

ZIMZALLA

OBJECT 001

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Opposable Dumbs

opposable dumbs: a project report (summer 2007 – Thanksgiving 2007)

Hey -

With current economic growth based on destroying employment and civil rights, the intellectual property statement for “opposable dumbs” leads off the project:

NO RIGHTS OBSERVED

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A call to plagiarize? Well, in part. Plagiarizing as a critique of capitalism (I’m thinking here of the Festivals of Plagiarism associated with Neoism in the ‘70s –‘90s) hits on many of the things we love to challenge: the authenticity of the author, the uniqueness of the individual, and the authority of “the text”. But how do non-human animals fare in plagiarism? The “author” may have disappeared, but language remains privileged.

What’s so great about freeze-frame words that enable discussions of “human rights” to obscure Police State might? As “opposable dumbs”, let’s assume the moveable mantle of the medieval author to explore what could be illuminating in the different ways human and non-human animals don’t have language.

Medieval manuscripts elude identity with a side of history. For example, the *Romance of the Rose*’s authors – poets, scribes, and performers – wrote/rewrote the story and illustrated/annotated the edges in intervocal anonymity. Sometimes they added new information, sometimes they added error. Either way, the “first hand” was not significant; rather, the history of the story was illuminated by the authors who were never more than partial. Can we reduce in this way the fictions that threaten us all? “What does it matter who is speaking” as a pan-animal liberation call.

some notes:

numb to dumb

for Allison Cobb, Jennifer Coleman, and Tom Orange

Bridge Street Books, December 1999

Rod Smith asks me if I've seen photos of the Seattle anti-WTO demonstrators dressed as turtles. It's like what you've been studying, he says, but live on the street. To our surprise, I'm a blank bunch of ums hearing this.

numb by numb by numb

at low luminous head of cast
golden form develops shake
lady-like shifts luminous other head
rain-cloud odds by shakes nine
Ready money easily action
w. lady-like too Later
resembling form develops squares
who type *fig* resembling this bowled as or low
pointed thousand units
nine identified book by having marked nine
swift nine strike number services
sometime you Lardner nine Phrases low
feature and TALK *Comb* this *fig* type
multiples who arch as Hist CLOUD
size distinguishing separate One into having size
forming ME in clubhouse category day person name nineteen multiplied *Comb*
name specification nineteen indecisive units multiplied between *Comb* naughty
multiples products a rare analytical out which having hatred leaf enlightenment long
effects one rebirth now dies little soul now existence some attraction High Freud)
Now wish only statement with you that yourself

District of Columbia Arts Center, November 2000
Reading with Allison Cobb and Jennifer Coleman

I don't know anything about the turtle demonstrators, but I'd like to. When a search of newspaper archives comes up zip, I switch to the wire services. There they depict the turtle demonstrators as spoiled college kids or as characters from Harry Potter and video games. Then while indexing an issue of *The Animals' Agenda*, I find a photo of the turtle demonstrators gathering for the Seattle march. They have cardboard shells hung across their shoulders sandwich-board style, turtle head hats, and pennants proclaiming "Don't Tread on Me." I can't stop looking at the photo - young and old, Asian, Hispanic, and Caucasian - looking at one another, at the camera, at the sky. All I want to do for the reading is have everyone look at the photo with me. The performance consists of picking out random words from the wires and then passing out copies of the photo for all to see in silence.

It occurs to me that I should get copyright permission from *The Animals' Agenda* if I want to use the turtle demo photo for more than my one "fair use." When I contact the magazine, they refer me to the photographer who, in turn, claims he never took that photo. Words continue to fail me. Then I come across a drawing of a man in medieval garb with his arm around the corpse he is about to dissect. I can't stop looking at this picture. One day the two images come together by chance as I put away my notes. I look at them together in different positions and from different angles - the anatomist with a corpse overlooking the turtle demonstrators, the turtle demonstrators peering over the anatomist with a corpse - from across the room they look like a station of the cross

XXXXXXX

what have I done
putting them together
so they look like one
crucifix
as in *On the Waterfront*
the social justice priest fighting corrupt union management
calls the workers D&D
Deaf & Dumb
& exhorts them to follow the solo fighter into the hold
which they do one by one
now individual deafs & dumbs
behind the freight door
where they all could have been somebody
except for the damned union fixing that fight
of their lives
which nobody's won so everybody's done

In May 1999, members of labor unions and environmental groups joined forces to challenge Maxxam Corporation - a company owning (among others) Kaiser Aluminum and Pacific Lumber. This blue-green coalition was formed to challenge Maxxam as it simultaneously engaged in clear-cutting ancient redwood forests in Northern California and locking-out striking steelworkers at five plants across the country. At the Seattle anti-WTO demonstrations, the union members cheered the turtle demonstrators and vice versa, something I saw reported solely in *The Animals' Agenda*. Only animal rights activists would think that speaking for animals is something for the bargaining table, not something for a paradise. But recalling the Law on Animal Protection enacted in 1933 under a vegetarian Hitler makes it is hard to imagine how a duty to speak for animals based on our status as superior beings due to language can lead to anything else but a society built on differences a superior race dictates by controlling language. In recent years, McDonald's Corporation has begun to trademark ordinary phrases that nobody would associate with them (yet), and the pace of their trademarking activity has increased as filing for patents on their products has decreased. At the same time, copyright and patent laws are collapsing on each other with a logic in place that could extend the patenting of software code to other languages. Historically, we have depended on animals to hear a dangerous situation coming. Before we can come out of the hold and speak for all of us animals, we have to listen and know that we all are D & D, not deaf but dumb & dumb with ox against a corporate economy that profits from us all.

opposable dumbs: a play

The set consists of a single chair in the center of the stage. On the chair rests a large poster board, blank except for a box with the words “anatomist with his arm around the corpse” inscribed inside.

Two characters approach the poster chair from opposite sides of the stage. One is the medieval physician Guido da Vigevano who published the first anatomical plates of a human dissection in 1345. The other is Cytut, a demo-weary animal rights activist dressed as a sea turtle.

Cytut: [looks at poster while cy-ing and tut-ing]

Guido: I’m Guido from Vigevano, a physician and anatomist.

Cytut: I’m a political activist who speaks for the animals and for the environment. Recently I’ve seen your drawing of a corpse cut down the center under the rib cage. The skin is pulled to the sides like window sashes to reveal a box inscribed with illegible words.

Guido: That’s the third in my series. [Gesturing to the poster] Hardly anyone ever shows the first drawing where I have my arm around the corpse as I make the first cut.

Cytut: Doesn’t an apology count only if it is made to someone who can hear you?

Guido: Why do you assume apologies are limited to speech? I place myself humbly beside the face of death, unsure of myself and of what I am doing.

Cytut: Sounds to me like humble pie in case you fail to find a cure for whatever ails your patron.

Guido: I acknowledge my ignorance in front of the Lord who is in charge of words wherever they fall.

Cytut: So for you God is the Big Dictionary in the sky?

Guido: dik en (e)ri??

Cytut: dictio (n-)
word,
word.
M16
L16

speech
speaking
4
diction
street

Guido: Oh, right, God's existence as a question for all words and the spaces where they fall.

Cytut: So, words used with divine pre-apology give you the right to slice and dice as you see fit?

Guido: See: fit?
FIT a yarn day's work that sections Hist LME?

Cytut: No, FIT the suitable Biol. foll.
done prepared to do
usu. exhausted spars
person) forby health

Guido: So, our way of marking off a day's labor is your way of defining health?

Cytut: Yes, and then those I protest against go on to FIT the forest's gloom into jig-saw puzzles & FIT the HUNTER tyrants into heyday costumes & FIT the animal experimenters into corporate sponsorships.

[RatWill enters stage right, bald with a black moustache and wearing a trenchcoat. RatWill is holding a cigar with a tail and little ears attached, and knocks over the poster with this ratcigar before addressing Cytut.]

RatWill: That's right - don't let anyone mess with my ratwill. Add this one to your protest: scientists give crack cocaine to pregnant rats and then cut them open to see what it does to their babies. I didn't eat a rat once to show just how far I'd go to control commies and the secret little things they do just so some namby-pamby liberals can defile them in the name of junkies who don't work and want ME to support them. Junkies don't have health insurance anyway! Am I supposed to pay for that, too?!! Animal experimenters, stop messing with my ratwill!

[RatWill exits stage right after jabbing the ratcigar a few times at the audience while chanting "Don't mess with my ratwill!" With the poster still on the floor, Cytut stands in front of the chair, eyes closed, corpse-like. Guido puts his arm around Cytut. Both remain silent for at least 10 seconds.]

Guido: Was that an example of speaking for the animals?

Cytut: Yes. I feel the need to apologize, but I'm not sure for what, or to whom.

Guido: Is it true that you have sick people in your community without health care?

Cytut: Yes, even worse, some participate in research just so they can get health care.

Guido: How has my cut come to cross up the living and the dead this way?

(an arm of)
fade act fusing
vector with parlor
adjacent a comic
from alphabet
astride
SLIDE
machine
the tool
machine
(arch)

[Guido stands in front of the chair, eyes closed, corpse-like. Cytut puts an arm around Guido. Both remain silent for at least 10 seconds.]

Cytut: YOU can't take the blame for evolutionary theory arising during British colonialism with its corresponding view that we've developed as a straight line. If evolution had been discovered during the Middle Ages, we'd have a system of mutual dependence with other species instead of the BIG HUMAN survival of the fittest fest we're stuck in.

Guido: Can I apologize to God for evolution and re-route it in some way?

Cytut: Well, there are some people trying to do that already. I'd prefer to apologize to evolution for the imperialism embedded in it. Would you like to do that together?

[Nodding in agreement, Guido and Cytut each put an arm around the other and move forward a bit, looking out toward, but not directly addressing, the audience. Both speak together.]

If all that business hopes to gain
hides behind what's well or ill
proclaiming rights of animals and man
means more of both are sure to be killed

[10 seconds of silence]

slow wo hopes our gain stalls wide
behind the sill of spell and rook
sizing (an)I mal no vi
sults more ru than lore of reel

[10 seconds of silence]

if care of health is labor-bound
while labor binds to none
no local plan can make a deal
that's ever really won

[10 seconds of silence]

universal _____ care
animal & hu _____ care
un _____ iversal care
animal & labor _____ care
un(vers) _____ al care

[10 seconds of silence]

Boycott Clinical Trials Until The Taft-Hartley Act Is Repealed!
un(vers) _____ al care
Boycott Clinical Trials Until Health Care Is Not-for-Profit!
un(vers) _____ al care
Suspend Animal Experiments Until Animals Have Health Care!
un(vers) _____ al care

[Guido and Cytut continue to repeat the slogans interspersed with 10 second periods of silence as RatWill returns to the stage front and center to taunt the audience.]

RatWill: [while jabbing the ratcigar at various intervals] Does this silence and broken word stuff bug the hell out of you the way it does out of me?! [mimicking] “universal _____ care” “universal _____ care” I can't believe they are putting us through this. They owe US an apology! I have a slogan of my own for them: Uniwhiner Weenie Care! Come on -

repeat after me! Uniwhiner Weenie Care! Uniwhiner Weenie Care!
Uniwhiner Weenie Care! Come on - are you with me or them? Chant
with me!

[RatWill walks offstage chanting his slogan while Guido and Cytut
conclude with another set of theirs.]

Additional response and/or silence at audience discretion.

rule of dumbs

(dedicated to Heather Fuller for her poetry and for her work with alternative forms of animal shelters)

In 1975, the philosopher Peter Singer began his book on animal liberation with a chapter entitled “All Animals Are Equal...or why supporters of liberation for Blacks and Women should support Animal Liberation too.” Recalling the 18th century *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* satirizing Mary Wollstonecraft’s feminist treatise, Singer calls for giving animals equal consideration instead of equal treatment.

consideration = attention

shape up the fragments to

distract us from our powerlessness

Singer’s work on animal liberation inspired many, including Henry Spira, a union activist who spent much of the ‘60s and early ‘70s fighting corruption in the National Maritime Union. For his first animal rights action, Spira organized a series of demonstrations to protest feline sex experiments at the American Museum of Natural History. For almost two decades, scientists had surgically altered various sections of cats’ brains and then observed their sexual behavior with other cats, rabbits, and inanimate objects. The demonstrations attracted press coverage, then politicians, then public hearings. The experiments were halted after the National Institutes of Health stopped funding the project. Spira then turned his attention to the cosmetic industry’s blinding of rabbits with the Draize test, chemical eye drops named for a Food and Drug Administration official. Along with demonstrations featuring people dressed as animals, ads run in major newspapers asked “How many rabbits does Revlon blind for beauty’s sake?” Revlon and other cosmetics companies responded by funding projects to develop animal testing alternatives. Another successful Spira campaign convinced the Department of Agriculture to cease the face-branding of cattle.

But when it came to changing factory-farming methods, Spira’s creative campaigns (including “End the Gulf War Now by Bombing Iraq with Perdue Chickens”) failed to have an impact. Perdue successfully countered Spira’s toxic chicken ads with ones of their own touting their hens as alternative food since they were fed “natural” marigold petals.

The animals we “see” either are in zoos (exotic icons of global imperialism) or at home (cute icons of nuclear familiarity). Not moving, pets confirm our isolation at home so that we act by buying more products from the world of wild animals who aren’t moving either. To date, animal rights actions have been successful when focusing on “feminine” appearances - cosmetic beauty and voyeuristic sex - which in turn reinforce patriarchal order. The factory farm remains.

The most successful protests by a union activist in the 1980s were for animal rights.

Lament for the unity in utility under capitalism

SIMPLUS from us— last part—not blended so!

Low force infold raised to name;

Guild math shatter seven low

His smile owns breath past blasted fame.

Proud rage our graves where steps whisp goal,

Toil fore one word round cling,

Sunk to hush, ally driv'lling cries

God! Why not sight our spare this rise?

I'm sorry for the ugly phrase “unity in utility under capitalism”

ill-favored adjectives balk

minatory **indifference curve** of goods where there is no preference for one over the other

like). ?? Awe.]

if 1. []formed consumer was equally satisfied with 10 peaches and 2 avocados, 2 kiwi and 12 peaches, or $1/5^{\text{th}}$ an apple and $1/4^{\text{th}}$ a banana, these combinations would all form a line on:

cankered, cantankerous, churlish, corrupt, crabbed,
crabby, cranky, critical, cross, cross-grained, crotchety, crusty,
attacking the person arguing rather than the argument itself

perverse situation called **rational** in reference to
the realm that you or others
are *homo economicus* largely

Ever since the publication of *Animal Liberation*, Peter Singer has been commonly known as the “father of animal rights” even though he’s a strict utilitarian. Rejecting the notion that animals have rights because they are not “subjects of a life”, he focuses on the consequences of actions that benefit or harm them. But for readers living within a system where profits are maximized by hiding harms, the only trade-off they know is supply and demand, the only demand they know is union corruption, the only supply they know is stream of con’n stuff ‘n stuff.

Dam con’n stuff ‘n stuff lament

long train of events is wrapped up Slower,
roll’d up in shades or as it is called
the cooling of heated metals produce
some slip in *Week-day Serm* happiness activity
to forget **the use of that word, all the changes**
indefinite, incoherent feeling in more and more
complex defending credit of all
public temper performed
varied sprays

As Solon moved to strengthen the Greek city state by portraying the casualties of war as heroes, the existing practice of mourning the dead – words broken into sounds by the cries of many women – was banned, and funerals hidden from sight. The law stipulated that there were to be no laments outside the home, and specified the degree of kinship necessary for a woman to legally accompany a corpse to its grave before dawn. The sound of collective wailing evoked fears of wild animals on the move, and of an uncontrollable revenge undermining the best interests of the state. With the linking of laments to property rights, any concept of “family” beyond economic ties was outlawed, and the history of war’s consequences for all families could be neither seen nor heard.

I can’t property lament this

Probable war of LED
Loss obviously of LED

ExistEN stopped
this swindler moment
numbered paragraph will

The May Day activists of 1968 believed that they were creating a revolutionary form of supply and demand - instead of subjects demanding objects, “free expression” was substituted for demanding subjects, thus eliminating objects the state could contaminate.

Now pure-bred sounds shake all on their own, beaker-speaks for which the only demand in the world is for words unsown in that world where field animals have no language only evolution which is a picture not a history although it looks like one

Collective Lament for Banishing Animals from History

Oh, Marx, when you called freedom the fruit of human minds already fully formed beyond the beasts in the fields, you hid history with evolution and drew a straight line from pose to state possession. No revolution can take place as we devote ourselves to managing the animal bodies we assume we’ve left behind. Our cries rise from throats made weak with words which can choke us while we breathe, XXX “to speak” XXX the dumbest design. As co-minions, we call across kinships to protest the totala

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

totalcon rate of *centration*

ixture of separab *plan* position *ll never*

turequivalent will unts

acoffensive: capital, egregious, flag curve of the longitudinal hull

echanism, that is changed □ who agitates

□ An appastirs, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX in small amounts increasing the rate of a □

completely different form restling reverses

specified angular origin remains

tuosition or disposition of by folding

Turn XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX *right side* unsettle:

“*Sudden prosper* □ with *to* or *into*: *turn*

through pages as toactions or *Make a*

where'd "He thought XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX some
turn had done for about involving
avert

tu were turned out

git *turn over*

to lurch or heave *My stsequence*

out of XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

leave the ocean. in time of *nd but used a stick as exhausted expedient before* pitch,
intonation, sjectives mean XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

day. termination: *axample*) Char *ce*:

char *ne*;

idate

April 25, 2004

During an abortion rights march on Washington, DC, counter demonstrators take over "Freedom Plaza", a small square on Pennsylvania Avenue within view of the White House. While the abortion rights marchers carry small placards – some printed, most handmade – the counter demonstrators are dwarfed by 3 ten-foot high, professionally-made, appropriate-for-newsbreak posters: one of a fetus appearing to suck its thumb, one of a monkey appearing to scream with electrodes on its head, and one of a self-proclaimed Islamic terrorist. The fetus has no words and no history, the monkey has no words and no history, and the image of the Islamic terrorist evokes words and history disintegrating along with the World Trade Center.

lament for the solidarity of base by face by face

the reciprocal frequency
feels with the common
interests that immediately
you include

the reciprocal frequency
stops with the common
complete interest that

includes you immediately

September 2, 2005

Lynne Dreyer finds an article in Baltimore's *Afro American* newspaper on "Hanging", a PETA exhibit that juxtaposed a photo of two black men lynched by a white mob next to one of a cow hung upside down in a slaughterhouse. The creatures were put together so that they looked like one Christian crucifixion scene. ("Tableau, you know, has judge&jury in tow.") The NAACP spokesman quoted in the article responded that comparing the criminal act of lynching with the legal act of butchering exploited history.

(dispose) >ABLE creatures

(two ways, in twosense "reverse, undo") > INTERROGATE HOLD begins

 /> start a sentence
capital
 /> start a business

chattel = moveable possessions

The inclusion of colloquial language in the 3rd edition of Webster's dictionary caused quite a stir. But it wasn't entries such as "ain't" that prompted a number of hostile takeover bids of MerriamWebster by rival publishers. Corporations were distressed that trademarked names, such as kleenex, had made their way into everyday speech uncapitalized. Reprints of the 3rd edition recapitalized all trademarks, except for those that had become verbs.

trademark - not land, not erosion, not wearing, not wearing away

a coming down from some previously raised state as the waves subside after a storm
a sinking down into the word as the tumult of the people in such cases, we were thinking of the building where animals are butchered

shambles /> a building
/> a disorder

our antimask set to case
such land as hide would cover
o? unwillingness to sum familiar
making m?urs o'erlaid

a sequence of values until it fails. Resumption takes -> the arrangement of light and dark parts to represent the colors of natural objects, but for effect only, and produced with hard material

1. Disguise thyself as thou wilt, still, Slavery...

.. still

is increased by putting in the space between the spectator and leaves

2. shutting together but running upon

1. peculiar to a language; not themselves

animals as trademarks are outside of history
animal trademarks hide humans as chattel
marking our trade slips = our silent kin ships

IdealDog trademark
Animal Series trademark
Animal Logic trademark
OncoMouse trademark
Animal Crossing trademark
Human and Animal Diagnostics trademark

Words don't branch out when linking non-human animal oppression with events in human history. If slaughterhouses are compared with gas chambers, Holocaust

survivors respond that Jews, Gypsies and the disabled may have died like animals, but animals don't die like Jews, Gypsies, and the disabled. Animals don't have a history. But those gassed in the camps didn't die like all animals, only those not covered by National Socialism's 1933 Law on Animal Protection. At that point in time, part of Jewish history overlapped with part of Gypsy history with part of disability history with part of non-human animal history. These historical laps remain as gaps in the stories told as the concentration camps become museums.

Illuminated Apology Laments

Usually we think of the medieval apology tradition as serving the court of male authors who, after publishing tales of sin and sex, would reaffirm themselves and society by penning apologies blaming the Eves of this world for tempting them to write. But women authors in the Middle Ages started off apologizing - for their gender, for their lack of education, for their second-class spirituality – before justifying their ideas by saying that God called them to write. At once an act of self-defense and self-effacement, women authors often included the apologies of other women writers with their own, and in so doing cataloged all of their accomplishments as partial authors – part apology, part history. The feminine apology tradition used the absent authority for the existing order, God, to justify claims for alternatives to that order. For example, Hildegard of Bingen's apologies laid the foundation for the founding of her own abbey, much to the dismay of the Church's hierarchy. She developed a private language for use with her order, composed chant and illuminated texts.

Illuminated Apology Lament: Lost Limbo

I am sorry that I couldn't save Limbo.

While the Qur'an describes a phase of human existence prior to conception, abortion isn't considered the taking of a human life until ensoulment occurs at 120 days after conception.

When the existence of Limbo was first removed from the Roman Catholic Catechism, it was not publicized in the hope that no one would notice. The infallibility of Church teaching on contraception and abortion would be called into question if the faithful were reminded that the proclamation "life begins at conception" was a relatively recent belief. Until the late 1800s, the Roman Catholic Church promoted St. Thomas Aquinas' position that ensoulment occurred at three months for a boy and four months for a girl.

Anabaptists rely solely on scripture for moral guidance, and emphasize freedom of conscience. They believe that laws making abortion illegal interfere with their relationship to scripture and disrupt praying with one another in community.

Augustinians put no faith in time frames. It was a period when priests were overwhelmed by requests for baptism from pagans who were ordered to convert by the state. St. Augustine was having none of this driver's license approach to Christianity. There was the kingdom of God, but no wishy-washy "eternal life". After all, Pelagius, who had come to Rome from the British Isles to offer humanism as an antidote to long waiting lines at the baptismal font, was described by St. Jerome as "a giant stuffed with Scottish pudding" for his view that baptism was not a necessary condition for salvation but a way to welcome infants into the world and to celebrate birth as an opportunity for God

From the earliest Mishnaic writings, the fetus is seen as an aggressor if pregnancy endangers a woman's life, and abortion is permitted as an act of self-defense.

to remind us how precious we are. The only way for Augustine to nip this heresy in the bud was to link Christ's Last Supper statement about eternal life to the taking of communion, thus relegating unbaptized infants to eternal damnation. Over the years, the pastoral approach to Limbo as a "common teaching" of the Church softened gradually, so that by the 1950s grieving parents were advised to engage in a heavenly form of free association with their little lost ones in Limbo.

Illuminated Apology Lament: Precautionary Hysteria

I was wrong to worry about the return of hysteria.

Although the symptoms of Gulf War Syndrome are consistent with radiation injuries – immune disorders, dermatitis, chronic fatigue, headaches, vasculitis, erectile dysfunction, birth defects, etc. – returning veterans are called “hysterical” to avoid discussing the effects of depleted uranium in U.S. weapons, a practice which is against the precautionary principle of the Geneva Conventions’ Protocol I.

Pictures of lone women without words no longer indicate that their minds are dumb. Instead, such images act as a reminder that the word “hysteria” doesn’t simply mean “womb” but rather refers to the womb as an animal on the move within the body. Ancient treatment consisted of burning various substances near the vagina in the hope that the animal would settle down. The classical treatment of hysteria as an environmental illness has much to offer those currently suffering from diseases that can’t be seen.

“Evidence” is the bottom line of corporate time. If pain has no corresponding image, there is no diagnosis and no care. Scan results are the property rights of medicine, with hysteria the collective lament moving us beyond hospital walls to environmental squalls.

Since pain is discontinuous with all other moments, stories of illness that share the same words are discounted as merely talk of the times. But just because the ill need to make their pain reasonable doesn’t mean their diseases don’t have histories. The burden of proof must fall to those who profit from a medicine of walls.

some more notes:

This project report is a self_swerving production.

(self_swerving@comcast.net)

for “No Rights Observed”

hey: “...expr... inquiry... freq. in comb. w. redupl. wds to form a meaningless refrain...*hey nonny nonny...*” (Oxford English Dictionary 1993, p. 1229)

plagiarism as a critique of capitalism: celebrated in Festivals of Plagiarism – one example: Baltimore, late 1980s - John Berndt & other Baltimore poets and Neoists along with Stewart Home. For one of Stewart Home’s takes on Neoism, see “None Dare Call It Nihilism”, pp.75-76 in Rett Kopi Dokumenterer Fremtiden, Ellef Prestsaetar and Karin Nygård, editors, Oslo, Norway, 2007, (www.rettkopi.no) This volume also contains references to the Luther Blissett project and other collective forms of authorship.

the “first hand” is not significant: “It has become commonplace to point out that in the medieval vernacular tradition texts were not fixed, and that their creation and recreation depended on the combined work of poets, scribes, and performers, whose activities often overlap.” (p. 2 in Sylvia Huot’s The Romance of the Rose and Its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission, Cambridge University Press, 1993)

reducing fictions: “How can one reduce the great peril, the great danger with which fiction threatens our world? The answer is: One can reduce it with the author. The author allows a limitation of the cancerous and dangerous proliferation of significations within a world where one is thrifty not only with one’s resources and riches, but also with one’s discourses and their significations. The author is the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning.” (Michel Foucault’s “What Is an Author?” pp. 158-159 in Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism, Josué V. Harari, editor (Cornell University Press, 1979); and p. 118 in the Foucault Reader (Pantheon, 1984)). Thanks to Carla Billitteri for suggesting that I read this essay, and to P. Inman for linking *The Romance of the Rose* with Foucault’s work in his “One to One” (pp. 221-225 in The Politics of Poetic Form: Poetry and Public Policy, Charles Bernstein, editor (New York: Roof, 1990.))

for “numb to dumb”

An earlier version of this piece can be found at DCPoetry.com (<http://dcpoetry.com>) and in Crayon #4 (2004) with thanks to the editors Roberto Harrison and Andrew Levy.

Bridge Street Books: an independent bookstore located at 2814 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20007. Rod Smith has worked there, written there, and brought writers to read there for decades. Building on the energy of the book store poetry readings/workshops of Mass Transit (thanks to Michael Lally) and Folio Books (thanks to Doug Lang), Rod has worked with other poets coordinating readings at In Your Ear (District of Columbia Arts Center) and The Ruthless Grip (currently held at the Pyramid Atlantic Art Center in Silver Spring, MD)--including but not limited to Buck Downs, Lorraine Graham, Mark Wallace, Tom Orange, Cathy Eisenhower, Kaia Sand, Jules Boykoff, Mel Nichols, Adam Good and Kaplan Harris--to create a writing community tolerant of “a blank bunch of ums” type of poetry.

On the Sea Turtle Restoration Project’s participation in the anti-WTO demonstrations in Seattle, Washington (USA), December, 1999: “By midday, the direct-action turtles met up with about sixty legally protesting turtles who had joined about 50,000 other citizens in a labor parade. Those turtles had received the loudest cheer of the day from the assembled steelworkers, Teamsters, and AFL-CIO rank and file when they entered Memorial Stadium carrying a 20-foot-long inflatable mama turtle.” *The Animals’ Agenda* 20(1): 10-11, Jan/Feb 2000. Another exploration of the Sea Turtle Restoration Project and related wire stories occurred at the Drawing Center (New York, New York) during a reading with Jennifer Moxley and Marjorie Welish on February 27, 2001. Excerpts have been published in Nineteen Lines: A Drawing Center Writing Anthology, Lytle Shaw, editor (New York: The Drawing Center and Roof Books, 2007).

blue-green coalitions: Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment: http://www.asje.org/rogue_target.html

social justice priest fighting union corruption: Budd Schulberg’s “Waterfront Priest”, *The Commonweal*, April 3, 1953, pp. 643-646.

extending patent law to languages: “The opinion... found ‘no meaningful difference between computer language, particularly high-level languages...and German or French.’” p. 105 in Dan L. Burk’s “Patenting Speech” *Texas Law Review*.79:1, 99 - 162. (2000).

fast food profits linked to the control of language: Sally Hardcastle’s “McDonalds Hard at Work Patenting - the English Language.” *BBC World Service*, June 27 2001. Available online: http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/business/highlights/010627_trade.mark.shtml

1933 Law on Animal Protection (including the text): Boria Sax’s *Animals in the Third Reich: Pets, Scapegoats, and the Holocaust* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

collapsing: several readings of this piece have included voices from the audience simultaneously reading from listings of McDonald’s patents and trademarks. The patent voice doesn’t last very long.

United States Patent and Trademark Office. Patent Full-Text and Full-Page Image Databases: <http://www.uspto.gov/>

Under the Patents link, click on Search Patents. Choose Advanced Search for issued patents and enter in the query box:
an/mcdonald\$ and as/IL and ac/oak

Under the Trademarks link, click on Search TM database (TESS). Choose Free Form Search (Advanced Search) and enter in the query box:
(McDonald\$ [on] and Corporation [on] and Illinois [ow])

for “opposable dumbs: a play”

Kevin Killian asked me to try my hand at writing a play for the 2002 Poets Theater event in San Francisco. He assured me that dictionary transcriptions would make fine dialogue. The first word “set designs” for the play were published in *Primary Writing* (2001) with thanks to Diane Ward and Phyllis Rosenzweig for waiting with me through various sets of transcriptions until one seemed to play on its own. Kaia Sand and Jules Boykoff helped me to feel comfortable with the play’s characters by publishing it as #3 (September 2002) in the Tangent Pamphlet series, coming after #1 - a conversation with Winona La Duke (Green Party vice

presidential candidate 2000), and #2 – Exit, a series of their own collaborations. A section of the play was performed at Jubilee, a Festival of Poets Theater, Small Press Traffic, San Francisco, CA (USA) on January 25, 2002, and was published along with the other Festival plays in *Lipstick Eleven #3* (2004). A full reading of the play occurred at The Ruthless Grip reading series, Mother's Day eve, 2004, with Ryan Walker as Guido, P. Inman as Cytut, and Tom Orange as RatWill. Other readings from it have taken place at Bridge Street Books, Bard College (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, with thanks to Joan Retallack), George Washington University (Washington, DC, with thanks to Dan Gutstein) the Kootenay School of Writing (Vancouver, BC, Canada, with thanks to Andrew Klobucar, Margot Leigh Butler, Aaron Vidaver, and Roger Farr); La Tazza (Philadelphia, PA, with thanks to Frank Sherlock), and the i.e. reading series (Baltimore, MD, with thanks to Michael Ball).

Guido da Vigevano with his arm around a corpse: pp. 67-73 in Jan Hendrik van den Berg's Medical Power and Medical Ethics (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978)

RatWill's character is based on G. Gordon Liddy, who bragged about eating a rat in his autobiography, Will. Liddy did a public service announcement for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) aired during the summer of 2001 criticizing a March of Dimes experiment studying the effect of cocaine on fetal brain development in baby rats (Style news item, Washington Post, August 18, 2001, p. C03.)

for "rule of dumbs"

The first section of "rule of dumbs" was published as Belladonna pamphlet #30 (New York: Belladonna Books, Spring 2002) with thanks to editor Rachel Levitsky.

Peter Singer's Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals (New York: New York Review, 1975)

Henry Spira: Peter Singer's Ethics into Action: Henry Spira and the Animal Rights Movement (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998)

misnomer "Father of Animal Rights" for Peter Singer: for example, "Father of Animal Rights Among TIME's Most Influential People", The Island Vegetarian: Vegetarian Society of

Hawaii Quarterly Newsletter, July-September 2005
(<http://www.veghawaii.com/newsletter-2005-09.pdf>)

Solon's law forbidding public lamentation: pp. 17-18 in Richard A. Hughes' Lament, Death, and Destiny (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004).

May Day beaker-speaks: p. 85 in Sherry Turkle's Psychoanalytic Politics: Freud's French Revolution (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978).

Marx's human/animal dualism: "Marx on Humans and Animals" in Ted Benton's Natural Relations: Ecology, Animal Rights & Social Justice (London/New York: Verso, 1993).

evolution is not a straight line: "Now this may be a bit disconcerting to some people. Sentient beings, sapient *human* beings, have always thought that there was something inevitable about them. Even devout Darwinian evolutionists tend to put our own immodest species at the top branch of the evolutionary tree, as if we were somewhat better and more evolved than other living species. But...chance has played a role in putting every living thing at the top of the present evolutionary tree." p. 4 in Jeffrey K. McKee's The Riddled Chain: Chance, Coincidence, and Chaos in Human Evolution (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

"Hanging": Zenitha Prince's "PETA generates outrage Equating Blacks with mistreated animals", *Afro American*, September 2, 2005, A1, A6.

(dis-*pose*) ABLE creatures: the title pays homage to Kevin Bales' Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999, and was published in *War and Peace* #2 (San Francisco: O Books, 2005) with thanks to the editors Leslie Scalapino and Judith Goldman.

use of trademarks as verbs: pp. 219 – 223 in Herbert Charles Morton's The Story of Webster's Third: Philip Gove's Controversial Dictionary and Its Critics. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Concentration camp/slaughterhouse comparison controversy: pp. 49-50 in J.M. Coetzee's The Lives of Animals (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

For a discussion of the interrelationships among the mass murders of Jews, Gypsies, and the disabled during National Socialism: Henry Friedlander's The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995)

for Women and the Medieval apology tradition:

Anita Obermeier's The History and Anatomy of Auctorial Self-Criticism in the European Middle Ages (Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999)

for Lost Limbo

A history of Limbo: George J. Dyer, S.T.D., Limbo: Unsettled Question (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964)

the quiet removal of Limbo from the catechism: "Dumping Limbo" in *Free Inquiry* 18(1): 45-46, Winter 1997/1998. The article is attributed to "Voltaire".

beginning of life at conception as a novelty in Roman Catholic moral tradition: G.R. Dunstan, "The Moral Status of the Human Embryo: A Tradition Recalled", *Journal of Medical Ethics* 10(1): 38-44, March 1984.

A description of the variety of Jewish opinions on abortion can be found in Laurie Zoloth's "Each One an Entire World" in Sacred Rights: The Case for Contraception and Abortion in World Religions, Daniel C. Maguire, editor, pp. 21-53, Oxford University Press 2003. Maimonides' teachings are discussed on p. 38.

Qur'an and ensoulment: pp. 40-41 in Encyclopedia of Bioethics, 3rd edition (McMillan 2004). Anabaptist opposition to the state regulating religious beliefs can be found on p. 36 in the same volume.

for an overview of the legal arguments for abortion rights as freedom of religion: Peter S. Wenz's Abortion Rights as Religious Freedom (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992)

Patriot Act protest: the following polemic was read in conjunction with "Lost Limbo" at Bridge Street with P. Inman, and at the i.e.

reading series in Baltimore with C.A. Conrad and Frank Sherlock, December 2005:

Disarm the Patriot Act by Arguing for Abortion Rights as Religious Freedom Rather Than as the Right to Privacy of Roe v. Wade

There is no such thing as privacy under the US Patriot Act. We live in a police state sustained by single-issue, right-to-life politics coated in faux religiosity. Constitutionally, privacy is not one of our named rights. Freedom of religion is, and definitions of when life begins and when abortion is immoral differ among and within established religions. Some legal scholars have argued that, constitutionally, the right to have an abortion is covered by the First Amendment because beliefs about the moral significance of non-viable fetuses are religious beliefs. Roe v. Wade should be abandoned as both constitutionally unsound and politically dangerous as it perpetuates the myth of privacy in the United States. The next anti-abortion court ruling should be challenged on the basis of religious freedom.

for "precautionary hysteria"

defining hysteria - the womb as an animal on the move: pp. 10-22 in Ilza Veith's Hysteria: The History of a Disease (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965)

the return of hysteria: Elaine Showalter's Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997); Gulf War Syndrome as a media event: pp. 133-143.

for a review of radiation injury studies from the 1940s – 1960s, including a discussion of the principle of the "latent period"- "...the time required for depletion of cells in affected tissues through interference with cell renewal" after radiation exposure: Arthur C. Upton's Radiation Injury: Effects, Principles and Perspectives (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969)

for information on current studies of the effects of depleted uranium: the Uranium Medical Research Centre
<http://www.umrc.net/>

on the use of "hysteria" to illuminate the history of environmental health issues: at a Bridge Street Books poetry reading on October

24, 1999, I protested a literary critic's use of "hysteria" as an organically-determined condition rather than as a socially-constructed one. I apologize for not recognizing that the critic was trying to counter postmodernism's ahistorical reputation by reminding readers of hysteria's track record as an illness.

text of protest:

Open Letter of Protest to Marjorie Perloff

Marjorie:

When I read Leslie Scalapino's Seamless Anti-Landscape, her response to your "The Language Poet as Autobiographer: Ron Silliman's Under Albany", I was surprised that you described Ron Silliman's, Barry Watten's, and Michael Palmer's works as proceeding from their lives while Leslie's proceeds from her body. I don't agree with your description of Leslie's work as "just barely controlled hysteria", but your uncritical use of the term "hysteria" here undercuts your critique of Leslie's work as not being "disjointed" enough since historians characterize hysteria as a discontinuous state, a collision of the conflicting social roles women play. Having now read your essay in full, I find that this depiction takes place as part of a general plea to academia to cease demonizing LANGUAGE poetry. It is abhorrent that, in the name of writing you champion because it "...undermines the '*natural look*'", you have attempted to normalize the works of a group of male poets by contrasting them with that of a lone woman who's "...mind's not right."

When, in speaking of Ron's work, you say that "...indeterminacy of agent and referent does not preclude a razor-sharp realism of description", I agree with you. It does not exclude history, either. If we LANGUAGE poets seemed to agree about anything early on, it was that we challenged notions of voice and the unified subject to highlight the historical conditions of our lives, not to obliterate them.

In a recent "Philly Talks" newsletter, Ron reiterates that his writing challenges people to resist being good soldiers who uncritically buy into the roles society creates for them. You completely undermine Ron's critical theories when you attempt to give him a "natural look" by comparing his "jaunty utterances" to Leslie's "hysteria" in the same sentence.

The title of Leslie's piece in question is "hmmmm". That is not the monotone hum of one suffering from mental illness, but the sharp reflex of one who is thinking about the ways language and images and memories intersect. Where you see Leslie assigning a distorted meaning to a scene, I see Leslie setting up a frame for questioning it. With a job description of critic, it does not surprise me that you would dismiss poetry that includes critique as part of its format. But no matter what bases you have for your individual likes and dislikes, your use of gender stereotypes puts you in the front line of the good women soldiers of internecine struggle who dismiss other women's intellectual contributions by calling them crazy. Hysteria as a concept has been, and thanks in part to you continues to be, a means of authenticating the lives of men over the defectives bodies of women. It should give all of us pause that someone who describes herself as a reader of LANGUAGE poetry for over 20 years should continue to think in these terms. Perhaps we owe you a collective apology. But you definitely owe Leslie a big apology, both personally and professionally.

texts cited:

Perloff, Marjorie. The Language Poet as Autobiographer: Ron Silliman's Under Albany. In: *Ron Silliman and the Alphabet*, Quarry West 34, Porter College, U.C. Santa Cruz, 1998, pp. 167-181. Perloff wrote about "hmmmm" in Leslie Scalapino's Considering how exaggerated music is (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1982). "hmmmm" is dedicated to Dog-Woman.

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