AN
EXPERIMENTAL
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MY ADIDAS (AFTER RUN-D.M.C.)
by Joe Hale

This poem was made from the lyrics to "My Adidas" by Run-D.M.C. as part of a series that focuses on the use of brand names in pop music lyrics. The original lyrics have been erased, except for references to brands, so the new text consists of a list of brands name-dropped in the song.

Adidas
Adidas
Adidas
Adidas
Adidas… Adidas…

Lee
Lee Adidas
Adidas
Adidas… Adidas…

Adidas
Adidas
Adidas
Adidas… Adidas…

Adidas
Adidas
Adidas
Adidas Bally
Adidas…

Inspired by Christian Bok's homophonic translation of Rimbaud's "Voyelles," these poems should sound like a countdown from 10 to 1. Each number is replaced with a word which is a homophone for the name of the number. The series ends with one of the earliest known symbols for zero, which was Babylonian.

End
times
await…
again…
lax
skies
snore,
sleep
through
us.

Men
pine,
fight,
chasten,
pick
strife,
war-
glee
and new
blood.

Friends,
the slime
hate
freedom!
Sit
by?
The floor
agrees.
Use
drones.

Men
dine,
eat,
live in
brick
sties.
poor
plead,
woo
none.

Amen!
Signs
gate
heaven
to sex,
thighs,
whores.
But please,
new
guns!

Men
whine,
break
even.
Pricks
cry,
"More!"
Keep
loot,
run.

The Yen
shines
bright
again,
stock
samurais
in hordes.
Whee!
Few
win.

Men:
crime
pays.
Craven,
slick
guys
hoard
fees,
accrue
sums.

Zen
times,
the weight
within,
fix
lives,
restore
peace
to
men.

Suns
vi-
brate,
cave in,
Styx-
dive,
fold
and crease
into
none.

DUSK (AFTER THE PAINTING BY WILLIAM BAZIOTES)
by Neil Ellman

"Dusk" is an ekphrastic poem, based on a work of modern art. Ekphrasis is an ancient approach to translating the visual into the verbal, but the image that inspired this poem is abstract, offering no literal content for interpretation.

After the dusk turns tangible
Complete palpable
a man bays to the moon

—save me
he says—

(and then)

a fish translucent
phosphorescent
pursued by dusk
drowns in its own light

—pray for me
it says—

light eats even its own shadow
even its own kind.

"Examination" is an examination of the everyday experiences of a young school teacher. Like many works of contemplative writing, this is a self-assesment, but it is written in the form of a school exam, encouraging the reader to compare answers. Its parts take various forms, such as matching terms to definitions, or the short essay answer. For each part, there are a number of points to be awarded for a valid response.

6. *Match* (/3)

A	today	the first day of my second year as a teacher
B	tomorrow	her final day of chemotherapy
C	the day before	Casual Day

5. *Fill in the Blank* (/10)

A room full of teenagers
staring at their reflections
in a wall-sized mirror.
Music plays as they practice.
Some are synchronized in pairs
reflecting rhyming movements,
laughing when it doesn't work.
Others are alone.
Isolating
a part of their body,
the robot shoulder slide.
Repeating
a part of a pose alive
in the moment of a motion.
Learning
to transform a part
away from the whole.
Searching
staring silently at the mirror
searching
for a memory in their muscles acting
a part.
I stand
in the margins
watching
the dance breaking
from the breakdancers.

4. *Short Answer* (/0)

For my Homesick Mexican students
weeping in the back of my class
and sitting in the halls.
For my teary Nigerian student
who wrote: "I never want to write again,
I do not want to be an author again,
and it is all your fault."
I will write you a story
and sing you a sad
quiet song.
I will not say that everything is going to be okay.
You know that already
and it still hurts.
So instead the story
and the sad song.
One day
a plane
flying somewhere.
One day
sitting
hallway
singing
along
alone
quietly
"One day
I will grow wings."
I didn't feel any better
but I felt something.
An emptiness
disappearing.

3. *True or False (/1)*

Staff-room

too early

talking myself awake

too loudly:

"What do I have to do? I don't know. All I know is that I need to take a poop."

Step around the corner

the Principal sits

reading the paper.

Forgotten I'd said hello to him

on the way in. On the way out

he gave me no answer.

HORSEY HORSEY PO PO BY ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON
by Gary Leising

This poem is fictitiously attributed by its real author to Alfred Lord Tennyson, who used repetition frequently as a poetic device. One scholar counted in Tennyson's work "no fewer than 82 cases of successive repetition of one word." This is a sound experiment, full of nonsense and sense, in the style of Gertrude Stein, who was also known for her repetitiveness.

half a league half a league
horsey horsey po po
half a league onward
horsey horsey po po
cannon to the right of them
horsey horsey po po
a lincolnshire baron says
horsey horsey po po
drunkest man in somersby
says horsey horsey po po
i've got a ball it's not so big
horsey horsey po po

inky binky skunky bonky
horsey horsey po po
daddoo's gonna kill your donkey
horsey horsey po po
the war is on the war is on
horsey horsey po po
sitwell sits well sitting on
a horsey horsey po po
still rain falls like idle tears
horsey horsey po po
a google search on alfred's beard
yields horsey horsey po po
the tennis court an oath is sworn
horsey horsey po po
wherever the green is worn
it's horsey horsey po po

wikipedia wikipedia
wiki wik ulysses
wikipedia wikipedia
wik knowledge the fishies
horseipedia horseipedia
horsey horsey po po
edison recorded him
at the whiskey a la go go

run amok and run unstuck
the needle's in the haystack
wikipedia wikipedia
bring the time of peace back

wikipedia wikipedia
horsey horsey po po
the light brigade's a knapsack
horsey horsey po po
wikipedia horseipedia
can't we bring the dead back
wikipedia po-po-pedia
the sky is full of russian flak
horseipedia wikipedia
the flower's in the crannied wall
po-po-pedia worseipedia
is buggery at locksley hall

men may come and men may go
horsey horsey po po
the pen may run the sun may blow
wikipedia po po
the pen my run the sun my blow
wikipedia po po
in those lines where's the typo
horseipedia po po

wikileaks wikileaks
horsey horsey po po
equus equus equus speaks
horseshitpedia po po
harry potter's nude on stage
dicky dicky po po
not in my victorian age
says lordy alfie po po
the bombs stopped dropping
peace is here
cries blitzy alfie po po

and harry potter's pee-pee's small
says equus horsey po po

wikileaks wikileaks
equus equus po po
oil this thing where it squeaks
horsey horsey po po
wisdom lingers knowledge comes
horsey horsey po po
thus saith lordeth tennethon
lispy lispy po po
half an inch half an inch
turkey turkey po po
balaclava for dessert
with horsey horsey po po

MULTI-VOICE POETRY
by Ashby McGowan

As its name implies, multi-voice poetry is a form of writing and performing poetry intended for multiple voices. This essay provides an overview, with examples and advice drawn from the experience of several performances in Scotland.

Some performance poets make their poems more interesting by using visual effects while reading their poem. Some poets make their poems more interesting by the use of their richly textured voices. In a multi-voice poem, it is the interaction of the words read together by different poets that makes the poem interesting. The rhythms and complexity that can be heard in one of these poems arise naturally when more than one poet reads words at the same time. Anyone can read these poems and can get the same rhythms and complexity: they are built into the poem's structure.

While performing a multi-voice poem, the readers sometimes speak at the same time. It can sound chaotic, but as the poem is repeated, the listener tunes in to a specific voice and makes sense out of the chaos. This is intentional, and is appropriate for many subjects. The poem is written so that the performers at a workshop can rewrite it and then perform it. The performers have to do a bit of work to fine-tune the piece so that their timing and volume are correct. At its easiest for a simple performance, two poets could perform a short multi-voice poem after about one an hour of rehearsal. I wrote some of my multi-voice poems to be performed at animal rights and human rights events.

Multi-voice is excellent for having each speaker show different views of the same situation. As an example, when there are only two speakers, these voices can be used effectively in opposition to each other; the opposition is emphasized with the speakers facing each other and using inflammatory language.

Multi-voice poetry is new to most people and can be extremely rewarding, for the audience as well as the performer. The hardest work in a multi-voice poem is done by the audiences, who listen carefully to question what they hear, and feel for the hidden rhythms. Audiences pay particular attention to the words because of this partial blurring of sounds and meanings.

I believe that this style of poem could become very popular. Performances of my multi-voice poems have been given by some of Scotland's best performance poets, with support from the conFAB literary group and others. I am grateful to everyone who has supported this idea. I feel that when you perform a multi-voice poem, you do so knowing that you are part of a team. So far, the performances have met with a very good response from audiences.

When working on a new multi-voice poem, usually I start by writing out all my notes, and all the words spoken by the different speakers, freehand. I work on these until I have a rough idea of how the various voices will combine. I then

transfer this rough draft poem to a computer. For two-part multi-voice, I'll have two columns of the poem's lines going down the page next to each other; a line of dots represents when a speaker is silent. For three or more speakers, I orient my page to landscape mode so that I can fit more columns on the page. I try to get every speaker fitting in side by side on the page so it is easier for the performers to understand what is happening. The pages are easy to read and then, of course, to memorize before the performance. Here are two example poems.

Happy the Dawn

Two readers at the same time, to the ringing of small bells.

Speaker 1	Speaker 2
Dawn-cold sun-bold climbing	Dawn-sky sun-high climbing
Cloud-gold tale-told miming	Cloud-cry tale-try miming
Night-die star-fly a-way	Night-cold star-told a-way
Bright-sky bird-high all day	Bright-gold bird-bold all day

Daybreak

Two readers at the same time.

Speaker 1	Speaker 2
Dawn light	Sun white
Colours cast	Flying fast
Delight the day	So bright each ray
Warmth touch hills	Valley mist fills
Moon dipping	Deer sipping
Glows amber	Then clamber
Over horizon falls	Over slippery walls
Clouds break	Sleep shake
Blue make	Love make
Bracken brown	Kneel down
Wind sent	Strange scent
Breath take	Lung break
Red froth from mouth and nose	Red froth from mouth and nose
Dead	Dead
Dead	Dead

After doing multi-voice for some time, I researched the idea and found that various poets have written and performed multi-voice. But the few examples that

I have found are very different from the type of poetry that I am writing.

Here are some examples of the methods that I use, along with some notes about how to write multi-voice poetry. Use the medium with care and you can get great results.

WRITING FORMS

Trigger Words

Many of the multi-voice poems use "trigger words." The trigger words are printed on large cards which are held by the reader of the trigger word/phrase. One performer reads the trigger words, which are also the first words read by another performer, who goes on to read their own verse. The trigger words are read at the same time by both performers. Then, usually, the first performer stops reading to prevent too much cacophony. In my first (and most popular) multi-voice poem, entitled "Another Night," the trigger words used by the first person are different from the words used by the second person—which makes it slightly harder to do.

On the script, I highlight or bold all the trigger words and try to ensure that if they are spoken at the same time, they are at the same level on the page.

Cascade Effect

"Another Night" also makes use of a cascade effect, where the trigger word starts two or three performers reading, and this cascade effect may be repeated. This is hard for the listener to keep up with, so "Another Night" is read through three times. The cascade effect lends a striking look and sound to a poem.

Conversation

In some of my poems, such as "Twins" and "Loving You," two protagonists carry out a kind of conversation. Occasionally in these poems, the speakers speak at the same time. Often, they speak one at a time. Sometimes, the speakers cross over and each takes the words of the other.

Side by Side

In this type of multi-voice poetry, the two or more strands of poetry going side by side down the page are very similar. The small differences between the lines spoken create additional internal rhythms.

Prose Poems

Here, much of the text is in prose. But at various points, the text changes into multi-voice poetry.

Sideways Poetry

My multi-voice poems usually conform to a style that I call "sideways poetry." Sideways, because it is meant to be read sideways, backwards and forwards along the adjoining verses, as well as from top to bottom of the page. Quite often in these poems, more than one speaker speaks at the same time. It sounds confusing for a few moments but it does yield interesting results.

I use a number of sound devices to increase the sense of stability (as the poem proceeds) in some of the poems: increasing use of alliteration, words (or sounds) repeated by more than one reader, increasing strength of rhythm, and so on.

The audience can listen to the effect of two or three voices intermingling, creating rhythm patterns, or they can tune in to one particular performer and look to that performer for the sense of the poem (or one aspect of it). Members of the audience usually do both during the performance of one poem.

I have kept the language in my poems simple. I believe this allows a greater depth of experimentation. Also, I do not feel a listener should have to struggle to be able to understand a poem. Most of the multi-voice performances are composed of poetry that stands alone as poetry in its own right. They are also exercises in multi-voice rhythmic experimentation, which is meant to be enjoyed for the sounds created.

Back Translation

In some multi-voice poems, the voices can be in different languages. Because I have been involved in reading translations of Greek, Japanese, and Chinese poetry for many years (and understand how inaccurate translation is), I am trying to develop a new method of "back translation." I have written some haiku in English. They are haiku in meaning. I am now trying to find a Japanese translator who will "back translate" these poems into Japanese. The finished work will have both accurate haiku in English (no loss in translation) and Japanese "originals" which will serve the purpose of letting the audience hear the language that haiku are usually written in.

NOTES ON TECHNIQUE

Use Cacophony with Care

Cacophony can sound awful if kept up for too long, but it can be used for emphasis or drama. You have to imagine how much cacophony your audience

can take. With so many voices reading at one time, the individual words cannot be heard. With too much going on, it can be occasionally difficult for the listener to keep up with events.

Blend Voices Correctly

Take great care with how the voices blend. Even when not blending with another voice, the sound of each word should be appealing and effective. Sometimes the two (or more) performers read lines that are *almost* identical. The one word or phrase that is different produces a "beat" and these beats can be built up line by line to produce a rhythm. The downside of this is that performers find it challenging to read lines that are nearly identical at the same time.

Some of my multi-voice poems were developed using a voice recorder to take the part of a different voice. I would record myself as *Voice 1*, then I would speak the part of *Voice 2* while the recorder was playing. A solo poet could perform multi-voice poetry by reading one set of verses while playing a recording of a complementary set of verses at the same time.

If you have the same number of syllables in two adjoining verses, then there will be a harmonious result. If you have a different number of syllables in each adjoining "verse," you will get a more chaotic sound.

Strive for Meaning

Multi-voice poetry should have more than just clever techniques and nice sounds. If planned well, it can allow more subtlety of meaning than single-voice poetry. Sometimes, though, I do think it is acceptable to have a poem that works because it just sounds good!

LARGE NUMBER MULTI-VOICE

Since I started writing multi-voice I have been writing different versions that are suitable for large numbers of people: these people being either the audience or the performing poets taking up the tasks / voices among themselves. I recently devised a version which I think allows maximum variation around the basic idea.

Firstly, I wrote a poem about something that flows or changes. (In my case it was the sea, but it could be anything, such as time or emotion.) There are definite turns in the poem, where things change by a large amount and in steps. This basic poem has words taken from its text and written up on cards for the audience

to read, or for other members of the performance group to perform. The words should have meaning and should fit the various "steps."

Instructions on how the poem is meant to be read are enclosed on the card for each member of the audience. In my poem, I read about the sea and each verse has the sea becoming softer and softer. The audience reads words that are very loudly spoken (in verse 1), then loud (verse 2), then normal volume (verse 3). The words themselves change from being harsh words like "crash" to softer words like "lap." Each verse that I read has a number that relates to a number on each card the audience has, so members of the audience with card 1 read out their bit according to their instructions while I am reading verse 1 at the microphone. Similar interaction occurs for verses 2 and 3.

Hopefully, this relatively simple setup should keep the audience involved and should let them feel part of the poem—in meaning and in sound. This might sound a bit complicated but should allow audiences of thirty or more to take part in a poem. In a similar project, I envisage some of the audience's cards being translated into Gaelic so the Gaelic sounds are also part of the poem.

I have recently written a multi-voice poem in which there are three voices but the audience only hears one (from one speaker). From the limited information available, the audience must fill in the gaps. The gaps obviously can't be that big.

TEXT AS FOUND OBJECT

I found that some texts have a power which power that comes from the meaning of the document, the importance of the document itself, and the sounds of the words. With my poem "Road Block," I wanted to write a poem built upon a historical document. I used the words broadcast by the "Hate Radio" in Rwanda in 1994.

If you use found text, then I think you have to obey a number of rules to avoid plagiarism. You should credit the source of the text. You must show respect to the found material. The poem that you make out of the text must say something new, and say something that couldn't be done without using the found text.

Scratched Poems

I use two types of "scratched" poem. The first is similar in purpose to what the disc jockey does when he scratches between two records: well-known phrases are repeated, sometimes mixed, and often meaningless sounds are added in as filler. The second type is where a narrative poem with a strong rhythm structure has bits cut out and pasted in elsewhere in the text. This can work surprisingly well.

Chinese Whispers

This is a game-like activity designed to get an audience involved. There are no winners or losers and all you have to do is keep the rhythm of the story flowing.

The presenter reads out a (roughly) five- or six-word phrase. The audience are then asked to hold hands looking inwards in a circle. Or, if the audience is big, just hold hands. The audience are asked to make up a story following the initial phrase given by the presenter. To keep it interesting, audience members have to follow a sequence.

The first person in the audience to speak (the person on the extreme left of the line or, in a ring, a designated person) has to try to keep the story going by reading out a similar five- or six-word phrase or sentence. But they must make the last word in their sentence rhyme with the last word in the presenter's sentence. The second person in the audience keeps the story going using a similar-length phrase, but this time they only need to keep the first letter of the last word they speak the same as the first letter of the last word that the previous person spoke.

This two-line sequence (i.e., last words rhyme, then last words begin with the same letter) is continually repeated.

Each person must spontaneously continue to tell the story along whatever lines it is following and must adhere to the two-line sequence.

This activity allows improvisation and brain searching, and a story gets told.

An example I made up on the spot:

Presenter's line	*I can soar*
First person	From the top to the floor
Second person	*Forever flying*
Third person	Resting on wings not crying
Fourth person	*Searching for calmness*
Fifth person	More not less

Holding Hands

Here, the poet links one line intimately to the following line: part of the leading line and part of the following line are read at the same time. An example is my performance poem, "Canada."

Canada

(The readers appear to the audience to read out of any sequence. They look at the

audience without looking at each other. Each reader reads one line and the second word in each line is spoken at the same time as the first word in the following line. Everyone speaks the last line.)

Snow falling
Falling down
Down wind
Wind blowing
Blowing hard
Hard ice
Ice breaking
Breaking through
Through Arctic
Arctic seals
Seals crying
Crying no more
No more blood
Blood stains
Stain's Canada

Canada's shame

Russian Dolls

Here I try to have a story partly hidden within another story. The two stories can complement each other or can act in opposition to one another. In my poem called "Story," the main part of the poem asks a question. This is answered by text which is partly hidden within the main text of the poem. There is a brief and enigmatic story hidden here. See if you can find it.

Story

where do Plughole Empties start, so begin the movement away, another day *fades*, fast stream, Down Until, distant day drifting, *sun* far lifting, far reaches running track, clue last field Faster, warmth reaching, *colour* leaching, day light, bats sight, then last far Down, fish *dark* swimming, *grey* sea rising through *brightness*, birds fly past around Travelling, forward fragments finding, toward tiger forest, *shadows* cast hot SILVER, Movement, sing softly, Water, treasure trail, wait, waste confuses land jigsaw, maze haze, Turn, finding, to a Whirlpool key, searching path, drifting back, hand

eyes flies, levity strings, Gravity, star Swirls where, when whispered, cold told, and search, frog eating jasmine jam, Turning, salty red fish swim, load lorry, sea story, and one two left right, prime DRAGON, foot print QUEST, journey searching, sand

Pointillism

At the National Galleries in Edinburgh, I was looking at a Seurat painting when I realized that what he did with vision can be done with sound. He used separate discrete areas of color to interact together to create new and different scenes or objects—which became visible when the viewer stepped back from the painting. So I am looking at ways to get poetry performers to read from a group of similar sounding words. (They can pick any words from the similar sounding list.) As the poem proceeds, the performers move in unison from one group of word-sounds to the next, then to a third, and then to a fourth. Each performer has a different set of 4 groups of words.

Interacting Words

I am working on ways to write poems using as few words as possible. I know that certain poetry groups have done similar things before. However, I want the number of words used to be so restricted (say 4 or 8: any less than 4 has insufficient interactions and more than 8 has too many interactions) that each word in the poem has to interact with all of, or most of, the other words in the poem—so as to create new nuances of meaning.

These works are meant to be real poems. They are not merely puzzles or experiments. There is no definite sequence in the poem. There is no story being told sequentially downwards.

Seven Words

Red	Poppy	Ejected
Mud	Fingers	Poem
Dawn		

CARRYING ON

The term multi-voice seems to put people off, or so people have told me. If it didn't sound so presumptuous, I would call it the "Glasgow Style." This is because most of the poets in our group are from Glasgow. And few people outside of Glasgow have heard of multi-voice poetry. I genuinely think that multi-voice (or the Glasgow Style of writing—if you prefer) could become one of the pillars of mainstream poetry across the world.

I would like to thank Rachel Jury of conFAB, who has found funding for most of our performances. Nowadays, I am not the only poet who writes in the Chromatic Voices style, but without funding for shows I personally would not be writing any poetry. I am not someone who can write without a readership or audience.

To close, I would just like to say that most Glasgow poets who have worked with multi-voice poems have said they gained new insights into their own work and were encouraged to try out new experimental approaches. The potential is enormous.
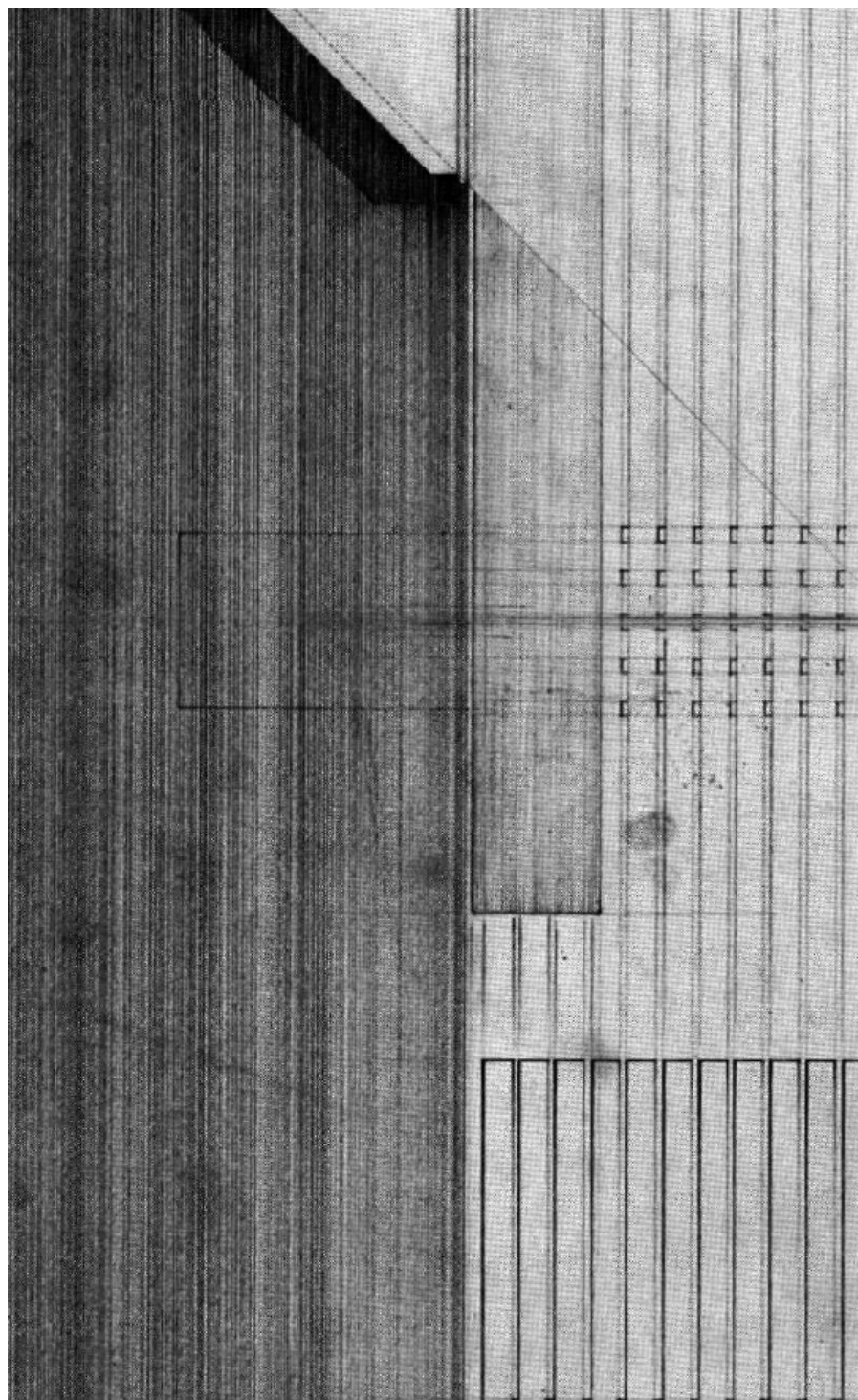
PÚBLICOS DOIS
by bárbara mesquita

These images are the second of the artist's "Publics" series. They can be read as visual poems, suggesting both a sense of architectural space and a duality.
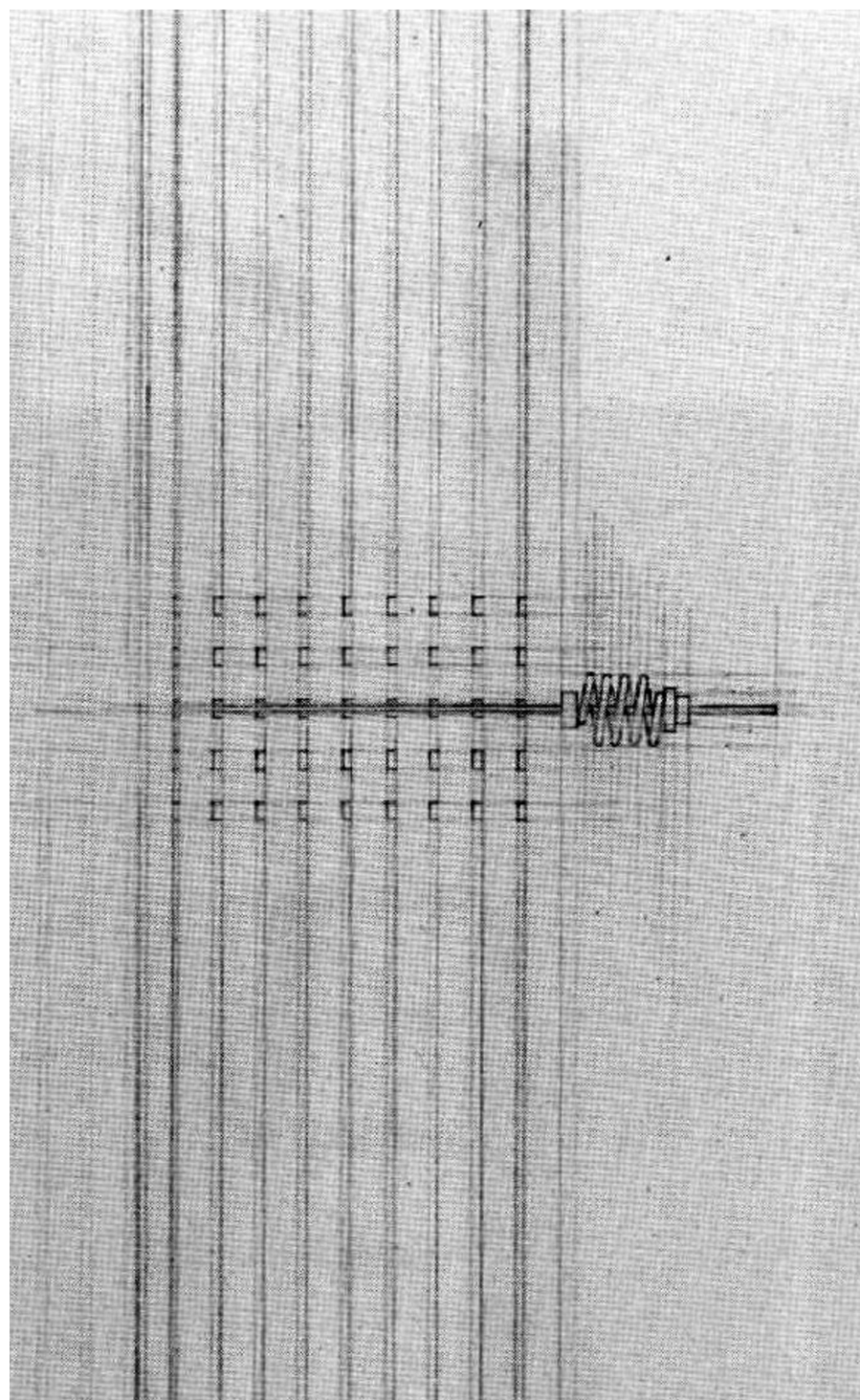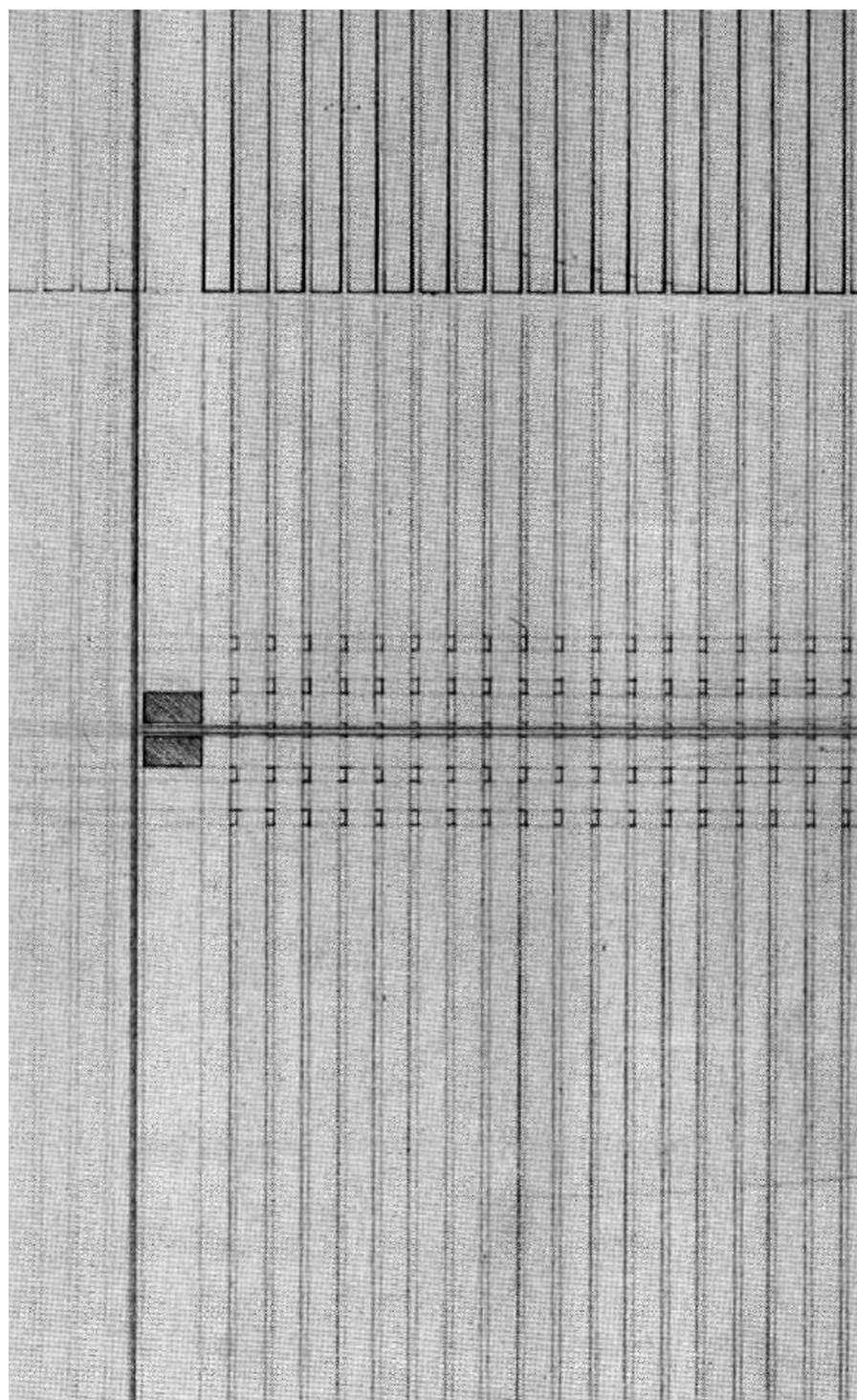
DIALOGIC
by Scot Ehrhardt

"Dialogic" is a deceitful sestina. It follows only the spirit of the strict form, repeating an elastic set of letter combinations (and punctuation) instead of fixed words.

In her father's kitchen, rain
rattles against the windows.
He exhales, eyes closed.
Rx bottles line the window ledge,
his disappointment overheard
in the daughter's parenthesis,

a voice without vocal cords: (She
can converse with the rain,
then. Let the vials overtake
this kitchen, with her dwindling
breath, toeing the ledge
of euphoria and closet

addictions. She is closer
to dying than I am.)
She has learned to dredge
his breathing for sounds, grains
in his graveled windpipe,
two fingers over

the valve over
the tube in his throat. His closest
sound to screaming is wind;
she swallows the parenthetical
silences, lacing her brain
with guilt and gilded edges.

He turns away, acknowledges
the storm stirring the clover
outside, the bristling sound of rain.
Tears burn his eyes closed.
He transcribes his own sigh: (She
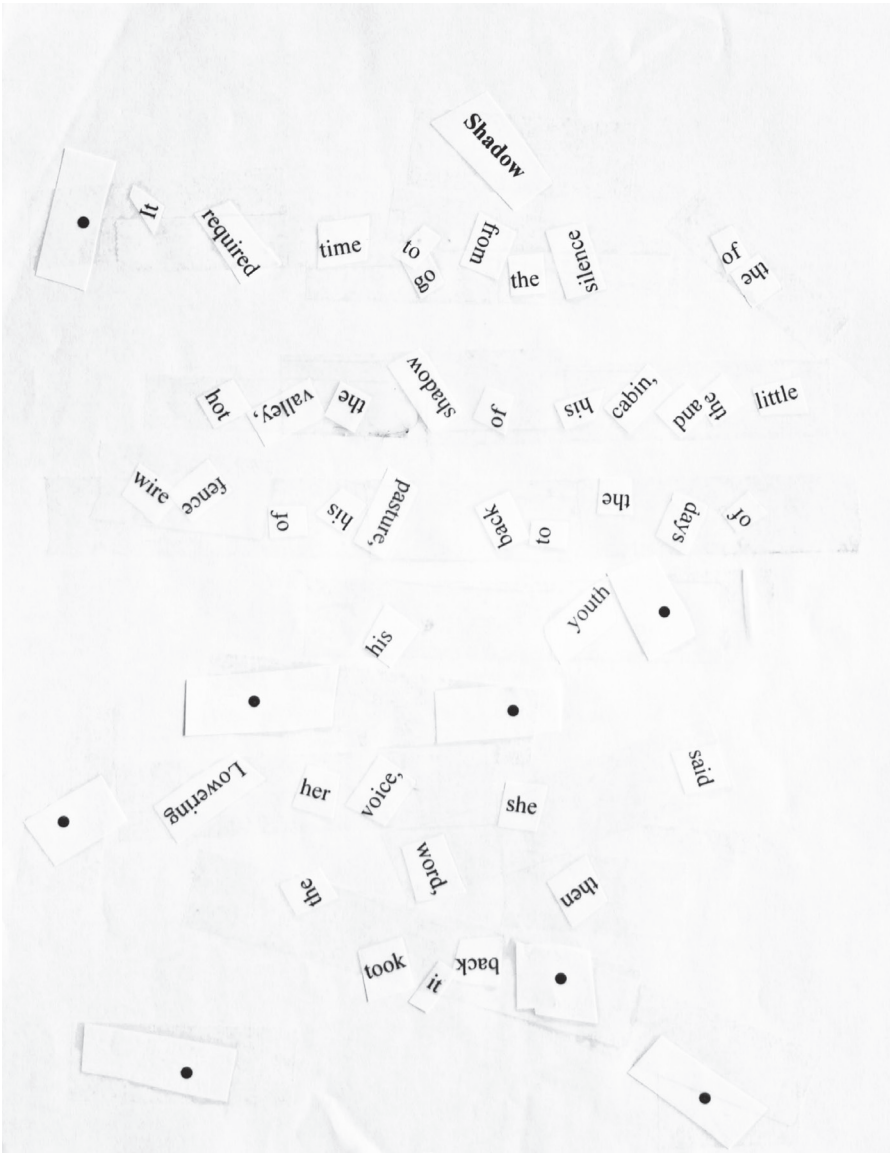is beautiful despite me, winding

like ivy around clouded windows,
across the grey and crumbled edges
of this sinking, silent house.)
She studies his introversion,
pockets two bottles, and closes
the front door behind her into the rain.

In the kitchen, the rain ceases to rattle the windows.
A screen door whispers closed, eyes toward the edgeless
sky: her name in gravel, over and over, in parenthesis.

SHADOW
by Joel Chace

This is part of a developing collection under the working title "period (s) now." After creating and / or collecting 100 pairs of sentences, the artist cuts up each printed word, with scissors, into component words and punctuation marks, which are then dropped onto a blank sheet of paper. Once each component finds its resting place, it is fixed in place with clear tape. Completed pages generally contain two sentences, separated by oversized periods that appear to have snowed down to rest.

Shadow

It required time to go from the silence of the

hot valley, the shadow of his cabin, and the little

wire fence of his pasture, back to the days of

his youth

Lowering her voice, she said

the word, then

took it back

It goes without saying that any make, you corrections I

approve of

, a priori

Back

alley's icy font

or

darkness

They were low, long-drawn expulsions of breath, very expressive. I still can't find a satisfactory story to go with it, but I continue to develop the separate dances
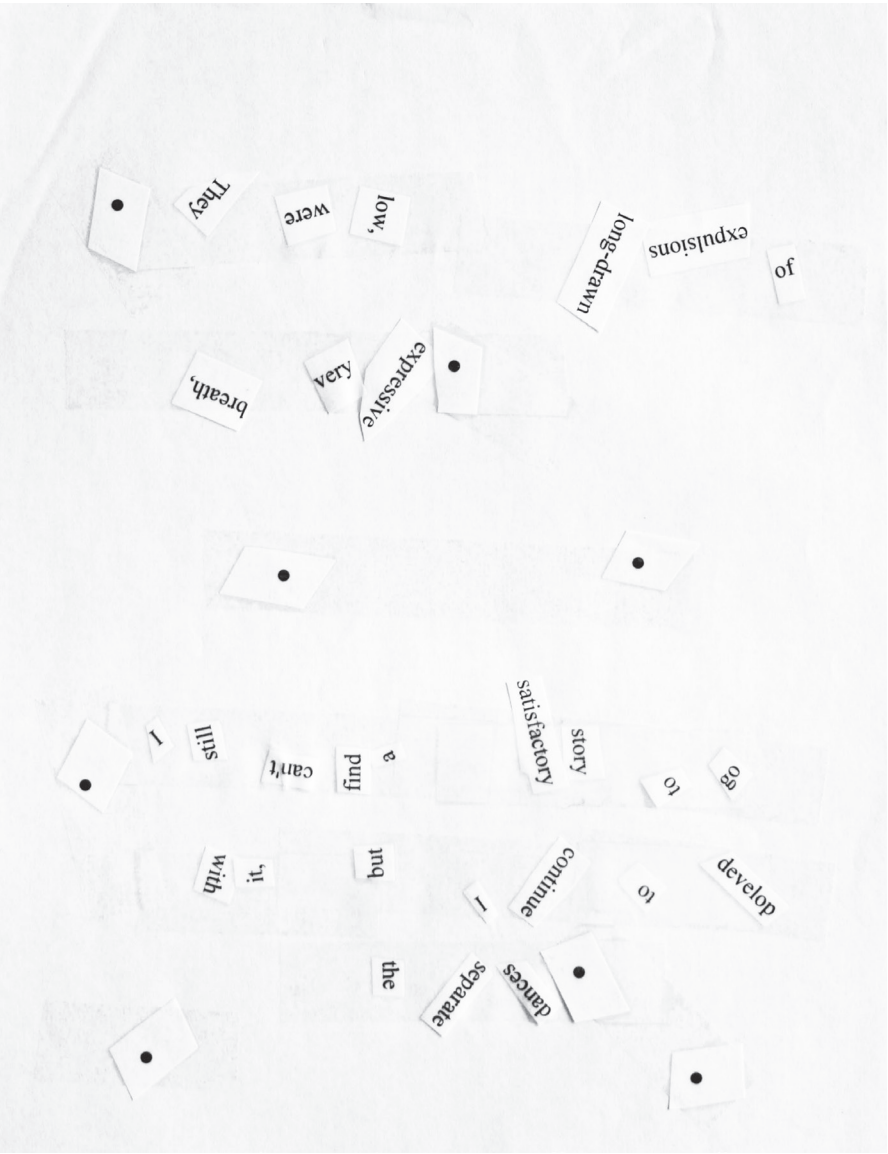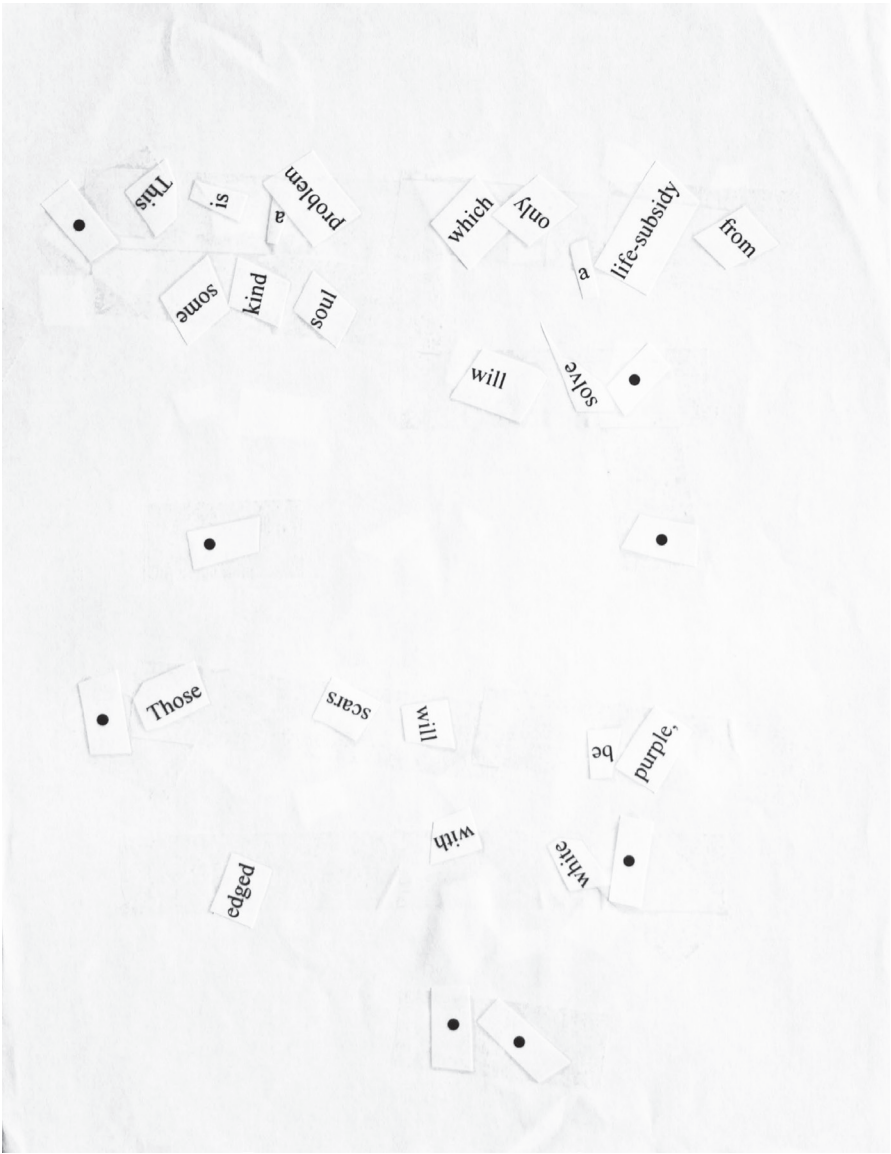
This is a problem

some kind soul

which only a life-subsidy from

will solve

Those scars will be purple,

with while

edged

SO WE DECIDED TO MAKE THE BIGGEST CORNISH PASTY EVER
by Gary Leising

This poem was generated from search engine queries for the title. The author chose
links with interesting text, eventually following one link to another to another,
choosing interesting directions and ignoring uninteresting ones, then rearranging
content for sense or lack of sense.

I like my women the way I like my kebab,
found by surprise after a drunken night out
and covered in too much tahini. Stroganoff,
boysenberry, frangipani—words with their
origins in other peoples' names. Man, age 23,
ploughs lonely furrow, slut in the kitchen, chef
in the bedroom. Romance is dead, so is
my mother. My mother named Romance.
Man, age 23, rarely produces winning metaphors.
When my parents were married, dad's mum
taught my mother how to make pasties.
I use the word "taught" in a rather loose sense.
In the For Days of Auld Lang Syne recipes,
here's the story: a bunch of Tesco stuff,
three kinds of potatoes, a leek, carrots,
more ground beef than you could pull
in an oxcart. The Cornish pasty needs
to be protected as clotted cream has been.
A friend once bought me novelty underpants
that had a caption on the front reading,
"In case of fire break glass." I didn't
understand what it meant until they actually
caught fire in the tumble dryer. They were
acrylic and the setting was on high. The door
melted shut and sure enough I had to break
the glass to put the fire out. Replacement
dryers are very expensive. Man, age 23,
forward-thinking, likes milling around
hospitals guessing the illnesses of outpatients.
They call me naughty Lola. Are you
Kate Winslet? Man, age 23, obsessed
with Kate Winslet and the word "ballsy"
is bound to pop up at least once. Note,
people who aren't Kate Winslet need not respond.

FUSION SONNETS
by Sudesh Sinha

Fusion sonnets are an experimental variation of the traditional sonnet form. They begin with a sonnet of 14 lines, followed by a half-sonnet of 7 lines acting as a coda or tail to add additional stability to the poem. No particular meter is used. There are rhymes in the 1st, 5th, 9th and 10th lines; in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th lines; in the 6th, 7th and 8th lines; in the 16th and 17th lines; and in the 18th and 20th lines. Rhetorical questions appear in the 9th and 10th lines. The first 10 lines carry a negative, pessimistic tone while the 11th–14th lines are optimistic. The turn occurs gradually in the 9th through 11th lines of the initial sonnet and on the 20th line of the final half-sonnet.

Departed Days

The time has vanished when I used to rely upon my branches—
I am now, just like a tree whose lithe boughs have congealed,
Enduringly bent and rotten without the sap inside that have been sealed
Somewhere else, for someone else's to be filled.
The provider of shade is now herself craving for calm benches.
The yearning in psyche is still strong yet has lost poise,
My opinion doesn't matter anymore owing to my faint voice;
I fear placing my words to prevent creating noise.
Shall the doctors be able to cure me to early stages?
Or shall I be forced to be like this for the rest of my ages?
I will stay in this form, but will not groan in pain–
When my children are enduring me, shall I not endure them?
Let my branches fall and let me turn cripple,
Till I have the verve in the nerves of my eyes, I must see them idyllic.
The time has vanished when I used to rely upon my branches—
Perhaps I have disused the forming element of my cadaver—
This had left me like a brittle glass upon the soft bed cover;
I have no clout to enjoy but smirk occasionally—
When I see them laughing in joy, those who care me blissfully;
Let this be my life now, contended with all I had over the years and forget that—
The provider of shade is now herself craving for calm benches.

Centuries of Creation

Centuries of creation instil creativity in me, to think and act along—
Boldness through the saved pages of history,
Mind and soul joining hands to decipher mystery—
Prevailing as a result of downfall of readers in each country.
Readers preferring ease in literature, as if preferring drums than lyrics in songs.
Unreformed writers' society coming up with daily workshops,
Of gossips devoid of heritage and creative crops—
To turn in films of fantasy; what a flop!
Should I bring in the renaissance spitting on the wrong?
Should I not learn to create being formally strong?
Let my birth be for you, oh literature and loving men—
Let me refrain from copying but receive inspiration;
The heaven shower blessings upon my pen, give in ink—
So that it can form the cascade of creation.
Centuries of creation instills creativity in me, to think and act along—
Perhaps the founders were egocentric to dedicate them to one—
Yet they were meant for all underneath the Sun;
As the manuscripts were like the notes of music,
To be molded into any rhythm to heal even the sick.
Revive, restore, recreate, and then form a formation of my name for . . .
Readers preferring ease in literature, as if preferring drums than lyrics in songs.

Beneath the Shade

While standing below the tree shade—

Destroyed in lightning,

The grasshoppers were heard singing,

The mind was out of trade, away from any dealing.

The fever of sleep has gripped the forehead.

My legs and arms were paralyzed,

With a disease in disguise;

A beggar dying for want of rice.

How is this startling world made?

What's the need of creation without ensuring food and bed?

I sank to the ground,

A rain drop wetted my eyelids,

Lifted me up to look at my utensil—

Some coins have gathered there!

While standing below the tree shade—

Pockets were seen hanging with coins and notes;

They are for make ups and coats.

The disease of neglect is a cancer,

The doctors seem to promote it further.

Lift me up men or mature will push me into the grave—

The fever of sleep has gripped the forehead.

SYMBOLIC PREPARED PIANO
by Volodymyr Bilyk

Made of dots, dashes, commas and brackets, this visual poem recalls the prepared piano, which is a piano that has been "prepared" by placing objects between or on the strings or on the hammers or dampers.
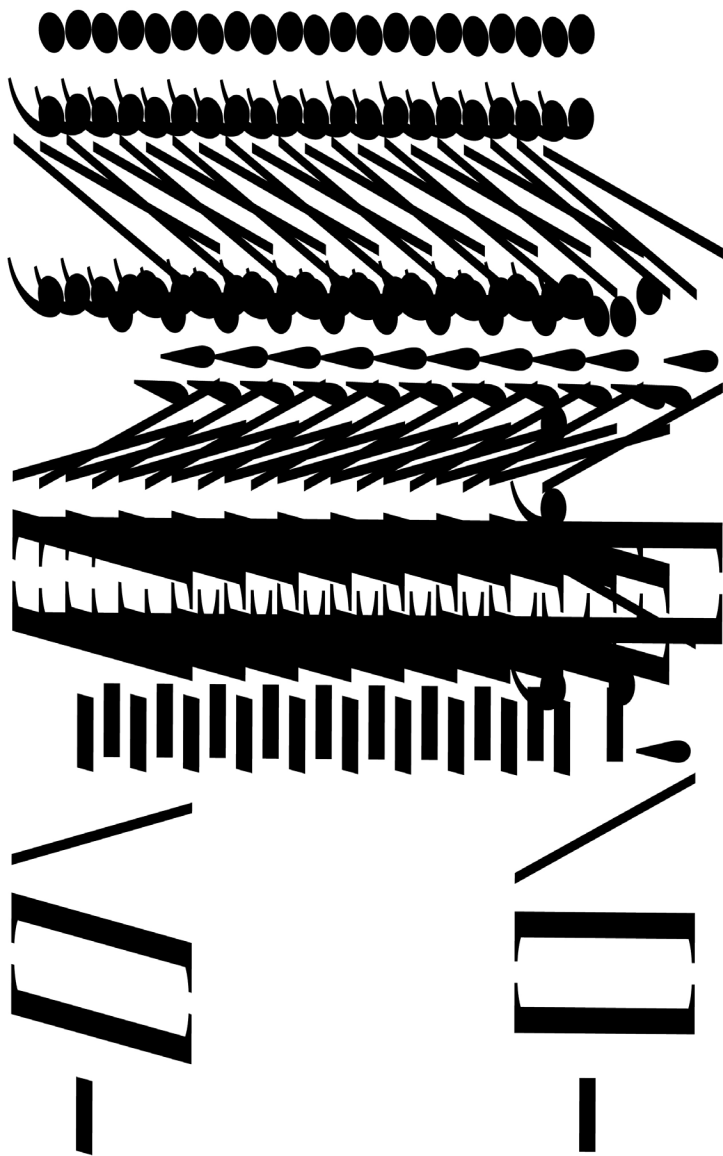
This essay starts with attempts to create a new kind of poetry, then describes how the author discovered that it had already been created. Further investigations turn up interesting connections between Oulipo, creativity and forgetting, Bell Labs, the NSA, cryptography, the death of the author, and Gnostic theories of the alphabet.

> *We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space*
> —Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author*

I have long called myself a poet, despite the pejorative connotations; the work seemed easy, if poorly paid. But even as the ultimate freedom is death, the easiest job ends up being impossible. An ill-defined task is hard to do well, unless one has that combination of grace and luck that comes naturally to those who have the good sense to be born beautiful and rich.

In my case, a combination of negligible education, bad attitude and an aversion to hard work led me to write visual poetry.

I began writing in two dimensions as a formal constraint that involved the letter, and not the syllable, as the poetic quantum. In the year 2000, after tremendous effort, on the inside cover of a marbled composition notebook, I inscribed the following stack of four-letter words:

```
P  O  N  D
A  R  E  A
L  A  S  T
E  L  S  E
```

In my pursuit of a poetic based on space rather than time, on shape rather than sound, I had written many crossword poems, but they were amorphous, asymmetrical. Now, at last, I had achieved an indisputable formal elegance. The poem pulsated with semiotic mystery, hovering above literal meaning in a naive engagement in the opacity of its elements, a dadaistic simplicity that concealed a humorous yet hazardous Scottish cryptozoophilic eroticism.

Later, I would discover that, a century earlier, an American subculture, organized around the creation of similar wordsquares, or "forms," considered it "veritable child's play to put together a square of words each consisting, let us say, of 3 to 4 letters … any person of limited intelligence can do this…" At the time, though, I found it extremely challenging, and after struggling to write a dozen more, it occurred to me that that this would be the kind of writing a computer could do well, and might even enjoy. Then I could contemplate these little word-gems without the hard work. I contacted an old friend, John Cerkan, who programs computers, and he agreed to help me hunt wordsquares.

In the years to come, not only would Cerkan's computer spew out millions of these gems, but his research led me to discover my predecessors in wordsquare creation, among them the American mystics, the "formists."

"Occasionally, we discover that a structure we believed to be entirely new had in fact already been discovered . . . sometimes even in a distant past" wrote François Le Lionnais in the "Second Manifesto of the Oulipo." The Oulipoeans call this "plagiarism by anticipation." What Bill Gillespie says of the "anagram, palindrome, and lipogram—" that they "are inherent in any alphabet . . . they cannot be invented, only discovered—" is more true of the word square, and can perhaps be said of all writing.

In "The Library of Babel," Jorge Luis Borges envisions an infinite, combinatory library, in which every possible sequence of letters can be found. In Borges' library, the alphabet is the writer. On this point, strangely, the atheist post-structuralist and the ancient monotheist also concur. Barthes says, "to write is... to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs,' and not 'me' "; the Sepher Yetzirah, attributed to the patriarch Abraham, claims that language "performs" the entire Creation: "Twenty-two basal letters. . . He exchanged them, each one with all; He formed by means of them the whole creation and everything that should be created subsequently."

Cerkan found online the ancient square, discovered at Pompeii, which reads:

```
R  O  T  A  S
O  P  E  R  A
T  E  N  E  T
A  R  E  P  O
S  A  T  O  R
```

As he discovered more about wordsquares through Internet searches, part of me wanted to resist—or to equivocate—because surely, even though word squares had existed for centuries, my very ignorance made me their inventor as surely as anyone else. For it is only forgetting which allows us to discover, naiveté which allows us to invent.

In his survey *Pattern Poetry*, Dick Higgins speaks of "an ongoing human wish to combine the visual and literary impulses" which is "universal" and attested to in almost all cultural traditions worldwide. From the Phaistos Disc, written in the undeciphered Minoan A, to the word grids of Optitian Porphyrias in the

4th century AD, to the thaumaturgic letter labyrinths of the Kabbalists, to the devotional letter labyrinths of baroque Portugal and Spain, all the way up to the *calligrammes* of Apollinaire and the typographical experiments of Dada and Futurism, visual and grid poetry has responded to a nearly constant aesthetic urge. In 1956, Augusto de Campos called for this combined aesthetic with a revolutionary fervor: the substantive use of space as an element of composition maintains a simultneous dialectic of eye and voice, which, allied with the ideo-grammic synthesis of meaning, creates a sentient "verbivocovisual" totality. In this way, words and experience are juxtaposed in a tight phenomenological unit impossible before.

Jackson Mac Low wrote grid poems based on repeated nonsense mantras. John Cage wrote acrostics, which have a crossword element. And then, of course, there are the crossword puzzles which fill the pages of the nation's periodicals. But they are mere puzzles—not aesthetic objects, not poems, I tell myself. It does seem that there's a difference between the text of a puzzle and the text of a poem—but, ultimately, it's not clear what this difference is.

I was sure that the word grid held a key to the synthesis of the visual and poetic urges that I felt compelled to effect. With a dense crossword, one could use any visual image as a constraint on a piece of writing. For example, here I use a photograph of Gary Michael Heidnik—cult leader, cannibal and murderer, whose name is almost identical to mine, as a visual constraint on a crossword poem.
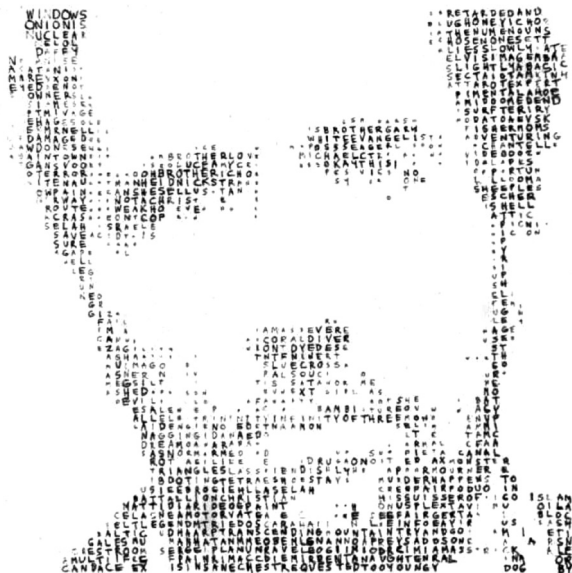
The focus on the letter rather than the syllable also frees the poet from the atavistic connection to sound and time, which was external to the page on which the poem would have its natural home. Thus, the visual poet insists on the letter "not as phoneme but as ink." (McCaffery via Beaulieu) The rigor of the constraint also precludes "meaningful" writing and any kind of transparency or absorptive-ness—qualities that can frustrate an avant-garde artist.

Constraints brings us back to Oulipo, the *Ouvroir de Litterature Potentielle*, or Workshop for Potential Literature, which examined literature produced by various forms of constraint and proposed the creation of potential literature, or frameworks by which literature could be generated, via combinatory or other methods.

The word square

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W   O   R   D
O   V   E   R
R   E   D   O
D   R   O   P
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appears with the title "Abandoned Poem" in poet Philip Terry's 2006 book *Oulip-oems*, whose title gives homage to Oulipo. As a constrained form, squares express an Oulipoean urge.

Most of today's aesthetic consumables—from film, to video games, to television commercials, to entire series of novels (Gossip Girls, Sweet Valley High, The It Girl etc.)—are created using industrial methods in accordance with psycho-logical techniques developed by marketing companies. This prevalent practice, as Christian Bok says demonstrates "the fundamental irrelevance of the writing subject in the manufacture of the written product."

Oulipo, too, moved several steps beyond the writing subject, going beyond mere writing to the creation of patterns by which literature could be made—leaving the grunt work to machines. As Francois Le Lionnais writes in "Lipo: First Mani-festo": "That which certain writers have introduced with talent (even with genius) in their work … (Oulipo) intends to do systematically and scientifically, if need be through recourse to machines that process information" (Motte, Oulipo, 27)

Computers had been used for writing by Oulipo writer Paul Founel before 1983; *The Policeman's Beard is Half Constructed*, written by a program called Racter, was published in 1983. I thought that using computers to write wordsquares

would play to the strengths of the computer as an author. Moreover, it seemed to me that wordsquares can't be written; they can only be discovered. All possible wordsquares exist in some logoic hyperspace, just waiting to be discovered, like gems in a mass of asemic ore. In this way, the process is more like refining.

Before long, Cerkan had constructed a program that was emitting enormous numbers of extremely exciting, lapidary linguistic objects. They were plentiful—we soon had over 90 thousand 4-squares, and over 2 million 7-squares, more than we could even hope to read—and many of them had the power of a koan. I suspected that those I didn't find compelling were simply too profound for me.

At one point, Cerkan found a bit of code online that was written to generate word squares. It was written by Doug McIlroy, who was a key figure in the development of Unix at Bell Labs in the 1970s. McIlroy is a wordsquare enthusiast, and included two of his favorite squares on his personal web page at Dartmouth, where he is a senior faculty member in the Computer Science department:

```
R A C I S M        W A S S A I L
E V I N C E        A N T E N N A
P E R S O N        S T R I N G Y
A S C E N T        S E I Z U R E
S T U C C O        A N N U L A R
T A S T E R        I N G R A T E
                   L A Y E R E D
```

From McIlroy, further research paths led us to a wordsquare subculture that led back to at least the late nineteenth century, and which formed a network of connections between Pythagorean mystics, number symbolists, the National Security Agency and secret military research.

This tradition shared with the visual-poetic lineage a common background in patterned and figured poetry from Imperial Rome, to medieval Portugal and Spain, to Kabbalistic works of diaspora Judaism, in an unbroken tradition of visually deployed letters for magical, spiritual or otherwise transcendent purposes. The 1458 Hebrew manuscript entitled *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*, for instance, contains a 12 × 12 wordsquare of nonsense words.

In the last half of the nineteenth century in America, a widespread subculture of "formists" were obsessed with constructing what were called, with mystical Platonic overtones, "forms"—a category which included wordsquares, rhombuses, diamonds, and other shapes.

Formists referred to themselves as "mystics" or "puzzlers" and went by pseud-onyms they called "noms." One mystic who went by the nom "Maud Lynn" was the editor of *The Round Table*, "considered to be one of the best mystical journals before 1880," according to the 1937 book, *A Key to Puzzledom*. The book further disclosed that "on July 5, 1876, the first convention of puzzlers met in the city of Philadelphia. The movement was engineered principally by James M. Beck, 'Goggles,' who was later Assistant Attorney General of the United States under McKinley. The Eastern Puzzler's League, which would become the National Puzzler's League, was founded in Manhattan on July 4th, 1883, at the appropri-ately named Pythagoras Hall.

The mystics practiced the construction of forms. Forms were often published in the puzzle pages of popular periodicals with spaces where the letters should be and hints so that readers could puzzle out the words themselves. These blank forms presaged the crossword puzzle, which was invented just after the begin-ning of the twentieth century, and which became wildly popular in the 1920s.

The wordsquare was considered by the mystics to be the greatest of all forms. Techniques for constructing forms were developed. The most common squares were symmetrical—in other words, they read the same across as they did down. Those that did not were called "double squares," and were considered more diffi-cult to compose. A double square of 4-letter words is considered as difficult to compose as a simple square of 5-letter words. Techniques for composing forms involved working from the bottom up. Mystics of a competitive nature concen-trated on forming ever-larger forms, and collected enormous lists of words from obscure atlases, gazettes and old dictionaries. "Hundreds of squares composed of 8-letter words have been constructed, but only a few composed of 9-letter words and most, if not all of them, contain terms open to criticism," said *A Key to Puzzledom*.

Legendary formist Palmer Peterson of Lenox, South Dakota —known by the nom "Sherlock Holmes"—created the following dictionary-legal but deeply mystifying double 8-square:

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B A B A M A M A
U D A R I V E R
N O R I S I N G
T E N T M A T E
I N S T O R E N
N A T I V I S T
G R O N E S S E
S A N G S T A R
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The military soon became involved in wordsquares; the Air Force Office for Scientific Research funded a project at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1960s to create a list of 268,000 reverse-alphabetized English words (alphabetized according to the final letters of the word, rather than the first letters); such lists are primarily helpful for creating word squares.

In 1968, Dmitri Borgmann founded the journal *Word Ways*, which was dedicated to "recreational logology." It quickly became a hub for word square research, and contributors included luminaries in the fields of cryptography, computer science, engineering and linguistics.

MacIlroy, a frequent contributor, along with A. Ross Eckler, later a *Word Ways* editor and also a major proponent of the National Puzzler's League, were both stars at Bell Labs in its glory years in the 1960s and '70s. Bell Labs was heavily involved in research that was key to creating today's computing systems and information technology, including the integrated circuit, fiber optic cables, computer languages and encryption methods. The contribution of Bell Labs research to today's technology would be difficult to overstate. Eckler also co-authored the first monograph—a work on guidance systems for missiles—published by the Military Operations Research Society. Eckler's father, by the way, was the director of the U.S. Census Bureau and President of the American Statistical Association.

Other *Word Ways* contributors include Solomon Wolf Golomb, number theorist, cryptographer and developer of deep-space communications for Golden Dawn occultist Jack Parson's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. He was given a medal by the National Security Agency in 1992, whereas his fellow *Word Ways* contributor, the deeply humanistic computer programming pioneer Donald Knuth, turned down an appointment from the same agency. Donald Laycock, a linguist who

studied John Dee's occult Enochian language; Walter Leight, a weather warrior for the Navy who later played key roles at the National Bureau of Standards; Eugene Charles Ulrich, Chief Editor of *The Dead Sea Scrolls* Bible; Leonard R. N. Ashley, expert on occultism; Willard Espy, anti-fascist father-in-law of CIA asset George Plimpton; Enoch Haga, founder of the International Association for Computer Information Systems; and dozens of statisticians, gamblers, engineers and nuclear scientists also filled the pages.

Recent years have seen continuing advances in the field of wordsquares. Cerkan and I were not alone in computerizing the search; not only Mcilroy, but other researchers such as Jeff Grant and Chris Long have used computers to peer into the logoic space in which wordsquares reside. Rex Gooch, who worked in nuclear energy and at IBM, broke the logological equivalent of the speed barrier with the following 10-square:

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D E S C E N D A N T
E C H E N E I D A E
S H O R T C O A T S
C E R B E R U L U S
E N T E R O M E R E
N E C R O L A T E R
D I O U M A B A N A
A D A L E T A B A T
N A T U R E N A M E
T E S S E R A T E D
```

Chris Long (now Chief Statistician for the San Diego Padres) analyzed the relationship between the list of words used—the "support"—and the number of word squares that resulted, in order to prove the formist's sense that a double square was as difficult to find as a square of greater magnitude, and that each increase of magnitude required an exponentially greater size of support.

Jeff Grant, along with scientist Maxey Brooke, was among the more sensitive logologists who addressed aesthetic issues in connection with the wordsquare. The kind of linguistic opacity and incomprehensibility that is as mother's milk to the aficionado of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry, and the "inabsorpability" advocated by Charles Bernstein, are not part of the aesthetic vocabulary of any logologist that I've yet come across. Rather, since these qualities are almost ubiquitous in wordsquares, logologists tend to look for other kinds of interestingness,

such as the use of common words, the use of many different letters, palindromi-
city and the like.

Higher-dimensional forms such as cubes, tesseracts and so forth are also
possible. Cerkan and I discovered some of each, as have people at the National
Puzzler's League. Here's one that, to my mind, speaks to issues of gender, class,
sexual violence and today's gentrified urban arts districts:

Finally, there's a class of square that I first discovered in a vision. While trying unsuccessfully to clear my mind of thoughts, I saw, as if in a Jenny Holzer piece, the words TEA, EAT, ATE scrolling by. I've often seen pieces from Cerkan's program's output printed here and there in old formist lore, so I was not surprised to see this square show up in Borgmann's 1965 book *Language on Vacation* as an example of a cyclic square—i.e., each word represents the same sequence, but starting at a different point. Such a cyclic square automatically makes a cube:

Other examples can be based on ONE; RCA; PTA; or, with a pidgin French assist, UFO. However, I was surprised to realize that a text I'd been attempting to penetrate for almost twenty years, a sequence of asemic, or at least asemiotic, words from the Coptic Book of the Savior from the Askew Codex, formed a similar cyclic square—using the vertices of the phonetic vowel triangle—namely, "IAO, AOI, OIA."

The wordsquare is an authorless text. Wordsquares aren't written, they are found. They can be approached on one hand as the limiting case of the critical theories behind language poetry and structuralist literary theory—and on the other hand as occult eidetic objects, connected to elite structures of military power and cryptocracy.

If, as Barthes said in *The Death of the Author*, "it is language which speaks," in what sense is this death the victory over a dead God that he claims it is? Isn't it a theomorphization of language itself that is taking place?

When Barthes says that "writing, by refusing to assign a 'secret,' an ultimate meaning, to the text (and to the world as text), liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases—reason, science, law," he is continuing the identification of revolution with materialism that has guaranteed the triumph of capital since Marx rejected Hegel's metaphysics in 1848.

The wordsquare, cryptic, perfect, eidetic, stands as a challenge to those of us who prefer freedom to horror. While revolutionaries have rejected the metaphysical in favor of materialism, the forces of reaction have, since precisely 1848, consistently routed the increasingly demoralized revolution. While the left has held onto little but its coldly comforting pseudoscientific sense of superiority and superior design sense, the right has held church meetings and Satanic sacrifices, consulted soothsayers, met in occult societies, cast spells and, consistently, won.

In twentieth-century physics, we have seen the dematerialization of matter; the epistemologies of the quantum have led us, paradoxically, to a Husserlian phenomenology; Cantor's infinities and the contrary infinitesimal point to the ineffable divine; and now only the scientifically and mathematically illiterate, bound to the nineteenth-century science of Marx, still believe in the primacy of matter.

Foucault sensed this. While flattering himself that he, along with the rape enthusiasts Bataille and de Sade, was killing God (though in fact the three were only poking their penknives into the bloated body of the beached behemoth of the Church, which might at any moment explode from the expanding gases of its putrefaction) he acknowledged that only the language of the mystics could properly convey the abysses of eroticism.

The statement that the death of the author is an anti-theological revolution is worse than empty rhetoric when our new gods, the corporations, are able to claim legal authorship and ownership of our very genes. Materialism provides no basis for resistance to the domination of capital, which is precisely the rule over the spirit of the material.

The word square, whose author is the alphabet, may help us to sense what the anchorite Aba Sepa meant when he said, in *The Mysteries of the Greek Alphabet*:

> *Come then, Plato the ignorant, in the pageantry of your pedogogue's dignity… let Aristotle, the chatterbox come, let Demosthenes and Pythagoras, and Socrates and the whole herd of vain Greek philosophers come, so that the assembly of the uneducated may instruct you about the alphabet and the mystery of each of these letters, by which you glorify yourselves and that you write with your hand.*

Mantra Hand

"Night Index" is written in 26 sections, one for each letter of the alphabet. Each presents one facet of a free-association narrative.

A: Archive

A kind of modest radiance trickled through my mind as I leave the Archive on Friday, only to be presented with a sickening taste of my last meal welling up in my throat as I stop to button up my coat. The streetlights are just coming on as the light blue fluorescence of twilight, always so vast and deeply meaningful to me in some obscure way, begins fading and giving way to a quiet evening. Taking out my cell-phone I notice a text glowing in red letters: Don't be late tonight by any means. I miss you. I chuckle to myself, knowing that being late was our way of seducing one another; or to put it another way: a direction in which to fool one another with mirrors.

B: Barbiturates, Benjamin (Walter), Black Lights

The stage is set for another evening of transparent dreaming. That is what this strange arrangement has become when I sit down and think about it hard. We didn't know each other prior to hooking up… I mean, who does that anymore, right? But that evening fourmonths ago when I opened my inbox on that dating site I knew I had found something interesting. Not special, mind you, but something interesting. I could tell by the words and phrases he used in describing himself he was not ordinary like a lot of other men I had met recently with their greasy charm, and on top of that, small penises. He didn't give himself away; he remained hidden, or at least partially seen when I threw tough questions at him. He didn't flinch in anyway. The more he looked at me in a way that wasn't bewitching, but hardly familiar the more I felt like I had tapped into something rarely observed. Call it a hunch or womanly intuition, but I unearthed a diamond in his gaze and then I was his. He sat there across from me in that black light lounge sipping his whiskey in an almost half-hearted way, and after a time we said nothing more at all. I felt like there was no barrier anymore, perhaps because he was a stranger with no knowledge of who or what I was, or the inclinations and desires I kept only to myself. Through the course of our first few hours together we found that we had a mutual appreciation for Walter Benjamin; in particular his great, unfinished magnum opus The Arcades Project. We talked of the flaneur and how wandering the streets of Paris with no true intention but to wander had more appeal than doing a shit load of drugs, which he admitted he had done anyway when he was young. I had no choice but to admit the same, maybe just to impress him, when really all I had ever done was a lot barbiturates when I needed a vast amount of sleep. And yes, my sleep became more interesting as well…

C: Calls in the middle of the night

I tend to take my time on these nights when we are supposed to meet, more out of a necessity to prepare myself for the unknown pleasures that wait than anything else. Still, there are times when she has totally caught me off guard and I would lie awake in my empty bed wondering what would come next as I lay my head down to sleep, a heavy gust of wind rattling my window. It was during these reflections where my mind drifted over past memories of women with less charm, which she would surprise me with a phone call just as the pain of remembrance served as a narcotic to bring on sleep. Did I wake you?... sorry... I had a dream about you and had to tell you right away. Without protest I sat up to listen, relieved by the sound of her voice that washed away those bad memories. I told her it was alright, I hadnt fallen asleep yet anyway. Lighting a fresh cigarette for my waiting mouth, she continued almost breathlessly: I was walking in the desert somewhere in Mexico. I assumed this because the only sign I saw outside a ramshackle town I passed through had Spanish phrases. No one inhabited the town, nor was there any real sign of life. An entirely cloudless day that would be appealing other than the fact I was alone, watching a series of vultures off in the distance. This is what probably propelled me to investigate. Anyway, once I got closer to where the vultures flew, I could see what looked like a person lying on the ground. Rushing over, the sun blazing in my eyes, I looked down to see that it was you who lay bleeding on the verge of death, eyes closed and murmuring. I remember placing my finger on your cracked lips and that is all."

Strangely, I wasn't at all taken aback by her dream, but rather intrigued by the thought of a quiet yet agonizing death in the open desert. More often than not the cherry of the cigarette nearly burning my fingers as I spoke I had many playfully morbid fantasies just like the one she described. She stifled a laugh, then apologized for waking me at such a late hour and assured me she would be calling me again soon to meet. Ending the call, I sat in bed for a long time ruminating over the scene she painted from her unconscious, somehow calm and ready to find her in my own dreams with a smile on my face.

D: Daggers

How should I put this? Really, there is no clear explanation to my fascination with daggers a fascination I had forgotten over time but I can say with a degree of certainty that once we came to know each other a little better through the miasma of the erotic exchange, a deep impulse to greet him with one in the future came rushing to the forefront of my thoughts. The idea almost made me come.

E: E=mc2, Elephants

The streets are dead tonight. They become deader as the months pass and the waning light of fall inevitably disappears, making the nights seem like endless excursions into a gradually cooling void called "winter". Lately, when I'm not thinking of her, I watch old stock footage of atomic bomb tests on the Internet, somehow drawn to the deep light of splitting atoms. Maybe it's more than that, though. Perhaps it has more to do with ultimate endings, whether taken up by forces we cannot control or the people behind them whose intentions seem removed from death until they see, as Oppenheimer did, the price of knowledge. Bad thoughts to have on such a quiet night. I used to lie on my bed when I was a kid and imagine an elephant carrying me across the plains, my head held high, searching out a place to drink water coming down from the mountains. When I come to realize how far removed I am from innocent memories like those, I tend to laugh a lot more at what I've become…

F: Fathers, Fingers

A bottle of white wine chills in my fridge. Thick blue smoke circles my head. I'm restless for one reason and one reason alone: him. He always makes me wait and what inevitably happens is some sort of regression into how and why I've come to this point in time with such a strange man. Maybe he reminds me of my father, the bastard that he is, but to imagine such a thing is wasteful and tiresome, even though the more I've come to notice the similarities between them. The dark hair, the intense gaze, the silences, even the laugh seems so exact. How didn't I notice this before? Sometimes the sudden appearance of a new toy makes one forget what it is they are playing with in the first place. But the aspect of him that really surprised me was his fingers and how much they reminded me of my father's touch. Those gentle fingers wiping away my tears, even as the smell of whiskey and stale cigarettes wafted in my face, or the other hand caressing my leg. Glad he's gone. So very glad. I was right in saying this was a waste of time.

G: Gifts

Nothing she has said as of late has pushed me in the right direction. As we've come closer together a kind of fog has appeared between us obscuring the other. She looks at me curiously now, searching for that bad seed that she is certain must exist. Her gaze is close to the truth, that I will not deny, but I want more of her. Every piece.

Every pore. Every strand of hair. Every eyelash. Trophies, gifts, call them what you like. Is it wrong to want all of someone? The air is so still and the streets so quiet that I imagine nothing else but the two of us, mimicking each other's movements…

H: Halcyon

Where the fuck is he? What is taking him so long? But I digress. I find comfort in the past as most people do by drowning in the familiar. Over the course of the last few months a kind of bomb has gone off in my mind. A time bomb. Literally a bomb that erases the present, insofar as only the immediate is of any interest to me, and the rest of my days are spent living in situations that are only tangible through the lens in my head. One piece in particular has been floating around as of late, taking me back into that fluorescent grey sphere of my memory. I must have been about ten years old at the time, wandering around in the garden trying to catch those cabbage butterflies with a makeshift net, feeling only the deep swell of well being that is common amongst most kids, only there is something wrong with the scene as it progresses. The longer I play the wind picks up, the clouds gather, and I come to realize that perhaps this didn't happen at all. My idea of memory is only a disguise for imagination, and the longer I wait for him to come see me, the more I know that what I see through that lens, the more it needs actualization.

I: Icicles

I'm surprised she hasn't texted me yet. Perhaps I'm just taking my time in order to push her buttons. The streetlights have just come on and I realize I'm running late, knowing that she will be pacing back and forth in her apartment pissed off that I'm not in her arms. Good. As we draw nearer, the more my feelings for her linger in an odd space between strong affection and coldness. If nothing else I've achieved a sort of control with her. I can hang over her now like those icicles on the eaves of houses…

J: Jealousy

Third cigarette. I decided to open the bottle and drink a little in order to calm my nerves. Maybe he has decided to forget me and fuck some other girl. The topic did come up once when we were lying naked on the bed and turned away from another, me looking out the window of my bedroom, and his eyes gazing into the mirror in the corner, perhaps staring at the curve of my back. I asked him if he would ever tire of the games we played with one another. Without turning over,

he said in a soft, almost boyish voice that he didn't know but that every game, no matter how intricate and pleasurable, would inevitably end with one side being defeated. I asked him what he meant. All he did was chuckle.

K: Kabuki

As I walk over the High Gate bridge, brightly lit and empty, I feel a void inside me. Nothing. Odd that she wouldn't make an effort to try to contact me in order to see where I was. Perhaps our relationship is different from others. Yes, definitely different. But different how? What is it about us that make us unique? The way she looks at me when I touch her is more the look of a little girl than a woman, and perhaps that is what I find to be the most appealing aspect about her. How she wriggles beneath my hands as I stroke her skin or touch her breast as though she is resisting me. It is responses like that, subtle and intensely erotic, which make me believe they hide something about her I will never know. Like a kabuki dancer upon the stage acting out the movements of a story, she covers her inner world with beautiful make-up.

L: Letters, Lies

We were having a drink on a rooftop bar during the summer, a night suffused with a sticky heat and a growing mutual drunkenness, when I think he asked me if I had ever received a love letter from someone. My head swimming with whiskey, I asked him to repeat the question. Instead he produced a folded piece of paper from his pocket and handed it to me, his eyes three quarters closed and his breath thick with the smell of Bombay gin. Leaning back in my chair and lighting another slim cigarillo, I put the letter up to the dim patio lantern and began to read: Funny how in this age of distances and isolation I came to find you across those great distances on a computer screen. Lonely is no longer a word I know since I found you. I remember laughing. I also remember how incredibly empty his words sounded. But again, I found him interesting despite his tacky lies. When I looked over at him again something silver flashed in his hands. He smiled and showed me the tiny knife he was playing with in the growing moonlight.

M: Millennium

I see her apartment off in the distance, the pallid light coming from the living room in thin streams. Pausing in the street, more deserted now than before, I lean against a lamp post taking a flask from my coat and sip slowly. Looking up at her balcony I have the feeling that I won't return here after tonight. Just call it a hunch. Maybe I have grown tired and bored in much the same way when

we entered this new century and realized I have gone nowhere but inward away from the light. Many people claim to know where they are going and how they will get there. I've just let impulse drive me to where I need to be. I throw the flask into the street.

N: Nihilism

I'll be ready once he does arrive. After all this time together I've finally learned how to see, and by opening my eyes wider than ever before, I understand what I must do. In order to move forward, one must must break the mirror and walk barefoot over the pieces. Only then can I truly understand what I've been trying to destroy all these years without regret. Perhaps deep down he even wants me to do it for him, because maybe he is thinking the exact same thing. Nothing left.

O: Origins

Someone once said that this universe is possessed by war and games. I would go so far to add that in the midst of that great miasma of energy that brought us here to this point in time, death would have to be the third.

P: Pipe dreams

Images change in my head. Moving away from those of his beautiful face and into that place where butterflies play and roses bloom. Some call that paradise. I call that an impossibility, even though the images are so clear and alive. I step outside onto the balcony and breathe in the emerging night air, all cool and dead, and look westward seeing only the faint glimmer of the day that passed… That and what I thought was real with him.

Q: Questions

I ask myself: Where did this all start going wrong? Answer: When our eyes met under the glare of those black lights.

R: Rain

Why is that when we are so close to the end of a given situation that our minds give way to distant memories? Even now, especially now, I remember the presence of rain as that natural process stirring my thoughts as the vivid darkness set in. The sting of leaving this apartment in the middle of the night when the streets were still and filled with deep puddles, mysterious unwanted tears matching the landscape, always indicated I was heading somewhere I didn't want to go. Not this time. Tonight the cycle is broken. Tonight I act. Tonight I transcend.

S: Snakes

The lobby has several chairs that sit beside a small wall fountain whose vertical ripples remind me of a dream I had of snakes, or rather of one snake in particular. The room always tends to be one with no windows or doors for quick escapes, is dimly lit and the snake lies coiled near a slow burning candle, rearing its sleek head as I approach. We study one another in way that is uncanny as though we share some sort of symbiosis, then the mouth opens. Only then do I accept that I will not survive… I close my eyes and smile.

T: Tears

Turning off the lights, I sit down with my head pressed to the door, listening for the elevator door to open and his soft approach down the hall. My bitterness has turned to tears. Large, salty tears that run down my cheeks and neck into my cleavage. I can almost feel his fingers there, and I shudder to think that he touched me so many times. I try not to breathe deeply so any tiny sound reaches my ears, even my heartbeat which seems dangerously slow. Somehow, I knew this night would be memorable.

U: Unicorn

As I ride up in the rickety frame of the elevator, the sounds of Vangelis flood my ears. Memories of Green, Blade Runner soundtrack. And as the sounds give way to the scrutiny of memory, the vivid image of Decker's unicorn comes to mind in much the same way it did to him, almost like a dream. Just as he may have thought the image was not really his, but planted there by those who created him, I begin to think that nothing has ever really been mine… even her.

V: Vendetta

One can only assume what they will do in any given situation until they are actually confronted with that situation. Now, as I hold the blade in my hand, I give in to what I've always felt: a desire to see an ending.

W: Walking

I like to walk in silence, for in silence one comes to know the slow moving current of the universe and the dynamics of change. Someone told me that once. It might have been her, actually. Sounds like something written on a fortune cookie, but a grain of truth nonetheless. The hallway is still; I must tread lightly so I don't destroy what I have just created. All I have to do now is walk through her door.

X: X-rays

Once the mirror is broken, the reflection is gone and one can truly see the other. Or rather, one can now see through the other.

Y: Y chromosome

My hand grazes the doorknob and my breathing slows. She never locks the door, for she is the inviting type and I'm always welcome. The man, or in this case insect, drawn into the web of the widow spider, suddenly paralyzed and put to sleep. How tired I've become. She has sensed my fatigue and prepared a bed for me to lie down in. Thank you for everything.

Z: Zenith

I can almost taste him now. Lightly licking the edge of the blade, my hunger pangs reach their peak. Tonight, I dine alone.