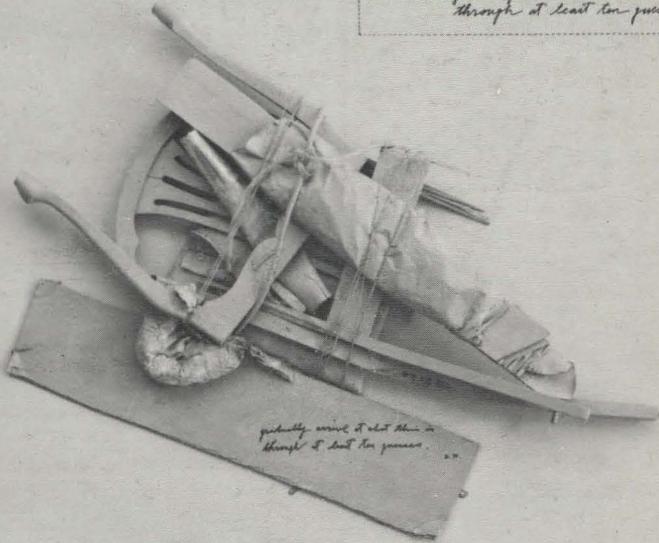


EXTENSIONS 7 \$1



NAME THIS

THE TWO AREAS SEPARATED BY THE GRAY STRIP (MOVABLE)
SHOULD NEVER BE UNITED IN ONE PERCEPTION

EXTENSIONS 7

Editors: Suzanne Zavrian
Joachim Neugroschel

Designer: Margaret Dodd



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EXTENSIONS

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one Paul Celan

EIGHT POEMS

Translated by Joachim Neugroschel

Over three nipple-
stones numbered
with brown-algae blood
in sea-
drunken sleep

turn your
sky tearing loose
from the last
string of rain.

And let
your sweetwater shell
that came riding here with you

sip all this
up before
you hold it to
a clock-shadow's ear
at dusk.

With the persecuted in a late, un-
concealed,
radiant
alliance.

The morning-plummet, overgilded,
fastens on to your co-
swearing, pro-
specting, note-
jotting
heel.

*From the orchis
(go, add up
the shadows of paces to it
behind the five mountains of childhood),
from it, from
which I win the half-word for the twelve-night,
my hand comes to grasp you
forever.*

*A small doom—as big
as the heart-dot that I
put behind your eye
as it stammers my name —
helps me out.*

*You come too,
as if over meadows,
bringing the picture of a wharf-wall;
here—while our keys,
deep in the obstructed,
crossed heraldically—
strangers diced with whatever
we both still possess
of language,
of destiny.*

*When the whiteness attacked us at night;
when more came from the libation-vase
than water;
when the barked knee
hinted to the sacrificial bell:
Fly! —*

*I
was still
whole then.*

*At noon, in the
flickering of instants,
in the shadow of round-graves, into my
chambered sorrow
(with you, the Hither-
hushed, I lived
two days in Rome
on ochre and red)
you come (I lie here already)
gliding bright through the doors, level —:*

*the arms that embrace you become visible, only they. Nevertheless
I mustered that much
mystery.*

*Etched by things undreamt,
the Breadland, sleeplessly traveled, casts
up the mount of life.*

*From its crumb
you once again knead our names,
which I, with an eye
resembling
yours on each of my fingers,
explore for
a place through which I
can wake towards you,
with the bright
hunger-candle in my mouth.*

*The Written erodes, the
Spoken, sea-green,
burns in the bays.*

*In the liquefied names
the dolphins rebound,*

*in the eternized Nowhere, here
in the memory of the clam-
orous bells in – just where?–*

*who
in this
shadow-square
snorts, who
underneath
flares up, flares up, flares up?*



No more sand-art, no sandbook, no masters.

*No dice-winnings. How many
mutes?
Seventeen.*

*Your question – your answer.
Your chant, what does it know?*

Deepinsnow,

Eepinow,

Ee – i – o.

Walter Abish *two*

from Minds Meet

A MESSAGE

There are twenty-six letters in the alphabet. The first letter A resembles the twenty-second letter V. It has a crossbar that links the two converging straight lines halfway between their ends and the point where they meet, and resembles an arrow head pointing straight upward. The letter V, which does not have a crossbar, points in the opposite direction. Even someone unaccustomed to the alphabet will have no difficulty in distinguishing the one from the other. Arrow heads are not extinct as one might suspect. They are still painted on all sorts of directional signs, i.e., This way to the abyss, or simply MENS ROOM.

In spite of the undeniable resemblance, a person pierced by an arrow does not think of the letters A or V. In general, people are conditioned to think of altogether different things. Most likely in the U.S. and in other places where Western Civilization has taken a stranglehold, people think of more immediate things. They think of Errol Flynn, or Wilhelm Furtwangler.

In some of the more backward areas in the Southwest people still use arrows. Disdainfully they shoot them into deer, and moose, and bears. In parts of New Mexico the plains are littered with arrow heads . . . From the air the ground looks like a giant alphabet soup.

The sky darkens gradually, but in spots the night sky remains brightly lit as more and more buildings go up in flames. Surprisingly no one shows any apprehension at this frequent occurrence. It is being taken for granted the way one person after another collapsing behind the checkout counter of your local supermarket from an excess of toxicity is taken for granted. Although the letters of the alphabet are independent of each other, people tend to ingest or read them, as the case may be, in small and large clusters that are called words. No matter what people say to each other, they are using words, not letters. When a word is not understood, the person using it is obliged to spell it aloud. This entails breaking the word into letters. However, if one is careful, one can speak for hours on end, even months sometimes, without once being compelled to spell a word . . . In the more rural sections of the U.S. people do not resort to spelling difficult words . . . instead they plunge a V-shaped knife into the other fella, who moans, "Ohhh." O also happens to be the fifteenth letter in the alphabet. For some reason it is often used by insecure people.

In the larger cities man's literacy is generally taken for granted. When an alarm goes out, the recipient will write on a card the location of the reported fire. The firemen are notified, and, having slid down from their living quarters on a greased pole, gather round the large wall map of their district to discuss the best approach. Many of the streets are blocked . . . many of the street signs missing . . . or pointing in the wrong direction. Still, the map is of some help. It gives the firemen a decided advantage. For one thing, all the street names are printed on the map. When a street is no longer being used, the street name is crossed out on the map. For that purpose an X, or several X's may be used. X is also the twenty-fourth letter in the alphabet. No one ever moans X, or exhales X. Only coy women will say: Although everything is predetermined, X baffled me last night.

Many couples communicate with each other by leaving notes on the kitchen table. Harry comes home and reads what his wife has written. Most notes are expressly reserved for

factual if somewhat prosaic statements: I have gone away, you will never see me again. The casserole should be heated at three-fifty for half an hour. If Harry feels like it he will also write a note. On reading a note it should be possible to discover if the person writing it harbors ill feelings towards one. Frequently, for one reason or another, the author of a note may try to disguise his or her ill-feelings, but like most things kept bottled up, ill-feelings will out. If not in this note then surely in the next.

It is also customary for people to sign the note with their own names. They write Harry or Joe, or just initial it, H or J . . . to let the person for whom the note is intended know that they and not someone else has written it. Not infrequently the writer of notes will feel impelled to address a larger audience. He may, on his way home, stop at one of the public conveniences in the subway and write in capital letters above the urinal: Does the past leave any room for the future? The writer will have the satisfaction of knowing that many men will ponder over this question as they stand with legs apart on the brink of an uncertainty that nothing will relieve.

Harry was embracing his wife when the message arrived. But they were no longer together by the time the message was deciphered a few years later. They were still avidly reading notes left for them on the kitchen table. These notes, respectively signed Bruno and Tina, helped somewhat to diminish their disquietening sense of apartness. Energetically Harry, with a compressed feeling of anguish, clipped all the articles dealing with the message from the local paper. It enabled him to recall the precise moment the message was received. To situate the exact location of their embrace, Harry tried to remember the interior of their former apartment, and while drawing its floor plan he discovered that it resembled the floor plan of his present apartment. What to do, he wondered.

In the building where Harry works, people dislike using the elevator. Quite candidly they admit to being afraid . . . As they shoot up to the thirty-third floor they shout obscenities at the

operator. But all this anger does not alleviate the terror. Many unaccountably spend long hours holding their throbbing heads between their hands and crouching in a retching position. Afterwards they say: tough shit. The message did nothing to assuage people's longing and desire to come together. Harry stretched out on a mat and dreamt of impromptu sex. Now, he whispered, this second, I am ready and waiting for you. But no one rang the bell. By the time Tina entered the room ten minutes later, it was too late, decidedly too late.

Of the many Divisions in the army only one is called the Big A. The men in it wear green fatigues just as the men do in the other divisions. The Big A is chiefly a useful administrative label. It is one way of having the Chiefs of Staff organize the defense of the President on paper without being plagued by tedious duplications. It also makes it possible to send one regiment to relieve another at the White House, or dig ditches for sewers . . . or do something else that is constructive.

The men of the Big A can be distinguished by their colorful shoulder patch which shows a big A on a blue background with a gold border. It's nothing fancy. There is no howling hyena on a volcano, just the letter A. The men seem to be satisfied. The patch is in the shape of a shield. The green fatigues the men wear cancel and reject all parallels that may be drawn to the age of chivalry.

The soldiers have their urinals and their beds. There is a general sort of rhythm to their everyday existence. Some have wives, others keep the names of available girls in spiral notebooks. Their needs, in other words, are taken care of. The shoulder patch unites them in a way. The letter A in this instance remains a situation. It may, for a historian who studies these matters of the heart, be a hopeless one, but how else can one keep the forest from moving in . . . how else can one prevent the stark and forbidding mountains from encroaching upon desolate cities. With a studied air of diffidence the soldiers read the message: Is there any other way to live? Over and over again.

three

Andrei Codrescu

A RELIGIOUS POEM

*The dog holds back his bark and I, my vomit.
I've been drinking with a dog from the fountain
of life and death. The dawn of Heaven
found us chewing gum.
The world felt dizzy: round and round and round.
I admit there is an old man in the dark snapping
a garter belt. Come dog,
I said in Romanian, let's get out of here.
But a strange sand kept stopping us from walking.
Attack the old man, I told my dog in Spanish,
and he did
and what scars there opened
the trees sucked in.
The cold fence around the fountain opened too.
We blew it up. The fuse was tied to my cock
and so was Maria,
my woman of the secret controls*

four

Jim Fulkerson

FIVE PAGES FOR PETR K.

FIVE PAGES FOR PETR K. originally consisted of five pages—more pages were and will be added, ie. a work in progress. The title will not change, however. Any number of pages may be realized in a performance with the minimum being at least part of one page.

Realizations may be prepared by interpreters in any media. Some approaches for preparing a realization follow:

- 1 One person decides the macro duration and each participant prepares his own realization to fit within this time space.
- 2 Each participant prepares his realization with disregard for other realizations or an established macro duration.
- 3 One person prepares the entire realization and explains the individual roles to the rest of the performers. This is the least desirable arrangement.
- 4 Any other configuration which the performers desire is also fine.

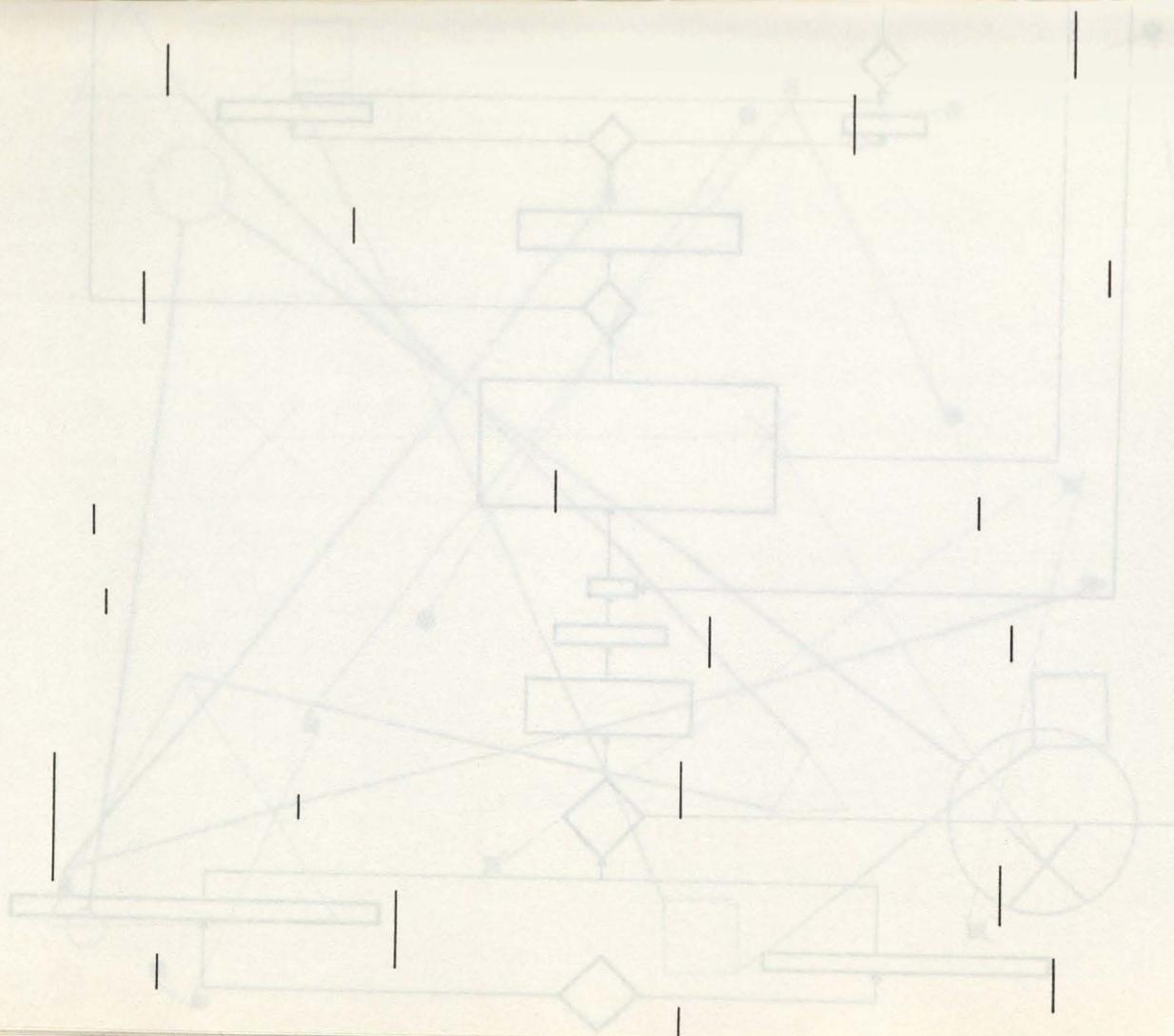
A sample realization following approach number three follows:

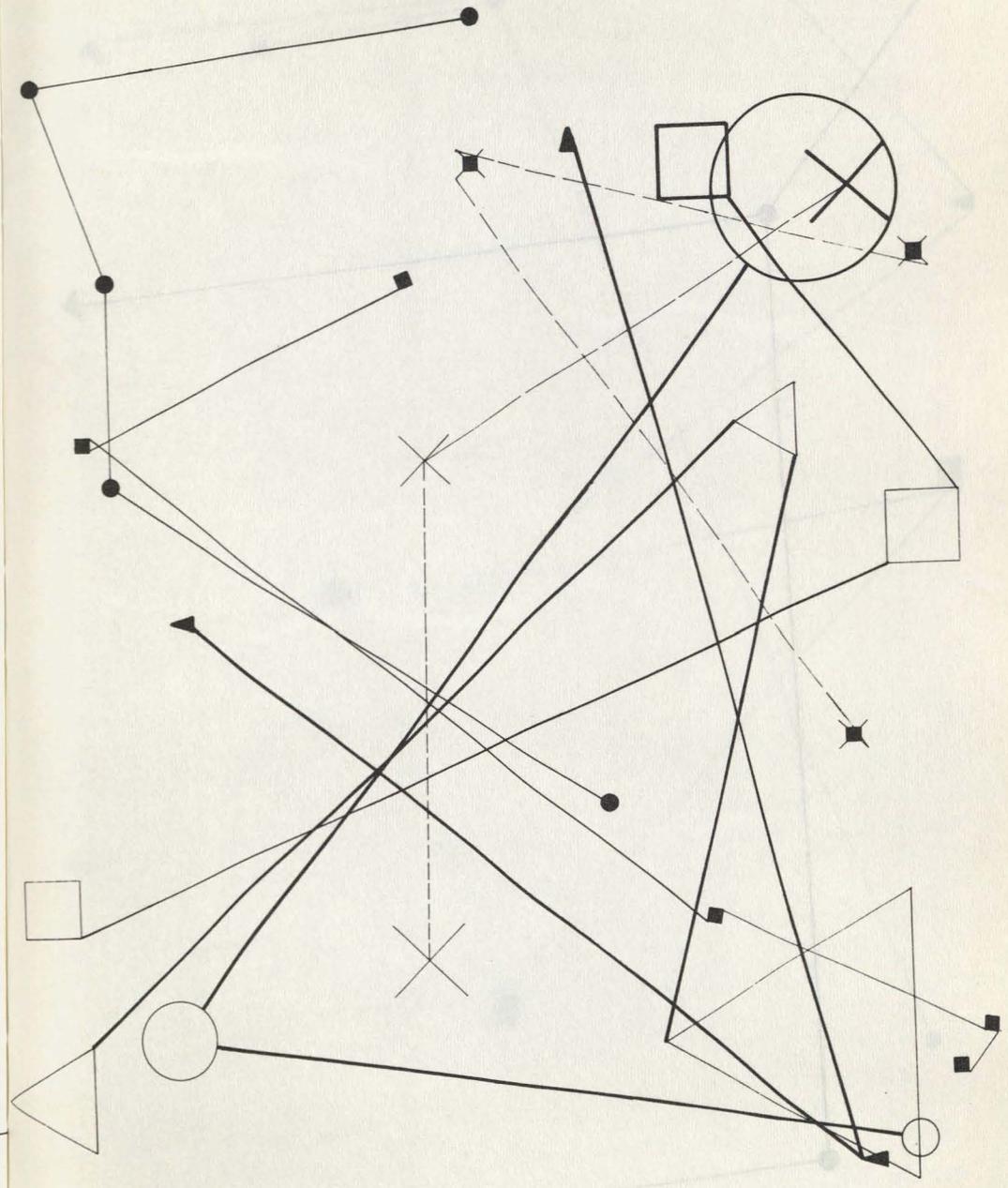
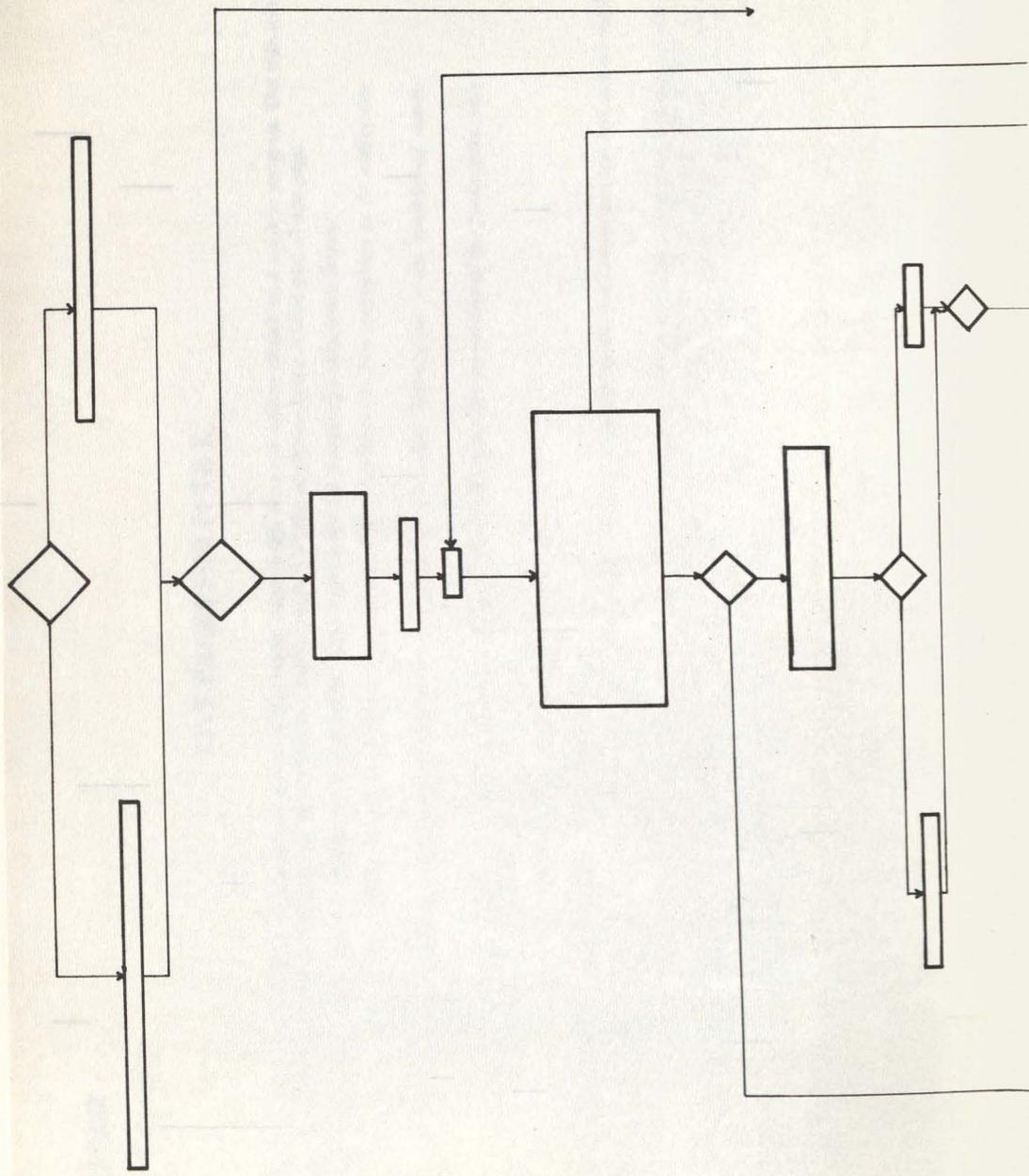
This realization was for four musicians. Page 5 was used to derive various spatial locations for the performers and was laid out on the floor in the performing area using masking tape and luminescent paint.

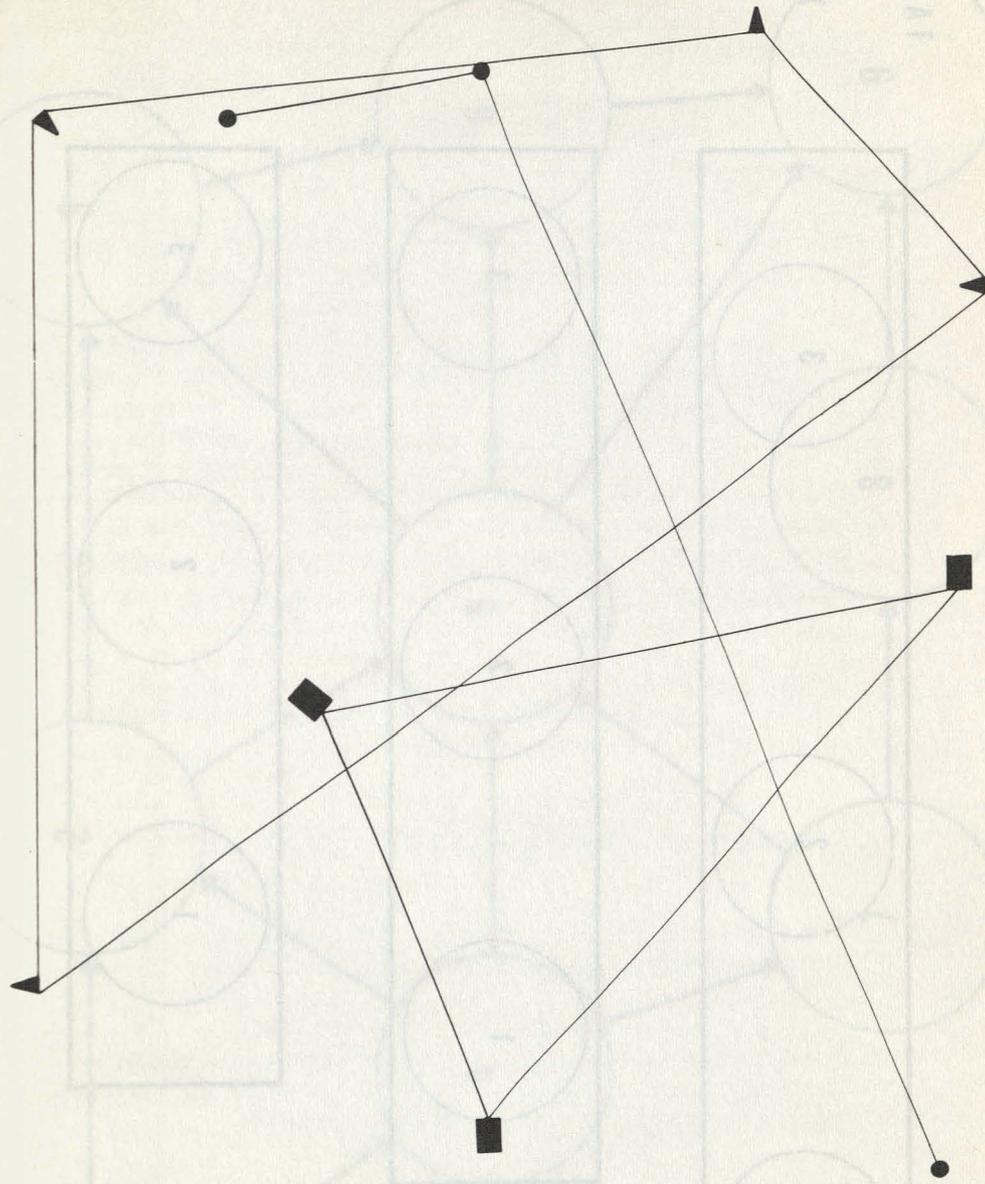
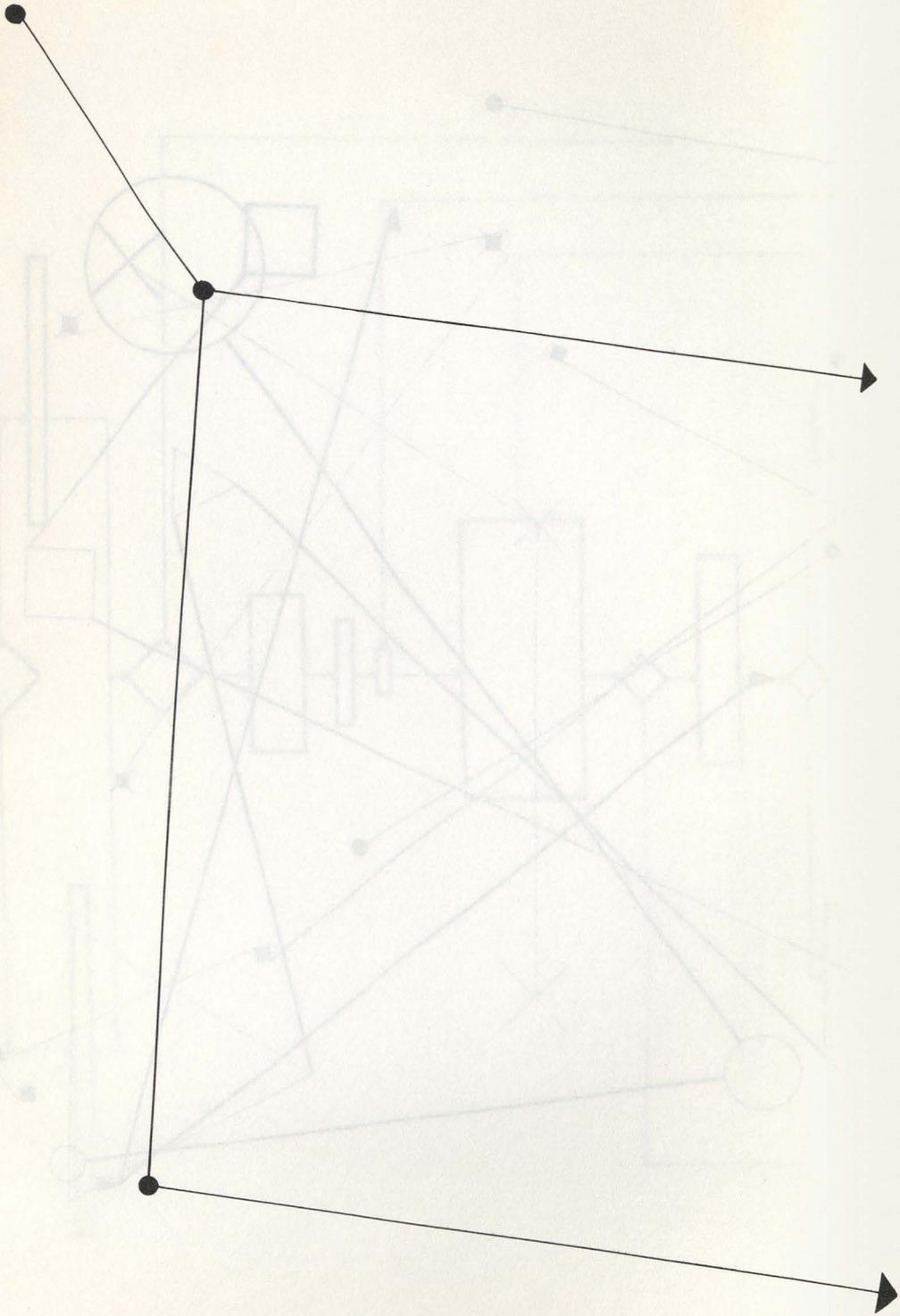
SECTION I: Total darkness. In the rectangular areas, three musicians laid on their backs and began to relax, breathing as deeply as possible, waiting for a tone to appear during an exhale. The fourth musician carefully burned a score in each of the circular areas. Each of the musicians in the rectangular areas let a sound appear and then tried to slowly connect to the first sound which had appeared from their activity. After the sound of the first musician to achieve a sound was "matched" or connected with, the sound was sustained and they began to return to silence quite slowly. When performers finished Section I they went to the preassigned triangular areas, turned on the flashlight suspended above each and waited until all performers had arrived.

SECTION II: Page #1 was turned so that lines were parallel to the floor, divided into three equal staves, and played in the traditional graphic manner of space-time. Each staff was given 3 minutes duration.

SECTION III: Page #3 was the final page utilized. A pre-established leader took a sound activity of his choosing and assigned it to one of the symbol groups on the page from which he derived a plan of making transformations of the chosen sound groups. The leader would begin playing this sound group and maintaining it in a steady state until all performers had also achieved this, then he began his transformations with all performers following until he had completed all transformations and entered another steady state. Without interruption in the sound, the next leader began. When all four had been a leader once, the piece was finished. Total darkness.





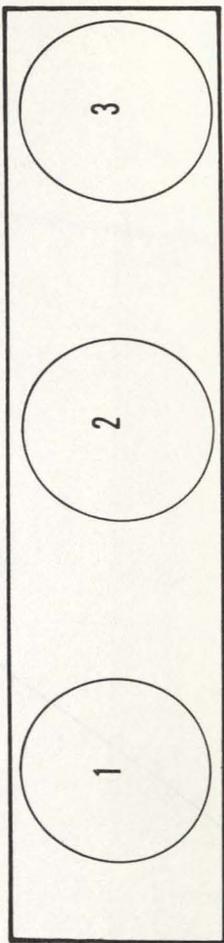
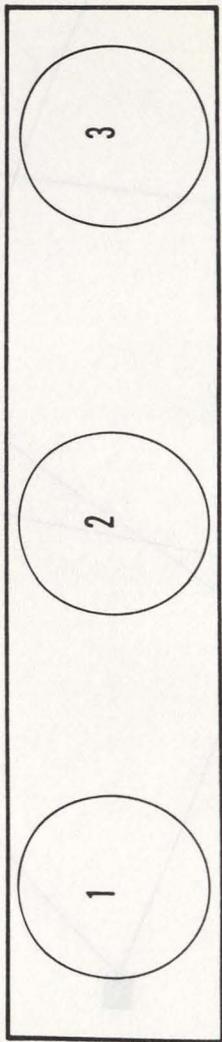
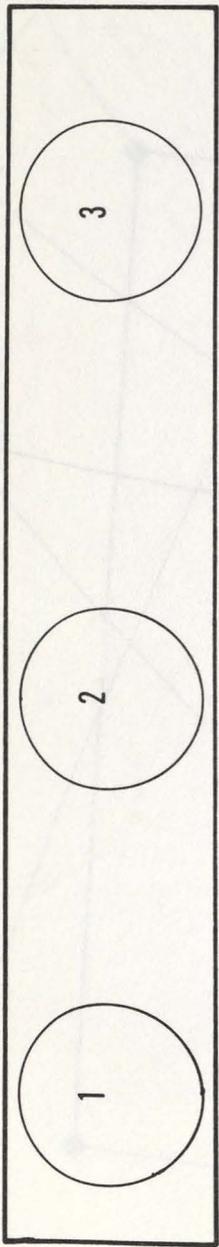


TASK

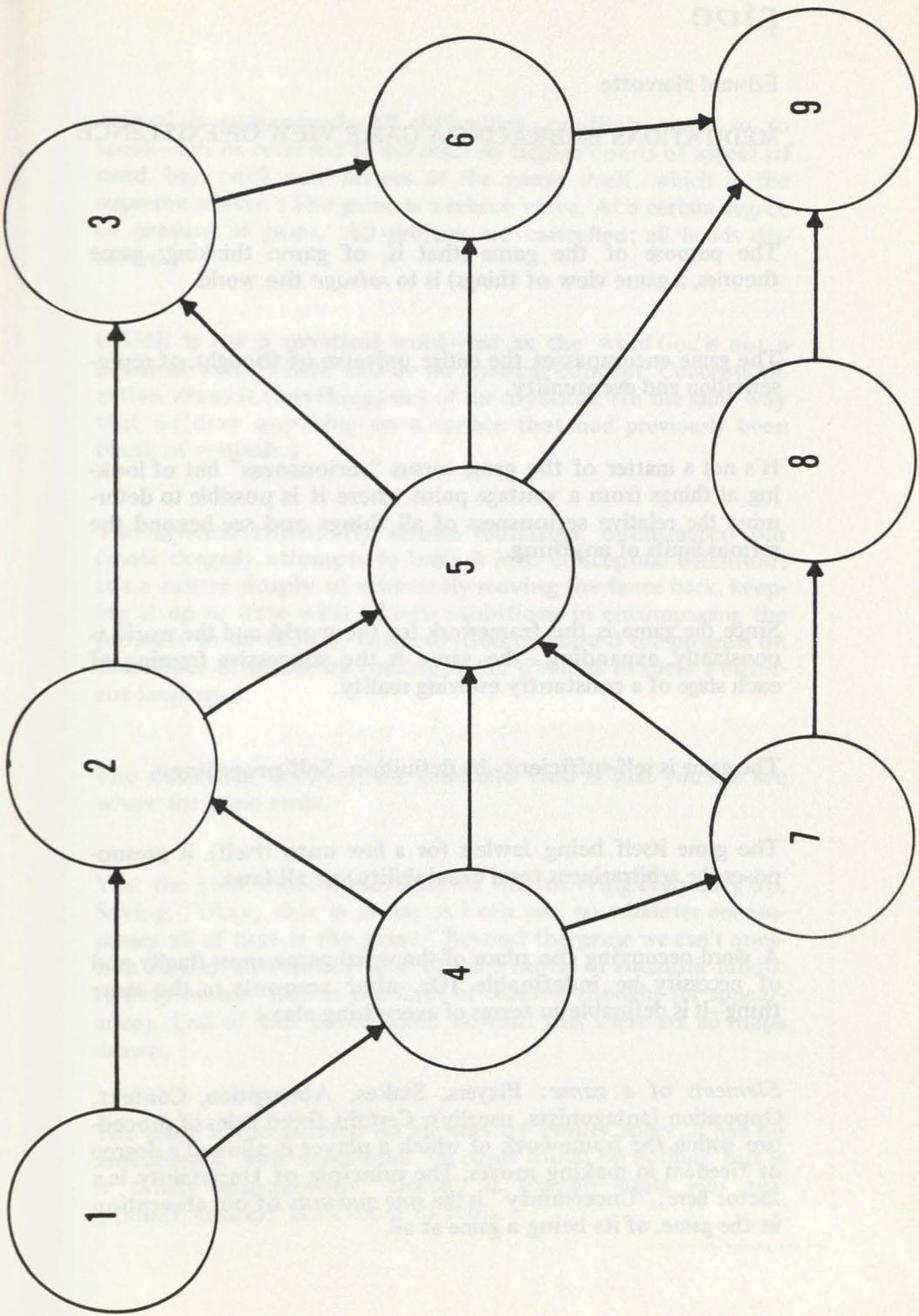
X

Y

Z



STAGE



five

Edward Marcotte

MEDITATIONS EMBRACING A GAME VIEW OF EXISTENCE

The purpose of the game (that is, of game thinking, game theories, a game view of things) is to *salvage* the world.

The game encompasses the entire universe of thought, of representation and eventuality.

It's not a matter of the game versus "seriousness" but of looking at things from a vantage point where it is possible to determine the relative seriousness of all things and see beyond the serious limits of anything.

Since the game is the framework for the world and the world is constantly expanding—the game is the successive framing of each stage of a constantly evolving reality.

The game is self-sufficient—by definition. Self-propelling.

The game itself being lawless (or a law unto itself), it presupposes the arbitrariness (and dissolubility) of all laws.

A word occupying the place of the word game must finally and of necessity be indefinable. (Or, what amounts to the same thing—it is definable in terms of everything else.)

Elements of a game: Players, Stakes, Absorption, Context, Opposition (antagonists, usually); Certain fixed rules of procedure within the framework of which a player is allowed a degree of freedom in making moves; The principle of Uncertainty is a factor here; "Uncertainty" is the *sine qua non* of our absorption in the game, of its being a game at all.

Appeal is guaranteed. All difficulties, conflicts—snags, so to speak—can be referred to successively higher courts of appeal (if need be), until one arrives at the game itself, which is the supreme arbiter. (The game is a release valve. At a certain degree of pressure it pops. All projects are cancelled; all bonds dissolved.)

GAME is not a mystical word—just as the word *God* is not a mystical word. There can be no mystical concept: Conceptualization draws it (anything) out of the mystical. (In the same way that we draw anything on a surface that had previously been blank of symbols.)

The mystical constantly refutes (outstrips, outdistances) our (most dogged) attempts to bring it into conceptual definition: It's a matter simply of constantly moving the fence back, keeping it up to date with all new acquisitions in encompassing the property to be therein defined. (God disrupted the progress on the Tower of Babel by causing all the workers to speak a different language.)

The difference between the game and God is that you can see where the game ends.

Yes: the game ends there. That's a way of tying everything up. Saying, "Okay, this is as far as I can see, so whatever encompasses all of that is the game." Beyond the game we can't question further. But not because of some moral or ritualistic taboo. It only means—this is the limit of charted thought (or appearance). End of the paved road. Beyond this there are no maps drawn.

The game is surrounded on all sides by empty space; it has no antecedents, nor successors. Its edges touch on nothing. But is it totally autonomous? Doesn't it extend roots into any ground? Answer: It *devours* its roots.

Making a move within the game takes the form of: "Given the universe, the world, this time and place, and all that I've experienced, including everything up to this very instant, plus all the forces that are acting upon me, and the forces that will be likely to act upon me, or clash in whatever manner with all the conceivable results (effects) of whatever choices of action I may have before me at this moment—I decide upon this specific move." (At this point, and to precisely this extent, gravity makes its entrance in the play.)

The game in a sense nihilates itself: calls everything back into seriousness once again.

The game is a post-existentialist, post-Christian concept. Rules were rules before, and rested on firm foundations. But now there are no rules except for the self-determining, self-regulating rules of the game. The game has replaced Christ (God) as our redeemer. The game is the unmoved mover. And thus does it satisfy our thirst for the absolute. (Without imprisoning us.) The unmoved mover is the originator of all things. There is nothing prior to it. It is its own reason for existing.

By calling it all a game aren't you robbing it of significance? After all, the notion of a game implies a meaningless, unnecessary activity . . . But this is just the point: The game is not just another way of giving meaning to things. It represents a different way of accounting for things. Away from meaning, so to speak. (Imagine meanings as a series of false fronts, barriers that we have to penetrate in order to get at the essences of things. *Detours.*)

But is it possible for man to live this way, knowing that he himself and the world around him rests on an abyss of nothingness? But the abyss itself was only an element of the old thinking. In reality there is no abyss. If there had been we would have filled it up already. (If God does not exist there can be no devil.)

Observe that the old notion of taking life seriously implies the exact opposite. For, after all, what were the criteria backing this

prescription? Not other than gods, universal laws, myths . . . things *outside* of life. In other words, take life seriously not for itself but because these things stand behind it. Which is not to take life seriously at all. (Myths thus defeat the purpose for which they were intended: they don't qualify or elevate reality—they diminish it.)

The word game is an omnidirectional pivot point. As the word both of zero meaning and all possible meaning, of all value and no value, etc.

The pivot point is where the element of determinacy shrinks to zero. There exists such a pivot point, or multiple pivot points, in every situation, the discovery and application of which provides immediate (and authentic) release from such situation. The game thus solves everything by opening a pathway beyond any particular context, thus negating it.

The game is a meeting place; we participate in the game.

The game does not imply a loss of involvement, but rather a shifting of the involvement of life to a different level—the level of game-like involvement, which bypasses all the binds of reality involvement.

The world as an infinite game of chance and of moves outstrips any notion of a "regulator" or "maker"—God is rendered superfluous. What is indispensable is the player of the game, who casts his lot at every turn, makes his play, and confronts a fate that constantly recedes into an infinitude of subdivisions.

One final attribute of the game as a self inclosed universe: it ultimately cancels itself—when we have seen that everything is a game it's all moved to a different level, there to be incorporated in the light of a new status. At this point a new sense of reality is generated (or, comes forth, becomes manifest): It's just a matter of relocation.

THE MESSENGER

I Turned from flattering princes, I am the
 eye looking
 upon a book thick and ancient,
 delicate in intonation,
 finding there fear in cryptic voices.
 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also
 the Lord sitting upon a throne high and
 lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

In the year that the convert turned from
 sycophant I
 saw the grape ripening in the vineyard and
 asked how a Lord can sit on the ancient
 wings of a dead moth?
 Six wings answered in sonorous silence
 that there is a temple,
 is there not?

Above the temple stood the seraphim: each one
 had six wings, with twain he covered his face,
 and with twain he covered his feet and with
 twain he did fly.

As moths, not angels of the sun,
 as children of the world and
 the chrysalis
 angels in silence said:
 "The worm infects the rose,"
 and one cried silently to another and said:
 "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the
 whole earth is full of his glory."

Motheaten, brown in veins
 where red life once flew,
 pressed to Isaiah's blood
 in a book
 sonorous, brown with time,
 the rose crumbles, like an ancient moth.
 Rose, again earth
 as my fingers return you to dust
 and Holy, holy, holy is the dust.

II

In my presence
 an empty boat stands
 upon an empty sea.

The boat
 the sea tremble beneath
 a crying gull.

III

A strange and mystic cloud,
 a purple vapor shot with lightning
 seizes my throat in the hour of embracing.
 Experience is dirt
 upon a
 crumbled earth.

I pay for everything with fool's gold.
 There was a time
 when I saw gold for gold on the butterfly
 and green for green on the caterpillar's spine.
 Six moths of black and
 brown flutter toward an orange flame.

I have entered a time of darkness.

Then flew one of the seraphim unto me,
 having a live coal in his hand, which he had
 taken with the tongs from off the altar.

Ash remains, soot where once
 red contrasted black.
 An history lies in these twisted tongs
 once sacred as an altar:
 reverberations now where once was
 a steady hand upon the sky.
 Fearful as children in the
 night I sit amid
 ashes and soot seeking playthings
 to give the sun tomorrow.

IV

A golden moon pulls
 the boat from harbor.
 A rope coils around
 a heavy anchor lying in the bow.
 I hear the voice Saying
 Whom shall I send and who will go?

Michael O'Brien

eight

For Ruth

In pyjamas, you're part of the Cultural Revolution
In Texas, you listen & press flowers
In borrowed cars, you continue your travels
In the dream, you mourn, set apart
In the kitchen, you wash lettuce, praising each leaf
In winter, your nose is cold, like the babushka ladies
Falling asleep, you shake yourself down
In Salem, you take a nap on Kenny's couch, the hard sunlight falling on your
face through the curtained window
In the chair, reading a mystery book, you invent money & a winter in Venice
In the window, you water your friends the plants
In the airport, you wear your new hat & blushes
In the mirror, you are a student
Working, you take long lunches with a catalog of friends, boozy midtown, the
artifacts of success
In cabs, you kiss me, invariably
In Japanese restaurants, you are a little girl & your mother gives you a bowl
of *miso* before you go off to school
In your purse, a salad of banknotes
In your clear eyes
In your gullibility, "an early work of Mozart"
In your anxiety, daytime TV
In jeans, you wear your hair down & no blouse
In phone conversations, falling asleep
In the mailbox, your hideous postcards
In the living-room, you & I, waltzing to Mahler
In the morning, you drink tea & assemble the day
In New York, you walk to Peter's, determinedly (I watched from the bus)
In London, you spill the broccoli & salvage it, brushing the green out of your
hair all evening
In Paris, you send me pictures of unicorns
In the market, you finger avocados
In the night, you lean on my chest as we watch the stars come in for the Late Show
In your hilarity, as I curtsey & bring you a soda
In the photograph, your defenseless gaiety
In the window, four dogwood trees, aching to bloom

nine

Jean Daive

CRIANGULATION

Translated from the French by

Joachim Neugroschel

In Vision Then Through Enigmas

Of a death, which is a dividing of the brain in two mother-tongues, or of the other death, all memory disperses the time of man and the origin. The scream imposing itself, by itself, on the poem too as a secret to descend beyond the human into the uttermost depth—who has not experienced it as the Unique to traverse through death?

From void to torpor, I have terror at not haunting the Impossible, the ghetto-cipher of some absolute poem, indecipherable but for its machination. All that resembles the world is man and what does not exist: the world that is I and that, for us, begins at Madness. With poems, I advance fatefully, with the horror that all within me plays out. Towards that place I advance, where the Other, the secret Name, the Law continue to incomplete the negation then the work, that immense phallic brain whose hieratic signs I unravel.

Whoever goes to the highest, from negation to the work, goes from castration to something of death: page after page, corpse after corpse. A liturgy.

Worlds through the mouth

How might I disappear if I cannot begin except through creation? And knowing that analogical death is the sole mediator between thought and knowledge, between thought of the unknown and knowledge of an imperishable, what is a shadow that is no longer the opposite of a shadow?

I was
like a gaze which now is only behind itself
and closes to the eyelids
of ourselves
no longer the things of night or the night
but
the act
when all had said
and I myself
"anatomy is our fate"
the act itself
when all had wreaked the simple vengeance
as a sibling-uterus
then
as humiliation.

An ultimate time to the gaze, the Arcane like a stuttering of death if not crossing the work without the mind being the word. I advanced towards that which, summoned ever since beyond fateful learning, was rejected in the other knowledge. With the last shadow went the fifth page: my memory, turned universal, appeared phallic, decipherable.

The enumeration I drew, like the curtain of worlds hung from abysses, was succeeded by the mass of hair that protrudes over the absolute. From grazing (resemblance) I became shadows transparent for death. No more being, no more language: only the invisible, shedding a unique image. A place, a witness to the cipher, cast its shadow, and through the circle that the absolute extended to spectral natures, to the whiteness of their cries, the law encoded such a creation, such a figure.

My mouth then touched signs of flesh.

A death does not exist on which the stamp has
bones absent looked understood words. The coil lasting
themselves. I walked at the side of learning alone a looking
sign. Likewise I walked with my eyes closed for the signs.

The Only-One appeared who is the Shadow in its fifth Figure. I warn the voices of low and high. Pass across hair, napes, gazes. I leave no memory in memory so that my gaze among enumerated (shrouded) things stained stars, the Other, and the world. Presence of Night-Being. Figure behind hoards of suns. I arrive at the place of indefinitely growing letters where to pass—to increase—is hallucination of one by one. For a long while, Head with mortal pupils furiously hounded by the book, despoiled its ultimate Figure. Far beyond the Lodge-Shadow, the initial letters reversed the order of numbers. Everything became a fraction amid white Head. I stopped entering into name and attribute. Forever.

The ancestor being lightly grazed, Presence advanced towards Figure. I cry. If he unearths, if he cuts the root. I strike. If he speaks, if he cries, if he strikes. Everything: a grazing. Behind me, I tow the alphabet by which, long ago, clad in them, they descended—Figures.

in presence of grace
space. hours. bodies in visions
has always been
falling
as though from a golden is tense
the search
that does not exist
and the ritual night.

A death does not exist on which she stamps her bones, sidereal fleshes, underground roads. The soils facing themselves, I walked at the side of hearing along a flashing sign. Likewise I walked with my eyelid lost to the enigma, and with a power revived its silence.

The human branch and the branch
that does not exist
of terror and organs

I say
that
from the place that is lost
to the place that I lose
an outside
of possessed gazes
mitre bones bodies in visions
has always been
falling
as though from a golden la tene

the branch
that does not exist
amid the ritual nights.

A death does not exist on which she stamps her
bony, silver fingers, underground roads. The wide facing
herselves, I walked at the side of hearing along a flashing
sun. Likewise I walked with my eyelids lost to the exterior.

A letter unique in itself to skim through in death

The distribution of shadows into a number of mys-
terious channels parallels the distribution of hair into as
many ciphers of my brain.

The drifting tentacles the inside into the world of
two persons through which only the Figures of my brain

I was attached and I turned in the Figures of my
brain as in a magical circle long ago. I saw my own move-
ment effect the universal dishevelment. I saw the mass of
astral hair dividing endlessly and each single hair being
reborn in its shadow, in its Star-Figure, to vanish from my
sight.

The dividing initiates the invisible into the world of two persons through which only the Figures of my brain scatter and traverse the mass of hair whose Figures appear beyond each hair that every shadow makes in reversing itself into its person.

The distribution of the dead into a number of mysterious rays parallels the distribution of ridges into as many channels in my brain.

In the snow
above the dome I saw
a piece of the shroud unfold
in which death returns and halts
as
after death
the head in the head
and
my fingers held celestial flesh
gliding into the male bath
like liturgical brains

I was
we were already a cry more distant than the water
or the corpse
whose claws still clutch the wing
of an Asia.

Through negation the hieratic Subjects come to light

One night I read death on the lips of her who, skimming through language in the falling of astral letters, averted the secret from herself. One last time I wanted to graze her. Of the invisible, she left only the mass of hair and, to begin with me, she passed through herself into her plurality.

*I pass through hair, napes, gazes. Pass through brain
like a star of the inhabited spirit. Along a vertebral water, I
glided, traversed by shadows.*

At the winding of knowledge the book loomed up,
and it fell outside like an infinite beginning while Double
clad all alphabets in the selfsame letters of death. A mouth
strove hard to utter only: "Nothing herself fallen of
enumerated things except the letter."

At half-abyss amid the Tree, when Figure reflected Presence and when Force dispersed any shadows, I saw the disposition of language in five diverse reaches, and the mass of hair snuffed out the order of their signs. Within the brain I myself was Figures and I was the object of their number.

Everything—metrical language—Suns Alphabets Knowledge

What dies and what was dying: on the side of man, on the side of machination. And this place—a creeping of language—reduced to the space that despairs of the beyond in human speech. For madness was in this place, and it struck Figure Presence Tree to pour out the gaze-sign and to advance in the mind only its secrets—averted—in metrical language: Suns Alphabets Knowledges: Nulls. As for that phantom stretched out full-face over worlds, it withdrew itself leaving the lips with nothing but usage, and habit with an abyss for eternity alive like mouth of a wounded lip: increasing entropy, still an abyss, eternity alive at last, eternity and flesh turned into a unique hare-lip.

First nor followed: the final shadow. Thrown like a
breath thrown back beyond the member—in the body of a
final shadow.

The patriarchal lip
extends beyond experience
far beyond
the apparatus-Word
of the directions of space

ghetto the uterus in which living flesh
see
across seeds the one
that is
not two not more than two
but a sacrificial
wound

a black pupil uterine
moves from the anus-eye and comes back to the gaze

at the uttermost depth of torture after the horror
sightless eyes from beneath
alchemical eyes
absent themselves
in the baths of seers

black body white skull
thrown into an expiatory embrace
growing beyond measure
in a single root
through a crematorial whiteness.

And whiteness through the dead makes an origin recede

To name? The name no longer echoed itself. In space
five overlaid rays reduced the stars, the seas, the skies, to
diverse equalities. A seed formulated the laws of a lumi-
nous magical universe through the cries uttered in the
breath of deadmen outside an inhabited world.

In whatever depth I may be: the clod as an uninter-
rupted diction and the cry made of constellations. Where I
am opposite, unknown, entangled, as myself returns no
more.

Coming to the world from long ago
the angel
of my brain
that a star distracts from its gathering night
settles in my posthumous sheet
at the beginning

I was already
clawed by the seeds the member
next to her who was dying
the negative candle darkening
the supernatural cards
next to her who watched over the
unfinished birth.

Downward: whoever would have spoken would not
have framed his sentence. An awesome sentence whose
ultimate word being a formula would at nightfall have
occupied the universal cipher with correspondences.
Downward under the member which he watched upright
like a coffin, spectral time arrays itself by the mouth in
millennial brightnesses.

The race only occurs outside with the instrument of
meteoric proportions or as I embody myself it strays in its
splitting towards shadows.

Before him in memory, breaths stratify, enumerations
of things, at the same time that his coffin stops opening.
But things thought and things learned no longer form a
single shadow in which the skeleton finds within itself a
trace of its shadow.

And whiteness through the dead makes an origin recede

To name? The name no longer echoed itself. In space
five overlaid rays reduced the stars, the seas, the skies, to
diverse equalities. A seed formulated the laws of a lumi-
nous magical universe through the cries uttered in the
breath of deadmen outside an inhabited world.

In whatever depth I may be: the clod as an uninter-
rupted diction and the cry made of constellations. Where I
am opposite, unknown, entangled, as myself returns no
more.

First nor followed: the final shadow. Thrown like a
breath thrown back beyond the member—in the body of a
final shadow.

The patriarchal lip
extends beyond experience
far beyond
the apparatus-Word
of the directions of space

ghetto the uterus in which living flesh
see
across seeds the one
that is
not two not more than two
but a sacrificial
wound

a black pupil uterine
moves from the anus-eye and comes back to the gaze

at the uttermost depth of torture after the horror
sightless eyes from beneath
alchemical eyes
absent themselves
in the baths of seers

black body white skull
thrown into an expiatory embrace
growing beyond measure
in a single root
through a crematorial whiteness.

And knowing that analogical death is the sole mediator between thought and knowledge, between thought of the unknown and knowledge of an imperishable, what is a shadow that is no longer the opposite of a shadow: incest.

Marisol As If Klee Drew Her

Late at night, Klee tired of the dissipation of art, the taste of the latest "stink" in his nostrils, (he was affected by appearance that way: a boy is swayed; a man is put upon his head & wakes his feet up to "right now"),

think of her *Mona Lisa* with *Giaconda* on a board & plaster hands — "right now" had Canaday, naturally, saying she "seems to be heading for the edge but stops in time at the brink"

stay, he sd. to the twinkle in her eye that captivated him there where moments are more than artifice, next in line to serve, the two lines of *Protopogenes* and *Appeles*, her drawn in & overlooked, in that most obvious place, no less, incident of growth, "child betrayed,"

it is the thinnest—no, the voluptuous ascent of "mere" in something like *Twittering Machine*, &, then, *Marisol*, on her head, doing with her removed, detached humor, (the blind poet with his head that way, on the land, nosed, too, the stuck horse of lolling thought to the trough where *up* came & the chair that climbed on & fitted, yes, the "sitting position," that's right, "right now"),

& yes, Marisol was doing with detachment then, (how the feet loll in nothingness, so work adeptly, adaptively, & with love), the man-created legs of the chair, sending Spanish whispers into its curved flesh-fitted back, & Klee, with a title in mind, held Marisol's night & waited for the birds of morning, the song he felt lines into what morning is, their flight that we imitate upside down, on our heads, & fly, stuck in one place, children without wings, or those other "voluptuous" lines of "mere,"

What can you say about Klee knowing "sitting down" so well except commission him to draw Marisol knowing "walking by."

I put into this poem, then, a Spanish eye that met in Switzerland the way it was to be: stuck in one place, & a violent refusal that shakes the horizon, the air going anywhere it wants to, a wingless side wrenching from "mere" places the imagination is, right now, disappointment dulling nothing, brightening the ever present place we're in, always, & the night, too, Marisol says serves them who act and try.

Oh, I want to violate it—the twinkle she has in her eye, walking by.

Marisol's Stored Strength

She comes in though you've locked the door, the windows, too, & the dog's howling, she's in the same old satire, has the dog by the tail, & yr. husband by his, it's not that she can't make up her mind what tail she wants (they both wag at women), it's the doll of the house she's after, to put her face to hers, draw in the justifiably beautiful dimension of womanhood, but Marisol is fallible, too, has her hands full, the dog's drooling on her breast & yr. husband has spilled his tail all over her leg, with those ends, she makes for us the top of the chair where eyes avert, blush, or, at the last minute, steal back to the eyes that are there, unguarded, then, & loving the lush, long eyelashes closing in the child that has come, for Marisol doesn't take satire to rhymes that rhyme or vulnerability that the tail is attached to, it's bad form for anyone, obscenity for one like her, whose

eyes marry everything and everyone that enter into the partnership of being, for a moment, a livable form in whom one can sense spaces that walked in take the self home to proper rooms, rhymes, vulnerability going to their walls, waiting as you, for this woman, then, who has room for both of you in eyes that are no longer eyelashes closing in a child but opening, opening men walking out to their shadows that her body has kept in place, Penelope & Ulysses, the travelers of loyalty, companioned by a dog, and that tale that stayed behind them until their eyes could speak it, wordless tale but so visible a mere tot of three walked to them to be closed in, raveled & unraveled, until one waited for him. Marisol, he thgt., & turned still where he could see gentleness and love where she sat, the top of the chair the head was positioned in his first acknowledgement & taking him on then, those separations loyalty brings, braved through because she had put her face to women, & none in all those separations confused him, because there was no last minute for his eyes to steal back to them, she was the agelessness of womanhood, the eternal rhyming wall eyes have built, the last spot the traveler stops in, consummation.

Advertising Claims

I sd. to her, The dozen I haven't done are what bothers me the most, all *her*, the burnt finger, drying douche bag, birth control pill, the song of the back, (lose yr. place in the rhythm method & you appreciate Marisol—back so firm you have to understand the eleven yr. old girl in her—mother dead from cancer at that age & father, dotting father, taking her places—oh, eleven yr. old in her face sculpted & wordlessly talked about at a party, from there, the joined harmony, the distance in a room people bunch together in to talk loudly but really to be near the far-off person, the functionary one across the expanse of artifice & its form, her face that partners all love that is fantasy, so longest lasting, & is everywhere in that distance, & so the fine, high cheek bone, the Spanish accented whispers, the luxuriant fall of black hair, & the disturbing, homeless black

eyes are the distance
Gabiella Mistral took
young Neruda to, & gone,
companions to the farthest
place in life we can go to,
the private self), — oh,
they bother me, the dozen,
& why catalogue the rest —
you know the position
& publically I can't
return yr. hand to that
excitement.

Woman, I make this
advertising claim
and pay the highest price
to do so. I am without
her *firm* back, her
private self, & kidnapper
that I am, she is 16,
has eyes that are home,
& her father is locking
the door, & watching
her protectively all the
way to her unpartnered
bed. If I throw a
stone at her window —
but how can I get to her.
Nothing masculine here
continues the distance.
Functionless, formless
female in love with female,
I go to the one whose
wickedness is in
her humor and not her
eyes.

eleven

Raphael Oliva

As Bergman's reality revolves about seven/ our world

Ultimately inferior/ subtracts four/ and possibly that
Is why we're lesser on a scale/ of seven we are only

Three/ or four less/ or not even half/ in other terms/
Three gods in our world cannot compete with even one

From Bergman's/ his deities are all distantly distinct
And different/ the chances of superiority in our favor

Are only 4.7 out of a possible 10/ or three out of seven/
Or less than equally half/ the father god/ the holy

Ghost of people's minds/ and the Jesus Christ gods/ boasting
Difference suggests just that there is none/ in our world
All gods are equal/ leaving room for deviation but little
For difference/ two of three gods have ears of thirds of

Two/ though all heads of three are similar/ though one more
So than the other two thirds/ with little room for difference/

Though three forms of deviation occur/ all thirds decree
Condemnation/ being better than the other/ one third works

For the ghost/ in turn apathy is father's reward to flourish
In exploitation/ though this favor is reciprocated/ Jesus

Christ/ earless/ lives on a farm in the same land/ or equal/
Or room for deviation/ but little for originality/ one
Third knowledge from Jesus Christ is as good as two thirds
Of father and ghost/ all things being equal/ or little

Room for creativity/ but expands for deviation/ Christ/
As original as Jesus condemning the exploiters for ex-

ploiting/ and exploiters for being exploited/ or throw in
A little/ but equal condemnation/ for slandering the

ONLY HOLY NAME OF THREE GODS/ ALL THINGS BEING EQUAL

twelve

David Shapiro

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BULWARKS AT DEAL

1.

To begin with, my rising with you near the Deal Apartments;
and my heart, always in ferocious projects, worries you
with distances and dark, with the perishing tendrils
in your hands still of the absurd, individual gift.

But if I tried to grab the child, this moment he becomes me
Or to seize you without suffering
my eyes in their skinny gaze hold, cover you no more.

The afternoon stone.
How many, our truest summers gone, the townsmen plundered you
selfless, dreamless, on the lopsided shore
and you quailed in horror
while the bloated gulls beat past the poles

2.

Lord I sleep and I sleep

I am haunted all night by the look of cars

When I sleep they can speak, they say: Ride me,
David. I am fast as death

Well who lighted this road up? Who made me this clear?

You know I am soft as plasma

I am haunted by all these things

I am crushed instantly

3.

Four hospitals put on the red hairs
of stink. The night puts on
a jay, a bat. I watch the water drop
sail thru these atmospheres of pain.

That is the red eye of the lobby.
And this is the lobby. Normally,
we are distressed;
when this man bobs at the dissolution

Of his plants,
which the children are already
sticking to a swarm under the floor
I begin to applaud that crazy

Bat that the night floats up
or swivels over the same street
that is lighted up
or when the moon separates

The teeth of nervous
monkeys in a store
I watch the woman whom I will
eventually kiss

Or I watch the tired men
make capital letters on the moviehouses
I am embarrassed, walking
into your body

4.

Even though the flower
in its important tropism
drops the root, and the moon
is rooted into the savage sea
The bath lockers keep screaming
for the carpenter, who finally
hangs the bulwark which serves
as a boundary for this nightmare.
And he is obese, carefully
dragging my hair in his mixture.
Whenever a cop turns around, that
carpenter pulls a flower from my cheek
Which he awards him.
O if I could dis sever
the rods and cones of a tiny organ
I'd have my flower
Because it is unusual and poisonous
anyway. He's angry at me.
So he drivels it back
on the hill.
You can tell that the crab
is really screwed to a grain
in his back and that the rotating
cyst is not mercy.
The lizard rolling toward
you operates the woods
but his tail shrivels and it is
swiftly deposited.
I know who was jockeying
in the moonlight, that time.
This time he can batter me.
I am pulled down.

5.

I stand on a weak mound,
wishing my eyes,
marking the swift particular fall
of the darkness which imposes
such fitful origins
as moonlight: moonlight recovers my limbs.
And in several wars I join
yourselves again,
tracing that thin, obsessive jay
I meet no more, jabbering down the skies
summers ago:
lifted to a wind I know, for all my
journeying among what
indecisive and unimaginative light
I go.

6.

SWEET ROOM! the wrist is made of strings.
Someone is wiping my legs. The beak is
flicked.

O when will the bluebird sit on my belly?
When his wings are blotched in the knocking
tree? I have concentrated on the bluebird
before.

7.

Each considers himself at rest in the ether.

The red birds are dancing. They saw the sun! They saw the sun! They call me, they call me the genius of the lake.

The wild ducks are moving.

You are the only thing that is going to die today, sick man.

You were the one that stretched the lake water.

You are the genius of the lake.

You were washed in the water drop. I need it, I need it now.

Sick man, now you really have to leave me alone.

You made me make this up. You made me love music.

You told me: This is the music that weaves the Nest.

1960-1962

Paul Grillo **thirteen**

7

Rodin's "Martyr" and Lady Electric Brown (1965)

I

She falls

past noon years and a water-rush

of

dreaming.

II

The red songbow of her body shatters,

and

wreathes the ground

with bloodfruit.

III

her eyes are shell and her breasts

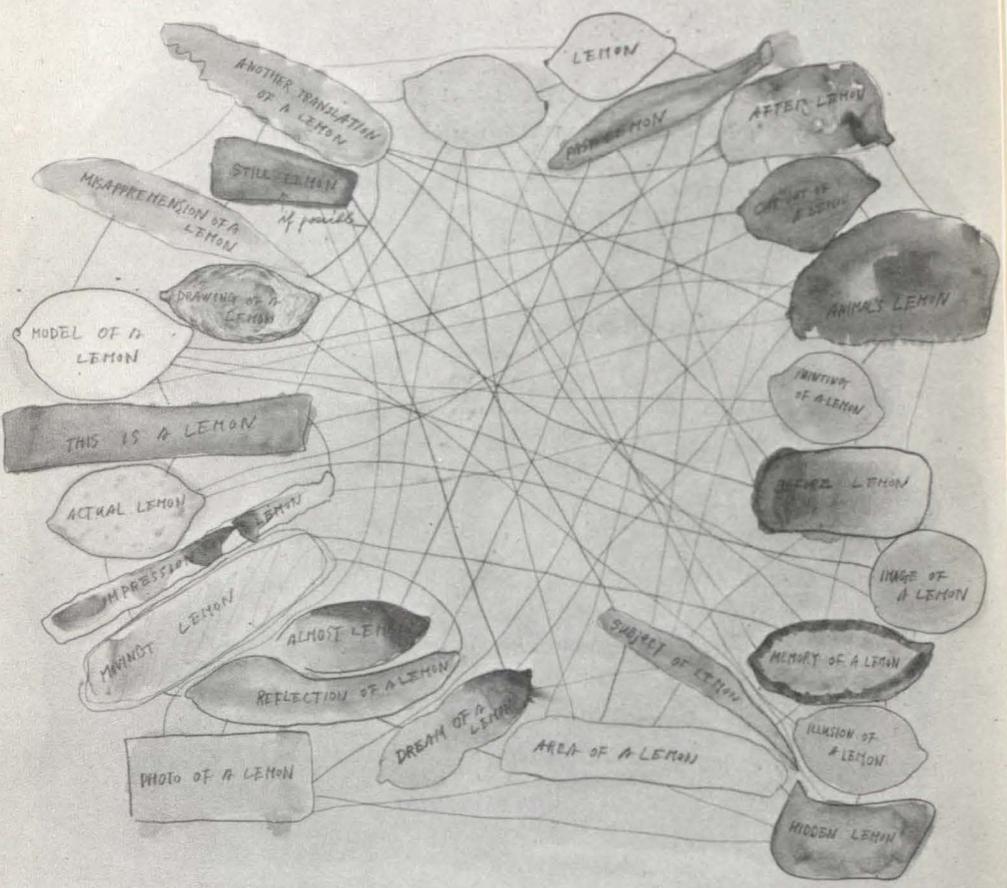
seem

hard copper pears

like yours . . .

About the network of AMBIGUOUS ZONES OF A LEMON
presentation of

Sketch No. 3



- * To make a three-dimensional model ~~of this~~ of this - perhaps based on double helix - if that one day exists, then the quality of ambiguity might change.
- * Ambiguous zones exist within each statement or representation and across the conceptual distances which separate those.
- * How to estimate the extent of these zones?
- * How not to think in terms of estimation but to deal with ambiguous zones as basic units?

ALLOWAY

fourteen

The Mechanism of Meaning

Work in Progress 1963-1971

LAWRENCE ALLOWAY

EXTENSIONS 5/6 featured the opening section of Arakawa's painting series, *THE MECHANISM OF MEANING*, which was shown last year at the Venice Biennale. The entire series is now being published in book form, with an introduction by Lawrence Alloway. Two parts of this text are excerpted below.

Presentation of Ambiguous Zones (drawing)

1 THE SERIES

*Compare: inventing a game—inventing language—
inventing a machine.*

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN
ZETTEL, NO. 327

The Mechanism of Meaning is a work in progress consisting at present of nearly a hundred paintings. Arakawa and Madeline Gins intend to expand their collaboration on the series, as painter and writer respectively, to include contributions from science. Their intention to work in other media as well is indicated so far by the progressive increase in the number of objects attached to the later canvases as compared to the flatter early pieces. This large work, to view it in the context of present painting, is neither a theme and variations nor a set of serial images (1). Robert Motherwell's *Elegies to the Spanish Republic* are in theme and variation form, with a master form implied governing each variant. In Frank Stella and Andy Warhol, the repetition of format and image, on the contrary, are permutations of set subjects. *The Mechanism* is neither an improvisation nor a projection of known forms. It has as its target a comprehensiveness somewhat similar to "the Great Work which Mallarmé imagines as being more or less consciously composed in collaboration by all geniuses," and consisting of "a totality of universal relationships" (2). This work, a kind of super-book that would be an analogy of the world, and the *Mechanism*, rep-

resent comparable summarizing ambitions. We can view *The Mechanism of Meaning* as a system with interacting components and relationships grouped according to an objective. The comparison is not exact and should not be taken too far, despite one's sense of a correspondence between the spatialized typography of Mallarmé's *Un Coup de Dés* and Arakawa's paintings with words. There is no doubt that Mallarmé is defending a sacred mystery from too wide an exposure. He is publishing the mystery but keeping it arcane. Arakawa on the contrary presents his pictures in the terms of sober exercises with general concepts. The ideas are not exotic and if they are hard to grasp he reminds us that so is everything else.

Arakawa regards art as a particular case of the mind's functioning and his paintings therefore represent the model of a more general order (3). Given his interest in the forms of thought and perception it would be a mistake to take too literally his interest in painting as such. In much the same spirit Paul Valéry took another field than literature as a symbol of its complexity of knowledge. In *L'Introduction à la Méthode de Léonard de Vinci*, he selected architecture and describes a city that is "a machine whose weight is the agent which leads from geometric notions to dynamic considerations and even to the most tenuous speculations of molecular physics" (4). The edifice is a machine, the same image that Arakawa uses to designate the scope of his series. The word *mechanism* is used literally in the sense of "an assembly of moving parts performing a complete functional motion" and is close to what we mean by system: a complex of elements standing in interaction. Valéry's treatment of Leonardo recalls Arakawa inasmuch as Valéry approached Leonardo not through his completed paintings but through his notebooks and drawings. In this way he lost nothing of Leonardo's speculative and theoretical activity. Here are the drapery studies and the dissected anatomies, maps and allegories, costumes and studies of flowing water, which, viewed as unexpected conjunctions of elliptical forms, are analogous to Arakawa's notational mode.

Arakawa is not content with the category of *painting* for *The Mechanism of Meaning*. It is true that each work is a function of more than one sign-system at a time (words and images, maps and photographs) but there are precedents in twentieth-century art for the admixture of different types of signs. The subject has

never been so comprehensively pursued by a painter, however, and this, surely, is related to collaboration with a writer. The format is presentational, that is to say, directed frontally at the spectator and presuming his participation. In this sense they are typographical, like pages, with commands and instructions to be followed. My view is that the technical definition of painting has so expanded that there is no reason to classify these objects as something else, but this does not preclude resemblances to and connections with other forms of discourse.

One of the obstacles to a comprehensive history of twentieth-century art has been the misleading image of Dadaism, which is usually viewed as nihilistic and/or frivolous. In fact, several enduring subjects of twentieth-century art are at the core of Dadaism, as is suggested by the continuation of its themes, concerning signification and multi-valued logic, beyond the historical limits of the movement. Arakawa's work has links with Dada, provided the sense of these connections is understood. The Dadaist's use of the diagram is an earlier stage of a basic part of Arakawa's art. Picabia's mecanomorphic pictures of 1915-22 and Max Ernst's of 1919-20, though embodying anthromorphic caricature, introduced the theoretical space (as opposed to pictorial space) of the diagram into art. Marcel Duchamp made schematic plans and elevations for parts of his Large Glass in 1913. The objects that Arakawa adds to some of his paintings are more like Dada, in their abruptness, that is to say their contrast of whole forms, than Cubism, in which the external bits are formally modified, or than Surrealism, in which the junction of the quoted matter was meant to be hard to find.

The topics and images of *The Mechanism of Meaning* are presented in a variety of signs and formats, but Arakawa's basic strategy is diagrammatic. A diagram is a simple line drawing that "outlines and explains the parts, operation, etc., of something," a connection with the word "mechanism" of course. Such charts or plans are a visual sign-system but not an iconic one. (Iconicity refers to a close degree of resemblance between sign and referent.) Thus the diagrams designate events or objects but without physical correspondance to their referents. The collage elements include iconic signs, such as photographs and literal objects, as components in the system, but the presentational mode is schematic. The objects are mostly used straight, like the

toy monkey fixed to the cardboard in Picabia's *Portrait of Cézanne, Portrait of Rembrandt, Portrait of Renoir*, still lifes, 1920. There is, in addition, a connection with Surrealism, in particular with Rene Magritte: like some of the Dadaists, his work has attracted the attention of later artists interested in signification problems in art. Magritte took as his subject games of reference, as quotation shows: "Everything tends to make me think that there is little relationship between an object and that which represents it" and "A word can take the place of an object in reality." (5). Because Magritte represents solid objects in three dimensional space he did not take his work with words as far as he might have: plastic imagery and graphic inscriptions are hard to reconcile, whereas Arakawa's more "hieroglyphic" style supports mixed sign systems easily. We might describe Arakawa's work impressionistically as the tradition of *Ut Pictura Poesis* in a post-Charles W. Peirce world.

Interart connections, such as those between art and poetry, were supported in the Renaissance by the theory of *Ut Pictura Poesis* (as in Painting, so in Poetry). Lessing is responsible for an influential refutation of this view of the arts; in *Laoccon* he separates the arts, by classifying the visual arts as spatial, a single work of art being viewed all at once, whereas literature, linear and sequential, is defined as temporal. The separation has been sustained by many artists since Lessing, including, of course, abstract artists. In Arakawa's paintings we certainly see the overlaying of art by art and to this extent, his work continues the tradition of the commonality of the arts. To this Arakawa adds the consciousness of an artist in possession of the knowledge of semiotics, defined by Colin Cherry as "the theory of signs (i.e. of linguistics, logic, mathematics, rhetoric, etc." (6). The humanistic assumption that the arts have a common center in man, rather than a disparate technical character, combines with the sophisticated analysis of modern linguistics. "It was one of the oldest devices of the Greek epigrammatist to make the statue, the urn, the column, or the monument speak to the beholder" (7). In the same way, Arakawa's works can certainly be called "speaking pictures." In place of the topics of classical poetry he proposes a battery of "language-games." This is a term of Wittgenstein's which recurs throughout his *Philosophical Investigations*. At one point he notes: "Review the multiplicity of languages in the following examples, and in others:

Giving orders, and obeying them—
 Describing the appearance of an object,
 or giving its measurements—
 Constructing an object from a description (a drawing)—
 Reporting an event—
 Speculating about an event—
 Forming and testing a hypothesis—
 Presenting the results of an experiment in tables or diagrams” (8)

This scrupulous list with its sober proposals is similar to Arakawa's presentational and dilemma-riddled art. In the same proposition as that quoted above Wittgenstein writes: “Here the term “language-game is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity” (9). As suggested, the mixed form of Arakawa's painting can be construed as a form of speaking.

We may at this point anticipate the objections of formal criticism by quoting Rosalind Krauss who has referred, apropos Jasper Johns' post-1960 paintings, to “the curiously literary quality of commentary in the paintings and sculpture of this period which replaced the critical posture of the earlier works, heightens one's sense of the modernist ambitions which the flags and targets embody” (10). Her complaint is that whereas the early work, though referential, conformed to a canon of flatness, the later work is not bound by it. It is necessary to point out that the literary is not the opposite of the visual. On the contrary, any visual perception of art is bound to be interpreted, which is why I shall refer throughout to both verbal and visual forms as sign systems. There is no corrosion of visual probity because of the presence of numbers, letters, words and references to things not in the pictures. What is referred to out of the picture, in fact, must be as much shaped by the painter's rhetoric as our interpretation of what we see is shaped by language. This is not a *literary* problem but a problem of signs.

It should be stressed that Arakawa's use of language is non-ideographic: The point is important, not because Arakawa is Japanese, but because of the twentieth-century dream of a language without conventions. Ezra Pound's theory of the ideogram is a characteristic example; it was supposed to bring language close to its referent, fusing the convention of signmaking with its object designated. Concrete poetry is a part of this desire to make language solid. However Arakawa does not in-

tend to confer pseudo-substantiality on his language. Though he made a group of pictures in 1965–67 in which nouns replaced objects, his standard unit throughout *The Mechanism* is the sentence, grammatically correct, drawing on a full, often abstract, vocabulary. One axiom of Arakawa's art, which I take to be true, is that there are only arbitrary sign-systems. Therefore there is always plenty of room between a language and its referents, between words and situations, and in addition, the conventions of language themselves characterize the reality to which they are supposed to refer. Reality is distributed between sign systems and the world. For instance, one series of Arakawa's paintings memorialize error, turning mistakes into a part of the picture's display. There is, for example, a monochrome word list, with one item obliterated by rainbow colors: the erasure itself is a sign, equal in value to the uncorrected or, presumably, true word list. In works of 1969, the paintings themselves increasingly partake in a lesson or command situation. In *A Cracking Point* we are invited to “Push, vibrate, scrape, crash, move these shapes into color.” Another is a painting inscribed “I have decided to leave this canvas completely blank.” As the expressed intention is defeated by its announcement, the painting denies the statement that it consists of. These paintings act as lessons in self-awareness, confronting us with problems of transformation and analysis.

It is instructive to consider a case in which spectators reacted to the command of one of his works, an untitled painting of 1969 (done as *The Mechanism of Meaning* was taking shape), inscribed: “If possible steal any one of these drawings including this sentence,” with the last word paling and fading like the Cheshire Cat's body. A group of five artists removed the painting from an exhibition and sent the artist a telegram: “Drawing safe—work completed” to which Arakawa responded “Work not exactly complete. Interesting misunderstanding but there are still many ways to effect a removal and various degrees of passion through which to steal. Please donate to public institution only as the Thieves with complete documentation of what has occurred. It has been a great surprise to collaborate with you” (11). In an interview the artist said: “I like the collaboration idea, but they are not *exactly* collaborating because they were wrong. I mean by that, they made a meaning without me. Their act has almost nothing to do with me. They are creating in a

different way . . . Perhaps we can think of the Thieves as accidental collaborators.” (12). The Thieves took the painting as an object not just one of the “drawings” and the “sentence”; this was the error and it is a reminder of the responsibilities of spectatorship faced with the complexities of *The Mechanism of Meaning*.

Arakawa dates *The Mechanism* from 1963, because, in retrospect, that is the year in which material absorbed into the series began to appear. Here are a few samples: *Untitled* (1963) is relevant here as the type for *The Meaning of Intelligence*, 1. It consists of the corners of a rectangle outlined just inside the corners of the canvas. *The Splitting of Meaning*, 5 incorporates, in the upper panel, a painting from 1965, *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, page one*; and *Tubes*, of the same year, recurs in *Presentation of Ambiguous Zones*, 3. *Bottomless*, 1, 1964-65, one of several paintings derived from a suspended box-like sculpture of Arakawa's, depicted in perspective, provides the central image for *Reversibility*, 3. The tangle of lines leading to a column of words (“cloud/bird/sky/mountain/sun/ocean/ship/tree/snake/house/ man/bicycle/ street/dog”) in *Neutralization of Subjectivity*, 3 comes from *Look At It*, 1968. *Presentation of Ambiguous Zones*, 2 is the antetype of *The Error*, 1968-69, one of the few paintings in which Arakawa simulates glyptic lettering. Usually his letters are neatly stencilled or hand-written in a neutral style that runs through all the works in the series.

As in Arakawa, so in Gins. Various aspects of her own work prefigure aspects of *The Mechanism of Meaning*. Consider the following passages from her prose work *Word Rain or A Discursive Introduction to the Intimate Philosophical Investigations of G,R,E,T,A, G,A,R,B,O, it says*. (13). It is a list, half folk-wit, half cliché, quoted from Roget's *Thesaurus*, which scrambles our classification of types of object or event, and recalls some of the language of the series:

“(ATTEMPT IMPOSSIBILITIES; SQUARE THE CIRCLE; SECRET OF PERPETUAL MOTION; SKIN A FLINT; MAKE A SILK PURSE OUT OF A SOW'S EAR; BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW; HAVE NOTHING TO GO UPON; WEAVE A ROPE OF STRAW; PRENDRE LA LUNE AVEC LES DENTS; EXTRACT SUNBEAMS FROM CUCUMBERS; SET THE THAMES ON FIRE; MILK A HE-GOAT INTO A SIEVE; ROMPRE L'ANGOUILLE AU GENOA; BE IN TWO PLACES AT ONCE)”

One of several equations in her book recalls the dissolving precision of *The Mechanism of Meaning*:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{“SW = spoken word} & \quad \text{W = written word} & \quad \text{C = letters} \\ \text{N = sounds} & & \\ \text{SW = W - C + N”} & & \end{aligned}$$

Another passage anticipates the convolutions of the series very well:

“Confusion is a word. Words are our confusion. Read and be confused. But don't be just a little confused. A great confusion follows just as she who let me speak will now speak as me but through her with a different I which will still for the most part be me.”

There seems to be a reminiscence here of the hearsay evidence in the trial of the Knave of Hearts beginning: “They told me you had been to her/And mentioned me to him.” (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Chap. 12*). In addition, an unpublished poem with its strict ordering and illusive denotation, indicates Gins' part in the series:

AN EMPTIED NAME

1. MELTING FIRE ITSELF
2. TIME IS FRICTION
3. BLOOD EROSION
4. TISSUE OF LIGHT
5. TIME IS FRICTION
6. THE DISTRIBUTION OF PRESSURE INTO A RECEIVING PATTERN.

The collaboration of Arakawa and Madeline Gins unites two supposed polarities: art and literature, husband and wife. Marriages are recorded of artists who worked in related styles, but they did not engage in shared projects. A joint output is without precedent so far as I know. A relevant collaboration between a writer and an artist is Paul Eluard's and Man Ray's *Les Mains Libres*, 1930, a book of equalized drawings and poems. Though Eluard “illustrated” the drawings, which came first, and though there is a kind of balance in the amount of detail in the drawings and the length of the poems, each man was operating in his own art. Gins has moved further away from literature than Arakawa from art, of course, but the project is an

exceptional fusion of language-systems. The notes for the project reveal the double contribution as shared ideas undergo changes in typescript and as images emerge progressively. Consider *Presentation of Ambiguous Zones*, with its spillage from two symmetrically placed containers of Elmer's Glue identified, after Roget again, as "cohesive, viscous, adhesive, sessile, tenacious, unseparated, adherence and/or an ambiguous zone." An early version of this in the notes reads: "The adherence is cohesive. Sessile united. Cleave to holding fast. This adherence is adherence. Viscous *adhesive* sticky." This is certainly Gins at work, in accord with Arakawa but working in a way that continues her earlier interest in lists and in descriptive words. In the same painting the word "mistake," as has been mentioned, reappears from Arakawa's earlier work. The work-notes are a jumble of typing (Gins works directly on the typewriter, not from a hand-written draft), corrections and deletions in pencil or magic marker, and underlinings; rough diagrams and indications of their positions abound. The notes have the look of work sheets for a project that has been discussed, typed, discussed again, revised. The continuous conversation of marriage has been directed to esthetic problems and ideas. In a way, the privacy of married life and the privacy of the studio support one another.

The theme of collaboration recurs, in the desire for future cooperation or, as mentioned, by the Thieves who followed a command in one of the pictures. Their action was part of a larger pattern of annexation and transposition in twentieth-century art dealing with problems of authorship and meaning. One of Yoko Ono's "instruction paintings" (meant for others to do" (14) reads thus:

**Borrow the Mona Lisa from the gallery
make a kite out of it and fly it
Fly it high enough so the Mona Lisa's
smile disappears. (A)
Fly it high enough so the Mona Lisa's
face disappears. (b)
Fly it high enough so it becomes a dot (c)**

Her proposal is for an act of collaboration with Leonardo. There are cases in which Arakawa cooperates with an unknown and unknown artist in the course of *The Mechanism of*

Meaning. For instance, Arakawa uses the Mona Lisa herself, and images of paintings by Tintoretto and Botticelli. In *Degrees of Meaning* he reorganizes a chair (designer: anonymous) and in *Expansion and Reduction*, 4 he analyses a framed painting by an artist named Papp. According to the context and the use, the meaning of the quoted material is changed. This is employing art objects like language, in fact, because words are readymades, part of a finite inventory of pre-existing signs. Bearing in mind, too, the sources of some of Arakawa's diagrams in books of experimental psychology, it is clear that *The Mechanism* is a collection of trophies in the empire of a new context.

Arakawa and Gins have mastered two phases of collaboration: They have succeeded in collaborating with one another; within the context of marriage each has acted as a fellow-artist. (In a sense this may resemble the support and understanding that Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns gave one another, in a kind of closed loop, while they devised their early works for the ideal audience that each provided.) They have demonstrated, too, their subtle and extensive control of the field of sign and object annexation from the common stock of messages. Their quotations, borrowings, and messages have an unerring justice. Between the poles of intimate dialogue and unilateral collaboration there is a form of contact which has not yet begun, though it is on their schedule: collaboration with known individuals, neither close nor neutral. It is characteristic of the self-generating nature of the project that it should place successive and different demands on its originators.

It was in 1968 that Arakawa and Gins arrived at the idea of a comprehensive work and the next year they gradually reduced work on projects not germane to the series (15). Although a program for the series was developed early on, its numbered sections do not coincide with the order of working. Allowing for overlapping, delays, and protraction, this is the rough chronological order, beginning with the first list of subdivisions in 1968-69. In 1969 three sections were evolved: 3. *Neutralization of Subjectivity*; 4. *Localization and Transference*; and 8. *Expansion and Reduction—Meaning of Scale*. In 1970 there was: 9. *Splitting of Meaning*; 13. *Mapping of Meaning*; 14. *Feeling of Meaning*; 15. *Presentation of Ambiguous Zones*; and 10. *Re-assembling*. Then in 1971, 11. *Reversibility*;

17 MEANING OF INTELLIGENCE

AN EXPLORATION OF WHAT IS MEANT BY THE STATEMENT OF AN INTELLIGENCE, OF WHAT TWO OR MORE ELEMENTS (ACTIVITIES?) ARE ALIGNED WHEN SOME X IS DECLARED INTELLIGIBLE AND OF THE POSSIBLE (IMPOSSIBLE) REASONS BEHIND (IN FRONT OF?) THIS.

AN AREA OF INTELLIGENCE
(RIGHT AND WRONG)

AN AREA OF INTELLIGENCE
(WRONG AND RIGHT)

15. *Logic of Meaning*; 16. *Construction of the Memory of Meaning*; 17. *Meaning of Intelligence*; and 6. *The Energy of Meaning* were painted. Thus the project has been realized not by a procedure in which pre-assigned meanings were consecutively illustrated, but as a continuous invention, with different points in the project activated simultaneously.

Before considering the sections, it might be as well to take one painting first and consider it in some detail. For this purpose I shall take *Splitting of Meaning, 1* * in which a large reproduction of Leonardo's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* is entitled *Portrait of Mona Lisa* and attributed in an inscription to La Gioconda. Thus two pictures of Leonardo's are conflated in a way that recalls Freud's notion that the smile shared by Mona Lisa and Saint Anne have a single cause in Leonardo's memory. Superimposed on the painting is an outline of dates and events of Leonardo's life, derived from a painting of Arakawa's of 1969, *Leonardo's Chronology*. Here the same date scheme is related to a painted central form recalling a thermometer which links biography as the passage of time with the fall of mercury, getting colder (older).

The *Mona Lisa* and the thermometer have made other appearances in recent art, starting in both cases with Marcel Duchamp. The *Mona Lisa*, in reproduction, received Duchamp's addition of a beard and moustache in 1919 and in 1930 Fernand Léger painted her in a still life with a bunch of keys. Subsequently Wesselman used the picture in the early sixties behind a flat tanned nude. Warhol used the picture in silk-screened paintings of 1963 and 1965, and Jasper Johns introduced a decal of her into a lithograph of 1969. Duchamp's original use of the picture was derogatory, an act of defacement accompanied by a pun. Johns on the other hand has recorded liking for both Leonardo and Duchamp, and says that by introducing the image he found a way of alluding to both artists (16). In Arakawa's painting concerning Leonardo the *Mona Lisa* is present only as a title but, acting in this context, as a symbol of modern art as much as of the Renaissance.

The thermometer entered art, so far as I know, not in the hands of a doctor in a nineteenth-century genre scene, but in

* Reproduced in *Extensions* 5/6

Duchamp's object of 1921, *Why Not Sneeze Rose Selavy?* It is thrust between cubes of marble cut to resemble sugar, introducing a notion of irrational measurement. Johns too has made use of the instrument, a giant one between two canvases on which are painted, just legibly, the callibrations. In *Splitting of Meaning, I* there is, of course, no thermometer, and Marcel Duchamp and Jasper Johns are cited here as artists who, like Arakawa, use their wits. They are part of a context of art as mischievous knowledge which is relevant to *The Mechanism of Meaning*. To quote the section program for *Splitting of Meaning*, stencilled on this painting: the painting exemplifies the "branching and ramifications pertaining to signification."

We see, not change of aspect, but change of interpretation.

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN
ZETTEL, No. 216

The choice of Leonardo's paintings as subject matter raises the problem that all works of art are subject to the different reception and interpretation of spectators. This is true of artists who worked originally without necessarily being aware of art's

vulnerability to revisions not made by the artist. Two cases of the mobility of the meaning of art works that have been documented are the *Laocoon* and the *Mona Lisa* (17). The sixteenth-century reconstruction of the newly excavated sculpture, which influenced so many artists, turns out to have been erroneous and like the *Mona Lisa*, as it is available to us now, has a legendary aura which it acquired only in the nineteenth century. According to Marcel Duchamp, this is the function of the audience, to determine a work's subsequent meaning by variable acts of "deciphering and interpreting" (18). Wittgenstein is central with his view that "For a large class of cases—though not for all—in which we explore the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: The meaning of a word is its use in the language" (19). If this is so then the meaning of a work of art is similarly subject to change. This switch in responsibility for meaning from artist to audience is not welcomed either by artists who want long-range control of their product or by writers whose pleasure is the maintenance of absolute values that they have proposed. Arakawa's attempt is to work consciously with the situation of variable meaning. The popularity of the theory of autonomous art, which assumes objects fixed in a realm of their own, is an extreme defense against such uncertainty. It makes art a thing identical with itself which, as Wittgenstein points out, "is to say nothing at all" (20). It was perhaps Op Art which popularized the spectator's contribution by taking as subject the act of perception, making us aware of our physiological responses. Arakawa is not generating illusions, however, but taking the instability of art as knowledge for his subject and celebrating its connections with the rest of culture.

The characteristic form of Arakawa's painting is that of a trial. He faces us with tests that demand various forms of reasoning. This is not, of course, a purely cerebral enterprise: it has a ludic and delirious aspect, as we shall see. In his paintings there are schedules, matching questions, figure analogies, number series, transformation rules, and true-false questions. These texts are presented with arrows and explanatory captions in columns, rows and panels. Numbered lists, graph lines, and schematic forms alternate with pasted-in photographs and attached objects to produce a particular kind of space, one somewhat removed from the customary space of art. Normally space in painting has to do with the reconciliation of materiality (of the

medium) and artistic intention. Thus in painting we often speak of the coordinate tension of illusion and flatness. This does not apply, however, when the means of the artist are so purely schematic; in Arakawa's art, space is absolute distance, defined by diagram structures. Diagrams imply neither volume nor mass, neither light nor air: they are weightless. Their criterion is their legibility and through it their stimulus to play and reason. Toby Mussman has correctly distinguished "between the picture plane and the literal surface of a painting" (21), but Arakawa has brought the two together. He treats the physical surface as a geometrical plane. The rhetoric of diagrams requires no less.

The use of diagrams does not lead to any reduction of Arakawa's art. On the contrary, it accelerates the scope and interplay of his signs, including a great deal of humor. There is a comedy of communications, measurement, and art. Humor is central to Arakawa's art, to his thought. It is not the *humour noir* of Alfred Jarry as expanded by the Surrealists, "Beat your mother while she is young," (22) or popularized as sick jokes: "Yes, but apart from that how did you like the performance, Mrs. Lincoln?". It is not a game with sexual or destructive topics that is the point, but a humor of fundamental doubt. Two examples are the heading of *Expansion and Reduction – Meaning of Scale, 2** "Fuck Intercourse" and the caption of two symmetrical figures in another painting: "each of these is upside down." Fuck means intercourse, hence fuck fuck, or it could be a rejection of intercourse, owing to the availability of two words with different etymologies and the same referent. If the symmetrical figures were inverted they would look the same, so Arakawa is either saying he knows a secret that enables him to discriminate between the two directions or testing our awareness of the fifty per cent redundancy of the figures which abolishes the proposed distinctions. The humor of the first example depends on word meaning, the second on an inapplicable but grammatical statement.

George Pitcher has discussed the connections of humor and logic in an article on "Wittgenstein, Nonsense and Lewis Carroll," (23) the title of which contains a slight joke: the ordering of subjects has the effect of hypostasizing Nonsense. It is similar to the celebrated conversation of Alice and the White

King: "I see nobody on the road," said Alice. "I only wish I had such eyes," the King remarked in a fretful tone. "To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too!" Pitcher also cites, in connection with Wittgenstein, the White Knight's multi-labelled song. The song is "A-sitting on A Gate," but called "Ways and Means"; its name is "The Aged Aged Man" but the name is called "Haddock's Eyes." All this accords beautifully with Wittgenstein's injunction: "Look into this language game to see if you can find the mysterious relations of the object and its name" (24). This enquiry not only produces some of the most entertaining philosophical cases, it relates to art and poetry in numerous ways. For example, the poetry of Christain Morgenstern is dedicated to the same realm of solidified words, as in:

Ein Wiesel
Sass auf einem Kiesel
inmitten Bachgeriesel.

translated by Max Knight as:

A weasel
Perched on an easel
within a patch of teal.

Knight observes that this might also have been "translated as a ferret nibbling a carrot in a garrot, a mink sipping a drink in a kitchen sink, a hyena playing a concertina in an arena." (25) and so on. In each case the words have syntactic cogency that we attempt to substantiate by supplying, inventing, referents. Analogous bait for the spectator is Arakawa's "a mnemonic device for forgetting" and "find appropriate eye motion to reduce each line back into originating dots at either end." These undecipherable words and undecipherable figures propose situations that we try to explicate. Arakawa celebrates the comedy of classifications, the development of which is matched only by his zest for connectivity between them.

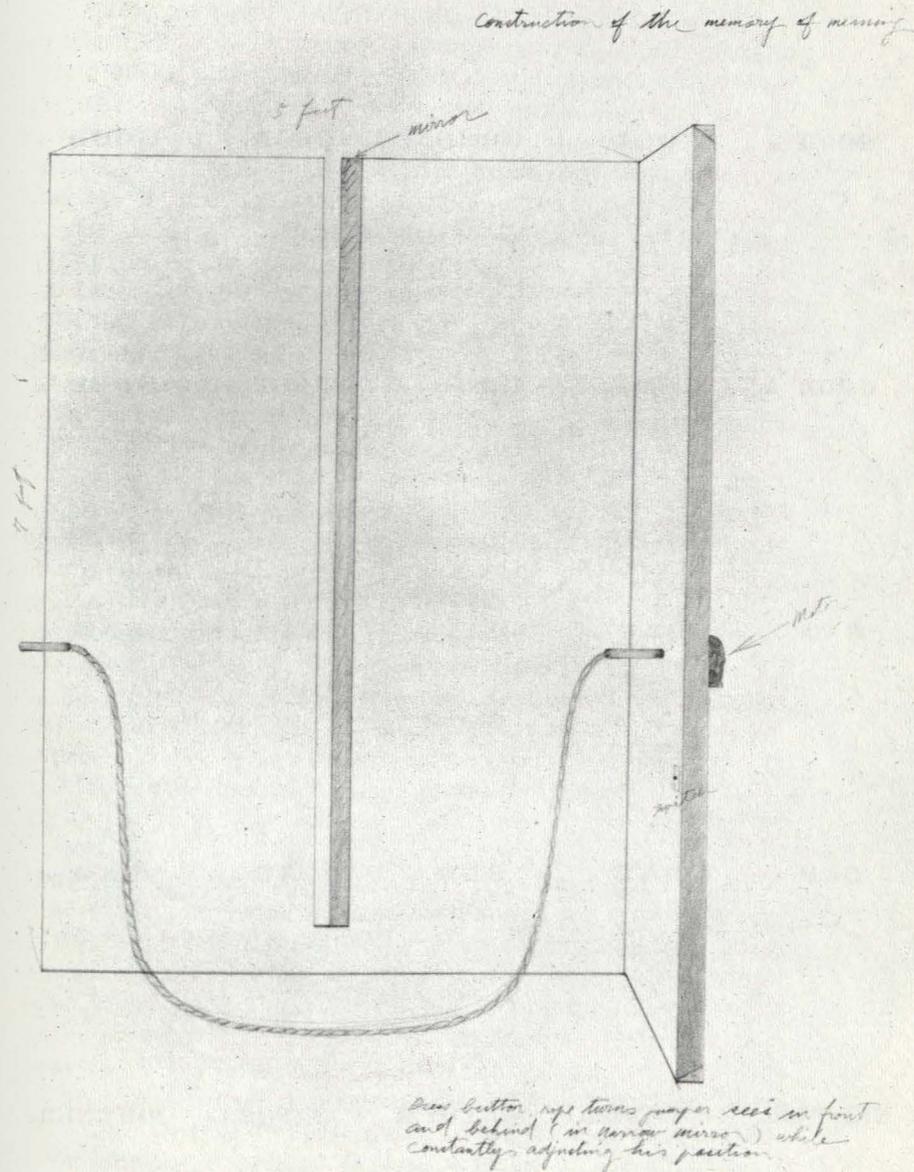
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NOTES

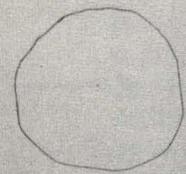
1. See *Variationen*, Städtische Kunsthalle Recklinghausen, 1966, and Coplans, *Serial Imagery*. Pasadena Art Museum, 1968.
2. Bradford Cook, *Mallarmé: Selected Prose Poems, Essays and Letters*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956) pp. vii-xviii.
3. The collaboration of Arakawa and Madeline Gins is constant and central to the series. Specific contributions will be mentioned from time to time, but from here on the word Arakawa will be used for convenience as a symbol of their *joint* contribution.
4. Paul Valéry, "Introduction à la méthode de Léonard de Vinci." In *Variété* (Lagny-sur-Marne. 1966) pp. 241-42.
5. René Magritte, *Words vs. Image*. Sidney Janis Gallery, New York. 1954
6. Colin Cherry, *On Human Communication*. (MIT Press, 1957) p. 9.
7. Jean H. Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts*. (Univ. of Chicago, 1958) p. 23.
8. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. (New York, 1953) p. 23.
9. Ibid.
10. Rosalind Krauss, "Jasper Johns." *Lugano Review*, 1.2. 1965. p. 91.
11. For full documentation see: Gregory, Landis, Lewis, Crane, Kahn. *Stolen*. (New York, 1970).
12. Lawrence Alloway: "Arakawa Annexed." *Arts*. 44.4. 1970. p. .
13. Madeline Gins, *Word Rain etc.* (New York: Grossman, 1970)
14. Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970)
15. The only exceptions are a group of Portraits (shown in Paris, Galerie Yvon Lambert, 197) and a poster for the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. The first exhibition of *The Mechanism of Meaning* was in the Japanese pavilion at the Venice Biennale, 1970: the introductory *Presentation of Bases for Selection* was shown, with the four sections of *Neutralization of Subjectivity*, the three of *Localization and Transference*, two from *Expansion and Reduction-Meaning of Scale*, and three from *Splitting of Meaning*. Most of this group was reproduced in *Extensions* 5/6, N.D., (1970) New York, pp. 1-14; also in Margit Staber, "Wörter als Bildes," *Kunst Nachrichten*, 7.1. 1970. u.p. The series was discussed as "The Mechanization (sic) of Meaning," by Jerry G. Bowles, "Can Epistemology Be Entertaining?" *Art News*, 70.3.71 (pp. 34-4, 72-4).
16. Joseph E. Young, "Jasper Johns: an Appraisal." *Art International*, 1. 13. 7. 1969. p. 53.
17. Margarete Bieber. *Laocoon*. (Wayne State U Press, 1967); George Boas, "The Mona Lisa in the History of Taste," in *Wingless Pegasus* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1950), pp. 211-35.
18. Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act," in Gregory Battcock, ed., *The New Art*. (New York, 1966). pp. 23-6.
19. Wittgenstein, P.T. 43
20. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London, 1966) 5.5303.
21. Toby Mussman, "Literalness and the Infinite," in Gregory Battcock (ed.) *Minimal Art*, (New York, 1968) pp. 236-50.
22. Paul Eluard and Benjamin Peret. "Surrealist Proverbs." *Locus Solus*, 2, 1961, p. 67. Trans. Kenneth Koch.
23. George Pitcher, "Wittgenstein, Nonsense and Lewis Carroll," in *Ludwig Wittgenstein; The Man and His Philosophy*. Ed. K.T. Fann. (New York 1967). pp. 315-35. The quotation from Carroll is from *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, chapter 1, and the White Knight's song is from *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, chapter 8.
24. Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Notebooks*. (New York, 1958) p. 17.
25. *The Gallows Songs. Christian Morgenstern's Galgen Lieder*. Trans. Max Knight (University of California Press, 1966) pp. 18, 19.

However all the forms are homeomorphic, which is to say that topologically they belong to a single class of form (27). The discovery of unity through classification is a prime resource of Arakawa's art, as is his postponement of the recognition of unity by wit. It should be remembered too, that every constellation has a propensity to open up again, when viewed differently. The drawing in *Reassembling* includes projects for a blacked-out wheelchair and an arm-garden, a composite plaster-cast and window-box. The drawing in *Construction of the Memory of Meaning* is a super-ambiguous threshold: A motorized skipping rope turns and the jumper catches glimpses of himself in a tall narrow mirror, so that his physical actions and attention to his self-image are hectically at variance.

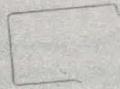
Another extension of the idea of *The Mechanism of Meaning* to this book is a device of dual presentation. The book has a different cover and dust-jacket, both strongly imagistic. The two images employed are the photographic blow-up of Leonardo's *Virgin and Child with St. Anne*, captioned "Portrait of Mona Lisa" by Arakawa and a color photograph of an anonymous monk in the Lotus position. They raise different expectations in the reader. If you assume something about the "mysterious East" the contents of the book will give one sort of surprise; if you assume something about the psyche of geniuses, it will be another surprise. In either case the display of the paintings will enforce meanings opposed to first contact with the book: the relation of the container and the thing contained becomes a part of Arakawa's way of thinking. The tangential images provide an occasion for reader exercises, inasmuch as they reinforce different readings. The third painting in the subsection *Mapping of Meaning* may be erected as a large public sculpture in Hanover. Arakawa envisages the format of the painting, five rows of ironically classified forms, as solidified into a central foursided monument. Each face is to be in different materials, possibly stone, stainless steel, neon, and with one wall covered by evergreen trees. Three steps, each differently angled, will approach the central mass in which the architectural potential of the layouts of the painting will be realized. Arakawa's paintings often have a kinship with architectural facades and their tranquil compartmentation. Facade-designs were used as frontispieces and title pages in Baroque books and the Hannover project will be a fantastic consolidation of the topic of the page as architecture.



Construction of the Memory of Meaning (drawing, 1)



GOOD a



GOOD b

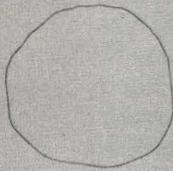


GOOD c

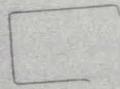


GOOD d

GOOD e



GOOD a



GOOD b

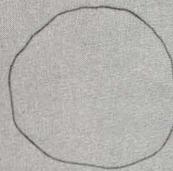


GOOD c

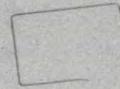


GOOD d

GOOD e



BAD a



BAD b

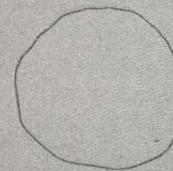


BAD c



BAD d

BAD e



BAD a



BAD b

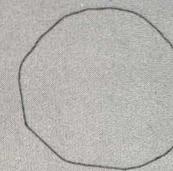


BAD c



BAD d

BAD e



NEITHER a



NEITHER b



NEITHER c



NEITHER d

NEITHER e

NONE OF THESE IS RIGHT OR WRONG

Why Not (A Serenade of Eschatological Ecology) is a film by Arakawa finished in 1969, that is to say it was made during the early decisions concerning *The Mechanism of Meaning*. It has one character, a girl, clothed, nude, it varies, who is seen in a big room (Arakawa's studio), experimenting with her body and with objects. One subject becomes dominant among her interests, the photograph of a dead man in the street. The title provides a hint, namely that the film might be considered an account of rituals (exercises) before dying. According to Arakawa no less than twelve of the nineteen subsections of *The Mechanism of Meaning* can be found in the film, but *Construction of the Memory of Meaning* is foremost. Our supposition that the film represents durational or real time (which became something of a fashion after Warhol's early films) is opposed by the symmetrical construction. The two deaths, the man's and the girl's, one before the film began, one at the end of the film, confront one another as resemblances across a central point rather than as successive events.

There is a strong sense of *The Mechanism of Meaning* being one great sentence, a form of the Mallarméan book, related perhaps to the Greek meaning of encyclopedia as a "complete circle of learning." This impression is the result of the elaboration of the subsections on the one hand and on the other of their reciprocal penetration. The leading themes of the subsections are learnable and sometimes easily caught, as is the case of *Texture of Meaning*, but there are many cross-references. Connectivity as a principle of organization is indispensable to Arakawa. In the list of *Operating Rules*, for instance, the subdivisions are defined as both "tentative" (a term referring to their origins) and "open-ended" (referring to their effect on the spectator).

The unifying theme is the kind of knowledge that appears as an interaction between the knowing human subject (ourselves) and the properties of the objects constructed by Arakawa which demand structuring on our part. Such interpretative action occurs in all perception, but Arakawa takes the illusive forms of communication as his subject. *The Mechanism of Meaning* is an inventory of the cases in which signs generate meaning in forms that declare their epistemological reliance on the spectator. Karl Mannheim, writing on approaches to the estimation of truth, gives a clue to the complexity and suspense of *The Mechanism of Meaning*. "It is precisely our uncertainty which brings us a good deal closer to reality than was feasible in former periods which had faith in the absolute (28).

NOTES

26. Arakawa, "On Everything and Film: Why Not." Typescript. July 1971.
27. If we take meaning as the non-linguistic cultural correlate, reference, or denotation of a linguistic form, decisions about meaning can be consensual but not absolute. Therefore my readings of individual works in the series should be construed as no more than a personal variable. My readings are estimates of *thatness* and *thereness*, to use Adelbert Ames' terms.
28. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*. (New York, 1936) p. 84.

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Sidney Goldfarb: *Messages*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux
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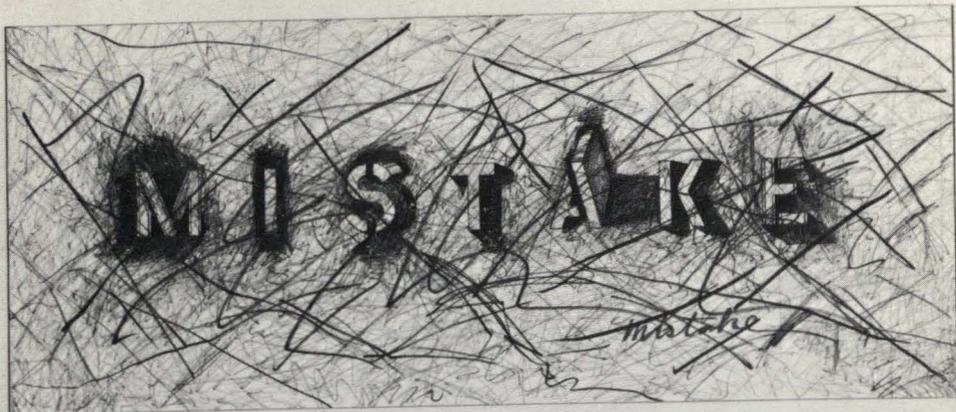
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