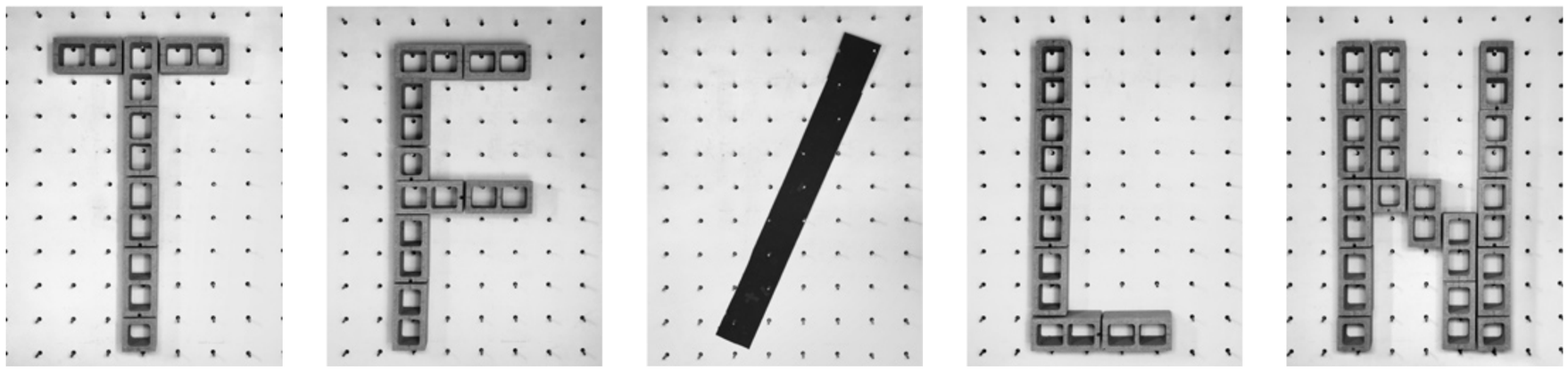


ENGINEER & TINKERER CAUGHT IN BRICOLAGE

PORT AUTHORITY — Structural anthropologist and New York-o-phile French writer Claude Lévi-Strauss died two weeks ago, one month short of his 101st birthday. As Larry Rohter in last Sunday's *New York Times* concisely describes, Lévi-Strauss's writings thrive on binary oppositions: "hot and cold, raw and cooked, animal and human. And it is through these opposing 'binary' concepts, he said, that humanity makes sense of the world." In the short piece, Rohter usefully translates the French term *bricoleur* as The Tinkerer and opposes it to The Engineer. In chapter 1 of *The Savage Mind* (1962), Lévi-Strauss describes the *bricoleur*:

"Consider him at work and excited by his project. His first practical step is retrospective. He has to turn back to an already existent set made up of tools and materials, to consider or reconsider what it contains and, finally and above all, to engage in a sort of dialogue with it and, choosing between them, to index the possible answers which the whole set can offer to his problem. He interrogates all the heterogeneous objects of which his treasury* is composed to discover what each of them could 'signify' and so contribute to the definition of a set which has yet to materialize but which will ultimately differ from the instrumental set only in the internal disposition of its parts." (DS) ■

** "Bricolage" also works with "secondary" qualitities, i.e. "second-hand."* The Sun as Error*, Shannon Ebner, (2009)*

"PUISSANT GOD" REVIEWED; "MAN, AFTER ALL"

UNITED STATES — One of America's first pirates was a Philadelphia printer named Benjamin Franklin, who was born in Boston three years before England's passage of copyright protection with the Statute of Anne in 1709. At 15, Franklin watched his brother James establish the colonies's first independent newspaper, *The New-England Courant.* Franklin ran away two years later and soon found himself in London as an apprentice typesetter. By 1726, he had returned to America and found employment in Thomas Denham's print shop.

For Franklin, piracy was a win-win: money for him, along with revolutionary ideas for a young republic. The scarcity of books in the colonies led Franklin to establish a book-sharing conversation group known as the Junto (or Leather Apron Club), and, later, the Library Company of Philadelphia in 1731. According to the U.S. State Department's *Outline of American Literature*, which is available as a free PDF from america.gov, "The unauthorized printing of foreign books was originally seen as a service to the colonies as well as a source of profit for printers like Franklin, who reprinted the works of the classics and great European books to educate the American public."

Soon after establishing the Library Company, Franklin published the first edition of his *Poor Richard's Almanack* without copyright protection, and he continued serially updating the book until 1758. At its height, print runs of the *Almanack* swelled to 10,000 copies a year. It attracted that kind of mass attention, in part, because it began with a literary stunt that Franklin had poached from Anglo-Irish writer Jonathan Swift. During 1708–9, Swift's fictional character Isaac Bickerstaff had predicted the date of quack author John Partridge's death and then convinced the public to believe he'd died on that date despite Partridge's rather vital assertions otherwise. Franklin's fictional alter ego Richard Saunders, for whom the *Almanack* is named, did the same to Franklin's rival publisher Titan Leeds. Swift, who published in Dublin, was, of course, not under copyright. Later, in the 1739 edition of the *Almanack*, Franklin "borrowed" heavily from an English translation of François Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel.* In essence, Franklin pirated material even in works he actually authored.

"Printers everywhere followed [Franklin's] lead," *The Outline of American Literature* continues. "Matthew Carey, an important American publisher, paid a London agent — a sort of literary spy — to send copies of unbound pages, or even proofs, to him in fast ships that could sail to America in a month. [. . .] Such a pirated English book could be reprinted in a day and placed on the shelves for sale in American bookstores almost as fast as in England." More than 80 years after the Statute of Anne, the great lexicographer Noah Webster would finally draft America's first copyright law in 1790, but its protections extended only to American authors, and piracy spread further and faster through the colonies than ever before. "The high point of piracy, in 1815," according to *The Outline*, "corresponds with the low point of American writing."

By 1842, when Charles Dickens had published his fifth novel, *Barnaby Rudge*, the British had strengthened the protections created by the Statute of Anne to better protect it and novels like it from piracy. Dickens — with the help of his friend, the dramatist Thomas Noon Talford — had been lobbying Parliament for copyright reform since the publication of his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, in 1836. (*The Pickwick Papers* is dedicated to Talford.) Though their first effort at reform had failed, the two finally succeeded in 1842. The current statutes were amended to forbid anyone from importing foreign reprints of any British copyrighted work to Britain or any of its colonies. Further, the British government began actively working with other governments to cultivate reciprocal agreements. With that, Dickens set sail to America.

As Professor Phillip V. Allingham recounts in his article "Dickens's 1842 Reading Tour: Launching the Copyright Question in Tempestuous Seas," Dickens's crusade to inspire Americans to embrace copyright reform did not go well:

"Americans, expecting him to be grateful for their warm reception, were staggered when this young British goodwill ambassador, at the beginning of 1842, at a dinner held in his honor in Boston, dared to criticize them as pirates while urging the merits of international copyright, which at that point in American history would have seen vast amounts of Yankee capital heading overseas with little reciprocation. He did not back down. A week later, in Hartford, he argued that a native American literature would flourish only when American publishers were compelled by law to pay all writers their due."

Between visits with author Washington Irving and President John Tyler, Dickens assailed Americans eager to meet their literary hero with the wrongheadedness of their ways. Allingham continues, "That he had not mentioned this issue in advance meant that his adoring audiences, taken by surprise, felt chagrined by the criticisms of this obviously mercenary young upstart who had come to their shores to take their money at the theater door and again in the bookshop." Dickens visited America again in 1867–8, at the end of his life. Though seriously ill — he complained of catching a "true American catarrh" — he nevertheless managed to solicit the support of writers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and give 22 readings at New York's Steinway Hall through the dead of winter.

In the audience one cold January night was a 33-year old journalist and budding author named Mark Twain, who'd worked as a printer in New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Cincinnati while educating himself at public libraries in the evenings. After making a comfortable living as a steamboat captain, Twain had found his way westward and reviewed Dickens's reading for the San Francisco newspaper *Alta California*, writing of his idol, "Somehow this puissant god seemed to be only a man, after all. How the great do tumble from their high pedestals when we see them in common human flesh, and know that they eat pork and cabbage and act like other men." Around the same time, Twain's first book, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*, appeared in print, though many of its 27 stories had, like Dickens's, been previously published in newspapers and magazines throughout the country. A travel collection, *The Innocents Abroad*, was published the following year. It would become Twain's best-selling book during his own lifetime.

But while his literary stardom would soon rival Dickens's, he would not enjoy much of his idol's financial success. Twain squandered his immense fortune on a string of bad investments, sinking the equivalent of millions into a frequently malfunctioning invention called the Paige typesetting machine, a rival and eventual casualty to Ottmar Mergenthaler's far superior Linotype. Anxious to recoup his losses, Twain penned a letter to Columbia University Professor of Dramatic Literature Brander Matthews in 1888 on the subject of copyright reform. Later published as a pamphlet called "American Authors and British Pirates" by the American Copyright League, the letter concludes,

"I think we are not in a good position to throw bricks at the English pirate. We haven't got any to spare. We need them to throw at the American Congress; and at the American author, who neglects his great privileges and then tries to hunt up some way to throw the blame upon the only nation in the world that is magnanimous enough to say to him, 'While you are the guest of our laws and our flag, you shall not be robbed.' All the books which I have published in the last 15 years are protected by English copyright. In that time I have suffered pretty heavily in temper and pocket from imperfect copyright laws: but they were American, not English. I have no quarrel over there. Yours sincerely, Mark Twain."

Three years after Twain's letter was published, in 1891, the Chace Act — the first legislation to introduce copyright protection to the works of foreign authors in the United States – would pass. Americans, who had enjoyed copyright protection on their own works for more than a century, had finally joined the rest of the world. (RG) ■

WHERE DOES YOUR MONEY COME FROM?

NEW YORK — As an artist I am often asked: "Where does your money come from?" The question comes in two variations. The first is largely innocent and occurs whenever my relatives or members of the nonart public, having in my presence come across an artwork I have made, genuinely wonder how it can be possible to get paid for having made it. When I explain that there are many people who like to look at artworks and compare them to other ones over time, and a few in that group who are even willing to pay extraordinary amounts of money (relative to materials and labor) for what they feel are the more interesting examples, my nonart friends squint their eyes a little and cock their heads at me, as if something nefarious was going on. When I resort by way of example to the goings on at craft fairs or *The Antiques Road Show*, they brighten, because they all know someone who earns a living making handbags or whose *Star Wars* paraphernalia was appraised at fifty thousand dollars. After they tell me about someone who has been similarly fortunate, I nod and say, "Yeah, art's just like that." Unfailingly, their heads straighten and their squints dissolve. They still know nothing about art, but at least they understand how it works, and how something works is always a more nagging question than what something means.

The second variant of the question about my money is usually posed by graduate students or architects, and is much more angry and troubling. It is intended to undermine my authority as an invited speaker or to expose a conceit I clearly have, a brickbat hurled from behind the stanchions of real-life drudgery that is the domain of architects and graduate students. That doesn't bother me. My veins are already coursing with the homeopathic toxins of commerce, so I'm immune to such naïve humiliations.

What does bother me about total strangers being concerned with my money, though, is the presumption that making a living is not an acceptable motivation for an artist. To me, for better or worse, all art is nothing if not a proposal for how the current situation might be altered at a profit. That that profit is often not immediately apparent to us is nothing against an artwork or its maker, and I, for one, refuse to live in a society where skilled individuals cannot earn a living however they please. If my best chance at making a living entails drawing snowflakes with a compass and gouache, then I can only hope that a liberal capitalist democracy such as ours will afford a niche in which to ply my trade; otherwise, the philosophical pillars of our society would be revealed to be not as liberal or democratic as they seem. For this reason, nothing is more impressive or politically reaffirming than an artist who is gainfully self-employed.

The confluence of energies that have produced this romantic, earnest climate are complex and quite unintended. Scholars and commentators tend to assert that digital technology is responsible for making our atomized world of independent contractors more viable than old-fashioned, centralized workplaces. That may be true, but it doesn't explain how such a broad appreciation for being self-employed came about in the first place. Having grown up near Niagara Falls, New York, a region of the country that is only now recovering from the recession of 1991 and embracing the *infotainment* casino economy, the current spate of self-reliance is the natural fallout of four decades of corporate merging, downsizing, and outsourcing. The initial shock of so many people losing their jobs and having their livelihoods disrupted has been more than offset by our bedrock mistrust of any institution or corporation that promises to look out for our well-being when profits are at stake.

During my youth, many of my parents's friends had no choice but to capitalize on whatever they were good at as a means of making a living, turning their avocations for crocheting afghans or restoring cars into legitimate business enterprises. Over time, self-pity evolved into self-survival evolved into self-actualization as entrepreneur. Today, entrepreneurship is a state of mind that is ideally suited (if not in material, then in spirit) to the cottage industry that is the Internet. Recent IRS statistics report that one in every five working Americans is an independent contractor, and some economists, counting people like commissioned salespersons who are technically employed but whose livelihood is self-generated, put the ratio as high as one in three. Thus, the more the necessity of having a unique and profitable skill permeates our culture, the more the business of being an artist is appreciated, and the more young people can aspire to be like John Cage or Vija Celmins when choosing a livelihood.

A Reconsideration of the Newspaper Industry in 5 Easy Allusions (3): *Which pile of money is equal in height and width?*

Now, if you are like my relatives and nonart friends, at this point you will be completely satisfied with the legitimacy of my profession, and even go so far as to wish me well at it since, given our shared belief in the aforementioned principles, it would be unpatriotic not to do so. And if you share the same chemistry as graduate students and architects, you will first need to square my philosophy with that of a figure from history in order to bring it under control. Which usually means you will cite Warhol.

It may surprise you to learn that when I say artists are the epitome of independent contracting, I do not have Andy Warhol in mind. I admire Warhol's enterprise, it was impressive in its day and all, but I think there is little about his methods or his oeuvre that is of use to independent artists now. The idea of art being made in a factory might have been a radical concept in the 1960s, but we do well to remember that corporations at the time were already in the process of rendering Warhol-type factories obsolete. Factories mean overhead, and if art and independent contracting share anything it is the desire to minimize overhead costs. Even if I were to assume that Warhol's Factory was important in some absolute sense, the fact remains that Warhol still didn't make anything of greater intrinsic interest or better quality than what could be found in the nonart world of his time. And that may have been his point. Indeed, that lack of distinction was perhaps Warhol's most important contribution to the then broad (and earnest) assault on art and life. Warhol meant to rely on the category of Art to distinguish his sameness from the sameness of the rest of the world.

Naturally, that category no longer holds once we begin to lump artists in with all other people in trade. Except, of course, when the activity of an artist is truly unrivaled by anyone else in the world, at which point it doesn't matter whether that person is an artist at all. He or she is simply "the best," and it is on the basis of that often highly profitable status that the value of any activity rests.

Take Agnes Martin. Although she died in 2004, her work still dominates the market for imperfectly-ruled pencil lines on unprimed canvas, even though her materials were inexpensive and her technique can be performed by anyone with a work surface and a yardstick. No one does. Martin so thoroughly wove her endeavor into herself as to make it seem impossible to impede on the terrain of her invention. In fact, her paintings — stripes and grids of graphite on canvas whose interstices were sometimes filled in with thin washes of color — can be seen as poetic evocations of the absolute distinction in relation to all other art that her work itself has come to represent. Despite her best efforts (or perhaps because of them), every line, space, and intersection that she delineated is different from every other, due to the weave of canvas, the pencils dragged across it, and the fact that Martin herself pulsed and breathed. The sublime residue of precise imperfection that resulted is unmatched by anyone, in any field.

The lesson, of course, is that it's much easier to be the best at doing something if there are as few other people as possible also doing it. Where Warhol's thousands of imitators continue to burn money and resources imitating a mainstream culture with which they can never compete, the real growth opportunities are in obscure enterprises where competition is low and materials cheap.

Just as Marshall McLuhan once observed that people didn't know they wanted television until television was invented, how can the audience for art know what it wants until we, as artists, invent it for them? Given that opportunity, how can any of us believe that it's in our long-range interest to constantly rearrange a product (such as popular culture) that our customers already know and have? In the end, and quite ironically, so-called "difficult" artists like Agnes Martin and David Hammons have turned out to be much better business models than their more celebrated counterparts could ever be. Their arcane interests, unique skills, and often restrained production methods epitomize such concepts as personal branding, value adding, and "just-in-time" production philosophies, state-of-the-art business innovations they and other artists have never gotten credit for. Until now.

The avant garde lives! Not because it's more meaningful or radical than any other activity, but because it fills a legitimate market niche. (JS) ■

RECORD BITES DUST

BERKELEY — As I tend to love a bargain, this year I followed my usual pattern of waiting until the new year had run well into its normal course before even beginning my annual shopping expedition for a calendar, a process I have followed for many years now because it cannot help but assure me that I will find, at a bargain price, a calendar that, though necessarily chosen from a lesser selection than that available to those who purchase before the start of the year, nevertheless serves its purpose as well as any calendar purchased earlier except that the first month or two of the year has already passed, a condition that, although the pages devoted to the days of these winter months are available for use as scrap paper or even for the fabrication of paper airplanes and cannot be used for the specific purpose for which they were intended, in no way precludes all the remaining pages — ten or even 11 months worth with a separate page for each day of the year — from being used in exactly the manner for which they were intended; that is, in addition to telling you the day of the week and the month and date, to record both the date and the hour of future activities such as doctors's appointments, luncheon engagements, office parties, vacation trips, et cetera, and to record reminders of important dates throughout the year such as your son's birthday and your parents's anniversary; and I have, therefore, for all these many years accepted the loss of January and part or even all of February so as to garner the economic benefit and psychological satisfaction that accrue to one upon having gained a small measure of victory in the marketplace by purchasing an item of necessity at a bargain price — a bargain of particular magnitude this year in that for a mere 99 cents, less than the price of a prune danish and a cup of coffee, I was able to purchase a spanking new 1985 calendar put out by the Sterling Publishing Company, which is entitled "According to Guinness" and which is a calendar arranged so that each page representing a day of the year has upon it, in words and in cartoon pictures, a world record from the famous *Guinness Book of World Records*, which, although the calendar is not nearly so well organized as the book, nevertheless gives me a daily world record upon which to reflect, to be amused or disgusted or intrigued or fascinated or even challenged, as I was when I read the entry for Wednesday, the 13th of February, which, above a cartoon of a man seated before a video display terminal, says that "the longest sentence recorded ever to have gotten past the editor of a major newspaper is one of 1286 words in *The New York Times* by Herbert Stein in the issue of Feb. 13, 1981," a date that, not by coincidence, one would assume, is exactly four years to the day before the date on my calendar upon which is presented the publication of Mr. Stein's very long sentence, a sentence of impressive length but nevertheless not as long as this sentence, which, by being published this day, June 16, 1985, in this newspaper, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, breaks the record established by *The New York Times* and Mr. Herbert Stein (who, incidentally, is an economist who was once the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors under both presidents Richard M. Nixon and Gerald Ford and whose 1286-word article in *The New York Times* was a reflection on White House operatives based on his experiences in the administrations in which he had served and his recollections of other administrations, going back to the New Deal days of Franklin Delano Roosevelt) because this very sentence that you are reading at this very moment has 1404 words (having been reduced from an even higher number after I decided it would be unfair to pad the word count by spelling out large numbers in words, so that, for example, "1404" would read "one thousand, four hundred and four"), and, although a run-on sentence such as this does not easily make a whole lot of sense and will probably win no literary or journalistic awards for the eloquent manipulation of the English language, is nevertheless longer than Mr. Stein's that was published in *The New York Times* in 1981, a sentence that, being a sentence almost as long as this sentence, is also a cumbersome run of words that is difficult to read and, in the long run, not very satisfactory as an expression of the ideas of the writer, presented as they are in a manner that is neither simple nor clearly understandable by the average reader; and, that being the case, one cannot help but wonder why Mr. Stein wrote a sentence containing almost 1300 words when he could have reorganized what he had to say and almost certainly presented the same ideas more clearly if he had instead chosen to divide that world-record sentence into two sentences of 600 or 700 words each or three sentences containing 400 or so words and still have expressed himself in sentences that were very long and, as a result, very complex and that, being very long and complex, make Mr. Stein appear intelligent and clever, which, I assume, is the only reason one would choose to write a sentence of such grotesque length unless, of course, one were deliberately trying to write a sentence even longer than that which Mr. Stein had published in *The New York Times* so as (1) to see if one could indeed write a sentence of such an absurd length just to exercise the writing muscle (an exercise the value of which I can now attest is debatable), (2) to publish a sentence of, if not Joycean, at least Steinian, proportions, (3) to earn the additional few bucks a sale brings to a freelance writer and (4) to get one's name in the *Guinness Book of World Records* from the comfort of one's own home without risking life, limb, or sanity by keeping a motorcycle in non-stop motion for 500 straight hours or by eating a pound of gherkins in less than 44 seconds, and to do all this while still producing a sentence that, despite its great length, is nevertheless able to make at least a modicum of sense and that is not an obvious cop-out (such as would be the case with any sentence that stated something like, "The longest sentence ever published in a major newspaper to date was one by Mr. Herbert Stein in the Feb. 13, 1981 issue of *The New York Times*, which said. . . " and then proceeded to quote the entire Stein sentence; or a sentence that was merely a long list, such as "The first 1000 names in the Salt Lake City phone book are . . . " or even a straightforward run of simple sentences connected with conjunctions, such as "Tom went to the store and then he went home and there he met his sister and then they went out to play but then their mother came home and . . . "), but is rather a legitimate sentence with a complex sentence structure with clauses and sub-clauses and parenthetic statements, but that, despite being longer than the Stein sentence, is at least sufficiently readable as to be publishable by a major newspaper, which, with the publication of the sentence, would establish a new record for the *Guinness Book of World Records*, and as a result, the next edition of the "According to Guinness" calendar that the Sterling Publishing Company puts out would not have a February 13 entry that reads, "The longest sentence recorded ever to have gotten past the editor of a major newspaper was one of 1286 words in *The New York Times* by Herbert Stein in the issue of Feb. 13, 1981" but would instead have a June 16, 1985 entry that reads as follows: "The longest sentence recorded ever to have gotten past the editor of a major newspaper was one of 1404 words in *The San Francisco Chronicle* by Albert Sukoff in the issue of June 16, 1985." (AS) ■

This sentence originally appeared in The San Francisco Chronicle*, 16 June 1985.*

How Media Masters Reality #4

"YOU ARE NOT A VERY NICE GIRL . . . "

TIVOLI, NY — In previous installments, I've described contemporary media as a feedback loop that follows a particular logic — collapsing the distance between producer and consumer. As a performer on a reality TV show I improvise the script around the pre-established format. When I log on to MySpace I give value to a commodity owned by News International. Incredibly, MySpace then turns around and sells the commodity of the community back to itself.

These days, we don't sit passively at home waiting for the TV to tell us what to go out and buy. Each of us is an individual — *above all an individual* — who increasingly uses the different media at our disposal as *technologies of the self.* By this I mean we use various media products that transmit a series of statements and make a series of demonstrations against which we test our own behavior and conduct. These media products allow us to judge what is right and wrong, and above all who is normal. Because we prize our individuality, we are suspicious of anyone, especially the state, telling us what to think. We can think for ourselves, thank you very much.

MySpace is precisely *my space.* It is that part of the network in which I am particularly me. The space of public discourse is no longer the space of the public sphere, that classic bourgeois space of the "good conversation," in which the good of the many holds sway over the selfish desires of the individual. Instead, an online space such as MySpace is privatized in two senses. First, it is a public space where I can talk about my world to the people I choose to communicate with: MyPublicSphere. Second, the space is owned by a multinational media empire, and its value accrued by the constant activity that occurs within it. Therefore, when we have fun on MySpace, we are working online to produce a space lively enough to attract advertisers. If we were all to migrate to SpaceFace or MyFace or FaceSpace, MySpace would evaporate like the morning mist. The amazing thing is that we actually pay to work for these guys.

In 1985, one of the first electronic networking spaces appeared — the WELL (an acronym reverse shoe-horned to hold Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link). The name WELL yet carried connotations of a communal space, the space of public concord, even if it was one of the first instances in which a community was sold to itself as a commodity. MySpace is a little less apologetic about collapsing the social space into the individually sized space of the self-directed, self-motivated, self-performing individual. When I am on MySpace it's easy to forget that the information I put up about myself isn't actually owned by me; I somehow manage to transform the goals of the corporation into my own choices.

How is such a deft move possible?

Toward the end of his life, French philosopher Michel Foucault became fascinated with how the state, during the seventeenth century and after, became increasingly preoccupied with the care of the individual citizen. It is particularly curious that when the state was at its most violent, it made its greatest investment in the care of its citizenry (the French Revolution or World War II, for instance). It's almost as if a paradoxical contract had been agreed upon — if you would die for your state then the state would owe you your well-being. The antinomy arises when, as the state apparatus constructs large destructive mechanisms (land armies and weapons systems), it simultaneously constructs technologies of care (culminating in the social democratic welfare state in the twentieth century). Foucault characterizes the antinomy with the phrase: "Go get slaughtered and we promise you a long and pleasant life."

It was in this period that the state was formed as the state per se, that it made it its business to make a political object of human happiness.

It was in the seventeenth century that the state formulated the notion of police, not in the sense of a force that would fight and prevent crime, but as a form of statecraft that would oversee the health of its citizenry, viewing (and constructing) the citizen not only through their judicial status, but also as working, trading, living beings. By the nineteenth century, German universities taught *Polizeiwissenschaft* — describing, defining, and organizing the new technologies of state power. It was in this period that the happiness of individuals was seen as a requirement for the survival and development of the state, and it also became axiomatic that positive intervention in the behavior of individuals was the state's task. It was during this period that the political rationality arose that, as the individual had an effect on society (either positively or negatively) it was beholden on the state to compile information about the fitness and aptitude of the individual. This political technology, Foucault argues, provides the basic reason for the existence of the modern state and is therefore more important than any arguments about ideology, because whichever government is in power, the needs of the state prevail. The state can govern directly, through legislation, or indirectly, by formulating values of individuality that the individual will seek to preserve.

We now see the emergence of two seemingly contradictory values within contemporary society: the state produces the individual and the state sets itself the task to care for that individual. At the moment the individual is defined, however, he or she seeks autonomy from the state and, in order to foster their independence, pays close attention to better self-management (forgetting perhaps that a well-managed and efficient individual is precisely what the state desires). But how might this individual gain knowledge about better self-management? How does this individual know they have made the right choices?

Judge Judy: ". . . you are actually not a very nice girl."

The values of self-reliance and independence, along with the techniques of self-management, are central to the structure of the non-scripted TV show. In the non-scripted TV show the subject is repeatedly placed in the judgement of their peers, or instructed by someone with greater experience, or guided by a mentor, or counselled by counselors. Parents display their errant children before experts who measure their delinquency and give feedback. The family, after undergoing the examination of the audience, takes up the challenge of a regime of self-improvement. An overweight actress, whose weight has yoyoed over the years, confesses her lack of self-discipline on a talk show; she renews her promise to lose weight and invites a film crew to chart her progress.

It is in the arena of the non-scripted TV show that the mechanisms of self-management are played out. It is here that things are measured, tested, evaluated, examined, recorded, and judged (ticking all the boxes you need to make a surveillance system). This is the way we are governed — not by following *orders* or meeting *obligations* but by taking up *challenges* and exercizing *choices.* (SR) ■

Big Bird turned 40 this week. Bird's pre-birthday announcement (and founding of the Children Television Workshop) was front page news in The New York Times *on March 22, 1968.*

MAY NEED REWRITE

NEW YORK — An editor, they say, should be a writer's ideal reader. They can give time to a writer's work. They can offer advice and suggest possible ways to improve a text. *Have you considered this from another perspective? How about we re-phrase the sentence like this?* A bit of trimming here, some burnishing there, they are nevertheless supposedly sensitive to the authorial voice. An editor is a go-between, matching a writer's ideas to an audience's interests, but they are, to quote the late art critic Stuart Morgan, "on nobody's side but their own." The editor is a writer's ideal reader, but not necessarily their friend.

(Yes, but who edits the editors?)

Lately, the role of the editor has changed. No, make that *genetically altered.* Like a comic book character overexposed to radiation in the blinding atomic blog explosion, the editor's DNA has been rewired and reproduced. In the fallout, the editor has become simultaneously author and audience, dividing, growing, regrouping, dividing, growing, regrouping. The editor is you, the editor is me. The editor has become a state of mind.

(Metaphor's bit overstretched, no?)

The comment threads that dangle beneath blogs — cheering or jeering, constructively criticizing or snarking — have become the main channel of communication for this new editorial polis. For personal blog pages, the comment function provides a way of linking up to a network of (mostly) like-minded readers, but for traditional media outlets, they relate to the old letters pages of newspapers. Having a letter published in a national newspaper used to be a big deal; that your opinion might be read over breakfast by thousands of citizens across the country meant something, a sign that your thoughts were considered to be of national importance, even if most of them were along the lines of "Sir, why oh why must my six-year-old pet rhesus monkey continually be subjected to the kind of din that young people deem 'pop music' these days. In my day . . . etc." In their older print form, letters to newspapers were carefully pre-selected and edited for content, clarity and concision. (I remember the giddy excitement and nervousness I felt as a teenager at receiving a phone call from a stern sounding woman at *The Times*, calling to tell me that a letter I'd written to them was going to be published. It was a defence of the artist Chris Ofili, and I was informed that my painstakingly-worded missive was going to be cut down to a single sentence.) In a bid to encourage traffic through their sites, and in order to help them market research their audiences, many newspapers introduced comment boxes for readers to respond to Op-Ed pieces. This not only took the shine off the sense of achievement at getting a letter printed in the paper, but ushered in the era of the citizen editor: opinionated, self-selecting voices responding to articles as fast as a title can publish them.

(Is the *Times* letter relevant? Or are you showing off?)

In theory, the idea that anyone with internet access can voice their opinion in reaction to a published text, and bounce their ideas off other readers in healthy debate, is a good one, and in many cases new communities of writers and thinkers have grown around certain blogs, which have generated large amounts of interesting material that might not otherwise get published elsewhere. However, there has been a broader effect of this access and excess of opinion, on writing both personal blogs and pieces for online publication — an effect more psychological than many initially supposed. Types of comment range from pleasant thanks to the writer, through courteously added further points of interest, into spirited debate, and all the way to pedantic unpicking of holes in an argument, bellicose ripostes, and flat-out abuse. Little by little, and in fear of intellectual stripes being torn off them by their commentators, writers have started to feel obliged to nuance their texts until their rhetorical spirit is completely ironed out, or their argument has become a convoluted mess of caveats, digressions, and sub-clauses.

(Interesting point, but the problem is that you give no examples which suggests that you're writing more about yourself than anyone else.)

Writer Mark Fisher, on his k-punk blog, has recently started compiling a "bestiary" of the main types of respondent found in comment threads. There is the Troll, for instance, who revels in nit-picking critique and wears with pride an inability to commit to any position. They see this "posture of alleged detachment, this sneer from nowhere" as "a virtue, a sign of their maturity." Then there is the Grey Vampire, who on the outside is friendly and sociable, but on the inside, like the troll, cannot commit themselves to anything. Both "are subordinated to The Fear and its demand that we be irreverent, that we constitute ourselves as ironically self-deflating subjects (I'm the sort of person who . . .)." Fisher contrasts this with the enthusiastic Fan writer, often the victim of the Troll or Grey Vampire because "It's always other people who are 'fans': our own attachments, we like to pretend, have been arrived at by a properly judicious process and are not at all excessive." His point about irreverence is key: the dominant pose cultural commentators are expected to affect at this present moment is that of the "everyman," a "common-sense" approach that allows for no flights of fancy, or evidence of rarefied intellectual or aesthetic tastes. Any demonstration of interest in complex ideas or cultural esoterica is acceptable only when couched in "I'm just an ordinary guy" terms, lest the trolls jump you for pretentiousness or the vampires slowly suck from your soul any enthusiasm you had to share your ideas with anyone.

(There's always someone, somewhere, with a big nose who knows . . .)

Whether Trolls, Grey Vampires, or Fans, the domain of blog commentators is collectively coalescing into a picture of sorts. It is that of a nebulous, but nonetheless highly reactive, popular front, a digital chorus of anonymously signed or pseudonymic opinion that exerts a kind of peer pressure on those who publish online. It may be a chimera, but it's an intimidating one. Filmmaker Adam Curtis identified its curious power when he described bloggers as "the new censors": writers now second-guess responses, they self-police themselves for fear that their biases, elisions, or inclusions will be shot down in flames by the invisible inquisition. Writing becomes an act done while looking over your shoulder. (DF) ■

Part 4: Headless Body, Topless Bar

SOME DIE, SOME GET HURT, SOME GO ON

GLASGOW — "Sports journalism is the last refuge of purple prose." That was the view of one sports writer, Kevin McCarra, who covers football for *The Guardian.* Honing his own skills, he'd been checking out old champions — A. J. Liebling, Roger Kahn, George Plimpton, Thomas Hauser, Hugh McIlvanney . . . (On reflection, Hauser and McIlvanney might want to dispute any sense of the past in that list, as they are both still in the arena). Most recently, McIlvanney introduced a mighty anthology of Budd Schulberg's boxing reports. In one of those pieces, "Fighters and Writers," Schulberg recalls the boxers of his youth in a roll call of rough poetry:

"And there I was, the wide-eyed 11-year-old at ringside with his devoted fight fan of a father when our Olympic gold medalist, Fidel La Barba, won the flyweight championship from Frankie Genaro. All those nifty little flys and bantams of my childhood, Newsboy Brown and Corporal Izzy Schwartz, with those six-pointed stars on their trunks, and all the Filipino battlers: at night instead of counting sheep I'd be murmuring their magical names — Speedy Dado . . . Young Nationalista . . . Clever Sencio. Since boxing was a shamelessly ethnic sport, we root for our local Jewish champions Mushy Callahan (Morris Scheer), Jackie Fields (Jacob Finkelstein), and the Newsboy (David Montrose), but as loyal Californians we cheered the Eastern campaigns of La Barba, who was holding his own with future Hall of Famers Kid Chocolate, Battling Battalino."

The names are sweet but Schulberg isn't overcome by sentimentality as he pinpoints race as one of the most powerful factors that define boxing. The other factors are money and ferocity itself, the sheer brutality of the sport and the fascination it inspires in its followers. McIlvanney nails that one in a report on the defeat of British champion Lloyd Honeyghan by Marlon Starling in 1989:

"Standing by Honeyghan's chair in a bare room off the Sports Pavilion at Caesars Palace Hotel, watching helplessly as he huddled forward almost into the fetal position while excruciating pain spread out behind his closed eyelids from the hideously swollen right side of his face, at least one reporter who has found boxing irresistible all his life wondered not for the first time if he had the right to be so captivated by it. Is it, I was obliged to ask, mainly the fear of being dismissed as an ageing hypocrite (of being bracketed with those bores we all could name who find it easy to turn sourly moralistic about sex as soon as their own juices start to dry up) that keeps the misgivings sufficiently in check to let me go back to the ringside?"

It's that uneasiness that stops many people even contemplating boxing as their sport of choice and it's the same dark ambivalence that makes it the most vital sport for a journalist to report on. Boxing is not clean in any sense of the word. Matches are scored with a lack of logic that makes it clear the best man does not always win. In fact, boxers are more often chosen as fodder for champions than to offer any true challenge. The worse that gets, the greater the slump in the game (boxing fans do not talk of the "end of boxing as a sport" but rather they take the long view and acknowledge a series of "slumps" when real contenders are scarce and the game turns to corrupt pantomime). In 1959, when the journalist George Plimpton decided to step into a ring with the formidable Archie Moore, he began to receive a series of anonymous calls offering advice. Once the caller suggested Plimpton hire the services of a spellcaster named Evil Eye Finkel. According to the caller, "Evil Eye's got a manager. Name of Mumbles Sober. The pair of them can be hired for fifty dollars to five hundred dollars depending — so it says in the brochure — on the 'wealth of the employer and the difficulty of the job.' " It's advice that has stayed true through time, as Evil Eye and Mumbles continue to prosper.

It also makes boxing the natural sport for newspapers. It is at times indistinguishable from crime reporting. It reflects the seams of corruption that run through society, class structures, and race relations. At times, it rises to unprecedented levels and reflects national traumas, never more so than when Muhammed Ali was handed a three year ban for repudiating the Vietnam War and the draft. As a sport, it regularly implodes, leaving writers to describe scenes of absolute absurdity, falsity, or, in the best of times, blood-stained victories and appalling defeats.

Writers rise to such situations. A recent Muhammed Ali reader contains articles by authors Tom Wolfe, LeRoi Jones, Norman Mailer, Hunter S. Thompson, Wole Soyinka, Joyce Carol Oates, and Guy Talese. The attraction for these writers is far from simple and may be entangled in a question of style. It's said that Jonathan Swift was a boxing fan and it's recorded that he watched the first British champion, James Figgs, in action. For an anatomist of human savagery such as Swift this could easily have been another step in his education.

Joyce Carol Oates makes an interesting comment on style and language in an observation on Mike Tyson in 1986:

" 'I want to punch the bone into the brain' . . . Tyson's language is as direct and brutal as his ring style, yet as more than one observer has noted, strangely disarming — there is no air of menace, or sadism, or boastfulness in what he says: only the truth."

Jonathan Swift could happily accommodate this definition of style as brutal and objective. Sports writers, though, can come at the same point with a variety of shimmies and half-steps. Oates, for example, analyzes the raw aggression of boxing with great intellect:

"The psychologist Erik Erikson discovered that, while little girls playing with blocks generally create pleasant interior spaces and attractive entrances, little boys are inclined to pile up the blocks as high as they can and then watch them fall down: 'the contemplation of ruins,' Erikson observes, 'is a masculine specialty.' No matter the mesmerizing grace and beauty of a great boxing match, it is the catastrophic finale for which everyone waits, and hopes: the blocks piled as high as they can possibly be piled, then brought spectacularly down. Women, watching a boxing match, are likely to identify with the losing, or hurt, boxer; men are likely to identify with the winning boxer."

A.J. Liebling makes a similar point describing Rocky Marciano's demolition of the legendary Joe Louis and the impact of the scene on a fan and his girlfriend:

"In the eighth round, as you probably read in the daily press, Marciano, the right-hand specialist, knocked Louis down with a left hook that Goldman had not previously publicized. When Louis got up, Marciano hit him with two more left hooks, which set him up for the right and the pitiful finish.

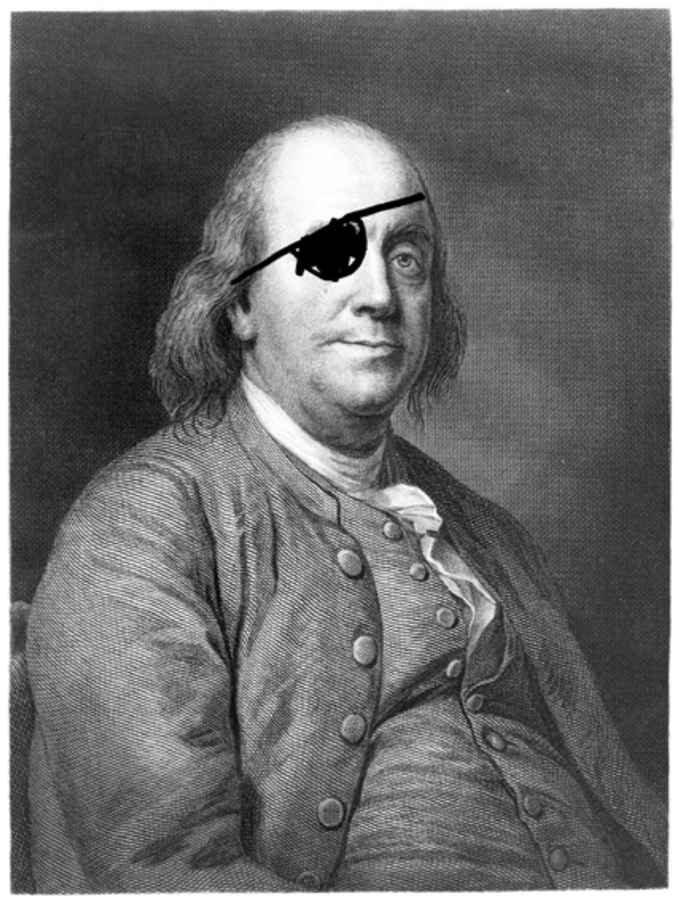
"Right after Marciano knocked Louis down the first time, Sugar Ray Robinson started working his way toward the ring, as if drawn by some horrid fascination, and by the time Rocky threw the final right, Robinson's hand was on the lowest rope of the ring, as if he meant to jump in. The punch knocked Joe through the ropes and he lay on the ring apron, only one leg inside.

"The tall blonde was bawling, and pretty soon she began to sob. The fellow who had brought her was horrified. 'Rocky didn't do anything wrong,' he said. 'He didn't foul him. What you booing?'

"The blonde said, 'You're so cold. I hate you, too.' "

Perhaps only sports journalism could produce two such valuable passages from such different points of view. This tangle of language, style, and drama is essential to the writer's art and it's the sports pages that allow that secret to be aired. Schulberg considers this issue in relation to boxing and comes to this conclusion:

"Why this affinity of writers and fighters? Where one has a promoter, the other has a publisher. One has a manager, the other has an agent. One has a trainer, the other has an editor. But when the bell rings, it's sort of interchangeable. You're out there under the bright lights feeling naked and alone. And what you do or fail to do out there can make or break your reputation for life." (FM) ■



"In both places, pirates flourished."

SOCRATES: GUARD UP, PANTS DOWN

NEW YORK — Around here we like to do things *properly.* Haphazard work and half-baked ideas won't cut it. Really, if you don't care, why should we? Uncaring, unfeeling, unthinking people tend to have little more to share than their own inappropriate sense of self-importance. And we've seen enough of that. Let's do things differently from now on. Let's do them properly.

So how do we do this, do things *properly*? Write properly, for instance? Is there a proper way of saying things in print? How would we know what's appropriate? What standards might we apply to check for inappropriate modes of writing? If I spilled my guts to you right now, telling you all about what's going on in my head and heart, would you want to read it? Or would it be inappropriate? Wouldn't you want to read it precisely because it is? After all, the one form of communication that will always be eagerly consumed is the one that arguably remains the most inappropriate of all: gossip. It travels fast. Before you know it, everyone knows. And they want to know more. Isn't that the kind of demand that any writer, any paper, would like to meet, whether appropriate or not?

That's assuming gossip can be steered. As if this were possible! Inappropriate forms of communication, like gossip, are hydra-headed. They tend to be unmanageable. In my experience, the best way to handle a hydra is to raise one yourself. Meaning: one proper tactic for countering gossip is to provide too much inappropriate information. It'll keep the gossipers busy speculating and, as long as they're kept busy, they won't realize that there never was anything to speculate about. Because they've already been told all there ever was to know. And more.

So there you have a proper argument for choosing inappropriate modes of writing, a most effective survival stragegy for writers: your guard is up when your pants are down.

Does this mean, then, that being inappropriate is proper to writing? You could argue that it is. Because who could ever claim to have appropriate reasons for putting things in print? Yes, it's true, there's news that needs to be aired if our society is to remain informed, open, and critical. This news consists of facts, but what about voices? What are proper reasons for trying to get your voice heard? What are proper motives for cultivating a voice over years of writing (apart from an inappropriate sense of self-importance)? Isn't becoming a spokesperson for a community, social group, or generation a proper reason? Unfortunately, such groups have a habit of not materializing when called upon to bestow a mandate to those prepared to speak for them. Of course, back in the day when the book of books was written, God was careful in his choice of writers, and made sure they had the chance to prove the authenticity of their vocation. Through some form of martyrdom or other. These days it's not so easy for a writer to authenticate your proper mandate. The possibility of suffering for your art is perhaps less appealing now when, in principle, a happy life is something you might still insist on leading as a writer slash citizen slash human being, even if it means renouncing the (lingering romantic) claim to a proper authentification of your presumed vocation.

What the hell does *proper* mean, anyway? Greek philosophy has an answer: what is proper to someone or something is what fits their characteristic properties. For example, it is proper for fish to be in water. It suits them. What equivalent state would be proper to writing? To appear in print? To writers? To be in a state of grace? Or perpetual crisis? What if both print media and writers were in crisis? Were they ever not? Greek philosophy also states that criticism is derived from crisis. The *critique* in Greek jurisprudence and medicine was understood as a votum passed on an undecided situation that determined the point of *crisis* at which it would decide itself (the climax of a juristical dispute, or the turning point of an illness). The proper place for the critique to determine the crisis was the *criterion*, the court of law or site of medical inspection. In its original sense, then, crisis is to criticism what water is to a fish. It is its proper medium. The proper task of critical writing and publishing is to navigate situations in which preconceived ideas of what is proper no longer seem appropriate. When it wiggles like a fish through an eddy of crisis, a critical voice or a critical medium comes into their own. Philosophically speaking, then, the "inappropriate" is the only form proper to critical writing and publishing.

Where might the criterion be properly sited today? Where can we take the crisis to decide its outcome? It's hard to say whether a proper place for solving inappropriate matters still exists. Big institutions will maintain that they provide it. And true, who would want to deny that, next to the parliaments, the fourth estate has been, and continues to be, the crucial criterion for modern democracies. Without it the topology of the democratic political sphere would lose a central arena for determining and resolving its crises. *So let's hear it for a free press . . . !* and yet, we shouldn't take it as given that only institutions can properly host the criterion. It could be any site where crisis can be made discernible. Some say that the web is well suited for this purpose. Maybe. But I can't help thinking that critical voices have bodies that inhabit the physical world. And I'd like to see these embodied voices be housed, hosted, and honed in actual places. The politics of place implied in siting a criterion continues to be a material matter.

When space and visibility in the city are so blatantly governed by the dictates of a capitalist property market, the only institutions able to occupy property in the city are those that promise to generate capital. Yet, the proper reason for a criterion to exist is not to generate capital but to discern crisis. By the standards of the property market, its existence can therefore hardly be justified. As such, to appropriate material space toward such ends, however temporary, is to insist that it is proper for a city to contain criteria.

The art of inappropriate critical thought has a very particular site set aside for it in the topology of the Greek city. This is the *stoa*, the park in front of the house or just outside the city. It is a zone where the laws neither of the house, the *oikos*, nor of the market, the *agora*, properly apply. One comes to the *stoa* to practice philosophy. Here Socrates could be found any day, walking about aimlessly, talking to anyone willing to talk to him. Socrates embodies the spirit of philosophy as an art of asking inappropriate questions. Unsettling their beliefs through irony, he would pull down people's pants by exposing that few of the things we say make proper sense, plunging the belief in the proper into crisis. It is then proper to this art of dislodging beliefs that it should be lodged in a site that is itself unsited, the zone of the *stoa* as a criterion for crisis where the laws of house and market won't properly apply.

In the end, though, gossip killed Socrates. People spoke badly of him, saying he was corrupting the youth with inappropriate thoughts, and he could put up no defense because gossip cannot be taken to court. It remains disembodied, spread by too many people, none of whom can really be taken to task. This is why gossip is so power- and painful. Invisible eyes are on your body. What better way is there to return this gaze but to authorize this situation by making that body visible — materially — as a body of thought in a form of publishing proper to its enduring inappropriateness?! (JV) ■

RIDER FOUR SEVEN COMMUNICATE

You're goin in via the cafeteria the cafeteria I believe is on the second floor / Ten A D two seven oh four ten A D two seven oh four / four one nine Bridge Street / Ten four

Oh six fifteen confirmed / Oh six sixteen the time I am at forty one / Heavy fire arrival / Forty five returning / Three six ten four / Oh six eighteen the time / Bronx don't have full address / Six nineteen ten twenty six apartment eleven charlie over / Oh six twenty / E forty fourth street ten four / Oh six twenty four one hour and three minutes there is no three eight five on this avenue one seven ten four / Six twenty eight two one nine five ten ninety two / Stand by / Ten four call to the six thirty stand by / Ten four / Unable to give an eta / Ok ten four / Respond to the command post / Six thirty one ten four / Oh six forty two second alarm at box three six five one / Five story p d twenty by fifty / Bronx don't have full address / Oh seven twenty E two nineteenth street over / That's the one, thanks / Does anyone know if forty four engine is between first and second or second and third? / On seventy fifth street? / Nevermind, got it / oh six forty nine November the eleventh / Oh six forty nine Bronx fire is now under control / Leave a message to notify that you're coming / Oh six fifty three two seven three / Two seven three continuing on a ten twenty / Ten four oh six five three hours / Ten four oh six five three hours / Rider one one seven / Very good thank you one one seven / Ok / Rider one one seven ten eight forty one zero / Very good thank you rider one one seven / Oh six five six one twenty / Central Park South six fifty seven the time at two five eight / ten four / Ok going back to the city / Williamsburg section / Ten four / Oh well / Do you want us to stay? / Ok roger / See what they wanna do / Yeah go ahead / Oh seven oh oh roger second alarm / Thanks / Thirty five two one five thirty five two one five seven oh one the time / Hamilton Bridge with a disabled vehicle / Ok / Rider four seven communicate / Seven division communicate / Seven / Shut down gas and electric at seventeen and nineteen / Both seventeen and nineteen you say? Ten four / Three six five one we are returning do you understand? / Right ten four / Stand by ok twenty two? / Seven oh six the time / E M S just notified that we have a total of six ten forty five code fours all refusing treatment over / Rider two six / Six ten forty five code fours all refusing treatment that what you say Division seven? / Ten four / Location Park Place at Flatbush Avenue on the North bound side of the station / Smoke North bound side of the station / Brooklyn to Battalion three one / Ok we're on our way / Station Park Place at Flatbush Avenue / Smoke North bound side of the station / Battalion three one / We're departing / Oh seven oh hours / Go ahead / Yes we are / Six ten forty five code fours all refusing medical attention / Ten four Bronx citywide dispatcher one three one, seven seventeen the time / Four six / E M S states they can't get in the building the lobby is locked / Yeah they just gave the message / Ok forty six / Ten four / Ten four forty six seven twenty one / Brooklyn of Ladder one one oh / Special one three nine / Brooklyn of Ladder one one oh

Luigi Sono, Matins, November 11 (PE) ■

REËDITED

10 GOTO althusser bioptic re-verb-bed
20 PRINT "systematic disavowal of all *New Yorker* umlauts"
30 END

(TK) ■

From *The Economist*, August 24, 2006: "In his book *The Vanishing Newspaper*, Philip Meyer calculates that the first quarter of 2043 will be the moment when newsprint dies in America as the last exhausted reader tosses aside the last crumpled edition." ■

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNI2Chjzr1M ■

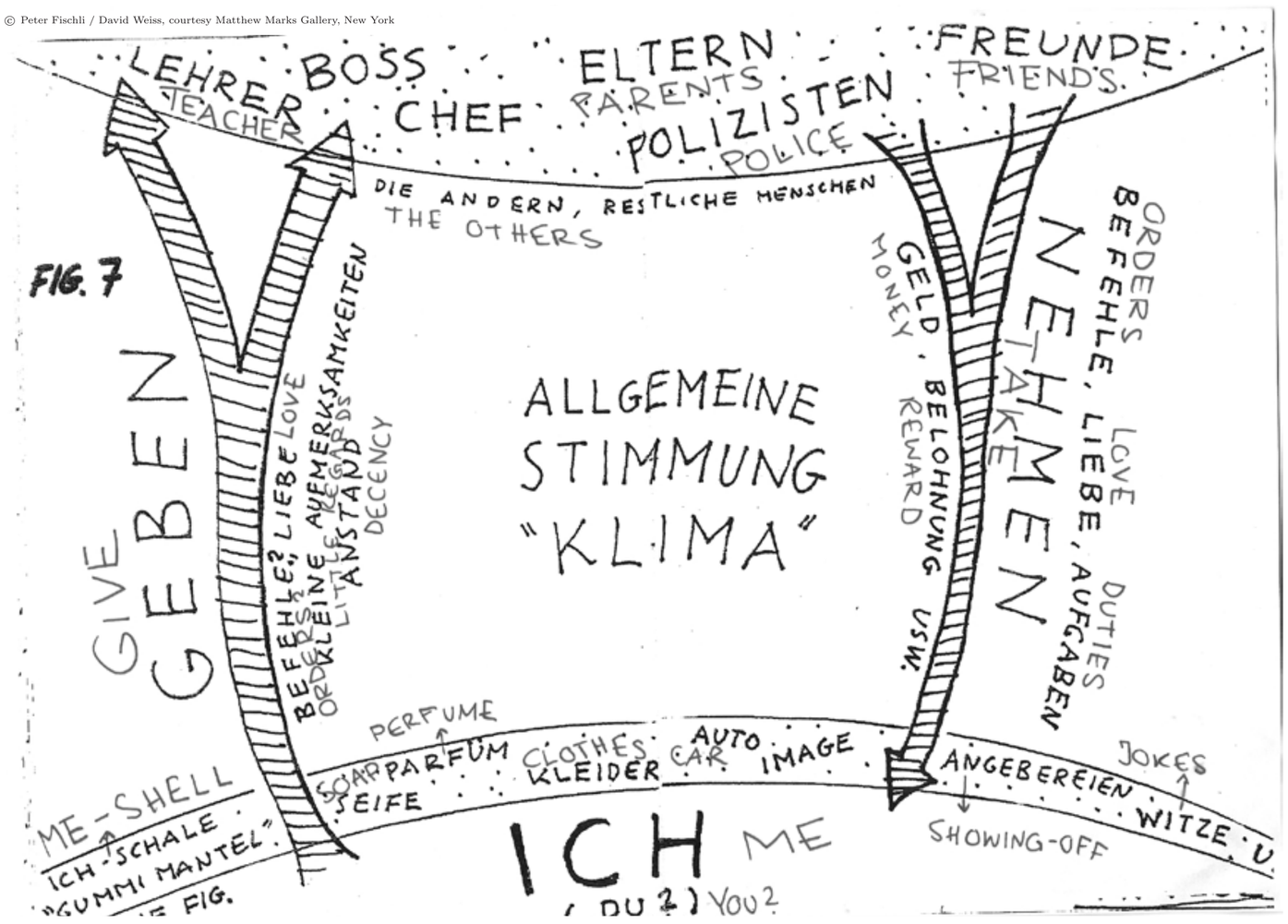
Fri, 13 Nov 2009 12:19:49 -0500 (EST)
– "Significant amount" of water found on moon, NASA says. (CNN) ■

The fourth First/Last Newspaper was assembled by DEXTER SINISTER with contributions by Steve Rushton, Angie Keefer, Joe Scanlon, Francis McKee, Rob Giampietro, Will Holder, Peter Fischli & David Weiss, Jan Verwoert, Shannon Ebner, Albert Sukoff, Snowden Snowden, Dan Fox, Quinton Oliver Jones, Paul Elliman, Seth Price, and Tom Kraft. Produced with the assistance of Brendan Dalton and Anne Callahan. Presented under the umbrella of PERFORMA 09 and in partnership with Times Square Alliance. Edited in cooperation with Defne Ayas and Virginie Bobin.

Masthead set in Strike Alphabet courtesy Shannon Ebner.

Performa, a non-profit multidisciplinary arts organization established by RoseLee Goldberg in 2004, is dedicated to exploring the critical role of live performance in the history of twentieth century art and to encouraging new directions in performance for the twenty-first century.

PERFORMA 09

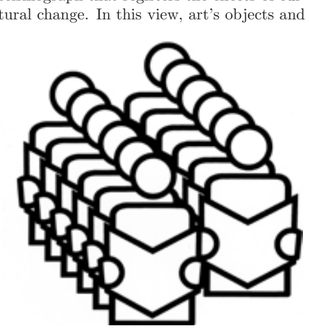


FIRST/LAST TAKEN FROM COMMONS

NEW YORK — People keep trying to get a handle on what's happening. There's a fear that others are hastening to make startling connections among the raw material, tracing lines between points we didn't even know existed. Exacerbating this anxiety is the fact that, despite its supposed insistence on the consolidation of knowledge and the worth of information, the Internet produces *ritualized unknowing.* You could say, however, that this is a good thing, for it provokes a desire to remystify the frenzy of technological change through ritual, through a personal and allegorical rehearsal of what is perceived to be a manic and distorting increase in density, a compression exponentially telescoping in reach and magnitude.

To tame this frenzy we are offered the calming linearity of lists. While the persistence of the list as a constraint on the Internet's data-cloud may simply be due to the persistence of small rectangular monitors, the list is clearly one of the chief organizational principles of the Internet. Search engines return lists; news is funneled into aggregations of that which is most flagged or emailed; blogs garnish their teetering stacks with the latest entries; a Web page itself typically extends downward in a scrolling, implied list.

Art is sometimes taken to be a kind of seismograph that registers the effects of cultural change. In this view, art's objects and



gestures yield distanced reflection and insight: from the frenzy, a distillation. But the term "ritualized unknowing," used above in reference to the Internet, could also describe a response to the banal condition of trying to understand *what's happening* that one finds in art discourse, which seeks to explain how art explains, to show how art shows, to suggest what art is trying to suggest.

There is a paradox in the very attempt to understand an unfamiliar art practice, which today is usually initiated through the medium of two-dimensional or screen-based images. Initially you grapple with a nebulous apparition in your mind's eye, a suspicion that something hovers beyond with no name forthcoming, but this sense of looming energies and meaning often shrinks when you finally inspect the actual artworks, which reveal themselves to consist of mere objects or gestures, as do all artworks. No matter how powerful the work, you're tempted to say: "But this is just?" *Just* an object, *just* a gesture. It would be a mistake, though, to think that your disillusionment upon scrutinizing the "actual" art is a bad thing. A gap has surely opened in your experience of the work, but art depends on this split between the fragile interiority of speculation and the more public and bodily activity of looking, which partakes of space. Your first impression, rare and valuable as it is, is only richer for the betrayal.

Frenzy might in fact be homeopathic, its anxiety-producing presence a spur, although rather than encourage the articulation of meaning, it encourages existing chains of associations to fold in a strange and unanticipated way, aligning incompatible ideas and holding them in awkward proximity. For example, a human body subjected to frenzies of processing is an aggressive and disturbing alienation, but the threat is also fascinating; like a gif-compressed headshot, a Cubist portrait recalls the ancient ritual gesture of donning a mask or hood, and the ambivalent pleasures of othering oneself. Fashion also hunts this path.

We were trying to get to this place — it was me and you, I think, and some other people — and it was a little like my house? Although, well, it was my house, but it didn't look like my house, somehow. And we were trying not to be seen.

Why does this stumbling sentence so clearly represent a dream in the telling? (SP) ■

"END OF QUOTE"

I hesitated to respond to this remark with yet another silly question, though I hadn't really had the chance to speak to Anna yet, and hear her out. (Like the old man, her quiet manner made me more eager to listen than Dick's enthusiasm, of which I had grown a little tired. No offence, Dick.) Till now any of their explanations were less helpful than what they intended. Once again I decided that it was best if I just sat back and observed, though I was, of course, conscious of what Dick called the "funny" nature (like "funny bone") of this situation. My presence altered their usual setting, with the result that I was, I imagined, still receiving a distorted view of things. For example: Anna had finished her soup. The orange streaks at the bottom of her white bowl testified to this. But all I could recall was a slight image of a few movements of her right hand and her lips, though in actual fact it seemed she had moved — but without attracting any attention, on the other hand, by an abnormal immobility.

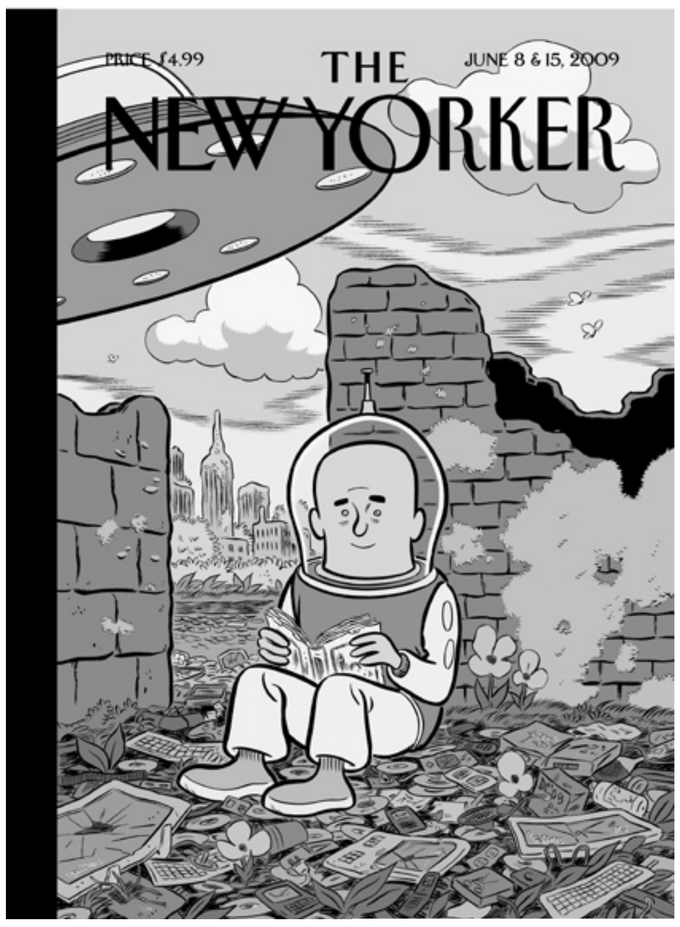
Then there was the old man's jumper: I could not think how I hadn't noticed the cuffs before. Once you paid attention to them it was as if they were there for all to see: the ends of the sleeves had obviously been worn by the wrists's regular movements, a long while ago. These had then been slightly clumsily mended with wool — a few shades darker than the blue of the the jumper — pointing out how bright that deep dark blue actually was. As clear as night and day. But not. (WH) ■

NON-EXISTENCE NEITHER PROVED NOR DISPROVED

GENEVA—Full implementation of the Large Hadron Collider has been delayed yet again after another highly improbable chain of events resulted in a malfunction in above-ground electrical equipment on Tuesday, leading to failure of the LHC cryogenics system. Temperatures in the superfluid helium-cooled tubes rose to a near sweltering 8° Kelvin before the failsafe systems responded, shutting down the world's largest particle accelerator for a period of several days. Dr. Mike Lamont, LHC Machine Coordinator, blamed "a bit of bag-uette on the busbars," believed to have been dropped there by a bird.

The unlikely incident neither proves nor disproves the controversial prediction made by physicists Holger B. Nielsen and Masao Ninomiya that "a large Higgs-particle-producing machine such as the LHC should somehow be pre-arranged so as not to come into existence." In their much-contested *Test of Effect from Future in Large Hadron Collider; A Proposal*, Nielsen and Ninomiya suggest that a particle collider with a combination of luminosity and beam energy — seemingly sufficient to change the fate of the universe on a macroscopic scale — would be thwarted by backwards causation, or universe-preserving influence from the future.

The idea is hardly farfetched in the realm of quantum physics. While macroscopic phenomena have not previously been observed to occur in reverse, the notion that "all physical phenomena are microscopically reversible" was put forth by Richard Feynman and John Wheeler in the Wheeler-Feynman absorber theory as early as 1941, in an attempt to explain the movement of energy waves backward and forward in time. Wheeler later coined the term "wormhole" to describe a hypothetical connection between two topologically distant locations in space-time — a conceivable conduit for time travel. (AK) ■



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