THE SILENCE OF OUR

by

J ANDERSON FRAZEE

(Under the Direction of Andrew Zawacki)

ABSTRACT

The Silence of Our, a manuscript of poetry, explores the liminal, in-between state that describes one's ontological being—exemplified in Heidegger's notion of being "thrown into the world"—as well as the state of contemporary poetics, with its notions of a "free multiplicity of form" and a "hybrid poetry" freely appropriating from both avant-garde and mainstream lineages. The dissertation's four serial poems—"Cartography," "The Body, The Rooms," "In this Element of Capture," and "Index"—employ a poetics of "noise" as their primary formal mode. Borrowed from information science's models of the communicative process, "noise" is defined as what must be excluded from the transmitted "signal" in order for coherent communication to take place, like static in relation to a radio broadcast. Translated into the realm of poetry, noise is an element excluded by the assumptions of genre (e.g., lyric or epic) or by tradition (e.g., avant-garde or mainstream); in a poetics of noise this prohibition is made evident through the use of dividing lines, brackets, and multiple voices and discourses. The prohibited element is in this way re-introduced into the poetry, re-inscribing noise *as* signal and implicitly critiquing the limitations of traditional and generic modes. The essay that begins the dissertation argues that the turn in contemporary poetics toward an avant-garde / mainstream hybrid likewise signals a turn from a linear paradigm of innovation to a spatial paradigm of experimenting with and inhabiting the entire range of available techniques, forms, and traditions. It argues that a poetics of noise, dramatizing the exclusion and re-inclusion of prohibited elements, works to situate both writer and reader "in the midst," acting as a kind of orientation device within a network of texts, places, people, and sets of poetics.

INDEX WORDS: Poetics, Hybrid poetry, Free multiplicity of form, Avant-garde, Mainstream, Lyric, Information science, Noise, Jack Spicer

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DEDICATION

For Tanya.

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INTRODUCTION

Asyla

In *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century,* music critic Alex Ross describes contemporary British composer Thomas Adès's *Asyla* (1997) as "a four-movement symphonic work" that

> cobbles together Ligeti's crazy-quilt tonality, the player-piano polyrhythms of Conlon Nancarrow, the Nordic landscapes of Sibelius, and a dozen other choice sounds. The composer dramatizes his own struggle to define himself within and against modernity, seeking "asylums" of one kind or another. Splintered rhythms and microtonal tunings create disorder at the outset, but an old-fashioned, nobly expressive theme surfaces. (582)

It may be that the postmodern condition is defined by the recognition that one always arrives late to the scene—or, more specifically, since one always arrives within an already-extant historical-aesthetic context, that one is always hyperaware of one's lateness.[1] In music, the young Brit, like T. S. Eliot's Gerontion, was "neither at the hot gates / Nor fought in the warm rain" (21); too late

[1] This notion of lateness has been developed thoroughly in reference to literature by Harold Bloom, particularly in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973). "[W]e, in fact, *are* latecomers," he writes in "The Dialectics of Poetic Tradition," "and we are better off for consciously knowing it." (To which he somewhat ominously adds: "at least right now" [1184]). Bloom asserts that Romanticism is—"of course"—"*the* tradition of the last two centuries." "But Romantic tradition differs vitally from earlier forms of tradition," he writes. "Romantic tradition is *consciously late*, and Romantic literary psychology is therefore necessarily a *psychology of belatedness*" ("Dialectics," 1187).

As I argue throughout this introduction, I believe that "lateness" marks postmodern culture in general, with its particular awareness of historical precursors and unprecedented access to information about the past. This tide of historical data comes essentially unsifted. As Jean-François Lyotard writes in *The Postmodern Condition*: "I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives" (xxiv)—metanarratives which legitimate, privilege, and organize knowledge, and without which we are, on one side of the coin, left to fend without them, and on the other, able to make the rules up as we go along, question everything, and consciously organize knowledge for ourselves. The mass of information, and the need to consciously apprehend it, leads to a complex critical self-awareness striving to locate itself—in history and in the data of history.

for Arnold Schoenberg's atonal revolution, for the seriality of Pierre Boulez or for John Cage's chance operations,[2] Adès further finds himself caught between the avant-garde call for innovation and the mainstream connection with an audience that the modernist lineage tended to disdain. What separates Adès, Ross implies, is that Adès makes that reorientation, that in-between state, the basis of his music, and that in this way his music becomes a metaphor for the human condition of, to echo Heidegger, being thrown into the world (cf. Heidegger 174). Between the camps of a century-long contest of tonal versus atonal, sequential versus serial, and intentional versus nonintentional, the composer builds his home, fully aware of the ground always shifting beneath his feet, and making that insight his art.

Translated into the realm of poetry, this image of Adès composing from the contingencies of the musical legacies at hand reminds one of Keats's definition of negative capability as "being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (494). In his version of negative capability, Adès—or at least Ross's description of him—inhabits a liminal space where the relative certainties even of the experimental lineage are called into question, and where the urgency of formal innovation, á la Ezra Pound's "make it new," is replaced—not with stasis, but with Keats's sense of being-in-the-midst.[3]

For poets at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we, too, are arriving late: after Modernism, after the New American Poetry, after Language Writing. We arrive late, as well, for the more mainstream revolutions—as Joseph Conte notes in his *Unending Design: The Forms of Postmodern Poetry*, innovations in content as opposed to form (2-3)—of the Confessional poets,

[2] Or, for that matter, for the particular styles and processes of Ligeti, Nancarrow, and Sibelius.
[3] We may say that the postmodern artist, in the absence of Lyotard's metanarratives, struggles not just with one lineage, but with *all* lineages. Thus the avant-garde dialectic of innovation is replaced with multiple dialectics, the artist/composer/poet in dialogue—if not in a Bloomian struggle—with a plurality of traditions that he or she is within, is in the midst of, inhabits.

Deep Image poets, and the Poetry of Witness.[4] Even those on the cutting edge tout the end of revolutionary innovation; in a statement about poetry after Language Writing, Christian Bök, citing fellow poet Darren Wershler-Henry, discusses this state of affairs:

> Wershler-Henry suggests that, because we are faced with the impossibility of composing something totally innovative, we may have little choice but to pick through the rubble of the past, jerryrigging contraptions that fuse old parts with new ideas, coalescing them syncretically into a contradictory set of unpredictable regenerations (like an unholy hybrid, for example, of Langpo spliced, say, with Vispo, Oulipo, and Fluxus). (Bök)

Note the paradox: the works Bök describes are not only innovative (at least in what he calls their "new ideas"), but in their hybridity they also become a kind of museum of the previous—the genres, movements, and techniques that gave them birth.[5]

The "hybrid" meme, long at home in the realm of genre experimentation, now permeates not only the avant-garde—if that term still holds[6]—but the left-of-the-mainstream, as can be seen in the recent publication of Cole Swensen and David St. John's aptly titled Norton anthology *American Hybrid.* Indeed, one looking at the work coming out of the oldest, largest, and most famous MFA program, the Iowa Writers Workshop—not to mention the awarding of recent National Book Awards to Nathaniel Mackey and Keith Waldrop—may argue that such experimentally-tinged work now *is* the mainstream[7]; that is, that the mainstream is itself

[4] I discuss the Poetry of Witness in more depth in the section on "In this Element of Capture" below.
[5] The real question may be whether any innovation has ever been "totally" innovative, or if most or all innovations have always been, as Bök writes, jerryrigged contraptions.
[6] It does.
[7] Swensen herself teaches at Iowa, and the other poets there, including James Galvin and Mark Levine, appear in *American Hybrid*. The finalists of the 2009 National Book Award competition, in particular, represent an experimental streak, with Ann Lauterbach and Rae Armantrout joining Waldrop. It should also be noted that Swensen chaired that year's committee, and that avant-influenced poet Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge also sat on the

becoming, in a synthesis of old foes, a hybrid of the experimental and traditional lineages.[8] The New Mainstream, expanding its range of influences even wider than Bök's wholly-avant quartet of Langpo, Vispo, Oulipo, and Fluxus, seeks to take what it can from all available resources, personal and impersonal, referential and non-referential, normative and non-. Swensen's description of this poetry in her introduction to *American Hybrid* echoes Ross's description of Adès:

> Today's hybrid poem might engage such conventional approaches as narrative that presumes a stable first person, yet complicate it by disrupting the linear temporal path or by scrambling the normal syntactical sequence. Or it might foreground recognizably experimental modes such as illogicality or fragmentation, yet follow the strict formal rules of a sonnet or a villanelle. Or it might be composed entirely of neologisms but based in ancient traditions. (xxi)[9]

In this, contemporary poetry, with its "cobbling together," "jerryrigging contraptions," and "hybrid poems," moves toward what poet and critic Mark Wallace, in an essay from the last decade of the twentieth century, called "a free multiplicity of form," a situation in which formal choices do not imply the practitioner's inherent allegiance to any particular program of cultural life or set of values (e.g. the "avant-garde" or "mainstream"—or, for that matter, Langpo, Vispo,

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committee; the work of all of the writers mentioned here—as well as Mackey, mentioned above—are included in *American Hybrid.*

[8] "Mainstream" and "experimental" (or "avant-garde," or "innovative") are of course fraught terms, and one can see, in my use of them throughout this introduction, how cumbersome—and reductionist—they become in attempting to describe contemporary poetry. One of the great attractions to a hybrid poetics is that it at least claims that these terms *are* reductionist. For another set of related terms, see several of Ron Silliman's blog posts on the "post-avant" and "school of quietude."

[9] Similarly, in his introduction to the *Lyric Postmodernisms* anthology—one which covers much the same ground as *American Hybrid*—the late poet Reginald Shepherd writes of work that "combines lyricism and avant-garde experimentation in a new synthesis [he calls], after Wittgenstein, lyrical investigations." The work "explores the poem as a form of thinking, a thinking-out and a thinking-through. . . . [The poets collected in the anthology] innovate and recreate while still drawing on and incorporating the lyric past and present. Their critical art is also a celebration of the riches of the lyric tradition" (xi). I will discuss the importance of the lyric form and tradition to my poetics, as well as discuss a third, earlier anthology of what we may call "hybrid" works, *American Woman Poets in the 21st Century: Where Lyric Meets Language* (ed. Juliana Spahr and Claudia Rankine), later in this introduction.

Oulipo, or Fluxus), but stand as a testament to poetic, linguistic, semantic possibilities.[10] The postmodern, in this sense, is less the awareness of arriving too late than of having all formal possibilities at hand. Such an environment runs counter to the linear emphasis on "making it new" and overturning the assumptions of the previous generation; instead this situation calls for a spatial exploration of the environment itself, replete with formal lineages and possibilities (an exploration which can be read, paradoxically, as itself an overturning of the assumptions of the avant-garde paradigm).[11] This situation, however, is only relevant, only fully possible, when poets are freed, Wallace's essay argues, from the ideological and aesthetic constraints associated with a particular poetics.[12] In a free multiplicity of form, one's formal decisions do not

[10] Cf. Wallace 196: "I mean by 'a free multiplicity of form' a cultural circumstance in which knowledge about issues of poetic form is not repressed and controlled by poetry production networks competing for ownership of forms. In a free multiplicity of form the issue of form in poetry becomes always an explicit problem that writers of poetry are allowed to explore in all its variance and that they must encounter."

[11] As I read them, both hybridism and a free multiplicity of form entail an end to what we may call the avant-garde's nihilistic streak, incorporated particularly in its Continental forms (cf. Dada) but also, in another sense, in William Carlos Williams's Emersonian-Whitmanic calls for a modern poetry of the American idiom. Historically, this rejection of the traditions in which the mainstream still builds its home is then mirrored with a similar, mainstream rejection of the innovative, which ends up throwing out the baby (formal experimentation) with the bathwater (what I am calling avant-garde nihilism). Most importantly, hybridism (as spelled out in Swensen's introduction) and a free multiplicity of form explicitly make the case that these issues are almost entirely polemic and rhetorical, and that manifestoes issued from either the left or the right (these terms, too, are useless) do not speak to the reality of contemporary poetry. Wallace's essay, in fact, begins as an investigation and critique of the manifesto as a rhetorical form. Both hybridism and a free multiplicity of form, in short, are, to rephrase Lyotard, incredulous toward the avant-garde and mainstream metanarratives constructed out of each lineage's manifestoes and statements of poetics. (Of course, both Swensen's and Wallace's essays are also seeking to establish their own metanarratives—as I am with this introduction.)

[12] In his 2001 essay "The Resistible Rise of Fence Enterprises," critic Steve Evans critiques—severely and at times probably unfairly—what would, several years later, be called a hybrid poetics, emblematized in the essay by the journal *Fence*. Evans complains that "[e]ver since the mid-1990s, when a host of forces conspired to drive the rigid designator 'language poetry' out of credibility for all but the professoriat, avant-garde poetry in the U.S. has proliferated without benefit—or detriment—of a shared conceptual horizon, agreed-upon situation definition, or common archive." At the forefront of these forces was a "liberal pluralism" (read: hybridism) that "is the spontaneous thought form of the marketed mind." While I agree with some aspects of Evans's piece (see especially note 13 below on "make it different" and the psychology of marketing), it seems that what he is raging against is the collapse of the avant-garde / language-poetry metanarrative—"a shared conceptual horizon," etc. To my mind, the poetics I describe here—at least in the way I have described it, as I wish only to speak for myself—does not eschew politics or a critique of capitalism. At the same time, I *am* concerned that it "rationalizes compromise as inevitable," or that it may do so; yet such a concern calls for exactly the kind of self-awareness and awareness of historical context that I believe this poetics embodies. For examples of recent books of poems I consider to be works of hybrid poetics and that employ incisive critiques of war, capitalism, and American culture, see Richard Greenfield's *Tracer*, Mark McMorris's *Entrepôt*, Claudia Rankine's *Don't Let Me Be Lonely*, and Juliana Spahr's *This*

necessarily imply a particular politics or ideological stance; more importantly, formal "innovation" in itself does not carry a cultural value trumping all others. "Make it new" thus becomes, as I have written elsewhere, "make it different" ("Present/Absent").[13]

The Silence of Our

Like Adès's work, the poems collected in *The Silence of Our* are my "asyla," my struggles to define my poetry "within and against" both the poetic avant-garde and the mainstream (within, that is, the context of a free multiplicity of form). In attempting to do so, I work to introduce interference—noise—into both general sets of poetics, thus positing each of these four poetic series as sites of meeting and exchange, nexuses of multiple discourses and connections, techniques and genres. This poetics of noise follows from the Modernist lineage of juxtaposition, parataxis, heteroglossia and collage that informs the avant-garde; at the same time, such a poetics works from the other end of the binary as well, introducing the more traditional elements of plain speech, direct address, and simple emoting into the avant-garde environment in order to produce

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Connection of Everyone With Lungs. (I should also note that not one poem published in these four books was published in *Fence*.)

[13] It would be interesting to consider "making it different" in light of the concept of differentiation in marketing—which can be summarized by the question "how does one make Coke seem different from Pepsi?"—and this in relation to "po-biz" (poetry business) in which academic careers are tied to success in publishing. Wallace, in fact, provides a basis for this argument in characterizing the tensions among various sets of poetics not as confrontations among sets of poetics as such, but among structures of training, marketing, and dissemination. He divides the contemporary American poetic landscape into five "major networks of poetry production": "the proponents of 'traditional' formalism;" "the proponents of confessionalism," which he ties to university MFA programs; "the proponents of identity-based poetries;" "the proponents of the New American poetry speech-based poetics;" and "the avant-garde," which he ties specifically to the Language group (193). "[W]hether or not given poets think of themselves as members of a production network," he continues, "it is almost uniformly true that poets without strong ties to one production network or another will have great trouble getting their poetry known beyond local environments" (194). The thrust of Wallace's essay is, in short, towards a perfect permeability among the five networks in poetics, as well as toward the creation of the institutional support for producing and disseminating works that engage such a multiplicity of form. Hybridism, as summarized in *American Hybrid*, comes close to this ideal, though it relies much more heavily on an interplay among the confessional/MFA, New American, and avant-garde networks, and less to those of traditional forms and identity based poetries, though important exceptions exist. Karen Volkman's and Laynie Browne's collections of sonnets, and the work of Nathaniel Mackey (cf. *Splay Anthem*), stand as important examples of a hybridism incorporating, in the former, traditional forms, and in the latter, an "identity-based" poetics.

its own brand of noise as a counter-discourse, a thorn in the side of any otherwise programmatic poetics.

Clearly, such experimentation is not unique in its general scope. Indeed, it seems to be becoming a typical mode, replacing what Charles Altieri calls in *Self and Sensibility in Contemporary American Poetry* "the scenic style" (11), and what Donald Hall in his essay "Poetry and Ambition" calls the "McPoem" (301). The McPoetic, scenic-style poem is our age's version of the Romantic lyric: a short, first-person quasi-epiphantic, quasi-confessional, quasi-narrative poem which has held sway for the last three decades or so as perhaps the most visible of mainstream poetics, if not the poetics of choice.[14] This incorporation of the avant-garde into the mainstream (or vice versa) implicitly questions the notion of innovation itself, or at least repositions it, from a place almost wholly concerned with formal newness and a linear overturning of the old by the new, to a spatial orientation of formal exploration and an inhabiting of the entire range of available techniques. I cannot claim that the formal experimentation here is

[14] In *The Idea of Lyric,* W. R. Johnson, describing what he labels as "meditative verse," provides a convenient summary of what would become the scenic style McPoem: "The poet in a landscape chances on something in nature that takes hold of him as he describes it to himself, for himself; from that description comes a vision, his inner state revealed by the outward sign; and from that vision in which the inner and outer blend comes an evaluation of the poet's life, of his renewal, perhaps of his transformation" (6). Perhaps the archetypal poem of this type—conforming to Johnson's definition so closely as to make one wonder if Johnson merely schematized it—is James Wright's "Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota":

> Over my head, I see the bronze butterfly,
> Asleep on the black trunk,
> Blowing like a leaf in green shadow.
> Down the ravine behind the empty house,
> The cowbells follow one another
> Into the distances of the afternoon.
> To my right,
> In a field of sunlight between two pines,
> The droppings of last year's horses
> Blaze up into golden stones.
> I lean back, as the evening darkens and comes on.
> A chicken hawk floats over, looking for home.
> I have wasted my life. (Wright 122)

Choosing this poem as a precursor of Hall's "McPoem" is not intended to imply a denigration of what I take to be a great poem; rather, it is to show how a great poem lead to several decades' worth of writing that became languid and, as Hall notes, unambitious.

necessarily original; further, I cannot persuade that the voices collected here are necessarily unique. Instead, these poems, like Adès's *Asyla*, like Keats's negative capability, seek to dramatize this situation of being thrown into the world, of being-in-the-midst—this crossroads in which the old creative writing workshop paradigm of *finding your voice* becomes the new mainstream poetics of *constructing your voice* out of the shared detritus (no, strike that: possibilities) of multiple traditions. Thus what I can claim is that the work here is my taking-place in contemporary poetry, my particular hunting-and-gathering, my cobbling-together and jerryrigging; what happens beyond that, to echo Eliot in "East Coker," is not my business (128).[15]

One's taking-place in poetry is always contingent, always caught in the gap between what one has just learned and all that one still has to learn; on our best days we use what we find there without any irritable reaching. Each of the poems in *The Silence of Our* seeks to investigate and challenge aspects of what populates that space for me, specifically in relation to lyric form—not necessarily as a critique or a rejection of the lyric *per se*, but as experiments in broadening its scope, in what may be possible within and, yes, against its assumptions. I have chosen experimentation in the lyric for several reasons—that for better or worse the lyric now stands, as critic Virginia Jackson claims in her essay "Who Reads Poetry?," for all the possibilities of poetry[16]; that we find ourselves in what may be a "post-lyric" context (see Rei Terada's "After

[15] The fact of writing a critical introduction to a creative dissertation, while important and I think necessary beyond departmental protocols, contains within itself the irony of attempting to persuade an audience of a literary text's value. Caught between positing that the work should stand for itself, and the need to provide this apologia, I thus put forward a context and an argument here in the hope that the work will somehow stand on its own two feet more so than before.

[16] "The definition of a lyric as a short, nonnarrative poem depicting the subjective experience of a speaker became the normative definition also—thanks to lyricization—of poetry" (Jackson 183).

the Critique of Lyric")[17]; or that lyric stands as the primary mode of communicating inner life (see Jonathan Culler's "Why Lyric?").[18] Of all options, lyric best provides the opportunity to explore both language and the nature of self in the world, themes that are traditional because they remain with us, and which, because of the ever-changing context in which these themes are found, are ripe for continued interrogation and transformation. These poems are, to turn a quote of Charles Bernstein's inside-out, soundings of the lyric from the inside.[19] These are poems about connection, loss, suffering, isolation, death, love—as well as how the self may speak of them. They are traditional themes, lyrical themes—not unlike Adès's "old-fashioned, nobly expressive theme"—yet themes that arise amid the dissonances of the contemporary.

As mentioned above, these experiments have well-documented precedents, and have been taken up by many other contemporary poets—this, of course, is as much a function of our particular historical awareness as it is of my intents and abilities. More essentially, these poems are my mapping of what parts of the poetic terrain I currently have access to and knowledge of; they are my bringing them into proximity with myself and with one another. On the one hand, they make a claim that this is what poems in some sense—but not in all senses—are: collections of precedents, moments of intertextuality ultimately belying their lyrical uniqueness, textualizations of the interpersonal, litanies of discrete writing acts, explorations of the linguistic and material space of the page both writer and reader face.[20] On the other, they are my clearing

[17] "Unknown forms and modes will catch the eye, worth the attention that twentieth-century lyric studies has prepared readers to give to their objects. If the new objects are new enough, they'll change methods of attention. . . . Compared with finding out what comes next, it isn't important what lyric is" (Terada 199).
[18] "If we believe language is the medium for the formation of subjectivity, lyric ought to be crucial, as the site where language is linked not only to structures of identification and displacement before the consolidation of subject positions but especially to rhythm and the bodily experience of temporality, on the one hand, and to the formative dwelling in a particular language on the other" (Culler 205).
[19] "There are no terminal points (me→you) in a sounding of language from the inside, in which the dwelling is always/already given" (Bernstein 239).
[20] Many of these conceptions of my work have been catalyzed by the poetics of Jack Spicer, particularly as described in Peter Gizzi's afterword to Spicer's lectures in *The House That Jack Built.* There Gizzi discusses

space, my elbowing with sharp elbows, in the hope of forging a voice from the dynamic of lyricism and anti-lyricism, text and context, signal and noise. They are an economy of individual experience and conceptual milieu, autonomy and groupthink—all poems, I think, are thus, and as such, reflect the way our selves are as well.

The formal methods employed in the dissertation extend from the possibilities primarily associated with the experimental, avant-garde tradition, though with the intent of exploring and broadening the expressive capacities of the traditional lyric form in thought, feeling, and language. These techniques include the use of a split page, dating back at least to William Carlos Williams's *Kora in Hell: Improvisations*, and slightly more recently to Jack Spicer's "Homage to Creeley / Explanatory Notes" in *Heads of the Town Up to the Aether*; the use of chance and conceptual poetics championed first by John Cage's write-throughs and Jackson Mac Low's operation-based poems, and later by Kenneth Goldsmith's essays and conceptual works; the use of appropriation and quotation, from too many Modernists to count, but brought about personally from working on *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation*, as well as from taking Andrew Zawacki's class on poetic erasure; and the use of the page's spatiality descended from, to choose a poet top-of-mind, Charles Olson. In its general plurality of formal methods it follows the models of such contemporary works as Julie Carr's *Mead: An Epithalamion* and *Equivocal* and Barbara Jane Reyes's *Poeta en San Francsico*—as well as older works such as W. H. Auden's *The Orators* and Muriel Rukeyser's *U.S. 1*—which seek to explore their ideas in a broad range of traditional, experimental, and procedural tactics, including

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Spicer's notions of the community of the poem and the poem as an intertextual unit, ideas and phrases which I have taken up less as starting-points for my own work than as affirmations and concretizations of my own, previously amorphous poetics. So, too, Spicer's notion of poetic inspiration as taking dictation from a radio receiving transmissions from "Martians" has influenced my thinking and vocabulary here, though obliquely in that I don't subscribe to Spicer's notions of transmission as a writing process *per se*, but rather as a model for what a poem is—a kind of in-between moment charting intersecting transmissions, connections among people.

odes, prose poems, letter poems, journals, dramatic monologues, serial poems, closet dramas, and collage works.

As a poet I have sought to inhabit these particular states of being in order to access the world with the particular linguistic, epistemological, and perceptual tools they have afforded me. But to say that I have *seen* the world through the tools and processes used in *The Silence of Our* is not exactly correct; through them, I have *been in* language, and in the world, and have somehow reconfigured them, however slightly, in the way of such things. In the remainder of this essay I will first discuss my poetics of noise in more depth, then how that poetics is tied to context and community. Following this discussion I will treat each of the book's sections in greater detail.

Noise Calls for Decipherment

Robert Pinsky, in his essay "Responsibilities of the Poet," puts forward that it is the task of the poet to integrate what he calls the "unpoetic" into poetry. "[W]hatever important experience seems least poetic to me is likely to be my job" (359):

> [T]he culture presents us with poetry, and with implicit definitions of what materials and means are poetic. The answer we must promise to give is "no." Real works revise the received idea of what poetry is; by mysterious cultural means the revisions are assimilated and then presented as the next definition to be resisted, violated and renewed. What poets must answer for is the unpoetic. (360)

In light of what I have described as the spatial reorientation of our particular historical consciousness, I read Pinsky's notion of the unpoetic less as a model of progressive innovation than as a continual integration and re-integration of content that previous or current poetic

paradigms exclude, a constant rediscovery and recovery of the prohibited. I see Pinsky's unpoetic, that is, as *noise*—the "no"—in relation to the *message* of the "implicit definitions of what materials and means are poetic," the prohibited in relation to "the received idea of what poetry is." This noise, as Pinsky defines the unpoetic, is not necessarily the new, but the excluded.[21]

In a discussion of philosopher Michel Serres's theory of noise as a model for thinking about science, John Lechte provides a concise understanding of "noise" and "message" through the lens and lexicon of information theory:

> With the advent of information science, a new figure for representing science becomes possible: this is the "model" of communication. Accordingly, we have three elements: a message, a channel for transmitting it, and the noise, or interference, that accompanies the transmission. Noise calls for decipherment; it makes a reading of the message more difficult. And yet without it, there would be no message. (Lechte 348)

Later in his summary of Serres's thought, Lechte writes that "[f]orm has to be extracted from the cacophony of noise; form (communication) is the exclusion of noise" (348). Translated into

[21] We can see a similar notion of noise as the inclusion of the excluded in the history of twentieth century compositional music as narrated in Ross's *The Rest Is Noise*. Ross outlines what I see as three major revolutions in compositional music during the century, each working to enlarge the capacities of music through the inclusion of ever-greater degrees of noise (i.e., of what music as an art form at that time prohibited). The first is the inclusion of atonality pioneered by Arnold Schoenberg. In this case, the composer intentionally sought—not only to incorporate, but to base his compositional method on—an entire range of sounds that at the time would have been considered un-musical (that is, as literal noise). The second revolution had to do with seriality, championed first by Schoenberg, but brought into maturity by Pierre Boulez and others. Seriality brought new procedures and new considerations of temporality into music; as Ross notes, "[t]he result is a music in constant flux" (395). And the final revolution, and to my mind the culmination of these experiments, arrives with a single composition: John Cage's *4' 33"*. This paradoxical work, as a piece of music, is silence: the title marks the length of that silence. But what it does is incorporate every audible sound in the room, at the time of the performance, into the composition—making art and life identical. Or, in language used in my discussion of signal and noise below, Cage's masterpiece makes context and text identical—noise and signal identical—while prompting audience participation in the performance to an unprecedented scale. With Cage's piece, in short, what music absolutely prohibits as noise—the un-musical, the un-composed—becomes the composition itself.

everyday terms, a successful transmission of a message, then—a voice, say, or music—comes from removing or filtering interference; as a distant radio signal arrives at one's receiver shrouded in static, various techniques (tuning, moving the antenna) may decrease the noise-as-static and allow the message to come through more clearly. Following from this, we can consider noise as an aspect both of *context* and of *the means of transmission*. One's ears receive the broadcasted message only to the exclusion of aspects of the (auditory) context: the static, the ambient noise in the room, any competing voices, etc. At the same time, the static interfering with the message is an aspect of the *material* qualities of the technology used to transmit the signal ("without it, there would be no message"), as well as of the physical distance between broadcast and reception.[22]

These delineations—of noise as interference, of signal as the exclusion of noise, and of noise as both context and the means of transmission—form the backbone of my poetics as expressed in *The Silence of Our*. While Pinsky reads the unpoetic as an issue of content, my notion of noise places more emphasis on formal procedures and the assumptions of the lyric genre, as well as those of the "mainstream" and the "avant-garde." My poetics of noise, in short, includes what such assumptions implicitly exclude, while making that exclusion—or the act or fact of that exclusion—tacit through poetic form. As such, the re-inclusion of noise interferes with the original message at hand, and complicates it in some way; by doing so, instead of excluding context, it broadens the context in which one understands the message. Simultaneously, the re-inclusion of noise emphasizes the means of transmission—here, the materiality of language and the page.[23] The new message, inclusive of noise, re-inscribing noise

[22] Imagine the bursts of static intervening thunderstorms generate.
[23] I do not mean these statements about the re-inclusion of noise or the broadening of context to necessarily imply that *all* noise or *all* context is then made a part of the poem—clearly that cannot be the case, if only because the page can only hold so much information. (Though, it should be noted, John Cage's composition *4' 33"* actually *does*

as message, assumes a new context. In *The Silence of Our* this broadening of context in general is taken up as a specifically interpersonal one—the book seeks to emphasize the poem as the site of communication, and the page as the site of interconnection, in the weaving together of what we may call the poem's community. "The poem is at last between two persons instead of two pages," writes Frank O'Hara in "Personism: A Manifesto" (283). And as Paul Celan writes: "I cannot see any basic difference between a handshake and a poem" (26). In so doing, I intend these poems to make a case, *contra* Auden,[24] for what poetry may "make happen"—what work poetry may do beyond the page.

Going to Work in the World

In one sense, what poetry makes happen is exactly this exclusion of "beyond the page," the exclusion of context.[25] That is, *materiality* is itself language's greatest noise: people, places, objects—all these are translated, abstracted in the face of writing, reading, interpreting: all are

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achieve this feat of making all context, all noise, a part of the "text.") However, I think that a poetics of noise does, or at least can, hint at that possibility through its formal and linguistic gestures. Through the emphasis of the materiality of the page, the page becomes another object among the objects of the world, and therefore assumes, theoretically, the universe as its context (as, of course, is the case anyway, though the attention devoted to reading generally excludes that awareness). Through its emphasis on including aspects of the excluded, a poetics of noise, as expressed through a particular poem, may prompt the reader toward considerations of ever-greater degrees of context. In *The Silence of Our* I frame this consideration of context generally as interpersonal, particularly in the address to the reader in "Cartography," in the charting of textual and personal interconnection in "Index," and in the disruptive war reports in "In this Element of Capture"—each of which I discuss in more detail below.

[24] "For poetry makes nothing happen" ("In Memory of W. B. Yeats," 82).

[25] William Waters discusses the particular "detachment from context" of the lyric in his *Poetry's Touch: On Lyric Address*: "It was not always this way. Lyric compositions were once embedded in a context of use to a degree that would be exceptional today. But they were dislodged very early, with developments in ancient Greek lyric around the fourth century BCE. . . . Everything we now know as lyric . . . has been decisively defined by this turn of Hellenistic poetry. What we call lyric poetry is literature, something whose detachment from context is, in a manner of speaking, its foundation. Contextlessness is different from detachment from context, and our poems live in the latter mode, finding their 'occasions,' as [William Carlos] Williams writes, 'as part of the imaginative structure' of the works themselves. This detachment from context, then, has become constitutive of the modern lyric, which is also the inheritor of many other such detachments, like the separation of lyric from music, and from voice altogether, and the distances that print publication introduced between handwriting and the book held by a reader" (10-11). This "context of use" was essentially ritualistic and, later, dramatic. My poetics here seeks to "reattach" this context—not semantically, but through an emphasis on the embodied acts of reading and writing *as* the context of use. My poem "Index," in particular, may be seen as a charting of what Waters above calls "the distances" between "handwriting and the book held by the reader."

effaced. At the same time, language has its own kind of materiality, in which words may be treated as objects (exemplified, in its most extreme sense, in concrete poetry), and, in another, related sense, in which the poem is treated as what it literally is: ink and paper. In a critical shorthand that stands as a testament to the unsustainability of such categories, mainstream poetics tends to foreground language's referential function (that is, to a world or event exterior to the poem) and avant-garde poetics tends to foreground language's material function (that is, to the systemic workings, the event, of language itself). Ultimately, those who this shorthand calls experimentalists say that poetic truth resides in the workings of language, since there is no access to the world (indeed, no "world") except through language; those who the shorthand calls the mainstream say that the poem must refer to an extra-textual event in order to make sense at all.[26]

At this intersection of linguistic materiality and semantic reference, this site of mutual exclusions, my poetics of noise—and in a broader sense, the poetics of hybridity—stakes its claim. It is here, too, where it becomes clear why the lyric stands as the most significant form for exploring both the referentiality and materiality of language, for bridging whatever distances there may be between the innovative and the traditional, and for investigating what poetry may make happen. In short, language's exclusion of extratextual, unpaginated materiality is mirrored by the lyric form's exclusion of the reader or addressee of the poem, as epitomized by John Stuart Mill's highly-influential assertion that "eloquence is *heard,* poetry is *overheard*" (553).[27] Placing the reader in the role of eavesdropper, the lyric effectively excludes the reader, and

[26] As Swensen discusses in the *American Hybrid* introduction: "This split [between the 'mainstream' and the 'avant-garde'] is more than a stylistic one; it marks two concepts of meaning: one as transcendent, the other as immanent. Thus, twentieth-century American poetry offers both a model of the poem as a vehicle for conveying thoughts, images, and ideas initiated elsewhere . . . and a model of the poem as an event on the page, in which language, while inevitably retaining a referential capacity, is emphasized as a site of meaning in its own right, and poetry is recognized as uniquely capable of displaying that" (xviii).

[27] Ann Keniston, who explores Mill's assertion in *Overheard Voices: Address and Subjectivity in Postmodern American Poetry*, notes that Mill's "subsequent statements make it clear that he is referring to lyric poetry in particular" (11).

therefore simultaneously isolates the lyric "I." In Northrup Frye's elaboration of Mill's definition, "the poet, so to speak, turns his back on his listeners" (qtd. in Keniston 11), resulting in what critic Ann Keniston calls "the essential solitude of the lyric speaker" (4). Similarly, in *Lyric Texts and Lyric Consciousness*, Paul Allen Miller writes of lyric as "a particular mode of being a subject, in which the self exists not as part of a continuum with the community and its ideological commitments, but is folded back against itself, and only from this space of interiority does it relate to 'the world' at large" (4). Lyric, in this sense, is always in some way *about* exclusion—and therefore provides an apt formal-thematic framework for a poetics that investigates exclusion. Further, and as can be seen through Miller's version of the lyric self, the exclusions of the lyric come, if only through extrapolation, with specifically political and ethical connotations. And it is for this latter reason—the political and ethical one—that lyric poetry also stands as a prominent site of contestation between the avant-garde and the mainstream.

Indeed, what Miller calls lyric's "particular mode of being a subject" is central to the critique of the lyric that is a tenet of several avant-garde movements, including Language poetry, and more recently Conceptual writing.[28] "Some argue that the lyric's intimate and interior space of retreat is its sin," writes poet Juliana Spahr in her introduction to the *American Women Poets in the 21st Century* anthology—an anthology aptly subtitled "Where Lyric Meets Language."[29] "This is essentially Adorno's argument," she continues, "which leads to his famous declaration that 'to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.' Some argue that because the lyric is a retreat, it

[28] I find it interesting to consider the ways that the so-called "ego effacing tactics" (Goldsmith, "Conceptual") of Conceptual writing, as well as Language writing's efforts to remove or at least redefine lyrical subjectivity, displace whatever agency one may find, mistakenly or not, in the "I" of a lyric poem, to the writer. That is, while the poetic text may itself efface subjectivity to whatever extent, one may become more aware of the name on the book jacket *as* writer (or, in the case of Goldsmith, as "transcriber"), and thus, I think, as a political subject, whose "work in the world" is the text at hand. This recognition of the authorial subject in relation to the text at hand is the recognition of *poesis*, making. (These ideas are taken up in the poems of *The Silence of Our*, most clearly in "Cartography" and "Index.")

[29] An anthology which, it should be said, features poets mostly associated with the experimental end of the binary. A majority of the poets are also featured in *American Hybrid*.

resists" (1).[30] But, as Spahr's introduction attests, the lyric may become the site of *investigating* this question of retreat or withdrawal, this question of the lyric's embeddedness in a context, and the lyric subjectivity's (and, by extension, the self's) embeddedness in a community, a world. "I find value in lyrics that retreat from individualism and idiosyncrasy by pointing to heady and unexpected yet intimate pluralisms," Spahr writes, "[l]yrics that help me to place myself as part of a larger, connective culture" (11). The poetics of noise outlined in the section above, with its emphasis on the context and the material means of transmission, provides a way to explore what poetry may make happen, putting forward the poem—and in particular the lyric—as an orienting device for the individual amid the world's multiplicity.

In *The Silence of Our* I seek to take the model of the lyric as withdrawal and intense interiority and break it open by including what lyrical generic assumptions say must be excluded: critical discourse, social relations, the reader, appropriated texts, multiple voices. In bringing the world—as noise—in proximity with the lyric subjectivity, the poems work to enact the lyric subjectivity's (re)orientation within the world. At the same time, these poems act as an orienting device for the reader by simultaneously emphasizing the materiality and referentiality of the poem on the page. The formal strategies of the poems, that is, emphasize the materiality of language (words as objects) and the materiality of the page (as a material-semantic field of activity); simultaneously the thematic content of the poems emphasizes this site as a meeting-place—both intertextual and interpersonal—not only of discourses but of people.[31] In situating

[30] This assertion of a dichotomy between the lyric as self-centered withdrawal and as a kind of oppositional stance is echoed in Mark Jeffrys's introduction to the critical anthology *New Definitions of Lyric*, in which he figures the lyrical withdrawal from the social sphere as an attempt to "transcend history": "Does lyric poetry inevitably attempt to transcend history? Does it ever succeed? Can lyricism be reinvented as a historically engaged mode of writing, or could a lyric poem's resistance to engaging its historical moment be figured as a genuinely subversive act within an oppressive culture?" (ix).

[31] The community of the poem is also inclusive of the voices of the past, exemplified in *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos*, Spicer's intertextuality, and Susan Howe's appropriative/palimpsestic poetics. While the poems included here do work with this sort of community—particularly with Spicer in "Index"—I want to push the notion of the

the poem on the page as participating in an intertextual-interpersonal community, the reader, in her or his own participation, is also thus situated. The poem in this way charts a space between the avant-garde and the mainstream, the material and the referential, the lyric as individual utterance and the lyric as connection to a community. As the poetics of noise seeks to undo the lyric as a site of withdrawal, so too it attempts to undo reading itself as a site discontinuous with the community. Instead of the page as a site of withdrawal mirroring that of the lyric speaker, it becomes the site of connection.

Rainer Maria Rilke, in *Letters on Cézanne,* employs a phrase that mirrors what he saw in Cezanne's work, and that may stand as a test for what he wanted his poetry to be: "real among all the rest of reality" (81). In a poetics of noise, and in this dissertation in particular, I want to make my poems real in that same way—though focusing perhaps more strongly on the "rest of reality" than Rilke did. I do this in order to prompt the reader to see his- or her-self as a "subject among subjects," a participant in the poem's community, one inclusive of other texts, people, places, and events. This is one thing that poetry may make happen; each of the poems of *The Silence of Our* seeks to explore this possibility formally and thematically. The following sections discuss each series in more depth, focusing on the particular lineages the poems are in communication with and how, through an incorporation of what those lineages prohibit, they seek to reconfigure those exclusions and broaden context—in short, how they do the work of orienting one within the world.

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community past intertextuality and into the interpersonal. So, in "In this Element of Capture," the "intertextual" use of quotes from newspaper articles is intended to establish an interpersonal community with those about whom the article speaks: the victims of suffering in Iraq and Pakistan, people whose extra-textual embodiment is threatened. Likewise, I seek, in "Index" not only a connection to Spicer's texts, but to the embodied *event* of his writing, long after he himself became, so to speak, dis-embodied.

1. "Cartography"

The formal gambits of the first series of *The Silence of Our* (and from which the book's title is taken) are intended to include elements normally excluded from the lyric, pairing intensely lyrical language with a dispersive serial form, direct address, and a split page that incorporates the page's vertical and horizontal spatiality. In doing so, the poem seeks to open up the lyric, from a discrete utterance to multiple utterances contextualized within a community; from the notion of the lyric as a withdrawal from the social sphere to one that actively seeks to incorporate—and be incorporated by—the reader; and from a singular and self-coherent utterance to one in competition with and inclusive of lyrical "noise": that is, of a second voice, a critical discourse, a posited, provisional explanation intended to invite the reader further into the creative-critical community of the poem.

The first formal issue, serial form, is characteristic of all the poems of *The Silence of Our*. Developed throughout the twentieth century, but most completely theorized by Jack Spicer, serial composition is, as described by Peter Gizzi in an introduction to one of Spicer's lectures, "the practice of writing in units that are somehow related without creating a totalizing structure for them. Their connection is purely poetic. That is, the poet must ignore the poem's progress in order not to unify its content into a message she or he can control" (50). Or, as Spicer himself remarks, "[i]t simply means that you go from one point to another to another to another, not really knowing where you are from point A to point B" (*House* 73).[32] While "Cartography" and the other serial poems of my dissertation don't follow Spicer's compositional method to a tee, they do seek to be exploratory in nature, and in some cases, as with "Cartography," introduce

[32] Critic Joseph Conte likewise defines the series as "determined by the discontinuous and often aleatory manner in which one thing follows another. . . . [T]he series accommodates the rapidly shifting contexts and the overwhelming diversity of messages that we now experience as part of our daily routine" (3).

elements of chance in order to frustrate attempts at a premeditated outcome of the compositional process.[33]

That said, while my series depends on many of Spicer's ideas, "Cartography" experiments with adding a totalizing structure—or at least the illusion of one—in the critical discourse stationed below the poem's explicitly lyrical content. Even this move, in a way, comes through Spicer, who employed such a split-page format in "Homage to Creeley / Explanatory Notes." Yet where Spicer's "Notes" ironically thwart explanation, the similar "bottom-half" discourse of "Cartography" comes closer to William Carlos Williams's effort in *Kora in Hell*:

> Such an old sinner knows the lit-edged clouds. No spring days like those that come in October. Strindberg had the eyes for Swan White! So make my bed with yours, tomorrow . . . ? Tomorrow . . . the hospital.
>
> ———————
>
> *Seeing his life at an end a miserable fellow, much accustomed to evil, wishes for the companionship of youth and beauty before he dies and in exchange thinks to proffer that praise which due to the kind of life he has led he is most able to give.* (58)[34]

In my poem, this split-page and apparently totalizing, explanatory structure, along with the poem's direct address to the reader, is intended to draw one's attention to the lyrical exclusion of

[33] My compositional process for the poems in *The Silence of Our*, and in my writing in general, stems from the chance-oriented work of John Cage, but only in its most general sense. While for Cage chance operations were generally highly rigorous and complex (often aided by computers), and stood to enact principles of non-intention, for me chance is less rigorous and works as only one part of my process. In short, I want to frustrate intention more than attempt to eliminate it. My process generally includes writing down phrases, lines, and sentences—sometimes what seem like whole poems—in a notebook, which are then returned to at some later date, at which time particularly resonant passages are excised and put into conversation with each other. Chance is sometimes introduced by combining these lines arbitrarily, without a particular consideration of how the lines fit together, logically or otherwise; this is the case with "Cartography," and also played parts in "Index" and "The Body, The Rooms."

[34] Such an effort at explanation has its roots in the dramatic explications in, for example, *Paradise Lost*, or alongside "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Williams's practice of couching the poetic within an explanatory framework is further elaborated in his *Spring and All*, in which the prose discourse is more clearly a defense of his poetics.

explanation or critical discourse (and, to a lesser extent, to the serial poem's exclusion of a "totalizing structure"). That is, the poem wants to frame the writing act, the attentive act, *as* exclusion, an exclusion always capable of being enlarged—in this case, by the incorporation of an "explanation" as noise, re-inscribed into the poem as signal.

This effort at enlarging poetic inclusivity is further emphasized through the poem's content, particularly through its use of direct address, which wants to situate the reader not as Mill's lyrical eavesdropper, but as the receiver of the poem—as, indeed, a reader sharing the world in which the poem exists—in, as the poem notes, "an unnamed plaza in an unnamed nation." Like Celan's handshake, poems of direct address are "a form of contact," as critic William Waters discusses in his book on the subject, *Poetry's Touch* (1).[35] Further, Keniston asserts that as a form of apostrophe, poems of direct address investigate and challenge lyric subjectivity itself:

> Postmodern address . . . emphasizes both isolation and the yearning for companionship, both mortality and the possibility of circumventing it. A focus on lyric address in this way illuminates the nature of lyric subjectivity: the attitude of speaking to an absent other allows the postmodern lyric subject to be defined at least partly by the yearning to unmake an isolation fundamental to lyric, which cannot, in the end, be unmade. (Keniston 121)

On one hand, this pathos Keniston describes, of addressing the "irrevocably absent" other (8), "yearning to unmake an isolation fundamental to lyric" *is* the pathos of "Cartography." But on the other hand, the poem does posit a structure in which the subject of address, the reader, is

[35] In addition: "The *you* that (perhaps) calls to the reader is a wild spot in poetics, a dynamically moving gap in whatever secure knowledge about poetry we may think we have; and 'live' as it is, this *you* makes palpable poetry's claim on being read, which is to say, its claim to make an accidental reader into the destined and unique recipient of everything the poem contains or is" (Waters 15).

not, at least, "irrevocably" absent, but is situated within what is, for better or worse, the interplay between the lyric address and the poem's quasi-explanatory structure. In so doing, this discourse, undoing lyrical isolation, puts forward a community of the poem itself, of the poem as a handshake, and the page as the material embodiment of that contact.[36] Thus the series attempts to map (hence "Cartography") a middle ground between the writer and the reader, the lyric and its context, the poem and the world.

2. "The Body, The Rooms"

"The Body, The Rooms" strives to exploit the emphasis on the page opened up by Modernist and postmodernist experimentation, and serves as the series most concerned with the page as a field of linguistic events. "Perceived optically as a complete unit," poets Steve McCaffery and bpNichol write in "The Book as Machine,"

> the page is qualified to such an extent that it ceases to function as an *arbitrary* receptacle, or surface, for the maximum number of words it can contain (functioning thereby as a random-sized unit in a larger construct), becoming instead the frame, landscape, atmosphere within which the poem's own unity is enacted and reacted upon. (18-19)

In the sequence, the space of the page, this "frame, landscape, atmosphere," is seen as an enclosure, as the "rooms" ("stanzas" in the Italian) the "I" lives in, grounding the discourse of

[36] Waters gets at this notion of contact as both linguistic and material in his description of his work: "[I]t avails nothing to discuss poetry's pronouns without involving the question of the reader's experience. These are two different domains, the formal and the phenomenological, to which two different critical vocabularies attach; but they are always, finally, two sides of one coin. . . . That is, the pronoun *you* is a formal feature of the printed text, and this is one half of my concern in this study; but the other half is the poem's recipient, the reader, as she finds herself in relation to the poem's acts of address" (14). The necessity for Waters to explain these "two sides of one coin" emphasizes the lack of critical consideration in attending to the reader as a material being reading a material book; my intention in "Cartography" takes a similar tack: to address the reader not as a function of the text, but as a living, reading being participating in a world of shared phenomena.

the poem on the page while simultaneously putting forward the referentiality of language—that is, to a reality beyond the page—through its concrete, personal, and even autobiographical register. While the technique of the sequence dovetails with Charles Olson's poetics as elaborated in "Projective Verse," it does so more in his sense of situating, in space and time, simultaneously on and off the page, the act of writing, than in the sense of Olson's spontaneous transcription of thought through the composition of a textual "field" on the page. As Michael Davidson notes in his essay "The Material Page," "[d]espite the oralist bias of 'Projective Verse,' Olson's primary concern is phenomenological: to create a poetry as close to perception and cognition as possible. The score for such processes was a page that resembled, as closely as possible, physical acts of writing, speaking, and walking" (75). While I am concerned, in conceiving the poem in relationship with an embodied reader and writer, with phenomenology, "The Body, The Rooms" does not "score" phenomenological processes as much as use the page as a situating mechanism, the site of writing—a site couched within a phenomenological context (a "room," literally and figuratively).

At the heart of this use of the page are the twin discourses of the poem—the discourse of the body, set in italics, and taking on the capabilities of prose, and the discourse of the rooms, sent in roman type, and broken into lines of verse. These two discourses are then put into a conversation, their rhythms at times fusing into a coherent utterance, and their physical notations at times disrupting the flow of sequential speech—and, in moments unforeseen in the original composition of the poem, points of textual confluence resulting in what amounts to concrete poetry (cf. the end of section 3). These moments further emphasize the materiality of the two discourses winding their way through the "rooms" of the page, and mapping out the extent of

their embodiment; this in turn reinforces one of the main thematic thrusts of the poem, that of being in the midst—of a world, but in this case, of the page as well.

With the introduction of any additional discourse—particularly, as here, emphasized *as* a discrete discourse—the dichotomy frames each as the "noise" to the other's "signal." In the context of this dissertation's exploration of the lyric, we may see that "The Body, The Rooms" is itself an exploration—and in that exploration, an expansion—of the assumption of lyrical withdrawnness, the twin discourses turning in on themselves in a recursion of self and domestic context that approaches the solipsistic. But it is this illusion of self-containment that the material constructedness and the interruptions of signal and noise, one into the other, hope to dispel—along with, that is, intrusions from the outside (the TV reports of "ten dead" and "tsunami lost") and the splinterings of self on the inside (the "animal" and "shadow" the speaker endows with some modicum of agency). In the end, it is through the two discourses, each both noise and signal, each working with and against each other, that the binary breaks down. With this we arrive at what we might call noise for noise's sake—or, we also might say, poetry.

3. "In this Element of Capture"

Of all the series in the book, "In this Element of Capture" most directly takes on the assumptions of the lyric as withdrawal from the social and places itself within the general realm of the so-called "Poetry of Witness," particularly within a group of poems I have elsewhere called the poetry of media witness.[37]

[37] In two unpublished papers, "'I've just been watching': Exclusivity and Agency in Juliana Spahr's *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs*" and "'Screen' Memories: Television and Trauma in Claudia Rankine's *Don't Let Me Be Lonely*," I discuss how each book explores the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks as a tragedy and trauma witnessed by millions via television coverage. Like these book-length works, "In this Element of Capture" features the "I" as a witness to atrocity through mass media (in this case, through newspaper reports); unlike the other works, it also formally enacts the traumas (or lack of traumas) these reports induce.

"The poetry of witness," as described in the introduction to Carolyn Forché's anthology *Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness*, "seeks to register through indirection and intervention the ways in which linguistic and moral universes have been disrupted by events" (45)—particularly those events defined as "atrocities." An important forebear of this notion of witness in modern American poetry is Muriel Rukeyser[38]; her sequence "The Book of the Dead," from her book *U.S. 1*, uses dramatic monologue, Modernist collage, appropriation, and other poetic techniques to tell the story of West Virginian miners' contraction of a deadly lung disease—due to the mining company's negligence—and the resulting court battle. Yet Rukeyser actually visited the town where the atrocity occurred, and Forché institutes the rule—at least for inclusion in her anthology—that "poets must have personally endured such conditions" (30). And yet "witness," if we are to measure it by a combination of personal perception (visual or otherwise) and quasi-traumatic comprehension or empathy, must, I argue, be expanded to include those of us—particularly in light of 9/11—who "witness" atrocity via the media.

"In this Element of Capture" takes this notion of media witness and uses it as a piercing interruption of the lyric of withdrawal, the lyric of domestic self-concern. Appropriating sentences, phrases, and sometimes single words from newspaper stories about suicide bombings in Iraq (in July 2008 articles) and Pakistan (in November 2009 articles) and inserting them into phrasings reminiscent of "scenic style" lyricism, the series seeks to show, through its formal disruption and radical juxtaposition of registers, the breakdown of the withdrawn lyric "I." In this, it stakes a claim as a different type of "postmodern witness" than that described by Alicia Ostriker's similar notion in her essay "Beyond Confession: The Poetics of Postmodern Witness." Ostriker's formulation of postmodern witness allows an autobiographical detachment from the

[38] Other such forebears may be found going as far back as one cares to; as long as there has been war and other atrocities, poems have been written about them.

events (i.e., the speaker need not have personally experienced atrocity), yet insists that "the poet is *present* and *located* in the poem," that "[t]he poet is not simply a phantom manipulator of words but a confused actual person, caught in a world of catastrophe that the poem must somehow mirror and transcend" (320).[39]

While I find much to admire in Ostriker's definition, I find it possible to chart a medium between "the poet [as] present and located in the poem," and the poet as what she calls "a phantom manipulator of words." The "I" of "In this Element of Capture" is both me and not-me, both inside and outside—indeed, I find that the notion of the poet as phantom manipulator of words touches on a veracity that does not preclude that manipulator being at the same time "a confused actual person caught in a world of catastrophe."[40]

In short, the speaker of "In this Element of Capture" finds himself both as an aspect of autobiography (the scenes described refer to my first apartment in Athens) and as subject to the machinations of this phantom manipulator of words—particularly in reference to that manipulator's application of a poetics of noise. For the contextual scope of the series is not only personal and political but also makes a case within the realm of the lyric. The model of the lyric as social and political withdrawal, that is, is itself helpful in that it is conducive to interruption

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[39] In particular, Ostriker in her essay refers to three works of postmodern witness: Adrienne Rich's *Atlas of the Difficult World*, Forché's *The Angel of History*, and Sharon Doubiago's *South America mi Hija.* She takes pains in separating her notion of witness from the "political posturing" of Language poetry, which, she writes, "seems to me politically vacuous[,] not only because of its captious repartee, and its systematic abandonment of the lyric 'I,' but because it denies that the morally responsible human subject is even theoretically possible. . . . [W]hat makes so much (though not all) of this poetry morally expendable is a failure to reckon, in formal terms, with the historical cataclysms that surround and batter us" (319).

[40] Similarly, I also find false the binary that Ostriker constructs when she notes that, while postmodern witness "employs the fragmented structures and polyglot associations originating in T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land*, Ezra Pound's *Cantos* and William Carlos Williams's *Paterson*" it—postmodern witness—retains the autobiographical "I" that modernism rejects (319-320). To take the "I" of any of these epics as rejecting autobiography is to take a simplistic view of what those "I"s—or autobiography, for that matter—are. This is perhaps an argument for another venue; here, it is enough to say that I believe the speakers of these poems—particularly the "Dr. Paterson" of *Paterson*, who has clearly taken on aspects of the autobiographical Williams—complicate the notion of what an autobiographical "I" is in the first place, by couching their utterances in the performative context of the dramatic monologue.

for the sake of opening it up to heteroglossia and overtly political content that—in intent at least—lays bare the ways that human suffering, however far-flung, permeate our daily lives. The "noise" in this case is that background static of media reports that all too often fail to pierce and disturb us.

4. "Index"

The long sequence "Index" takes the anti-personal, anti-lyrical claims of Conceptual writing—not to mention Spicer's impersonal poetics—as its impetus, while twisting that poetics into a more personal and lyrical bent. Stemming from the work of visual artist Marcel Duchamp, in the found, aesthetically-recontextualized nature of his readymades; composer and writer John Cage, in his insistence on non-personal procedure; and the Oulipo group of writers, linguists, and philosophers, in its emphasis on formal, often mathematical constraints, Conceptual writing as a subgenre has developed over the last decade or so, through the work of many—including Bök, Craig Dworkin, and especially Kenneth Goldsmith, who also supplies the movement's loudest voice:

> Conceptual writing obstinately makes no claims on originality. On the contrary, it employs intentionally self and ego effacing tactics using uncreativity, unoriginality, illegibility, appropriation, plagiarism, fraud, theft, and falsification as its precepts; information management, word processing, databasing, and extreme process as its methodologies; and boredom, valuelessness, and nutritionlessness as its ethos. ("Conceptual")

Goldsmith's *oeuvre*—particularly *Fidget*, for which the writer voiced every movement of his body for a day into a tape recorder, then published what he recorded, and *Day*, in which he

typed out an entire issue of the *New York Times* word for word—stand as exemplars. "I am a word processor," Goldsmith writes. "The simple act of moving information from one place to another today constitutes a significant cultural act in and of itself" ("Information"). In the end, it's the concept, not the final text, that is of importance, as Goldsmith somewhat famously remarks: "I don't expect you to even read my books cover to cover. It's for that reason I like the idea that you can know each of my books in one sentence" ("Boredom").

In contrast, "Index" starts from a Conceptual point, but resists the "boredom, valuelessness, and nutritionlessness" that Goldsmith claims as its ethos, as well as seeks to find a mean between "intentionally self and ego effacing tactics" and the expressive capabilities of the lyric form. The poem came out of my engagement with the notebooks in which Jack Spicer wrote *After Lorca*, housed at the Bancroft Library at UC-Berkeley. In the process of taking my notes, I began to see connections among my descriptions of Spicer's physical pages and handwriting, my transcriptions of what he wrote, and my observations of what was going on around me. What I was writing had a certain rhythm—anchored by my use of the categorical tags of "note," "personal note," and "transcription."[41] I was also drawn to the ways the material journals held the trace or aura (so to speak) of Spicer the man, whose hand touched every page—as well as to how my transcription of Spicer's words formed a kind of parallel history to Spicer's own "transcriptions" of his poems.

The result is a very long sequence that *is* at times "boring" in the sense of Goldsmith's valuelessness, and in the sense of the boredom one associates with the narrative heart of the poem: scholarship, library research, and note-taking. Yet the poem also seeks to find moments of beauty amid the chance juxtapositions and repetition of the categorical tags. Likewise, I wanted a

[41] I likely would not have noticed this "rhythm" of notational tags without having read Rusty Morrison's *the true keeps calm biding its story*, with its telegraphic line endings of "please," "stop" and "please advise."

balance of the personal and impersonal, both in an attempt to resist a purely Conceptual poetics, and to make the text more expressive and engaging. With that in mind, I first disrupted personal intention by alphabetizing the notes by each note's first word (providing, in the meantime, the multivalent title "Index"—which I take as not only referring to the alphabetical nature of the piece, but also as standing as a linguistic index to my time in Berkeley and to Spicer himself, as well as to that other definition of the word: "[s]omething that serves to guide, point out, or otherwise facilitate reference" ["Index" (def.)]). I then worked to introduce what Conceptual poetics excludes—namely, the personal and lyrical—and did so by versifying the alphabetized sections—that is, by making them lyrics. The result is the best example in the book of what I wanted each sequence to be, in charting the cartographies of interpersonal connection, of a shared world, shared history, and the community of the poem.

Coda: Exclusions

After emphasizing the poetics of noise as an investigation of exclusion, I would be remiss not to discuss what has been excluded from the creative content of this dissertation, as well as what has been omitted—or left as loose ends—from this introduction. My hope is that this list will stand as both an example of the critical self-awareness I discuss above, as well as an outline for further questioning and exploration. These notes and questions will inevitably complicate, if not outright contradict—if not reveal major lapses in—what my introduction to this point has argued.

Poems Excluded from the Manuscript

Over the five years I have spent at the University of Georgia, I have produced many poems, most of which are not included here. Perhaps the most obvious exclusions are that of individual lyric

poems (that is, poems discrete from any other poetic sequence or series). Their omission has been primarily due to my aesthetic intuition, and from a notion that the serial poem holds the greatest capacity for exploring issues of inclusion and exclusion (though of course this idea excludes discrete lyrics). I touch on the serial poem in the following section, though the question of why I excluded individual poems remains to be explored, especially in light of the poetics I have been advocating.

These thoughts lead to a series of as-yet-unexplored questions: What place do discrete lyrics have in a poetics of noise? How may a poetic manuscript frame the relationship between individual poems and serial poems so as to draw attention to their mutual exclusions? What would a manuscript comprised wholly of individual lyrics, and devoted to a poetics of noise, look like? How would it work? In a more general sense, what is the place of individual lyrics in contemporary practice? What is the relation of this to the imperative of publishing in journals (at least print journals) according limited space? And, perhaps the most interesting questions: what is the relationship of a poetics of noise, a poetics emphasizing exclusion, to the book form, a form which inherently excludes? What is the relationship between a poetics of noise and the "aesthetic intuition" I note above, and which I privilege as a legitimate, exclusionary strategy?

The Poetic Sequence and the Serial Poem

Though I touch on the nature of the serial poem in the section on "Cartography," a more in-depth exploration of it is necessary, particularly in light of the questions raised above. Briefly, I find that both the serial poem and the poetic sequence, each as a medium between the individual lyric and the long—if not epic—poem, provide the most flexible and subtle ways to explore inclusion and exclusion, as well as the individual and the other, the part and the whole.

One glaring omission from the introduction is a discussion of the difference between the sequence and the serial poem, a discussion which occupied much of the semester in Andrew Zawacki's course on the poetic sequence. Briefly, Conte differentiates the two forms in the ways they develop: "The series distinguishes itself from the neoromantic sequence principally because it forgoes the linear, thematic development of that form" (20). Far from a part-to-part linear development, "[t]he sections of a series are not hierarchical. There is no initiation, climax, or terminus precisely because there can be no development. . . . The reader does not require the information of any one section in order to comprehend the others" (23).

So, then, considering these differences, how may the poems here be classified, and in what way may those classifications relate to a poetics of noise? Is the linear poetic sequence no longer efficacious in the postmodern era (as Conte seems to argue)? How may considering the poems collected here as either sequences or series change the way we read them? How may the two forms differ in their considerations of part and whole, individual and other? How may they differ in how they enact exclusion and inclusion?

Lateness, the Tradition, and (Im)personality

The most pertinent theoretical issue that remains to be fully developed is that of the issues of lateness and the Tradition, and their relation to a recurring ethos of impersonality in the poetics of three poets who stand, whether on the surface or bubbling beneath it, as the touchstones of this dissertation: T. S. Eliot, Jack Spicer, and John Cage.[42] To this list of poets should be added the

[42] As I write this list, I am a little surprised. Were anyone to ask my favorite poets, or those I think have influenced me the most, I would name Eliot, John Ashbery, and Sylvia Plath. It may be that most traces of Plath are absent in the creative work here—though somehow the atmosphere of rage I read in "In this Element of Capture" approximates a similar rage I sometimes feel in her work. Ashbery, though, deserves a greater part in this discussion, and will serve a greater part in my thinking on the issues explored in this introduction. In particular, I am interested in Jed Rasula's description of Ashbery's poetics as *parasiting*, in his essay "News and Noise: Poetry and Distortion": "Where modernist poets *cited* predecessors in collaged parataxis, Ashbery *parasites* by mingling his

critic Harold Bloom, whose career is more or less built upon these issues, and who in his own considerations of lateness struggles with his critical forebear, Eliot. (Here we will set aside the issue of Bloom's criticism and focus on the poets, though his overall influence should not be understated, and his theories must be addressed in any further thinking on these topics.)

Each of these poets bears a particular relationship with their predecessors, and each espouses the poem as an intertextual unit, as a kind of space through which past voices speak. For sure, they have their differences—Spicer is much more willing to incorporate "low-culture" texts than Eliot is, and Cage works almost wholly with appropriated texts (most famously Pound's *Cantos*). What they find perhaps more agreement on is that this vision of intertextuality and citation either necessitates or precipitates the extinguishing of the poet's personality from the poem, as a way of making room for the voices of the past to speak, and for the poem to work as language.[43]

Even as I am drawn to their programs of intertextuality and impersonality, a poetics of noise must ask what is excluded in these sets of poetics; the most obvious answer, at least, is clear. But the issue of personality, subjectivity, or the autobiographical self also extends to another issue I am concerned with: that of the poem as not only an intertextual unit, but as an interpersonal one. My thought here brings me to a poet strangely absent from the introduction, but manifestly present in the poetic manuscript as the author of its epigraph: Walt Whitman. Whitman's interest in the interpersonal is perhaps unmatched in modern poetry—not only in his

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own chatter with the austere idiom of his sublime hosts" (92). It is this idea of "mingling his own chatter"—introducing subjectivity into the "austere idiom" of his predecessors—that I find an affinity with, as I see this inclusion of a personality as the introduction of a sense of orientation, however in flux that constant (re)orientation may be in Ashbery's work. Rasula's essay, too, with its employment of information theory and the term "noise," deserves a greater part of my thinking about these issues.

[43] For example, Eliot: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality" ("Tradition," 10). And Gizzi on Spicer: "Since poets write backward in response to their deceased poetic predecessors and forward to the eventual readers of their poems, they exist inevitably outside of their own time even as they reflect or embody it. Thus Spicer proposes that the poet is always posthumous in the act of composition" ("Jack" 175).

famous catalogs, or in his consideration of the individual and the masses, but also in his direct addresses to readers.[44] (Interestingly, this interest in interpersonality and community is coupled with an effort to separate himself from his predecessors, with Emerson perhaps the only exception.)

Many questions then arise: What is the relationship between the Tradition, intertextuality, and a poetics of impersonality? In what ways may personality be introduced into a poetics that takes Eliot's, Spicer's, and Cage's poetics seriously? Does a program of interpersonality and community necessitate the inclusion of a personal or autobiographical "I" in the poem? What is Whitman's relation to these three writers? What may these questions tell us about poetry as practiced in the U. S., a poetry which may be seen as continually "talking back" to Whitman? Does the (re)inclusion of a personality into innovative practice somehow dilute the experimental and political praxis the avant-garde advocates? And is this reason enough to go ahead and do it, despite / to spite the avant-garde?

[44] For an exemplary discussion on Whitman's direct address to readers, see Waters. See also such poems as "Thou Reader" in Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (11).

THE SILENCE OF OUR

I acknowledge the duplicates of myself.

Walt Whitman

Cartography

My shifty blue lenses elaborate each particular into a field of partial knowledge.

Whose promiscuous lines have you read.

I've been waiting, hanging like a bat emitting silent pulses of language to discern the vicissitudes of your shape when you move.

But these parliaments of flesh that nest head first in the body's portable realm, that collapse into sensual rigor, armored clothes meant to disengage the mouth of a god.

We each discover the poem. We or one may take the poem as a set of three. A: that which you or the reader is reading and which in the process of writing is before me or the poet, B.

What sad pilot mistakes language for a map of the environs.

And cursed with dials the size of the moon.

The body's corollary of action and sound.

We sit in plain time, muscles attached in an aching mobile.

The meaning one or the poet takes from the text, and which resides solely with him or one or me, or in some space between her and the page. And C: the meaning resultant for you.

Some temperature rises in the elbow, then in the knee.

Who taught us these connections, these movements. Stolen moments like bodies disinterred and dancing the rumba.

Some kind of alarm to predict the distillation of intent.

Yet we speak beneath a cuneiform sky. Yet we break the consolation of attachment, some mechanization dreamed up in an outlying factory.

Or the reader, likewise hiding within him or her or you, or within some airspace your eyesight intersects. The total text therefore comprises a world, and we are its occupants.

Some beauty reminiscent of violence, old age.

But mostly the entrapping code breaks and breaks.

Brutal contagion of weather.

Yet the moon features a terrible array of consciousness, each needy finger an individual pulse.

Through the reproduction of texts connecting poem, reader or one, poet or me. And with us or them, those contexts associated with its reading and writing (the totality encompassing.

Stationary systems of release.

The aboriginal displaced.

Do we believe in anything.

Though Rome was not dismantled in a day.

Both localities as well as that—separating, reaching—between us or them). It is a meeting the poet or the author or the I can only take on faith, for in the moment of writing one can.

But do not separate. Let me describe our bodies here among the coffee table, a plentitude of words we have never seen but feel, as with magnets we may or may not have swallowed in each of our previous lives.

Let's work toward the supreme levitation of love.

Here in the territory mapped with bodies left for dead, the aged and alone.

Within the notches of the belt of night disfigured. Mosquitoes and moths drawn to the galaxy of door lights.

Only assume your or the reader's presence, or even one's existence as the void who is the always-unknown and always-unknowable subject of the text or the world's drive toward.

Let us be something out of place, out of moonlight. Displacement of skin here where our moods wear rings. Partial birth of amniotic alphabet. Pretend then to use the imagination God gave you. We interact like fingers on opposite hands.

Let's remember those quaint and ancient tales to tell beneath a sky chained and feral in moonlight, collapsing again on shoulders.

To quote the moon at such a time. The windows degrease the slovenly night held close like a heartache, paper receipt notched with illegible language, a language nobody knows.

But the moon holds its parliament, as if to contaminate us with its mythic temperament, the power to pull tides and fold an ocean dry.

Utterance or disclosure. Thus we posit that for the me or poet *the reader is the real* or *he or she is the real* or *you are the real*. It is my or the poem's perhaps unconscious impulse to construct.

What I feel slowly emerging from me. The real me is too polluted with the world.

But back to the beginning. It is the past which pushes me, critical mass of genetic drift like compasses lodged in heart and lung and swinging small intestine. Here lies north, here lies the future tense.

What pilot would bleed onto his instrument panel.

We were brought here by premonition, an unnamed plaza in an unnamed nation.

A scaffolding for one or you to understand these contexts and communicate them beyond yourself and—impossibly, impossibly—back to me. For the poet's or one's stance is this.

Of the slippery modern world.

With what detail of mind may I, beneath sky of minute particulars, find and hold grace in a coffee-cup-sized palm ringed with long sleeves, holding a nonexistent menu, a nonexistent map, meant for some cousin-self.

What sort of animal am I whose thoughts partition.

Down some glance at the moon of nerves spreading across the night.

We or the poet and reader are alone in their poem. Bodies or pages separate. Language is both the separator and that which bridges the lapse of separation. Interiority without trans-.

The skin of barren night enveloped the houses. The womb of barren night leapt around the warmth of a home and glanced inside its rooms, its tall tales, smelled furniture and detergent, fell head first into probable nightmare and probable dream.

This fiction I adopt, trim like fingernails, pare like trees.

Instruments of their own desire.

Controlling alphabet of my safety's blithe pattern.

Mission may only be analogous to their or our enclosure or exile or death. All my or implied my texts are in this sense alarms. All my texts then are cries or crises from the silence of our.

Tremendous altitude diverges sky from uncounted layers of artifice, the recognition of death not depth.

There we open the ribcage nested in flesh, the pancreas portable with age, teaspoons of sea salt for the eyes, the disgruntled chin.

The countertop twists moonlight into specters and ghosts.

The calamity of arcs, geometry's palest horse ridden in magnificent old-century style.

Inwardness which only we or you and I ourselves may know. In the recursive elaboration of this body between us we are inscribed into it, onto the page our eyesight intersects: Speak.

The Body, The Rooms

1

My body rests in its perpetual motion machine, its circular cellular division, its divisioning. The rooms

are not my rooms.
Their ministrations want me

to envy enclosedness, un-
dialogic fingers *Lives beneath a February sky, sinking certain words into the world, the page of worldly symptoms.* and the arcs they dance, prompt
as letters written, alphabetic litter
written under condition *Comes to the world weakened from movement—through dream, my dreams partake of me.*

and maps on walls,
no maps on walls, rooms
pale in comparison *(When I sleep alone, bed wet with slick of me, the sweat and come of me, snow in faux spring—* rooms of the past
encamp with the *here*.

They memory-grasp.

To let them in, induce
the design *low-angle daylight through windows decades older than me—the entire ramshackle city,* their songs
patrol me, echo off

dust motes. *a foundation of invisible stilts, imagined scaffolding.)*

2

Churn of wash, hum of heat:
I belong to taxonomy. Periodic table
my moods indicate

some visible space. Insects
in corners can't be

reached. Have they names? *My body seems something solid and permanent. And pure, pure as a god's mouth—* the TV's dark. Once it said
ten dead. It invokes
a world, a corner of room *though it caves in like calendars, craves coffee and sugar, takes Prozac with its breakfast, with its toast and eggs and its*

with some special maneuver
grabs an object-
part and drags it

inside my apartment-
gut like a huntress *(death of my father, then death of a friend—death of a love affair with—) (winter* some terrible compromise
a million years ago. Some splice

humanity meant to them *sprinkling salt on the mirror of me, sowing the ground with—) (I call upon the thaw and reflective sun, refraction in the mirror of—).*

to preen the day's
shards and rust—and permit us
to envision the other.

Lock on door, door in
wall, wall in *Sets itself in front of the mirror and sees its scars, its pores around the nose—like some landslide, some lava flow.*

books stacked in a corner. Near a lamp,
a fan. Near the fan, a
window. Venetian blinds. Outside: *It needs a cut, it needs a shave.*

3

My body dreams inside itself. At night my body dreams—

friends and fathers long gone, lovers and love, one upon one, one upon—.

I can never place the train
where the sound comes from.

A martyr to forget,
that sound, a Saturday

Dreams of music—The spheres undefined,
though of rock stars,
performance artists—

Dreams of peace,
a feeling of well-being,
feeling comfort in its skin.

its music keeps me warm.

And the room, a slit throat
the hall reminds me of *It consists of dreams and skin.* all its mechanisms *Counts on me to do what's right. Sometimes seeks a soul and comes up cold.* behavioral models, everything *(Hear me you Methodists, you mother and grandparents! Hear me Baptists, my* they *sister and brother!) (The waning daylight makes me miserable!) (And the sink sunk* pollinate me *into the countertop! the sink gleaming through the night!)*

4

Will lie quiet on cold table. Wants cremation not internment. This is my last will and—.

Useless doesn't lie here.

The fan in the corner
the wind won't enter.

(A sight to see, parking
lot, maneuver) *Confirms the oxygen around it—says goodbye and hello on the phone or when it's buying milk to help it grow*

into newer, bigger, badder bones. but enough
of movement. They correspond

to a heart, these chambers. Pushed
through the threshold *Ten dead in Iraq today—roadside bomb, suicide bomber—the elections draw closer as—* again the threshold threatens *Likes sunlight, impending summer storms.* to pin me among worlds.
Blood clot *the accounts of tsunami lost climb to stratosphere and past—into empty void, universal god-space.* of my forgetting.

5

Wonders if it's animated by anything other than itself Something's meant
to change. Objects oblique
and serviceable *(blood vessels, meat—
tendons, nerves—brain and brain stem—pitted skin and hairy skin—* if the ceiling fan wants to
make a mechanism *hair
from my head, ears and nose and arms). Some sort of animal—* of my dreams—it should
(want to be some poisonous animal too small to see dream their solidity, their
corners and sills *and crawl up under a
toenail, or down a throat, an unawaking ear, then folds of brain—lying, laying eggs there).*

enclosure should posit its tenets:

A gloaming at end of day. Prescience
in their knowledge of my movements

*My animal of sounds and language, of sense and poetry, of meaning and non-meaning,
of perilous endeavor, perilous viewing, perilous making.*

my shadow should haunt me.

6

Suffer forth
the children they say *My animal seeks love and warmth—nutrition, clothes, reinforcement. Pavlov's*

a specific *they dog to mate with (unmaking the human inside me, the chance for posterity, for elegy or eulogy,* and program my dreams. My
animal promotes me with

best of intentions. What it thinks
of weather, of premonition *unmaking the vast mask of my names—*

should prophets arise be wary. (I *erasing).* said that.)

7

The shadows cut to pieces.
Though mine escaped. In
parallel. In dimension *My animal has a shadow; and its shadow, feelings of its own. Tosses and turns when I sleep alone. Comes to my dreams* premonition a theme
the rooms agree on. Some

submission, though my knees
were never

broken. Parallel to these *and wants to wake me to tell me it's bored and wants to dance beneath moonlight or streetlight*
table legs. To fit my shape
the chair invites me. It

has a shadow too. We mingle,

entertain.
Moon-scrapes feel into me *blinking off and on every minute or two.*

through grace of glass window,
grace of room. What technology
permits me

such intrusion, a rain-blotted line,
one side of the known *My shadow wants to play, it wants nice things (images of me in another's head—moving of their own concentration, volition).* an empty bed to clothe me.

8

Disintegrates so slowly it's hard to see it's happening. Pauses at the threshold of tearing away from the world. First Practically-speaking,
marooned here,

the insect-archer
mask I wear

prowls uncontrolled throughout *confirms the oxygen, nitrogen—the entire atmosphere of air; tries to hide in its big belly of invisibility; confirms the sound of thunder-crash and positive feedback loops* panel-lined rooms,
forgive me: tangled in

forgetfulness, a poison

the room intakes, verb me
a way outside *cracking apart the tender heart of sky* the rain verbs, the moon verbs,
my nouns

leave

a trail of dead,
insects I've secretly named *negative feedback of contrition, quantum realization of the soul, more than mannerism—* something
in a quandary, an

elopement to
disengage

the room—its moon
is me *puts the person back in personal—sky burns a spectacular gray, pustules of stars posture the drama—impending night pinpricks the daily artificial. our paradigm*
that dances, they say.

In this Element of Capture

Note: The phrases in brackets are taken from articles
in the American press published in June 2008 and November 2009.

(Mornings link coffee [A car
bomb set to explode]
untested in our bones—
[the busiest time of day]
my new one, and next [at least
51 people] with sports-
talk radio, [and wounded 75]
to another tree [as shoppers
were strolling a neighborhood]
garden-variety garden
[market in]—Who
occluded moons of eyes,
[the deadliest attack in]
still with leaves—[in]
of frequencies [more than]
transmission, symptomatic rote
of [three] the body's positions

[The blast struck] of latent
meaning, twelve steps—
[a crowded bus terminal]
soil sown in signals, a soil
sown in code.) What [district
that once]—who fashioned
a tight-knit armory [a large
population] of paradise granted
to those [the American-led
invasion] of stations of the sun,
curl of prismatic stimuli, held un-
accountable for actions occlude
[death squads, who killed or drove
thousands] from fear of fear

And what my neighbors think
of me: [bomb tore through]
The guys with leaf-blowers
[and offering a grim] Does
it have anything to do
[and felled electrical] howl
of sports-talk radio, strapped
to their backs military-style,
[station reported that]
with temperature—the leaves
a parking lot hello. [a car
laden with explosives] de-
constructed summer sun,
[timed to coincide with]
falling from trees. Law of
transcendence, maybe it's mine.

Barefoot with my radio
and words, [relatives
of the victims] un-
showered, a portable
example [enraged
and on edge. One]
What language I derive,
here on couch, [lost
11 relatives, including]
of how not to live.
[At a courtyard in]
Here wearing pajamas
nearly one p.m.
[Hospital morgue]
as an integral member
[wept and] an aspect
of the student
[cursed the government]
of American society.
I make no money
so to speak [allowing
the blast to happen]
I create no jobs,
the skin of barren day
envelops the houses [and
called on God for revenge.]

[fleeing the blast site]
the economy will do
what it wants [who
interviewed] The womb
of barren day leaps
around the warmth
of home [a cordon set
up around] I've
mentioned the music,
the sun, [the scene
of the attack] with
or without me. What
home [there had been two]
and glances inside its
rooms, its tall tales, [that
officials described.]
Now here's a bird,
[sealed off the area
and allowed in only]
is poetry? What code
[ambulances and police]
smells furniture wax,
detergent [40 bodies
had been brought to]

A little dance.) A promenade,
next to the stove seems not
reminiscent of violence [in
the lawless border]
room to room, of morning's
[arrived in] the best idea:
here's some fallen green leaves
[killed more than] of old age;
barbed wire, [of them women
and] from the potted plant
atop the fridge—veins on the back
[most devastating recent]
in matters sanctioned by law:
an X-rayed hand: I water it, I.

Flashes fully formed
in human flesh,
[The bomber struck as]
falls head first [troops
were attending a
neighborhood meeting]
here's a change of
temperature, [nearby,
according to one]
permitted its own laws
[After the blasts] into
probable nightmare
and probable dream
[A rumor swept the
crowd of frantic] here's
autumn pulling itself
[there was still one bomb]
its own way of doing things)
the courtyard of its
inhabitants, inhabitant
[yet to be detonated.]

(Morning I shape my hair
sink into winter's singularity
From where I sit, [broken
glass, twisted] with sleep's
punk rock grease, [metal
and splintered push carts]
above the swimming pool,
the huge and lingering
[no immediate claim] past
Venetian blinds [responsible
for] something for myself,
grasshoppers, "Georgia thumpers"
[the blast and no word] in
the solvent of Georgia sky,
a soft chuckle in the mirror—
[bomber in a rickshaw struck]
the bare limbs of a tree
[and wounding] when alone,
Leave the can of furniture wax
up with some beauty

Index

Nature is a haunted house—but Art—is a house that tries to be haunted

Emily Dickinson

Note: "Index" consists of notes taken during a three-day stint with the Jack Spicer notebooks at the University of California, Berkeley. Notes were first written in longhand in a notebook; entries where then typed and alphabetized by first word, and then lineated and put into sections. [Square brackets] indicate my designations and notes (made during the original writing in Berkeley); {braces} indicate instances where phrases originally set on top of one another in the notebook are now type-set horizontally on the page, and separated by a slash. All the text presented here has otherwise been transcribed as-is from the original.

Quotations are taken from the following: After Lorca Notebooks, 1957, Jack Spicer Papers, BANC MSS 2004_209 Container #9, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

A

Alba, re: aubade [NOTE] [All this, I think,
in the published version]: Buster Keaton:
I don't want to be autobiographical.
B. K.'s Shadow: No [TRANSCRIPTION] Along
the right side of one page [PERSONAL NOTE:
the edge nearest the world], a stain
that erased some blue of the page's lines [NOTE]
Another coffee stain, in the curve of a cup
or saucer, geometrical, the concave arc
holding the two lines of poetry [NOTE]
Answer: No [PERSONAL NOTE] The arcs of parens
and the arcs used to show where new lines
are spliced [NOTE: re: "18th century biology"
(check quote)] [PERSONAL NOTE] At the top
of the other (white) flyers: a box containing
some birds and the following: "For Three Days
The Flight of Billions of These Pigeons
Obscured the Light of the Noonday Sun
And Now the Species Has Entirely Disappeared"
[NOTE] At the top of the page: "difficult if
[or "of"] unrewarding luck [or "lack"]" [NOTE]
At the top of the page: "Hieratic {robins / swallows}
/ Smuggle in the summer" [This also may be
labeled a transcription] [NOTE]

B

Backs of the crumpled pages like landscapes
where the sky is most folded [NOTE] [Box 9:1;
Books; After Lorca – Alba; 1957] [Box 9:2;
Books; After Lorca Notebook; 1 of 7; 1957]
[Box 9:3; Books; After Lorca Notebook; 2 of 7;
1957] [Box 9:3, continued] [Box 9:4; Books;
After Lorca Notebook; 3 of 7; 1957] [Box 9:5;
Book; After Lorca Notebook; 4 of 7; 1957]
[Box 9:6; Books; After Lorca Notebook; 5 of 7,
1957] [Box 9:7; Books; After Lorca Notebook;
6 of 7; 1957] [Box 9:8; Books; After Lorca
Notebooks; 7 of 7; 1957] [Box 9:9; Books;
After Lorca Typescript; 1957] [Box 9:10; Books;
After Lorca – Contents Page; 1957] [Box 9:11; Books;
After Lorca – Publicity; 1957] Buster Keaton: This
is the wrong side of the moon. [TRANSCRIPTION]

C

Call Tanya at 6 (ET), 3 (PT) [PERSONAL NOTE]
Capacity, etymology [PERSONAL NOTE] Consider
amendment to methodology: the quadrants of
the page [phases of the moon; forehead expression]
[PERSONAL NOTE] Cover: Brown, almost replicating
leather in look; burnished metallic stripe at top
and in lettering; it reads: {"The Spiral"} in a kind
of Greek script, or Roman, as if carved into
a marble column; then a large circle, the logo
["Logos," I think, "lowghost"] in the center, a large "S"
in the background leather brown, and a spiral bisecting
the whole (the circle, itself the burnished metal, and
the "S") horizontally; then it reads, in the metallic:
"THEME BOOK"; and then it reads, in the metallic,
in much smaller type: "WIDE MARGINAL RULED
/ 11 x 8 ½ / 1958"; and below that, in still smaller font,
in the metallic: "REG. U. S. PAT. OFF."; in
the lower right corner, a circle: {25¢} [NOTE] Creases on
the lower right corner, and dirt in the creases [NOTE]
The cross of the "t" in "enters" doesn't cross the t [NOTE]

D

DAY 2; May 28, 2009; 1:05 pm;
Bancroft Library, Univ. of California,
Berkeley DAY 3; May 28, 2009;
a Friday; 1:15 pm; Bancroft Library,
Berkeley, CA] Deep in the horror of
the chest

sandbox heart
edge of the sand

[TRANSCRIPTION] A description
of the handwriting: in pencil; leaning
as if written left handed [was he]
[I feel I should know] [who knows
these notebooks] [to have access to
handwriting, one should know]
[NOTE] The Dickinson quote that art
is a house pretending to be haunted
[insert explanatory note with actual
quote] [NOTE] The draft of the letter
to Blaser [PERSONAL NOTE: I imagine
Blaser going through the note-
book, seeing the “Dear Robin” (I
imagine the “dear robin” hovering in
the top margin)]; it ends “Dishonestly,
Jack” [NOTE] Due to time constraints,
today a different tack [REMINDER]

E

Each page in various stages
of creasing and wear; the rusty-brown
tint along the edges sometimes [NOTE]
Earlier I washed the blue ink off
my hands [PERSONAL NOTE]

F

Final page: begins with “Eng 110.1 (II)”; includes
two-column list, similar to previous instances,
on the left; on the right, four groupings of poetic lines
(“In the middle of the poem I kill a rabbit”)
[TRANSCRIPTION]); at the bottom left, the following:
“Naked and un- / Impressible / They purred. ///
Your flesh.” [TRANSCRIPTION; written with urgency
in the original, the pencil pressed harder into the page,
as if wounding it]; in the lower right, a small (cigarette) burn
[NOTE] First I think again of the acid on my fingers, then
of the notches in my fingernails [PERSONAL NOTE]

H

Handwritten in pencil; blank sheet (no
lines or margins); tearing on the right page
[NOTE] Handwritten, on three
smaller notebook pages [NOTE] A half-
moon, eyebrow of a pencil mark, upper-
center on the left [NOTE] How the jottings
begin to move across the page [PERSONAL
NOTE: like a moon] [NOTE] How to
disrupt the conventions of Spicer's (impersonal)
method [PERSONAL NOTE]

I

I am still jobless and have managed to develop
a loathsome skin disease to keep myself so
[TRANSCRIPTION] I begin today with the second
notebook; on this page, the Magic Workshop
questionnaire continues, in longhand, cursive,
pencil [NOTE] I decide not to transcribe
everything [PERSONAL NOTE] I feel like Susan Howe
[PERSONAL NOTE] I feel organized [PERSONAL NOTE]
If your {body/hand} had been meaningless
(first line) [TRANSCRIPTION] I go home
for the day [PERSONAL NOTE] ~~I had made it~~
~~very clear to him that neither the poems or~~
~~the letters he had sent me~~ [dele. mark continues
into the space after "me"] [TRANSCRIPTION] I
handle the notebook carefully, with the very tips
of my thumb and index finger [PERSONAL NOTE]
Individual and Society – Assignment – IS OUR
COMMON MAN TOO COMMON. Patterns
for Living. Read by Wednesday [TRANSCRIPTION]
I inhale it [PERSONAL NOTE] I look out the window
at the green between buildings, I put my hands
on my head [PERSONAL NOTE]

In the folder, the pages torn out,
the “geological formation” missing from
the edge of the page [PERSONAL NOTE:
where the spiral has sunk] [NOTE] In the last
of the pages in plastic, the poem “Radar:
A postscript for Marianne Moore”; between
the sections are lowercase “i”s to mark the three
parts; all are erased [NOTE] In the sterile sheets
of seafoam

A death for the race that has tried to
complete me (in toto) [TRANSCRIPTION]
In the upper margin above the main part
of the written poem: “the birds are still
in flight,” and “moon-children,” and
“And there is the sound / of a little river” [NOTE]
The introduction continues but the draft
ends as the page does, at “But I am” [NOTE]
I open the notebook [PERSONAL NOTE]
I replace the first folder and remove the second,
employing the laminated card as necessary
[PERSONAL NOTE] I replace the folder (as
before) [NOTE] I rub my hands on my jeans, as
if to wipe them clean of acid [PERSONAL NOTE]

L

The lack of punctuation – the failure of
quotation marks – to contain the above
“resumes” [truncated] [NOTE] The “ladder”
of rust-colored cuts into the page; the theory
that these were caused by the notebook’s
spiral is discredited, as the typescript is not
bound [NOTE] The last line on the page –
“Certainly I of all people am least fitted” –
hearkening back to the previous page’s
“Suit” [NOTE] Last page: the upper right
corner folded, so the leather-brown
of the back cover is seen; at the lower right,
a large piece of the corner torn; it appears,
following from a crease, that Spicer wanted
the tear along the crease, but his attempt
was not successful [PERSONAL NOTE:
the tear, along with the corner of the back
cover, looks like a blending of the
iconographic and anatomical hearts] [NOTE]

The left edge holds the spiral; inset from
the spiral: three hole-punches [NOTE]
The left-hand page opposite a page written
in thick and heavy pencil: the dust of
graphite pressed into, all over the page
[PERSONAL NOTE: a kind of rubbing,
as of an ancient text on stone] [PERSONAL
NOTE: a child's rubbing of a leaf] A left
side page written on; written, it seems,
in haste; "The boy / You will remember"
[NOTE] The library doors are very heavy;
the library is climate-controlled [PERSONAL
NOTE] Looking quickly at the loose page
behind the notebook I think the handwriting
is mine; it reads "48. Plato's ideas cannot be
applied to pronouns" [PERSONAL NOTE]

M

Many blank pages interspersed;
on some, the twin creases
described in the previous note;
one can see, in one instance,
where the spiral was pressed
into the page,—here without
the rusty cuts of the first page;
rather, like a series of zippers,
four of them, radiating from
the vertical center of the page
upward like a kind of cone
[PERSONAL NOTE: I could have
said “stitches,” or “scars”]
Misspells “loneliness” as “lon-
liness” multiple times in this
notebook [NOTE] The mutations
of the compositional practice:
the omitting strikethroughs, erasures,
lists, patterns [PERSONAL NOTE]
My doubts as to my ability to
convey this {vision / experience};
my ability to take this in
[PERSONAL NOTE] My head hurts
and I think of leaving for the day
[PERSONAL NOTE] ~~My long glances~~
~~Explore the sky~~ [TRANSCRIPTION]
My need to transcribe and be precise
(without photocopying, which
seems to me a cop-out) at odds with

time constraints and my need to stay
sane [PERSONAL NOTE]

N

Next page: continuation; poem
ends – poem draft ends – nearly –
but not exactly – halfway down
the page [NOTE] Next page:
draft of "Lorca's" introduction
to *After Lorca* [NOTE] Next page:
[I'm just now coming back
from my break, having first
asked the librarian (earring and
wedding band) how long I could be
away without having to turn
my materials back in (10 minutes);
going to the restroom, and talking,
outside, to Tanya; the day was sunny
with a cold breeze; I walked on
a low wall]: a sketch of the cover
for *After ~~Lora~~ Lorca*; very
rudimentary, with the title veering
["lapsing"] downward [NOTE]

O

On a left hand page, written
upside-down in pencil, a two-
column list of letters, some
connected by lines (see
transcription) [NOTE] One
would think, were he waiting
for dictation, that the lines here
would be in multiple “hands”;
they seem, rather, to come
all at a time [NOTE: as his
first book, this is early in the
development of his theory]
[PERSONAL NOTE] (On left
hand page, right justified, with
several spaces between each unit):
“which are difficult / always /
inevitably,” and “its own,” and
“be used” [TRANSCRIPTION]

On the back of the next page, I
see the writing of the first page
pushing through [NOTE] On
the first line of a page, “Dear Lorca,”
and nothing else on the page [NOTE]
On the first page of this notebook,
a kind of ladder of small cuts along
the left margin, rust-colored, as if
the spiral had been somehow
pressed into it, though there is no
evidence the page was folded [NOTE]
On the last page of this notebook,
a poem is interrupted by three upside
down lines [NOTE] On the last page,
upside down beneath a poem-draft:
“Wa 1-9360” and “And neatly wipes
their shadows from the floor” [NOTE]

P

Page 1: lines; the first near the top
middle at an angle; another at top
right written on the lines; the third
several lines beneath [NOTE]
The page as schema for ordering
experience [PERSONAL NOTE]
The page is a draft of the Buster
Keaton poem, and contains references to
“The Shadow” and to “Helen of Troy”
[NOTE] [Pages I do not make notes on]
[NOTE] A page with the double first
accordion fold crease, a draft of
a poem, the rust-colored cuts, and
the left margin, crumpled like a relief map
[NOTE] Perhaps I should not
write this; perhaps [the lyrical impulse]
I should let the reader discover it
[how I assume an audience]; how
the notebooks, his or mine, cannot
contain the man [re: language as the “trace”
of Spicer’s passage] [re: the dead like an
absent god] [PERSONAL NOTE] Perhaps this
was meant for publication [PERSONAL NOTE]
A phone number written upside down
in ink on the back of the end of
“Song of Two Windows” [NOTE] [T]he poetry
emerges, {~~the peacock shits, the swan~~
~~delouses himself~~ / tentatively, like a hermit
crab from a conch shell} [TRANSCRIPTION]

Q

The questionnaire's first question –
"What is your favorite
political song" – and the discussion of songs,
and political songs in particular,
in Spicer's "Poetry and Politics"
lecture [NOTE] Question: Should I type out
notes on my laptop [PERSONAL NOTE]

R

~~Reflecting itself on water~~ [TRANSCRIPTION]
The remnants of several pages torn out, very
small near the center of the page; rock-shaped,
thick like a geological formation, having
substance; the tearing itself must have been
rather difficult [NOTE] The remnants of two
torn-out pages, still entwined in the spiral [NOTE]
Revisions, the ambiguity of {body / hand};
the erasure, the present-absence of "poems
cover / poetry covers / ~~shadow-covers~~ /
~~shadows cover"~~; a list of choices, or lines
themselves (check in pub. version) [NOTE]
A rhyme or patterning scheme [PERSONAL NOTE]
Rules in textbooks and classrooms. About as
advanced as biology in Middle Ages [TRANSCRIPTION]

S

The same brown-leather [I mean
"leather-brown"] cover, though in
black instead of the metallic [NOTE]
Same notebook model as previous
[NOTE] Same notebook type ("The
Spiral") as previous [NOTE] Saying
good bye to a ghost is more final
than saying goodbye to a lover.
Even the dead {~~reappear~~ return},
but a ghost, once loved, departing
will never {~~return~~ reappear}[TRAN-
SCRIPTION] Saying goodbye to a ghost
is more final than saying goodbye
to a real person. Even the dead return –
but a ghost, once it has left your house
or your poetry, it is gone forever
[TRANSCRIPTION] The sense of *being*
when first opening the folder and
knowing the trace of Spicer's passage;
the handwriting infinitely more (somehow,
and I redact the infinite) "human";
of a certain time, a certain place [NOTE]

Several pages left blank at the end of
the notebook; on the last page used, the line
"Or the loss of hope – or," where
in writing "loss of hope" the pencil lead
is blunted, and the phrase is written in
double [PERSONAL NOTE: stereoscopic]
Some traces of [pencil] erasure and
overwriting in these lines: ~~a demon~~
[first I write "a demon"] a dream not
moving / But the bones quiver

In the white endlessness [NOTE /
TRANSCRIPTION] ~~So somebody has~~
~~stolen my wallet~~ [TRANSCRIPTION]
SPICER ARCHIVES [BANC MSS 2004/
209; BOX 9] The spiral is small, and
the pages get caught up in it easily;
it is also bent at places [PERSONAL NOTE:
does time, climatic conditions bend
a metal spiral]; there's a fold at
the upper left near the spiral, mirrored
in a symmetric fold on the upper right
of the left-hand page [NOTE]

T

10 minutes on this folder [NOTE]
The theme of precision [PERSONAL
NOTE] The theme of the absent:
the notebooks (to the reader
of these notes) themselves [PERSONAL
NOTE] The theme of "translation"
[PERSONAL NOTE] The theme or trope
of the present-absence of the ghost,
and of the deleted words; the idea
that the personal, for Spicer, must be
"deleted" from the writing process,
but remains as a word crossed-out,
a piece of furniture for the other
to occupy [PERSONAL NOTE]
The thinness of the paper; the title page,
crumpled along the left edge; Lorca's
"Introduction," creased in quadrants,
as if folded to pocket-sized [NOTE]
The thought of Spicer ripping out
those pages, and whether the poems
were written on them before they were
torn [PERSONAL NOTE] The title of
the poem is "Alba – A Translation for
Russ Fitzgerald" [NOTE] They are
{~~Occam's Razor~~ The Verifiability Theory
of Meaning} [TRANSCRIPTION] This
is no longer an exercise in precision

[PERSONAL NOTE] To again compare
the pages to landscape: the rectilinear
fields of the Middle West from an aerial
view [PERSONAL NOTE] To not add
anything not written in Berkeley [PERSONAL
NOTE] The trope of touch as corrosive;
the fragility of the medium (as,
conventionally, whether convention's
convention or my own, the fragility of
anything: the body, life itself, interpersonal
relationships [here I construct my ghost,
as does Spicer] [PERSONAL NOTE] Try to
describe the handwriting [PERSONAL NOTE]

U

Univ of California @ Berkeley;
Bancroft Library; 1:30 pm, 5/27/09
The use of pen; on a right-side page;
seems to be a kind of lesson plan;
“What kind of topics might I choose”
[NOTE]

V

Voices; to my left, a window,
a greenspace among the buildings of
the Berkeley campus; it is
Tuesday; I am in seat 3-D [PERSONAL
NOTE]

W

Was eaten from inside {~~by~~ / with} love
[TRANSCRIPTION] ~~We are all going to die"~~
[TRANSCRIPTION] What may we not see
behind the writing of these drafts
in the notebook [PERSONAL NOTE] What
Spicer says of Lorca's notion of cosmic
[my word] otherness in the lecture I read
[someone in the library says the word
"dictation"] before coming here [as I sat
on a bench near Brian's old library – the
engineering library (now the need to explain
"Brian") – which I found rather easily
after three years, and more easily than I
did then, following the campanile; a bench
in a series of benches in a kind of garden,
with vines providing the roof; first, a squirrel
came very close to me, and found half
a strawberry it proceeded to eat; then,
a sparrow tried to fly from under the bench
but could not, soon hopping out to better
airspace] [PERSONAL NOTE] What termin-
ology to describe the handwriting(s);
that he was a different man each time;
the more measured and intent handwriting;
the more rushed, urgent, and "messy"
handwriting; the schema I have are much
too limited [PERSONAL NOTE] When
sunrise covers the wet grass
        poems cover

poetry covers

shadow covers

~~shadows cover~~ (final lines) [TRANSCRIPTION]

What would happen if I sneezed on the page
[PERSONAL NOTE] The word “resumes” moves
off the edge of the page [NOTE] The writing
throughout is in cursive [even as mine
modulates b/w cursive and print] [NOTE]

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