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"... no ordinary chaos"
Heuretics for Media Work in Education

by

Michelle Forrest

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
July, 1997

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned hereby certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance a thesis entitled "...no ordinary chaos: Heuretics for Media Work in Education"

by Michelle Forrest

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dated: August 9, 1997

External Examiner

Research Supervisor

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. . . to my parents,

Jeanette Eileen and Marcel Joseph

The careful balance of order and disorder, the planned
and the spontaneous that distinguish arts of Zen,
is found in the happy home.

- Madeleine Grumet

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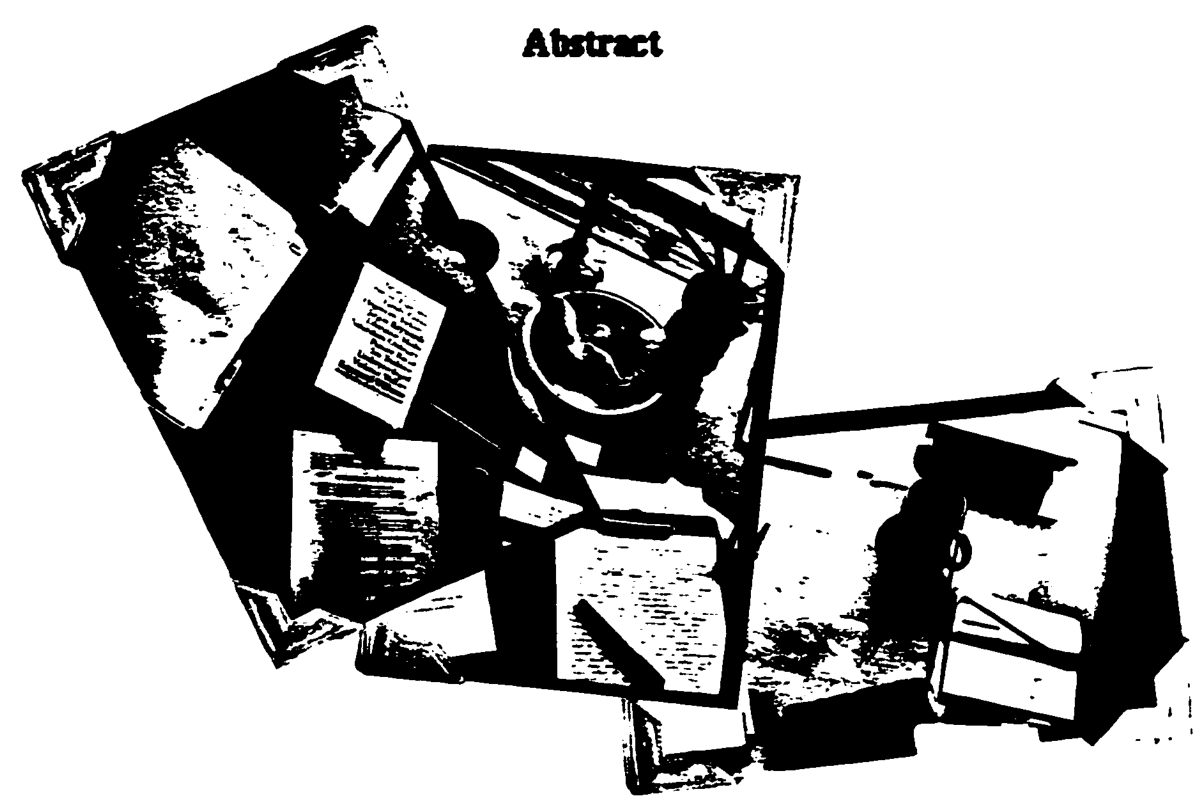
Abstract



This work in philosophy of education explores the concept of openness as demonstrated in 'open' art-works, using them as both exemplars and touchstones for multi-media invention. The first point of departure is the writer's own response to an 'open' work which raises questions about the indignation evoked by difficulty and the significance of the resulting reflexivity for the pedagogical ideal of open-mindedness. A second departure point is a pair of case studies in the use of counter-narrative. It is suggested that under the rubric 'deconstruction', counter-propaganda may pose as pedagogy. This leads to a discussion of Derrida's process of de-composition and its significance for the teacher who rejects social realism in favour of openness. The work then de-composes itself into a series of media works demonstrating the movement of invention (heuretics) within an alternate realism, a realism of process. The dissertation closes by opening its own form to reader response. Thus, it rejoins its first point of departure, a disclosure on the value of openness.

Acknowledgements

For their openness, clarity and humour, I thank my supervisor, William Hare, and my committee members, Robert Bérard and John Portelli. Our conversation continues to puzzle, bewilder, and bemuse.

For seeing me through the unpredictable effects of an 'open' work during a difficult time in our lives, I thank my family and friends for their faith and patience and for reminding me time and again that "it could be worse".

To my external examiner, Michael J.B. Jackson, who made me realize order within chaos, and to all those who knowingly or otherwise assisted me with production details, your generosity is greatly appreciated.

I. Prelude

An abstract is a kind of prologue as in a masque or play where the actors mime, or almost dance, a brief miniature of the action of the play about to unfold. Shakespeare's Hamlet, though having no prologue of its own in the classical sense, depicts the "dumb show"[III.ii.141-157] belonging to the play, "The Murder of Gonzago" [II.ii.548], which Hamlet arranges to have performed to "catch the conscience" [II.ii.617] of his murderous uncle. The nineteenth century "tableaux vivants" are similar in technique, depicting a kind of still-life on stage, replete with the characters and suggested action of an historical event, the Battle of Trafalgar, for example. One might think also of a miracle or morality play in which everyone is an archetype, the Everyone of its type.

It is usual and traditional in a doctoral dissertation, as in any scientific treatise [L. *tractare* handle; *trahere, tract-* draw, pull], to include some discussion, perhaps a sizeable formal treatment, of the premises by which one has proceeded. In the abstract to this work, I use the phrase,"'open' work". A good image might be that of a hand-crafted piece of tatting, lace, or other open-work. A formal pattern will be discerned in the finished piece; it is our habit to impose one, our way of conceptualizing. But, open-work is a play of positive and negative space. Every closure of one form is the inevitable opening to others.

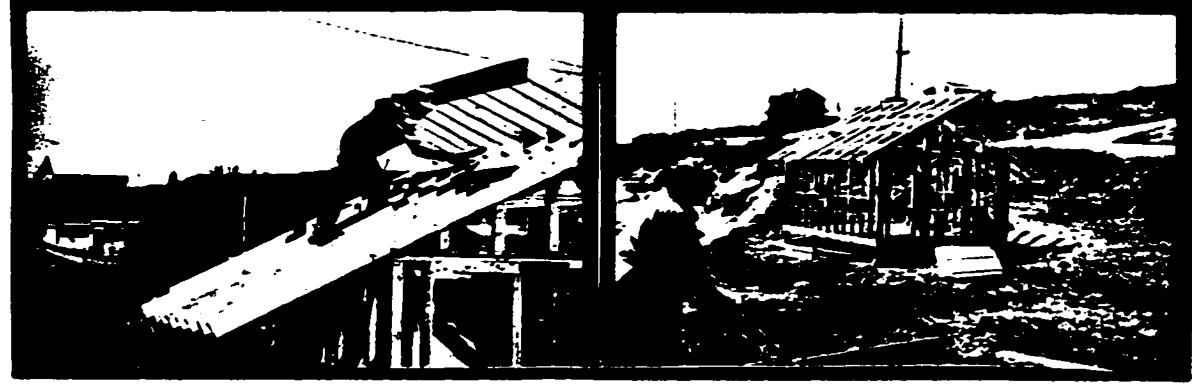


fig. 1.01

If the primary move in a philosophy of education is away from closure, it may mean the adoption of a form of relativism. It is safe to say so in this case, but not to assume that relativism necessarily entails ethical subjectivism, an *anything goes* attitude towards human action. To imagine things as other than what they seem, without creating another hard-and-fast semblance of reality, is difficult if not impossible when assuming the existence of absolute, objective truth. Although there may well be such a thing as objective truth, it is presumptuous and risky to work from the assumption that we can know it well enough to base our assumptions for reading the world and negotiating a place in it upon representations of absolutes. It is more prudent, it seems to me, to adopt as a working hypothesis the assumption of no such knowledge. By being prudently humble we save our working in the world from the presumption of certainty. This is the strategy of heuretics: to take everything seriously (but not without humour), even the absurd.

In The Philosophy of No, Gaston Bachelard says in the preface to his analysis of the new scientific mind:

> So, only too often, the philosophy of science remains corraled in the two extremes of knowledge: in the study by philosophers of principles which are too general and in the study by scientists of results which are too particular. It exhausts itself against these two epistemological obstacles which restrict all thought: the general and the immediate. It stresses first the *a priori* then the *a posteriori*, and fails to recognize the transmutation of epistemological values which contemporary scientific thought constantly executes between *a priori* and *a posteriori*, between experimental values and rational values.[1]

I take Bachelard's phrase, "scientific thought", in its broadest sense, referring to any study which questions its own fundamental principles [L. *scientia*, *scire*

[1] Gaston Bachelard, The Philosophy of No. A Philosophy of the New Scientific Mind, G. C. Waterson, trans., New York: Orion Press, 1968, 5.

know].[2] The transmutation or change of any form has interesting repercussions which are largely the subject of what is to follow. Bachelard suggests that each set of epistemological values ought to balance the other.

> Of course, just as we often have to lighten ballast with the realist, so we must sometimes keep the rationalist properly counter-weighted. We have to watch out for his *a prioris* and give them back their true weight as *a posterioris*. We must constantly demonstrate what remnant of common knowledge still resides in scientific knowledge. We must prove that the *a priori* forms of space and time involve only one type of experience. Nothing can justify an absolute, invariable, definitive rationalism.[3]

In order to keep a balance, he says, we must remind everyone of the "pluralism of philosophic culture".[4] A way of doing so, is to put together an "album of epistemological profiles on all basic notions", which would help one assess the "relative efficiency of different philosophies. Such albums, individualistic of course, would serve as tests for the psychology of the scientific mind."[5] Bachelard imagines a philosopher who, cross-examining himself about a notion, "discovers five philosophies within himself,"

> what would we not obtain if we cross-examined several philosophers about several notions? But all this chaos can be organized if one is willing to admit that a single philosophy cannot explain everything and if one is willing to put the philosophies in order. In other words, each philosophy gives only one band of the notional spectrum and it is necessary to group all the philosophies to obtain the complete notional spectrum of a particular piece of knowledge.[6]

---

[2] This and all etymological references to follow come from the OED. For simple references like that above, I use The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 7th ed., 1982. For more in depth treatment (See e.g.s. in III, i. & ii.), I refer to The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, 1971.

[3] Bachelard, 35.

[4] In teaching courses in philosophy of education to teacher trainees, I have frequently encountered in my students the assumption that we are in search of a particular philosophy of education, a single set of *a prioris* which will prepare one and account for the *a posterioris* of a teacher's role in the classroom. The corollary to this assumption is: if no such set is to be found, what's the point of philosophy of education?

[5] Bachelard, 40.

[6] Bachelard, 41-42.

I may be giving the reader the impression that I believe such chaos can be ordered in a precisely fixed way. Bachelard's language is precise but he recognizes the idiosyncrasies of representation and warns us to allow for them.

> To shape his conviction, the philosopher only too often has the habit of looking for support to a particular science, or even to the pre-scientific thinking of common sense. He then thinks that a notion is the substitute for a thing, whereas a notion is always a moment in the evolution of a thought.[7]

What you are about to read is an album of epistemological profiles; it collects and comments on notions I take to be basic to a philosophy of education. And since education is itself all about theories of knowledge and learning, the mirroring effects you will encounter are hardly surprising; its way of coming together is as much a part of the album as is any interior profile it contains.

It is customary at this point to give the reader a short plan of what he or she is likely to encounter in the following pages. I appreciate the economy of this convention, which offers a kind of overview, or the impression of one, at least. In this case, however, I am trying to give my reader a feel for the piece as it was produced, as it chanced upon this source or that image, this concept or that experience. I can fashion no statement that describes this process better than these words by Jeanne Randolph:

> I am extemporizing, and even though I have my itinerary, I wander. Wandering, the surprize along the way, constitutes my research. Also, by extemporizing there is the potential, at its best, for jazz. At its worst, well, there are ideological risks. Extemporizing, I hope imparts provisionality.[8]

My itinerary is loose, at best. It would not serve to try and 'firm it up', as they say. The idea is not to force a stricter following. With words, a song ain't scat.[9] There

---

[7] Bachelard, 42.

[8] Jeanne Randolph, "Technology and the Preconscious", The City Within, Jeanne Randolph, ed., Banff: The Banff Centre for the Arts, 1992, 35.

[9] scat *n.*, & *v.i.* Wordless jazz song using the voice as instrument. [prob. imit.]

are, as Randolph says, ideological risks. But isn't this always the case, regardless what method one chooses? It goes against tradition to admit that one's research wanders, let alone to embrace chance as *method*. I may be asked how this passes muster as rigorous. And, I'll say, "Isn't 'wandering' the ground on which method is figured?" Someone may say, "If the reader follows the argument into ambiguity, what use is that?" And, I'll question back: "If these riffs[10] are to feature provisionality, how can they do so in strict time?" The ambiguous has a tremulous clarity, echoing itself. Risk is a function of sprung rhythm. It's talk out of time. Forewarned is not always what it's cracked up to be.

. . . . .

"Yes, I've done it again!" says the has-been comic in the movie "Mr. Saturday Night",[11] as he hones his skills on his former straight-man, his brother. I don't have the quote verbatim, so I'll paraphrase it: "See what I did there? You thought I was taking you that way, but I took you the other way." As kids, growing up as a comedy team, they continually duped one another, not uncommon between siblings. But, since play was also their livelihood, they owned up to it. Catching one another out turned into a running discourse on method.

If I'm going to play tricks, as I must to make a case; if I wave the wand, palm the card, make the rabbit reappear, I'd best own up to this *leger-demain*, this slight-of-hand. All writing employs it, more or less artfully or craftily. But, unlike in a stage act, I can divulge the secrets of my craft to the audience. Will it destroy the illusion? Perhaps. And perhaps it's an illusion to think so.

---

[10] riff *n.* Short repeated phrase in jazz and similar music. [20th c.; orig. unkn.]

[11] A mid-90s Hollywood comedy, in the style of Neil Simon, crushingly amusing, always on the edge of a pain which is not to be approached directly. This type of humour is referred to by Yuri Glazov [Professor of Russian (retired), Dalhousie University] as "gallows humour". The movie was produced and directed by stand-up comic and actor, Billy Crystal, who played the title role.

When I speak for myself, in my own voice, I see the wisdom in the old tradition at Cambridge, where you earned your degree based upon one commitment: to live within a mile radius (extended somewhat, now, I expect) of the monument to Mary Magdalen at the village centre. When this tradition, perhaps only legend, was first told me, I thought what a quaint and typically English way of assuming honourable intentions. Any drifter or reprobate could easily comply with such conditions and earn those esteemed letters after his or her name. But I now see that a bogus account, like one with integrity, can take any form. Integrity (wholeness) reflects and results from authority, from responsibly effecting oneself in the world. This is my performance in the most vital way, the way that tells you who I am, and helps me believe I am worth (the) telling. ('See what I did there?')[12]

[12] I close this opening with truth to an absurd degree, truth 'squared', if you will.

II.i. "Daily Meals": notes on an 'open' work

On Tuesday, Nov. 28, 1995, I saw the following notice on the board outside the Art Gallery at Mount St. Vincent University:

> Daily Meals
> Take a picture of your dinner . . . or lunch or breakfast and send it to me for an art exhibition. I would appreciate color photographs (any size) of a meal you've made, eaten in a restaurant, your mother's speciality, any meal you think would make an interesting picture.
> Please include the date taken and any details you want to add: what it is, where you ate it, the circumstances, if you enjoyed it or not, etc. Include your name (if you want to be credited) and return address if you have any questions about the project.

This was followed by a Halifax address and the postscript: "Mark photos enclosed, please do not bend".

I copied the notice into my notebook. I remember feeling intrigued that someone I didn't know would be asking for something which, though very personal, couldn't really say much about me or about meals in general, or so I thought.

The next day I loaded my camera with the only film I had on hand, a roll of TriX 400, a high-contrast black and white film. The phrase "daily meals" became the focus for me. The first thing that came to mind was a cooked meal, a special meal. I was reminded of an old friend who spent New Year's with us many years in succession. And, each time, as the first meal of the new year lay steaming on the plates, she would photograph the table before anyone sat down. I wonder what sort of collection those photos would make?

So, my first thought was of a cooked meal, which, for me, has always meant an evening meal. But, this didn't appeal as a subject because it would require a flash, and I rarely use a flash with my good camera, my Nikon. I don't need one often enough to have learned to use it effectively. I prefer ambient light. I'll see something, a convergence of elements occurring randomly, which I try to capture on film. As for creating effects with supplementary lighting, I've got enough to cope with as it is. I still make all the amateurish mistakes, like not accounting for glare, or forgetting how much light is refracted on a foggy day.

As I considered what else I might do for Daily Meals, my stomach growled for its daily fare. Then, I thought: There's the meal I eat every day -- granola with plain yogourt and half a banana or berries when they're in season. This is a meal I take everywhere, regardless whether I'm staying in a hotel or visiting friends. And, for extended visits, I find a local source for one or all of the ingredients. This was a problem during the winter I spent in Moscow in 1982. Russian black bread and sour cream were not viable substitutes for a five-month stay, and my health suffered as a result.

My bowl of cereal is truly a 'daily meal', and has been a commonplace of my existence for longer than I can remember. Until this Daily Meals exhibition came along, I had never given it much thought, except when explaining it to a host or travelling companion. It can seem odd that someone would be so regimented in their diet. My Moscow experience in particular made me realize that this meal is more of a tonic than an indulgence.

So, having filled my bowl -- I chose my favourite bowl rather than the one I tend to use every day -- I snapped the first shot. I could hardly resist taking a bite. I recorded each shot in my notebook, including the shutter speed, f-stop, and time of day. You can see part of my notebook entry for that day, 29 November 1995, in some of the shots.

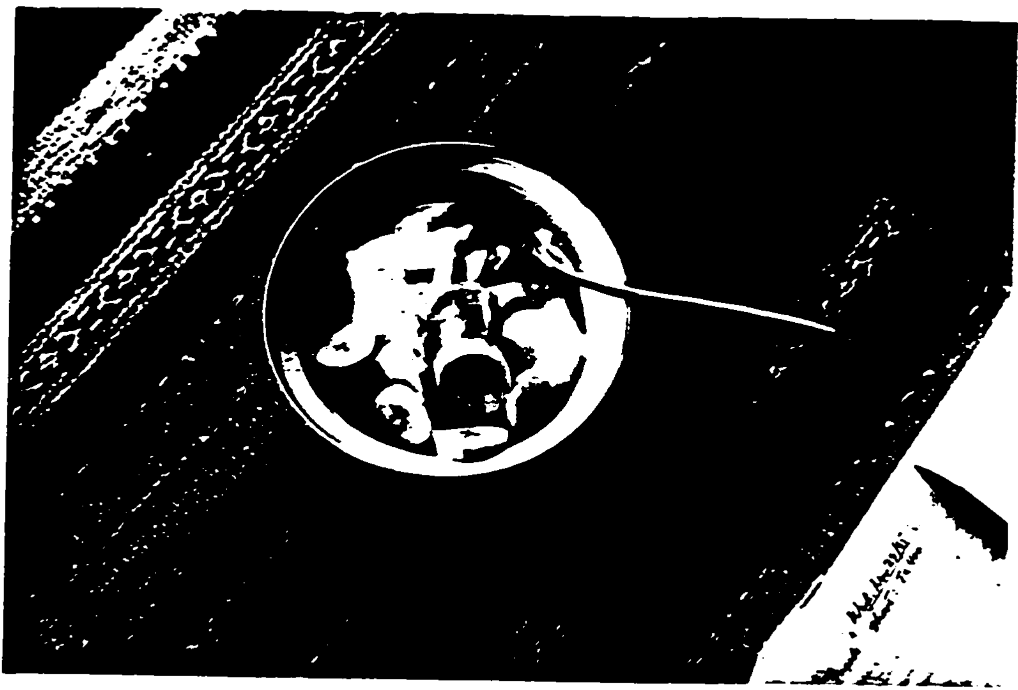


fig. 2.01

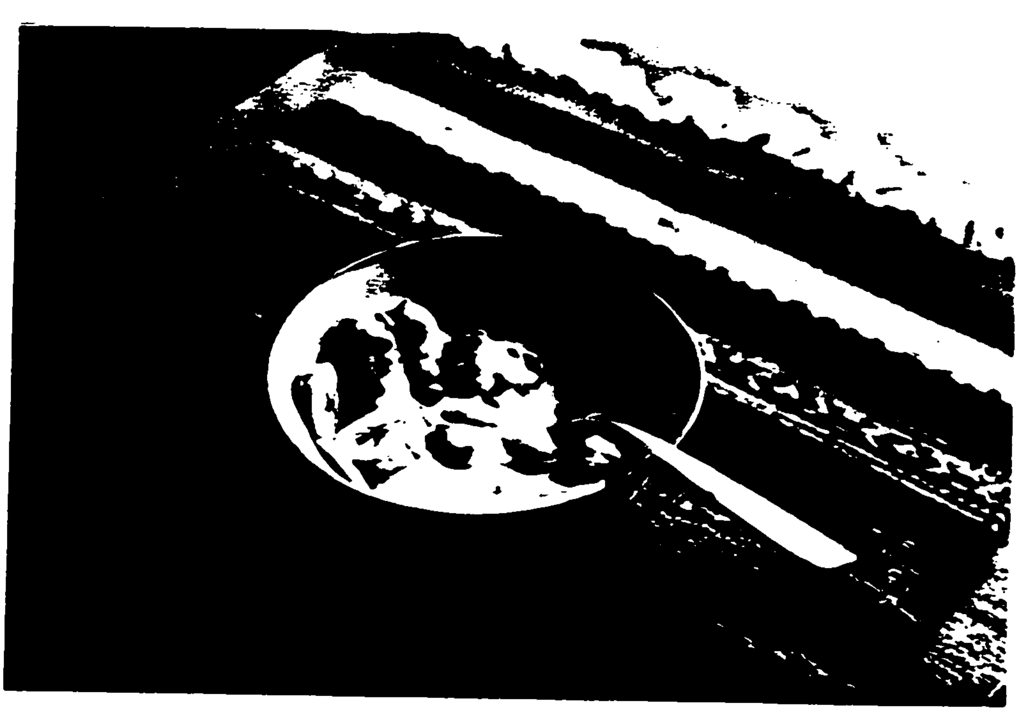


fig. 2.02

fig. 2.03

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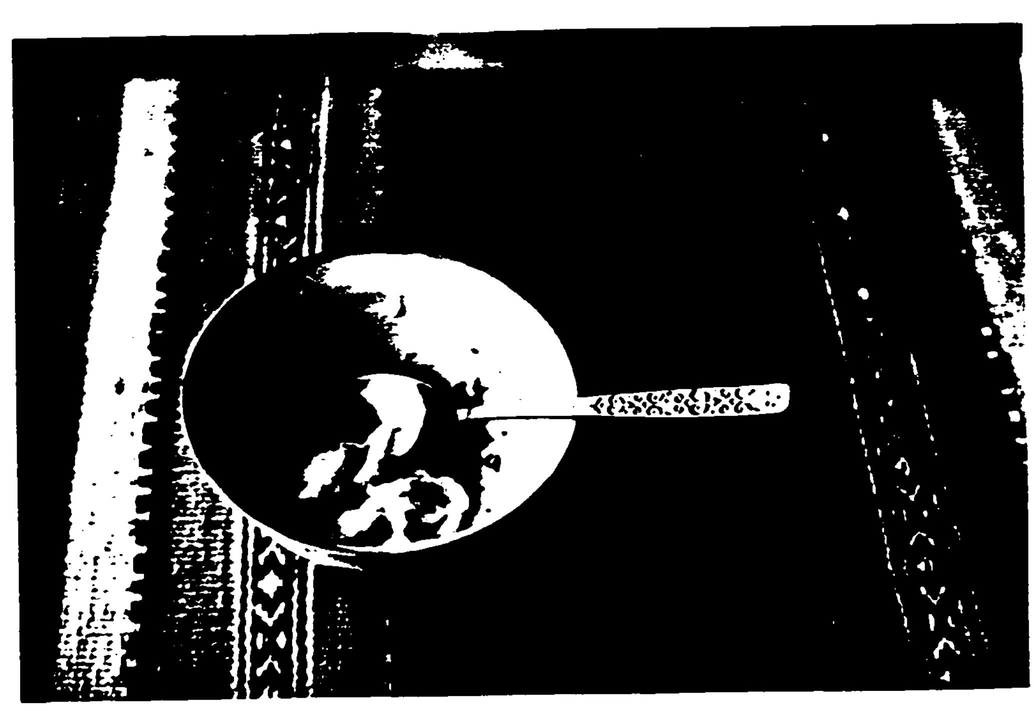


fig. 2.08

fig. 2.09

fig. 2.10

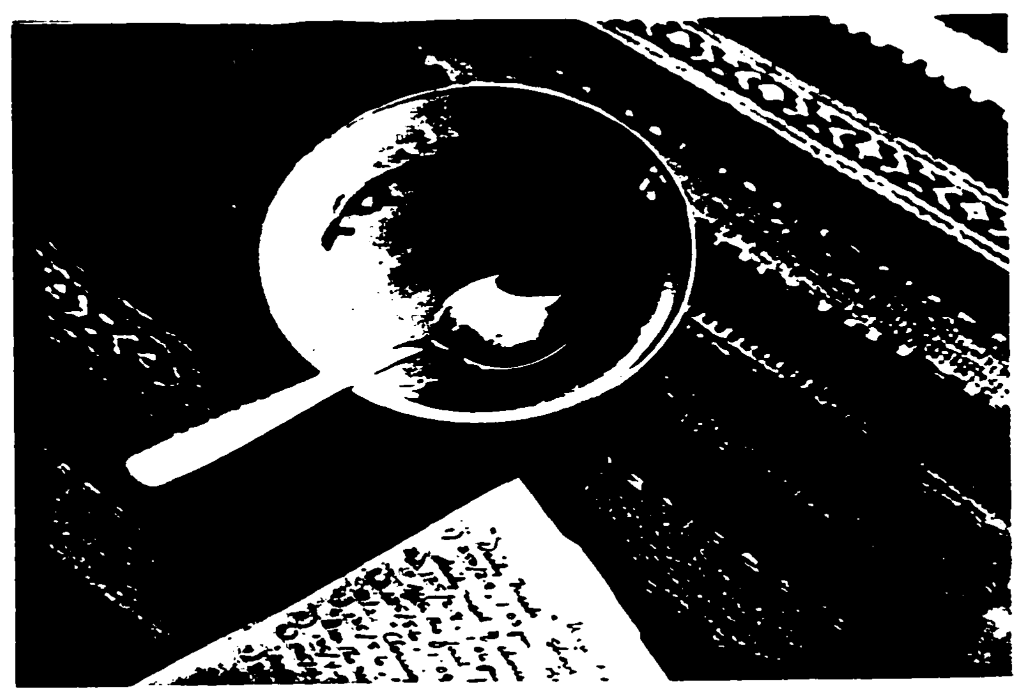


fig. 2.11

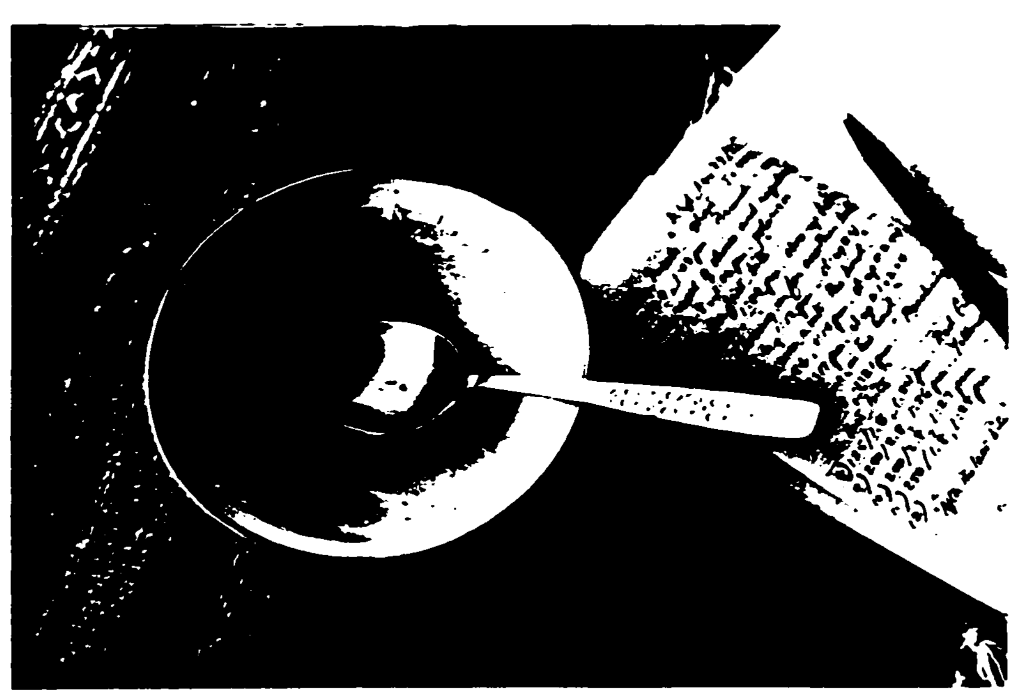


fig. 2.12

Along with choosing my favourite bowl, I put a place-mat on the table, thinking its textures would add to the effect. On an average day my 'daily meal' travels around the cottage with me as I . . . prepare to go out, rinse a few dishes, answer the phone, or, like today, move from computer to table, typing script and laying out photos. Here is a more typical shot of how my 'daily meal' might end.

fig. 2.13

I caught this image some time after the Daily Meals shoot. It was because of the exhibition and my series of photos that I noticed how I typically leave my bowl (not, I should add, when visiting), and I felt compelled to add another shot to the story, an image which, paradoxically, is both typical and unique. After the last bite, I typically leave the bowl wherever I happen to be. (For the meticulous house-keepers among you, <u>sometimes</u> the bowl goes straight in the dish-pan and back into the cupboard.) Each day chance leaves the bowl in a unique pose, never to be repeated. The same is also true for a dish that sits at the same place on the same table each day, and whose journey back to the

cupboard is perhaps more direct than that of my bowl. How subtle is the uniqueness of those poses? Can they be reflected on film?

But, to return to the Daily Meals exhibit - as you may recall, the notice asked for colour photos. So, I photocopied some of my prints and brushed on a few strokes of water-colour paint, a process which brought to mind a time as a child when I watched my aunt's brother colour photographs by hand. His work space was full of swabs of cotton in more colours than one could imagine. As I think about the sense for colour such an art must require, I look up from the computer screen and my eye lights on an old photo by Wallace MacAskill which I inherited from my aunt. It's one of the original prints from his day which were hand-coloured by his wife. Looking at this scene of a little boy and girl walking down the lane in Purcell's Cove at the mouth of Halifax Harbour, I suspect that what one wants is not to reproduce the colours as they were, but to decide which colours give meaning to the scene.

fig. 2.14

In this photo it's the hint of rose colour at the horizon as the afternoon sun illuminates just that section of the lane in which the children walk. There's a touch of blue in the sky and water and in the children's clothing, and brown along those fence rails caught in the path of sunlight. And, I cannot help looking at it without imagining the warm, earthy colours of my Aunt Eleonor's apartment, itself a kind of painting in sepia. It's the art of suggestion, and, although I attempted to suggest rather than heavily lay in colour, my hand and materials are not capable of such visual subtlety as that in the touch of Mrs. McAskill. There is a quotation written in pencil on the mat over the photo: "I was a child, and she was a child, In this Kingdom by the Sea". I believe the name "Poe" is there as well, though it is difficult to make out, and I confess, I don't know the literary origin of the lines.[1] The handwriting appears identical to that which signed the name "W. R. Macaskill". (Interesting, the use of the small 'a'.) I wonder if both inscriptions are from the hand of the colorist, Mrs. Macaskill.

---

[1] I have since discovered that the epigraph is from Edgar Allan Poe's "Annabel Lee" (1849,1850), ll. 7-8.

fig. 2.15

So, off went my attempt at hand-colouring a photo, along with a couple of the black and white prints. (I'd been lucky in the processing; several shots in the series were so similar that the people in the lab got confused and printed extra copies by mistake.) Here is the cover letter I sent with the package:

260 S____ C___ Rd.,
T_______ B___, N. S.
B3_ ___

Thursday, Jan. 11/96

Daily Meals
____
____
___ ___

To whom it may concern,

I first saw your notice outside the MSVU Gallery on Nov. 28, but circumstance and the season prevented my replying until now. You may already have finalized plans for your exhibition. But, I was keen to participate, so I send these images along for your interest. Unfortunately, I had black and white film in my camera when I saw your notice. I made a couple of photocopies of my "Daily Meal" prints, and gave them a hint of colour with water-paint. Let me tell you why I chose the meal you see here.

The phrase "daily meal" became the focus for me. I thought: there's a meal I eat every day - yogourt, fruit and granola - and I eat it everywhere, whether I'm staying in a hotel, or visiting friends. For extended visits, when I run out of my supply from home, I find a local source of these ingredients. This was a problem during my winter in Moscow in 1982, and my health suffered as a result. This simple meal has been a commonplace in my life for about twenty years. But, until I decided to participate in your project, I'd never given it any serious thought. Thanks for the prompt.

I'd like to attend your show, if I'm not too late in writing. In any case, I'd appreciate knowing the details, as I have a special interest in interactive art projects.

Yours truly,

M. Forrest

M. Forrest

In this act of return, this process of re-telling the story of my daily meal for the purposes of this larger project, I look back to my notebook for that date, Nov. 29th, 1995. You see it in the photos, but here is its text, as closely as this medium can reproduce its contents:

Wed. Nov 29/95

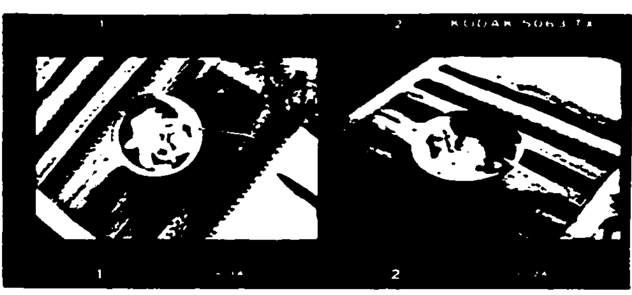
"Daily Meals" shoot: Tx400

1) 250/2.8, 1:03pm. Brunch - my daily meal of choice and regularity.
2) 125/2.8, 1:06pm. polarizer "After the first bite".
3) 125/5.6, 1:09pm. close-up filter #1. "Closing in for another bite".
4) 125/5.6, 1:12pm. close-up #4. "Over the rim and into the bowl".
5) 125/4-5.6, 1:15pm. close-up # 2 & 4.
6) 125/4, 1:17pm. close-up #1, 2 & 4. "reflections in the bowl".
7) 250/2.8, 1:21pm. "Reaching the last bite".
8) 125/1.8, 1:24pm. red filter
9) 250.2.8, 1:26pm. yellow filter
10) 250/2.8, 1:27pm. yellow filter
11) 250/1.8, 1:28pm. yellow filter
12) 250/2.8-4, 1:30pm. "After the last bite"

There's a pattern here, a series of titles for the exercise. What might a fully annotated series of these photos look like? The 'shoot-at-a-glance' could go something like this:

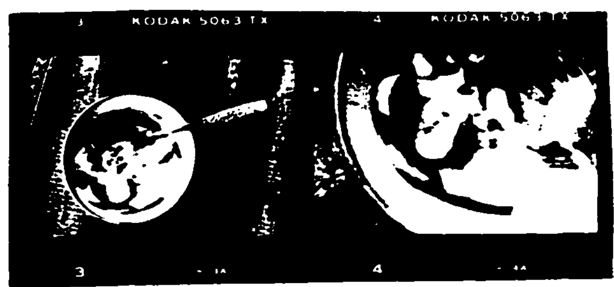
Wed. Nov 29/95

"Daily Meals" shoot: Tx400



1) 250/2.8, 1:03pm. Brunch - my daily meal of choice and regularity.

2) 125/2.8, 1:06pm. polarizer "After the first bite".



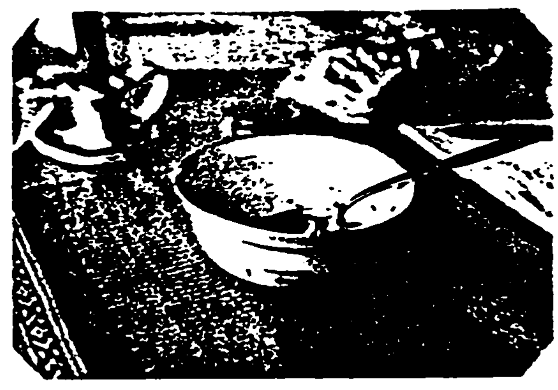
3) 125/5.6, 1:09pm. close-up filter #1. "Over the rim and into the bowl".

4) 125/5.6, 1:12pm. close-up #4. "Closing in for another bite".

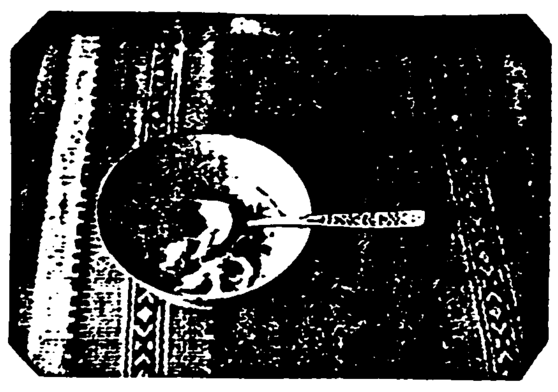
5) 125/4-5.6, 1:15pm. close-up # 2 & 4.

6) 125/4, 1:17pm. close-up #1, 2 & 4. "reflections in the bowl".

fig. 2.16



7) 250/2.8, 1:21pm.
"Reaching the last bite".



8) 125/1.8, 1:24pm. red filter

9) 250/2.8, 1:26pm. yellow filter

10) 250/2.8, 1:27pm. yellow filter

11) 250/1.8, 1:28pm. yellow filter

12) 250/2.8-4, 1:30pm.
"After the last bite"

fig. 2.17

Why record all this about a bowl of cereal? What's the point of such an exercise? How can it serve our pedagogy? To begin to answer these questions I go back to my reaction when first I saw the Daily Meals notice on that bulletin board. I was intrigued by this formal, public, anonymous call for something personal, something I couldn't quite imagine as part of a larger series beyond my control. I liked the idea. I wanted to participate. It was just what I'd been waiting for, though I didn't know it until some time later. But, I'm getting ahead of myself.

In order to explain what I see as pedagogically interesting in this curious call for participation, I need to flash back again. In fact, a stylistic feature of this project, which the reader may have noticed already, is the recursive nature of its narrative; time and again it bends back to recount pivotal moments which then change as they effect change in being brought forward.

. . . . .

Once, when I was visiting a family friend in Manhattan, as we strolled around the courtyard of Lincoln Centre, I was struck by the irritation she expressed on approaching the gargantuan Henry Moore sculpture of a reclining figure in the reflecting pool. I recall her tone as one of indignation; "That's not *art*!" At the time I was amused and made a couple of probes to find out why it provoked such irritation. My friend was annoyed that the sculptor hadn't done an adequate job, that his efforts didn't realistically resemble a reclining woman.

I have heard similar reactions in muffled tones at London's Tate Gallery as I stood puzzling over a work which consisted of a row of shoes with roses in them. This was many years ago, when my gallery-going had only just begun. My interest was in the famous rather than the infamous (though, come to think of it, Dali could be called both). I took no note of who created the shoes and roses. I just happened upon them on my way to the Dali exhibit. But, those shoes and roses stayed with

me, and, as I think back, I see the irony in my wanderings at the Tate that day. Could that work with shoes and roses have existed without Dali's melting timepieces . . . without the challenges of Dada and the Surreal?

Now, I'd like to dip into the murky waters of aesthetics, for a moment. This is a realm of philosophical endeavour I usually test from a safe distance. I recall the advice of my master's thesis supervisor when I expressed an interest in Jacques Maritain's contention that a philosophy of education ought to be founded firmly upon a philosophy of the human being. He cleared his throat, "Hmmm . . . ", and said ever so diplomatically, "I think we'd better leave that to the metaphysicians." So, when it comes to arts education, I try not to jump into the deep end of debate in aesthetics. And, if it so happens that I must choose a deep spot, I try to do a shallow dive, skim the surface and make for shallow water as fast as I can. This creates a lot of noise and splashing on the surface, but it settles quickly, by which time I'm safely ashore watching my ripples dissipate.[2]

When it comes to reflecting about art-works, one can hardly avoid the famous hobby-horse of aesthetics, Immanuel Kant's notion of aesthetic or reflective judgement. He distinguishes between determinative and reflective judgement. "Judgment in general is the ability to think the particular as contained under the universal."[3] If the universal is given - i.e., if we start with a rule or law or

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[2] A note on style may be in order here. By now, if you think this is all style and no content, all fluff and no stuff, you've obviously taken my point, and needn't leave in a huff. The Zen proverb reminds us: "Don't take the finger pointing to the moon for the moon itself." Sage advice for a reader to be wary of rhetoric. However, the flip side (or 'dark side' - it's the moon after all) might go something like the rule my mother taught me at a tender age: "Never point in church." This little maxim foregrounds the pointing, but surely not at the expense of its context. As soon as I heard those words my hands became fists and remain so whenever I step across sacred portals. I feel safer knowing no errant digits could inadvertently be caught . . . *pointing*. A sense of the power of style came early in my life. True to the Zen advice, I'm wary that style isn't everything (contrary to the Nike advertising slogan). True to the lived wisdom of my mother's advice, I try to choreograph my gestures to avoid any overt or unnecessary pointing.

[3] Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgment (1790), Werner S. Pluhar, trans., Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, 18.

principle or definition - then, says Kant, judgement is determinative.[4] One determines over which particular or particulars the universal legislates. For example, under the rules of harmonic progression one judges whether a particular progression of musical chords complies with or breaks the given rules. Although, in this example, we are deciding a question to do with an art form, our judging is of a determinative sort, a matter of fitting the particular to a set of rules. When a progression of sound combinations steps beyond the rules recognized as common to the body of work known as Western music, we are challenged to stop and reflect. "[I]f", as Kant says, "only the particular is given and judgment has to find the universal for it, then this power is . . . reflective."[5] We reflect upon this rogue particular to find it a universal whose legislation provides us with the means to understand it, i.e., find it a slot within the range of categories by which we organize our understanding of the world. Without this capacity, which has obvious and integral links to memory, we would be faced with a new and mystifying world at every turn. It's difficult to offer an example of a particular with no universal since our judging facility is such that it seeks immediately for a universal, in the way that a vacuum seeks to fill itself, and since to name is to categorize.

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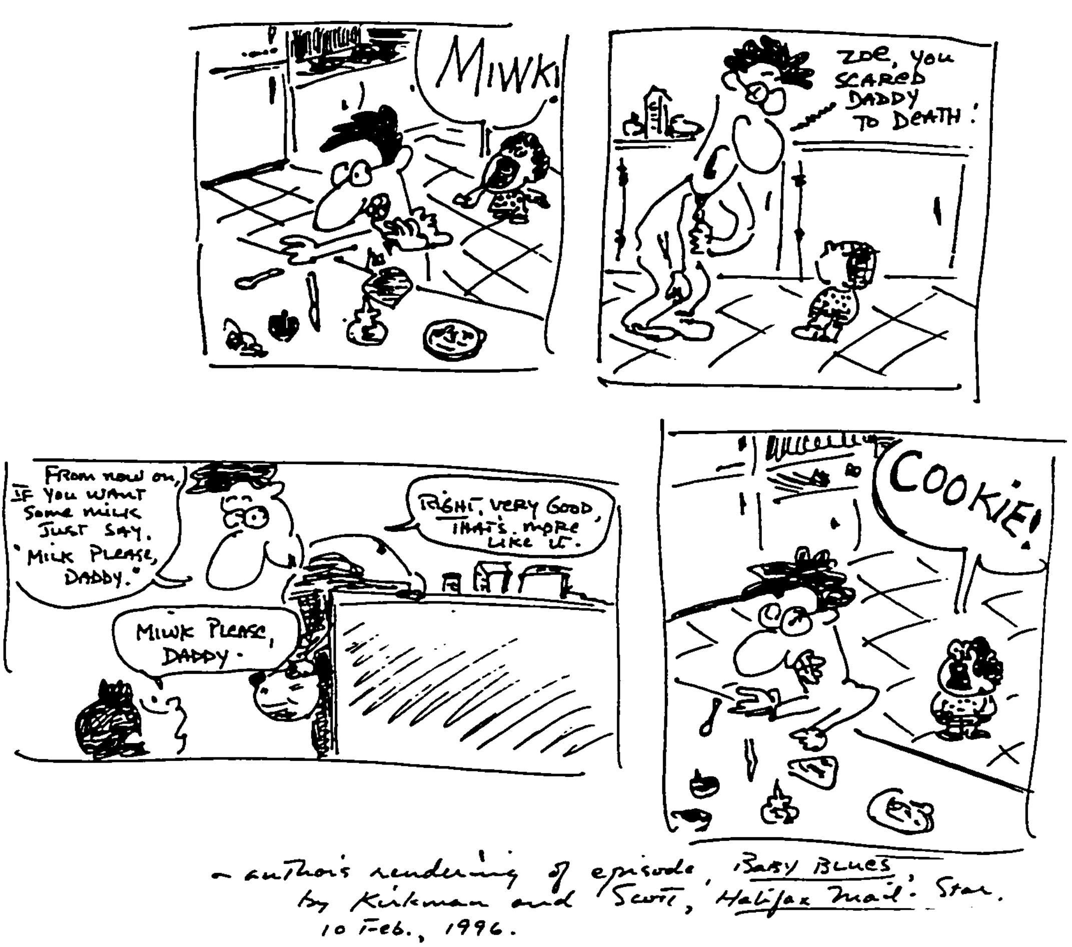
[4] William Hare (Supervisor's comment, Feb. 1997) has pointed out that other translations use 'determinant' rather than 'determinative', and he asks if this is significant. Although I cannot comment on the significance of this difference to Kantian scholarship in general, I would suggest that Pluhar's choice of words suits my purposes since 'determinative' retains more of the sense of the process; whereas, 'determinant' connotes a state or condition. In his introduction, Pluhar makes an interesting distinction, using as his example the judgement 'This is a dog'. Determinative judgement, he says, "makes our empirical intuition [i.e., our perception] determinate, by turning it into the *experience* of a dog, or, which comes to the same, a dog as experienced (a dog as 'appearance')." (xxxiv)

A procedural note: From here on, I shall try to work into my text all responses from my thesis supervisor, Dr. William Hare, and, to avoid needless repetition, I will omit further references as to when these comments were made. In effect, they can be said to have been part of the five-year conversation which supports this work. Any references to the published work of Dr. Hare will be cited accordingly.

[5] Kant, 19.

One could speculate that this drive to supply universals is a facet of the survival instinct; the need for sustenance drives our capacity to recognize its markers. The infant learns to extrapolate from the source of care to those sounds, smells, textures which always accompany it. One might say that the infant is determining those patterns that need to be recognized in order to most effectively and accurately express his or her desires. The following episode of the cartoon-strip "Baby Blues" by Kirkman and Scott[6] is a comic turn on the process of learning to categorize.



— author's rendering of episode, Baby Blues, by Kirkman and Scott, Halifax Mail-Star. 10 Feb., 1996.

fig. 2.18

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6 The Halifax Mail-Star, Feb. 10, 1996.

Following her father's instruction, the child rehearses a modified way of asking for milk. It would seem that the little girl doesn't recognize a general category called "asking for things". But the joke is on the father for assuming that (1) she would generalize according to his category and (2) there is only one way to generalize across acts of asking. He has done exactly what *she* wanted and expected under *her* category called "yell and they respond".

Most of the particular cases we encounter give us little room for reflective judgement in the sense I've described it, that is, in being stymied regarding a category for it. There are common types of perceptual difficulty which momentarily defy categorization. For example, encountering a noise or shape as one comes out of a sleep, one may misconstrue it for a split second. This happens to me on occasion if I'm waking up away from home. In my half-sleep, I expect to see what I am used to seeing on waking up, and through closed lids I orient myself to the light source as I would in my own room. To then open my eyes and find that things don't fit my pre-figuring of the space, that the light source is, say, on the opposite side of the room, gives me a sudden case of vertigo. In that split second before all my senses kick in, I read my position in the space quite differently. In such a case as this, there is certainly no time for reflection. Things right themselves immediately. Categories are re-adjusted, and the disorientation slips away as quickly as a dream scenario so vivid at the edge of waking.

This is an ordinary instance when universals - the 'rules' or 'bearings' by which I orient myself in my usual space at waking - have been misapplied, as it were. But they are not seriously challenged. I simply applied them to a misreading of the particulars needing judgement. It's more a matter of things being out of synch, a kind of sensory glitch. But the example foregrounds two things: the disorientation when the particular doesn't fit the universal one assumes it ought

to belong to, and the urgency to find a fit,[7] to get the world back into one's notion of synch.[8]

. . . . .

An interesting case of struggling to find a fit is the piano piece, 4'33", by the American composer, John Cage, which was first performed in 1952. A description of a performance of 4'33" would go something like this: A pianist comes on stage and approaches the piano in the usual way, bowing to acknowledge audience applause, then placing the musical score on the stand and settling himself at the open keyboard. But, instead of placing his hands on the keyboard and playing the piece in the conventional way, he closes the lid on the keyboard, takes a stop-watch from his pocket, and deliberately starts it in time with his own silent reading of the score. In keeping with conventional sonata form, there are two breaks in the composition, at which points the pianist stops the watch at the point of ceasing to read the score, opens the lid momentarily, then closes it and repeats the action of simultaneously starting to read and starting the watch. At the end of his reading or silent performance of the piece, the performer stops the watch, closes the score, opens the lid, and stands to take his bow.[9]

What are we to make of such a performance? It challenges our notion of what it means to 'play a musical score'. But is it music? There were those in a group of school teachers to whom I showed this video who couldn't wait 4 minutes and 33 seconds to express their reactions. The ambient sound during that

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[7] Nelson Goodman, Ways of Worldmaking, Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1978, 21.

[8] William Hare offers an example of a controversy arising from conflicting universals where one is left ethically disoriented; that is, the killing of one's terminally ill child. Is this an act of mercy or murder? Since each of these terms can be defined in a way which 'fits' the act in question, the particular case allows more than one interpretation, not an option under our legal system. In this age of life-support technology, euthanasia is likely to continue to challenge the legal precedents of determinative judgement.

[9] The performance I describe by David Tudor was part of a made-for-television documentary on John Cage for the PBS series American Masters, produced jointly by The Music Project for Television Inc., and American Masters, 1990.

performance included the staccato of nervous laughter with a continuo of whispered asides. In the discussion afterwards, the most vocal reactions were from those who had found an instant fit: "Well, I know what I like, and, as far as I'm concerned, that's not music!" And, at the other extreme, those who seemed intrigued by their own disorientation. "But, who says music has to be what we like or what we're used to?"

. . . . .

In my high school English classes, I've tried to help students through various difficulties as they approach works of literature. There are what George Steiner calls *contingent* difficulties: looking up words, phrases, or references which for myriad reasons make a work of art inaccessible. As Steiner puts it, "[t]hese difficulties arise from the plurality and individuation which characterize world and word."[10]

Then there's the level of difficulty Steiner calls *modal*. There are no answers to be looked up, because there is a gap between the reader's sensibility and the relevant frame of perception for receiving the work. As Steiner says, an art-work's "idiom and orders of apprehension [may no] longer [be] natural to us".[11] I have to choose works carefully so that modal difficulties aren't overwhelming and frustrating for my students (or for me). Also, these difficulties usually require contextualization - giving historical background, perhaps, and helping students come to, say, Elizabethan drama, by way of contrast and comparison with aspects of their own lives, or aspects of other works they've studied.[12] Steiner says that

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[10] George Steiner, On Difficulty and Other Essays, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, 33.

[11] Steiner, 33.

[12] A classic example of something which attempts to mitigate the contingent and modal difficulties of Shakespeare is Tales from Shakespeare (1807) by Charles and Mary Lamb (New York: Garden City, 1955), a work whose prose style and usage now present difficulty for today's young audience.

modal difficulties "challenge the inevitable parochialism of honest empathy".[13] Developing a familiarity with an idiom may also require lots of reading aloud, with my modelling the rhythms of blank verse and students 'trying them out'. And, similarly with the complex inverted sentences of a nineteenth century novelist like Charles Dickens. Getting the ear used to an idiom is not something one can look up.

A third level of difficulty is that which Steiner calls *tactical*. This is the artist purposely making things strange to, as Steiner puts it, "deepen our apprehension by dislocating and goading to new life the supine energies of word and grammar."[14] (And, of course, this description can be modified to apply to any realm of artistic endeavour.) I would say that tactical difficulties are not so often invited into high school English classes. What begins as a tactical difficulty, e.g., a disjointed narrative with sudden and unexpected shifts of image and point of view, may be repeated by other artists and be named as a particular style or technique, in this case, stream of consciousness. Critics and other literary analysts describe and give us a kind of short-hand for categorizing types of art-works (possibly to the dismay and irritation of a given artist). Publishers who collect works of art into school anthologies tend to group them either by style or by theme. Often, an editor's notion of what constitutes the central theme of a story is printed as a subtitle or epigraph to catch the reader's interest or help the teacher quickly assess if the theme suits the lesson. Thus, what teachers tend to work with is a poem or story that is weighted by the authoritative categories of the document in which it's collected. In short, it has already been categorized into an idiom.

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[13] Steiner, 33.
[14] Steiner, 40.

Suzanne de Castell talks about the disempowering effect of documentary authority in school texts.[15] She cites Dorothy Smith who claims that factual statements stand for an actuality not directly accessible. How did the statement come about? Out of whose experience? On account of the social organization of the production of accounts "the concept becomes detached from its ground".[16] De Castell makes the point that the school focuses its reading and writing instruction almost entirely on literary texts, and not on documentary texts which, she claims, are those with this disempowering factual authority. But I would add that the ways in which the institution of schooling frames literary texts gives them a disempowering authority as well, one which limits the reader's range of reaction and interpretation.

One of the limiting influences comes with the best credentials from university English departments. A professor may model a literary critical paradigm without making plain its philosophical assumptions. As a consequence, school-teachers of literature tend to approach literary works in accordance with how they were categorized and characterized during their own education. In a case where a teacher might be introducing an unfamiliar piece of literature, one she has no ready categories for, she quickly finds a place for it in the history of literature and set of genres as she has learned them, and this is where it tends to stay for future introductions to new groups. An artist's tactic for making language strange and new can quickly becomes the critic-teacher's example of modal, that is, stylistic, idiomatic difficulty. It has been critiqued, anthologized, and fitted out for lesson plans.

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[15] Suzanne de Castell, "Literacy as Disempowerment: The Role of Documentary Texts", Reason and Values, John P. Portelli and Sharon Bailin, eds., Calgary: Detselig, 1993, 117-127.
[16] Dorothy Smith, "The Social Construction of Documentary Reality", Sociological Inquiry, 44, 4, 1974: 261.

Of course, if one is of the opinion that teachers should not bring into the classroom material with which they are not fully conversant, then my point will seem overdrawn. One might argue that to introduce any level of real difficulty - i.e., that which is difficult for the teacher as well as the student - is tantamount to being unprepared. But, if aesthetic difficulty is always experienced by students as an effect of their limited understanding of a work, compared with a teacher's deeper appreciation, is it any wonder they respond with indignation? Students come to expect that the teacher has an informed opinion and is guiding their reactions toward his or her presuppositions. Let me offer an example.

I present a grade 12 class with Chekhov's short-story, "An Enigmatic Nature", a two-page account of a brief exchange between two strangers in a railway compartment. One of the first comments is that the story is 'stupid' because, as the student put it, "nothing happens". Other students agree. They want to know what I think. I explain a contingent difficulty, the term 'enigma', and go on to describe the 'slice of life' genre of short-story, but they still want to know what the story is about. Indignation mounts when I compound the enigma by not providing an interpretation, by answering their questions with questions of my own. They feel they've been toyed with, that I'm just holding back the 'right answer', that I'm just trying to make them think. And when I say "perhaps there is no answer" they're convinced I've lost it because this is school where every question has an answer that isn't a new question, an answer that closes the issue, that gets the check mark.

It was in the spring when we read this story. There had been months of encouraging their exploration in reading and writing, of responding to their papers and in-class comments with speculation of my own. In short, seriously, though not without humour,[17] asking questions that were also questions for me, questions I

[17] In encouraging the development of a community of inquiry in his classes, John Portelli emphasizes in an ironic tone that seriousness does not preclude humour.

couldn't answer, but which I continued to ask. And yet, those months of modelling an attitude of exploration and speculation were nothing in comparison to the impact of that little story, that enigma, that open question. Our experience with "An Enigmatic Nature" still makes me wonder about the inevitability of closure which characterizes even our approach to that which we deem an open territory for reflection, that is, aesthetic experience.

. . . . .

Imagine what it would have been like to witness 4'33" at its first performance, before, that is, the critics reflected on it and offered a new universal by which it could be understood or, at least, a new spin on an old category. A piano composition for closed keyboard would be, and still is, difficult to take seriously as a 'musical' composition. But why? Cage offers us help when he says, "[t]he material of music is sound and silence. Integrating these is composing."[18] It was after seeing Robert Rauschenberg's notorious White Paintings that Cage decided to make the same point in sound by composing 4'33". The critics have mitigated the difficulties of the piece with phrases like 'minimalist art' and 'conceptual art'. We can put it away into one of these categories, determining that it is more a technical or intellectual exercise than a work of art. Or we can put it down to an avant-garde slight of hand, amusing as a one-off experience, an inevitable extension from Duchamp's ready-mades and certainly not worth acquiring for one's listening library. It seems to me that the piece not only still remains difficult, but is more than intellectually difficult since it continues to affect my listening as well as my thinking about listening. It continues as an aesthetic as well as a philosophical experience. Cage says,

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18 "John Cage", American Masters, 1990.

> The first question I ask myself when something doesn't seem to be beautiful . . . is, why do I think it's not beautiful. And very shortly you discover that there is no reason.

The reasoning for disliking a difficult new work tends to go something like this: It's nothing like those things I call beautiful, those things I call 'art'; therefore, it's neither beautiful nor 'art'. We've heard the common version of this reasoning: "I don't know anything about art, but I know what I like, and I don't like that!" In fact, this is not so much a reason for disliking the work, as for not wanting to think about it. I'm not suggesting that there is any imperative for engaging in reflective judgement, or for liking 4'33". But I am intrigued by the rancour which often accompanies this line of reasoning and, as I've suggested, I wonder if our pedagogy isn't partly responsible for it. We set people up to think they know what art is, because in our classrooms we tend to deal predominantly with determinative judgements - Does work X fit definitions A, B and C? We offer room for a range of descriptions but generally within a strictly limited choice of categories.

Cage says: "If we can conquer that dislike or begin to like what we did dislike, then the world is more open."[19] I take this to mean that in order to like what we dislike we have to examine what it is, and why we don't like it. "X isn't like the other things in this category which fit the criteria for acceptance into it." One would then have to ask why those things which fit the criteria do so. For example, for those accustomed to the Western tradition of diatonic music, a Mozart sonata fits the criteria for what constitutes 'music'. Every other composition that one calls 'music' fits these criteria to a greater or lesser degree. But how does one find this fit if not through description? And could one not find a fit for 4'33"?

4'33" isn't anything like a Mozart sonata!
It's in three parts like a sonata.
But, where's the theme, development, variations?

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19 "John Cage", American Masters, 1990.

Perhaps we're developing its theme right now.
But, this isn't music!
How would you characterize a musical statement?
One that has melody.
Hm hm hm hmm-hm-hm. (*Imitates intonation pattern of previous sentence*)
Okay, so there's melody in speech, but we don't call it 'music'.
If music is that which we call 'music', then why not include 4'33"?

When asked in 1990 what he had learned as a result of all the furor over 4'33", Cage replied, "I'm not so much interested in learning, as in changing my mind."[20] We get comfortable with our categories and assume that they are in some way dictated by nature, that we need only conjure them and judge things according to whether they fit. What interests me are things which shatter the categories,[21] things which call for re-adjustment, which make room for reflection, which make us more open to the world. If a work attempts to open up time and space for reflection, this seems to me to be an aesthetic function. Doing a turn or variation on a figure is what art has traditionally been thought to do. Could the figure not be the very grounds in which the work is set?

. . . . .

Turn back, for a moment, to page 28 in this essay. (It's the page with nothing on it but the digits "28" in the top right-hand corner.) At the time, as you turned from page 27 to 28, this would have caused a momentary lapse in the way you were reading this piece. You may have chalked it up to a glitch in the printing process which I overlooked. Now, as I say I meant it to be there, you may be asking yourself some questions. Is it just a trick to demonstrate my point about our quickness to find a universal for any 'difficult' particular? Perhaps it points to a

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20 "John Cage", American Masters, 1990.

21 I borrow a favourite expression of Mary McGinn: "Oh, my shattered categories!" As John Portelli rightly points out, by naming a group 'shattered categories', I form another category. (Reader's comment, May, 1997. As I mentioned in II.i. fn. 4, this work has been part of a five-year conversation. The other members of the group supporting my work are Dr. Robert Bérard and Dr. John Portelli. I shall also attempt to weave their comments into my writing without unnecessary references.)

metaphor: the ground upon which each essay is inscribed, the blank space, the empty slate? Does it witness the place before the starting place?

This trick, if you like, comes out of a question posed by Niki Hare in response to 4'33".[22] She asked how I would respond to a student who handed me a blank piece of paper, saying it represented the poem he or she composed and worked at very hard. I was reminded of the audience member who, during the question period after the taping of 4'33", asked John Cage what he would do if someone made a rude bodily noise during the performance. "I would . . . listen." said Cage. And so, I would . . . read my student's submission. Let us assume for the moment that it is a *lined* blank page. It would scan; it would have rhythm. Must we assume that those lines can only represent the ground upon which one marks out that which one calls 'poem'? And, if the page were unlined, one could ask the same of the white rectangle? The poem is stripped of everything - or almost everything - recognizable as poem. Does some new version of 'poem' emerge? It is certainly more than a blank sheet of paper because its owner calls it 'poem'. This "Poem on a Blank Page" emphasizes the creative ground, that part of the poetic process non-poets never see. "Poem on a Blank Page" cries out for a first line, a first mark, for pattern, be it rhythmic or tonal. Wave "Poem on a Blank Page" and it rustles. Hold it to the light and it reflects different tonal qualities of white. We need to read it differently, to be open to the overlapping of these things called 'poem' and 'painting',[23] to hold predefined categories in an open-minded way.

But I have named this 'poem'. I have taken liberties with this poet's work. What I might first have asked its writer is, "How would I recognize this work if I saw it again? Does it have a title, something to mark it as 'poem'? Or, would you

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[22] Conference of Atlantic Educators, Memorial University, St. John's, Nfld., Oct. 14, 1995.
[23] As William Hare suggests, in this case the categories may be merging.

prefer it remain part of the oral tradition, something you distribute in person, telling the story of its making to each receiver? What, then, might a copy of it look like?" Questions multiply. New difficulties arise. "Poem on a Blank Page" is a meta-poem. It draws attention to its own process in a formal way by emptying content from the category 'poem'. It offers paradox: poem without words, like Rauchenberg's painting without colour, and Cage's silent musical composition. The fact that someone has made this point, i.e., 'written' this poem, makes it worth considering as a material work. It is more than an idea, because it has been embodied or enacted. It is what Steiner calls a blank question.

The fourth level of difficulty Steiner distinguishes is that which he calls *ontological*. He says these are difficulties in which the poet

> confronts us with blank questions about the nature of human speech, about the status of significance, about the necessity and purpose of the construct which we have, with more or less rough and ready consensus, come to perceive as a poem.[24]

It is this level of difficulty which continues to work on me in 4'33". Before seeing and hearing a performance of the piece, on this video-tape, I was interested by the very idea of it, and wondered what effect it would have on audience expectation. I was intrigued that an established composer would focus full attention on ambient sound, the ubiquitous ground of all listening which Western music works so hard to ignore.[25] I wondered how Cage's piece might have influenced our recognition of forms previously considered beyond the pale of Western music. In short, I began struggling with and listening to the distinction between sound and music. It was with these thoughts that I inadvertently came to my first hearing of the piece. I don't recall the details of my listening experience at that time. I may have been too

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[24] Steiner, 41.

[25] The printed program at London's Royal Festival Hall used to include a note contrasting the decibel level of an open cough as opposed to one which is - "AHEM!" - covered.

wrapped up in the philosophical implications of the piece to have listened very carefully to anything but my own silent speculation. This raises another question: how does the questioning by this interior voice differ from that, say, in an operatic aria? The public expression of the latter contrasts formally with the fact that the former is a kind of tacit performance. But, is this a qualitative difference? And if not, can they be clearly distinguished conceptually? Or is this merely a conventional distinction, a matter of habit, a matter of taste? It would seem that 4'33" continues to evoke these blank questions, as Steiner calls them, which lead to deeper consideration of the nature of art and the status of its significance. The sounding of this consideration may be the silent refrain which fills the public space.

So, what happens as I listen to this piece? Can I rightly claim that its effects are aesthetic as well as intellectual or philosophical?[26]

4'33" at 11 a.m., Saturday, Oct. 7th, 1995:

> Thoughts always accompany my listening. This dialectic between sound and internal monologue is an aesthetic experience, a musical experience, if I'm listening to it. It has rhythm, tone, and dynamics in concert with ambient sound which may be Mozart or the moan of a windy day. Hurricane Opal whips her tail against the windows. My pencil bites in and squeaks along in counterpoint with the heel of my hand swooshing as it pulls and is pushed across the paper. Traces of that sound and movement are these marks on the page. The wind chimes clang furiously in time with a 25 knot gale. The TV drones in a piercing high-pitched voice even though the volume is turned down. And, I hear my voice silently speaking these words as I draw my thoughts together.

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26 I could, of course, do an end-run round my question by citing John Dewey on the aesthetic pleasure inherent in intellectual activity. He says that "an experience of thinking has its own esthetic quality. It differs from those experiences that are acknowledged to be esthetic, but only in its materials. . . . Nevertheless, the experience itself has a satisfying emotional quality because it possesses internal integration and fulfillment reached through ordered and organized movement." (Art as Experience (1934), in John Dewey. The Later Works, 1925-1953, Jo Ann Boydston, ed., Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987, 45.)

Speaking to the audience at a performance of 4'33", Cage said, "You won't believe this probably, but I wrote 4'33" note by note, and all the notes were silent. But, they all had different lengths. And when I added them all up they came to 4'33"."[27] In the video-taped performance, one sees the pianist reading the music, and keeping strict time with a stop-watch. What was he hearing? Many of the same sounds, doubtless, as his audience - the coughs, the shuffling, the electronic hum of the lights in the hall. But, for him these sounds occur in relation to the different lengths of those silent notes Cage composed so meticulously. I don't believe the written score of 4'33" is superfluous. It directs our listening. In any performance, the rhythms, the pacing, and the dynamics of *all* the sounds in the concert hall or the living-room play themselves out against the silent marking of time by each performer. And here I use the term 'performer' in the expanded sense in which Umberto Eco uses it in his essay "The Poetics of the Open Work". He says that "[e]very 'reading', 'contemplation', or 'enjoyment' of a work of art represents a tacit or private form of performance."[28] And that, although the practical intervention of an instrumentalist or actor is different from that of an interpreter in the sense of an audience member, both can be seen as different manifestations of the same interpretive attitude.

But, if we expand the notion of performer to include the listener as well as the instrumentalist, the gallery-goer as well as the painter or sculptor, what becomes of that thing we're accustomed to calling a work of art? William Hare has asked, does the notion of work of art then vanish in favour of performances? Or, is there enough family resemblance among the performances to tie them together as the 'same' work? Certainly, by most traditional accounts, which grant no essential

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27 "John Cage", American Masters, 1990.

28 Umberto Eco, "The Poetics of the Open Work", The Open Work (1962, 1964, 1968), Anna Cancogni, trans., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989, 3, fn. 1.

significance to interpretive attitude, this expanded notion of 'performer' poses problems. In his 1956 prize-winning essay, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics", Morris Weitz argues that inadequacies in theories of art are the result of a fundamental misconception of art. It is a mistake, says Weitz, "to conceive the concept of art as closed when its very use reveals and demands its openness."[29] Following Wittgenstein's famous contention that 'game' is a family resemblance concept, Weitz concludes that

> [i]f we actually look and see what it is that we call 'art', we will also find no common properties - only strands of similarities. Knowing what art is is not apprehending some manifest or latent essence but being able to recognize, describe, and explain those things we call 'art' in virtue of these similarities.[30]

Weitz says we can choose to close the concept 'art', thus stipulating the ranges of its use, but such a move "forecloses on the very conditions of creativity in the arts."[31] New conditions continually arise, new works, new movements, which find interested parties, usually professional critics, deciding whether the concept 'art' should be extended to include them.

Weitz is criticizing the major extant theories of art for purporting to be complete statements about the defining features of all art-works. On the face of his theory, he appears to have avoided this trap himself. One could take a step back and read his insistence on an open concept of art as also a complete statement about the defining features of all art-works. However, such theoretical one-upmanship does not negate the fact that Weitz focuses attention on the role of interpretation.

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[29] Morris Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 15, 1956: 30.

[30] Weitz, 31.

[31] Weitz, 32. The open concept of art, says Weitz, does not preclude the justifiable existence of closed concepts in the arts. Weitz contrasts the difference between "tragedy", which must remain open to allow for the possibility of new conditions for its use, and "Greek tragedy", which is closed because the boundary "Greek" closes its conditions of use.

Descriptions which serve as illustrations for complete statements about art are carefully crafted. It is a complex journey from an initial reaction to an art-work to a crafted statement about its place in the scheme of art and human experience. The art critic who appears to judge in a flash, generally began that process long before arriving in front of the work, a process which may or may not be a good thing for the work in question and for public understanding of art and art criticism.

What interests me in Weitz's argument is the way in which it revitalizes the notion of reflection about art. The indeterminacy of this process needs more than a split-second of indecision before one makes a work fit into previously accepted categories. Rethinking the categories is part of the reflection. Weitz helps us see that continual shifts among acceptable descriptions and sets of similarities is a process of aesthetic reflection.

As I work to resolve difficulties in my classroom, my judgements and those I encourage in my students are usually determinative; I give to their judgement a definition, principle, or rule, and ask them to fit into it the particulars of a work of art. Kant says that reflective judgement postulates "a universal voice about a liking unmediated by concepts" and that this voice is only an idea to which we refer our judgements.[32] When one automatically opts to fit difficult works into pre-designed packages, one chooses to ignore this reflective voice, to avoid the blank questions.

In 4'33", Cage includes or foregrounds the indeterminate in a formal way. It is what Umberto Eco calls an 'open' work. It has a formal malleability which goes beyond traditional notions of how a performer shapes a composition. The traditional work is a

> complete and *closed* form in its uniqueness as a balanced organic whole, while at the same time constituting an *open* product on account of its

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[32] Kant, 60.

> susceptibility to countless different interpretations which do not impinge on its unadulterable specificity.[33]

By contrast, the 'open' work is *open* in a far more tangible sense, in the sense of being formally unassembled. The author hands it to the performer, says Eco, more or less like the components of a construction kit and seems unconcerned about how they may eventually be deployed.[34] There are 'open' works in which the composition as artifact is literally unfinished in that the performer is invited to supply some of its components. An example would be John Cage's Concert for Piano and Orchestra (1957-58) in which the pianist's part consists of 84 different kinds of composition from which he or she may play any elements wholly or in part and in any sequence. In Cage's 'happenings' -- events in large open spaces like a sports stadium where so much is happening at the same time that one cannot possibly take it all in -- the viewer or listener has to choose among the things going on what to watch, what to listen to: one maps one's own route, as one does through the chance convergence of ambient sounds in 4'33". The composer Henri Pousseur describes his piece Scambi as a "field of possibilities, an explicit invitation to exercise choice". The performer may begin or end with any one of the sixteen sections, two of which may be played simultaneously. Pousseur also speculates on the possibilities for the general public to develop their own constructs from interchangeable recordings of the sixteen sections.[35]

Richard Kostelanetz calls 4'33"

> the work of art as *primarily* an aesthetic illustration. The illustrative point of 4' 33" . . . is that all the unintentional, random sounds framed within that auditorium and within that period of time can be considered "music," for, as

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[33] Eco, 3-4.
[34] Eco, 4.
[35] The description of Scambi is in Eco, 1-2. This speculation about choice for the record-buying public would hardly go down well with the record publishers who, I suspect, would prefer to sell copies of all possible permutations rather than let the buyer manipulate the units.

the critic Jill Johnston[36] notes, "doing nothing is clearly distinct from expressing nothing."[37]

One might argue that all works of art are aesthetic illustrations insofar as they heighten our perception; we bring, say, Monet's insights from multiple studies of one subject under different light, to our own perceptions of the world. Perhaps after seeing his picture-series, Rouen Cathedral, one begins to notice minute differences in an everyday scene. But, lost to us today, other than as an historical curiosity, is the revolutionary effect impressionist vision and technique had on the perceptual conventions in art at the time. No longer was art hiding art, and people reacted indignantly to this emphasis on the very surface of the picture. The impressionists were criticised for not knowing *how* to paint. The work as aesthetic illustration does more than heighten an individual's perceptions of its subject or technique. It invites one to reassess the conventions surrounding those acts of presentation we call 'art', and this, in turn, may lead to a recognition that, as in the Zen proverb, we may have been "taking the finger pointing to the moon for the moon itself."

We can only draw a distinct line between any art-work and its performance or presentation by seeing it purely as squiggles on a page or paint on a canvas. Once we believe it to be its material manifestation and more, then there are no discrete boundaries, only individual readings. (And this does not mean they are necessarily all of equal merit in reaction to a given art-work.) But the 'legibility' of traditional closed works and the interpretive conventions we've developed from them have lulled us into thinking these boundaries discrete and discoverable. Marcel Duchamp was of the opinion that paintings and sculptures die after forty or fifty years when their freshness disappears. "Afterwards", says Duchamp, "it's

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36 Dance critic of The Village Voice.

37 Richard Kostelanetz, "John Cage: Some Random Remarks", John Cage, Richard Kostelanetz, ed., New York & Washington: Praeger, 1970, 195.

called the history of art".[38] Artists are frequently quoted as saying that their finished oeuvre no longer holds their interest, that their 'favourite' work is the one in progress, the one engaging them in the working out of formal problems. Marcel Duchamp, on the vanguard of artistic experiment, would have been ahead of the average gallery-goer in terms of what constituted fresh artistic difficulty or challenge in the historical sense. For the viewer who comes to these experiments for the first time, decades after their formal completion, the work may again offer challenges in a kind of reprise of its initial freshness. The 'open' works I've described also evolve, fade, die, are refreshened through new viewings; others emerge, and with them new difficulties and blank questions. In their freshness, they encourage us to keep our concept of art open; and, conversely, an open concept of art allows us to consider new degrees of difficulty in something claiming to be art.

Eco says that an 'open' work constitutes a fresh dialectic between the work and its performer. And, to my mind, this is where the pedagogical significance of the 'open' work lies. Its radical (fundamental), formal openness foregrounds its own structure as it contrasts with traditional 'closed' concepts of art and openness. One might say that it extends the traditional process of aesthetic reflection to a meta-level. Faced with choice, collaboration, seemingly non-artistic materials, we must reflect on aesthetic experience. On the other hand, one might think, as I tend to, that this realm of indeterminacy and doubt is the ground of aesthetic judgement. The indignant reaction to difficulty demonstrates the shutting down of this split-second of aesthetic reflexivity. The question - Should I reflect on this difficulty? - has been averted. One's mind is made up. Like a room disassembled during a short visit, it's quickly made presentable and appears as if untouched.

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[38] Pierre Cabanne, Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp (1967), Ron Padgett, trans., New York: Da Capo, 1971, 67.

Gaston Bachelard says, "everything comes alive when contradictions accumulate."[39] Perhaps as teachers we need to be more courageous and foreground the contradictions in our classrooms, not just the puzzles to be solved, but the open questions about the very nature of 'classroom' and pedagogical discourse.[40] The essence of the modern 'open' work, says Eco, is the dialectic between form and the possibility of multiple meanings.[41] This relationship can be attributed to less radically open works or to any art-work. But the difference in the dialectic of the 'open' work is that we are challenged to reflect upon our engagement with it for, in seeing multiple meanings, one inevitably encounters the contradictions in one's own meaning making. In describing the movement of the dialectic of the 'open' work, Eco calls it an oscillation "between the rejection of the traditional linguistic system and its preservation".[42] To reject one's system of representing the world to the self is to set oneself adrift. Being pulled on the current of chance, one leaves behind the old ground which may be a useful example in finding a new foothold.

Maxine Greene tells us that "[t]eachers, like their students, have to learn to love the questions, as they come to realize that there can be no final agreements or answers, no final commensurability."[43] Is this a realization we must leave for so-called 'higher' education? And, if we wait that long, what are the chances, in the face of entrenched indignation and the current lack of belief in education as an end in itself, that this light will ever dawn? Greene talks about tendencies which are antithetical to education for freedom because

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[39] Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space (1958), Maria Jolas, trans., Boston: Beacon Press, 1992, 39.
[40] This will be taken up in III.
[41] Eco, "Openness, Information, Communication", The Open Work, 60.
[42] Eco, "Openness, Information, Communication", 60.
[43] Maxine Greene, The Dialectic of Freedom, New York: Teacher's College Press, 1988, 134.

> they impose a fallacious completeness on what is perceived. Instead of reaching out, along with others, toward open possibilities in experience, individuals in all groups accept existing structures as given. They may try to make use of them or escape them or move around them or make a mockery of them; but they feel themselves in some way doomed to see them as objective "realities," impervious to transformation, hopelessly *there*.[44]

It is often argued that the arts are valuable because they help us recognize and resist existing structures by telling us inspiring stories *about* such resistance. But such narratives can be found outside artistic forms, in the news, in historical accounts and in the stories we tell one another. The form of resistance artistic engagement offers as model is the struggle of reflective judgement to cope with uncharted territory, with new and difficult openings. It is because we can't pin down beauty that it is valuable. It is because someone had the audacity to put a symbol of fragility and beauty inside a functional object - yes, those shoes and roses - that I'm left still wondering . . .

I puzzle over shoes and roses, and find myself thinking about a new Toronto institution, the Bata Shoe Museum. Or I recall a curator friend telling me about the shoes they found in the walls of a Dartmouth historic house. And who is or was Dr. Scholl? Who buys odour-eaters? And what about Chinese foot-binding, and about my podiatrist, a tall thin Aussie who inclines my chair so the blood rushes to my head while he tells me about the difficult questions his five-year-old asks? And, what about Nike sports wear? What audacity to patent a pedagogical commonplace: the check mark? Wondering about shoes and roses, not trusting my own interpretations, I hear Cage's words, "[t]he best criticism will be the doing of your own work".[45] I pick up my camera and set out, humming a "curb-stone classic" as

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44 Greene, 22.

45 Richard Kostelanetz, "Conversation with John Cage", John Cage, 30.

Freddie Sharp[46] used to call those Victorian drawing-room ballads. . . . (*Sounds of door opening; female voice humming "'Tis the Last Rose of Summer"; door closing. Cut to visuals.*)

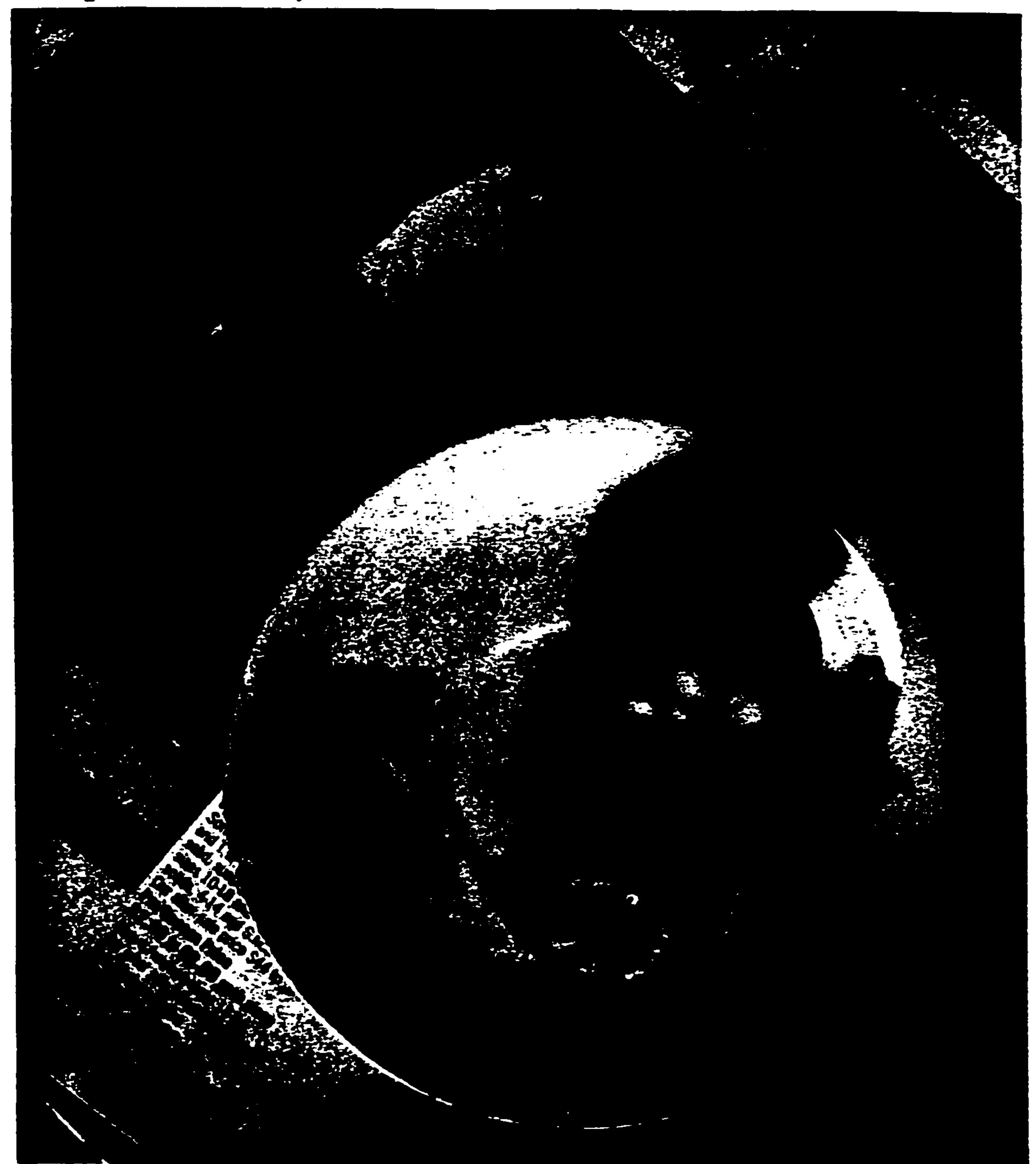

fig. 2.19

[46] Frederick Sharp was a well-known baritone at the English National Opera after the Second World War. He was my singing teacher at the Royal College of Music in the late 70's.

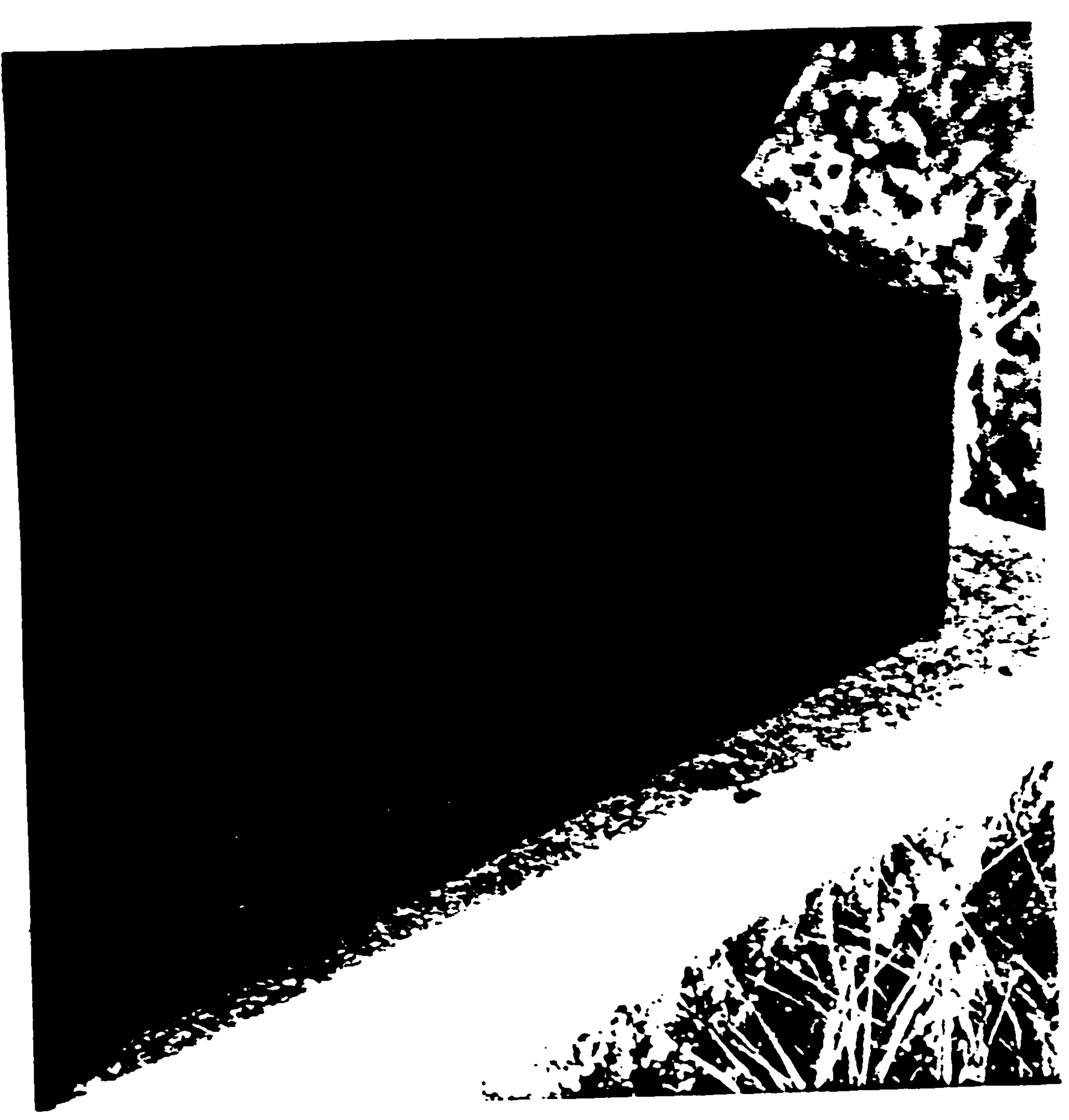

fig. 2.20

fig. 2.21

fig. 2.22

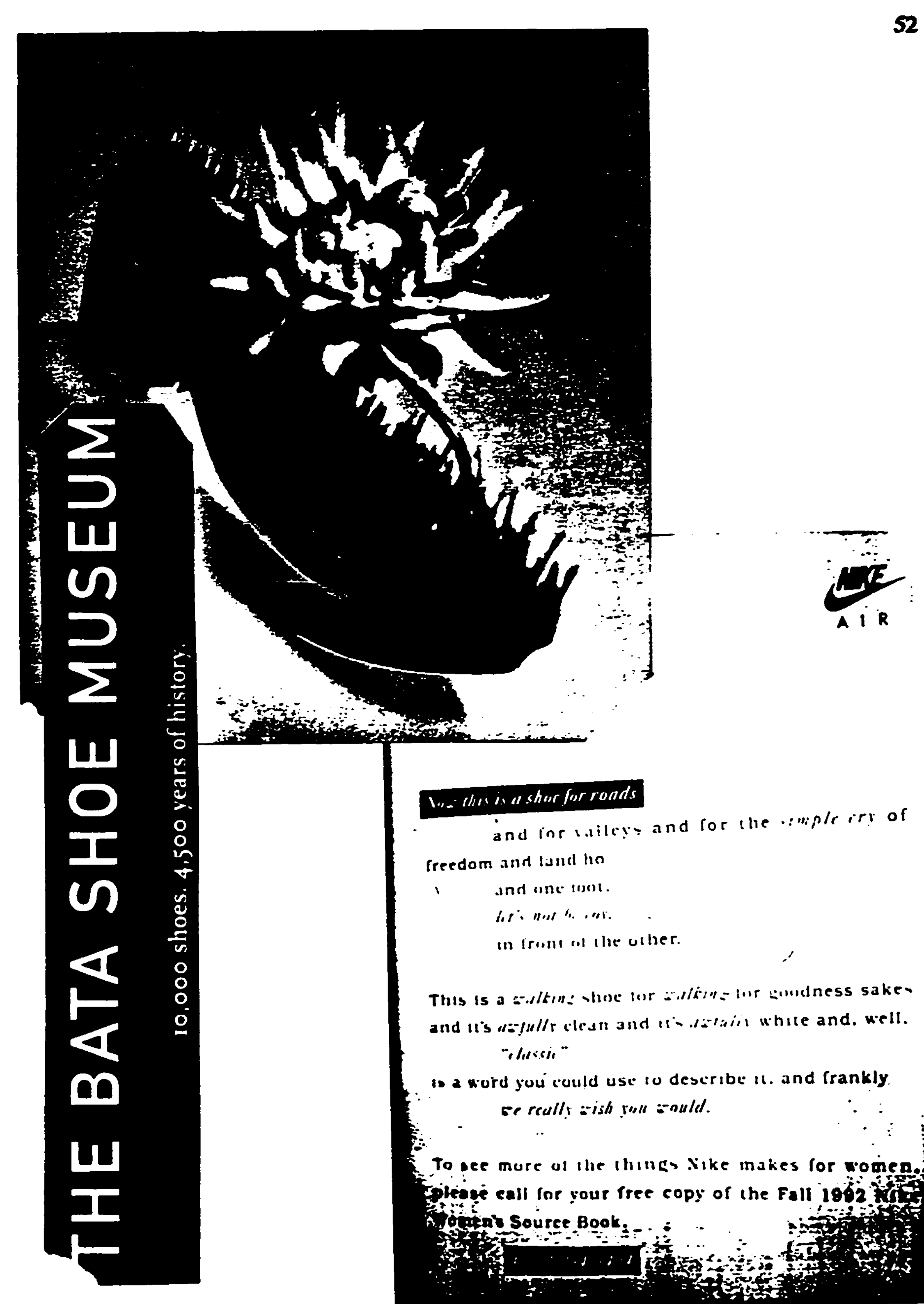

fig. 2.23

fig. 2.24

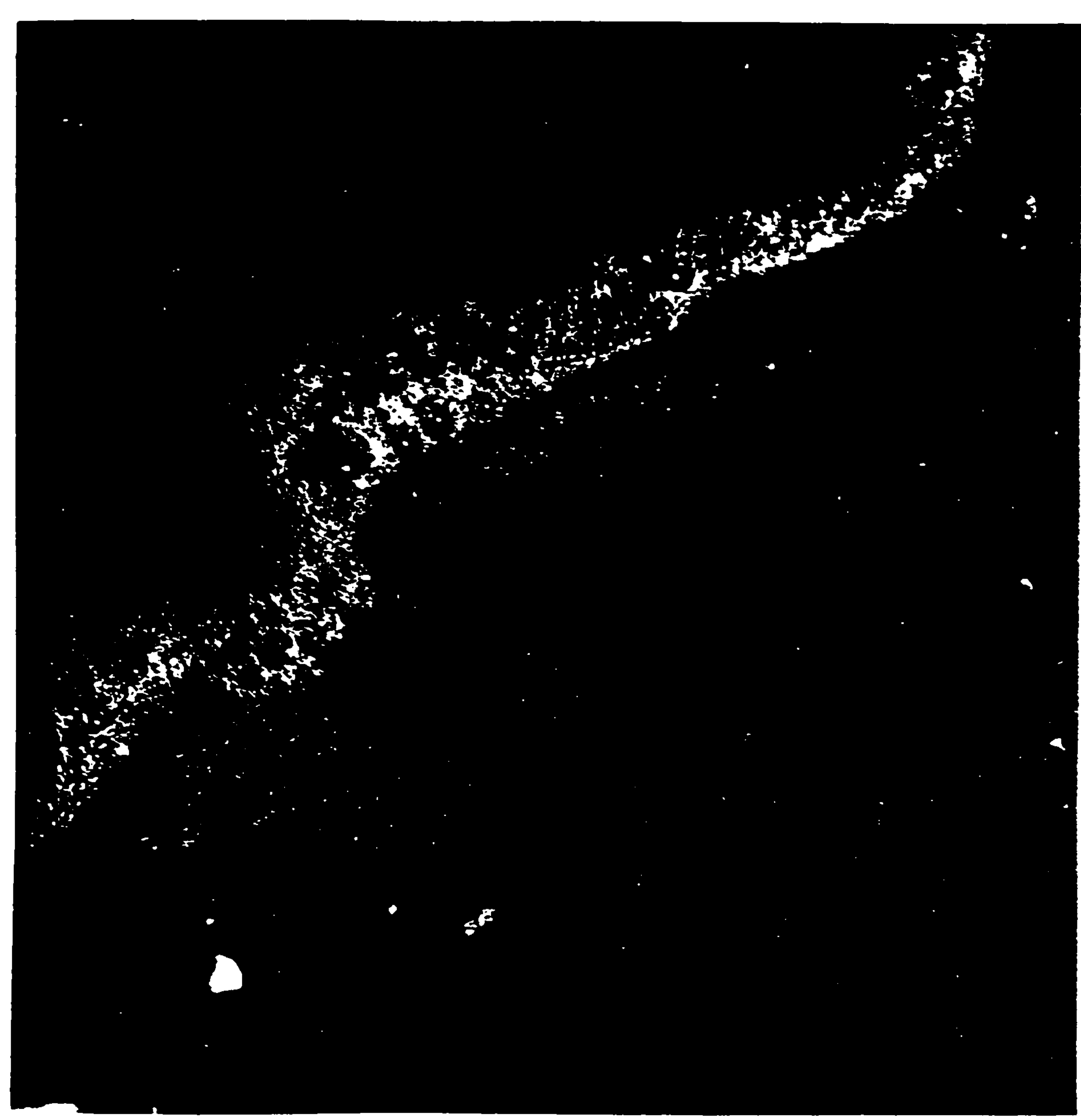

fig. 2.25

fig. 2.26

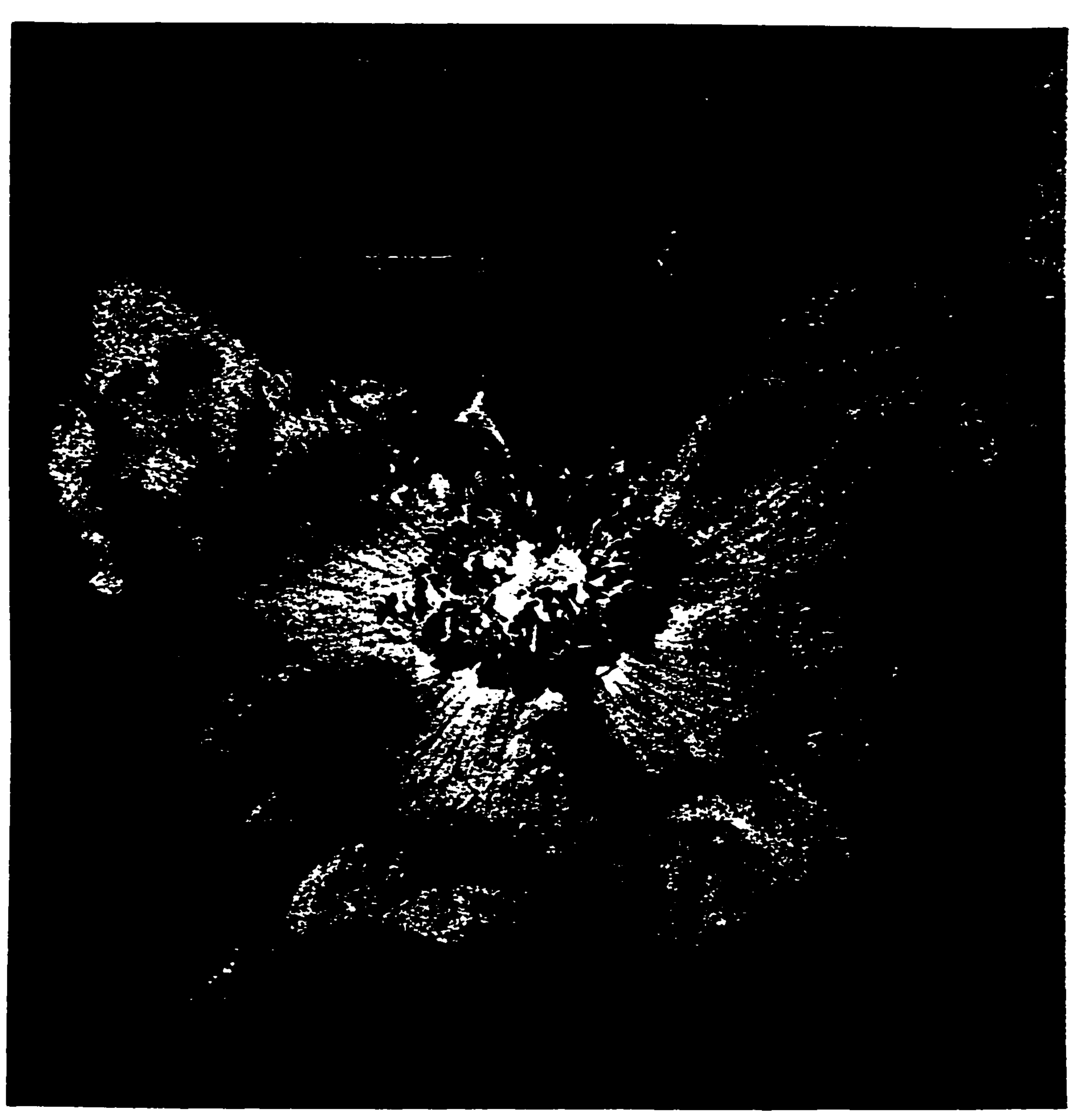

fig. 2.27

fig. 2.28

fig. 2.29

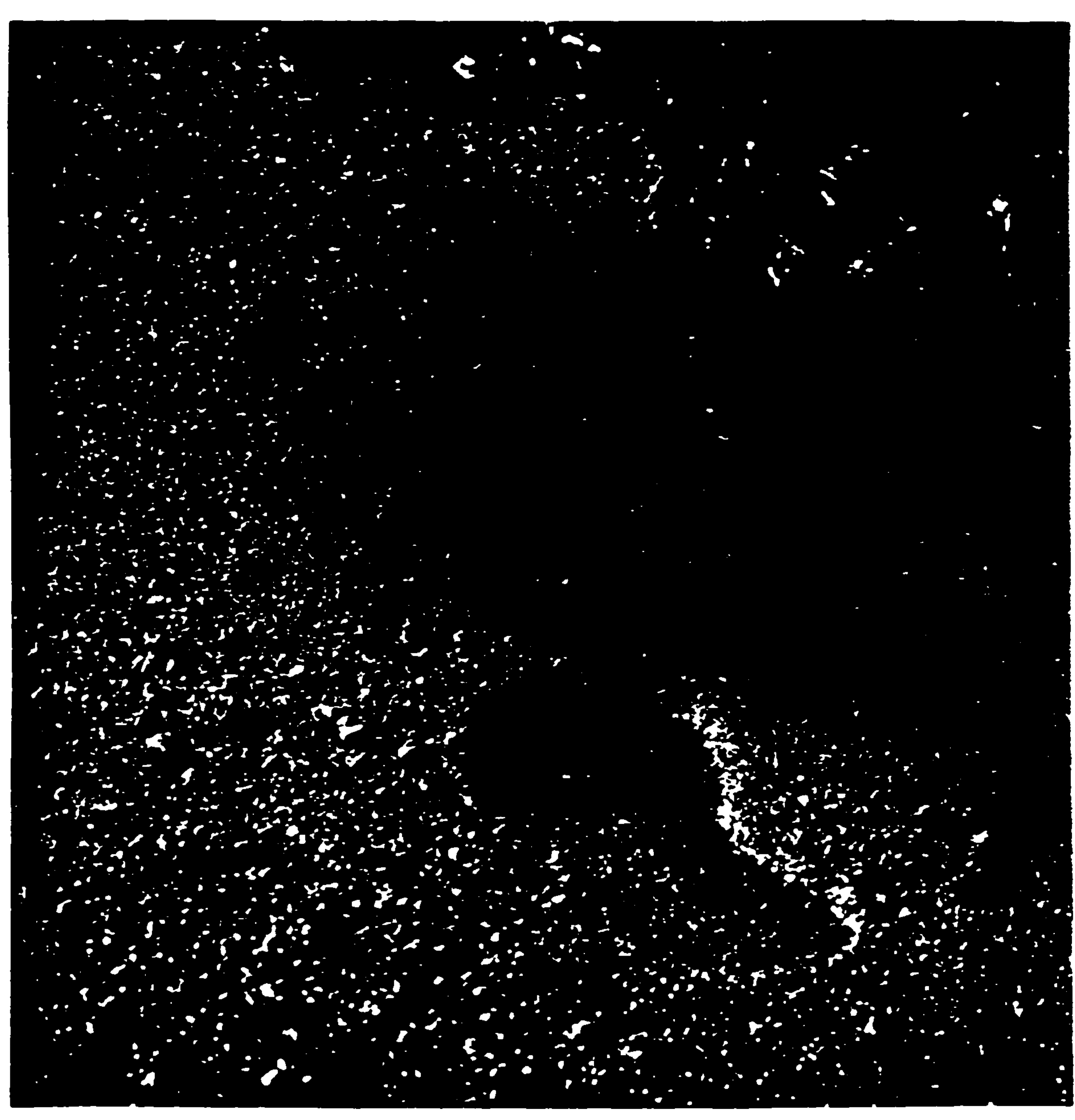

fig. 2.30

II.ii. Absolute Propaganda: counter-narrative in the classroom

I've done little to clear up that question many pages back about a bowl of cereal. In fact, I've complicated the issue by adding another series of banal images: shoes, roses, and the odd marker. This set of things, inscrutable and irrelevant as it may seem in academic discourse, provokes interpretation. Naming, as I said before, is an interpretive move. But, what kind of move? . . . A straight play? . . . Or a finesse? Or perhaps the move is part of an opening gambit which requires deftly concealed sacrifices enroute to a final victory . . . ?

So, that's what it was all about - a provocation, a trick, to show our drive to interpret, to categorize, to figure things out. But, what does it prove? Now that I know, you won't trick me next time.
You think that's all it was? A trick? Only time ~~we'll~~ will tell.

The narrative tells a story of how chance and curiosity conspire to deliver a set of things which provoked a kind of unformulated question for me many years ago. Other questions have intervened since then, some connected, some seemingly not so, but all leading me to a recognition that what seemed unformulated was the form of openness. There are things I could do to make these images *make more sense* to the reader. But the phrase "make more sense" is itself problematic. It's not as if these images are lacking in sense or meaning. If anything, there are too many ways of making sense of them. A reader looking for illustration in the usual sense will try to make logical connections between the images and what I have been saying. But that's not how these images came to be what and where they are. A common criticism of a work is that it has nothing to say, that it may be a technical success but that it tells us nothing new, it has no original read on the world? What

if its 'message' is its technical innovation? Is this not worthwhile? John Cage insisted without being flippant: "I have nothing to say and I am saying it."[1] Obviously, he did say something: words which I've just quoted.[2]

The shoes, roses, and markers escape, somehow, the full signed-sealed-and-delivered effects of explanation. Not because they're so striking as to stand alone, although one might think so of this or that image. But, because chance has been purposely employed in the process of their making and coming together in this way. There exists, in this process and others we'll encounter, a narrative of engagement in the sense that it discloses its own process as it goes. It is formally reflective, and therefore reflexive. But, the integrity of this process is not dependent upon making or defying sense. It has no agenda beyond its *getting on with its own process*. This is a kind of formalism: not looking through what a work is doing, to what it appears to be about, but reflecting on what it does and how this affects what it appears to be about.

I hesitate to use the term 'formalism' because of the controversy it evokes. 'Formalism' (I use inverted commas to refer to the limited sense of formalism which its opponents take as their target) has been so vehemently opposed by social realists, i.e., those who feel that art ought to be about something in society, that it ought to try and change things for the better.[3] The familiar question arises: "What is the responsibility of the artist?" Non-representational art is castigated for being irresponsible. But, because one can read no definitive message of social reconstruction in an art-work, does this mean that it is necessarily socially bereft? The notion of "art for art's sake" has been taken by its opponents to mean that the

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[1] "John Cage", American Masters, 1990.

[2] William Hare offers two examples of saying "I have nothing to say" which could say much: (1) as indication that to say anything more would be superfluous and (2) as a sign that the speaker fears he or she is about to be trapped.

[3] In 1938 George Lukacs and Ernst Bloch debated the question in terms of realism versus expressionism. See Aesthetics and Politics, Ronald Taylor, ed., London: NLB, 1977.

artist takes no responsibility beyond that for his or her art-work, and it is thought by many that this is socially irresponsible. Engagement in formal questions, in working out material problems, is seen by the social realist as evidence that the artist is detached from social concerns and immersed in the working out of a personal vision or project with little or any regard for the so-called 'real' world. This view stems, I believe, from a dangerously limited, realist notion of what constitutes social responsibility and of what constitutes art-work. At the end of II.i, I suggested that art is an open concept and practice, that its borders are blurred or permeable or that perhaps we err in thinking of art in terms of borders, that borders are what we are all about. This I consider most interesting for our pedagogy, as I've suggested, and ultimately this is where my narrative will lead. First though, there is this provocation, a foil to my narrative: the social realist agenda at work through the pedagogy of interpretation.

. . . . .

All seems infected that the infected spy,
As all looks yellow to the jaundiced eye.

Alexander Pope published these words in "An Essay on Criticism" in 1711.[4] The jaundiced eye, the infected outlook, spreads to all it surveys. The diseased point of view is one so biased or imbalanced that it prejudges every new situation it encounters. As a teacher, I take Pope's metaphor as a reminder not to 'infect' or 'jaundice' the eyes of my students. There are times, however, when, as William

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[4] Alexander Pope, "An Essay on Criticism" (1711), Eighteenth Century Poetry and Prose. L.I. Bredvold et al., eds., 2nd ed., New York: Ronald Press, 1956, 352, ll. 558-559.

Hare points out, a teacher may need to use a dose of bias to counter bias.[5] A common instance would be that of playing the devil's advocate. Say, for example, a whole class quickly agrees with an out-spoken student who claims disdainfully that Hamlet is just lazy and spineless. The teacher might attempt to shake this view by wondering aloud whether the fact that Hamlet is a student has anything to do with it. This would be a dramatic and dangerous counter-move, an *ad hominem* argument, and not one we are likely to find described in detail in writings on teaching methods, i.e., 'To shake students out of their complacency, try sarcasm.' And yet, as teachers we have all been in situations where circumstances provoke a response which, if taken at face value, would appear less than exemplary. None of us is completely immune to provocation. This edgy, dangerous tactic could be mitigated through tone of voice or by self-implication, i.e., the teacher is learner too. The important thing, having taken such a risk, would be to bring into open discussion the dilemma: on the one hand, there is the danger of impulsive, snap decisions; and on the other, of resting complacent. In other words, this is the human dilemma we all face along with Hamlet. The opening gambit in this strategy is ethically questionable; but, some would say, worth the risk if it leads to such a realization. Each case will have its own contingencies, and the decision *how* to proceed must be determined accordingly. As William Hare warns us, the use of flagrant bias as a teaching strategy is not to be recommended *in general*. Under certain limited conditions such a move may serve to "shake the students out of their complacency." We must not forget that the ultimate goal is to bring them closer to an attitude of open-mindedness. "The suitability of a method", says Hare, "depends

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[5] William Hare, Open-mindedness and Education (1979), Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983, 66.

very much upon particular circumstances, and this particular technique has many limitations."[6]

The case I've constructed is an example of a teacher taking a calculated risk. It is the kind of thing one might attempt if one were on very good terms with one's students, open and honest about one's own mistakes, not afraid of being the brunt of the joke oneself and certain there would be time to explain the purpose of such a strategy. Even with all of these qualifications, I cannot help but feel uncomfortable for having given a modicum of authority to such a tactic by putting it into print.

Within the practice of critical pedagogy, based in the critical theorist's assumption that "men and women are essentially unfree and inhabit a world rife with contradictions and asymmetries of power and privilege",[7] teachers react against standard pedagogical narratives considered dominant and oppressive. These are narratives seen to so pervasively exclude disadvantaged segments of society that the accounts are considered systemically biased. In some cases, critical pedagogues react by introducing alternative narratives which run counter to those deemed unacceptable. Through contrast and opposition, a counter-narrative foregrounds the bias of the dominant other.

In the year which marked the 500th anniversary of Columbus' famous voyage to the Indies, educators were among those who attempted to publicize the

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[6] Hare, 66. On this point, regarding the dependence of this method upon circumstances, Hare acknowledges his debt to Bernard Crick in "On Bias", Teaching Politics, 1, 1, 1972: 3-12.

[7] Peter McLaren, Life in Schools. An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education, Toronto: Irwin, 1989, 166. McLaren begins by stating that "[i]n practice, critical pedagogy is as diverse as its many adherents", but he attempts an overview of the themes and constructs they have in common, beginning with their general acceptance of the founding premise of critical theory, quoted above.

Robert Bérard has remarked that the two assumptions - that we are unfree and that we inhabit a world imbalanced by power and privilege - are "separable and unequally convincing." He goes on to say that "people experience power in different ways. It may be far more oppressive to be in Peter McLaren's class than to be in Jean Chrétien's country." In other words, he asks: "Is one objectively oppressed, or is this a concept that depends on circumstances? Am I oppressed if I agree to obedience to my abbott?"

underside of his so-called 'discovery of the new world'. William Bigelow was such a teacher and writes of his on-going efforts to encourage a skeptical attitude towards social studies texts in the secondary school history class which he team-teaches with Linda Christensen.[8] He begins the class by seeming to 'steal' a purse from a student with whom he has pre-arranged the little charade. Objections fly, to which he responds by taking objects from the purse and claiming they are his. Students obligingly react as he expects by saying the things are not his, that he has stolen them. He draws out students' reasons for why they think the things are not his: some things have the owner's name on them, she worked to buy them, etc. Then, Bigelow comes in with the clincher: "What if I said I *discovered* this purse, then would it be mine?"[9] Thus, the conditions are set for the analogy to work, and Bigelow asks why it is we say Columbus *discovered* America.

> I want students to see that the word "discovery" is loaded. The word itself carries with it a perspective, a bias; it takes sides. "Discovery" is the phrase of the supposed discoverers. It's the conquerors, the invaders, masking their theft. And when the word gets repeated in textbooks, those textbooks become, in the phrase of one historian, "the propaganda of the winners."[10]

He follows discussion of the word 'discovery' with accounts of how Columbus and his men made slaves of the indigenous people, forced them to gather gold on pain of mutilation and death, and eventually drove the Arawak to mass suicide.[11]

I commend Bigelow and Christensen for going beyond the inept textbook accounts. The image of Columbus and his men giving thanks for their safe arrival

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[8] William Bigelow, "Discovering Columbus: Rereading the Past", Language Arts, 66, 6, 1989: 635-643.
[9] Bigelow, 636.
[10] Bigelow, 636.
[11] Bigelow cites Hans Koning's Columbus: His Enterprise, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976. Robert Bérard asks whether "we now too readily accept the revisionist accounts of Columbus", and points out that Monthly Review Press was the U.S. equivalent of Progress Publishing.

in the new world is, I expect, inscribed in the minds of all North Americans who were traditionally schooled. Each history textbook account of the expedition included an artistic rendering of the landing. A frequently reproduced image is the painting by John Vanderlyn, entitled "The Landing of Columbus on San Salvador, Oct. 12, 1492", which hangs in the Capitol building in Washington, D.C.[12] The existence of an artistic rendering of an historical event has the potential to influence the editorial emphasis. A visual representation could serve to make the account, such as it was, more dramatic though, obviously, a much more dramatic story is the one which remained untold. The 'discovery' thus recounted became a standard in history textbooks, taking on legendary proportions which editors simply reprinted from one generation to the next. Research into primary documents such as Columbus' diary is not the business of those who edit school textbooks. They tend to work from extant summary accounts such as those in encyclopedias. It falls to the teacher to supplement these synoptic texts. We also need to remember that values such as love of god and country have only recently begun to recede as the dominant themes in school texts. I offer none of these explanations by way of excusing the ineptitude of this tradition of inaccuracy but in order to suggest some of the formal, procedural reasons why such things continue to occur. If I were to take an example from the science curriculum, the teaching of classical Newtonian physics, let us say, I can recall from my own secondary school education that Einstein's theory of relativity was hardly mentioned, let alone Heisenberg's uncertainty principle or other revolutionary ideas which had gained acceptance well before my formative education, and which brought us into this era of sub-atomic

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[12] Roger Simon, in "The Pedagogy of Commemoration and Formation of Collective Memories", Educational Foundations, 8, 1, 1994: 5-24, tells how the image was reproduced not only in history textbooks, but also on currency and postage stamps. The painting includes at bottom left two sailors fighting over something they have found on the shore, which implies that Vanderlyn had a sense for more than the glory of the expedition. In the 1893 U.S. postage stamp version, the engravers have eliminated this intimation of reality from their image (14-15).

particles and chaos theory. One might argue that this is not a useful parallel since the primary documents surrounding Columbus' expeditions were always available. It was just that no one bothered to dig further, since the story as told suited those in power. Scientific discovery is different, or so the objection would go. It requires a kind of creative leap beyond the old paradigm. But this argument gets to my point exactly. Discovery *is* a leap beyond an old paradigm through a veil of preconceptions. Columbus and his expeditionary force were part of the vast experiment, if you will, which demonstrated that the world was not flat. It has taken Western philosophy until this century to realize, following the revolutions in scientific thinking, that linear, Aristotelian logic may be a part of something larger, a dialectical process.[13] Are we deluding ourselves yet again in thinking the Columbus story now complete because two versions are prominently poised in opposition? Does it not perhaps require another kind of viewing entirely?

I believe strongly with William Bigelow that teachers ought to encourage critical reading of all text. And yet, though his approach is very effective in its dramatic provocation of skepticism, it may have been somewhat misguided. I am concerned about his dramatic, I would go so far as to say sensational, use of bias against bias. His opening gambit, with the purse-stealing episode, captures the students' interest in a way which bears an ironic similarity to Columbus' use of trinkets and glass beads. The theme here is the abuse of trust. Columbus, as soldier-conqueror, gained the trust of the aboriginal peoples and used it ruthlessly for profit. Bigelow's manipulation of the trust of his students can, it seems to me, only be justified if he is willing to use his own actions as an example, draw the parallel with Columbus as I have suggested, and point out that the use of the words "steal", "theft" and "lie" are also loaded, this time in favour of revision. In the

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[13] See Gaston Bachelard, The Philosophy of No. A Philosphy of the New Scientific Mind. I refer to this dialectic in I, 2-4.

example I gave from a class on Hamlet, the use of sarcasm is not worth the risk if one is not willing to take an active role in determining whether or not it had harmful effects. Bigelow is bringing into question the trust his students may have had for other teachers and figures of authority over the years. To break this trust in one fell swoop is a clever move, but does he have the right to do so? Is it his place to decide for the students that their trust was misplaced?

There will be those who feel it is my concern which is misplaced, that I am perhaps out of touch with the resilience of today's adolescents, and that, considering the degree to which their trust is being manipulated continually by retailers, advertisers and spin doctors, it is time that teachers took a more active political role. If this injures the sensibilities of the more sheltered students, well, at least they have been alerted to the levels of manipulation around them. I find this a deeply cynical view and don't believe it is the best we can do as educators. With something so serious at stake - the abuse of trust - is it appropriate to resort to trivializing antics and risk abusing students' trust in us in order to make a point?[14]

Although Bigelow expresses concern that some students are troubled by what he calls "these myth-popping discussions",[15] he says nothing further of the student who wrote that she was "left not knowing who to believe". He does go on to quote Josh, whose skepticism is well articulated and who offers, as Bigelow says, "a wonderfully probing series of questions" which the teachers read anonymously to the whole class. Josh writes:

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[14] Robert Bérard comments: "This also assumes that the teacher is in possession of a higher truth which justifies the manipulation thought unacceptable for Philip Morris."

John Portelli questions my assertion that Bigelow used "trivializing antics". It is within the realm of possibility (just as with the tactic I conjured up earlier in the class on Hamlet), to successfully employ methods which rely on playing with student trust, but it is not something I believe it within the scope of my authority to encourage. However, I take the point that I may be trivializing Bigelow's methods. Mine is only one reading.

[15] Bigelow, 642.

> I still wonder . . . If we can't believe what our first grade teachers told us, why should we believe you? If they lied to us, why wouldn't you? If one book is wrong, why isn't another? What is your purpose in telling us about how awful Chris was? What interest do you have in telling us the truth? What is it you want from us?[16]

By using the polemical issue of the Columbus expedition, so inextricably implicated as it is in public consciousness of identity, ownership, and the rights of nationhood (and here I refer to those on all sides of the issue), it is likely that reaction will be charged with emotion and that students' subsequent desire to know will focus on wanting to know the 'correct' account. Thus, it seems to me, that in making his point so dramatically and polemically (and apparently without irony), Bigelow undermines the pedagogical purpose he claims to uphold: to help students distance themselves from all accounts. To encourage them to step back into an attitude of cynicism and suspicion, feeling they've been duped by former teachers, may shut down openness. Would we not rather see students consider evidence dispassionately? Is it not our goal to develop critical skills and attitudes which stand students in good stead when confronted with issues steeped in emotion, issues very difficult to separate from one's personal experience of them?

Bigelow's commentary on Josh's questions is framed in generalities which bring the account to an end. He maintains that his purpose was to present "a whole new way of reading" necessary for dealing with textbooks which "fill students with information masquerading as final truth" and that he and his colleague "wanted to assert to students that they shouldn't necessarily trust the 'authorities' but needed instead to be active participants in their own learning".[17] I cannot help but wonder about the zeal of Bigelow and Christensen's efforts. What were they doing in their classes before enacting their belief in "teaching as political action"?[18] Is it possible

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[16] Bigelow, 642.
[17] Bigelow, 642-643.
[18] Bigelow, 643.

they had only lately come to question the authority of the texts they'd been teaching? The epistemological shock of such a realization after a lifetime of education and years of teaching would certainly have a profound effect. It is more than likely that a responsible teacher would wish to pass on the benefits of such a realization to his or her students. But, the use of shock tactics *in loco parentis* is a move which needs to be considered separately from that of our pedagogical responsibility to encourage a critical attitude.

In an age when teachers feel increasingly pressured to capture attention through dramatic techniques as a way of competing with the entertainment media so prominent in the lives of their students, Bigelow's account of the success of "teaching as political action"[19] is likely to catch the imagination of many classroom teachers. In November, 1994, a parent complained about the Remembrance Day activity in which her grade one child participated. It seems that the child was frightened for some time after her teacher had organized the class into role-playing a Nazi death-camp scenario in which some students played victims while others acted out pulling the switch in the gas chamber.[20] I use this extreme case to emphasize that there are dangers in resorting to sensationalism in education, in going for an immediate end with little understanding of the adverse effects of the technique employed to reach it. The belief that the end justifies the means was also the premise of Hitler's Final Solution.[21]

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[19] Bigelow, 643.

[20] Gerrie Grevatt, "Teacher took 'graphic' Holocaust lesson too far, parents complain", Halifax Mail-Star, Nov. 18, 1994.

[21] Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, Ralph Manheim, trans., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943. In reference to a concern over combatting the evils of totalitarian regimes, William Hare warns that "we should be careful not to adopt their illiberal practices." See What Makes a Good Teacher, London, Ont.: The Althouse Press, 1993, 99.

I should add that one of my graduate students tried Bigelow's method in his junior high social studies class. He reported that it worked very well, that the students 'got' the stealing vs. discovery analogy. Later, however, one of his students approached him in confidence to say that he had a graduation ring of some value which he had had for some time, but which was not his own.

Bigelow cites Paulo Freire's well-known critique of traditional education: the "banking metaphor" by which the mind of the learner is treated as an account to be filled with the valuable currency of knowledge which we, the teachers, deposit and wait for interest to accrue.[22] This metaphor, like all others, is of little use if it is taken literally. Whether we see the mind of a child as an empty vessel, a blank slate or a bank account, all of these metaphors imply that the mind and education are most importantly means to extrinsic ends, rather than ends in themselves.[23] And ultimately, all metaphors can be stretched into contradiction or absurdity. As a teacher I must tread warily if I find myself zealously set upon convincing my students of some truth. A first question to myself must be: What makes me think I know a truth worth imparting?[24] And secondly: Am I justified in using the full

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The teacher suggested he might try and find its owner. Soon after this, the teacher received a phone call from the student's mother. It seems that the ring had somehow come into the hands of the student's father who had given it to his son, without, it seems, attempting to find its owner. No more details came my way, but the interesting thing is the way in which the teacher's lesson caused the student to, in effect, question the morality of his father's behaviour.

[22] Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1968), Myra Bergman Ramos, trans., New York: The Seabury Press, 1974, 62-63. In footnote 2, Freire acknowledges the similarity of his metaphor to Jean-Paul Sartre's notion of the 'digestive' or 'nutritive' concept of education as described in "Une ideé fundamentale de la phénomenologie de Husserl: L'intentionalité", Situations I (Paris, 1947).

[23] On the subject of metaphor as it applies to education, I direct the reader to a collection of readings, Metaphors of Education, William Taylor et al., eds., London: Heinemann, 1984, in particular Denis Lawton's "Metaphor and the Curriculum".

[24] See II.II.fn.14. As I frame Bérard's comment into a question, I evoke Herbert Spencer's famous line: "What knowledge is of most worth?" And, as Hare and Portelli point out (Philosophy of Education, Introductory Readings, 2nd. ed., William Hare and John P. Portelli, eds., Calgary: Detselig, 1996, 181) some consider that by formulating the question in terms of knowledge Spencer builds in a certain distortion. A version of this critique would, I believe, be that launched by Jane Roland Martin. (See her "Needed: A New Paradigm for Liberal Education", Eightieth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, J. F. Soltis, ed., 1981.) Though I believe her argument misrepresents the work of Paul Hirst, it is helpful as a kind of purgative for those adhering to an epistemological realism, a doctrine Hirst thought undesirable as a base for a concept of education. (See also Paul Hirst, "Liberal education and the nature of knowledge", Knowledge and the Curriculum, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974, and "Educational theory", Educational Theory and its Foundation Disciplines, Paul Hirst, ed., London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983. And, for Hirst's theory of meaning, see "Language and thought", Knowledge and the Curriculum.)

range of my pedagogical repertoire of tact and tone to convey this truth?[25] Other questions might be: Why am I certain of this truth? Did it come as a shock to my beliefs? Did I have to re-evaluate what I held formerly to be true? What means are justified in getting this truth across to my students? What are the limitations of these means? Are the means I employ implicated in the shift in my thinking?[26]

What if I were to tell my students the story of this disruption or shift in my thinking, how it came about, how it left me uncertain, and how I am wondering what to think now and what to tell them? Some readers might object that such an approach would not be appropriate for younger students in, say, the middle or

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[25] Here I evoke Max van Manen's work on the tact and tone of teaching. He starts from the assumption of honesty. To my knowledge, he makes no reference to the use of feigned tact or tone in pedagogy. (See The Tone of Teaching, Richmond Hill: Scholastic, 1986, and The Tact of Teaching. The Meaning of Pedagogical Thoughtfulness, London, Ont.: Althouse, 1991.)

[26] William Hare has reminded me of the scene from Horace's Compromise in which the teacher, having conducted a class on Graham Greene's The Destructors, closes the session in this way: "A bare three minutes before the class's end, Sister Michael left the text and asked, Should this story be in a textbook for students? Immediately the response, Why not? Sister pressed: Does it give the wrong message to growing people? Is art for entertainment, or preachment, or is it simply a neutral description of reality? The students left the class off balance, pondering." (Theodore R. Sizer, Horace's Compromise, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984, 145.) Like Bigelow, this teacher has prompted a questioning of pedagogical motives but not, I would say, at the risk of student trust. Leaving students off balance does not necessarily encourage a general skepticism. But neither does Bigelow's charade. Students may already have questioned the documentary authority of school texts, or authoritative accounts may never have made an impression on them. In response, in short, to John Portelli's question regarding the fairness of my account of Bigelow, I would have to say that, when it comes to certain tactics, I prefer to err on the side of caution. I do not give Bigelow the full benefit of the doubt because of the possible misapplications of his approach which I have both witnessed and imagined. I feel justified in representing him in this way, not to impugn his motives, but to point out that forms of manipulation exist in different ethical contexts, and that this is one in which the agent (the teacher) begins from a position of advantage.

There are other mitigating factors in any comparison between the two scenarios. Bigelow's is a first-person account; Sizer's, from the third-person. Thus, in the latter scene, the researcher makes these comments about the teacher's attitude: ". . . one could sense that the sister herself personified a style of kindness that was married to rigor and demand. Her judgment, timing, and sense of direction were clear but not obtrusive. This class was a model of the craftsman at work, a craftsman of sensitivity and judgment. It was an experience not reducible to a lesson plan for a substitute to use or a curriculum guide." (145) Regarding the conditions under which Sister Michael's craft could work best, he says: "A classroom like that of Sister Michael's works well when students want to be there and are at least reasonably ready to engage in discussion and attend to the use of their minds. The typical classroom is not designed for rambunctiousness, for noise, for confrontation." (145) When conditions are not ideal, teachers can easily find themselves employing more dramatic measures, a time to err on the side of caution.

early elementary grades. I believe it would depend upon the tone with which one tells one's story and upon the subject matter of one's uncertainty. One must always take care when challenging the credulity of others. It seems to me, and I have only my own experience as my guide, that we must be careful in edging students away from gullibility, that we not damage their potential for commitment. To honestly recount one's process of considering new evidence and pondering its impact upon what one already holds to be true is an example of critically coming to knowledge, a process we hope our students will consider at every new turn.

Children's own questions frequently offer opportunities for talking and thinking about thinking. We are sometimes too quick, it seems to me, to offer answers to the difficult questions children ask. To the child's question "Why is the sky blue?" one may answer in ways which leave the question open for the child to continue wondering. What sort of reply is of most use? The realist may feel that the sooner the child understands the physics of light refraction the better, and may attempt a simplified version of a scientific account. But perhaps the child is wondering about that blue crayon, and why he's been using it to colour the space above the ground. This may be a questioning of convention, of why we call blue 'blue', something the adult has already been conditioned to accept and to which she never gives a second thought unless, of course, she is prone to such questioning by nature or occupation. I am not suggesting we *necessarily* need to find out what the question means. I believe we do need to consider the possibility that the question is more profound than we can imagine.

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Let us return to this oppositional approach to authorizing a 'right' story, an approach which attempts to check the bias of one account by offering a strong counter-offensive. You may still be asking how I can say that Bigelow's approach,

which corrects a gross inaccuracy, is an example of using bias to counter bias. If the counter-narrative is the 'correct' or 'real' story, how can it be called biased?

R.M. Hare considers how we ought to distinguish education from indoctrination. He first of all rejects the notion that they be distinguished on the basis of the *content* of what is taught, for who, asks Hare, are the sane and sensible people who are to decide what constitutes right or acceptable content? Says Hare, "[m]ost people think that they themselves and the majority of their friends are sane and sensible people."[27] Hare's point about content not being sufficient grounds reminds me of the call to censor reading material because it contains unacceptable content. How are we to raise discussion and awareness of a societal problem without using examples of that which society deems objectionable? Which would you prefer for your children: Mother Teresa teaching *Mein Kampf*? Or Jim Keegstra teaching *Winnie the Pooh*?

In discounting content as the distinguishing factor, R.M. Hare is responding to those who contend that the difference between education and indoctrination must be in its content because it can't be in its methods. With young children we must at times use non-rational methods. Discussion is as yet beyond their capacity. Hare agrees that non-rational (as opposed to irrational) methods are sometimes appropriate. I am reminded of Dewey's famous example of the actions of the wise mother. It would be inappropriate, even irresponsible, to try and reason with a child who is dangerously close to an open fire.[28] We might add as corollary to this William Hare's admonition against the use of bias to counter bias *as a general rule*. The use of bias can be equated with the use of non-rational methods. Under certain limited circumstances they may be advisable, but, to repeat William Hare's

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[27] R.M. Hare, "Adolescents into Adults", Aims in Education: The Philosophic Approach, T.H.B. Hollins, ed., Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964, 48.
[28] John Dewey, Experience and Education (1938), New York: Macmillan, 1963, 43.

qualification, "[t]he suitability of a method depends very much upon particular circumstances."[29]

If content is not the distinguishing feature of indoctrination, and if we cannot distinguish it on the basis of methods because, as we agree, non-rational methods are sometimes required in education, then are we left saying that indoctrination is acceptable in some cases? Recently, some of my B.Ed. students, in considering the Keegstra case, talked about good and bad indoctrination. If we encourage this usage, the term 'indoctrination' loses its usefulness as a means of distinguishing unacceptable practice from that which we deem educational. In any case, this would only shift the problem to one of distinguishing 'good' indoctrination or education from 'bad'.

R. M. Hare suggests a third possibility: that of distinguishing indoctrination on the basis of the aim or purpose with which one employs rational and non-rational methods. Non-rational methods may be part of education. It is conceivable that they be deemed necessary for reasons of, say, safety, and would not necessarily be deemed indoctrinatory unless one aimed (or inadvertently succeeded) at instilling an unquestioning obedience to authority rather than hoping to eventually teach the child indirectly the danger of playing near an open fire. Says Hare, "I do not *want* the child to remain such that non-rational persuasion or influence is the only kind of moral communication I can have with it."[30] This is not to say that the mere aim or purpose of developing moral growth will necessarily ensure that such growth will occur. However, as Hare points out,

> the *aim* which distinguishes education from indoctrination has a profound bearing upon both the method and the content of education - only these other things are not fundamental; they come from the aim, not it from them.[31]

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[29] William Hare, Open-mindedness and Education, 66.
[30] R.M. Hare, 51.
[31] R.M. Hare, 52.

In the Bigelow case, the shock value of the tactics serves to bias or over-balance his counter-narrative, i.e., the correct, or more accurate, historical account of the Columbus expedition. As a result, some students were left not knowing what or whom to believe. Bigelow's interest in setting the historical record straight was one aim. The other was to teach his students to be critical. By conflating the two aims, the one substantive and the other formal (though substantial), he induced a reaction which worked against both. The students were not sure what constituted valid evidence, and they were left, at least for the time being, on the cynical side of skepticism. John Portelli asks whether the move towards skepticism and away from unquestioned belief does not always move in this cyclic fashion. I agree that the process of revising one's views based upon new evidence does follow this pattern, one I consider vital to education. My concern here is to balance it with the other ideal: respect for students' sensibilities, those that exist already and those one is attempting to encourage. Cynicism, it seems to me, is an injured form of skepticism. A person has been hurt into disbelief and is reticent to trust again in the possibility of human goodness.

In an article written several years after "Rediscovering Columbus", Bigelow tells of how he and Christensen encouraged students to relate to historical examples of oppression through an examination of personal experiences of injustice.[32] In what he calls the "collective text" which emerged from these personal disclosures, over half of the students offered examples from within the school setting. The teachers then encouraged the students to conduct their own research within other classes. As a result of these investigations, various abuses of authority were reported: e.g., boys being treated preferentially and boring teaching seen as a

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[32] William Bigelow, "Inside the Classroom: Social Vision and Critical Pedagogy", Becoming Political, P. Shannon, ed., Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1992, 72-82. The example they use is that of the removal of Cherokee Indians to the west of the Mississipi at the time of the Andrew Jackson administration (73).

method of lulling students into mindless acceptance.[33] Not surprisingly the students became so frustrated and angry over what they saw as a situation of oppression, that one student picked up his desk and threw it against the wall. It is to Bigelow's credit that he recounts the incident and how he and Christensen came to an important realization:

> [W]hile the outburst was not directed at our class in particular - thank heavens - we understood our culpability in his frustration. We had made two important and related errors in our teaching. Implicitly, our search had encouraged students to see themselves as victims - powerless little cogs in a machine daily reproducing the inequities of the larger society. . . . I think the major problem was that although our class did discuss resistance by students, it was anecdotal and unsystematic, thereby depriving students of the opportunity to question their own roles in maintaining the status quo. The effect of this omission, entirely unintentional on our part, was to deny students the chance to see schools as sites of struggle and social change - places where they could have a role in determining the character of their own education.[34]

As a result of their realization, the teachers introduced a role-playing scenario in which the students play workers and unemployed eager for jobs, while Bigelow plays the owner of a machine who manipulates his work force for profit. The workers eventually band together to overcome the oppressive tactics of the owner. Thus, through the allegory of the workplace the students engaged in acting together for social change.

Was the choice of settings for the role-play not somewhat curious given Bigelow and Christensen's earlier efforts at encouraging students to research injustices in their own, pedagogical environment? Why did the role-play not follow from the students' collective text as their research did? Bigelow ends by saying that teachers-to-be "ought to learn that teaching is, in the best sense of the term, a

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[33] Bigelow, 1992, 75-77.
[34] Bigelow, 1992, 77.

subversive activity - and to be proud of it."[35] And yet, although these lessons had come to a dramatic climax with a student throwing a desk, the teachers seem to have backed away from their stated aim of giving students a chance to see "they could have a role in determining the character of their own education." The obvious choice of a role-playing scenario would have been a school setting in which a group of students determine how best to make their schooling more democratic. Were the teachers vary of their own aim and how it might affect their methods? Were unquestioned assumptions motivating these lessons? For example, students *do* resist the educational system continually. With every opinion they express or choose not to express they *are* determining the character of their own education. As John Portelli points out, this resistance may be at a cost to themselves and their parents. May I rightly assume that behaviour such as inattention, tardiness, and incompletion of work is a form of student resistance to authority? May I also assume that this resistance is necessarily anti-educational? It seems to me that such questions can only be answered case by case.

In his study of the nature and history of ideology, Kenneth Minogue points to the fallacy commonly committed in the service of dogmatism: *petitio principii*, or begging the question, by which the conclusion of an argument is taken for granted in its premises.[36] Bigelow and Christensen enter the classroom believing that school is part of "the repressive social relations of the larger society".[37] This belief is implicit in their interpretation of student behavior. They see a lack of collective student action as a failure to collectively resist oppression and conclude how effective the oppression has been. One could as easily apply this circular logic to the teachers' failure to carry through with the theme of the violation of students'

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[35] Bigelow, 1992, 81.

[36] Kenneth Minogue, Alien Powers. The Pure Theory of Ideology, New York: St. Martin's, 1985, 41-42.

[37] Bigelow, 1992, 72.

rights. See how oppressed the teachers are: they changed the scenario from that of a school to that of a workplace.

But, John Portelli asks, what if these teachers "came to hold their beliefs after careful and 'painful' deliberations?" I can only say I wish they had included an account of such a process. There are signs of their struggle, and for this I believe Bigelow and Christensen are to be commended for their honesty. The extended accounts of their efforts at transforming the classroom into "a center of equality and democracy"[38] will strike a chord in every teacher who believes this to be an essential aim of education. Admitting they felt they had reached an impasse, they give their reader a chance to reassess as well. The error, as I see it, one to which we are all prone, is one of omission: to fail to question one's assumptions. The taken-for-granted may adversely affect one's reasoning and persuasiveness without one even knowing it. In a democratic classroom, the validity of the teacher's assumptions regarding social reality, of which pedagogy is a part, must also be open for discussion. It is ironic if students are not encouraged to challenge the assumptions of teachers who lead them to question pedagogical authority.

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This brings me to a case from a popular critical trend in the branch of language arts pedagogy called "media literacy". After describing this trend with a series of examples, I shall consider its appropriateness to formative media education, how representative it is of "deconstruction", a descriptor often used to characterize these efforts.

It is necessary, before looking at examples, however, to make a formal point. That which follows includes photo-copy prints made from my slides of various images produced by other people. In an attempt to come to terms with the

[38] Bigelow, 1992, 72.

dilemma of how to quote the pictorial without copying it, I have taken pains to ensure that these photo-prints not be mistaken for the images they quote. I place the images in my own environment; one sees parts of it in the background or in the shadow-play on the surface of the quoted image. That which is being quoted is thus framed by background detail or overlaid by the play of light from the time the photo was taken. For example, I purposely include the shadow of the window frame as the afternoon light illuminates the page of the magazine displaying the image. In several of the photo-prints one sees the post-it note I use to mark the page or the rock which keeps the page from blowing in the wind. All of these things have been done in a effort to 'quote' rather than 'copy', an important distinction for a pedagogy of the visual image. In Ways of Worldmaking, Nelson Goodman distinguishes between replica and copy:

> We must remember that being a replica and being a copy are quite different matters; replicas may differ drastically so long as they are spelled the same way. Since picturing has no alphabet and no notational criterion for sameness of spelling, direct verbal quotation has no strict analogue in painting.[39]

How, then, are we to quote the pictorial except by copying it, which according to law one cannot do without dispensation? Goodman makes a further distinction by drawing a comparison between the several prints of a photographic negative and the replicas of a word. But, he says, the relations are not the same.

> [T]he relation among the prints consists in their having been produced from the same negative while the relation among the inscriptions consists in their being spelled the same way. Still, since both systems are multiple, with their symbols having plural instances, 'duplication' among the prints might be accepted as a tolerable even though admittedly inexact analogue of replication among the inscriptions.[40]

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[39] Goodman, Ways of Worldmaking, 48.

[40] Goodman, 48. He uses the terms 'autographic' (f. Gk *auto-* self) for the relation among the several prints from a negative, and 'allographic' (f. Gk *allo-* other) for the several replicas of a word.

It would seem, then, that through a process of duplication one may quote a photogragh. Says Goodman,

> Then a photograph may actually contain a duplicate of a second photograph; and the first, if it also refers to the second through showing it as in a frame, etc., might then be said to quote it directly.[41]

It is this which I claim to be doing in what follows. I make no copies and thus infringe upon no copyrights; rather, I duplicate within my own frame.

I would make this same case for the use of videotape for pedagogical purposes. If, for example, I rent a commercially available video with restrictions upon its use before groups of people and then video-tape it as it plays on my television set framed within the context of my environment, I am duplicating for the purposes of quoting. There would be further qualifications upon its use, it seems to me. I would need to frame the playing of this duplicate within my own exposition. To simply play the duplicate as if it were the original to, say, avoid further cost would be an infringement on copyright.[42]

I begin, then, with the moment of provocation, that incident which continues to raise questions about the line between indoctrination and education in media studies as part of compulsory schooling. It is important, first of all, to place the moment in the setting of my own practice. I have frequently been uneasy about analyses of mass media messages which end in the demonization of the source, e.g., advertiser, broadcaster, publisher, etc. For example, in an analysis of the language of advertising, discussion of techniques and strategies will tend to assume the

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[41] Goodman, 48.

[42] William Hare asks about the legal status of what I call quoting the pictorial through duplication. In consultation with Dalhousie University's legal counsel, Brian Crocker, I can report that to do so in the form of academic research, i.e., for private reasons, falls under an exemption in any case. My understanding is that this theory of pictorial quotation could, however, be tested by law were one to apply it in a commercial publication. Would this injunction include, I wonder, a commercial publication in which one quotes the pictorial in order to give an example of how quoting differs from copying?

existence of a manipulative motive on the part of those writing the copy and those paying the copywriters. This assumption is ubiquitous, and regardless of how well-founded it may be, is it pedagogically appropriate to encourage *any* unquestioned assumption?

At a time when the study of mass media was only beginning to take its place in formal education, Brian Firth warned language arts teachers that we need to be especially careful, coming as we do out of a tradition of literature and so-called 'high art', not to forget that, for students in the age of mass media, television is inextricably implicated in their notion of 'home'.[43] Now that mass media products are commonplace objects of study, has this high-low dichotomy shifted, I wonder, to the assumption that we, the critical viewers, are above the motives of the advertisers? Commercial advertising is part of what we think of as television. Advertising lore is part of our culture. Its language and jingles enter colloquial usage. Much of television comedy, sketch and stand-up, targets advertisements, and we develop a love-hate relationship to these mini-dramas. Students talk about their favourite ad or the one they hate the most. Figures 2.31 and 2.32 (see pages 103 and following) depict collages made by two grade twelve students who were asked to construct something which represented themselves, a kind of signature poster. As you can see, no attempt was made to conceal the names of commercial products. Brand names come to be used as generic descriptors.

Although, in analyses of ad language, I try to focus attention upon technique and not motive, rhetorical devices are used to produce certain effects in the reader or viewer, and discussion of these easily slides into general assumptions regarding manipulation. Along with this concern, I also struggle with students' assumption in their talk about literature that what they observe, how they react, is what the author

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43 Brian Firth, Mass Media in the Classroom, London: Macmillan, 1968, 12.

intended, what he or she is trying to say or do.[44] Although one may attribute such-and-such an interpretation to the intention of an author, there is no way of verifying that this is what he or she intends, and even if one were so able through, say, an autobiographical account, it only serves as an historical addendum, not as evidence for the validity of this or that aesthetic judgement. Because of my own discomfort with judging any work, novel or advertisement on the basis of faulty logic, I try to take the work as a thing in itself and encourage students to do the same. This is not to say I discourage or avoid talk about authorial intention or personal emotional response, an impossible task even were one so inclined, but rather to stress the importance of helping students understand the different kinds of judgements we make about art-works.[45]

One day on a visit to an elementary school, I saw a bulletin board in the hallway featuring send-ups of current cigarette and alcohol advertisements: the familiar head of the camel who, in this version, was choking on tobacco smoke and the distinctive shape of the bottle of a certain brand of vodka which, in the student's spoof, formed the outline of a toilet bowl with the caption, "Absolute Nausea". All of the work in the display spoofed tobacco and alcohol ads by evoking extreme examples of the possible effects of these products, and I left that school wondering: Why are all the spoofs of the same type? How was the assignment initiated? Who is the target audience for these counter-narratives?

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[44] This assumption is a combination of two fallacies identified by W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley. The intentional fallacy is the error of "judging the meaning and the success of a work of art by the author's expressed or ostensible intention in producing it"; and the affective fallacy, of "judging a work of art in terms of its results, especially its emotional effect." [See A Handbook to Literature (1936), C. Hugh Holman et al., eds., 5th ed., London: Collier Macmillan, 1986, 6 and 258; and, for a detailed account, see W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., The Verbal Icon, Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1954.] The first of these assumptions can creep into teachers' own talk, especially when time and emphasis is placed upon an author's biography; and the second, into our efforts to begin literary criticism from a reader's immediate and personal response to a work.

[45] In respect to authorial intent, Robert Bérard comments that "we also need to recognize that one of the intentions of advertisers is to display technique to other advertisers. The fans want a goal, but the other players admire the pass, the fake, the evasion of a tackle."

Although I recognized the advertisements which the spoofs were lampooning, I had never looked at them very closely. I do recall being momentarily struck by the cleverness of the targetted vodka ad when first I saw it, thinking it quite different from alcohol ads I had seen previously. After that school visit I looked up the ads in some back issues of The New Yorker. I was unable to find the proto-type, but figure 2.33 refers to one of the variations promoting a spin-off product, Absolut Peppar.[46]

You may recognize this ad or its product from other ads in this campaign. The founding concept of the Absolut campaign, it seems to me, is to feature the purity of the product in a straight-forward, striking fashion by placing the clear bottle centre-stage, filling more than half the frame of a typical 8.5" x 11" full-page magazine ad. The product is backlit, creating an aura around the bottle while emphasizing the black print across its face. The fact that one can read the description on the front of the bottle emphasizes the clarity of the product. *It's so pure you can read through it!* The glow around the bottle recalls the corona of a heavenly body eclipsing another, while alluding to the religious aura or halo

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[46] The bottle design and Absolut calligraphy are trademarks owned by V & S Vin & Spirit Ab., and their ownership extends to all "Absolut" ads quoted in this work.

Since writing about these advertisements, my attention has been drawn to them everywhere. In Florida (March 1997) there was an exhibition of the work of Lawrence Gartel at the West Palm Beach airport. The ad for the exhibit billed the artist as having created Absolut's first piece of digital art (1991). Unable to get to the show, I called the local art council who kindly gave me Gartel's telephone number in Florida. The artist (who is also Chairman of Electronic Publishing at the Inter Fine Arts College, Miami) was extremely gracious in accepting my call and told me about the experience of doing the piece for Absolut; for example, for the production of his digital ad, "Absolut Gartel.", he was the first non-military person to use one of the digital cameras used during the Gulf War. He called Michel Roux, mastermind of the Absolut campaign, a "total patron of the arts", and suggested I look for a copy of Absolut Book. The Absolut Vodka Advertising Story by Richard W. Lewis (Boston & Tokyo: Journey Edition, 1996). The book is, as its fly-leaf blurb says, a delight. It contains over 500 Absolut ads, including some amusing rejects, plus the whole story of the campaign told from an insider's point of view. The photo production values in the book are even better than those of the ads as seen in glossy magazines, and overall its wealth of production details is a useful resource for anyone interested in advertising, particularly the artistic production side of things.

surrounding the heads of the pure and saintly. The ad copy consists typically of the product name in large, bold letters and a full stop across the bottom of the page.

The ad quoted in figure 2.33 for the spin-off product, Absolut Peppar (The New Yorker, July 1994), exhibits the proto-typical aspects of the original ad for the basic product, Absolut. This variation on the flagship product is reflected in the packaging in a way which is in keeping with the promotional turn in the advertisement. This suggests excellent orchestration not only of the development of the product but of its image as well. One might even speculate that image and spin-off product were developed hand-in-hand.[47]

Variations on the basic concept from the Absolut campaign tend to fall into two categories. There are those promoting spin-off products like the ad "Absolut Stoker.". The Absolut Peppar bottle differs from that of the flagship product in that it features, apart from a qualifying adjective in its name, red blotches as if drops of blood were smeared across its label. The imagery implies the drink is so hot it draws blood. This is picked up in the ad copy, "Absolut Stoker.", implying the product makes your blood boil as it stokes the fire within.[48]

Other spin-off products have inspired the creativity of the advertisers, and their ads follow a similar pattern. The ad for Absolut Citron (American Photo, January/February 1996, not figured here) shows the typical, backlit bottle the surface of which is transforming from top and bottom into the skin of a lemon. The copy reads: "Absolut Morph.", referring to a change of form or morphology, and alluding to a recent popular use of the word morphology as an adjective

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[47] There are numerous examples of this type of coordination in the marketing of children's toys where the concept of, say, Barney the Dinosaur spawned simultaneously the television show and countless products with the Barney image.

[48] Richard Lewis devotes a whole chapter of Absolut Book to what he calls "Absolut Film and Literature". Here I discovered that "Absolut Stoker" is an allusion to Bram Stoker's Dracula.

(morphin) and as a verb (to morph) in the sense of to change one's form.[49] In another Absolut Citron ad (American Photo, March/April 1996) the bottle is in the form of a juicer. The copy reads: "Absolut Squeeze.", both a literal reference to the juicer and an allusion to the slang for one's paramour in a sentence such as, "Who's your main squeeze?"

The other category of variation on the basic concept is that in which the bottle completely disappears and its distinctive shape or script does the work of representing the product. It is here, it seems to me, that the effectiveness of the basic ad is confirmed. The advertiser has created an association so strong - a synecdoche, i.e., a part stands for the whole - that reference to the actual bottle is no longer necessary. For example, in figure 2.34, the ad "Absolut Muskoka." (Harrowsmith. Country Life, June 1995) depicts an aerial view of cottage country with a large lake in the distinctive shape of the Absolut bottle. This is also an example of how Absolut's advertisers target a particular audience.

In "This Vodka Has Legs" (The New Yorker, September 12, 1994), Arthur Lubow describes the struggle to devise a long-running ad campaign, a "campaign with legs", for Stolichnaya Vodka's superpremium product, Cristall. The campaign with legs of recent years by which everyone measures success is that for the rival brand, Absolut. Absolut is what is known in the trade as a "badge product", an item with prestige which people consume conspicuously (65). The way in which Absolut's advertisers target up-market audiences as in the "Absolut Muskoka." ad shows why it is aptly called a badge product. Another example, in figure 2.35 (Harper's, August 1993) reads "Absolut Recycled.", and features a necklace with jewels make from chunks of the Absolut bottle, the writing showing through as if one is seeing it from inside the bottle, i.e., back-to-front so the writing is illegible

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[49] Since its inception in the early 1990s, the television show "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" has been the favourite target for groups lobbying against violence in children's programmes.

and takes on a decorative and symbolic function. There is a visual pun on 'ice'/diamond/ice-cold/priceless perfection, and here the connection to the basic product is made without the shape of the bottle, but rather with the distinctive script backlit through the glass. The advertisers target the new environmental consciousness of the upwardly mobile.[50]

It is ironic that the technique employed in the Absolut ads is itself somewhat recycled. I recall a Benson & Hedges ad campaign prominent on London billboards in the late 1970's and early 80's. Three of the images from the campaign won places in the juried photo yearbook, European Photography '81.[51] One of the poster ads designed by Mike Cozens,[52] to the right side of figure 2.36, is a low, wide-angle shot along the blue wooden floor and into the corner of an empty room. Up-stage left is a pink cast-iron radiator, the same rosy hue as the walls. The white base-board, which recedes into the corner up-stage right, features an eliptical hole as if for a mouse. In front of it lies the distinctive gold pack of Benson & Hedges cigarettes as if it were a cat ready to pounce. The ad has always stayed with me, partly due to the hours of riding London transit and seeing it in tube stations, but also because of its enigmatic quality. There is no straightforward interpretation. The image lingers like Magritte's boulder inside an empty room (L'Anniversaire. See figure 2.37.[53]), like one of Dali's ubiquitous melting timepieces, or like the shoes and roses. This was the first surrealist advertisement I had ever seen, a puzzling ad, an ad without an obvious message. The ad on the left side of figure 2.36 (The New Yorker, December 1994) plays on a similar motif but lacks the enigmatic quality of the ad to its right. Its angle is also low as if from the level of

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[50] The artist who created this piece is the jewelry designer, Mariquita Masterson. (Lewis, 73)
[51] European Photography '81, Basel: Polygon Editions S.A.R.L., 1981.
[52] European Photography '81, 141, Duffy, photographer; Alan Waldie, art director; Collett Dickenson Pearce & Partners Ltd., advertising agency; Gallaher Ltd., client.
[53] Print made from slide purchased from Art Gallery of Ontario, @ 1978.

the floor. The left side of the frame is filled by the bottom right hand section of an elegantly decorated Christmas tree with a few tastefully wrapped gifts beneath. The white shirting-board behind the tree is punctuated at centre-right by a hole in the shape of the Absolut bottle. It appears to be lit from within, high-lighting the right-hand edge of the opening and casting a shadow of the bottle's shape out onto the floor. The copy reads "Absolut Stirring.", evoking the line from the Christmas verse "Not a creature is stirring", and playing on the word 'stirring' since the substance is mixed with many other liquids. A shadow cast by an empty space is an interesting reversal of the *so pure you can read through it* motif. It is also a reversal of the other two Benson & Hedges ads from European Photography '81. The ad in figure 2.38,[54] plays on the notion that the package casts no shadow; the other, in figure 2.39,[55] that its image is not reflected in a mirror.

The success of the Absolut campaign is legend. No matter what the competition throws at them, Absolut's legs never tire. At the time of Lubow's article, the Stolichnaya account was in the hands of Michel Roux, head of sales for Carillon Importers, the man who had had final say on the Absolut campaign from its inception in 1981 until 1994 when the brand-owners, Vin & Sprit, entered a world-wide distribution agreement with Seagram. Roux was having trouble matching his original success. One of the best ideas out of the Stolichnaya camp was to use Russian artists to create ad imagery. One example, on the left of figure 2.40, from Yuri Gorbachev (American Photo, November/December 1995) presents the Stolichnaya basic product against an evocation of the innocence of Russian folk themes in a typically rustic style. The Absolut campaign, however, had pioneered the idea of using original art in advertising. (See figure 2.40, right side, from The

[54] European Photography '81, 140, from the same team as the ad to the right in figure 2.38.
[55] European Photography '81, 139, Graham Watson, designer and director; Adrian Flowers, photographer.

New Yorker, July 1995.) The art work is by Kurt Vonnegut. His readers will recognize the distinctively macabre sense of humour. The simply sketched and coloured line drawing depicts a looming mustashioed male figure holding the string web of a cat's cradle over the Absolut bottle, the cap of which is the head of a surprised-looking cat. The notion that the cat's cradle appears ready to strangle its namesake bears a passing resemblance to the spoof techniques employed by Adbusters, a magazine dedicated to the subversion of all commercial advertising, especially that which, like the Absolut campaign, is successful in capturing public imagination.

A Vancouver-based organization called The Media Foundation publishes four issues a year of the magazine Adbusters. Journal of the Mental Environment. Their promotional flyer features positive critiques from Green Teacher Magazine, and from Neil Andersen of The Association for Media Literacy, in Ontario, the first association of its kind in Canada. Adbusters magazine specializes in taking an ad campaign and using its own 'hook' to hang it by. Figure 2.41 offers a good example of what Adbusters does best. In this spoof, "Absolute on Ice",[56] Adbusters uses a distinctive feature of the Absolut campaign by creating an aura of backlighting. This ground's-eye-view of the sole of the foot alludes to the distinctive shape of the bottle. On the toe tag is inscribed, "Name: Johnny Doe, Age: 18, **DOA**". And below the ad copy, in fine print are the alarming statistics regarding alcohol abuse, its effect on adolescents, and the number of alcohol ads a teen sees before he or she reaches drinking age. There is a play on the familiar backlighting effect: in the spoof it suggests a funereal glow, the low-intensity light which gives off less heat, slowing the process of decay.

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[56] Adbusters. Journal of the Mental Environment 2, 4, 1993.

A regular feature of Adbusters is their write-in competition for the best spoof ad. The summer 1993 issue calls the feature "Absolute Craze.", with the super-title "culture jamming", a favourite phrase in the magazine's lexicon. (See figure 2.42.) Below the title is the following in fine print.

> Every year, alcohol costs $100 billion in health and associated costs. Every issue, the spoof ads pour in, proof of the intoxicating power of an effective campaign. Send us your ideas and we'll showcase the absolute best.[57]

There are nine spoofs on the page. One picks up on the Adbusters' hook, the corpse with the toe-tag, punning "Absolute-Lee" with the corpse's name "Lee Smith".[58] Three feature a toilet bowl, two with the bowl in the distinctive shape of the bottle ("Absolute Porcelain"[59] and "Absolut Nausea"[60]) and one using the upside down bottle as a urinal ("Absolut Shits."[61]). Two target the effects of alcohol on the unborn: "Absolut Syndrome."[62] shows an umbilical cord attached from a foetus to the mouth of the bottle, and "Absolut Beginners"[63] depicts the vodka bottle with a nipple instead of a cap. Three of the spoofs target alcoholism directly. "Absolut Cirrhosis."[64] represents an anatomical drawing of a human torso with the bottle where the liver would be. "Absolut Addiction."[65] presents the bottle against the brick wall of a cell with a ball and chain attached to the bottle's neck. The other spoof ad with the same title "Absolute Addiction"[66] has the distinctive shape masked in a brown paper bag. Several of the contestants use the

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57 Adbusters 2, 4, 1993: 78.

58 Philip Kerr, North Hollywood, California.

59 Jeffrey A. Rochon, Whitewater, Wisconsin.

60 Dominic Ali, North York, Ontario.

61 One of four images on a poster entitled "Absolut Alcoholism." by Kelly M. Louis, San Francisco, California.

62 Kelly M. Louis.

63 Sarah Ovenall, Durham, North Carolina.

64 Kelly M. Louis.

65 Kelly M. Louis.

66 Charles Dobson, Vancouver, British Columbia.

patented brand-name spelling, "Absolut", a move Adbusters would be unlikely to make for fear of liability.

The Spring 1996 issue of Adbusters features a range of products being spoofed on the contest page (figure 2.43): diet pills, designer clothing for children, and running shoes. The winner is a spoof on another brand of vodka. The top half of the spoof shows a line of Mounties from the Musical Ride with the text: "There's Vodka." Below this is an image of people being beaten back by riot police. The text reads: "And Then There's Smirnoff."[67] Apart from the difference in the variety of products being targetted, the most obvious difference between these spoofs and those from Summer 1993 is that the earlier ones were fairly simple, hand-done line drawings, whereas these images appear to have been taken either directly from the targetted ads themselves or from other glossy full-colour magazine imagery.

The Spring 1996 issue includes another category in the contest section. It is called "subvertising" (figs. 2.44 and 2.45) and features Adbusters' picks among those entries which not only spoof a product but, to quote the magazine, "put them into action. Wild dandelions pushing up from the cracks in gray urban life".[68] For example, one of the winning entries comes from a group called PTA - Philadelphia Troublemakers & Anarchists - who, as Adbusters puts it, "have been celebrating their independence from product penetration since 1992: here's a fine example of what a little wit and glue can do."[69] The entry is a photo of a billboard ad for Basic cigarettes which shows the package and reads "YOUR BASIC MESSAGE". The PTA have amended the advertisement by adding their own stickers which read: "YOU GIVE THEM MONEY. THEY GIVE YOU CANCER". It is ironic that

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67 Matt Silburn, Peterborough, Ontario.

68 Adbusters 4, 3, 1996: 40.

69 Adbusters 4, 3, 1996: 41.

these subversive messages are underlined by the surgeon general's warning - "smoking causes lung cancer, heart disease, and emphysema" - which is boldly framed across the bottom of the billboard. Is it subversive to state the obvious? If anything, the PTA's action would draw *more* attention to the ad, thereby assisting the advertiser. What these activists have succeeded in subverting is the principle of private property.[70]

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In that elementary school display of students' work, all the spoofs attacked the same product. They were all variations on one theme, but whose theme? Bertrand Russell warns against those who lack reverence for human personality. "Regimentation is the source of the evil. . . . No man is fit to educate unless he feels each pupil an end in himself, . . . not merely a piece in a jig-saw puzzle, or a soldier in a regiment, or a citizen in a State."[71] Who decided the content of these assignments? Were the original ads examined in any formal way, showing their subtleties and sophistication? Were the names of the ads' art directors known or mentioned?

Did the teacher start from an unquestioned assumption, i.e., that tobacco and alcohol are the enemy, leaving no room for students to discuss this position, let

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[70] I have heard of an interesting follow-up from the Adbusters' strategy: an alcohol manufacturer sponsors a photo competition in American Photo, calling for images depicting their product. This is proof (or should I say 'overproof') of the saying: There's no such thing as *bad* publicity.

This type of reader or consumer participation in the artistic end of advertising was initiated by Absolut as a facet of their decision to advertise in newer, smaller niche publications. They tailor-made their ads for the magazine's readership. For example, the ad, "Absolut Participation", in Spy magazine, invited the reader to create their own Absolut ad. As Lewis tells it: "Readers were provided with a palette of Absolut-shaped paints and encouraged to 'brandish a cotton swab and your native brilliance'". Of the two thousand entries, the winner, which was published in Spy, was an all-black page called "Absolut Sartre" (242).

[71] Bertrand Russell, "Freedom versus Authority in Education", Sceptical Essays, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1928. In "Standards for Schools: Help or Hindrance?", Elliot Eisner considers the curricular effects of our twentieth century quest for certainty with its focus on specificity, precision, mechanization and routine. (See Philosophy of Education. Introductory Readings, 2nd ed., William Hare & John P. Portelli, eds., Calgary: Detselig, 1996, 333-344.)

alone disagree with it? Is it appropriate to assume (and lead children to assume) a direct causal connection between the sales promotion of a product and the abuse of this product? Isn't prescribing irony as much an indoctrinatory practice as the actions of the advertiser? One might consider it more so, masked as it is by the rhetoric surrounding the ideals of critical thinking. Blind scepticism is surely no better than blind faith.[72] Is alcohol or tobacco or inaccurate narrative the problem? Or is it the attitude of blind acceptance with which a message is received?

Adbusters is unabashedly a programme of counter-propaganda, in some cases clever and urbane and a refreshing alternative in small doses. But, it is propaganda, nonetheless, and needs to be considered in this light before its wholesale implementation as a classroom technique for what is called "media literacy". As Everet Dean Martin pointed out in The Meaning of a Liberal Education (1926), "Even in the service of a good cause, propaganda makes for superficiality in both him who gives and him who receives it."[73] It's one thing to teach the techniques of parody and another to prescribe or strongly influence the substantive direction students' efforts take.

Again I hear objections that I am overly concerned, that the main thing is to impart socially acceptable values and behaviours, and that to harp on fine points regarding how these values are delivered is a waste of effort at a time when images flash by so quickly that it is impossible to apply such picayune analyses. The best we can do is try to counter the offensive and abusive themes in the content of what

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[72] William Hare has points out that Bertrand Russell makes a similar point on credulity and incredulity in "Education for Democracy", National Education Association 77, 1939: 527-534. He says: "You have two opposite tasks to cause people not to believe when there is not reason and also to cause them to believe when there is reason. The credulity and incredulity are exactly wrong in the natural man." (p. 530)

[73] Everet Dean Martin, The Meaning of a Liberal Education, New York: Norton & Co., 1926, 48-49.

our children consume by reiterating that which we know and accept as healthy and appropriate. Who has time to take apart the multiplicity of techniques involved in mass media messages?

My interest in formal techniques has undoubtedly been affected by the time I spent studying Russian in the former Soviet Union.[74] In a sense, I have had an intensive experience of counter-narrative, the effect of which has been to foreground the forms of propaganda. That which I had taken for granted in my own culture -- Western styles of propagating messages, those ubiquitous declamations I, in effect, accept by letting them wash over me: the billboards, junk-mail, t.v. ads, posters, designer logos, info-muzak, packaging, packaging, and more packaging -- all looked quite different after I had been immersed in propaganda with different content. What struck me first was its socialist content. Take, for example, the typical style of placard art associated with socialist realism. Across the top of the poster (figure 2.46) bulbous, cartoon-like letters proclaim "The Party", followed in smaller type-face by the words "the mind, the honour, and the counsel of our epoch!" The viewer is in the position of looking up at V.I. Lenin, behind whom are arrayed flags of the world proclaiming "Peace" in various languages in the name of international socialism.[75]

Take the poster in figure 2.47, the text of which reads: "Our industry and business is the Fatherland, is the Party!" Pipes and girders symbolize prosperity moving off into the future while the solid face of the socialist worker oversees the efforts of industry with the benevolent gaze of a guardian.[76]

In figure 2.48, the theme of prosperity is romanticized to a maudlin degree, conjoined as it is with family and nature all framing and focused toward the central

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[74] The winters of 1982 and 85.

[75] M. Getman, artist; A. Galkin and Y. Bogomolov, eds.; 80,000 copies; Moscow: Plakat, 1981.

[76] E. Shacktacktinskaya, artist; V.Petrov and L. Koryagina, eds.; 80,000 copies, Moscow: Plakat, 1976.

figure of the Red Soldier backed by comrades bearing arms. The text reads: "In the name of peace on earth . . . In the name of the happiness of the people".[77]

But it is the form this content took which stays with me. I was reminded of these images of late socialist realism in 1992 during the build up to the referendum on Quebec sovereignty. For months the artists who create graphics illustrating print and television news had to come up with variations on the same theme. The sovereignist fleur-de-lys and the federalist maple leaf were used continually to represent the opposing sides of the impending vote. One graphic, from CBC Television's The National , depicted the two flags with the fleur-de-lys in the foreground seeming to overlap the Canadian flag. The light and shadow play on the Quebec emblem were sharp and dramatic, while the maple leaf in the shadows seemed to bow rather limply in the direction of its nemesis.[78] By the time the vote was to be cast, I had become almost numb to the variations on this war of symbols. However, one photo montage from the last week of pre-referendum hype strongly evoked for me the socialist realist imagery I described above. It was on the front page of The Globe and Mail, October 24, 1992. (See figure 2.49.) At right, is a figure in a pose inspiring solidarity and a call to arms, and resembling a well-known francophone leader; at left, a figure in silhouette lurching to the right in a gesture like that of an advancing soldier. The central area of the montage, the field of battle, as it were, shows part of a sovereignist poster with three images of the fleur-de-lys, the first limp on its flagstaff, the second beginning to unfurl, and the third flying straight out in what one might call the winds of change. The first words of the text of the poster are barely visible but suggest they might read "L'avenir", the future. At first glance the maple leaf is conspicuous by its absence;

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[77] O. Sabostiuk and B. Uspenskii, artists; B. Jarkov, B. Shcherban and O. Isayeva, eds.; 100,000 copies; Moscow: Plakat, 1982.
[78] Broadcast during the week of Feb. 17th, 1992.

but if one takes the positioning of the montage into consideration, one sees that this francophone struggle is framed by federalist icons: the masthead of the paper, "Canada's National Newspaper", and the reference to Charlottetown, the cradle of Confederation, in the subtitle to the lead story.

I am not suggesting any particular motivation behind these images. I simply wish to show that in all of these images, whether from image-makers in Moscow or Toronto, events are being stylized, romanticized, and dramatized. Under the strict control over the dissemination of information which existed in the former Soviet Union, there was an overt effort to depict the socialist utopia the regime claimed to be building. Art, imagery, music and drama which did not promote that which everyone was overtly committed to achieve were repressed for being bourgeois decadent self-indulgence threatening the common good. In a society where everyone ostensibly believes the same thing and works toward a common goal, the term 'propaganda' is not pejorative. The Ministry of Agitation and Propagation (agitprop) was the educational arm of the communist party which, as the poster tells us, *is* the country and the people. The Ojegov Dictionary of Russian Language defines 'propaganda' as "[d]issemination in mass and interpretation of various opinions, ideas, learnings, theories."[79] The OED defines it as "association or organized scheme for propagation of a doctrine or practice; (usu. derog.) doctrines, information, etc., thus propagated." There is an interesting formal reversal here, which strikes me as ironic. Those using the word with the added weight of a derogatory connotation assume that the other purely denotative sense of the word is biased whereas those using the word in a simple denotative sense take the other sense to be biased. Each side sees the other's definition as biased. Given the Soviet definition of propaganda, it is synonomous with education as long as its content is

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[79] S.I. Ojegov, Dictionary of Russian Language, 16th ed., N.Y. Shvedov, ed., Moscow: Russian Language, 1984.

party-friendly. The Western definition includes the connotation of a manipulative purpose; hence R.M. Hare's distinction between it and education is on the basis of aims.

One often hears people complain about the barrage of death and destruction which dominates the nightly news. "Isn't there any *good* news?" The competition for ratings leads journalism further down the path of sensationalism. In this age of the 24-hour news channel, the old adage "No news is good news." is a nostalgic reminder of today's corollary: news is bad news. Neil Postman has contrasted the 'bad news' of the news media with the 'good news' of advertising.[80] Drive the right car, wear the right clothes, drink the right booze, and life will be great. The key to this technique is the use of the future tense. The product is associated with images of the ideal life, just as on every major street corner in Moscow I read the phrase "We are building communism!" We may not be there yet, you may be standing in line for food, but, together, we're working on it. And what about "paying down the debt", this 1990's obsession in the name of global competitiveness at a cost primarily to whom? The perpetuation of the dream is essential to every propaganda campaign, and its perpetuation succeeds as long as no one is heard questioning the contradiction: why must we accept practices which defy the ideals we claim to uphold? In other words, how does that end, no matter how great, justify these means which we abhore? In order to drown out the question, the cacaphony of 'good news' must be incessant.

The ability to recognize internal contradictions is the skill we need to teach our students. The business of producing classroom materials which help teachers in this effort is something which demands close scrutiny. As we have seen, Adbusters is championed by various educationally oriented organizations. Older, more

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[80] Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death, New York: Viking, 1985.

established publications also produce what they call classroom editions.[81] Promotional material for Maclean's "In-Class Program" enjoins teachers to "[d]evelop critical skills and make teaching more effective", and to "[j]oin hundreds of Canadian teachers who enjoy the benefits of Maclean's In-Class Program". The CBC produces a series of copyrighted video tapes called "CBC News in Review"; The Globe and Mail, what they call their "classroom edition". All of these educational packages come with teacher's guides.

The educational arm of The Globe and Mail focuses specifically on the teaching of business and economics, according to a front page headline in its inaugural issue: "The Classroom Edition hits the schools. New paper aims to help the teaching of business and economics".[82] The story appears to be a news report, but is actually an editorial since it carries no by-line and speaks in the first person, e.g., "To help us develop the Classroom Edition, we are forming an advisory board of educators, business people and students." It explains that the material in this edition is prepared in conjunction with the Canadian Foundation for Economic Education from the content of the Globe's "Report on Business". Its aims are:

> to facilitate and improve the teaching of economics, business, social studies, international affairs and related disciplines in high schools, community colleges and universities.

The editors go on to explain that the publication is made possible by a partnership with business but that it does not "sell advertising in the conventional manner. Rather, it is supported by corporate sponsorship." This is followed by a list of the five sponsors, each a large corporation. The 'report' then claims that, though the regular Globe has always been available to teachers, it required "many hours of research and preparation to come up with the appropriate materials." The

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[81] Time magazine did so, at least since the mid 1980's.

[82] The Globe and Mail, Classroom Edition, 1, 1: 1992.

implication is that the editors of The Globe and Mail Classroom Edition have done the kind of research and preparation a teacher does and that, as a consequence, they can offer teachers a short-cut.

Other than this report in the opening issue, there is nothing on the masthead or page 2 of subsequent issues to indicate that the Classroom Edition is a collection of articles culled exclusively from The Globe's "Report on Business" or that it is dedicated to economic education. The paper's claim that it does not sell advertising in the conventional manner is valid. What one sees instead of the bitty spots of advertising filling every nook and cranny of a daily paper are the full-page ads from the corporate sponsors. In the opening edition of 24 pages, 5 are full-page ads, one from each of the corporate sponsors. This format remains the same through to May, 1995 when I stopped collecting the issues. In figure 2.50, the ad for Midland Walwyn features a large blue chip in place of the 'o' in the word 'education'. The ad copy tells why this investment company is committed to education: "This nation must nurture the ability to think quickly and analytically, and to transform this thinking into precise action or reaction." I am reminded of the lapel pin worn by every Soviet school child. It read: "Study, study and study", a quote from V.I. Lenin.

The April 1993 issue includes a message from another corporate sponsor, Apple Canada Inc. (See figure 2.51.) They offer this economical use of words: "There is no price too high to pay for knowledge", combining the value that the end justifies the means with a retailer's metaphor for education. In the second half of the message, the word 'power' is used twice, the second time in the final line with the Apple logo as punctuation for the allusion to the name of one of the sponsor's most successful products. In figure 2.52, from the December, 1992 issue, we again see the word 'power'. The same theme runs through all the ads for the CIBC: a photo of a young man or woman doing a menial job, and the idea that you'll never

get a powerful job without an education. The text here reads: "One day, you hope to have power. Not provide it."[83] Implicit in this distinction between having power and providing it is the assumption that to have real power means that someone else provides the labour. There is another level of power relations one can read from this ad. In cultures where people pull taxis as a life-long occupation, there is as little hope of going to college and advancing to a better job as of buying a new pair of Adidas.

Another of the corporate sponsors, Xerox Canada Ltd., runs a series of ads like that in figure 2.53, which features a sheet of paper. The slogan "A Mind Of Its Own" plays on the educational ideal of encouraging single-minded, critical and independent thinkers. The final line of the ad is typical of the empty rhetoric of advertising: "like you, ideas should have a mind of their own."

The spoof ads from those elementary school students and in the Adbusters' competition represent crude attempts at satire, most of which barely rise to the level of invective, i.e., harsh, abusive language; vituperative writing.[84] There are times when an individual may be driven by a sense of outrage to express herself freely in such a form. But were these students free to respond as they wished to the alcohol and tobacco ads? A program directing general involvement in one type of response is what we derisively refer to as repressive. Such was the directive from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to artists in the late 1930's to create exclusively socialist realist art.

It is essential to teach students the techniques of irony and to help them recognize contradiction in the world around them.[85] If this is the teacher's aim,

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[83] It seems to me that the adverbial phrase has been misplaced. Does the writer wish to say that one day you'll have the hope, or that you have the hope now to one day have power?

[84] See 'invective', A Handbook to Literature, 261.

[85] Robert Bérard relates having seen students engaged in making "Don't Drink" posters, while wearing t-shirts and carrying kit-bags advertising a brewery.

then it is appropriate to use a variety of models from diverse cultures and historical periods, from nursery rhymes and political cartoons to the irony of Austen and Swift, Magritte and Dali, Gilbert and Sullivan and Luciano Berio, and contemporary artists whose work incites public outrage.[86] This is a complex and sophisticated project which involves serious consideration of the very act of quotation, verbal, pictorial and aural. But, if the models for parody are predominantly from one area of political action and are offered to elementary school children for direct imitation, this process is indoctrinatory, propaganda not pedagogy. It's important to look beyond the attractive guise of 'media literacy kits' and avoid the trap of becoming unwitting accomplices in the propagation of one view of social reality. As educators we need to remind ourselves continually that our first responsibility is to prepare students to question all forms of propaganda, both explicit and implicit, even those which seem to have gained wide-spread acceptance in our schools.

I recall a group of high-school graduates who designed their own t-shirt; the names of all the prospective grads were printed inside the distinctive shape of 'that' vodka bottle. How acceptable might this inventive response have been within the strictures of a spoof-ad assignment? I doubt it would have made it onto a school bulletin board, let alone on the winning page in the Adbusters' competition. In fact, in this case school authorities got wind of the students' plan and put a stop to it. And yet, don't the students' initiative and the response it got bring to account both systems of image control: that of the school system as well as that of the advertiser? The intention of those students was not to parody the advertiser's edification of

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[86] At the risk of inciting the outrage of my reader, I will say that the artist I had in mind is Andres Serrano, whose large colour photo-works, "Piss Pope I" and "Piss Pope II" are part of the Vancouver Art Gallery's permanent collection. I saw the images, silhouettes of the eminent profile, luminously transfigured in glowing oranges and lime greens, before reading the titles. The irony of this transfiguration was very striking.

vodka. Rather, the bottle filled with their names said, in effect: "We're cool; we know how to party!" In class, students comply with teachers' initiatives and invent the 'correct' counter-narratives. Out of class, they represent their passage out of compulsory education with an image which celebrates their arrival at legal drinking age. What would be the effect of placing the image of that t-shirt next to the ad parodies which convey an acceptable counter-message? Are we afraid of the 'absolute' story of propaganda?

. . . . .

As an epilogue to the 'absolute' story and segué into the next chapter, I draw your attention back to figure 2.45. The one example of subvertising in the Spring 1996 issue of Adbusters which is not a defacing of private property is from Scott Stoughton who incorporates into his own photo an ad from the campaign to change the wholesome but square image of milk. In an attempt to make the product appear sexy, cool, and/or sophisticated, the advertisers use a pantheon of famous faces each sporting a milk mustache, an image usually associated with the innocence of childhood. Stoughton topples the impact of the ad by citing it within his own scenario of a man holding in each hand a piece of women's clothing. The satire cleverly strips the ad of its punch by emptying its content into his own photo-commentary. The integrity of the original ad remains intact. It is challenged, but not defaced or degraded. By engaging the advertiser on a similarly complex level of implication and allusion, he avoids being homogenized into the invective and sheer vandalism of the other examples. Although the editors praise most highly the 'subvert' to the left of this one, I believe it is Stoughton's work which rises to the top.

Techniques such as that encouraged by Adbusters and their admirers are frequently referred to as attempts at 'deconstruction'. The next question is whether

these efforts are representative of deconstruction in the sense used by the French thinker, Jacques Derrida, and if not, what a deconstructive pedagogy would entail.

fig. 2.31

fig. 2.32

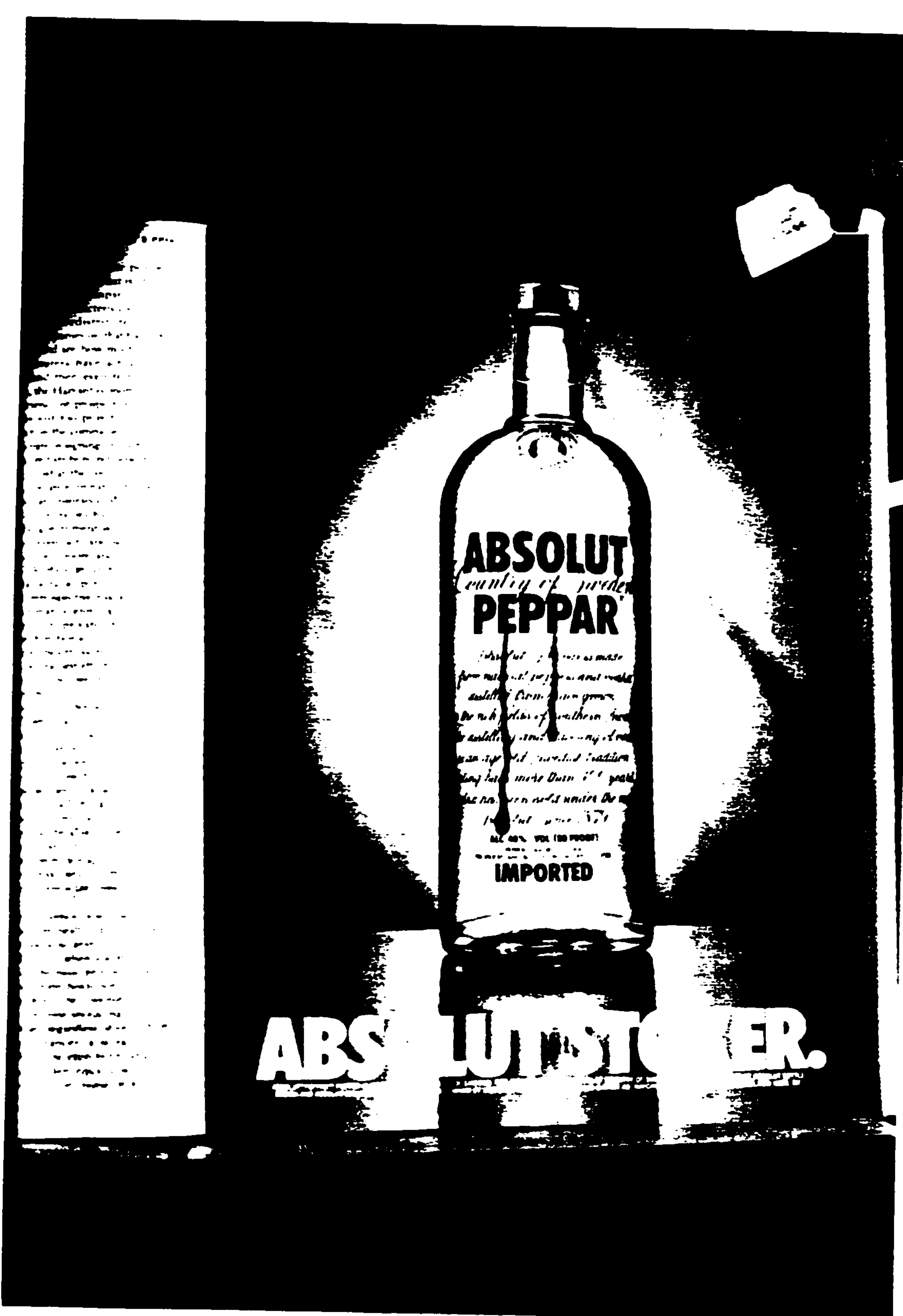

fig. 2.33

fig. 2.34

fig. 2.35

fig. 2.36

fig. 2.37

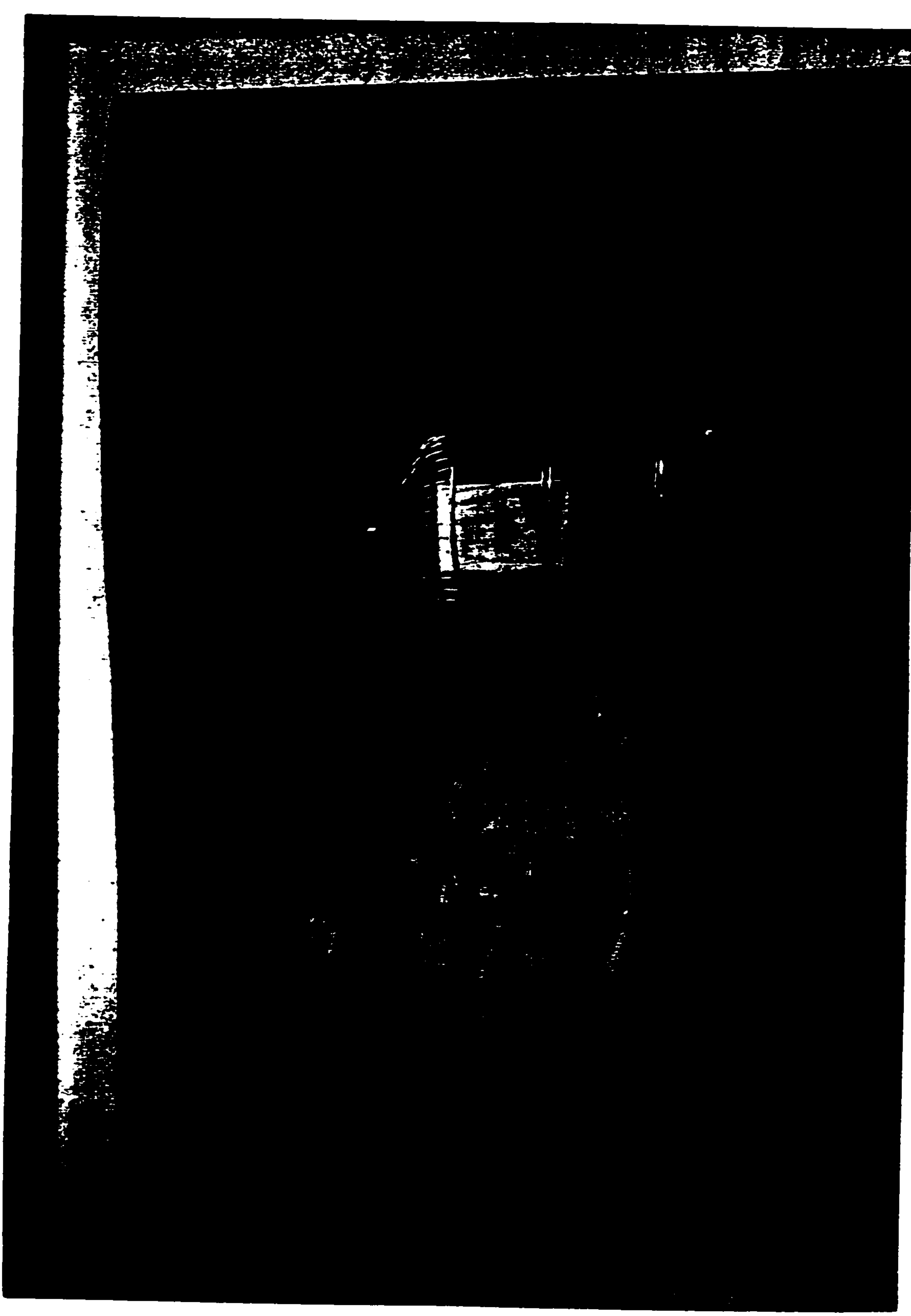

fig. 2.38

fig. 2.39

fig. 2.40

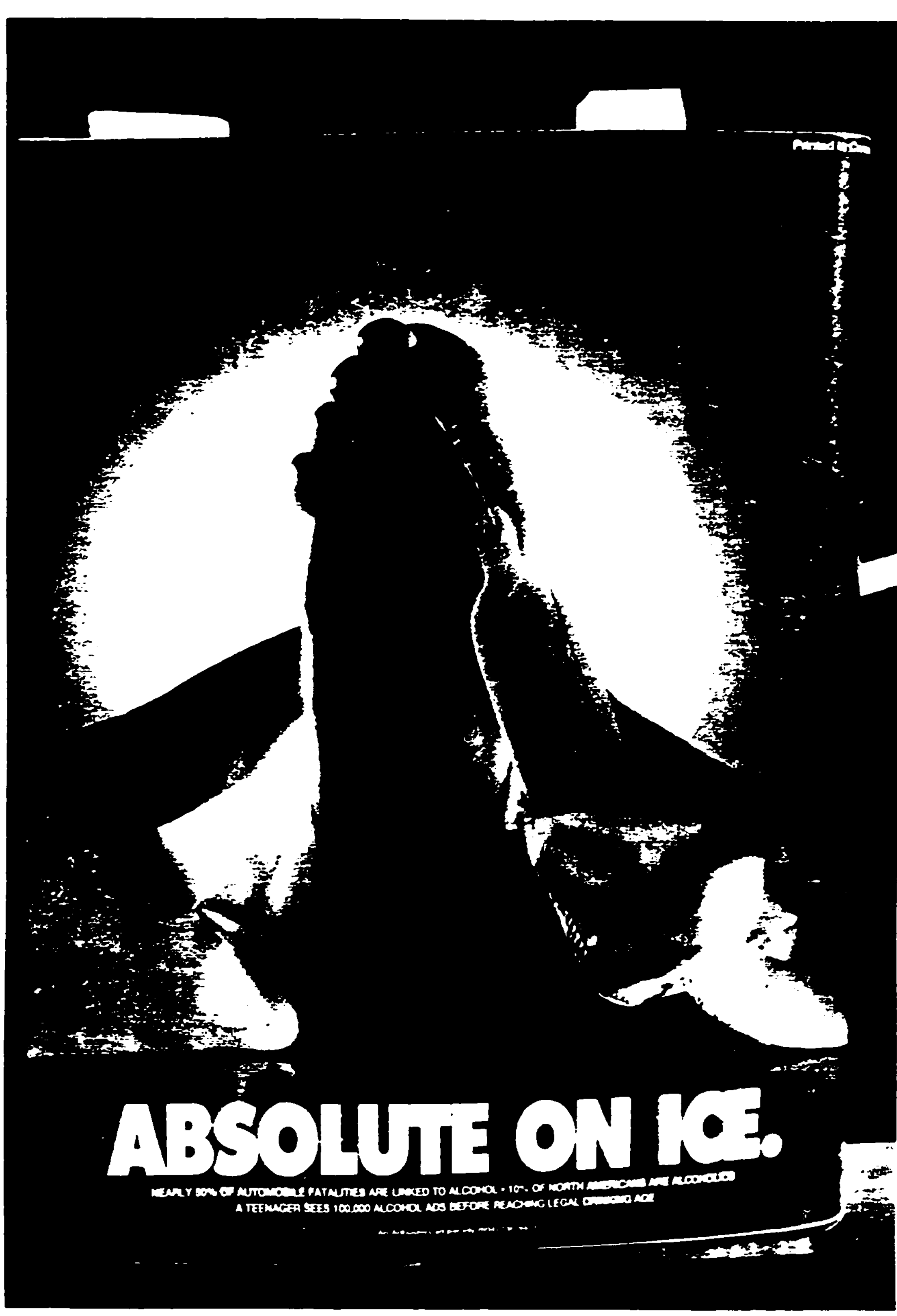

fig. 2.41

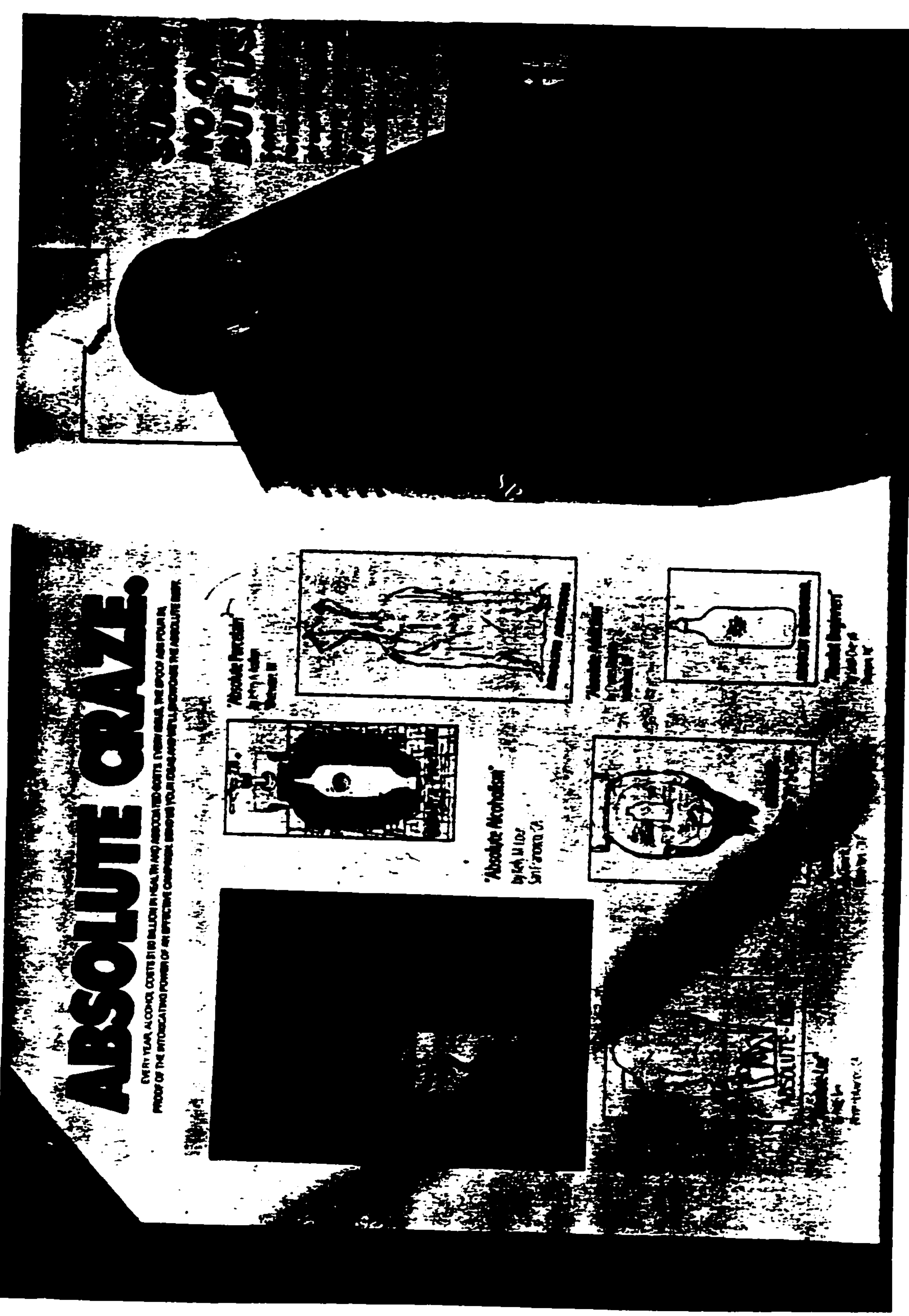

fig. 2.42

fig. 2.43

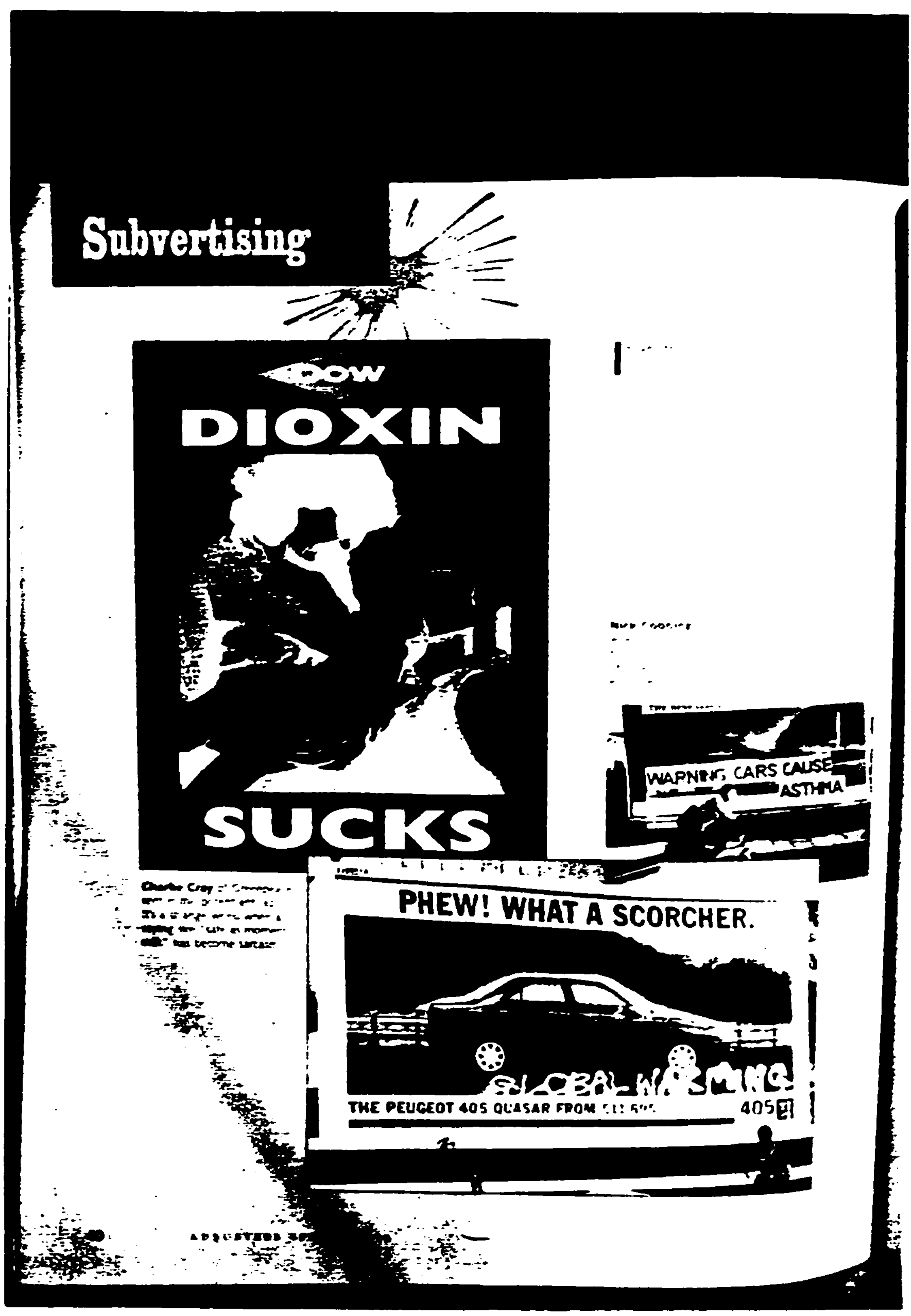

fig. 2.44

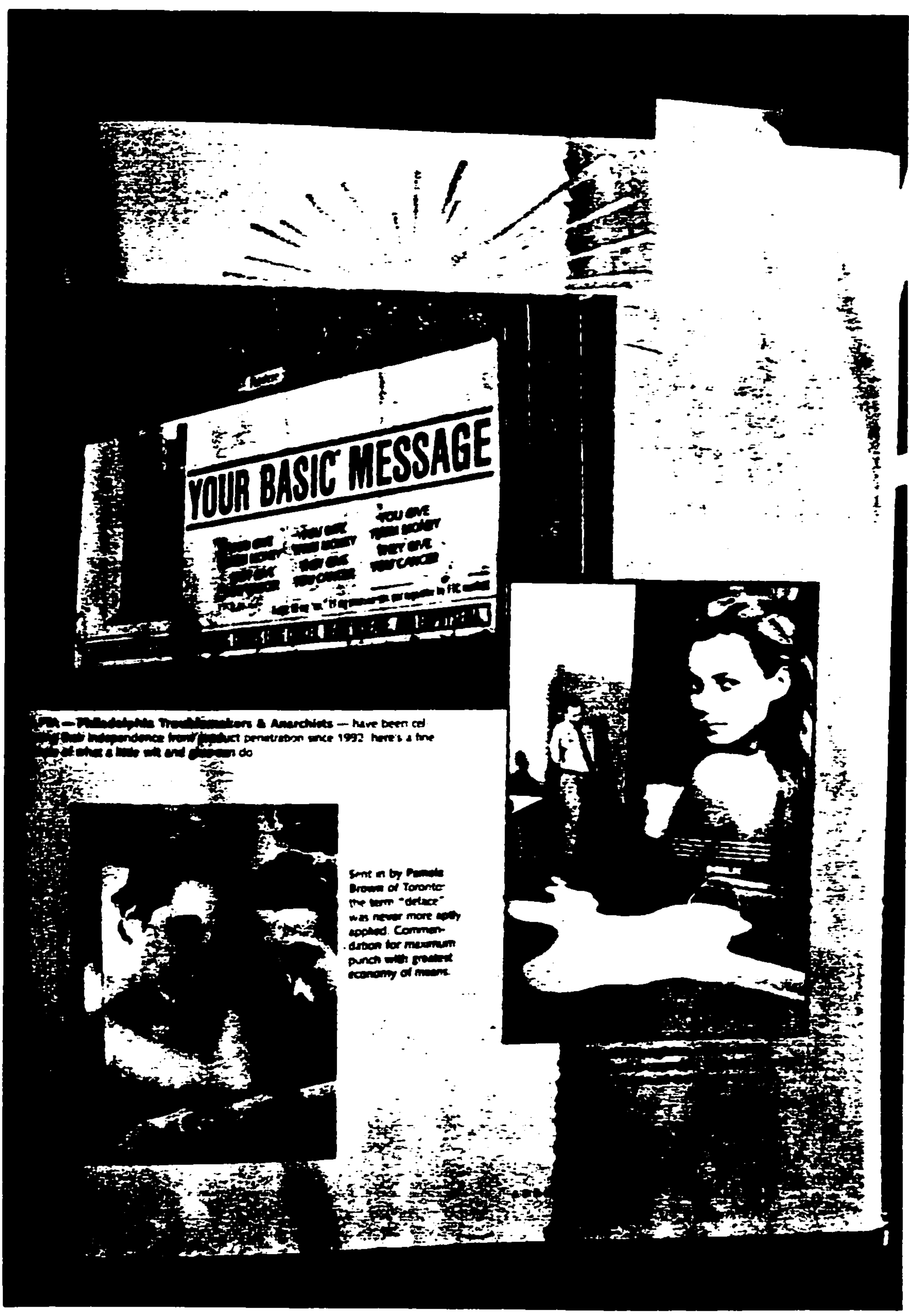

fig. 2.45

fig. 2.46

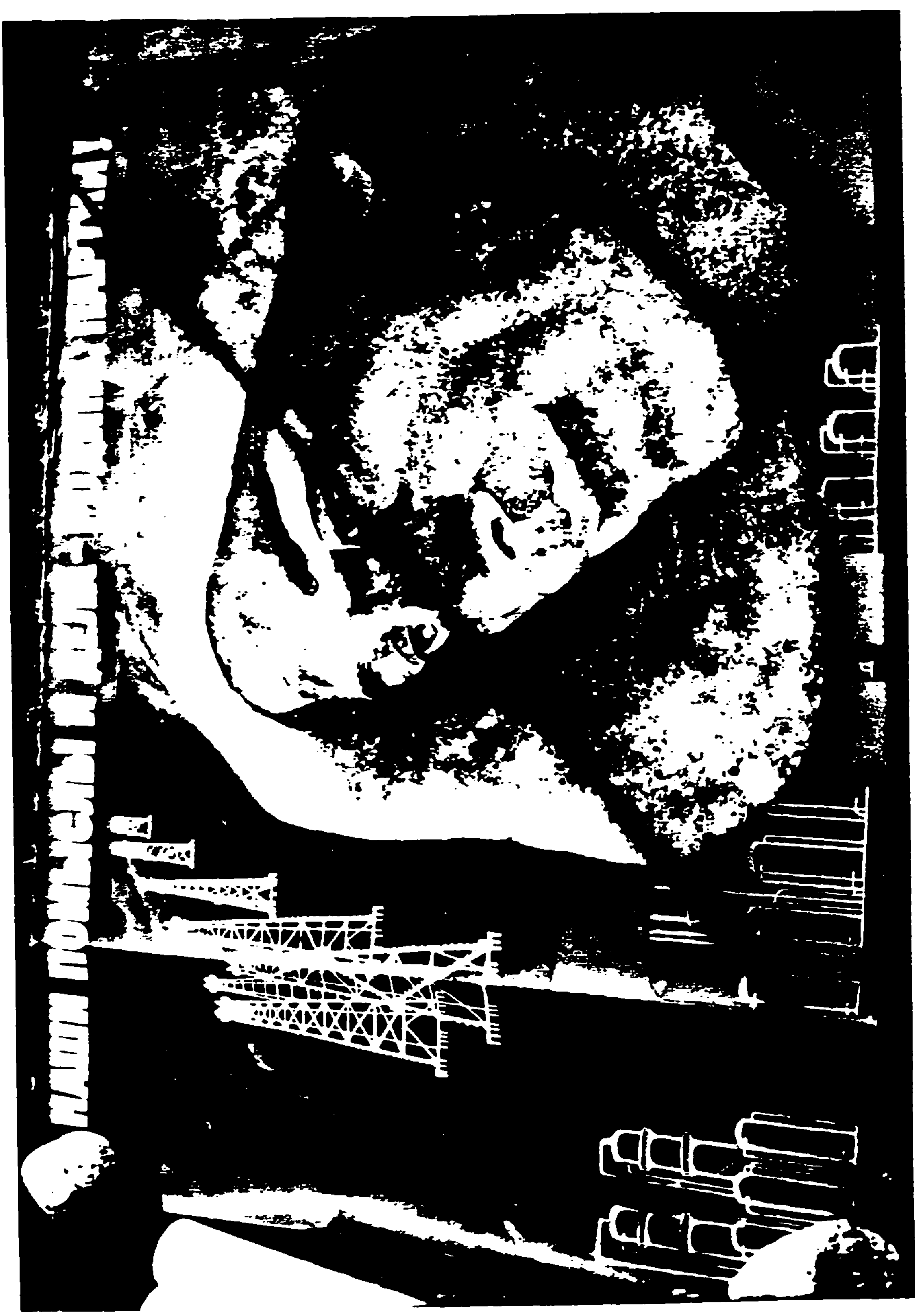

fig. 2.47

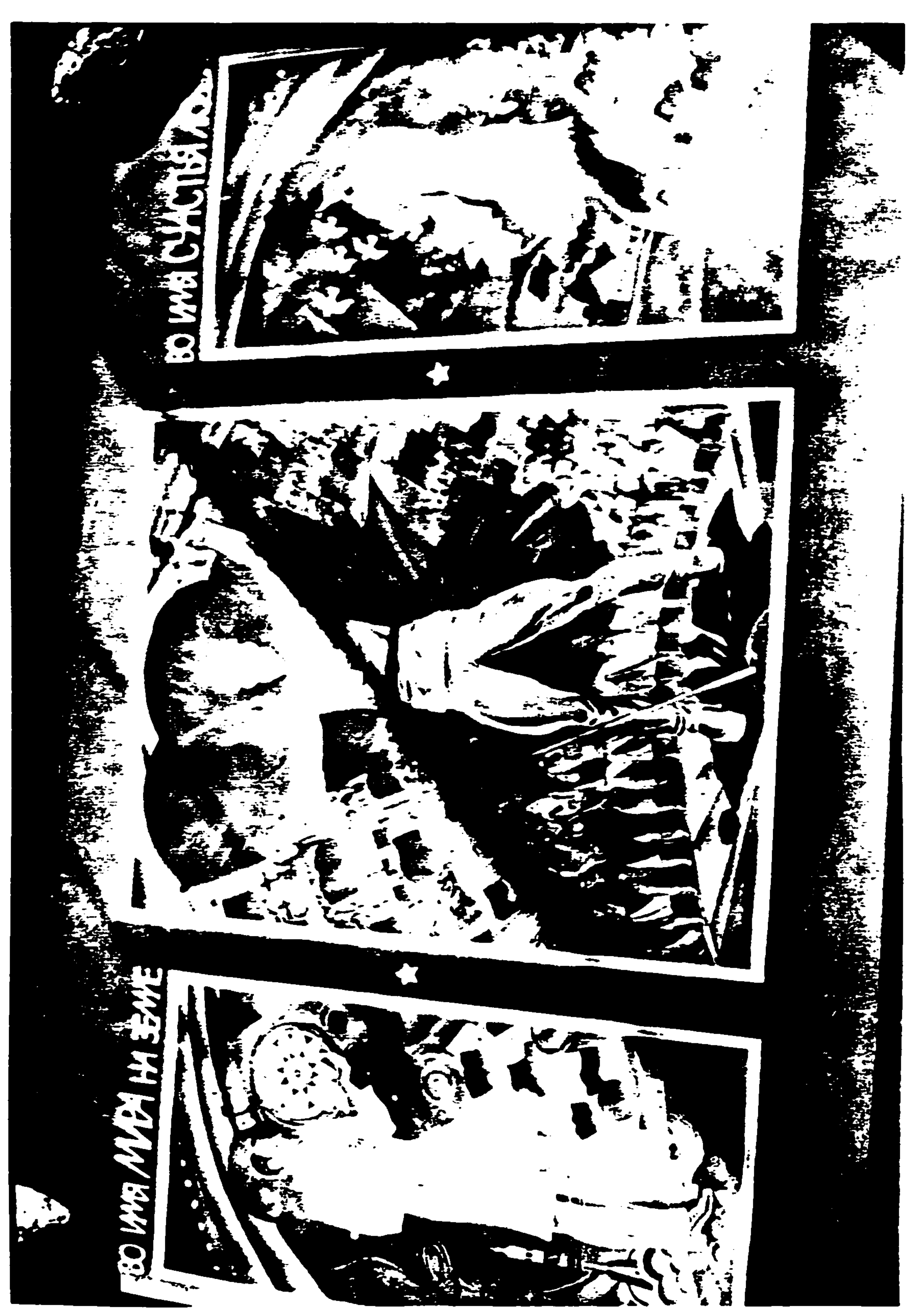

fig. 2.48

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Referendum had to be held, politicians say

Charlottetown agreement

fig. 2.49

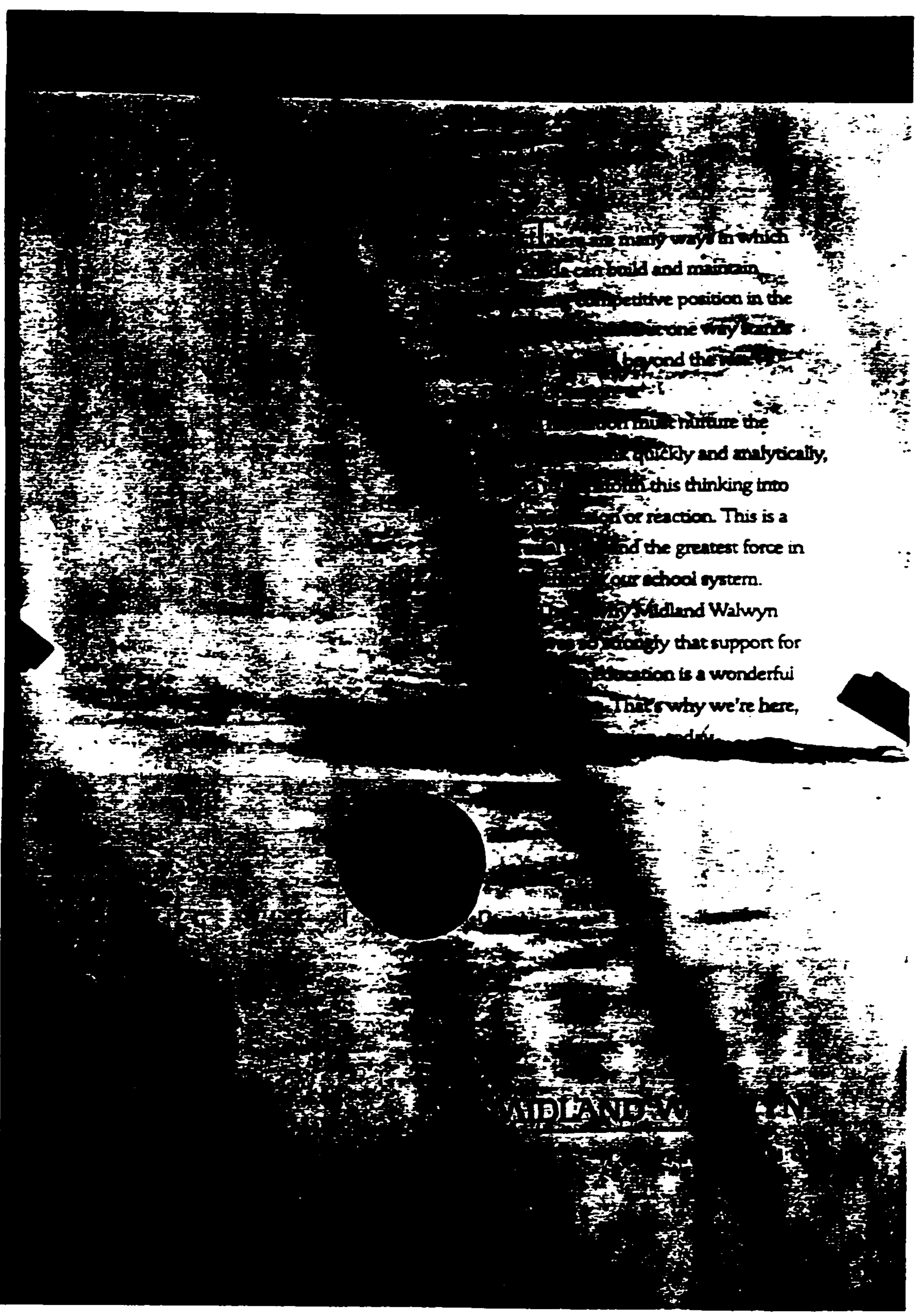

fig. 2.50

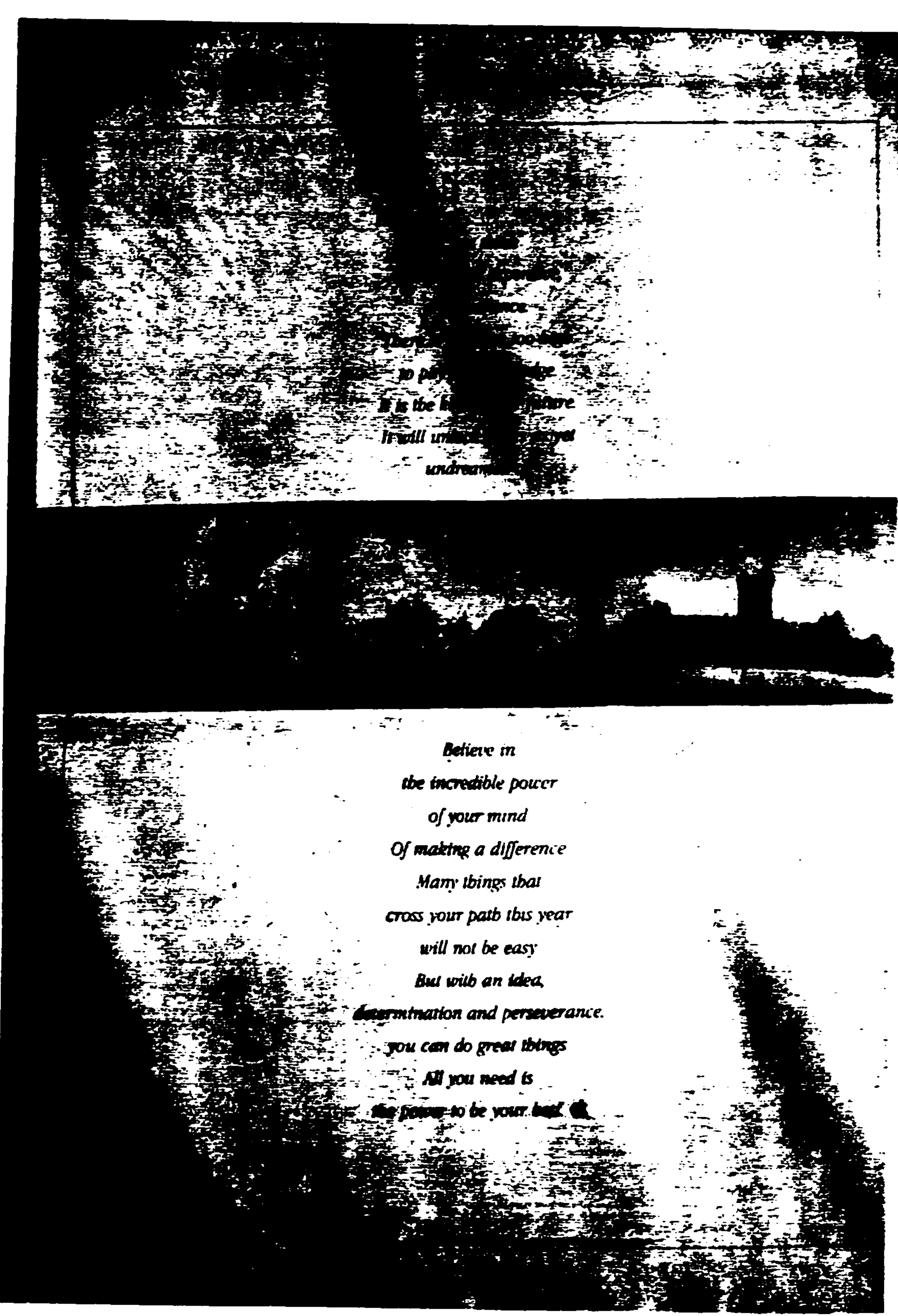

fig. 2.51

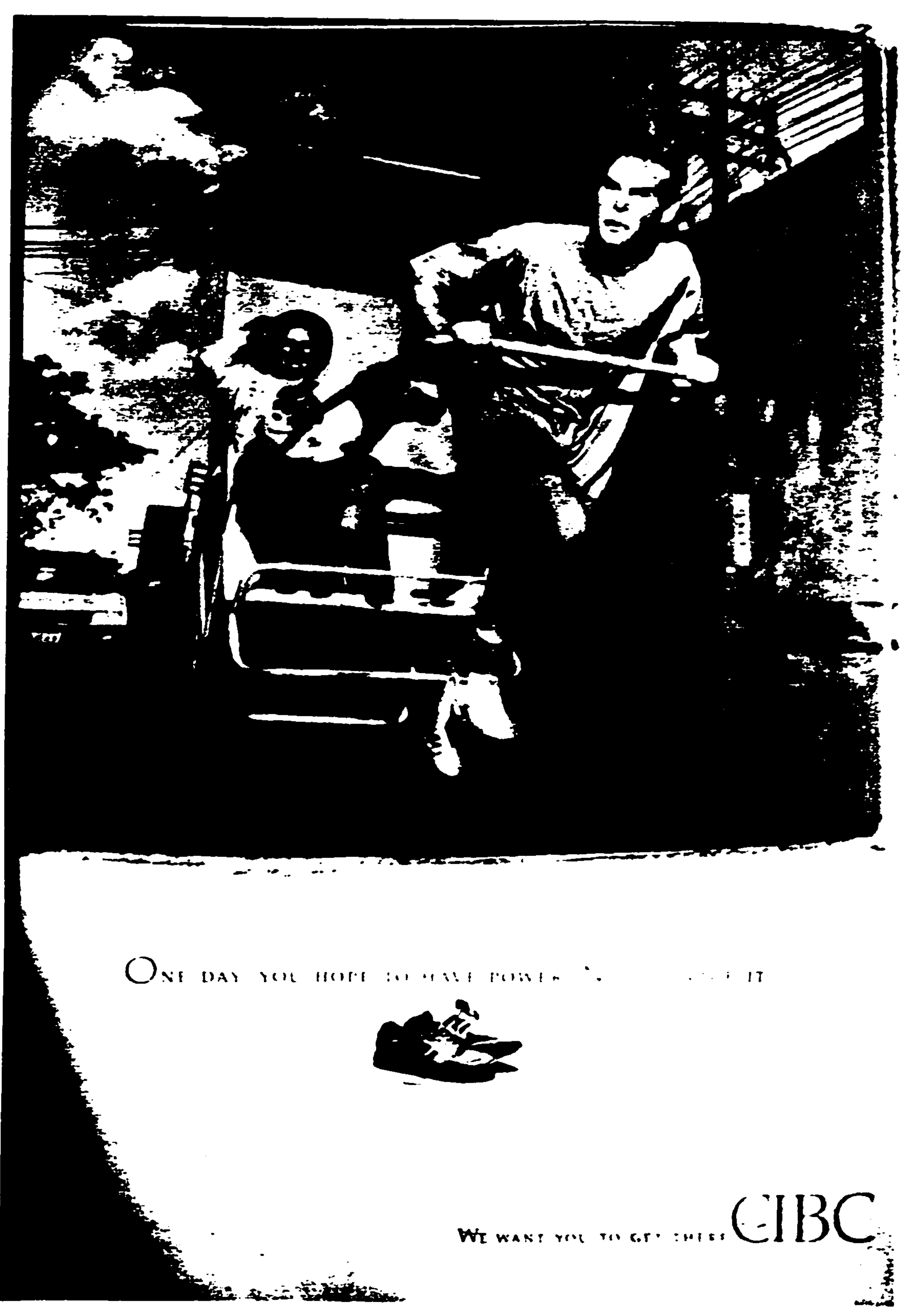

fig. 2.52

fig. 2.53

III.i. Heuretics, Derrida, and spaces in schooling

> There is something antic about creating, although the enterprise be serious. And there is a matching antic spirit that goes with writing about it, for if ever there was a silent process, it is the creative one. Antic and serious and silent.
>
> \- Jerome Bruner [1]

In the two sections you've read so far, you may have found it unsettling, at the end of a section on teaching practice, to be left with no conclusions or strong suggestions as to where the prose might be leading and then, suddenly, to be thrown into something on the difficulty of experimental art-work or on the formal aspects of an ad campaign. Where can all this be going? What's the thesis? When am I going to find out about the 'shoes and roses'?

Perhaps you've begun to see, as I have, that there are ways of working, following the formal experiments of artists, which have significance for pedagogical inquiry. That which I have called the 'open' work has, in its disclosure of its formal openness, some unique value for pedagogy in general. This had been my hypothesis, if you will, throughout the time of this project as I read, attend exhibits and lectures, teach and engage in formal creative processes. But, the value of such a belief does not lie in proofs. The path of proof brings to bear the weight of one's interpretations and rhetorical skills along with validation from other strands of scholarship. Rather, the value is in witnessing the process itself. I proceed with this feeling about 'open' works as a guiding principle or belief which leads me on to no specific, extrinsic goal. I have a general desire to see what will come of proceeding according to this principle of formal openness. This would be called an heuristic method of research. And yet, since my interest is in the process and products of heuristic itself, it becomes more than an open-ended means to an

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[1] Jerome Bruner, On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand, New York: Atheneum, 1968.

end outside itself.[2] It is this problem of adequately describing a work, the subject of which is its own method, which led me to the term *heuretics* which has been resurrected by Gregory Ulmer in his work on Jacques Derrida.[3] According to the OED, heuretics is a rarely used term referring to "the branch of logic which treats of the art of discovery or invention".[4] The term was used in 1838 by Sir W. Hamilton in his Logic:

> That which treats of those conditions of knowledge which lie in the nature, not of thought itself, but of that which we think about . . . has been called *Heuretic*, in so far as it expounds the rules of Invention or Discovery [OED].

There is a very sticky distinction here between the nature of thought itself and the nature of that which we think about, a distinction leading to innumerable philosophical debates and which might conceivably mark the fork in the road where psychology parted from philosophy. This is not a distinction I am able to consider within a work on philosophy of education. For our purposes, allow me to assume that the words, images, textures and spaces I have here compiled and which you now hold, somehow comprise *that which we think about*. What we, reader and writer, student and teacher, have as the starting point of discovery is what we hold in common.[5]

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[2] I could, of course, be accused of using this exposition as an heuristic for successful completion of my doctoral candidacy.

[3] In first formulating this description, I said that the work demonstrates a collapse of subject and method into one another, to which William Hare asked whether an example of such a work would be an essay or interview on "What is a discussion?". It would depend, it seems to me, to what extent the essay or interview demonstrated as well as talked about the rules or aspects of what constitutes a discussion.

[4] Gregory L. Ulmer, "The Heuretics of Deconstruction", Deconstruction and the Visual Arts. Art, Media, Architecture, Peter Brunette and David Wills, eds., Cambridge: University Press, 1994, 80-95.

[5] William Hare has pointed out the shift from calling 'heuretics' an exposition of the rules of discovery, to calling it the art of discovery, and adds that he prefers the latter. What prompted the editors of the OED to call 'heuretics' an art, even though the only reference they give for its use is the passage from Hamilton, quoted above, which refers to rules? It may have been the introduction into usage of the term 'heuristic'. They cite Whelwell (1860) in Todhunter's Acc. W.'s Wks. (1876): "If you will not let me treat the Art of Discovery as a kind of Logic, I must take

The root of *heuristic* is from the Greek *heurisko*, to find. An interesting addendum is the fact that the 1st person singular perfect tense of the verb is *heureka* or *eureka*, Archimedes' legendary exclamation "I have (found) it!" (OED). This mythical image of the Greek mathematician in his bath proclaiming "Eureka!" is inscribed in the popular imagination as analogue for the moment of discovery. It arrives unexpectedly, often at the most unlikely and banal moments: for example, while one is, say, out for a walk or relaxing in a hot bath. Traditionally, the circumstances or conditions of a moment of discovery or invention have been viewed as amusing curiosities. (How many of us can still conjure up the illustration of Archimedes in his bath which appeared in our school science book or of Sir Isaac Newton being hit on the head by an apple?) Focus tends to be placed on the validity and application of the object of the invention itself. Our pedagogy goes to proofs and uses. There is little talk of the Archimedean tub, which brings me to another point, if I may call it that.

Archimedes' proclamation, "Give me a place to stand and I will move the world" contains a big 'if': if only there were a place from which to work the lever. This becomes a metaphor for the limitations of objectivity. How does one get outside or beyond one's existence in order to see it apart from one's knowledge of it? As William Hare points out, framed in this way, my question must elicit the reply "One doesn't". The questioning then goes to the nature and purpose of the place we create and posit as unbiased perspective. We imagine ourselves in it, but,

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a new name for it, Heuristic, for example." I agree with William Hare, and would add that, if we adopt a term to describe the chance occurences associated with discovery, it seems more appropriate to think in terms of an art than in terms of rules of procedure. How can there be hard and fast rules encouraging something as fleeting as discovery? Hamilton refers to the rules of invention or discovery in connection with rhetoric. I suspect that he was cataloguing the ways in which one might adapt the discovered or invented into one's exposition.

in describing its parameters to ourselves and others, we can do nothing other than inscribe ourselves into the description.[6]

Figure 3.01, below, is my rendering for the purposes of citation of Wagner's cartoon strip "Animal Crackers".[7]

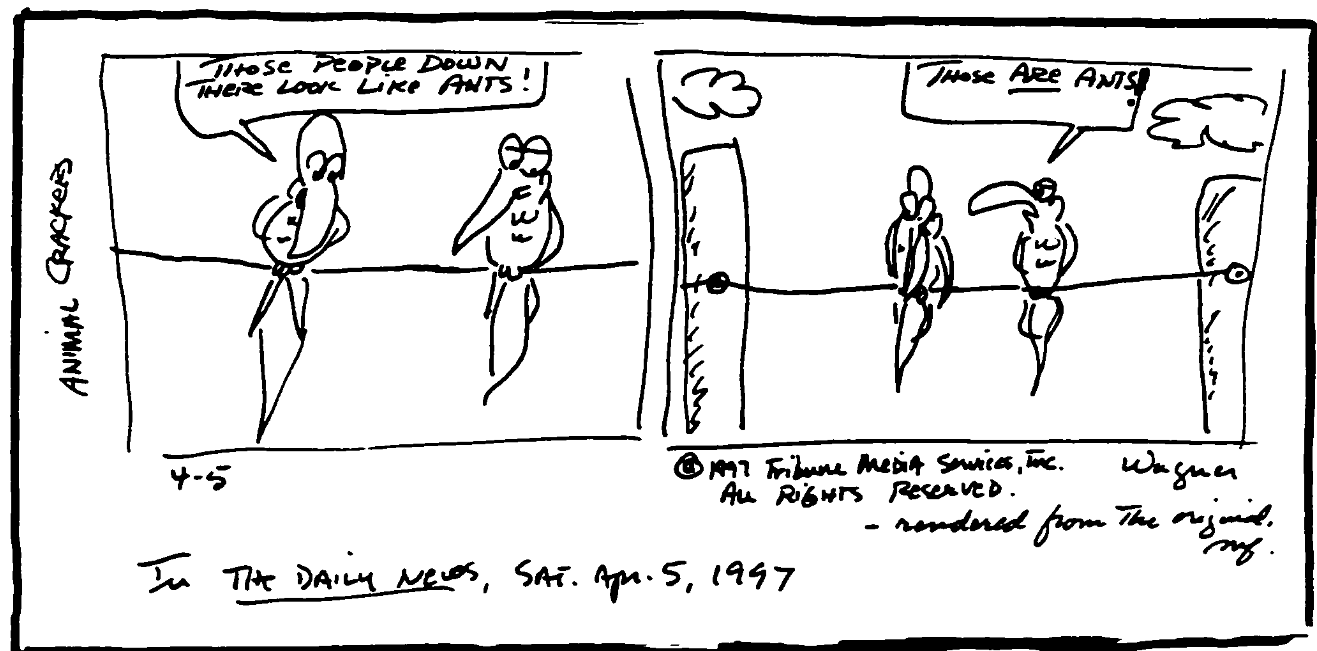

fig. 3.01

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[6] In this sense, we might think of 'description' as 'inscription from'. There is a connection with Derrida's The Post Card in which he, as Gregory Ulmer puts it, "explores the equivocity in tradition, as manifested in the postal metaphor." (See Gregory Ulmer, Applied Grammatology. Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys, Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1985, 143.) The post card after which the book is named, is what Ulmer calls an exemplary example of teleological 'return inquiry' (142-143). In his first book, the introduction to Husserl's Origin of Geometry, Derrida made a central point about Husserl's *Rückfrage*, translated as *question en retour*. Derrida describes it thus: "Like its German synonym, return inquiry (and *question en retour* as well) is marked by the postal and epistolary reference or resonance of a communication from a distance. From a received and already readable *document*, the possibility it offered me of asking again, and *in return*, about the primordial and final intention of what has been given me by tradition. The latter, which is only mediacy itself and openness to a telecommunication in general, is then, as Husserl says, 'open . . . to continued inquiry'". (See Edmund Husserl's "Origin of Geometry". An Introduction, John P. Leavey, Jr., trans., York Beach, Maine: Nicolas-Hays, 1978, 50.) Insofar as I form my own description, it can be said to be an inscription from me as sender, an inscription which may be returned, i.e., not received, or to which one may return, i.e., question again.

[7] The Daily News, Halifax, N.S., April 5, 1997.

Wagner makes the point admirably by shooting down our common English metaphor for objectivity: the bird's-eye view. It too is limited by its own perceptual framework. Hence, every position is vulnerable, since each is part interpretation (subjectivity), part negotiation (culture), and part convention (logic). This does not mean that objectivity is a hoax, that we are hopelessly trapped within our individual worlds and that any attempt at communication is doomed to failure. Our very processes of writing, reading, creating sign systems, and operating within their certain and uncertain parameters are as much evidence as we need or can ever find that objectivity exists or that it is worth attempting. It is both our ideal for communication and the *modus operandi* in which we find ourselves. As William Hare has put it, "that the ground shifts doesn't mean it isn't stable now."

Paul Hirst also put it well, speaking of the "extent of objectivity" which is the extent of our agreement upon the judgments of applying the relations between thoughts, concepts, and propositions, on the one hand, and that to which they are applied, on the other.[8] Hirst makes it clear (though the extent to which he was misconstrued is legend) that to think of objectivity as a fixed, locatable position, an Archimedean point, is to mistake the grounds of objectivity; they shift constantly in our negotiation of these relationships. Hirst was careful to place his comments within "a great context of total change":

> Intelligibility is itself a development in this context, and one that is of its nature hedged in and limited by it. To assume that this framework is in any sense necessarily fixed now seems absurd. But to imagine it is not setting limits to what is right now intelligible is equally absurd. Those limits may change, but right now intelligibility is what it is.[9]

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[8] Paul Hirst, "The forms of knowledge re-visited", Knowledge and the Curriculum, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974, 94.
[9] Hirst, 93.

I make these comments about the limits of objectivity because I feel we need to recognize that the frame within which one accepts or rejects the apparent arbitrariness of the logic of invention (heuretics) is also a constantly shifting ground. My hope is that, in accepting this to be as likely as not, the reader may be more open to the apparent whimsy of my demonstrations.

. . . . .

We have seen that the substitution in the classroom of one stereotype for another, e.g., the propagation of an acceptable message in place of that deemed (by someone) unacceptable, still constitutes indoctrination if it is expected that the acceptable message be adopted without question now or in future consideration. This describes the method of indoctrination, not that of education, following R.M. Hare's distinction.[10] And yet, as we have seen, there are those classroom approaches to themes and messages deemed unacceptable which smack of propagandistic goals and methods. In some cases, the term 'deconstruction' is evoked by way of justifying such approaches.

As I have mentioned, Adbusters uses testimonials from educators to promote the sale of their publication. It also advertises various counter-propaganda products, like a t-shirt inscribed "Idiot Nation" which pictures a dozen heads gazing blankly into a television screen. Volkswear, the producers of the t-shirt, claims to

> use the techniques of deconstruction in an astringent, culture positive manner, rather than the . . . dilatory, nihilist and narcissistic self-referentiality of the post-modern left.[11]

As deconstruction came from the so-called "post-modern left", it is ironic to see it being evoked by a group setting itself in opposition to postmodernism and claiming a superior knowledge of how deconstruction ought to be used.

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[10] II.ii., 73-75.

[11] Adbusters 4, 3, 1996: 44.

Seeing that counter-propaganda techniques, like those in Adbusters, affect classroom approaches to the study of media, and deciding to look more closely at 'deconstruction', a term evoked in justification of techniques I find pedagogically questionable, I began by locating some uses of the term in curricular documents. Variations on the now familiar phrase "deconstructing media messages" have become commonplace in curriculum guides for compulsory education. A draft document entitled "Integrated Literacy" from the Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Project Team posits the following as a goal for grade eleven: "Learners will deconstruct and then construct meaning to allow multiple pathways for learning."[12] The five other goals, in keeping with the title "integrated literacy", emphasize the need to give learners the opportunity to: "investigate modes of communication", "use language in a multiple of ways and for multiple purposes", "have the tools to enhance their lives intellectually and aesthetically", "with the tools of language . . . make connections among media/text/modes of communication", and "create and investigate in various modes/text/media to empower them to communicate in powerful ways." The team defines literacy as "the tool through which we critique our world. For learners to achieve literacy, they need to derive meaning from a multiple of texts." The phrase "integrated literacy" is defined as "the balance of the learner demonstrating valuable and meaningful expression that reflects our world, as well as the learner having the opportunities to create different modes of expression to create meaning about that world."

> In a curriculum of integrated literacy learners have the opportunity to become aware of their own thinking. By becoming aware of the nature and function of contextual frames they can analyse their own frames of reference and the effects they have on their own behaviour. Not only does the learner

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[12] Sarah Archibald and Margaret DeYoung, "Grade 11, Integrated Literacy", prepared for Ann Blackwood, Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Project Team, English Program Services, Nova Scotia Department of Education, March 31, 1995, 007. I am grateful to Ann Blackwood for providing me with this document which, at the time of my receiving it, was still in draft form.

construct meaning through text, but also they are constructed by the text. It is important for the learner to interrogate that construction.[13]

Variations on the term 'deconstruction' are used five more times in the 25-page document:

- By deconstructing the generalizations in his/her own thinking, the learner will have a better understanding of his/her world. (009)
- Learners must deconstruct and envision meaning. (010)
- Through deconstructing the world and the work of others, learners begin to construct meaning for themselves. (012)
- Learners will deconstruct meaning in order to make connections with the issues. (013)
- Students will be able to deconstruct still photographs and analyse the methods used to communicate messages in this medium. (019)

One of the writers, speaking in the first person, expresses a concern with which I commiserate and which may well have inspired the move to this 'integrated literacy' model:

> I have increasing difficulty in separating the disciplines as we look at Language Arts from the context of human communications and culture. Much of what I feel would properly be classified under Language Arts is being touched upon in other subject areas. (016)

The writer goes on to mention specifically the visual and design components in fine art and communication technology courses and adds, parenthetically, "in schools where these programs exist".

It is not my intention to critique a document which I have been allowed to see in draft form. I cite it here as a way of demonstrating some common uses of the term "deconstruction", and to look at images within which it is embedded in the discourse of education. Going through the six goals for grade eleven, I see these metaphors:

- learner clears path for learning
- learner is investigator

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13 Archibald and DeYoung, 008.

- language is *techne* [art; technology]; language proficiency is power
- language skills are tools [*techne*]
- language is tool for connecting media, text, and modes of communication

Each of these metaphors carries certain assumptions, just as the first clause of this sentence assumes that metaphors *carry* things. I use myself as example because we cannot speak without evoking metaphors; I had done so in the previous sentence without even realizing it, which is Derrida's point. These metaphors all posit a learner as identifiable apart from his or her world, learning, language, text, and communication. Who is this explorer or investigator apart from these things? Thus, we create representations in order to imagine 'stepping back' from our own experience in order to 'reflect' on it.[14] We can do no more and no less than imagine ourselves as present before the world: I am figure; it is ground. This is what Derrida calls the "metaphysics of presence". His writing is difficult because he deconstructs our way of looking at the world by continually subverting and supplementing the 'presences' in his own text. His technique is that of the double gesture, always appending at least one possible other meaning to everything he says, and combining a host of techniques both literary (allusion, pun, etc.) and graphic (miming visual art-works, employing the more graphic aspects of written language such as brackets and slashes).[15]

Nowhere in the draft document on integrated literacy is there an account of what the writers take deconstruction to be; its meaning seems to be taken for granted. Neither do I find deconstruction at work (no hints, clues, or plays on words) though, as shown above, there are several references to the term in the text.

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[14] It is not within the scope of this work to pursue close readings of each of these metaphors. For writing of this kind, in which examples are drawn from radio newsbroadcasts, see my <u>Bias and Media Literacy</u>, Master's Thesis, Dalhousie University, Halifax, N. S., 1991.

[15] I shall defer further explanation since, as shall soon become clearer (which is to say, more problematic), explanation of deconstruction is something of a contradiction. What is appropriate is demonstration.

I would say, then, that the document talks about deconstruction but does not demonstrate it. This seems a facile thing to say. A science curriculum guide would not demonstrate the methodology it suggests. Why should the absence of such a thing be noteworthy in a curriculum document in language arts? Because, I would say, deconstruction understood as pedagogy continually enframes synoptic texts, places them in inverted commas, questions their authority. If an overview of education suggests deconstructive pedagogy, one looks for signs that it deconstruct itself. I point this out not to fault the writers, but to show how the term 'deconstruction' has developed in common usage into a synomym for *analyse, take apart, criticize, scrutinize, assess.* A closer look at Derrida is needed to illustrate his project of deconstruction.

Most of what one gets from the horse's mouth by way of explanation of deconstruction does little more that mystify or puzzle anyone seeking an ordinary form of explanation. As Christopher Norris points out, this has helped to spawn the widespread notion that "Derrida is some kind of mischievous latter-day sophist bent upon reducing every discipline of thought to a species of rhetorical play."[16] Derrida's point is that meaning is not confinable or rather, that it is something of an illusion to assume or imply that one has confined it, and that this illusion is part and parcel of language and its workings. As Norris says, Derrida resists the attempt

> to reduce deconstruction to a concept definable in terms of method or technique. For it is precisely this idea - this assumption that meaning can always be grasped in the form of some proper, self-identical concept - that Derrida is most determinedly out to deconstruct.[17]

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[16] Christopher Norris, Derrida, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987, 20-21. The question of whether Protagoras, one of the most eminent sophists, has been misrepresented in the interests of maintaining a belief in the essential invariance of human existence is treated by Joseph Margolis in The Truth About Relativism, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

[17] Norris, 19. William Hare points out that in this passage Norris appears to be using the term 'decontruct' in the sense of refute. This would mean that Derrida cannot say what deconstruction is. For how can one refute a proposition without positing another meaning, which is just the thing

Derrida's writing is a constant reminder of the gap between words and that to which they pretend to refer, reference always and everywhere being a pretension of (the retention of) meaning. The pretension is inevitable. I have just referred to something I call "Derrida's writing". The fissure between sign and referent disappears through continual usage. One might say that familiarity breeds content. The slippery prose of Derrida reminds us that in our forms of expression we need not submit wholesale to their inevitable illusion: we can create and expose the illusion at the same time. Derrida responds to the request for definition:

> All sentences of the type "deconstruction is X" or "deconstruction is not X", *a priori*, miss the point, which is to say that they are at least false. As you know, one of the principal things at stake in what is called in my texts "deconstruction", is precisely the delimiting of ontology and above all of the third-person present indicative: S is P.[18]

In other words (words always being 'other' than what they seem), a sentence of the type "deconstruction is X" assumes a correspondence theory of meaning, i.e., a one-to-one correspondence between a word and that to which it (pretends to) refer(s). And this is the very ontology which Derrida continually deconstructs or calls into question. Or, should I say, calls in to answer?

So, if what I say only ever scrapes the surface while pretending to mean, then, ask Derrida's critics, what is the point of communication at all, and doesn't Derrida subvert his own purposes as well as those of any other writer? J. Hillis Miller offers an answer in this account of what criticism ought to be:

Norris says Derrida rejects? Here's point gets at the essence (if I may call it that) of deconstruction as demonstration or 'Writing' which will be considered more closely in the pages to follow.

[18] Jacques Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend", Derrida and Différance, David Wood, ed., University of Warwick: Parousia Press, 1985, 1-8.

> . . . criticism is a human activity which depends for its validity on never being at ease within a fixed 'method'. It must constantly put its own grounds in question.[19]

Others would call this activity 'philosophy'. As Merleau-Ponty says, "true philosophy consists in relearning how to look at the world." And, I suspect he meant not just once but *continually.*

But, how can I say deconstruction can't be defined, then attempt to do so?[20] How can I criticize traditional forms such as explanation, totalising statements, over-arching conclusions, then explain, totalise, conclude? Not without contradiction . . . or so/sew it would seem/seam. And, seeming/seaming is believing (quipped the tailor to the cleric), for how else are we to piece things together. As Gregory Ulmer says, ". . . I will not try to explain what deconstruction is, but to make it into something."[21] This is where deconstruction leads through its own fabric and back again, decomposing as it tacks things loosely together. The work and the talk go hand in hand.

. . . . .

We have seen the danger when counter-narratives or counter-images fall into teacher-prescribed, predictable patterns and end up promoting the very attitude of blind acceptance that we, as teachers, are out to undo. Using the term 'deconstruction' in curriculum guides does lend a *tone* of postmodern critique. What we need to ask is whether, in the classroom, the term serves as a kind of *carte blanche* for propagating 'acceptable', 'right' messages, for turning media studies into a project of social realism. The difference between loose renderings of 'deconstruction' and the Derridean sense of the term is a crucial distinction if one holds open-mindedness as an essential pedagogical goal.

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[19] Cited by Sharon Crowley in A Teacher's Introduction to Deconstruction, Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1989, 22.
[20] As William Hare points out, we don't always need definitions, so why attempt at all?
[21] Ulmer, "The Heuretics of Deconstruction", 80.

If these loose renderings of the 'd-word' are a danger in our classrooms, what is deconstructive pedagogy in the Derridean sense? Is the phrase itself an oxymoron, as Sharon Crowley asks?[22] If so, does this necessarily invalidate attempts to bring deconstruction and pedagogy together? Perhaps it makes the effort all the more relevant? J. Hillis Miller claims that "in fact deconstruction is a currently fashionable or notorious name for good reading as such. All good readers are and always have been deconstructionists."[23] The interesting thing about this comment is that Miller is not dismissing deconstruction as just a new frill on an old frock. What his comment points out is that our notions about reading and our actual reading as practised and taught in schools may have wandered from what good reading is all about, that is, a process and not the end result of an exercise.[24]

Does this mean that deconstruction changes how we read the grocery list? I believe it does, not in the sense that we must question whether 'm-i-l-k' means the carton of white liquid we call 'milk' but in the sense that a grocery list, or a light bill, a note passed in class, or graffiti on the washroom wall; each has its own cultural context and thereby a kind of integrity as (to borrow Louise Rosenblatt's term) *event*.[25] Derrida's project affects many of the assumptions driving traditional language arts pedagogy. Crowley offers the example of the 'close reading' practices of the New Criticism (no longer 'new', but still prevalent in the language arts classroom) which assume that textual analysis "should reveal some

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22 Crowley, 45.

23 J. Hillis Miller, "Composition and Decomposition. Deconstruction and the Teaching of Writing", in Composition and Literature. Bridging the Gap, Winifred Bryan Horner, ed., Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983, 43.

24 See III.i., fn.46.

25 Louise Rosenblatt, The Reader, the Text, the Poem, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978. She says, "[t]he reading of a text is an event occurring at a particular time in a particular environment at a particular moment in the life history of a reader. . . . Just as knowing is the process of linking a knower and a known, so a poem should not be thought of as an object, an entity, but rather as an active process lived through during the relationship between a reader and a text" (20-21).

coherent meaning and should give some clue to its author's intention." And, in the area of writing instruction, traditional pedagogy assumes that "the presence of ill- or well-formed formal features in texts (sentences, paragraphs, thesis statements) is indicative of the quality of the writer's thought".[26]

I'm reminded of a little boy in a grade four classroom working on a writing exercise. He's been asked to think of typically Canadian gifts to give his true love on each of the twelve days of Christmas. Few of the things on the board from the general brainstorming seem to interest him. I'm a visitor, supervising a student teacher. I suggest to him a few other things, he looks into the distance for a second, his face suddenly lights up, and he puts his pencil to the page. When I come back a few minutes later, he has drawn something tiny yet very complex, a strange-looking creature. "It's part lobster and part beaver," he tells me. I ask what he might call such a creature. He thinks for a second. "Lob-beaver!" he says. I suggest he might like to add it to his list. He says, "No, it isn't true". His face assumes the previous serious look as he ponders the list on the board. The lob-beaver, hybrid of two Canadian icons, never makes it to the 'good copy'.

Why did he feel it couldn't be included? Did he think only 'real' things could be gifts? Would the teacher have accepted his 'lob-beaver'? I believe she would have but was there something in the nature of our pedagogy which led this student to think a fantasy gift or made-up word would not be acceptable, or that a drawing has less legitimacy than words? None of my questions are answerable definitively, but they resound in connection with what Rosenblatt calls "[k]eeping the live process of the literary event before us".[27] What combination of influences writes the literalist agenda to which the little boy seemed to submit his work? While classrooms are on-track to the production of 'good copies', how many

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26 Crowley, 27.
27 Rosenblatt, 16.

significant scrawls and squiggles end up in the waste basket? How many inventive names for fantastic creatures are never coined?

In our classrooms, some critical pedagogues berate us for not provoking our students into political action. But what could be more political than the deconstructivist view of text as inextricable from context, of meaning as the movement or play of invention? This view democratizes the reading and writing process profoundly, perhaps more so than the invention of moveable type. It questions the legitimacy of systems of authority dependent upon a realist view of documentary evidence.[28] Meaning is continually compromised and negotiated by the 'mean-er' (not to mention the 'mean-ee').

. . . . .

There are moments, call them spaces or confluences of circumstance, when 'classroom' feels right, alive, in the moment. I have had the same feeling in my stage-work when the prepared piece rises above preparation and expectation, when everything is completely 'other' than planned, expected or hoped for, yet 'right' nonetheless and a good thing on both sides of the footlights. At first in my teaching practice, I attributed this feeling of everything being right with the world, to virtuosity. I would relax into my role as 'teacher', take a question, and go somewhere familiar, yet new, find an example that worked better than I'd hoped, extend a metaphor beyond where I thought it might carry. All of this was part of the fun, dare I say, the joy of teaching, its reward. But a virtuosic reward, a sense of self-fulfillment, of treating language and literature in a way I had always admired in my teachers; at least I had the impression that this was what I was doing. My 'readings', when good, were exemplary, models of good improvisation, of how one can take a word or phrase or image and run with it, develop one's own talk

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[28] That is, that it is ever possible to get "the facts, Ma'am, nothing but the facts", as Detective Joe Friday used to say in the 1950's television drama Dragnet.

with, from, and about it. Yet, somehow, even though I knew many of my students recognized the value in this and would happily, dutifully, or reluctantly attempt similar operations in their essays and responses, (for, after all, this was high school, and they came to me after years of similar training) there was something hollow and *merely* self-satisfying about this process. There were, however, other 'classroom' moments, spaces in schooling which magnified by contrast my increasing dissatisfaction with these effects even though they were established, accepted effects which even earned me some modest success in the eyes of administrators and peers as well as students.

I was involved in doing other things which began to raise questions for me and which rendered problematic my feats of virtuosity. I felt a little as if I were working at cross purposes as if somehow virtuosity created counter-effects. In the drama workshop my expertise came out of my own working practice. Sure, I practiced as 'writer' in my English classroom, but most of my writing was of a critical or prescriptive nature. There was the writing workshop, when I would start students off by doing the free-writing exercises with them, but I was always too busy conferencing with students to develop my first drafts along with them. In the drama workshop, improvisation was not only my province; the students worked on it tirelessly. We worked towards freedom from imitation and role-playing. One of the ways was through an approach Viola Spolin calls the "point of concentration" (POC).[29]

Imagine for a moment the actor in the Mike Nichols play Enter Laughing. The protagonist joins a troupe of actors led and managed by the great star (as in the

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[29] Violin Spolin, Improvisation for the Theater (1963), Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1983. Spolin describes the POC as a "technique to achieve detachment" (388). She works from the assumption that character, the essence of theatre, emerges out of stage life, i.e., out of full contact among the players, and for this to begin, one must develop the "ability to become aware of the life in the environment" (380).

grand tradition of the stage). This neophyte is so unaccustomed to the conventions of the theatre that he meticulously learns *all* the lines in his bit-part, even the words in italics. At his cue, he bursts onto the stage and blurts out the stage directions, "Enter laughing". It comes out as a kind of demented, incongruous imperative. Hence the name of the play is a wonderful turn (more like a double back-flip) on theatrical conventions. My point, however, is about the actor in the role of non-actor. How does he convincingly play the role of someone who hasn't a clue about acting? What techniques of acting can he employ to free himself from knowledge of them? The ultimate actor's paradox, the ultimate theatrical joke is a joke on itself, a meta-joke.

Viola Spolin's technique of using the point of concentration is to focus on some particular. It doesn't matter what it is. Say, for example, the actor is meant to be an older person sitting on a park bench. The typical 'mistake' of the neophyte is to play-act, that is, to try and 'look' old. What Spolin's technique requires - and, I use this explication not as a recommendation for the best way to act or teach acting but as a means of getting at the contrast with virtuosity - is that one concentrate on some particular, physical or otherwise. With the beginner, I have found it best to suggest it be something unrelated to what he or she expects the character ought to resemble. For example, were the POC a sore back, the beginning actor might still be trying to act 'old' by miming a sore back. Better to make it, say, a grocery list; better still, that morning's breakfast. The beauty of Spolin's simple improvisational technique is that it helps free the beginner from preconceived notions of what acting is, of how one's character *ought* to appear. The newcomer to the theatre sees professionals assume roles and thinks it is make-believe, a pretending to be someone other than oneself, the way a child plays house or plays cops and robbers. What the newcomer doesn't realize is that the actor's challenge is to play the role of that child, making-believe. The actor's challenge is

not making believe but believing in the life of forms, focusing with concentration on every encounter.

A similar release from the artificiality expectation imposes on action is achieved for the visual arts in techniques such as those described by Betty Edwards. The simple act of reproducing a line drawing viewed upside down helps to free the drawing process from the dominant mental functions of speech and language, the province of the brain's left hemisphere.[30] The fact that the image for reproduction is upside-down allows one to see a line as straight, curved, jagged, etc. rather than as 'chair-leg', 'shoulder', 'rock-face', etc. In other words, one breaks down form into manageable parts, dealing with each on its own terms. The dominant tendency of realism to recognize what the lines resemble and to name and categorize this resemblance gets in the way of seeing the form before one's eyes.

The mother of an elementary school child tells how when her son started school he was afraid to draw, to form the letters of the alphabet, or to try to read aloud. "He is such a perfectionist," she says, "just like his dad." He wouldn't even begin for fear of not getting it right. According to his mother, he was helped out of this fear by the art teacher and by his grade two teacher who had him read aloud to her, then said "See, you've just read the whole book out loud." His mother recalls his elation that day when he told her about it.

It would seem, then, that the language functions which teachers work so hard to encourage may be exacting to a fault, to the point of working against the goal of literacy they are thought to effect. Recall, if you will, the Baby Blues cartoon strip (figure 2.19). As you may remember, the 'hook' in this bit of satire lies in the cartoonist's ability to play with the mental function of naming and categorizing. This scenario is exemplary on a meta-level. Satire not only blends left- and right-

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[30] Betty Edwards, Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain, New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Perigee, 1989, 50-55.

brain functioning, a claim that could be made of any art; it also exemplifies this process in an allegorical world. The art of the satirist is to recreate the ordered world of categories in which things and people are named and grouped according to type while at the same time playing with this condition. The play or turn only works because of the accuracy with which actual human relations are depicted. This cartoon-strip is an allegory of the act of satire. The father is more than just every-parent. He is the rational, controlling left brain which, as it were, can't see the milk for the cookies. The child is the right brain, fixed on what is immediately before her. She succumbs to the necessary, inevitable force of reason but then comes the over-turn or surprise ending to the reasoned, expected chain of events. This exemplifies more than the idiosyncrasies of parent-child relations. The satirical gesture achieved in this cartoon is an allegory of satire and thereby of the eternal overturn of order.

In An Anthropologist on Mars, Oliver Sacks recounts the prodigious drawing talents of an autistic child, Stephen Wiltshire: his accurate recall and depiction of detail after but a moment's observation, his apparent freedom from the expectations regarding what constitutes accuracy. Sacks' lengthy case study after many encounters with Stephen2 allowed him to detect a style to this talent. And yet, though Stephen was famous throughout England for his drawing by the time he was thirteen, he was, as Sacks puts it,

> as autistic, as disabled as ever. He could draw, with the greatest of ease, any street he had seen; but he could not, unaided, cross one by himself. He could see all London in his mind's eye, but its human aspects were unintelligible to him. He could not maintain a real conversation with anyone, though, increasingly he now showed a sort of pseudosocial conduct, talking to strangers in an indiscriminate and bizarre way. [31]

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[31] Oliver Sacks, An Anthropologist on Mars (1995), Toronto: Vintage, 1996, 203.

All testing confirmed Stephen's severe emotional and intellectual deficiency, and yet Sacks, seeing more than just accuracy in Stephen's art-work, wonders:

> Was there, nonetheless, a mental and personal dimension, a depth and sensibility, in him that could emerge (if nowhere else) in his art? Was not art, quintessentially, an expression of a personal vision, a self? Could one be an artist without having a "self"?[32]

Sacks quotes a comment from Clara Park, the mother of an autistic artist, who describes her child as having an "unusual capacity to render the object as perceived", not, adds Sacks, as *con*ceived.[33] The implication is that conceptualising, taking in the world with a view to one's place in it, allows the development of categories for sorting out experience, for crossing the street. But, this comes at a cost: the build up of preconceptions blocks the openness to render the world as directly perceived, as taken in through the senses. This assumes, however, that we can *directly* perceive. William Hare points out the difficulty:

> The non-autistic mother presumes to know that the autistic child has rendered the world as directly perceived. But don't her conceptions get in the way of her directly perceiving what the child has rendered?

In this light, the mother's remark takes on an irony which evokes pathos. One could surmise that, trying to frame her child's responses in positive terms, she imposes a reading she can never know is applicable.

The more Sacks got to know Stephen and his art-work, the more he recognized an idiosyncratic style in the intricate pencil drawings. This led him to speculate about the possibility that art might be Stephen's expression of identity. Throughout his account, Sacks gives anecdotes from his time with Stephen, time spent regularly joining in the boy's daily life. There is no question, in Sacks mind or that of this reader, that Stephen recognizes the doctor on his visits. But, says

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32 Sacks, 203.
33 Sacks, 206. His reference is to The Seige: The First Eight Years of an Autistic Child, by Clara Claiborne Park, Rev. ed., Boston, 1982.

Sacks, "though he would always greet me with his cheery 'Hullo, Oliver!' he remained as courteous, as grave, as remote as ever."[34] I suppose one might say that Oliver Sacks was reading into the situation his own reading of it, a possibility he also considered. But can one do otherwise? Sacks believes Stephen was expressing himself vividly and idiosyncratically in his work. However, as Sacks laments, "[w]hether this power of representation entailed any depth of inner resonance or response remained completely unclear."[35]

In the following text,[36] the American composer, actor, director, and playwright, Robert Wilson, tells a series of stories in reaction to his interviewer's question: 'What were the strongest influences on you and your work?'

> *Robert Wilson*: A former teacher of mine from the Pratt Institute gave me a tape, saying he thought it would interest me. The voice on the tape went something like this:
>
> Ad-im . . . adim, adim, adim . . . ad . . . im . . . im . . . im . . . adim-adim-adim . . . im . . .im, im . . . em, em, . . .Emily likes the tv because . . .**HEY!** . . . because . . . **BEE!** . . . because she likes Bugs Bunny . . .because . . . she likes it.
>
> The taped voice was that of a 13-year-old boy named Christopher who lived in a state-run institution. . . . Some time later, I was rehearsing The Life and Times of Joseph Stalin, a 12-hour production with a cast of 125, which was to run from 7pm to 7am at the Brooklyn Cafe Music. I invited Chris to come and see the play. I'm very difficult when I'm performing in my work; a real prima donna. And, five minutes before the play was to start, a knock came to my dressing-room door. Chris' parents had brought him to say 'hi'. There stood Chris. He was looking down at the floor. I heard myself say, "Hi, Chris. Would you like to be in my play tonight?" The play had been meticulously worked out and rehearsed for weeks. Chris' mother asks: "What would he do?" I answered: "I have no idea." I asked a couple of more times and finally, she answered: "I guess it would be alright as long as it's not for too long." . . . I took him before the audience and said: "LADIES . . . AND . . . GENTLE . . . **MEN!** . . . [The theatre was big, about 2000 seats.]

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[34] Sacks, 221.

[35] Sacks, 211.

[36] This is my reconstruction from notes I took while listening to the profile on Wilson compiled by Danielo Pietropalo for CBC Radio's The Arts Tonight, a rebroadcast aired on November 3, 1995.

> Ad-im . . . adim, adim, adim . . . im, em, em . . . Emily likes the tv because ______". I waited and Chris said: "____ HEY! . . Hadda - hap - ha - hap - hap . . . .". We had a 10 minute dialogue at the end of which there was applause and we left the stage. Chris performed in all acts of the play, then went back to the Institute for Brain Damaged Children. I visited him there, and saw how he was being taught. I couldn't see any need to stop or correct his speaking. After some discussion with his parents, Chris came to live with me, and as a result, I introduced text into my work which had been silent to that point - texts written by Christopher.

Wilson says his work for the theatre had been silent up until that point. He tells another story, from earlier in his career, about stopping on the street to help a boy who was having a hard time with a policeman. It appeared to Wilson that the policeman was about to hit the boy. As it turned out, the boy, Raymond, was deaf. Presumably, the policeman had taken his signing gestures as acts of defiance. Wilson went home with the boy and, not wanting him to be institutionalized, eventually succeeded in adopting him. At the court hearing over his adoption application, Wilson was asked how he knew that the boy was intelligent. He answered: "He has a sense of humour." Deaf Men Glance was Wilson's first major work for the theatre, seven hours long and silent, a work developed in collaboration with Raymond Andrews.[37]

Stranger than fiction? To be sure; and yet Wilson goes on to give some details of his adopted sons' present-day circumstances. Both have grown up to be independent and to hold down jobs. Chris works for an architectural firm.

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[37] William Hare responds with: "Rorty says that individuation presupposes socialization. In the same way, do these forms presuppose the more conventional forms? And your English students may eventually reach the 'difficult' works if you continue with your virtuoso teaching." This recalls a reference Hare makes in his discussion of humility as a quality in the context of teacher education. (See What Makes a Good Teacher, 1993, 38.) He refers to the *pedagogical fallacy*, "the belief that this is our Last Chance to correct what we take to be an error. We forget that the discussion can continue, and that students have not said their final word on the subject." And he cites Jerome A. Popp, "Teaching the ways of inquiry", Illinois Schools Journal 57, 3, 1977: 54-59. Perhaps a corollary to this fallacy is the belief that a teacher's shortcomings (or her perception of them, be they real or imaginary) necessarily have a direct affect upon students' learning.

Raymond has a steady girlfriend, works for Bell Laboratories, and drives a blue Buick.

What do these examples have to do with 'classroom' as comfortable space? For one thing, they feel right in the same way 'classroom' feels right to me when it's alive and in its own space, not smothered by a collection of expectations about 'classroom'. Wilson says he is interested in a formal theatre that's open-ended. He says his work is always full of time, that it doesn't have a concept. He tries to create a mental space in theatre where ideas are indicated, not pushed.[38] These strike me as clues to why these examples feel right.[39] Let's move on.

. . . . .

These moments of freedom, of recognition of something beyond, something worthy of time in pedagogical space - how do I allow for them, encourage them, open up my practice to them? As mentioned before, the 'difficult' art-work offers a way in, an imponderable, impenetrable *something* worth stopping over. The temptation is to focus on finding a new category for the difficult work, to quickly wrap it up in a familiar mode of interpretation. Certainly, no one method or reading ever says everything about any work of art, or about anything else, for that matter. But, there is an illusion that such completeness is within the realm of possibility, and when the work presents itself in a form which is familiar, it is easier to continue within this illusion, adopting the known interpretive parameters and assuming that when they have been covered, all is said and done, i.e., it is clear what the work is *about*.

I am initiating the students in my English class into a discipline. But what is this discipline? Love of literature? Of art? If I am lucky, my enthusiasm will

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[38] Ibid. Wilson acknowledges his debt to Balanchine, Merce Cunningham, and John Cage whom he says create a mental space.

[39] John Portelli suggests questioning this comfortableness. Who can afford it?

infect them. How? Perhaps they'll like me well enough, be intrigued by my histrionics, my insights, my harmonica playing, or by the connections I make between their lives and the world of poetry and fiction, so that they'll develop an interest, as I did from my English teachers. And the institution of education considers this a job well done since, notwithstanding the open question regarding the intrinsic value of such an interest, the interest provokes response, the exercise of language, its regimes, its relative clauses and punctuation, its functional use, its calesthenics. This is why English is a core subject. We extol the value of communication and self-expression (within certain limits!), as an extension of a basic survival technique. The baby cries for its milk; the adult fills out job applications. Thus, in school, literature is accepted as a means to an end outside itself. This is its curricular justification. Meanwhile, as English teacher I'm asked, "Why do we have to study Shakespeare?" As much as I may believe that it has intrinsic value, how can I argue this point? The best response in keeping with this belief is to take the questioner to a production of one of the plays or produce one of them in the classroom, or in some way convey a sense of what verse drama feels like, its rhythmic patterned tonalities, its use of language to create the world as spectacle. There is no logical argument for intrinsic value, no proof through argumentation, regardless of the fact that I may just have made some convincing points in its favour. The points I bring to bear favour the form in which they inhere, i.e., the prose exposition. Expository form adheres in all its particulars to the case or theme it sets itself. Even when a point appears tangential, it is from the argument that it diverges, and to which it returns. One *sticks to the point* for the sake of constructing a good argument. A play stands or falls by virtue of its own integrity or authority as medium. The form we call 'criticism' accompanies an art-work, and a good accompaniment is always a collaboration. In a sense, there is

no such thing as an accompaniment (or a critique) for its effectiveness is in the quality of the collaboration to which it brings itself, in which it merges.

Freire says that as teachers we must give testimony to our students about what it means to read a text.[40] The simplest and possibly most important evidence of what reading means would, I suppose, be the parent reading to the small child. And, at the other extreme, it would be Freire forced into exile for reading with Brazilian peasants. We think of 'testimony' as the tangible record given by a witness. But, that is only the means by which 'testimony' is handed on. The root, *testis*, is Latin for witness; the suffix, *-mony*, forms nouns denoting an abstract state or quality (OED). 'Testimony' is firstly the state or quality of *being* a witness, and secondly the record of that witnessing. What does it mean to witness? The root, *wit*, is the old English verb 'know of'. A remnant of this archaic form remains in the phrase 'to wit', meaning, 'that is to say', or 'namely'. In the preface to his play A Man for All Seasons, Robert Bolt says his main character, Thomas More, is a hero of selfhood. In our age, says Bolt,

> [w]e feel - we know - the self to be an equivocal commodity. There are fewer and fewer things which, as they say, we 'cannot bring ourselves' to do. We can find almost no limits for ourselves other than the physical, which being physical are not optional.[41]

As history and Bolt tell it, More could not bring himself to state on oath something he did not believe. Why could he not simply tell the lie and save his life? Bolt explains that

> a man takes an oath only when he wants to commit himself quite exceptionally to the statement, when he wants to make an identity between the truth of it and his own virtue; he offers himself as a guarantee.

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[40] Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, We Make the Road by Walking. Conversations on Education and Social Change, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990, 37.

[41] Robert Bolt, A Man for All Seasons (1960), Scarborough, Ont.: Bellhaven House, 1963, xiii.

Thus, More is the man of integrity, of wholeness, one who, by joining self-truth with that of the statement, *author*izes it; he is knower of this truth as surely as he witnesses everything he holds to be true right down to the truth of his own self.

This is 'testifying' or 'witnessing' as, I believe, Freire would have us think of it; the witness is one with the truth of what she says, she stands for it, she brings herself to it. This sounds like quite a responsibility for a teacher. And yet the parent reading to the child witnesses this truth naturally, unpremeditatedly. Why? Because there is no separation between the means and the effect, of this act. When the traditional method of literacy training, with its graded lessons and the testing of competence, is used unimaginatively with a preponderance of rote memorization combined with texts meaningless in pupils' lives, the result is mechanistic.[42] Many students are bored and often troublesome while even those who comply and are deemed 'good readers' may well be some of the graduate students Freire describes in the following account. He calls it a "testimony of critical illumination." He chose for his group of graduate students six pages of a transcript containing a statement from a Brazilian peasant.

> . . . I started to read, but when I came to the first period, I stopped and said to the students, "Right now for me it is impossible to go on if I don't stop in order to think about what I read. I want to understand better what I read here, so let me go back to the beginning of the sentence." I went back to the first word and read little by little. When I stopped again, I said, "Right now I think I understood better, and I will try to tell you how I interpret what is behind this speech by the peasant." And then, I began to speak about what I was reading, and I read two or three more pieces of the speech, doing the

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42 The example that comes quickly to mind is the teaching of phonics through vocal imitation and repetition. This method has also been used successfully; but, mainly, I suspect, by teachers whose enthusiasm, imagination, and compassion surpassed the limits of the materials. The authority which these materials seem to command can lead teachers to believe in the letter of the materials, as it were, rather than in the efficacy of their own example and encouragement. There is nothing to say that even the worst materials can't be pedagogically useful in the right hands; for example, hate literature could be used effectively to encourage tolerance and open-mindedness. But, as John Portelli reminds me, the effectiveness of materials or methods does not depend only on the teacher.

> same thing. When I stopped, I said, "Who would like to continue?" One of them began to read.[43]

What Freire witnesses here is truth in the sense of wholeness. His testimony recounts an act of reading which illuminates its own reflexive, critical quality. Dewey says that all cases in which means and ends are external to one another are non-aesthetic. "In all ranges of experience, externality of means defines the mechanical." Travelling to get somewhere or being 'good' to avoid punishment is "as anesthetic as going to the dentist's chair to avoid a lasting injury."[44] When, on the other hand, a means or vehicle is one with its effect it is what Dewey calls a 'medium', a means which is incorporated in its outcome. Freire's account of reading with his students describes a way of foregrounding the reading experience during the act of reading. He goes on to say that together they spent four three-hour sessions reading those six pages. Freire began by actually reading that text, verbalising his reading process as he went through it. In terms Viola Spolin might use, Freire was aware of the life in his reading environment and helped his students to reach a similar awareness. Their engagement was not merely a means of fulfilling a course requirement. Dewey describes the difference:

> One student studies to pass an examination, to get promotion. To another, the means, the activity of learning, is completely one with what results from it. The consequence, instruction, illumination, is one with the process.[45]

As Freire says, "[i]f you insist on something, you end up getting it. But 'knowing' is not that, not just getting what you insist will be the end result of the exercise."[46]

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[43] Ira Shor & Paulo Freire, A Pedagogy for Liberation. Dialogue on Transforming Education, New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1987, 84-85.

[44] John Dewey, Art as Experience (1934) in The Later Works, 1925-1953, Jo Ann Boydston, ed., Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987, 202-203. Of course, anaesthetic can have its own aesthetic purpose, e.g., to put a patient in a state of rest which in itself can be healing.

[45] Dewey, Art as Experience, 201.

[46] Shor & Freire, 85. William Hare asks how Derrida might react to Freire's "reading". The continual return, the asking again, and then the asking about one's asking is all part of what he refers to in his phrase the "postal effect". (See III.i., fn. 6.)

I became uncomfortable using literature to "get them", my students, writing, thinking, appreciating. This was brought home most vividly, I now see, by the introduction of the writing workshop into my classroom, those notions of free writing, of opening up the curriculum, allowing it to follow the writing wherever it might lead. But even this opening suffers attempts, though well-intentioned, to shut it down. As a supply teacher, I was several times confronted with the absurdity of pedagogical practices in connection with student journal writing. There on the teacher's desk would be my instructions to 'check' students' journals to see that they had made the requisite number of entries or filled enough pages.[47] As I leafed through the personal jottings of young people whose names I could not yet match with faces, some pages would be folded over with instructions not to read them, evidence that in this classroom there had been some concession made for privacy. For me, however, it only accentuated the absurdity of compelling people to keep a journal. The general perception is that public institutions do not interfere with individuals on the level of personal belief or private ritual.

Several years later, as supervisor to student teachers during their practicum in elementary education, I witnessed a similar practice. In one case, where grade three children brought their journals to me, as another teacher in the room, for response, I could not help but notice 'corrections' to the mechanics of the child's writing. But, more often, the approach was less obvious. The teacher might take a misspelt word and re-use it in its 'correct' form in a question from the teacher as correspondent. Thus, I began to wonder about the levels of purpose layered within this enterprise, about the didactic embedded within the seemingly conversational,

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[47] I am reminded of a conversation I had in the early 80s with my former teacher of Russian, Professor John Barnstead of Dalhousie University. He had just returned from a trip to Moscow, his first since the beginning of Gorbachev's era of change, of 'glasnost' (openness) and 'perestroika' (restructuring). I asked him what changes he had noticed as a result of the new openness. "Now", he said, "they are fulfilling the plan of openness."

and about my own complicity in response to my students, past and present. Increasingly, when faced with these childrens' journals and encouraged by their teacher to respond, I felt the impulse to 'write back' doodles, cartoon figures, silly jokes; in short, to play the 'bad kid' myself, to resist the form within which these children were asked to 'freely' respond. And still, were my attempts at resisting the form any more free or open? In my position of authority, is it possible for me to pry open this form? Do I not simply catch myself in another contradiction, using openness as a means of getting them writing?[48]

I've described myself, my reactions to the conventions in which and for which I work, in terms and tones which I questioned earlier in William Bigelow's assumption about the oppressiveness of the educational system. I feel complicit because I am complicit in this story. So, what can I do about it?[49]

. . . . .

Derrida begins "Outwork", the preface to Dissemination, with this sentence: "This (therefore) will not have been a book."[50] In the introduction to her translation of this work, Barbara Johnson says it, "begins with a denial of the book and of the beginning,"[51] To deny the book - the conventional practice of running that line from left to right and up and down, casting off each page to the left as one moves through while under the illusion of moving on - would be to deny the

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[48] Here William Hare asks, regarding the doubt I express about complicity, whether it assumes that the conversational and the didactic are mutually inconsistent. Not, I would say, in general; however, when trying to "get students talking", writing, etc. by means of engaging them in conversation, one must take care not to feign interest and sincerity for the sake of achieving pedagogical ends. One would be modelling a pretence of conversation, which could be didactic in a harmful way, i.e., like the didacticism of propaganda.

[49] Robert Bérard remarks that "[p]art of the problem arises from the compulsory nature of schooling. If I want to learn to spell correctly and write clearly, I would welcome detailed corrections, even (maybe especially) in red pen."

[50] Jacques Derrida, Dissemination (1972), Barbara Johnson, trans., Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981, 3. In "Outwork" (30), Derrida quotes Hegel at length from the close of his preface to Philosophy of Right.

[51] Ibid., xxxii.

beginning. It is, after all, only the start of an illusion of beginning. There is always something which is simultaneously before a beginning and after an ending,[52] and, following Hegel, Derrida takes the convention of the preface - written after to stand before the beginning - as exemplar for this illusion that theoretical discourse is ever not "belated and precipitous with respect to the textual practice it attempts to comprehend."[53]

This condition, whereby my best attempt to mean is but a mean attempt at best, was freely and reverently admitted in earlier times (and still today in some contexts and cultures). A writer/artist invoked the gods or muses before launching into artistic conceits. The carpet weavers of Azerbaijan still weave a 'mistake' into their designs as an escape hatch for the devil and as testimony that earthly creation cannot perfectly depict the gardens of paradise. This preamble to creative endeavour, this act of humility, has come to be seen in our scientific age as an empty formality or convention, itself an artistic conceit. But it is necessary for those who believe in perfection to stand witness to the truth of this belief. As we have seen, the believer presents herself, her words and work as testimony. In classical works, the opening invocation to the muses was a request for help, for inspiration. Part of the historical development of what in the modern world we call the 'subject' or 'individual' was a shift in understanding of what it meant to seek inspiration. It has become more accurate in modern understanding to say one "is inspired" or "becomes inspired", as if inspiration were generated from within. The phrase "creative spirit" carries the connotation of being housed within the creative person or 'genius'. Although we still speak of genius as a gift, we in the age of science tend to think of genius as a capacity or quality inherent in the person. Since science cannot isolate a human capacity or quality from those inherent in the

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52 John Portelli sees a similarity to St. Augustine on eternity in his Confessions.

53 Barbara Johnson, "Introduction", xxxiii.

inquiry process, we are left with metaphor as our means of representation. Is it presumption to suggest it presumptuous to house genius within ourselves?[54]

Confidence in empirical evidence may leave traces of idealism. In popular usage, there is a sense that once all the right evidence has been identified, once the cold, hard facts are in, we will know the whole truth, the real thing, the exact meaning.[55] But all of these phrases presuppose the acceptance of certain connotations which could as easily be replaced by other images. The word 'truth' can be taken as meaning 'integrity' or 'wholeness'. Thus the phrase can be rendered redundant: the 'whole wholeness'. Similarly with 'real' from the Latin *res*, or thing, giving the phrase 'thing thing'. 'Exact' [from L. *ex*, out + *agere*, to drive] plus 'meaning' [*moyen*, in the middle] can render the image of driving out the middle, mean, or intermediary. Undermining the semblance of precision in these phrases demonstrates that exactness may be in the mind of the empiricist. Unlike the classical believer who acknowledges her gods, the believer in empiricism claims to hold no belief in transcendency. She will insist that the facts speak for themselves. Stuck in the metaphors of realism, she is unaware of their metaphoricity. Although the same may be said of a fundamentalist of any stripe, i.e., that she takes the metaphor to be that which it is used to represent, the modern believer is caught in a double illusion. The metaphors of realism deny their figurative nature. The realist, by (denying) extension, denies her own nature.

Theoretical discourse, bent upon the one-to-one correspondence between word and meaning, epitomizes the presumption that there is escape from metaphor; its tone implies belief in its own content. (Don't I *sound* as if I stand behind the

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[54] John Portelli asks: "So where does this leave Dewey's or Aristotle's external/internal distinction?" I evoked it in connection with Freire's "testimony of critical illumination". (See III.i., 26-27.) I would ask: Does the distinction have to be an objective reality in order to serve in our assessment of human motivation, its means and ends?

[55] Robert Bérard draws the connection with scripture: "There will be a time when we 'will see as we are seen' but it is certainly a presumption to think it will be in this life."

truth of what I am saying?) If one has second thoughts about a point, one edits them out or uses them as a straw *person* in one's argument. There is a doubling of authority in exposition. In the opening line to "Outwork" - "This (therefore) will not have been a book." - Derrida writes a declarative sentence (x = y) with its inherent tone of self-insistence while simultaneously undercutting everything about its (and theory's) layering of authority. "[O]ne of the principal things at stake in what is called in my texts 'deconstruction'," says Derrida, "is precisely the delimiting of ontology and above all of the third-person present indicative: S is P."[56] To 'delimit' is to determine the limits or territorial boundaries (OED). The limits of ontology (ontology is concerned with the assumptions about existence underlying conceptual schema, theories, or systems of ideas[57]) inevitably limit what we can say about it. Therefore, an attempt at determining these limits is itself caught within the same boundaries just as what I have said is a *stringing together* of metaphors in my effort at objectifying that of which I am a part. Derrida's opening words take on a declamatory tone as they inveigh against that of which they are a part. Yet, against the background of 'book' and 'preface', such a start demonstrates a multifarious irony, discrepancies, or discord on several levels. The situation is surely ironic: the reader expects theoretical discourse to be straight-forward, clear, and coherent. But in this sentence the confusions multiply with each word. Barbara Johnson describes it this way:

> The opening sentence, "This (therefore) will not have been a book," written in the future perfect tense, marks itself as presentation ("this"), anticipation ("will"), negation ("not"), recapitulation ("have been"), and conclusion ("therefore").[58]

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56 Jacques Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend", 1-8.
57 Antony Flew, A Dictionary of Philosophy (1979), 2nd ed., New York: St. Martin's, 1984.
58 Dissemination, xxxii.

Thus, Derrida gives us the anticipation of a non-completion re-viewed as a present conclusion in the form of a proposition whose status evokes the expectation of a simple statement of intent and content: 'This is a book about x.' What could possibly be more discordant or confusing? On the level of verbal or rhetorical irony, i.e., saying one thing and meaning another, this sentence inscribes a variation which may well be unique and require a new term, 'ontological irony', perhaps. It does a turn on the very assumptions with which words are used. It goes beyond the meta-jokes we saw in Enter Laughing and in the Baby Blues cartoon-strip because it simultaneously plays out and in the ontological difficulty. Barbara Johnson says this of the task Derrida sets himself:

> The challenge here is to "present" dissemination in a disseminative way. In a sense, the very success of such an attempt would be a sign of failure. To perfectly disseminate the exposition of dissemination would require a kind of textual mastery that would belong among the recuperative gestures that dissemination undercuts.[59]

Derrida witnesses this paradox. In an age when ritual gesture is, for the most part, seen as either emptied of belief or filled with superficiality, another kind of gesture may be needed. The gesture which presumes to say everything deserves scrutiny. Derrida's double gesture offers an alternative for our theorizing and by extension for our pedagogy. He admits being caught within the paradox by foregrounding his complicity even as he proceeds. And he does proceed. But rather than invoke the Muse to assist his project, Derrida calls together all the Muses, all the resources of language, all the forms or frames of mind. 'Muse' is from the same Indogermanic root as 'mind': *men-, mon-, mn-* think, remember, intend (OED). The opening sentence to "Outwork" is a convocation, an assembly of resources [*re + surgere* rise], the very play of intention itself. Derrida stands himself in the place of this play.

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59 Dissemination, xxxiii.

This notion that the play of language is the seat of wisdom is a bitter pill to swallow. "Outwork" is the veiled unveiling of this view of philosophy, and it is no accident that it is a preface. Derrida says:

> Speculative philosophy thus proscribes the preface as empty form and as signifying precipitation; it prescribes it, on the other hand, insofar as it is in the preface that meaning *announces itself*, philosophy being always already engaged in the Book.[60]

In his use of lexical differences with the words 'proscribe' and 'prescribe', both with their root in writing (L. *scribere*, write), Derrida discloses the double gesture inherent in speculative philosophy through a demonstration in his text of this doubling and its inevitability, just as I found myself caught in the same double bind as I began this sentence. I discovered that I was writing on two levels (it's happening again), referring to the lexical differences of 'proscribe' and 'prescribe' while realizing that whatever I say of them in particular can be said of writing in general. Proscriptions and prescriptions are both 'writing' *in front of*, one a denunciation against or a putting of something or someone outside, the other an authoritative laying down or imposing and, as such, they are the fibrillation of writing itself. The fibres of writing's roots quiver constantly. They are *always already* in play. Writing, then, denounces its own imposition. In other words, writing denounces its self-announcement. In Derrida, this is done openly, as pronouncement. There is here a play of connotation in 'open' and 'pronounce'. Both the literal and figurative interweave in this text. Derrida's writing is open in its self-effacement, seemingly wiping out its chance at clarity and coherence. It is open in its form as it doubles back on itself with multiple possiblities and inevitable confusions. It bewilders, puzzles, *bemuses*.[61] Writing's difficulty is bound up in

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60 Dissemination, 28-29.

61 William Hare remarks: "If it puzzles, that is one thing - puzzles suggest a capability for negotiation. But being bemused is not the same." Robert Bérard adds (and here I paraphrase from

its own intentions. Its formal utterance (pronouncement) speaks in different ways (pronunciation); it designates without naming (pronoun).

Thus, through one lexical set I arrive at another which displays a similar story in its play. What my little speech (tirade/parade/charade) discloses is not some meaning floating free and then touched somehow by sounds, scratches, or clicks. What is inscribed is the play itself.

> I'll have grounds
> More relative than this - the play's the thing
> Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.
> (Hamlet, II.ii., 615-617)

I reach out with my left hand and pull Hamlet from the shelf. Writing usurps the place of speech; it metes out words, trickling them in at the ear. To see its sovereign sway reflected in its inevitable play, gives "grounds more relative". Any attempt to escape the play merely forms another scene.

It is fortuitous that Hamlet comes to mind since I learned somewhere in connection with Shakespeare that of the forms of humour, sarcasm is the lowest, punning, the highest. To be honest, I find the pun rather annoying in conversation; I am sometimes galled by being sent back to account for that which I did not intend. Those who enjoy punning would find in what I said something other than what I intended. And what, I ask, is the point of this? To take the words as they issue from my mouth and make them mean something quite different, opposite perhaps to what I had intended? My intention was replaced by another kind of tension, a pull or play of tendencies, a non-tension, and, since in effect not being my sense, a kind of nonsense.

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conversation), that he sees 'bewilder' as the flip side of bemuse. One is bemused by one's own bewilderment.

This feeling I have for the 'mindless' punning or play on words is what I suspect many (myself included) feel when attempting to read Derrida with what one might call "interpreter's mind"[62] rather than with the mind of a player. Who wants to be so reflective as to become reflexive in one's speech and writing, forever turning back on oneself and disclosing the unintended tendencies of one's words? Except, that is, in play? And yet, whether we like to turn back or not, words take their own turns, and one good turn deserves another. It is our lot. Cast or drawn, words fall to us as dice in the game.

Möbius strip, recto:

WORDS CANNOT SAY WHAT WORDS CAN SAY SAYING

But, as usual, I have followed my prose away from my own intention, and it remains to try and pick up the threads I dropped earlier.

As Derrida's project is also a deconstruction of Western philosophy,[63] the preface can be read as epitomizing the gesture of conceptual apriority by which Western philosophy writes itself (is written) both in its substance (talking about a beginning as if it weren't already over) and in its structural purpose (meant to precede the beginning). What, then, can Derrida mean by "the end of the preface"? He questions whether such an end is possible.[64] Assuming, as I have, that 'preface' stands for the domain of conceptual apriority, Derrida questions the possibility of such an end. Is he punning on 'end' as both 'finish' and 'goal'?

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[62] My turn on the phrase "beginner's mind" from the way of Zen.

[63] In the interview, "Implications", with Henri Ronse, Derrida describes how his project begins from the textual work, from philosophy as writing, and leads to a questioning of the metaphysics of presence upon which Western philosophy is based. He says of this textual work that it gives great pleasure. "That is, a writing interested in itself which also enables us to read philosophemes – and consequently all the texts of our culture – as kinds of symptoms (a word which I suspect, of course, as I explain elsewhere) of something that *could not be presented* in the history of philosophy, and which moreover, is *nowhere present*, since all of this concerns putting into question the major determination of the meaning of Being as *presence*, the determination in which Heidegger recognized the destiny of philosophy." See Positions (1972), Alan Bass, trans., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, 7.

[64] Dissemination, 30.

Derrida says that it is in the preface that "meaning *announces itself*".[65] This could be read as an end (goal) of the preface although this phrase as issuing from Derrida is not free from the suspicion of irony. His contention is that Saussure's model of signifier/signified is a false dichotomy: try to find a signified, i.e., a word's *meaning*, and all you do is follow a trail of other signifiers. Thus, when Derrida says that in the preface "meaning *announces itself*", it would do to be wary of yet another of his double gestures. For meaning - that which cannot be located but only played out - to announce itself is a twice double bluff, masking the end (finish/goal) of the preface as both empty and double gesture.

The end (finish) of the preface marks the beginning of the exposition proper, that which is foreshadowed in the preface.[66] Derrida says that the end of the preface "is the moment at which the order of exposition . . . and the sequential unfolding of the concept, in its self-movement, begin to overlap according to a sort of a priori synthesis".[67] There has already been one kind of folding back: the hand, having writ its last, takes the last of its last back to the beginning as preface.

Möbius strip, verso:

MÖBIUS IS TO DERRIDA WHAT SHAPES ARE TO THESE WORDS:

(See footnote[68])

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[65] Dissemination, 28.

[66] A cameo comes to mind as an apt metaphor for the preface. A miniature likeness is carved in relief by slicing across the layered strata of the stone, using portions of the different shaded layers as detail in the background to the figure. A cameo is also a brief sketch or acted scene.

[67] Dissemination, 30.

[68] A Möbius strip or band [from A. F. Möbius, German Mathematician, d. 1868] is a surface with only one side and edge formed by joining ends of rectangle after twisting one end through 180° (OED). According to the Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought, 1988, "[i]t is of interest in topology as being the simplest way of constructing topological spaces that have unfamiliar or unexpected properties (e.g., a cut around the band does *not* separate it into two pieces).

To create a Möbius band, cut a strip of paper about a foot long (cutting a letter-sized sheet across the bias will do) and at least an inch wide. Along the top edge of one side, write the 'recto' text given above. Flip the strip over. Along the top edge of the reverse side, write the 'verso' text given above, making sure you are not writing the two texts back-to-back. Twist one end of the

But what about the apriority of this synthesis? Of creating a synoptic view after the fact, then placing it at the beginning? Or, is Derrida again punning on 'end'? Is the goal of the preface to create a sort of *a priori* synthesis where none is ever possible?

Directly following these comments on speculative philosophy being "always already engaged in the Book",[69] Derrida gives us an intriguing footnote.[70] He refers to Feuerbach's treatment of Hegel,[71] specifically to "the question of the Hegelian *presupposition* and the textual residue" which Feuerbach examines "in terms of *writing*". Derrida goes on to explain how Feuerbach, taking exception to Hegel's insistence that exposition was supposed to presuppose nothing, accuses him of speculative empiricism, formalism, pretence, and game-playing. Derrida then remarks: "What is of interest here, beyond each of these terms, is the necessity of the exchange and of the opposition." He then cites Feuerbach:

> But precisely for this reason with Hegel also - aside from the wonderfully scientific rigor of his development - the proof of the absolute has in essence and in *principle* only a *formal* significance. Hegelian philosophy presents a contradiction between truth and scientific spirit, between the essential and the formal, between *thought* and *writing*. *Formally*, the absolute idea is certainly not presupposed, but in essence it is.[72]

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strip 180°, bring the ends together and tape them. The 'recto' text should now lead into the 'verso', and vice versa. You now have a Möbius band, a continuous side and edge. Now cut around the band until you arrive back at the beginning of your cut. (Try not to cut through any text.)

My first introduction of the use of the Möbius band in art was in John Barth's, Lost in the Funhouse. Fiction for print, tape, live voice, New York: Doubleday, 1968. The book is a collection of short fiction beginning with "Frame-tale", a Möbius strip with the text: "ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A STORY THAT BEGAN". According to Barth, the collection explores "ways in which the phenomenon of the disembodied authorial voice can be used metaphorically". (jacket notes)

[69] Ibid., p. 28-29.

[70] Dissemination, p. 29, fn. 28.

[71] Paul Feuerbach, Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie (1839), Kleinere Schriften II, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1970.

[72] Feuerbach, 29.

These words reassure me in my reading of Derrida; in itself and as applied, proof of the absolute is nothing more nor less than the form in which it presents itself. And yet, this reassurance comes at the very cost of which Derrida continually warns us through demonstration. Feuerbach's words are clear and make sense; yet, if, as a result of their clarity and meaningfulness, I take them as true, I have fallen victim to the very absolutism of which they warn. It may be that Derrida is showing us Feuerbach's insistence as equally complicit in this paradox. How can Feuerbach presume to be above the contradiction of which he speaks? Thus, Derrida's interest is, as he says, in the necessity of the exchange and of the opposition. It strikes me as no less significant that Derrida has chosen to frame this opposition, exemplar of that with which his entire project is at odds, in a footnote within a preface. He hides his intention as well as those assumed by speculative philosophy, thereby demonstrating its inevitable hiddenness. Any escape from contradiction invokes and evokes another.

Back in his text proper, Derrida says that this contradiction "necessarily leaves protocolic traces".[73] It is likely that multiple allusions are at work in the word 'protocol'. It connotes the etiquette surrounding formal proceedings, the official formulas used at the beginning and end of a charter, papal bull, or similar instrument; and the first (proto) leaf of a volume, a fly-leaf glued (colle) to the case and containing an account of the manuscript (OED). The preface, as gesture of conceptual a priority, is formality, formula, and first leaf of the instrument of philosophy. "But", says Derrida,

> the contradiction is dissipated when, at the end of the preface, which is also the end of history and the beginning of philosophy, the domain of conceptual apriority no longer knows any bounds.[74]

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[73] Dissemination, 29.

[74] Dissemination, 29.

Thus, Derrida delimits ontology; he determines its boundaries open. What, then, are the pedagogical implications of this unbounded conceptual apriority, this openness?

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In "White Mythology. Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy", Derrida uses Polyphilos, a character in a dialogue by Anatole France, to make his case regarding the hiddenness of abstract language. Polyphilos (a name which suggests a love of diversity or play [*poly*, many + *philos*, love][75]) uses the example of a coin having its embossing ground away as metaphor for what happens to a word through use. Its specific attachments and value are lost in place of an extended exchange value.[76] Derrida lights upon this example and its connection to the word *usure*, meaning both 'wear' and 'usury', that process of exchange by which value is increased. He says:

> Abstract notions always conceal a sensible figure. It seems that the history of metaphysical language is commingled with the erasing of what is effective in it, and the wearing out of its effigy.[77]

This is interesting, this loss by which the word becomes, as it were, universalised and more versatile in its applications. He lets Polyphilos speak for him on both the magnitude and the self-deception of this loss.

> [A]ny expression of an abstract idea can only be an analogy. By an odd fate, the very metaphysicians who think to escape the world of appearances are constrained to live perpetually in allegory. A sorry lot of poets, they dim

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[75] Robert Bérard asks whether 'Polyphilos' is Greek for "crack-filler", a question which I imagine Derrida would appreciate not only for its humour but as offering a possible metaphor for Derrida as philosopher, in contrast with Socrates as gadfly.
[76] William Hare suggests as examples slogans, clichés, etc.
[77] Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology. Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" (1971), F. C. T. Moore, trans., New Literary History, 6, 1974-75: 7.

> the colors of the ancient fables, and are themselves but gatherers of fables. They produce white mythology.[78]

This is Derrida's project: to bring us to a recognition of this hiddenness by demonstrating a kind of writing which reconstitutes itself on and in its own terms. He says:

> Although metaphysical metaphor has turned every meaning upside down, although it has also effaced piles of physical treatises, one ought to be able to reconstitute the original inscription and restore the palimpsest.[79]

The image of the palimpsest [*palin*, again; *psao*, rub smooth], the writing material or manuscript on which the original writing is effaced to make room for a second writing (OED), is particularly evocative in the context of how pedagogy writes itself. The obvious allusion is to the chalk-board with its generations of writers and writing, each superimposed upon another. There is also the Mystic Writing-Pad which Freud offered as model for his theory of the unconscious. The inscription on the celluloid sheet disappears when the sheet is pulled off the wax tablet, but the traces in the wax remain.[80] If, as I suspect, the double gesture offers a way of writing which differs significantly from the oppositional pull of narrative/counter-narrative, perhaps I ought to take Derrida's injunction seriously and reconstitute the palimpsest in my 'classroom'.

Gregory Ulmer makes a crucial point which impinges on the possibility of a deconstructive pedagogy. He says:

> [T]he problem of the "preface," discussed in "Outwork" is identical with the problem of pedagogy in general - of a communication between a teacher (the one who is supposed to know) and a student (the one who thinks he is supposed to learn what the teacher knows). Everything that Derrida says apropos of the deconstruction of the preface applies equally to the

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78 Derrida, "White Mythology", 11. [See Anatole France, <u>The Garden of Epicurus</u> (1908), A. Allinson, trans., New York: Dodd, Mead, 1923, 213-214.]
79 Derrida, "White Mythology", 10.
80 Ulmer, <u>Applied Grammatology</u>, 76-77. Ulmer discusses Freud's model in connection with Derrida's search for a double-valued writing.

> pedagogical discourse, with the student being in the position of the reader of a text about which as yet he knows nothing.[81]

The teacher, then, is in the position of the writer of the text and as such has the role of only being able to clarify by inscribing trace upon trace. In the interests of openness, a teacher may add qualifiers to his or her discourse, such things as: "This is how I see it", "As far as one can tell, based on the evidence", "Of course, I am open to new thoughts on the subject", etc. However, in his or her position of authority over what and how students speak and write -- i.e., as evaluator of their expression -- how deep, really, do these qualifiers go?[82] The teacher's opinion weighs constantly upon student performance. After all is said and done, it is the teacher who gives the final mark, along with which come no qualifiers regarding openness to change.[83]

What can be done, and what many teachers already do in the name of openness and democracy, is to build opinion, position, methods of inquiry in concert with students; and not just in the sense of making believe they (the teachers) are coming up with these things for the first time, but in the actual give and take of improvisation. To improvise is to compose *extempore* (OED), i.e., without preparation. In other words, one does not work from a set or prepared piece or opinion; one literally works *ex tempore*, out of the time, out of that which unfolds in the classroom. This way of working has its detractors who, though admitting its

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[81] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, 161.

[82] William Hare reminds me of Mary Warnock's question: "How much do such provisos actually add to one's understanding?" (See "The Neutral Teacher", Philosophy of Education. Introductory Readings, 139-148.) She considers that it would "create endless confusion" if the teacher were always putting in the covering clause" (141). She is speaking, however, of teaching skills - e.g., the use of Latin syntax and Euclidean geometry - where it would become tedious and redundant to continually add the proviso that this is the usage, "things being as they are". As for using provisos when it comes to teaching the social sciences, Warnock points out that such qualifications can also be mere appendages if "one cannot specify at all what alternatives there may some day be." The main purpose of the teacher here is "not only to impart information but to give to pupils a sense of evidence" (142).

[83] Michael J.B. Jackson, external examiner of this thesis, adds here that "[s]trictly, the teacher does not always give the final word; as well, evaluation can be formative."

usefulness as an *exercise* in collaboration, tend to view it as too off-hand and unpredictable, as a loss of control. The phrase "winging it" is used jokingly by teachers to refer to sessions when one is 'unprepared' and 'fakes' the appearance of knowing one's material. But what this attitude and terminology does is to devalue real improvisation which can be as much an art as the prepared lecture. Working out of time means contradiction, doubling back, repetition, and resetting parameters. This may sound too confusing, a waste of time; but it has value as testimony, humility, and restoration. Or, to echo Polyphilos, it colours the white mythology.[84]

Derrida demonstrates another way of mitigating the weight of authority vested in teacherly tone, teacherly discourse. And this is not to say that I am proposing a complete reversal of pedagogical discourse. In fact, I take my cue from Derrida who determines not to "abandon the territory of the University. . . to empiricism."[85] What Derrida's double gesture does offer, I believe, is a foil, a mirror, a jester which allows the king to see himself, to see the possible other case. This is a pedagogy, as Ulmer indicates in his phrase "Post(e)-Pedagogy", particularly relevant to that area of the curriculum concerned with media studies. The prefix *post*, meaning after or behind, alludes to Derrida's notion of the supplement to language, the trace which can never be located. If we think of a phrase like "post-graduate", which refers to a state after study which is at the same time another, supplementary study, we can feel reassured, I believe, that this is not a call for something unpedagogical. The alternate prefix, *poste*, which Ulmer offers by his use of brackets, is from the French for station or set, as in *poste de*

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[84] William Hare takes my point about improvisation but wonders why earlier on (III.i., 15), in describing my own 'good improvisations', I am suspicious of them. In response, I can only say that I continually question my own motives when I am in a position of authority over others and, as I remind my B.Ed. students, this is not necessarily a sign of weakness. (It feels rather odd saying this in response to a teacher who taught me the value of doubt.)

[85] Jacques Derrida, "Qui a peur de la philosophie?", GREPH, Paris, 1977, 106.

télévision, and alludes to the era of electronic media. His phrase, Ulmer tells us, "refers to a Writing[86] and a pedagogy that is both a move beyond conventional pedagogy and a pedagogy for an era of electronic media."[87] What needs to be shown in the pages to come is the value of Writing as both supplement and alternative.

There in the spaces between our disciplines, our subject areas, are living subjects who express and suppress feelings, exchange notes and glances, scribble and doodle on margins, covers, letters, pencil cases, numbers, graphs, models, and on the images of queens and prime ministers. This is part of what Derrida calls the *mise en scène* of teaching. Taking a breath in the middle of Hamlet's Act II, scene ii soliloquy, I wonder "Are those two really that interested, or is it just my new earrings?" I recall similar so-called 'distractions' from my own school-days: the soft, solemn clatter of beads and the smell of starched linen as 'Sister' walked down the aisle, the dust-bane, the fruit warming in the lunch-boxes, the deep reverberation of wooden window sashes, the tap-tap of the pointer on the board, and on and on. For some of us, those who did well or okay at school, the sensory scrapbook of our schooling is preserved with a kind of dutiful pleasure for the most part. For others, there is no nostalgic replay, only the bitter need to forget.[88]

The scene has its sounds as well. The impressions, the feelings, I write with now flow very easily, black on to an unlined sheet of white paper. (What you see is a mechanical transcription, removed from that initial inscription.) How many years did it take - twelve? fifteen? - before my hand escaped the rule of those pages, that foolscap paper, those Hilroy scribblers where scribbling was forbidden? On a trip to the British Museum some years ago, I saw a special exhibition of manuscript

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[86] Derrida uses the capitalized version to distinguish this practice from the usual ways of writing, a distinction I hope to demonstrate further as we proceed.
[87] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, 157.
[88] Or, as John Portelli adds, to remember in order to resist.

pages from famous authors, the actual creamy writing paper from the hand of Henry James. His handwriting took some getting used to, which is the way with handwriting, especially that from another era. But then, suddenly, I was reading (not deciphering) not only what he wrote and how he formed letters into words but also all the spaces, and turns, the idiosyncratic economies and flourishes from a person's hand, and how they all inevitably make up the tone, the voice of the author. This is not a panegyric on the pen, as if to say that the distancing of the keyboard from the physical act of writing were a lesser form of writing, but just to emphasize the edginess of the properties of the act of writing. The act of someone composing before a computer screen could be captured by a camera with the idiosyncrasies of the keyboard writer manifest on tape rather than on paper. The artifacts of writing in the computer age are both more cumbersome and more economical, an irony inherent in any technology. Change has its costs as well as its advantages. As the handwriting is effaced and the screen takes its place, another system, that of ones and zeros, invisibly intervenes. In a sense, nothing will replace the book though, as a commonplace, its future is foreseeably short. Journals, letters, manuscripts have an immediacy. Where in the scene of teaching does this immediacy lie? How do we reconstitute it, not in a reaction against new technology but as an archivist conserves and catalogues artifacts.

When I write with my students, it is writing writ large, 'Writing' that extends into the margins, into the cupboards and personal archives. It is show-and-tell, passing notes, scribbling graffiti, pasting torn images on the inside of a locker door, on a classroom wall, on the fridge in my kitchen. These are images from the scenes of literacy in an age of multi-media, a polyglot of disciplines, languages, meanings. This is the age our children inhabit, the age we too often attempt to reduce through what Ulmer, following Derrida, calls the Hegelian model of teaching. It now remains to revisit this transmission model and look for clues to a

practice which, as Ulmer says of Derrida's Writing, "is capable of miming the duality of form and force, . . . of presence and what exceeds it."[89] It is the single-sided mimesis - its rootedness in a correspondence theory of knowledge, and its use of the metaphors of realism - against which the 'open' experiments and demonstrations here are contrasted.

[89] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, 77.

III.ii. Decomposition: a lesson in media works

A distinction I alluded to but did not draw out in the previous section is that between deconstruction and decomposition or 'Writing'. Gregory Ulmer begins Applied Grammatology with a description of how as a graduate student, writing a dissertation on Rousseau, he unsuspectingly bought a copy of Derrida's De la grammatologie, and before long found himself more interested in Derrida than in Rousseau. Ulmer says of this shift:

> My interest in grammatology as a pedagogy emerged out of my experience teaching courses in literary criticism, or rather, out of the relation of this course to my other courses, a juxtaposition that made me aware of the disparity between the contemporary understanding of reading, writing, and epistemology and the institutional framework in which this understanding is communicated (pedagogy, curriculum, evaluation).[1]

The odd thing is that I came upon Ulmer in a similar, unsuspecting way. Imagine my surprise to find that Ulmer not only sensed a disparity between arts pedagogy and its context but also turned to Derrida as a clue to a new, postmodernized pedagogy. Ulmer calls Derrida's Writing or decomposition "the practical extension of deconstruction". He quotes an interesting passage in which Derrida voices his displeasure with the fact that such attention has focused on the term 'deconstruction' in his work. He says, "I use this word for the sake of rapid convenience, though it is a word I have never liked and one whose fortune has disagreeably surprised me."[2] Peggy Kamuf, in her introduction to A Derrida Reader. Between the Blinds, makes a similar point, adding that Derrida saw the term 'deconstruction' as only one of a chain which includes other terms such as 'différance', 'spacing' and 'trace', none of which can

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[1] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, ix.

[2] Jacques Derrida, "The Time of a Thesis", Philosophy in France Today, Alan Montefiore, ed., Cambridge, 1983, 44. Cited in Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, x.

"command the series or function as a master word." Kamuf speculates that the success of 'deconstruction' as a term can partly be explained by the timing of its arrival in the 1960s in a theoretical climate dominated by structuralism, in particular the influence of the ethnologist Claude Levi-Strauss.[3] In his influential 1966 lecture at Johns Hopkins, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", Derrida considers that the ethnocentrism of any science based on concepts derived from the European tradition is an inevitable necessity. He states plainly that though no one can escape this necessity, all ways of giving in to it are not equally pertinent. Kamuf sees deconstruction as marking a distance from those discourses which have uncritically taken over the legacy of Western metaphysics. She says

> the distance or difference in question is in the manner of assuming responsibility for what cannot be avoided. Deconstruction is one name Derrida has given to this responsibility. It is not a refusal or a destruction of the terms of the legacy, but occurs through a remarking and redeployment of these very terms, that is, the concepts of philosophy. And this raises the problem, as Derrida puts it, "of the status of a discourse which borrows from a heritage the resources necessary for the de-construction of that heritage itself."[4]

Derrida is cast as the dog who bites the hand that feeds him, a role I suspect he'd play gladly. He might even say "Isn't this what philosophy is all about? It also bites the hand that feeds the self?"

Ulmer sees 'grammatology' as a term with a broader application, embracing both 'deconstruction' and 'writing'. He makes a point to which I alluded earlier, namely, that although many appreciate and agree with Derrida's critique of Western philosophy, they do not all see his way of writing as an

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[3] A Derrida Reader. Between the Blinds, Peggy Kamuf, trans. and ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, vii-viii.

[4] Kamuf, viii. (See Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference (1967), Alan Bass, trans., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, 289.)

integral part of this critique. Ulmer cites Johnathan Culler's study in which Culler recognizes that Derrida's own treatments of literary works are not in themselves deconstructions in the sense in which contemporary literary criticism had been using the term and that therefore critics must look to Derrida's deconstructions of philosophical works for models applicable to literary criticism.[5] As a result of this focus on the term and technique 'deconstruction', Culler dismisses Derrida's readings of art texts. Ulmer, taking the other tack, decides to foreground such treatments. He says

> The difference between Writing and deconstruction may be seen most clearly in the different ways Derrida treats philosophical works (which he deconstructs) and literary or artistic texts (which he mimes).[6]

Ulmer is careful to point out that he does not foreground the term 'grammatology' in order to set up an opposition within the Derridean project but as a means of moving away from the exclusive focus on deconstruction. He views each of the two operations, deconstruction and decomposition, as complement of the other.

In his thesis defense, "The Time of a Thesis" (1980), Derrida chose to include only that work which involved deconstruction. His experimental texts, though they date back, as Ulmer points out, to the late 1960s, were not submitted. Derrida recounted for the academic jury the development of his shifting attitude toward his thesis, but chose to include only his "philosophical" works. Ulmer takes this as an acknowledgement of the division in his project.[7]

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[5] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, xi. (See Jonathan Culler, On Deconstruction. Theory and Criticism After Structuralism, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press ,1982, 212.)

[6] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, x. We will come to mime in due course.

[7] One might speculate as to the openness to experimentation of his jurors. For my part, my committee members and external examiner have been exceedingly tolerant and open to my experimentation. As a consequence, I see that experimenting with the conventions of this process shows how flexible it can be. Or, perhaps, conversely, I have discovered the experiment to which this process has guided me with my interests and experiences intact.

On its face, Ulmer's shift of emphasis in considering Derrida's *oeuvre* has in its favour, it seems to me, the fact that it models Derrida's main point, i.e., that every discourse has its supplement. 'Decomposition', then, could be read as that to which 'deconstruction' inevitably defers. And, if we may judge by the movement in Derrida's work away from traditional analysis and toward a decentred, decomposed way of writing, it seems likely that Ulmer, in shifting to the terms 'grammatology' and 'Writing' in the mid-1980s, was astutely following Derrida's shift from the mode of analysis to the mode of composition. Without restating, or should I say replaying the treatment of Derrida's writing which I offered in III.i, allow me to remind the reader and myself that this move is inevitable. The Derridean mode of analysis (if I may call it that) can only construct analytical frameworks by continually deconstructing itself as it goes, a process manifest through the decomposing effects of the movement of invention to which it[8] throws itself open. Ulmer was surprised to discover what he calls a "fully developed homonymic project at work in Derrida's style."[9] The word-play for which Derrida is famous is often taken as subversive of academic discourse even by those who engage in deconstructive analysis. It was this anomaly which attracted Ulmer to take a closer look. For my own part, I had been intrigued by (what I now see as) a similar phenomenon in the style of Marshall McLuhan, the way his writing was criticized for lacking "the virtues

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[8] My syntax dictates that this pronoun's antecedent is "Derridean mode of analysis", but one might also call it 'philosophy'.

[9] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, xii. There will be more later on the impact of this project for pedagogy, but to amplify slightly, here is more from Ulmer: "I say I was astonished because it is one thing to engage in wordplay, but another thing to sustain it and extend it into an epistemology, into a procedure that is not just a tour de force but that is functional, replicable. This Writing, however, is not a method of analysis or criticism but of invention (and here Writing departs from deconstruction). Writing is the *inventio* of a new rhetoric, with 'invention' – or even 'creativity' – being the 'mana' word of the new pedagogy associated with Writing" (xii).

of its medium,"[10] and how it was thought by many that, for one who so espoused electronic media, McLuhan never extricated himself from the book. His epigrammatic, aphoristic style, loaded with ambiguity, was an easy target from the traditional academic perspective and style of precision and clarity. What seemed to me to be a significant aspect often overlooked by such critics was the way in which McLuhan demonstrated in his style the very point he was making about it, namely, that the medium is the message. The fact that many critics became entangled in criticisms of stylistic considerations in his work demonstrated his point, that we do not see the medium we are 'in', so to speak, which makes it the message we miss on the way to what McLuhan calls content.[11] Similarly with Derrida, to dismiss his 'play' is to miss his point about the inextricability of point from play. Many of McLuhan's critics were unable or unwilling to see that the reflexive relationship between his style and his thesis was the demonstration of that thesis. To say "the medium is the message" is to double back upon one's statement; it writes (about) itself, and doing so responsibly is to embed one's statement-effect in one's statement. Hence, the ambiguity or double-valence of the aphorism is its clarity.[12]

I have alluded to my former work in media theory because I now see that that was the beginning of this or, conversely, this is a continuation of that. It was with this interest in McLuhan that I wondered about the phrase now current

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[10] Dwight MacDonald, "Running It Up the Totem Pole", Book Week, New York Herald-Tribune, July 7, 1964, reprinted in McLuhan: Hot & Cool, Gerald E. Stearn, ed., Toronto: Signet, 1967, 206.

[11] I have elucidated this point more fully in Bias and Media Literacy, Master's Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1991, 11-16 and 111-113. See also Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, 2nd ed., New York: Signet, 1964.

[12] It is worth noting that Ulmer distinguishes Derrida's break with a "narrow and historically determined concept of writing" from what he calls the technological determinism of McLuhan who projected a return to an oral civilization. (See Applied Grammatology, 14-15 and 35, and Teletheory, Grammatology in the Age of Video, New York: Routledge, 1989, 4.)

in language arts pedagogy, 'media literacy'. Earlier, I took up what I consider to be a common use of the term 'deconstruction' in curricular recommendations,[13] but it was the phrase 'media literacy' which first struck me as strange, and following my consideration of 'deconstruction' I now see how these two concerns connect in the context of pedagogy.

We inherit in our pedagogy terms and phrases which come to us from a history of usage elsewhere. As we have seen, the term 'deconstruction' is one such word, arriving as it did through the discipline of literary criticism but also through other disciplines which were taking up the challenge it posed to structuralism. I suspect that the phrase 'media literacy' became entrenched in pedagogical discourse following the success of E.D. Hirsch's book Cultural Literacy. He begins his preface with the statement: "To be culturally literate is to possess the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world."[14] Thus, Hirsch reinforces what is implied in his title phrase, i.e., that the term 'literacy' has become a widespread generic marker indicating competency or knowledge-in-use while the term 'culture', used as an adjective, is reduced to the body of information modifying the prevailing definition of competence. Raymond Williams has described the word 'culture' as one of the two or three most complicated in the English language because of its

> intricate historical development, in several European languages, but mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought.[15]

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[13] III.1., 131-135.

[14] E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Cultural Literacy. What Every American Needs To Know, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987, xiii.

[15] Raymond Williams, Keywords. A vocabulary of culture and society (1976), London: Fontana, 1988, 87. In his introduction to Keywords, Williams explains: "[e]ach word which I have included has at some time, in the course of some argument, virtually forced itself on my attention

Williams also traces the history of the term 'literacy' which has been extended from meaning both an ability to read and a condition of being well-read, to indicate "the achievement and possession of what were increasingly seen as general and necessary skills".[16]

As for the word 'media', as we saw earlier, John Dewey reserves the term 'medium' [L. *medius*, middle] for those instances when means and ends coalesce whereas the mechanistic is defined according to the externality of end to means or vehicle. This is 'medium' in what is generally considered to be the artistic sense of the term, a sense I have found useful in considering pedagogical approaches to the study of media. The following story, from my own practice, illustrates the significant difference between means and medium.

As I mentioned, I ran a theatre workshop in a secondary school. The art teacher and I were working with the players to develop a dramatization of Canadian prose poems.[17] We had decided to render slide images onto large styrofoam sheets to be used as backdrops. One image was of an old tombstone, a Celtic cross, which had fallen over and lay on yellowing autumn grass. The stone was illuminated by long swaths of late afternoon sun, and we thought it might render well in black on

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because the problems of its meanings seemed to me inextricably bound up with the problems it was being used to discuss" (15).

In "Postmoderism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", Frederic Jameson speculates that in this, the "society of the image or the simulacrum" ["the identical copy for which no original has ever existed" (74)]," we witness "an expansion of culture throughout the social realm, to the point at which everything in our social life . . . can be said to have become 'culture' in some original and as yet untheorized sense" (In Postmodernism. A Reader, Thomas Docherty, ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, 86-87). An example of a 'simulacrum' would be Andy Warhol's "Brillo Box". The term 'simulacrum' can also be applied to a commercial product such as a running shoe; the artifact or shoe itself has no original, only the advertiser's image, of which the artifact is an identical copy.

[16] Williams, 184-188.

[17] Our production went 'on the boards' as PROZAIK, at King's-Edgehill School, Windsor, N.S., in 1989. It consisted of a series of sketches developed through improvisation around selections from Kent Thompson's two collections of post-card stories, Leaping Up, Sliding Away, Fredericton: Goose Lane, 1986, and Open Windows, Kingston: Quarry Press, 1988, and a collection of Canadian prose poems, The Lyric Paragraph, Robert Allen, ed., Montreal: DC, 1987.

the stark whiteness of styrofoam, particularly when bathed in the warm gel of a stage light. The art teacher went off to the local building supply store for a large sheet of styrofoam about 4 x 6 feet. On her way back a gust of wind lifted the panel out of the back of the truck and onto the road. By the time she stopped the truck and caught up with the panel on someone's front lawn, it had cracked into three jagged pieces. I was disappointed (though greatly relieved no one was hurt!), seeing this as yet another set-back to our production schedule. But my colleague set to work using the broken pieces. She reconstructed the panel and rendered the image onto it as planned, then we hung the three pieces with spaces between them in the style of a triptych. The jagged edges gave an illusion of monumental weight to the feather-light material, and the triptych arrangement added a religious allusion. Both of these formal elements echoed the subject matter of the rendering and the text of the dramatic sketch. The material means at our disposal had been transformed into medium by an artist open to chance operations.

This story illustrates not only Dewey's distinction but also an attitude and approach to materials which I have come to see as essential to media studies for openness. This is a formal rather than an ideological approach. The engagement in formal interventions, following the material where it may lead, is an example of heuretics or the movement of invention which, as Hamilton said in his Logic (1838), inquires into or after the nature of that which we think about, not the nature of our thinking. After the experience I described above, I began to wonder how the artist's attitude to material might be encouraged in the language arts classroom in conjunction with its mandate to study media. It was with this in mind that I began to wonder about the preconceptions contained in the phrase 'media literacy'. Within the context of a core subject whose content and *modus operandi* are words, i.e., groups of letters, the use of the term 'literacy' to denote general competence suggests a bias, possibly of ideological

proportions. The approach most often taken in the language arts classroom to that branch of its curriculum called 'media literacy' is to 'deconstruct' mass media messages, one of the mainstays of which is the 'deconstruction' of advertising copy, as we saw earlier.[18] It begins from the assumption that the barrage of mass-mediated information and messages must be countered with strategies of analysis leading to institutional critique. As we saw with the case William Bigelow describes, the strategy of introducing conflicting evidence leads students to question not only the content of their curriculum but also the motives behind its propagation. In my treatment of his methods, I have attempted to show that any strategy can be hoist with its own petard, that contradictions can be teased out of any pedgagogy, and that this leads to the Derridean insight that such contradiction is inherent in our sign systems.

William Hare adds: "[s]uch as asking 'Is communication possible?' in a philosophy course?" Though the terms of such a scenario (the question and its context) evoke a contradiction, this is not to say the handling of the question within that context would necessarily allow for the contradictions to, as Bachelard says, accumulate. It is possible that the antinomy would be resolved in a traditional way, through redefinition. On the other hand, this would be a provocative question upon which to base a media course in education. Hare's question evokes one of Derrida's: "Is my death possible?"[19] The question, explains Derrida, follows Heidegger on the concept of time. Heidegger saw in "the whole tradition, from Aristotle to Hegel, a hegemony of the vulgar concept of time insofar as it privileges the now". Derrida extends this insight to the question: "What if there was no other concept of time than the one Heidegger

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[18] See II.ii., 83-91.

[19] Jacques Derrida, Aporias, Thomas Dutoit, trans., Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, 21.

calls 'vulgar'? What if, consequently, opposing another concept to the 'vulgar' concept were itself impracticable, nonviable, and impossible?" And then he shifts to the concept of death:

> What if it was the same for death, for a vulgar concept of death? What if the exoteric[20] aporia therefore remained in a certain way irreducible, calling for an endurance, or shall we rather say an *experience* other than that consisting in opposing, from both sides of an indivisible line, an other concept, a nonvulgar concept, to the so-called vulgar concept?[21]

He refers again to this aporia:

> I suggested that a sort of nonpassive endurance of the aporia was the condition of responsibility and of decision. Aporia, rather than antinomy: the word *antinomy* imposed itself up to a certain point since, in terms of the law (*nomos*), contradictions or antagonisms among equally imperative laws were at stake. However, the antinomy here better deserves the name of aporia insofar as it is neither an 'apparent or illusory' antinomy, nor a dialectizable contradiction in the Hegelian or Marxist sense, nor even a 'transcendental illusion in a dialectic of the Kantian type,' but instead an interminable experience. Such an experience must remain such if one wants to think, to make come or to let come any event of decision or of responsibility.[22]

Enduring an aporia is necessary if one wants to think. I am reminded of an apparently paradoxical concept from John Passmore: what he calls the critical spirit "as distinct from professional competence as a critic of techniques."[23] I take Passmore to be suggesting that the critical spirit is a kind of sensibility which tells one when, in the true spirit of criticism, it is appropriate to suspend the application of critical techniques. Offering students an aporia to be endured rather than an antinomy to be resolved might act as a *koan* for the development

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[20] I take Derrida to be using exoteric (intelligible to outsiders) as a synonym for Heidegger's 'vulgar'.

[21] Jacques Derrida, Aporias, 14.

[22] Jacques Derrida, Aporias, 16. In this passage he frequently cites himself from other works.

[23] John Passmore, "On teaching to be critical", Education and Reason, R. F. Dearden, P. H. Hirst, and R. S. Peters, eds., London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972, 30.

of the critical spirit.[24] Such a problem could well be the question in a philosophy course: Is communication possible?[25]

I ended my treatment of the Bigelow case in appreciation of his disclosure of the difficulties he encountered, and I hope my sentiments did not come across as condescending after my reading of his text. In moving on to Derrida and the contradiction that is diction, I came to an admission of my own complicity; one could as easily take my critique and topple it. This implies a long tendential line of argument/counter-argument which, in a sense, is the only game in town, a game whose strategies we need but which we also need to see and admit as 'game'. Part of the play of language remains to be uncovered in its institutions, education being foremost.

The phrase 'media literacy' epitomizes the way in which the game, or perhaps I should say the game effect, may be assumed but not openly declared and in effect hidden. The phrase may be read in such a way as to disclose a kind of category-mistake, an error in abstract thinking which Gilbert Ryle defines as the allocation of a concept to a logical type to which it does not belong.[26] In the phrase 'media literacy', there is a reversal of genus and species, the former modifying the latter. 'Medium' is the genus [L. *genus -eris*; birth, race, stock]

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[24] *koan*, riddle used in Zen to teach the inadequacy of logical reasoning (OED). The classic example is the question: "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" Paul Reps says: "For the koan itself is the answer, and by the time there is a right answer to it Zen is dead" (Zen Flesh, Zen Bones (1957), Paul Reps, compiler, Middlesex: Penguin, 1973, 91).

[25] I am reminded of the question John Portelli continually asked in his graduate course "Principles and Practices of Curriculum Construction" (Mount St. Vincent University, 1992): "What is curriculum?" All the while, with every definition that the reading list offered, there was something else to show the limitations of definitions. Enduring the aporia was enjoyable for me, but not quite so much fun for others in the class, a condition of which Dr. Portelli was aware and which, from where I sat, he handled with sensitivity.

[26] Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind (1949), Middlesex: Penguin, 1980, 19. Ryle's, now classic, example is that of the visitor to the university who, after being shown colleges, libraries, playing fields, departments, museums, and offices asks, 'But where is the University?', as if, says Ryle, "'the University' stood for an extra member of the class of which these other units are members" (18-19). Ryle's definition does not fit my example, "media literacy", exactly. It is perhaps better to call the phrase "media literacy" a category-reversal.

of which 'letters' or 'literature' is but one species [L. *specere*, look, appearance, kind, beauty]. *Logos* [letters, literature] is but one species of means or medium which happens to dominate the discourse of institutionalized education. To set the categories in an order in keeping with the genus-species hierarchy, one could coin a new series of phrases: "literary mediacy", "visual mediacy", "computer mediacy", etc.[27]

The fact that the term 'literacy' has been over-generalized to refer to competent use of means or media other than words (e.g., 'visual literary', 'computer literacy', 'cultural literacy') seems to me an effect in curriculum discourse of what Derrida calls the 'logocentrism' of Western culture.[28] The "image of perfectly self-present meaning is, according to Derrida, the underlying ideal of Western culture".[29] The written word has wielded, and to a great extent continues to wield, the weight of documentary authority in our tradition. As Barbara Johnson puts it, in commenting on Derrida's insight, "[t]he illusion of the self-presence of meaning or of consciousness is thus produced by the repression of the differential structures from which they spring."[30] Derrida's project illuminates the litany of dichotomies in which the former partner of each pair is the positive while the latter is a corrupt version of, or a falling away from, the former: good vs. evil, being vs. nothingness,

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[27] Gregory Ulmer suggest the word 'videocy' to distinguish competency in the moving image from competency with the written word (literacy). See Teletheory, 16.

[28] I should point out that 'over-generalize' is not a normative term but rather refers to the evolution in the usage of a term. For example, in common usage at this time is the over-generalization of the third person plural pronouns (they, them, their) to stand for the singular since we have no gender-neutral form in the singular, and the option which agrees in number (he/she, him/her, his/hers) is cumbersome. A word's current connotations may come to dominate its root meaning even to the point of meaning the exact opposite. For example, the word 'presently' has come to be used more in the sense of 'now, at the present time' whereas its traditional meaning was 'soon, after a short time'.

[29] Barbara Johnson, "Translator's Preface", Dissemination, ix.

[30] Johnson, ix.

presence vs. absence, truth vs. error, identity vs. difference, mind vs. matter, man vs. woman, soul vs. body, life vs. death, nature vs. culture, speech vs. writing.[31] In setting out to dispel the Cartesian doctrine of the separateness of mind and body, Ryle says

> A myth is, of course, not a fairy story. It is the presentation of facts belonging to one category in the idioms appropriate to another. To explode a myth is accordingly not to deny the facts but to re-allocate them. And this is what I am trying to do.[32]

In responding to students' writing, I find myself reinforcing the dichotomy that through the written word one strives for 'voice', for the immediacy of meaning thought to be present in the spoken word, when the word is spoken and heard simultaneously. By illuminating the differential structure equally at work in spoken language, i.e., the illusion that meaning is present in thought before it is uttered, Derrida foregrounds the graphic nature of writing and the phonic nature of speech. The drawing of the 'lob-beaver' and the intoning of "Ad-im . . . adim, adim, adim . . . ad . . . im . . . im" deserve equal status in a pedagogy for expressive competence. Why is it that we cannot 'read' them? As William Hare suggests, "Because we are (in part) reading for <u>meaning</u> and we cannot understand what is being communicated." Yet they do not lack personal expressiveness, which is a goal of literacy education. How do we allow for and respect the potential of all means of expression?[33]

I hear an objection which brings us full circle again: a teacher can't be an expert in all these areas; that's why we have the various specialties like art, music, dance, etc. But, I ask, what about the specialty called 'media literacy'

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[31] Johnson, viii.

[32] Ryle, 10.

[33] Michael Jackson adds that "[i]t may also be problematic to separate expressiveness from meaning except in a logic-word-based sense of meaning." This raises questions about how a measure for meaning is established and how this measure affects student expectation.

which exists as a sub-category of the language arts curriculum? If, in theory, we grant equal status to all media (written, spoken, figured, gestured) and if we grant that the proliferation of mass-mediated messages are rife with expressions across a range of media, how, then, can we justify the dominance of language arts pedagogy over the development of such an important competence? One might argue that, although it is the language arts curriculum which has a special subcategory for 'media literacy', the teaching of this competence is certainly not limited to that school subject. Also, the positioning of 'media literacy' within language arts, a core subject, ensures that it is taught to all students. These are valid points, to be sure, but they do not change the fact that by subsuming 'medium' under the category 'literature'/'literacy' we, in effect, support the mechanistic.

If we adopt for our pedgagogy the Deweyan definition of 'medium' as coalescence of means and ends, we inevitably support the view of the student as subject-in-herself. We may use words to write a grocery list, speech to give directions, line and space to plot a quick reference. However, in arts pedagogy[34] I strive for something beyond the functional, mechanistic,

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[34] I use the phrase "arts pedagogy" or "arts education" to refer to all of the arts: the figurative, verbal or literary, dramatic, choreographic, and musical arts, and those activities called variously "crafts", "designer crafts", and "folk art". A better way of describing these latter activities might be with the old-fashioned expression "the homely arts". Calling embroidery, quilting, carving, knitting, basketry, etc., "crafts" plays into a distinction between craft and art made largely on the basis of where a thing is made, for whom, or from what materials. Another option is the phrase "the practical arts". But this sets up another unpalatable dichotomy between arts which are practical and those which are impractical or non-practical, meaning those whose use is purely aesthetic. Here the assumption is that aesthetic enjoyment is not practical or useful. Although the word "homely" carries the connotation "plain and unattractive" (OED), it carries a fundamental sense of pertaining to the comforts and values of domestic life (the homely virtues), and is thus an apt description of these activities as they originally evolved. A quilt with a traditional pattern such as the Dresden Plate alludes to a European artifact which may have narrowly survived emigration to a new land. One can imagine how the design of a single cracked but precious reminder of home came to be reinterpreted into new world needs and materials. To re-adopt the phrase "the homely arts" with its derogatory connotations may well be a useful political move against the high art/low art dichotomy.

exteriority of means and ends. As a teacher in the arts, my practice and purposes may conflict with the language of curriculum guides which frequently expresses a means-to-an-end rationale.[35]

The concept 'medium', pluralized and reduced to the status of modifier in the phrase 'media literacy', is effectively limited by evoking common usage of the term 'media' to refer to the institutions, practices, and products of mass-mediated electronic communication. As much as institutional critique is and needs to be a part of education, its role in (language) arts pedagogy ought to include, it seems to me, a critique of its own institutions. If we take the examples of a photograph and a verbal description, both can in theory stand alone and achieve the coalescence of means and ends constitutive of 'medium' in the Deweyan sense. Let me use, as my example in prose, this passage from the beginning of Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy" which follows his preface to Dissemination: "A text is not a text unless it hides from the first comer, from the first glance, the law of its composition and the rules of its game."[36] I offer this *litterale* example of medium. Derrida can only be straightforward when he is pointing the finger back upon what is hidden in straightforwardness. And yet, look at the ambiguity he embeds in his opening: text = not a text. When is a text not a text? Or rather, when is a text both a text and not a text? When it hides its own patterns of operation. Thus, Derrida's statement is a means to its

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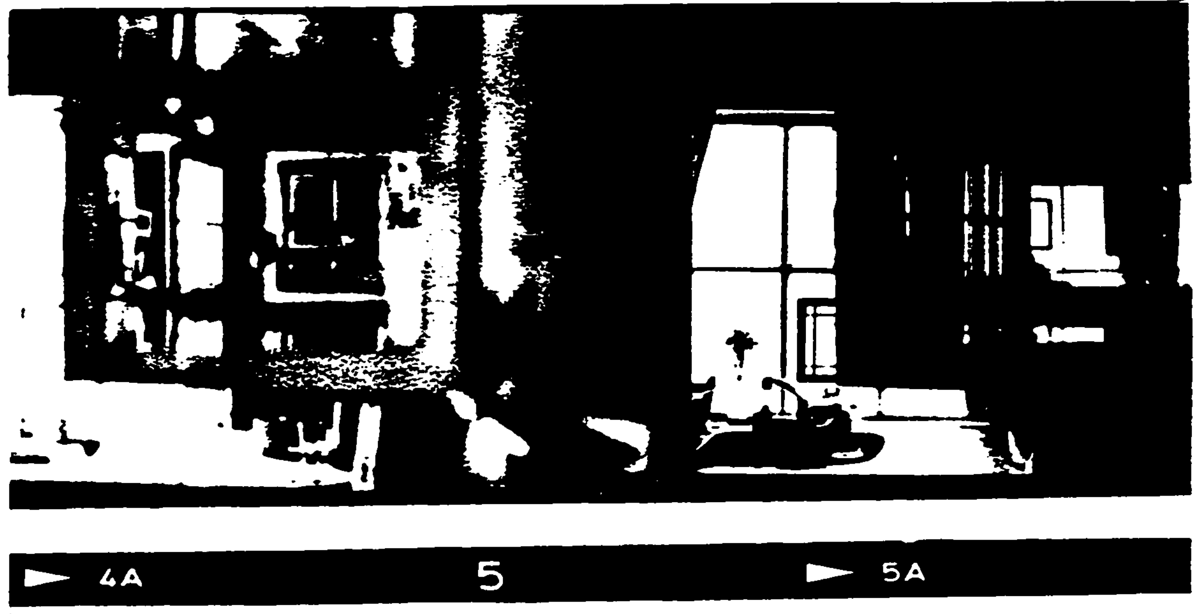
35 The Atlantic Canada Framework for Essential Graduation Learnings in Schools includes the following: "Aesthetic Expression - Graduates will be able to respond with critical awareness to various forms of the arts and be able to express themselves through the arts" (Cited in Arts Education in the Halifax Regional School Board, 1996-1997, Joyce Pierce, Chair, Fine Arts Study Group, Dept. of Educational Programs & Services, January, 1997). The qualitative nature of the arts and of an individual's awareness of them does not lend itself to measurement. This point is one I would hope to teach students of the arts. Thus, I would be opposing the assumption in the above statement that such things can be measured with certainty.

36 Jacques Derrida, Dissemination, 63.

own end, i.e., the point that all text is medium for the taking, or rather 'Writing' or decomposition.

In the following photo, a similar insight can be read:



shooting the mirror

fig. 3.02

There isn't any way out of the picture in order to show how the picture works. This is an image of mirroring. It cannot but mask its own laws of composition. In order to show the mirroring, the photographer must find an oblique angle which cannot both show its perspective and disclose its own position without creating another reflection. Thus it is the means to its own end: photo as both medium and not medium, the inevitable necessity of non-escape.

Granted I have used this verbal means to draw out the mediating effect in each of the examples but one might attempt a similar synthesis with photographic means as in the following. The verbal text is my play on Kamuf's point about the palindromic syntax of the sentence, "A reader reads a reader", and also of the title of her book, A Derrida Reader.

reader reads reader

fig. 3.03

This image may be aporetic on several levels.[37] There are countless questions which a reader might ask about the genesis of this image and its superimposed graphic, questions of the sort, "why take such a picture?", and "why superimpose text over it?" An obvious incongruity is that which exists between the word 'reader' and the photographic subject who is a photographer or 'viewer'. This incongruity is readily dispelled by a search into the roots of the word 'read' which comes from the Old English verb *raedan*, advise, consider, or discern, and which had a similar meaning in Old Saxon, Old High German, Old Norse, and Gothic. But, though one question is in a sense resolved, i.e., the viewer or photographer is also a reader in the sense of being one who considers or discerns, it raises another question about the sense in which reader advises. This leads to a consideration of the root sense of 'advise' [L. *ad*, to + *videre*, see] which implies that reader is viewer and leads into another round of questions about the term 'viewer'. The image may evoke a chasing after traces, thus modelling the inevitable and endless hunt for the elusive meaning. Or, for the less pedantically minded, the permutations of the palindrome may provoke questions around the issue of reading being fundamentally a self-consideration. And what about the stack of 'readers' in the background to the left? Do they read themselves? Are they being read in this image?

I do not pretend that these are new and startling questions. Much of this kind of visual questioning and textual operation has been a staple in the art-world for many years, and, if anything, my simple evocation of such operations, from the artistic point of view, are at least passé.[38] However, it serves to make

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37 *aporia* (Gk. puzzle). Antony Flew offers the following for the term *aporetic*: raising questions and objections without necessarily providing answers. Such a procedure is characteristic of Socrates in the early dialogues of Plato. A difficulty of this sort is sometimes labelled by Ryle and others an aporia [See Dictionary of Philosophy (1979), 2nd ed., New York: St. Martin's, 1984].

38 At the time of writing this, wondering how commonplace art as textual operation still was, I turned to the arts section of The Globe and Mail and found an article by John Bentley Mays on the

my point about the complex relationship between the concept of literacy and that of medium, i.e., that defining 'media literacy' as a process of bringing verbal competence to the analysis of mass-mediated messages assumes a hierarchy of sign-systems (clarity of word over ambiguity of image) and a discreteness among the means of expression at our disposal.

William Hare asks what I might offer by way of an alternative account. My suggestion of using the term 'media' as genus in referring to competency in a given sign-system ("literary mediacy", "visual mediacy", etc.), shifts attention away from the system and onto the learner as agent or mediator. Perhaps something as simple as a shift in the categories of common verbal usage may help emphasize what many educators believe is central to competent communication, i.e., that a facility with a sign-system is an empty competence if it is not employed by a free agent, an empowered learner, one free to make wise and responsible choices. A pedagogy for mediacy, it seems to me, must start with the learner experimenting, discovering, and following the potential of a host of adaptable materials at his or her command. This is heuretics, the art of discovery of which I have been speaking.

My own formal in(ter)ventions serve to demonstrate heuretics, the art of discovery whereby I follow formal connections. The conceptual difficulty embedded in the phrase 'media literacy' provoked inventive exploration by means of a visual as well as a verbal medium, and eventually led to a photographic operation combining visual and verbal text. And, although, for the purposes of this work in pedagogy, my formal in(ter)ventions were embedded

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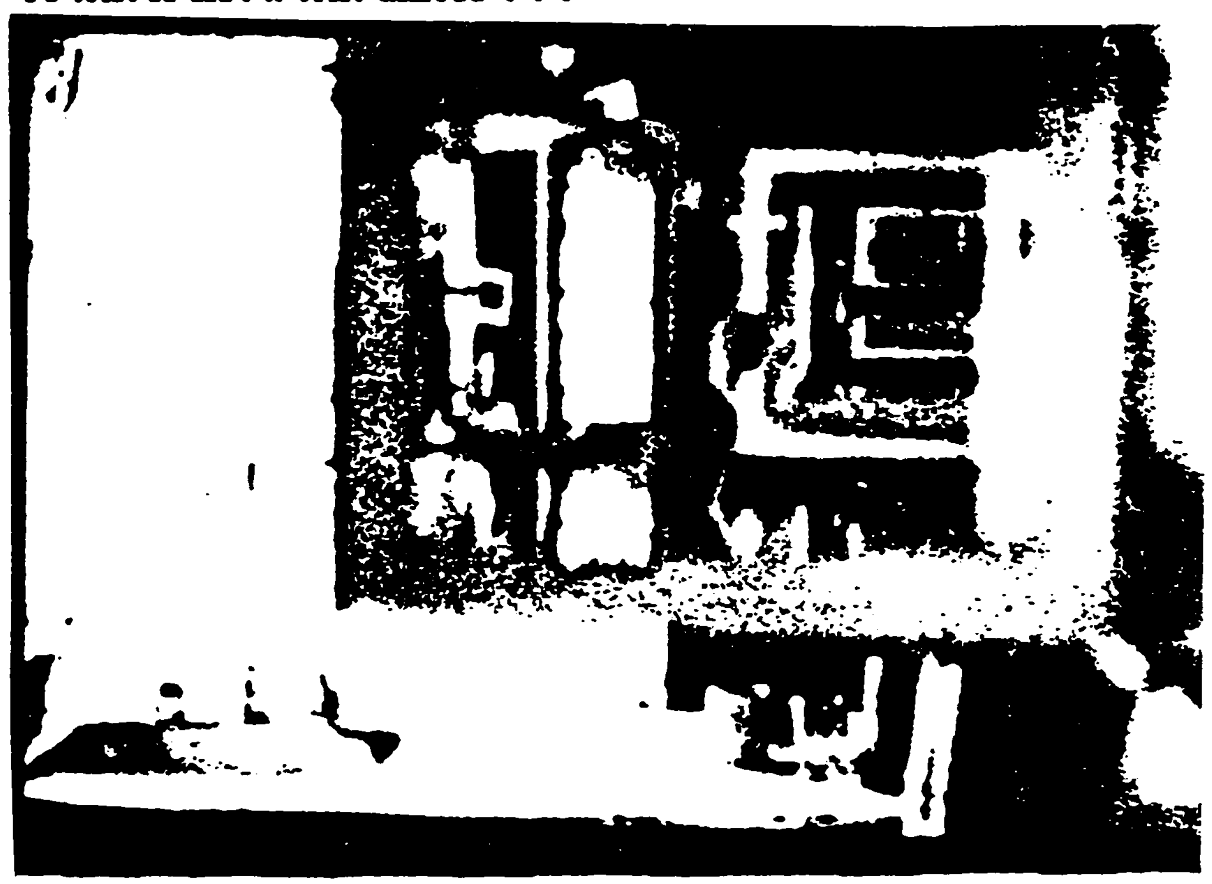
Lawrence Weiner exhibition at the Wynick/Tuck Gallery in Toronto. Mays makes the point that the phrase 'conceptual art' is perhaps the "most misleading moniker in art history" and that Weiner's art "can get a hold on your mind, shaping the ways you think about visual art, culture, the world itself." (See "New York artist puts Words of wisdom on the wall", The Globe and Mail, May 24, 1997.)

in an expository, semi-explanatory verbal text, the elements could stand alone and still prove provocative, a contention which is virtually impossible to demonstrate even with the following reproduction because the reader has already been acquainted with the explication. Nonetheless, it is worth considering these in(ter)ventions again, stripped of the analysis. There is no way of knowing, after all, how a reader may eventually come to recall that media work.

"A text is not a text unless . . .



it hides from the first comer, from the first glance,
the law of its composition and the rules of its game."

fig. 3.04

Must I explain the use of brackets in the formation 'in(ter)vention'? On the level of the single word, is it not another example of means into medium? 'Inter' is a prefix with the sense of 'between', forming words which express mutual or reciprocal action or relation. Simultaneously there is the pun on 'inter', the verb, meaning to in-earth, to bury. The effects of the movement of invention and the materials within which the movement materializes are reciprocal. Formal intervention introduces a change of form; it inevitably invents a new form, which is seen in its difference from the old form, i.e., it is seen as new, as invention, rather than as intervention. Thus, intervention is always buried within invention, as demonstrated in the word become medium, 'in(ter)vention'. This is but one way of forming meaning from in(ter)vention. The play of the two words came to me as 'ter' (L. *terra*, earth) caught my eye in the middle of intervention (L. *in*, in, into, within + *venire*, come), in the space between setting a course and coming to mind. The formation 'in(ter)vention' could also be call an 'exemplary example', a phrase we will return to, but first . . . . . .

I left the question "Why grammatology?" to return to it following these media-work in(ter)ventions. Derrida's project in the early work was to outline a science of writing which he called 'grammatology', thereby foregrounding the "trace, grammè [written mark], or grapheme".[39] It is worth repeating that Derrida sees this project as a necessary response to logocentrism, the belief in the self-presentation of meaning which he sees as the underlying ideal of Western metaphysics. And, as Barbara Johnson points out, his critique is not a simple reverse of the value system, putting writing ahead of the immediacy of speech which it is expected to palely imitate.

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[39] Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology (1967), Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak, trans., Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University, 1976, 9.

> Rather, he attempts to show that the very possibility of opposing the two terms [speech and writing] on the basis of presence vs. absence or immediacy vs. representation is an illusion, since speech is *already* structured by difference and distance as much as writing is. The very fact that a word is divided into a phonic *signifier* and a mental *signified*, and that, as Saussure pointed out, language is a system of differences rather than a collection of independently meaningful units, indicates that language as such is already constituted by the very distances and differences it seeks to overcome. To mean, in other words is automatically *not* to be. As soon as there is meaning there is difference.[40]

In his preface and several times throughout Applied Grammatology, Ulmer emphasizes that Derrida's project, his "compositional attitude", is addressed to the needs of what Ulmer calls a "multichanneled performance - in the classroom and in video and film as well." It is as if the theorizing around this point breaks down as one goes into a decomposed version of its former self or, rather, of the self theory set out to be. I observe this falling away from intention and expectation in my own writing, particularly in my role as a Derrida reader.[41] Ulmer says that "'Writing' as Derrida practises it could be called Scripting", and he uses the example of La carte postale as a book which has the status of a script.[42] It is a work which, according to Ulmer, "elaborates a tripartite script -- picto-ideo-phonographic". It consists of

> a discursive commentary (the phonetic level); examples interpolated ("pinned") into the discourse (the ideographic element); and "found"

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[40] Johnson, ix.
[41] Ulmer's development of the conceptual neologism "mystory" and his account of how it came about are examples of how one is affected by decomposition to start decomposing. (See, Teletheory, chp. 3.) Another example is the writing of the curriculum theorist Jacques Daignault who also appears to be de-composing. (See "Traces at Work from Different Places", Understanding Curriculum as Phenomenological and Deconstructed Text, William F. Pinar and William M. Reynolds, eds., New York: Teachers College Press, 1992, 195-215.)
[42] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, xii-xiii.

> pictorial material (such as . . . the post card from the Bodleian Library featured in *La carte postale*).[43]

'Script' is a metaphor that appeals to me. In a script for stage or screen, there are many kinds of markings from the words characters speak to the detailed descriptions of the physical arrangement of set and positioning of lighting to the image boxes of a story board and the various orthographies which mark the different status of the various inscriptions (e.g., dialogue is marked differently from stage directions, etc.). A script demonstrates a vast range of purposes within purposes. Even the most apparently disparate sets of purposes - those of the characters in the drama as contrasted with those of the many facilitators (directors of set, costume, lighting, sound, front of house, etc.) of the illusion required for the necessary suspension of disbelief - can also be seen as part of this overall attempt at scripting. The script itself is a "multichanneled performance".[44] The conventions of the written script (particularly the traditional theatrical script) are quite well known, tend to be taken for granted and are not 'seen' as a composite kind of writing.

In his attempt to describe what decomposition will look like, Ulmer says that "[t]he first lesson for this future word-thing Writing is derived from the miming, in Derrida's essays, of the 'picto-ideo-phonographic' inscriptions of non-Western cultures."[45] In order to understand how this can be the case, Ulmer takes us back to Derrida's interest in early forms of writing, in particular to the hieroglyphs,[46] which

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[43] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, 99. Ulmer also cites Derrida's La Vérité en peinture (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1978) as an exemplary work in tripartite script.

[44] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, xii. Ulmer uses the phrase to refer to Writing.

[45] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, 98. He cites Derrida's Of Grammatology (1967), Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak, trans. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University, 1976, 90.

[46] It is in Of Grammatology, chapter three, "Of Grammatology as a Positive Science", that Derrida writes extensively on the origins of writing.

> themselves were tripartite, including figurative characters (literal representations of objects . . .); a symbolic element, expressing abstract ideas by analogical extension of the figurative images; and phonetic characters (figures used exclusively for their sound value).[47]

It is in the miming of art-works that interests meet, my interest in the artist's attitude to materials, and Derrida's in following the ways of working of the avant-garde. Ulmer mentions many times the importance to Derrida's project of the miming of vanguard art-works, a practice Ulmer follows in the creation of his own multi-channeled performance, "Derrida at the Little Bighorn".[48] I would like to demonstrate why I agree with Ulmer that this miming is the crux of decomposition and how miming began very early in my own investigations, long before I discovered Gregory Ulmer's valuable work.

. . . . .

In 1970, Michael Snow represented Canada at the XXXV International Biennial Exhibition of Art in Venice. In a piece called First to Last (1967), two seven-foot squares of grey-painted two-inch plywood stand upright and parallel at two inches apart. There are two viewing slots through which one catches chance reflections on the aluminum lining between the sheets of plywood. Snow says of the work,

> I am interested merely in framing itself. This piece is a kind of absolute that frames things that are fortuitous. It is totally symmetrical, a perfect square in middle-grey, turned in on itself. The experience it gives should just happen; then maybe later you should think of how it is done.[49]

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[47] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, 98-99. He cites John T. Irwin, American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Heiroglyphics in the American Renaissance, New Haven, 1980, as signaling a renewed interest in hierglyphics.

[48] In Ulmer's Teletheory.

[49] Michael Snow, XXXV International Biennial Exhibition of Art, Venice, June 24-October 31, 1970, organized by National Gallery of Canada, Brydon Smith, Exhibition Commissioner and curator, Joanna Woods Marsdon, Commissioner for Canada, Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970, 19.

Here, it seems to me, is a way of thinking and proceeding which models the attitude that attracts me to the art of invention, to the way of following the materials. It is putting ulterior/mechanistic motives aside, imposing chance whic is, of course, another kind of motive but one which grows out of involvement with the material process itself and which thereby gives chance a chance or at least more of a chance than it is usually granted in a means-to-an-(exterior) end methodology. It is an imposition of chance, an aleatory operation.

Another of the works in the exhibition is Authorization (1969) which again demonstrates Snow's interest in framing. This work has haunted me since first reading about it and seeing it reproduced in the exhibition catalogue. This is the first time I have stopped to write about it although, as you will see later, I have responded to it through my own series of visual in(ter)ventions. Why does Authorization resound so in my thinking around media and pedagogy? I suspect it has to do with its way of writing, a form of decomposition. But, before continuing, we must look at it in its workings. You need to go through its 'events' with me. My description is assisted by that of Brydon Smith, curator of the show. I began my consideration by drawing the following sketch of the work as a means of both reproducing the photograph from the catalogue and putting myself through a step-by-step visual process which mimes in pen and ink what Snow has done in polaroid photos.

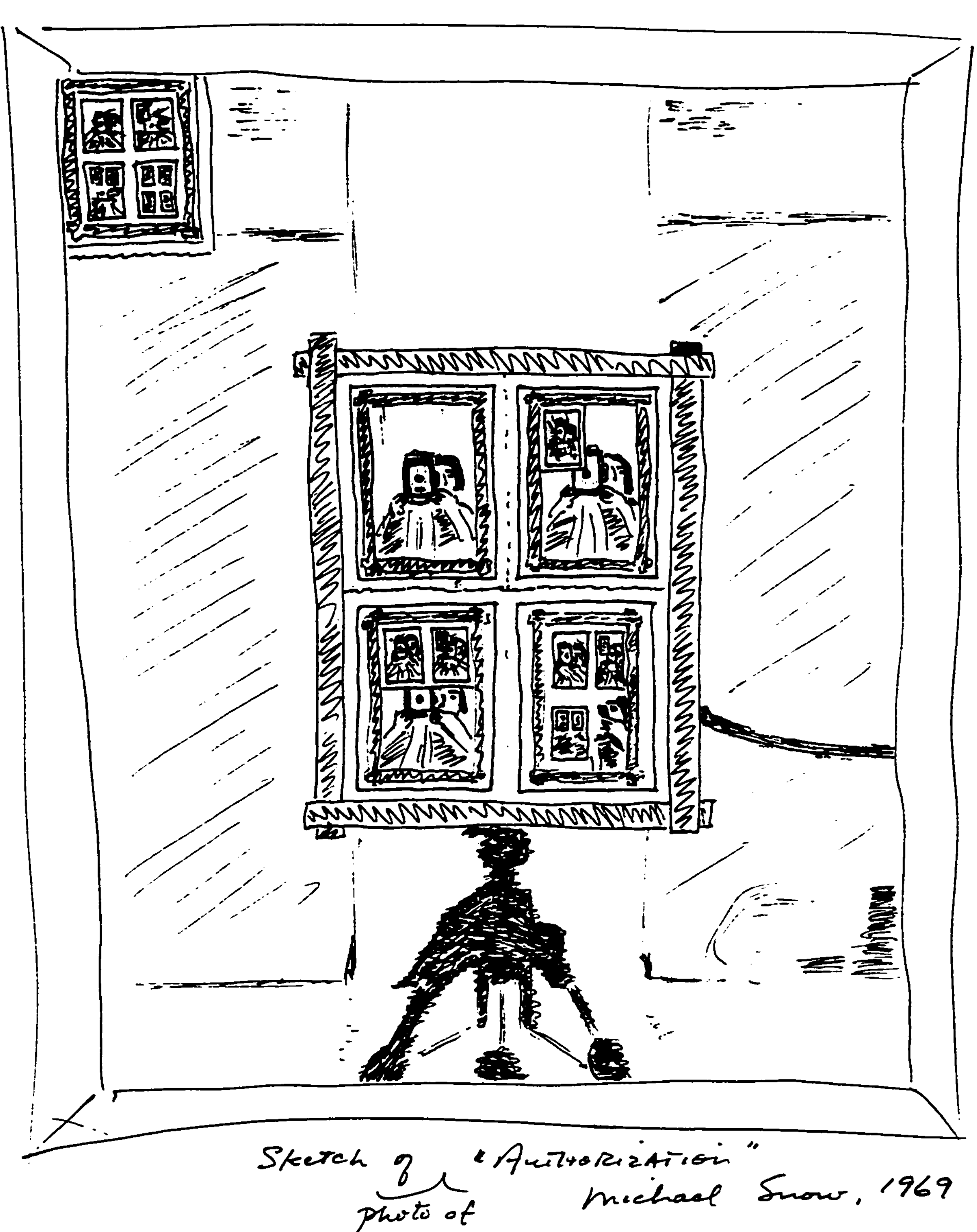

fig. 3.05

Authorization is a series of polaroid photos taken by pointing the camera into a mirror. The outer frame is that of a mirror which is of approximately the same proportions as those of a polaroid photo. Snow used gaffer's tape to mask off an area in the centre of the mirror which would frame a series of four polaroid photos as they emerged from his operations. He framed himself and his camera within the masked-off area of the mirror and, focusing on the mirror image of himself, took the first photo which he then glued to the upper left corner inside the rectangle. The second photo is taken from the same point of view and now includes the first photo on the mirror's surface. As Brydon Smith points out, the first photo appears blurred in the second photo because the camera is focused on the mirror image, not on the mirror surface. The procedure is repeated until the rectangle is full, and "the fifth shot, which simply records this conclusion, is glued to the upper left corner of the mirror."[50]

Smith explains that he has given such a detailed description of the making of Authorization "because how it was made determines what it is."[51] This could, of course, be said of any artifact. How, then, has this statement particular relevance for Snow's piece? If anything which is made is necessarily determined by how it is made, what special sense of process does Smith refer to in Authorization? Smith goes on to say that this work is

> a beautiful reconfirmation of one of Snow's main artistic tenets since 1960, namely that the content of his art follows from the process of its realization. It is realism of process.[52]

But, again, can we not say this of any work in that it is necessarily the realization of its own process? The difference is in the emphasis or focus of the process. To what does the artist direct the viewer's attention?

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50 Brydon Smith, Michael Snow. XXXV International Biennial Exhibition of Art, Venice, 23.
51 Smith, 23.
52 Smith, 25.

By André Malraux's account, modern art could not have been born without the death of the art of fiction.[53] Western painting moved through a series of discoveries - techniques such as foreshortening, the portrayal of volume and texture - on a path toward making the work more "true to life".

> It followed naturally that illusion should become the supreme form of expression and the criterion of value . . . . And from this, in turn, came the accepted practice of subordinating the execution of the picture to what it represented [resembled].[54]

According to Lyotard, academicism had assigned to realism the task of preserving various consciousnesses from doubt. This task has been taken over by photographic and cinemagraphic processes. With a circulation so much faster than that of narrative or pictorial realism, the fantasies of realism multiply.[55] Realism, says Lyotard, "intends to avoid the question of reality implicated in that of art".[56] In other words, narrative or pictorial realism creates its resemblance of reality by hiding the question concerning reality upon which acceptance of this resemblance *qua* resemblance depends. The question, it seems to me, is this: What do I accept in accepting an illusion as reality? This question begs another which provokes the fundamental insight regarding human knowledge: In distinguishing between illusion and reality, am I assuming that both exist beyond my knowledge of them? I cannot assume this with certainty.

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53 André Malraux, Museum Without Walls (1965), Stuart Gilbert and Francis Price, trans., London: Secker & Warburg, 1967, 36.

54 Malraux, 47-48. At the end of Malraux's text, I offer 'resembled' as a more accurate term than 'represented', following the useful distinction made by Gordon Graham who points out that there is a difference between representing something and rendering its appearance. (See: Gordon Graham, "Value and the Visual Arts", Journal of Aesthetic Education 28, 4, 1994: 4.) I would suggest that tokenism is an example of a rendering of someone's or something's appearance, which falls short of appropriate representation. Conversely, an archetype or symbol may represent a variety of human experience while lacking obvious resemblance to the life of any one person or group.

55 Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (1979), G. Bennington and B. Massumi, trans., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, 74.

56 Lyotard, 75.

Thus, the techniques of narrative and pictorial realism may draw us into or reinforce our tendency toward accepting epistemological realism. In Authorization, Snow does not avoid the question of reality implicated in that of art. He acts out the question of reality by making the process of the work as it unfolds into its own subject. And I mean both senses of the preceding ambiguous statement. Thus, the work is "realistic in the fullest sense . . . [t]he approach is phenomenological in nature, dealing with the appearances and gestural modes by means of which physical things are presented to our consciousness."[57] Here again we have *heuretics* or the art of invention "which treats of those conditions of knowledge which lie in the nature . . . of that which we think about."[58] Speaking of the work of Carl André, Philip Leider says "the order which André imposes on materials is not designed so much to create an object as to create a set of conditions which we experience as art."[59] Though any art object can be said to be a set of conditions we experience as art, it is realism of process that creates these conditions without reifying art as object. Put another way, in realism of process the phrase *objet d'art* is transformed from its usual meaning of "art-object" into its possible other interpretation, "the object [purpose] of art".

By now my reader may have begun to draw connections from my comments on art to the process of learning in general. The applicability of the

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57 Marcia Tucker, Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Material, exhibition catalogue essay, New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, May 19-July 6, 1969, 33. Though Tucker is referring to all the works in the exhibit, she goes on to say of Snow that he makes films "in which actual duration eliminates the illusion of a duration created by narrative exposition. . . . A mysterious, subjective quality results from the intensity of presenting what is *seen*. 'I'm interested', he says, 'in doing something that can't be explained'" (38). As an addendum to and further acting out of the realism of process, I should add that this exhibition catalogue, on loan from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, carries these hand-written words on its inside front cover-leaf: "This book was given to the library by Michael Snow."

58 W. Hamilton, Logic, as cited in the OED. See also this work, III.i., 126-128.

59 Tucker, 10.

one to the other is becoming more obvious to me as I write. But, rather than draw these out, I prefer only to suggest that such a process may be pedagogically significant. The potential for more of these connections will arise as we go on.

My early interest in artists' ways of working led me to a collection of essays on Dada, in particular to a piece by Marian Malet, "Hans Arp and the Aesthetics of the Workshop".[60] Later on, the trail led to various more recent documents, including one by Ian Hunter which traces the conceptualization of aesthetics within the cultural studies movement as the foil in which the cultural studies project is set (my metaphor). Hunter questions the assumptions underlying the slogan of the project to "politicize aesthetics" and collapses the opposition between politics and aesthetics in a view of the latter as a practice of the self. He calls aesthetics an ethic:

> an autonomous set of techniques and practices by which individuals continuously problematize their experience and conduct themselves as the subjects of an aesthetic existence.[61]

From what I have demonstrated thus far about the provocative, puzzling, even aporetic effects of proceeding heuretically, which is to say by invention rather than by justification,[62] it follows that I conceive of aesthetics as intrinsically political [Gk. *polites*, citizen; *polis*, city]. Every expression, gesture and move impinges, intervenes in the world, and is a public [early L. *poplicus*, *poplus* (later *popul-us*) people] inscription. The attitude of the artist to his or her

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[60] Marian Malet, "Hans Arp and the Aesthetics of the Workshop", New Studies in Dada. Essays and Documents, Richard Sheppard, ed., England: Hutton Press, 1981, 67-74.

[61] Ian Hunter, "Aesthetics and Cultural Studies", Cultural Studies, L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, & P.A. Treichler, eds., New York: Routledge, 1992, 358.

[62] Ulmer (Teletheory, 56) makes the distinction between discovery and justification, claiming that the "educational apparatus" has until now maintained them "as absolutely separate dimensions of thought". It seems to me that this separation is evident in the sub-distinction between 'creative writing' and 'expository' or 'essay writing'.

working space, workshop or studio [L. *studere*, study] and to its many relationships and interventions is inherently political. The art-work is a public expression; it witnesses the process of becoming *aestheticized*, of intensive sensory engagement of self with material. The fact that art-works have been mythologized, institutionalized and commodified permits the redundancy inherent in the slogan "politicize aesthetics." The aesthetic is political.[63]

For me, then, Malet's phrase "aesthetics of the workshop" offers no contradiction or opposition between notions of ideal form and the practical everyday matters associated with a place and the procedures of working something through. Art, like philosophy, is a doing, a set of procedures, operations and in(ter)ventions that one performs in an effort to come to terms with the terms by which we term our coming to term(s). Malet says:

> In considering the notion of the workshop, it is immediately clear that this is a place of trial, building and development and thus of growth and change - two favourite themes of Arp the visual artist . . . This interest, which spills over into his poetry, is not directed towards the mechanisms of growth and change, but rather to their immanent forms.[64]

In his comments on Authorization, the curator, Brydon Smith, is not talking about a reproduction of it, as I am forced to by approaching the work through an exhibition catalogue. What I have given you here is a sketch of the photo-reproduction printed in the catalogue, hence, you see the tripod and the extension cord for the shutter release. Authorization, then, discloses not only its own process of realization but also that of the photographer attempting to reproduce it. In order

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63 William Hare asks: "Is it redundant if the connection (the aesthetic is political) has been ignored or lost sight of?" With my sense of 'aesthetic' as deeply political, it would be redundant (or perhaps ironic) were I to utter this phrase. However, for a speaker or writer who is working from a sense of 'aesthetic' as the production and appreciation of art-objects, it would not be redundant to utter it. It strikes me as ironic, though, this attempt to make political that which, if more broadly conceived, could be seen as the root of the political, i.e., aesthetic judgement seen as the self-conscious (reflective) sensory relationship of self with world.

64 Malet, 67.

to photograph the two-dimensional surface of the mirror in such a way as to get in focus what is in focus across the surface of the work, the photographer is obliged to place the camera lens parallel to that surface. Hence we see the tripod, presumably considered preferable to the inclusion in the photo-reproduction of the image of the photographer him or herself. In sketching the photo, I am not bound by the same limitations as the photographer (though other limitations obviously apply, such as the difficulty of reproducing the effect of something out of focus). I could have left out evidence of the photo-reproductive process. But it was only after going through this process of reproducing the photo in a line drawing that I realized the anomaly, i.e., the evidence not accounted for in the curator's essay. In miming Authorization, one is bound to leave one's traces in the work.[65]

[65] And, in response to William Hare: I do mean 'bound' in both senses.

IV. Interregnumization: a realism of process

I ended the previous section abruptly, giving my reader little by way of explanation for my use of Snow's Authorization although it goes without saying that the context in which an example exists has a complex arrangement of attachments to that example. I spoke before about an "exemplary example", but before saying more about why I find it useful for a heuretics of pedagogy, I believe it will help tie things together if I approach it through the concept of authority.

In educational debate over concepts of authority, focus shifts back and forth from one side of the equation to the other, from the forces in control over the learner, those said to be *in authority*, to the learner as agent, as 'authoring' or originating her learning and place in the school and in the world. Educational authority as social control tends to dominate debate over discipline and accountability, while the agency of the learner is referred to variously as education for autonomy or individuality and figures in the discourse around learner empowerment.[1] In general the idea underlying the notion of learner as agent is that each of us is unique in her place and perspective in the world and is therefore best served and best enabled to serve others by developing and drawing from her own natural interests and capacities. This assumes that there are such things as 'natural' as opposed to conditioned interests and capacities. It assumes they are 'good' interests and capacities. And it assumes an ideal start for a human being or at least the possibility of going past the 'bad' or misdirected, unnatural self to a learner's best self.

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[1] Both emphases are sometimes evoked in discussions of democracy and education, i.e., education for social reproduction as opposed to education for individual autonomy. (See, for example, Amy Gutmann, Democratic Education, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.)

It seems appropriate that an educational system begin by giving everyone the benefit of the doubt. It is for the legal system to codify policy for deciding how society ought to respond to anti-social acts. And even under the law, one is presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Can we do any less in a system of education? It is, after all, a goal of public education to develop in youth a sense of responsibility for their actions?[2] This is not to say we ought to discount past experience as represented in the available evidence on public record, nor that the benefit of the doubt ought necessarily to be granted blindly, as it must in the case of legal judgements leading to the removal of a basic human right like the right to life or to freedom of movement. Beginning, then, from the assumption that everyone may have a better self, how can education nurture this potential?

Israel Scheffler identifies three myths attached to the notion of human potential: (1) the myth of fixed potential against which he contends that potentials and their realizations vary over time, (2) the myth that one's potentials are harmoniously realizable[3] and (3) the myth of uniformly valuable potentials against which Scheffler holds that people are potentially evil as well as good. In talking about students' *realizing their potential*, one needs to be vary of assuming these

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[2] Michael Jackson adds "Is the real issue here individual liberty? We have chosen to assume that the burden of proof lies on a state wishing to intervene. This may eliminate beliefs about the goodness of human nature and the existence of innate potential."

[3] Israel Scheffler, Of Human Potential. An Essay in the Philosophy of Education, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, 11-16. Citing William James' remark that the philosopher and the lady-killer cannot both keep house in the same tenement of clay, Scheffler offers these examples of discordant potentials: "heavyweight boxer and ballet-dancer, automobile mechanic and dressmaker, cardiovascular surgeon and longshoreman" (128). I would suggest that the members of these pairs are not necessarily mutually exclusive. I can imagine the choreographic potential in the steps of a boxer, and mutual exclusivity in the second pair seemed based upon a stereotype of the 'mechanic as grease-monkey'. The potential of becoming a prize-fighter might better be contrasted with that of becoming a concert violinist or pianist. The risk of injury to one's hands involved in realizing the former potential obviously mitigates against the latter. The members of the third pair assume a degree of manual labour to longshoremen which, with the advent of the container ship, is becoming a thing of the past. Surgeon and boxer would be conflicting goals in terms of physical risk and insofar as the intention to inflict physical injury conflicts with the intention to heal.

myths, keeping in mind the normative assumptions upon which talk of 'realizing potential' is based. We are talking about good, publicly acceptable potential, not the development of, say, criminal potential. It may appear that this distinction goes without saying; but, unless the counter-example is kept in mind, one may begin to operate under the misconception that helping students realize their potential is a fairly straightforward matter of identifying potential through testing and other forms of evaluation, then implementing means of realizing it. Scheffler calls this a question of fact coupled with a question of technology, a comforting picture which is seriously flawed.[4] In contrast, his account of human potential is based upon a view of human action as "mediated by intention, belief, and symbolism."[5] The difficulty of mediation is that it is hermeneutic. Determinations leading to action are based upon interpretations which impinge on intention, belief and symbolism and are impinged upon by them. All action, including interpretive acts, is mediating and mediated in this way.[6] This is the key difficulty to which I shall return.

The myths Scheffler identifies and the misconception they foster have figured perhaps most famously in the common misconstrual of Dewey's theory of experience, i.e., that teaching is a matter of following student interest, that therein lies a direct route to student potential.[7] This misconstrual is worth looking at in light of my injunction to follow the movement of invention. Talk of openness may

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[4] Scheffler, 14.

[5] Scheffler, 16.

[6] Scheffler focuses on the nature of human potential in general. There are, however, moments which suggest the difficulty regarding interpretation. For example, he says: "... people are not only extended in time, but understand themselves as thus extended, forming their self-conceptions through rootedness in a past conserved in memory and directedness toward a future guided by aspiration. The child's conception of its own potentials is not an isolated thing, cut off from such temporal integration. Its growing powers reflect and stimulate a growing sense of self, and the exercise of such powers closely meshes with developing motivation and adult purpose" (112).

[7] Dewey's Experience and Education (1938) is the philosopher's concise refutation of many of the misinterpretations following the lack of understanding of his philosophy of experience.

conjure images of a *laissez-faire* attitude to student behaviour, that is, that we should let students follow their interests and learn through experience. A romanticized version of learning from experience is the Horatio Alger character of the bootblack or newsboy (today's runaway, drop-out, street-kid) who learns at the "school of hard knocks" how to "pull himself up by his own bootstraps" and whose virtue is rewarded with success and riches. The real life of a child left to his or her own devices does not have a mandatory happy ending. Learning by trial and error can be very dangerous. If we think of Dewey's example of the wise mother who saves the child who gets too close to the fire, we can imagine the intensity with which she would be on guard against another such incident, watching for signs that the child had learned to predict the possible adverse effects of such a danger while ensuring he or she come to no harm. The balance, as I mentioned before, between giving the child freedom to experience things on her own and restricting that freedom in the interest of safety is delicate and sometimes precarious. Take the example of the parent whose teen-aged child asks to borrow the car for the graduation dance. As far as the parent knows, the teenager has always acted responsibly behind the wheel. Will this hold true under the exceptional circumstances of the grad dance, a rite of passage sometimes viewed as excuse for the party of all parties?[8]

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[8] CBC Radio's "As It Happens" (June 10, 1997), interviewed a grade ten student in Golden, British Columbia, who helped stage the deaths of six fellow students as a statement about the dangers of drinking and driving. There was no warning that this was a dramatic enactment. The Montreal Gazette ["Driving-death hoax angers B.C. students" (CP) June 10, '97] reported that the school principal had made the shocking announcment. Ten minutes later, a second announcement explained that the first was part of a simulation. The radio interviewee, when asked by Michael Enright if she thought the adverse effects of this action were worthwhile, responded to the effect that sometimes people have to be upset in order for an important point to be made. Bigelow's mock theft pales in comparison. One wonders what official line the school took after this action. According to the young woman interviewed, the idea was entirely that of the students.

This action can be compared to that of 'outing' gays and lesbians. The assumption in both cases, it seems to me, is that the common good must take precedence over individual rights, a difficult if not impossible case to argue under the most dire circumstances such as imminent warfare and the question of whether or not to conscript citizens into military service. Those

"The function of knowledge," says Dewey, "is to make one experience freely available in other experiences."[9] Although the freedom to experience is essential, it needs protection from the tyranny of freedom for its own sake. Dewey was thorough in outlining the responsibilities of the teacher in directing student interest. "Freedom of outward movement," he says, "is a means not an end. . . . Everything then depends, so far as education is concerned, upon what is done with this added liberty. What end does it serve?"[10] Dewey describes the advantages "which reside potentially" in increase of outward freedom whereas under the strictures of enforced, regimented movement and response, students "put seeming before being."[11] Students learn to go through the motions, to behave to an enforced standard of what constitutes a 'good student'. In his novel Hard Times, Dickens gives us the dictatorial school-master in the person of Thomas Gradgrind who works ruthlessly to eradicate from his pupils' thinking any idea not based upon "facts, facts, facts". We know, of course, that Gradgrind is an extreme example of a utilitarian approach to teaching and that many regimens are adopted willingly and without requiring one to surrender to a form of oppression; for example, games, dances, and the play of witty repartée.

It may seem, however, that Dewey does not consider the cases of ritual and licence. Uniform movement and response are not necessarily more limiting of one's sense of freedom than no such uniformity. Take the example of the monastery or convent in which the rule or order is itself a means of freeing people from the more mundane concerns of everyday life. Conversely, a lack of

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fighting to end the senseless pain caused by discrimination may well argue that they too are on the 'front lines', that the statistics show no marked improvement through educational means, and that drastic action is required. This is the argument for terrorism, and, although I can see how desperate times might lead someone to desperate acts, it remains the school's responsibility to point out the difficulties of this argument.

[9] Dewey, Democracy and Education (1916), New York: The Free Press, 1966, 339.

[10] Dewey, Experience and Education, 61.

[11] Dewey, Experience and Education, 62.

uniformity or order does not necessarily increase one's sense of freedom. I think of the person emigrating from a totalitarianism into the chaos of Western capitalism and who is overwhelmed by the number of choices. In my own experience, the so-called 'free market' continually forces me to make trivial choices among variations on basically the same product which has been re-marketed as 'new', 'improved', etc.

I suspect, however, that Dewey is not excluding either the freedom of ritual or the oppression of licence. Uniformity implies an enforced semblance of sameness as opposed to freely choosing an act or to act in unison with others, as one might in choosing to live in a religious or military order. Regimentation and enforcement come in many forms, sometimes disguised as freedom of choice. In response to my earlier comment, on the attempt in some classrooms to build a community of inquirers, Robert Bérard points out that the fashion of communal opinion-building can be as oppressive as the old authoritarianism. This is a valuable reminder for those of us who, in our zeal to give students more of a chance to participate in building or negotiating their own curriculum, may fail to consider that not everyone wants this level of involvement in the design process.[12] An effect of regimentation is that freedom of outward movement can become reified as the unattainable goal of those under enforcement, giving them a distorted or immature sense of what freedom is. Freedom is also poorly served when, assuming free choice is a common good, one feels justified in imposing it on others.

It is tempting to challenge Dewey's claim that in education freedom of outward movement is a means not an end. I think of my experience as singer and teacher of vocal technique. One strives to achieve freedom for the vocal chords. In order for the complex of cavities (chest, mouth and throat, nose and sinuses) to

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[12] Michael Jackson adds "[o]r, actually, is ready to handle it. Some studies suggest that such settings put some social groups at a disadvantage -- not surprisingly lower social classes."

resonate freely and fully, I work toward eliminating tension or other counter-productive conditions throughout the entire supporting mechanisms of spine, inter-costal muscles, diaphragm, etc. I might then say that this freedom of movement, which is a freedom from tension, is an end in itself although, within the rigours of vocal training -- the hours of exercises designed specifically for building flexibility, richness of tone, control of breath -- this freedom is an immediate end, within the highly specialized form of control or crafting we call art. Vocal freedom is but one of the means of achieving artistic ends. In art, as in education, everything depends, as Dewey says, "upon what is done with this added liberty. What end does it serve?"[13]

Dewey goes on to say that freedom from restriction is

> to be prized only as a means to a freedom which is power: power to frame purposes, to judge wisely, to evaluate desires by the consequences which will result from acting upon them; power to select and order means to carry chosen ends into operation.[14]

Though overuse has turned the term 'empowerment' into a catch-phrase, the word must have originally carried the Deweyan sense above of power to enact purposes responsibly. Herein lies also the root sense of the word potential [L. *potens*, power]. The freedom which is power necessarily entails wise judgement and responsibility for the consequences of one's actions. But how can this freedom for power be encouraged from a position of relativism, the philosophical stand I have been suggesting throughout this work? How can relativism offer an authoritative basis when Dewey is surely describing development within a context of commonly held values? Recall, if you will, Paul Hirst's words on intelligibility; that, though it is absurd to assume that the framework of intelligibility is necessarily fixed, "right

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[13] Dewey, Experience and Education, 61.

[14] Dewey, Experience and Education, 64.

now intelligibility is what it is."[15] Beginning as I do from the assumption that claims to truth are relative (Whether absolutes exist cannot be known, only taken on faith.) does not necessitate either ethical subjectivism (Values are only a matter of personal taste.) or extreme skepticism (Since we cannot know anything for certain, what's the point in trying to accomplish anything?). In groups we come to hold certain attitudes and assumptions to be workable, useful, valuable, that is, we give them value and this changes constantly. Take, for example, attitudes towards marriage in Western society. We have come quite recently to distinguish between marriage in its literal, formal sense under the law of church and state and marriage as a metaphor for a committed relationship. As a result of this separation between the literal, legal sense, and the figurative, state-of-mind sense we are coming also to re-define our notions of family, and this shift in sensibilities is beginning to be reflected in changes in the law regarding spousal benefits, etc. One might argue that, under these trappings of law and convention there is some intangible, which I have called 'commitment', which stands as a universal value and which must then be absolute. I would say that, though it may be an example of an absolute, I can never know for sure, but I can proceed even without certainty. My own experience of the world, my interaction with others, is my basis for the working out of how value is to be attributed. This is how I read Keats' lines:

> "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, -- that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."[16]

Beauty is truth because it represents our best attempt at expressing the inexpressible, at explaining the inexplicable. Artistic expression is our best attempt because it has no ulterior motive, no purpose beyond itself. Or, to phrase it in

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[15] Paul Hirst, Knowledge and the Curriculum, 94.

[16] John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn", ll. 49-50.

positive terms as Kant does: aesthetic (reflective) judgement is "purposiveness without a purpose".[17]

Once one opts for an open rather than a closed system, everything is, in theory, open to re-consideration. It is conceivable that other ways of measuring and hence perceiving may determine that, say, the earth is not round, that this is the best yet limited view we have of it thus far. This is not, however, a thesis we need spend a great deal of time on although, with a view toward teaching children to hold views open-mindedly, we might consider the subject worth taking up in an age when children grow quickly to assume the earth is round, contrary to direct personal experience of an expanse of land appearing to extend out before one as a flat surface to a line at the horizon.[18]

Absolutes are what we take as the conventions, habits, and traditions by which we consider that, say, $2 + 2 = 4$. Mathematical formulae are useful patterns we've devised and grown to accept as absolute through use. The question is "Two of what?" Two galaxies plus two pretzels equals four of what? We learn the exception to the rule: we cannot add things from different categories. What the exception proves is that the rule is a rule of thumb, not an absolute.[19] The apparent absoluteness of any rule or equation can be made to appear irrelevant or absurd. This doesn't mean 'useless'; it simply means relative to our needs, which are always requiring new rules.

In Against Method, Paul Feyerbend says that scientists know there is more to the stories of their science than that which is actually written in; the style of these

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[17] Kant, Critique of Judgment, 73.

[18] In Vicious Circles and Infinities, New York: Doubleday, 1975, Patrick Hughes and George Brecht describe how a teacher introduces his students to the concept of measurement by asking them to guess the length of the eastern seaboard of the United States. When a guess close to the normally assumed distance is given, he asks them to make another guess taking into account all the bays and inlets. Then he asks that they try to include all the hills and valleys, and so on, making the point about the relativity of measurement.

[19] "Or," adds Michael Jackson, "our seeing it as an exception, points out the rule."

stories represent the conventions in which they operate, conventions which change and develop continually.

> Considering now the invention, elaboration and use of theories which are inconsistent, not just with other theories, but even with *experiments, facts, observations*, we may start by pointing out that *no single theory ever agrees with all the known facts in its domain*. And the trouble is not created by rumours, or by the result of sloppy procedure. It is created by experiments and measurements of the highest precision and reliability.[20]

For the practice of science, this discrepancy is not a problem; it is how one proceeds. "Counterinduction," says Feyerbend, "is thus both a *fact* -- science could not exist without it -- and a legitimate and much needed *move* in the game of science."[21] But, as Gregory Ulmer points out, it is a problem for pedagogy.

> The harm that follows from this disjunction may not affect science proper. . . . The real victim is pedagogy, where it is precisely the formal rather than the informal, contingent, oral, discovery model of knowledge that is invoked and enforced.[22]

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20 Paul Feyerbend, Against Method. Outline of an anarchistic* theory of knowledge, London: NLB, 1975, 55. One of the many examples Feyerbend offers is from quantum theory in which a procedure called 'renormalization' consists in "crossing out the results of certain calculations and replacing them by a description of what is actually observed" (61). Feyerbend cites David Hume's point that theory cannot be derived from facts and adds: "[t]he demand to admit only those theories which follow from facts leaves us without any theory. Hence, science *as we know it* can exist only if we drop the demand and revise our methodology" (65).

Feyerbend uses the asterisk after the word 'anarchistic' in his title to dispel the notion that he supports anarchistic practices which disregard human life and happiness. He explains that he chose the word 'anarchism' following general usage but that, considering his distaste for forms of anarchism which "contain precisely the kind of Puritanical dedication and seriousness" he detests, he has come to prefer the term *Dadaism*. He says "A Dadaist is prepared to initiate joyful experiments even in those domains where change and experimentation seem to be out of the question (example: the basic functions of language). I hope that having read the pamphlet the reader will remember me as a flippant Dadaist and *not* as a serious anarchist" (21, fn. 12).

Feyerbend later describes the anarchist as he conceives of him or her as "like an undercover agent who plays the game of Reason in order to undercut the authority of Reason (Truth, Honesty, Justice, and so on) " (33). Here he adds another footnote on Dada, from Hans Richter, in Dada: Art and Anti-Art, who says that Dada "not only had no programme, it was against all programmes" (Chp. 16, fns. 21). Feyerbend adds that "[t]his does not exclude the skilful defence of programmes to show the chimerical character of any defence, however 'rational'." And he offers the example of the playwright, Pirandello, who produces "all the outer manifestations of 'deep love' in order to debunk the idea of 'deep love' itself" (33).

21 Feyerbend, 68.

22 Ulmer, Teletheory, 32-33.

I would say that Ulmer offers the worst case scenario. Not all pedagogy enforces the formal all of the time. However, I tend to agree that the authority of the formal model tends to outweigh the informal and contingent even when the latter is emphasized in a particular class or school.[23] Faced with the weight of this implicit authority, one may need to overstate the situation somewhat in order to make a case for the informal and contingent, not in opposition to the formal but in balance with it. If, then, in the name of open-mindedness, we feel responsible for disclosing the contingency of method, what claim to authority remains?[24]

Dewey spoke strongly against the potential for authority to impose a set of ideas and thus fix a way of thinking:

> Men still want the crutch of dogma, or beliefs fixed by authority, to relieve them of the trouble of thinking and the responsibility of directing their activity by thought. They tend to confine their own thinking to a consideration of which one among the rival systems of dogma they will accept. Hence the schools are better adapted, as John Stuart Mill said, to make disciples than inquirers.[25]

These words are as true today as they were when first published in 1916. If there is one question of pedagogical concern which motivates my writing, a question embedded in all the disciplines of human endeavour and which may remain forever rhetorical, it is the question of why education continues to produce more disciples than inquirers. There are simple answers such as: most teachers are also the products of such authority and, as such, are themselves more disciple than inquirer.

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[23] I think specifically of a situation in which I was responsible for the production of a celebratory school drama production. The entire school was involved, and all resources had, in theory, been committed to the production schedule for a ten-day period leading up to the celebrations. Although this was the official position of the administration, it took a great deal of time and tact impressing upon many in the school community that these rehearsals and preparations were not 'extra-curricular'.

[24] As we saw in II.II, Bigelow opened his practice to the possibility of radical scepticism which led to a violent outburst from a student causing Bigelow to question his approach.

[25] Dewey, Democracy and Education, 339.

Whether this is true or not, a thing impossible to measure, I believe most teachers do strive to be inquirers.

Assuming that our efforts fail more often than succeed,[26] that we stop asking "Why?" in our classrooms, what help comes from disclosing the frailty of our methods? Bertrand Russell was of the opinion that though, as he said, "[t]ruth is for the gods",

> [e]ducation should fit us for the nearest possible approach to truth, and to do this it must teach truthfulness. Truthfulness, as I mean it, is the habit of forming our opinions on the evidence, and holding them with that degree of conviction which the evidence warrants. This degree will always fall short of complete certainty, and therefore we must be always ready to admit new evidence against previous beliefs. Moreover, when we act on a belief, we must, if possible, only take such action as will be useful even if our belief is more or less inaccurate; we should avoid actions which are disastrous unless our belief is *exactly* true.[27]

If we are to take Russell at his word, that we can never reach complete certainty, his use of italics for the modifier 'exactly' seems to suggest either or both of two readings. He may be using the term ironically. If we take the phrase 'exactly true' to mean complete certainty, then actions disastrous without recourse to that which is impossible, should obviously be avoided. He may be using the term 'exact' in its root sense [L. *ex*, out + *igere act- = agere*, drive] of demanding or insisting upon. Our inevitably limited criteria for establishing truth exact such-and-such a result which is then called 'true'. I prefer to read Russell as implying both these senses in his phrase "*exactly* true". It is hardly surprising, assuming this position regarding

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[26] This begs the question "What constitutes success?" The strongest evidence from my own experience that this may be the case is the degree to which spinning slogans takes precedence over thoughtful consideration in the institution of schooling. I cite as an example the use of counter-propaganda in the classroom. (See II.ii.)

[27] Bertrand Russell, "Freedom versus Authority in Education", Sceptical Essays, London: Allen & Unwin, 1928,149. Russell's concept of truthfulness is very like that of open-mindedness as expressed by William Hare (who acknowledges his debt to Russell) in his Open-mindedness and Education, Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979, and In Defence of Open-mindedness, McGill-Queen's, 1985.

truth, that Russell should so vehemently oppose orthodoxy and encourage us to mistrust those who use their authority to promote it.[28]

> There must be educational institutions, and children must be to some extent under authority. But in view of the fact that no authority can be wholly trusted, we must aim at having as little authority as possible, and try to think out ways by which young people's natural desires and impulses can be utilized in education.[29]

Dewey and Russell seriously challenge the social control enforced upon thought in the name of education. A half century or so later, R. S. Peters considers authority "the most crucial concept for discussing social control in the school"[30] although it "is not confined to spheres of social control. We can speak of a person being *an* authority purely in the sphere of knowledge."[31] The teacher is therefore a figure of authority in both senses: being *in* authority as part of a system of social control and being *an* authority in his or her particular sphere of knowledge. Allowing that authorities may be limited or wrong, Peters admits that we have little choice other than to consult experts. If a person is rational, he says, he must "avail himself of the best that is going." And when institutions are established for the handing on and development of knowledge, assuming they are organized on rational grounds,

> those who are authorities must be put in positions of authority at a level which is consistent with the principle of public accountability.[32]

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[28] William Hare doesn't think Russell is being ironic. He says: "I think he means that we do not escape blame just because our action would have been fine had our belief been exactly true. Since we cannot establish the latter, we should not act as if we did possess it (the exact truth)."

[29] Russell, 327.

[30] R. S. Peters, Ethics and Education, London: Unwin, 1966, 237.

[31] R. S. Peters, Ethics and Education, 239.

[32] R. S. Peters, Ethics and Education, 251. Peters contrasts the principle of public accountability operating under different political conditions (307-310). One can easily extrapolate from his contrast to the shift in notions of educational accountability following the shifting economic conditions in Western society in recent years. When all high school graduates could find work, the grading system served to satisfy the principle of public accountability. In a situation where even

Peters invokes and Weber's distinction between traditional and rational authority. There was a move from an authority fixed in custom, status, and traditions to one whose claim to legitimacy rests on "'a belief in the "legality" of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rule to issue commands'".[33] Peters offers the example of a principal in the civil service who "can play cricket under the captaincy of one of his subordinates -- an unthinkable situation in a traditional order" in which status was fixed and constant across the full range of relationships and situations in one's life.[34]

In the rational order, authority exists only within one's sphere of competence. It would seem that the rational order brings the concept of being *in* authority closer to that of being *an* authority. The distinction between the two resembles that between what Peters calls 'expertise' and authority. 'Expert' is used when knowledge is viewed as instrument to achieving some end rather than pursued for its own sake. "'Expertise' implies the application of knowledge, not just the possession of it. An expert swimmer or fencer is very different from an authority on these activities."[35] And yet, the distinction in current usage and perception seems to be disappearing. Anyone claiming to be an authority on an activity without proof of present or past competence in its practice is viewed as lacking credibility. Similarly, one's claim to knowledge of a group is seen to be lacking legitimate authority if one is not a practising member of that group.

The majority of teachers and parents in Western society will soon be people who have not experienced a traditional system of authority in their own education

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university graduates are unable to find sustaining employment, the onus has fallen heavily on educational institutions to account for the apparent unpreparedness of their graduates.

[33] Peters, Ethics and Education, 242. Peters quotes from Max Weber, Theory of Economic and Social Organization, Talcot Parsons, ed., London: Hodge, 1947, 300-301.

[34] Peters, Ethics and Education, 243.

[35] Peters, Ethics and Education, 240.

and up-bringing. Remnants of the traditional order still remain, to be sure, but the days are gone when the teacher's or parent's word was accepted as law by virtue of his or her status.[36] Thus, the concept of teacher as authority tends now to be seen in the context of teacher as expert practitioner[37] and teacher as *an* authority in his or her sphere of knowledge. One could speculate, then, that a new order of authority, sometimes called 'professionalism', has evolved from the old notion of expertise and that in the sphere of social control the teacher is *in* authority by virtue of how well he or she accounts for competent practice. The question then becomes "To what extent does this record accurately or adequately account for the realization of student potential?" I am reminded of Whitehead's warning that "when ideals have sunk to the level of practice, the result is stagnation."[38]

. . . . .

This brings me to the problem I mentioned earlier, that of interpretation or, as Scheffler put it, the mediation of our action by intention, belief, and symbolism. Peters points out the defect common to both the 'moulding' and the 'growth' models of education: "that of regarding the educator as a detached operator who is working for some kind of result in another person which is external to him."[39] He says that what these models lack is

> a sense of what D. H. Lawrence called 'the holy ground' that stands between teacher and taught. To conceive of 'education' as imposing a pattern on

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[36] In a recent conversation with a parent-volunteer at an elementary school, I noticed several allusions to a time when the teacher was not considered to have a life beyond the school. This parent, in her 30s, sees the shift away from a traditional order in which 'teacher' meant 'authority'. Within what I have posited as an historical shift, there may well be a process of rationalizing authority which goes on in an individual's perception of the authority figure.

[37] The phrase 'expert practitioner' would, in Peters' sense of expertise as implying practice, be redundant. Michael Jackson rightly points out that the phrase could be used to "contrast with 'poor practitioner'."

[38] Alfred North Whitehead, The Aims of Education and Other Essays (1929), New York: The Free Press, 1967, 29.

[39] Peters, Ethics and Education, 52-53.

> another person or as fixing the environment so that an individual 'grows' fails to do justice to the shared impersonality both of the content that is handed on and of the criteria by reference to which it is criticized and developed. It ignores the cardinal fact that education consists essentially in the initiation of others into a public world picked out by the language and concepts of a people and in encouraging others to join in exploring realms marked out by more differentiated forms of awareness.[40]

Peters' insight is, I believe, crucial in helping bridge the gap between the extremes of the two models. The 'moulding' metaphor encourages the teacher to assume she has the right to reach across this holy ground and effect change in a student. Lawrence's phrase 'the holy ground' may not catch one's imagination today. If we believe the teacher ought to proceed with a deep respect (approaching reverence) for the trust binding the one *in* authority to the one *under* authority, it seems appropriate to evoke terms of transcendence, as a means of mitigating this imbalance not as an empty rationale for it.

As Dewey pointed out, we like to think in terms of *Either-Ors* and even when realizing that an extreme cannot be acted upon, we cling to it as still alright in theory, however hampered by circumstances. Thus the traditional-progressive opposition -- education as formation from without versus education as development from within[41] -- with its corresponding metaphors of 'moulding' and 'growth', becomes entrenched in our thinking and talking about education. Dewey's principle of continuity serves to reduce the distance between these positions, just as does Peters' debunking of the myth of the detached operator. By "continuity of experience" Dewey means "that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after."[42] He uses these lines from Tennyson's Ulysses to illustrate the principle:

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[40] Peters, Ethics and Education, 52-53.

[41] Dewey, Experience and Education, 17.

[42] Dewey, Experience and Education, 35.

> . . . all experience is an arch wherethro'
> Gleams that untraveled world, whose margin fades
> For ever and for ever when I move.

Thus, if I may mix metaphorical currencies, the sculptor develops herself and the materials she moulds, and the plant forms itself into a new figure out of and against the ground in which it grows. It is only in the description of change that an agent of change appears detached from that process.

Adding the principle of continuity to Peters' vision of education as initiation,[43] one can see that education is an initiation for all participants, not just for the student. Since the teacher is not a detached operator but continually changes in attempting to effect change, she is continually being re-initiated into the public world of awareness she shares with her students. Peters uses an interesting phrase: "shared impersonality" referring to educational content and its critical criteria. It would be a mistake, I believe, to assume that by the term 'impersonality' Peters implies an uncaring detachment. As he said, the notion of teacher as detached is a common defect on both sides of the debate over definition. The multicultural, multi-media, on-line classroom makes one wonder, however, what in fact we do all share, apart, that is, from a sense of wonder bordering on confusion as we face the so-called "information explosion".

Whenever there is a commitment to share resources, those involved must make compromises. One must be willing to accept a degree of what might be called the impersonal. That is to say, I see and understand plan X, but, though I have no personal experience upon which to base my response to it, I understand it based upon the experience of others whom trust and therefore I am willing to lend it my

[43] Peters' more detailed account is found in his, Education as Initiation, London: Evans Bros., 1963.

support. I do so with the assurance that others are also willing to make reasonable concessions. This is what might be called a shared impersonality.

Peters emphasizes the role of language in the development of mental structure: [mental structure] "develops out of and as a response to public traditions enshrined in language."[44] Although I am not comfortable with the word 'enshrine' (a feeling which doubtless betrays the effects of my orders of authority), I agree with Peters insofar as I take him to assume that we are as we go, that is, we form ourselves and our lives as we live. Through each successive moment and engagement with it one is transformed, new, changed. These predicate adjectives cannot adequately describe continuity of experience since language fixes a thing in the process of representing it. Even Tennyson's metaphor of the receding horizon assumes the fiction of vanishing point as fixed point. Luigi Pareyson offers a theory based on the assumption that forming is a fundamental human activity.

Pareyson's aesthetic theory of formativity is a reaction to the Absolute Idealism of Benedetto Croce. He offers a middle road between the Crocean retreat into intuitionism and the formalist reification of the art-object.[45] His theory recognizes the importance of human contemplation but without relinquishing the importance of the art-work itself. He uses the term "formativity" in order to distance himself from the controversy between those who stress "form" and those who stress "content" in a work of art. In the preface to the first edition in 1954, Pareyson explains why he chooses the inelegant term 'formativity',

> the term 'form' with its multiplicity of meanings, ends up being ambiguous, and risks passing for the simple antithesis of 'material' or 'content', evoking thus the *vexed question* of formalism and of materiality [*contenutismo*];

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[44] Peters, Ethics and Education, 51.

[45] See Benedetto Croce, The Aesthetic as the Science of Expression and of the Linguistic in General (1902), Colin Lyas, trans., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

> that which needs to be avoided, inasmuch as 'form' means organism, the living of life proper and endowed with an interior legality . . . .[46]

He holds that formativity is a universal feature of life since all human activities culminate in some form. Forming is an inevitable and natural part of human existence. I form my thoughts, words, bodily gestures and complex actions, all of which are self-propelled and are not characteristically imitative.[47] Since form is the proper aim of art, it is in art that formativity becomes an autonomous tendency, i.e., the creation of form for form's sake. Beauty is the 'contemplatability' of form as such. To see things as forms is to contemplate their beauty. The act of contemplation and contemplatability are indissoluble. Thus, beauty is neither subjective nor objective. Pareyson collapses the distinction with his notion of formative activity.[48]

Hugh Bredin offers the following model of Pareysons's theory:

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                expresses                           forms
FORM -------------------------> ARTIST -----------------------> MATERIALS
(art-work)                                          (fictional world, feelings, etc.)
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fig. 4.01

Bredin goes on to say that the diagram would be better put in the form of a circle.[49] Perhaps, it would look something like this:

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[46] Luigi Pareyson, Estetica. Teoria della formatività (1954), Bologna: Zanichelli, 1960, p. v. Any inaccuracies in the translation are mine. To my knowledge, no English translation of this work has yet been published.

[47] One might attempt to imitate, but even the most accomplished of imitations, those of, say, the professional character actor, are still stamped with the actor's own unique style of imitation.

[48] For a description of formativity, I have relied upon Hugh T. Bredin, "The Aesthetics of Luigi Pareyson", British Journal of Aesthetics, Vol. 6 (1966), Umberto Eco's chapter "Form and Interpretation in Luigi Pareyson's Aesthetics", The Open Work, and Max Rieser, "Review of Luigi Pareyson's Estetica - Teoria della formatività, 2nd ed., Bologna, 1960, Zanichelli Editore", in Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 20, 1972: 454-455.

[49] Bredin, 199.

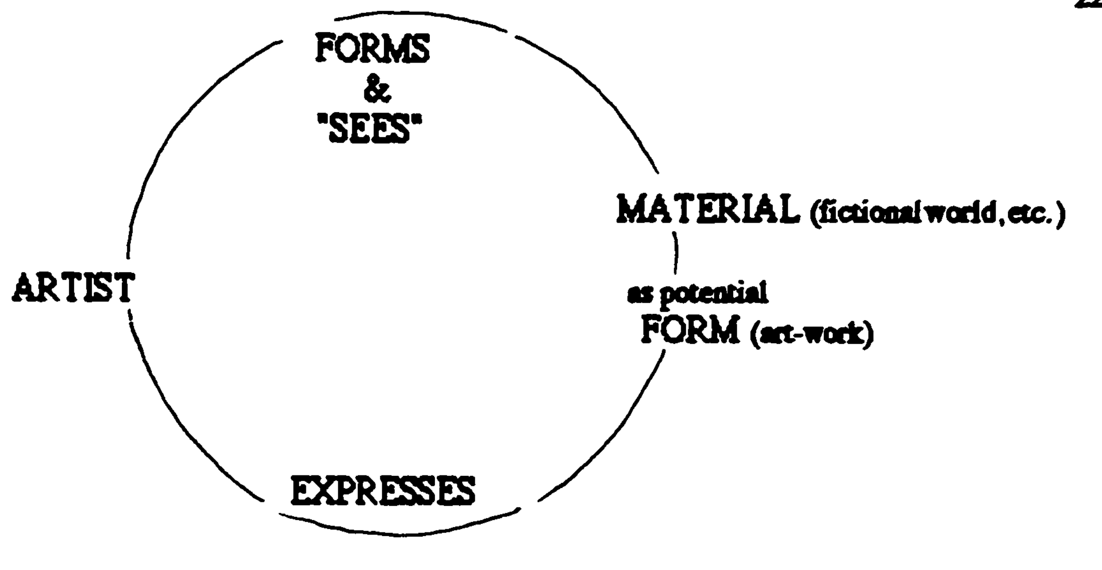

fig. 4.02

To adapt this model of formativity for application to all types of forming, it is helpful to use Eco's notion of artist as 'performer'. Thus, any perception is a kind of tacit performance in the mind of the perceiver.[50] And, to avoid the illusion that this act is perfectly circular, i.e., closed, we need to include the temporal factor which, according to Paul de Man, is persistently forgotten, particularly by those who have attempted to reify the literary act. De Man considers that the American New Critics made a mistake regarding the nature of intentionality, thereby turning the literary act into an object. According to de Man, to by-pass the intentional character of an art-work is to ignore that which distinguishes it from a natural object like, say, a stone. He says that Wimsatt and Beardsley, who articulated the intentional fallacy,[51] were concerned to avoid the oversimplification of the complex relationship between theme and style which was being imposed by deterministic historical and psychological systems of criticism. But, says de Man, to do so they assume a concept of intent based on an analogy

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50 Eco, "The Open Work", 33.

51 See W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. & Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy", Sewanee Review, 54, 1946, and W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., The Verbal Icon, Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1954. Also, my reference to the fallacy in II.ii. fn. 42.

with the physical model, as if intent were transfered from the mind of the poet to that of the reader. De Man considers intentionality to be a structural concept.

> The structure of a chair is determined in all its components by the fact that it is destined to be sat on, but this structure in no way depends on the state of mind of the carpenter who is in the process of assembling its parts. The case of the work of literature is of course more complex, yet here also, the intentionality of the act, far from threatening the unity of the poetic entity, more definitely establishes this entity.[52]

It seems to me that de Man's understanding of intentionality as a structural concept, as against a transfer model, is helpful in considering the intentional act we call teaching. The 'blank slate', 'empty cabinet' and 'banking' metaphors of education imply a similar simplification, i.e., that teaching is a matter of transfering the knowledge in the teacher to the minds of the students. This critique of the transfer model, that it encourages a technicist approach to teaching, is well known.[53] The metaphor often offered in its place is the metaphor of growth, i.e., development or process, and this, as Peters points out, is equally incapable of accounting for the degree to which the teacher continually changes the developmental process through engagement in it. What if, using de Man's notion of intentionality, we view the structure of knowledge as determined by the fact that it is destined or intended to be learned? This would imply a constructivist view of knowledge, i.e., that the objects of knowledge are framed, selected, and crafted for learning. But, rather than questioning the motives and intentions of those doing the framing, selecting, and crafting, intentionality would be

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52 de Man, 25. It should be noted that in the preface to the 1981 edition of his Aesthetics. Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism (1958), Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett, Beardsley acknowledges the "help of judicious critics" and admits the possibility of an intentionalistically defined concept of art. He says he has come to realize that this approach at definition needn't run afoul of the intentional fallacy, the importance of which lies in its clarification of the language of criticism. This needn't mean that an artist's intentions are irrelevant in our attempts to *define* art (xix).

53 See II.ii. fns. 21 and 22.

scrutinized structurally. For example, in the Adbusters' spoof ad, "Absolute on Ice" (See figure 2.43), one would ask, as I have, about the purposes of the various techniques employed in creating this overall effect. What is the purpose of the back-lighting, the positioning of the various compositional elements, the choice of font and size for the ad copy, etc.? Responses would most likely lead to talk of imitation. One could then elicit examples of imitation of other sorts -- masquerade, role-playing, plagiarism -- and discussion could focus on the purposes of these forms of imitation. One might like to ask to what degree learning in general depends upon imitation. This shift in focus from the intentions of those selecting, framing, and crafting the objects of knowledge to the intentionality implicit in the structures of the objects themselves may seem overly subtle. The questions and their resulting discussions might well be the same regardless of how one views intentionality. What the subtle shift can do, however, is help ground talk of intention in the material process at hand. It allows me to say that, though in considering an object it is inappropriate and effectively impossible to accurately impute intention to those who made it, talk of intention is not ruled out. The art object, be it an abstract painting, an advertising image or both, is an intentional object. As de Man puts it, we cannot conceive of its significance "without including in the description an allusion to the *use* to which it is put".[54] And here, one must keep in mind that an art-object's use may lie in its uselessness, i.e., its purposiveness without a purpose.

To adopt the idea that intentionality determines the structure of knowledge, that knowledge is inconceivable as significant without allusion to its use, may seem like a capitulation to utilitarianism, i.e., the mechanistic view of education with which I have already taken issue in this work. But, assuming that intentionality is

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[54] de Man, 23-24.

part of the structure of knowledge does not prescribe which objects of knowledge are to be considered significant. It is not a rationale for selection on the basis of usefulness, as a utilitarian or instrumental approach would have it. It is simply a way of considering intentionality which does not lead inevitably into a project of imputing motives to and laying blame on those forming and selecting the objects of knowledge. Some may consider such a strategy for teaching critique in the classroom an avoidance of political responsibility since students ought to question the motives of those in positions of power. But, as we saw with the scenarios Bigelow describes, as teachers we are implicated in any institutional critiques we may initiate. By starting with a view of intentionality as a structural concept, we may be less likely to leave the intentional objects of pedagogy -- curricular materials, arrangements, requirements, outlines, unit plans, evaluative schema, in short, our own critical assumptions -- out of the critiques we initiate. We cannot remain at a remove, as if we were detached operators. Laying claim to 'political' and/or 'critical' aims and methods in one's pedagogy must be reflexive, which is not to say that reflection necessarily comes before or after the teaching act itself.

Reminding us that Plato once defined philosophy as "the soul's dialogue with itself", Peters emphasizes the ongoing nature of the dialogue.

> The ability to reason, in the philosophical sense of thinking critically about one's beliefs, develops only if a man keeps critical company so that a critic is incorporated in his own consciousness. The dialogue within is inseparable from the dialogue without.[55]

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[55] Peters, Ethics and Education, 51. Although I am aware of the bias in the use of the masculine form of the pronoun to refer to people in general, I quote from M. D. Moore, W. S. Avis & J. W. Corder, Handbook of Current English, 2nd Canadian ed., Toronto: Gage, 1983, on the use of *sic*: "Since many writers feel that the insertion of *sic* to mark the errors of others is more snobbish than scholarly, the practice has declined in recent years" (170). It seems to be on the rise again in this era of inclusion and political correctness when to say that offense was caused unintentionally serves as little excuse.

In referring earlier to Freire's notion of testimony as critical illumination, I wondered about his representation of this testimony, manifest as it was in his after-the-fact description of his seminar scenario. Did his description testify to testimony? And if not, if it is just another set piece, set even more rigidly by virtue of my reproduction of it in another descriptive frame, where is the critical illumination? William Hare called me to account for this very point asking whether Freire, in saying "it is impossible to go on unless I stop in order to think about what I read", knew in advance that he would stop his reading in this way. This question calls to mind my own experience teaching three sections of grade twelve English at the same time. Trying to reproduce for one group something which has gone well with the first, I realize the gap between my interpretation of what has gone well and why and the event itself. An attempt at reproducing the successful lesson is the wrong tack because it depends upon imitation when, in fact, successful presentation in the sense of critical engagement and illumination depends upon responsiveness to its own immediate circumstances. One may describe the events of a class or lesson after the fact, but description never does justice to the experience as lived. This is the actor's dilemma as well as the teacher's. One can only prepare by knowing the materials of the *mise en scène*, and then one enters laughing, as it were. One enters with an openness to the possibilities of the situation, resisting the limitations of previous interpretations.

In pointing out that there is always a time lag in the interpretive circle, de Mann cites Heidegger's theory of hermeneutic circularity. As de Man puts it, "the interpretation of an intentional act or an intentional object always implies an *understanding* of the intent".[56] Heidegger calls this the *Forhabe*, the forestructure of all understanding which is "always temporally ahead of the explicit interpretive

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[56] de Man, 29.

statement that tries to catch up with it. When understanding has been achieved, a circle or totality seems to close and "only then is the foreknowing structure of the act of interpretation fully revealed."[57] Thus, says de Man, "to understand something is to realize that one has always known it, but, at the same time, to face the mystery of this hidden knowledge."[58]

. . . . .

Everyone enters the scene of teaching with a repertoire of things known. A critical balance is achieved, perhaps only momentarily, if I present the things I know so as to give students a sense of how I both know and don't know them. But in describing such a process, I fall back on the known, i.e., the rhetorical devices for recounting past experience. At the end of his description of that graduate seminar, Freire says to Shor (the book is a conversation between the two): "What is my opinion on this? (Maybe I am not rigorous now because I begin with only my opinion!)"[59] Thus he testifies to his self-critique. We can only take him at his word that the process he engaged in with his students was critical and not just an imitation of what critical might look like.[60] As I say this, I see that I might as easily have taken Bigelow at his word that his lesson was critically illuminating and not a prescription for a pre-determined result. I can't give the benefit of the doubt to one and the blame to the other. Both have testified, thus opening their practice to either interpretation.

According to de Man:

> Literary 'form' is the result of the dialectic interplay between the prefigurative structure of the foreknowledge and the intent at totality of the interpretative process. This dialectic is difficult to grasp. The idea of

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57 de Man, 31.

58 de Man, 32.

59 Shor & Freire, A Pedagogy for Liberation, 85.

60 William Hare adds that "[w]e could (in principle) ask his students. And his words would have to ring true."

> totality suggests closed forms that strive for ordered and consistent systems and have an almost irresistible tendency to transform themselves into objective structures. Yet, the temporal factor, so persistently forgotten, should remind us that the form is never anything but a process on the way to its completion.[61]

"Difficult to grasp"? "Impossible" might be more appropriate. But, what is it about these systems and their tendency to close? To stop and see itself, the 'i' adopts a static position. Otherwise how is an impression to be recorded and conveyed to others? For the 'performer', who is engaged in working through the formal demands of her materials, form is obviously a process on the way to its completion. And, though the formal artifacts of this process have a physical completeness to them, they cannot be understood without this implication of intent, i.e., completion is an ideal.

To include the temporal factor in a model of formativity generalized to apply to any act of forming, it makes sense to imagine a spiralling series of spherical loops:

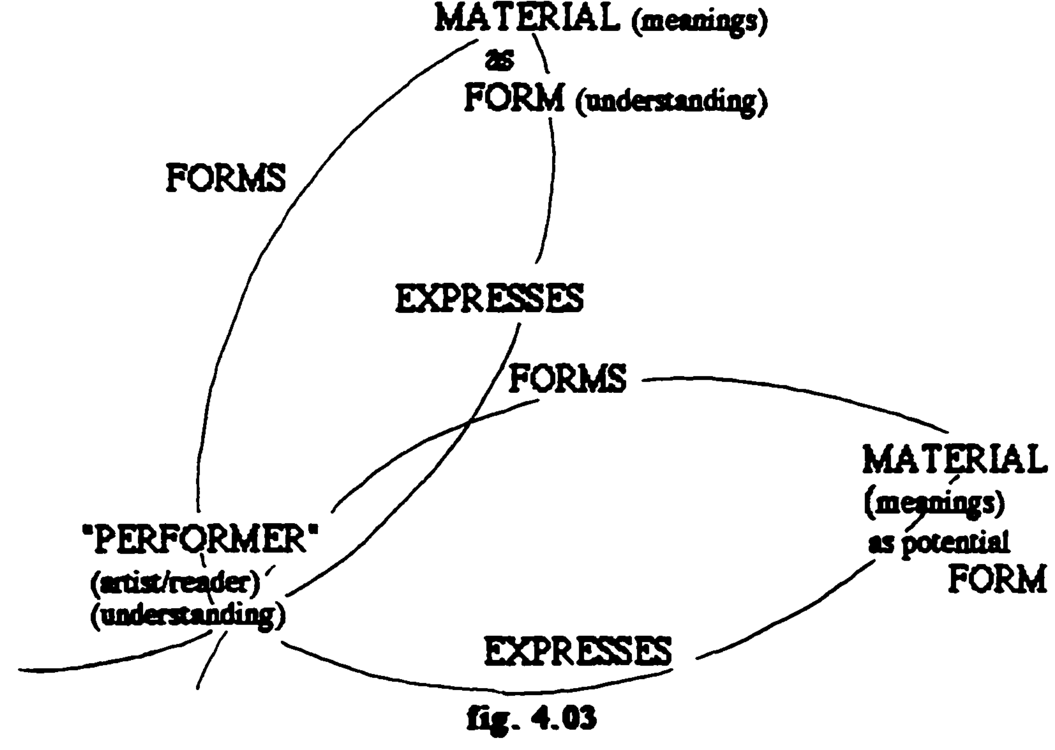

fig. 4.03

61 de Man, 31.

This sets up a cycle that calls to mind Whitehead's "rhythm of education". He uses the image of a small whirlpool to illustrate his vision.

> Each lesson in its minor way should form an eddy cycle issuing in its own subordinate process. Longer periods should issue in definite attainments, which then form the starting-grounds for fresh cycles. We should banish the idea of a mythical, far-off end of education. The pupils must be continually enjoying some fruition and starting afresh -- if the teacher is stimulating in exact proportion to his success in satisfying the rhythmic cravings of his pupils.[62]

Though he agrees with Hegel's analysis of progress into the stages called Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis, Whitehead finds that for application to educational theory the names are not "very happily suggestive". Therefore, "[i]n relation to intellectual progress" says Whitehead, "I would term them, the stage of romance, the stage of precision, and the stage of generalisation."[63] He explains his choice of metaphors for conceptualizing the movement of these stages: "I have chosen the term 'rhythmic', as meaning essentially the conveyance of difference within a framework of repetition."[64] In his description, one can see the parallel with Dewey's principle of continuity, the inevitable carry over from one set of experiences to the next. Also, it isn't much of a stretch to imagine how Whitehead's eddy cycles could be superimposed upon the expanded model of Pareyson's theory of formativity. From all of these models of the learning and forming process, one gets a sense of the difference and différance within repetition; we change as we affect and effect change, as we form materials according to a foreknowledge of potential which is realized yet never complete.

I have, as it were, piled up these models of learning and forming in order to show that, though each helps one reflect upon one's learning and teaching, each also

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62 Whitehead, 19.
63 Whitehead, 17.
64 Whitehead, 17.

has the tendency to close, to be a mediating symbol-system which appears to tell the whole story when, in fact, we know from experience that there is always an exception which renders the rule problematic.[65] From the autistic artist, Stephen Wiltshire, form emerges fully-blown. It is as if all three of Whitehead's stages are either merged into a spontaneous response, perhaps lacking altogether, or some combination of these extremes which our attempts at communication cannot decipher. With the ready-made in art, Marcel Duchamp forced a re-thinking of what it means to form materials. We could no longer think of forming exclusively in literal terms. We were opened to the possibility that anything could be art, even a concept. And, if that is so, what distinguishes a work of art from, say, a doctoral dissertation? How is any intentional object or act to be valued without continual reflection on the way in which belief, intention and symbolism tend to force closure on judgement and on reflection?

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I said of Snow's Authorization that it discloses its own process and, consequently, the process of anyone trying to reproduce it. The work is an exemplary example of an alternative realism, the realism of process. That ubiquitous realism, that which Ulmer calls 'naive',[66] is dependent upon conventions and techniques which focus one's attention on the resemblances they form, and thereby efface themselves by drawing one into their world of appearances. Disbelief may have been suspended by a willed act of the subject in his or her first encounter with a fantasy of realism (and who knows how early it first occurs in an environment rife with realistic images), but a steady diet of realism forces a constant suspension of disbelief. When disbelief is a constant, it loses what I would call its pedagogical value: the conscious, willed act of suspending one's disbelief is

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[65] Michael Jackson adds that "recognizing an exception to be an exception may reveal the rule."
[66] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, 259.

an exemplary example of a pedagogical moment. We see what it is that cannot possibly be believed and consciously decide to suspend our disbelief, not permanently -- as if to say "Yes! This is reality! This is what really happened!" -- but rather to ask "How does this impossibility mime reality? How does it relate to my experience?" By habitually or constantly suspending disbelief, one relinquishes one's "freedom which is power", as Dewey puts it,[67] the power to frame purposes, judge wisely, and evaluate desires by the consequences they entail. Believing or not believing is no longer a willed act of the subject. That which becomes habitual soon begins to go unnoticed and eventually can no longer be seen as the effect of convention and technique. For example, when one talks, as I did in my master's thesis, about the "nightly news" as a dramatic genre, one is up against a common misconception, which Dan Schiller calls the "myth of objectivity".[68] We have come to accept the form called "tv news" as constituting that to which it directs our attention, namely, docu-drama. To call the news "live drama" in order to distinguish it from "theatrical drama" is to suggest that one accepts myth, that one is blind to the "invisible frame" masking the patterned structure.[69]

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[67] Dewey, Experience and Education, 61.

[68] Dan Schiller, Objectivity and the News, Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1981. For my account of Schiller, see M. Forrest, Bias and Media Literacy, Master's Thesis, Dalhousie University, Halifax, N. S., 1991, 44-46.

[69] Schiller, 2. As Schiller points out, the myth is not something recent. He traces its development through the history of print journalism. I would say, however, that with the primacy of the image over the word, the acceptance of the myth is more deeply entrenched, the point Lyotard makes in saying that realism preserves various consciousnesses from doubt. (See III.ii., fn. 55.) With the printed word, we can imagine balance in terms of the sequential order of argument. Such-and-such a report is objective because it offers both sides. Schiller helps us see that having the reader come to an apparently critical and detached determination regarding the objectivity of a report is part of the conventions of reporting. Events are crafted into a 'balanced report', and the reader judges it on its balanced presentation, thinking this constitutes the very essence of those events used for subject matter. Drawing on John Berger's idea that the photographic image is characteristically ambiguous (See John Berger and Jean Mohr, Another Way of Telling, New York: Pantheon, 1982.), I would say that the transformation of written news into an increasingly more pictorially realistic genre, the culmination of which is the television news story, marks the move I describe above as that from habitual to blind acceptance. All talk of

Any methodology can fall into naive realism thereby foreclosing the question regarding its own assumptions and purposes. To be an authority in a sphere of knowledge is to be engaged in forming a way of judging the validity of propositions according to the criteria posited within that sphere as useful, important, crucial, and a foil to its structural purpose. This is where the form comes in. It must be artifice, for it is in its lack of practical purpose that its purposiveness as exemplary example lies. The sphere is a metaphor which fixes the unfixable in our intentional acts of learning, teaching, and creating the intentional objects of pedagogy. It might serve my purposes to distinguish pedagogy from schooling by making the latter a sub-category of the former, as it were. The intentionality of schooling is collaborative. Pedagogy is the name I would give to experiences of engagement with structure solely, meaning by itself and by oneself. And, let it not be thought that I imagine some detached conceptual engagement. I mean only a focus on the structural composition of one's learning. What has been criticized as the myth of the detached operator[70] I would call an engagement with form, not for its own sake but conscious that its lack of purpose is just what we need as the possible other case to things as we see them. Henry James tells us in his prefaces that he always writes the "possible other case" into his novels.[71] One can never know for certain what anything in his stories 'really' means. Thus, his work is highly pedagogical. Certainty on the reader's part discloses his or her own position, which, by contrast with the openness of uncertainty, foregrounds the realism of certainty. One's testifying act is that of making an example of oneself,

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objectivity and the elimination of bias in news reporting is like commentary on the style of the Emperor's New Clothes: the founding act of gullibility is not open to criticism.

[70] IV., 218-221.

[71] Henry James, "Preface to 'The Lesson of the Master'", The Art of the Novel (1902), New York: Scribner's, 1962, 222.

of becoming one's own exemplary example. I authorize myself by publicly accounting for how I write myself into the picture.

I began from my attraction to the openness of the studio, be it a stage or workshop, a classroom, desktop, notebook, or interior monologue. It is full of adaptable materials, a riot of forms which necessarily precludes the dominance of the system by which any one thing is formed. If we imagine, as Pareyson has, that forming things is the characteristic human response to our environment, then a program with a reward system for encouraging a set range of responses[72] is limits or controls one's potential for formal engagement.[73] Art teachers have always warned against the limitations which the colouring book imposes on a child's natural propensity for making shapes and combining colours.[74] Learners need an open field of forming possibilities with a wide range of materials at their disposal. Francine Shuchat Shaw observed, over several years, the open spaces and adaptable materials she saw children using at The City and Country School in New York City. She describes such classrooms as "workshops in which curriculum and pedagogy develop from the children's experience of using adaptable media according to their own purposes."[75] Having worked with stage managers and set designers, and

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[72] I am thinking specifically of computer games of this type which are sometimes described as 'educational'. The term is appropriate insofar as one learns what the game teaches; but, to adapt Freire's comment about knowing: 'education' is "not just getting what you insist will be the end result of an exercise" (Shor and Freire, 85).

[73] This is not to say that all such programs are necessarily limiting in a bad way. I limit the range of my vocal exercises to develop a specific part of the voice.

[74] The colouring-book is often given to the child by a well-intentioned adult who is prone to prompting the child into associating the two-dimensional white spaces on the page with three-dimensional shapes in the real world, then asking, "What colour *is* a pony?" And so, the child is encouraged to suspend her disbelief without knowing what it means to do so. It is not a willed, conscious act on her part, a pedagogical step, if you'll excuse the redundancy. It is an act of imitation, and realism is both its technique and its ideology.

[75] Francine Shuchat Shaw, "Blocks and Film and Other Media: The Aesthetics of Inquiry and Understanding from the Inside Out", Reflections from the Heart of Educational Inquiry. Understanding Curriculum and Teaching through the Arts, George Willis & William H. Schubert, eds. New York: SUNY, 1991, 224.

having frequently been lost in the formal delights of adaptable materials both concrete and abstract, I read Malet's description of Arp's workshop and think of the children at the City and Country School:

> The workshop must be understood as the antithesis of both the factory and the museum. The rote, automatic (in the wrong sense) activity carried out in accordance with a preconceived plan, which is the hallmark of the factory, is far removed from the artist in his studio or at his desk.[76]

With the phrase, "in the wrong sense", Malet implies a distinction between 'automatic' as automated or programmed for a set range of action, and 'automatic' in its root sense referring to something working of itself or self-moving [Gk. *autos* self]. In his work, Arp sought the latter and deplored the former. Like the other Dadaists, he was against all programmes and sought a return to the natural and the spontaneous, a purpose perhaps best demonstrated by their experiments in automatic writing, which is related as tactic to Derrida's use of the homonym. Ulmer quotes Derrida on the play of forms:

> The use of language or the employment of any code which implies a play of forms -- with no determined or invariable substratum -- also presupposes a retention and protention of differences, a spacing and temporalizing, a play of traces.[77]

From this it is clear that Derrida does not claim to be making a great escape from all programmes. He says, in fact, that the error of the avant-garde is to imagine that the system has an 'outside'.[78] I take Derrida's terms 'retention' and 'protention' literally. To retain [L. *re*, behind, after + *tenire*, hold] difference is to hold it back, secure, confine or fix it. We use variations on this 'holding'

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[76] Malet, 68.
[77] Ulmer, Teletheory, 63. He cites Derrida from Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs, David B. Allison, trans., Evanston: Northwestern, 1973, 146.
[78] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, 169, cites Derrida's "Qui a peur de la philosophie?", GREPH, Paris, 1977, 106.

metaphor in our talk about conceptualizing: "getting a hold", "grasping the idea", "pinning it down", all in the sense of defining [L. *finere*, finish, end] it. The term 'protention', one of Derrida's neologisms, would appear to be a holding forth [L. *pro* + *tenere*, hold]. The internal play of the two senses of "holding forth" supports my reading; we hold forth difference by declaring it, in the sense of speaking out or taking a stand, and yet, something is always retained, held back, or deferred. The OED gives two main denotations for the prefix *pro-*, with seven sub-distinctions all of which may well be at play in Derrida's neologism, 'protention'. But, even on the purely physical level of 'holding forth' in the sense of holding difference in front of one, holding it up for scrutiny, we can see the seriousness of this play of forms. This, I believe, is the seriousness of which John Portelli speaks, the seriousness which does not preclude humour.[79]

Ulmer calls Derrida the "Plato of video". He says Derrida is "as suspicious of television as Plato was of writing", and cites Eric Havelock's point that conceptual thought did not arise 'naturally', it had to be invented, and "Plato's internalization of alphabetic writing played a major role in that process." Now, says Ulmer, Derrida is "playing a similar role for us."[80] In order to identify the "electronic properties of differantial reasoning"[81] "a new term is needed to replace induction, deduction, and even abduction." Ulmer suggests the term 'conduction'.

> When we pose the ancient question of the ground of reason in the context of teletheory we think first of all of the pun that gives us an electronic ground. *Ground*: a conducting connection between an electric circuit or equipment

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[79] It seems utterly appropriate that this notion continues at play in the dialogue I enjoy with John Portelli, who introduced me to this concept when I participated in his graduate seminar on doing philosophy with children, Mount St. Vincent University, 1989.

[80] Ulmer, Teletheory, 62-63. He cites Eric Havelock's Preface to Plato, New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1967, 302.

[81] Ulmer plays on 'differential' reasoning, following Derrida's *différance* from the French verb *différer*, which combines both of the English verbs 'to differ' and 'to defer' while remaining hidden in spoken French since the words *différance* and *différence* are homonyms. The difference/différance lies in their writing/Writing.

> and the earth of some other conducting body. Reasoning by conduction involves, then, the flow of energy through a circuit. . . . which gives us a new definition of truth as "a relationship between disparate fields of information," as illustrated here in the conduction between the vocabulary of electricity and that of logic.[82]

In the pun, we see the retention and protention of differences which Derrida claims are presupposed in the play of forms. The pun, as Ulmer explains it, brings together "two unrelated semantic fields on the basis of one or more shared words. The terms in one field are treated as figures for the other, as an invention for problem-solving."[83] In this work, I have many times found myself Writing; for example, in this chapter there has been an implicit play of forms between the vocabulary of formativity and that of pedagogy. I made the play explicit with my use of the word 'former' (IV. 233).[84]

Key in this project of 'differantial reasoning' is the play of chance. Malet says of Arp's workshop:

> Another crucial element in the workshop is chance. It is precisely the environment of the workshop, full of seeming chaos, that provides the best conditions for the artist to exploit an element for which there would of necessity be no room in a tidier, more deliberately-ordered setting. In this place which, while seeming disordered, is filled with no ordinary chaos, chance acts both as a muse and a catalyst.[85]

Malet adds that Arp even went so far as to write some of his poems in a purposely semi-illegible hand so that the printer would also have to take part in the creative production of the book. In a prose piece called "Dadaland", Arp says of himself and his Dadaist colleagues:

> We rejected everything that was copy or description, and allowed the Elementary and Spontaneous to react in full freedom. Since the disposition

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82 Ulmer, Teletheory, 63.

83 Ulmer, Teletheory, 63-64.

84 In my titles I have used homonyms: "heuretics for media work" uses 'work' as both noun and verb, and a similar play is 'at work' in the title to IV, "a lesson in media works".

85 Malet, 70.

> of planes, and the proportions and colors of these planes seemed to depend purely on chance, I declared that these works, like nature, were ordered "according to the law of chance," chance being for me merely a limited part of an unfathomable *raison d'être*, of an order inaccessible in its totality. Various Russian and Dutch artists who at that time [1915] were producing works rather close to ours in appearance, were pursuing quite different intentions. They are in fact a homage to modern life, a profession of faith in the machine and technology. Though treated in an abstract manner, they retain a base of naturalism and of "trompe l'oeil."[86]

The intentional imposition of chance in art, most famous perhaps in the musical composition of John Cage, has come to be conventionalized under the phrase 'aleatory operations'. These works, though like natural objects insofar as the artist imposes chance upon their composition, are still intentional. As Derrida says, there is no 'outside'. Escheving all programmes is itself a programme. Similarly, the imposition of chance is not accidental, though many accidentals will inevitably be involved in the process. Playing, no doubt, on Kant's definition of reflective judgement as "purposiveness without a purpose", Cage referred to his work as "purposeful purposelessness".[87] It's all about taking us away from our own instrumental purposes. In employing chance we risk chaos. Cage says

> When you use the word 'chaos,' it means there is no chaos, because everything is equally related -- there is an extremely complex interpenetration of an unknowable number of centers.[88]

In describing the piece, HPSCHD, on which he collaborated with Lejaren Hiller, and which Kostelanetz describes as "one of the great artistic environments" of the 1960s, Cage imagines the experience for the viewer/auditor in the midst of the huge sports arena where they staged this extravaganza of simultaneously projected imagery and sound:

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[86] Arp, On My Way, poetry and essays 1912 . . . 1947, Robert Motherwell, dir., The Documents of Modern Art, New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc., 1948, 40.

[87] Cited in Richard Kostelanetz, "John Cage: Some Random Remarks", John Cage, 197.

[88] In Kostelanetz, "Environmental Abundance", John Cage, 175.

> As you go from one point of the hall to another, the experience changes; and here, too, each man determines what he hears. The situation relates to individuals differently, because attention isn't focused in one direction. Freedom of movement, you see, is basic to both this art and this society. With all those parts and no conductor, you can see that even this populous a society can function without a conductor.[89]

But, Ulmer might add, not without conduction, which is to say, that flow of energy between "disparate fields."[90]

Like Dewey, Cage does not see freedom of movement as an end in itself. He characterized HPSCHD as "a political art which is not about politics but political itself."[91] It is political in that it topples the hierarchical authority of the traditional structure of musical production, i.e., a group of players all subject to the commands of a conductor. Here is the Hegelian model of teaching to which Ulmer refers, the top-down model of the teacher's role. Ulmer describes this role as that of

> model and authority, a concrete embodiment of the ideal self with which the student must identify (from Socrates to Freud and beyond, transference is an important element in the pedagogic effect).[92]

This is the imitation model in contrast with which Derrida offers a different mimesis, one which retains "the structure of mimesis without representing anything."[93] Ulmer is referring to the principle Derrida described as being at work in Mallarmé's "Mimique".[94] What can it mean to mime without representing?

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89 Kostelanetz, "Environmental Abundance", John Cage, 175.

90 Ulmer, Teletheory, 63.

91 Ulmer, Teletheory, 63.

92 Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, 166.

93 Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, 251.

94 Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, 176. As Ulmer explains it, "Mimique" is from Mallarmé's Sketched at the Theatre, "an aesthetics of mime based on Paul Margueritte's solo performance, Pierrot Assasin of His Wife. (For "Mimique", Derrida's discussion of it, and a commentary by Daniel Gerould, see Drama Review 23, 1979: 103-19 (Autoperformance Issue).

As I noted in the discussion of decomposition in III.ii, Ulmer helps us understand the dual structure of Derrida's project. Derrida deconstructs philosophical works and mimes literary and artistic works. Ulmer says Derrida in a sense apprentices himself to works of literature and art.[95] It is in miming these works that writing becomes Writing, i.e., decomposition. At the beginning of "Plato's Pharmacy", Derrida says:

> Since we have already said everything, the reader must bear with us if we continue on awhile. If we extend ourselves by force of play. If we then *write* a bit: on Plato, who already said in the *Phaedrus* that writing can only repeat (itself), that it "always signifies (*semainei*) the same" and that it is a "game" (*paidia*).[96]

By miming an art-work, engaging with it in its manner of operation, Derrida extends himself by force of play. By engaging in chance word-play as it surfaces in his writing, Derrida is miming the aleatory operations of avant-gardists. He mimes the work of visual artists by "grafting . . . visual items to text, as executed in The Post Card."[97] And, in his attention to the visual or graphic nature of the written word, he can be said to mime the operations of the concrete poets. Thus, Derrida offers a different mimesis that does not imitate or play upon the content or 'message' of another, but rather, mimes the manner in which another work operates, that is to say, it mimes the movement of its invention.

Ulmer calls Derrida the Aristotle of montage, and he claims that collage [gluing together] (its cinematic counter-part being montage) "is the single most revolutionary formal innovation in artistic representation to occur in our century." It provided "an alternative to the 'illusionism' of perspective which had dominated

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[95] Ulmer, Applied Grammatology, 99.
[96] Derrida, Dissemination, 65.
[97] Ulmer, p. 99.

Western painting since the early Renaissance."[98] And at the root of Derrida's practice of montage is a "new mimesis in which text mimes its object of study". Thus, Writing is a simulacrum of 'true science'.[99] As noted earlier, Fredric Jameson defines simulacrum as "an identical copy for which no original has ever existed."[100] It is worth quoting Ulmer at length on the value of mime for post-criticism because this value is pedagogical in many ways, not least of which is its potential for helping us avoid what I have called the "realism of certainty", i.e., that which supports and defends orthodoxy in education.

> The implication of textual mime for post-criticism, informing paraliterature as a hybrid of literature and criticism, art and science, is that knowledge of an object of study may be obtained without conceptualization or explanation. Rather, as if following Wittgenstein's admonition that "the meaning is the use," Derrida enacts or performs (mimes) the compositional structuration of the referent, resulting in another text of the same "kind" (genre -- but "different" according to the "law of the law of genre" noted above). Post-criticism, then, functions with an "epistemology" of performance -- knowing as making, producing, doing, acting, as in Wittgenstein's account of the relations of knowing to the "mastery of a technique". Thus post-criticism writes "on": its object in the way that Wittgenstein's knower exclaims, "Now I know how to go on!"[101] -- with this "on" carrying all the dimensions and ambiguities of the "on" in Derrida's "Living On" (beyond, about, upon, on -- including the parasitical connotation). Writing may show more (and other) than it says -- the "surplus value" of writing which interests Derrida. The name of this "more" is "allegory."[102]

Ulmer says that miming compositional structuration results in "another text of the same 'kind'." Then he adds parenthetically: "genre -- but different'", evoking the root sense of 'genre' [F. *genre*, kind; OF. *gendre*, gender; L. *genus*, kind]. I

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[98] Gregory L. Ulmer, "The Object of Post-Criticism", The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture, Hal Foster, ed., Seattle: Bay Press, 1983, 84.
[99] Ulmer, "The Object of Post-Criticism", 91-92.
[100] Jameson, 75.
[101] Ulmer cites Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations, G. Anscombe, trans., Oxford: Blackwell, 1968, 105 ("The Object of Post-Criticism", 94, fn. 27).
[102] Ulmer, "The Object of Post-Criticism", 94.

suppose one could call this another opposition, but its metaphor is that of the game, not that of the fight. The game is the art of forming, which, as Cage says, is not an art about politics but politics itself. And, unlike the shared impersonality of Peters' holy ground, the Writing is grounded by sharing the pun, the *différance*, of its own personality. What is shared is not a tendentiousness, the impersonal taking of a position *against*, but a demonstration of the operations or structural movement of *inventio*, the contrivance of finding things out.

Allegory is the parallel case which, being so blatantly not the case, is perfect for pedagogy. In "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism", Craig Owen attempts to rehabilitate allegory after its being "condemned for nearly two centuries as aesthetic aberration".[103] He quotes a passage from Jorge Luis Borges in which the writer speaks disparagingly about allegory: considered once quite charming but now "besides being intolerable" it is thought "stupid and frivolous."[104] Owen points to the "doubly paradoxical" nature of this statement's coming, as it does, from a writer whose works are considered allegorical, and who seems to here be denying allegory its characteristic "capacity to rescue from historical oblivion that which threatens to disappear."[105] Owen brings in Northrop Frye's distinction that "genuine allegory is a structural element in literature", using it in passing from his view that "allegory occurs whenever one text is doubled by another" to his metaphor of allegory as palimpsest. This metaphor rings true to my

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[103] Craig Owen, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism", Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation, Brian Willis, ed., New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art & David R. Godine, 1984, 203.

[104] Owen, 203. Owen cites Borges' "From Allegories to Novels," in Other Inquisitions, 1937 - 1952, Ruth L. C. Simms, trans., Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964, 155-156. Borges says that neither Dante (Vita nuova) nor Boethius (De consolatione) "would have understood our feeling." And he asks a rhetorical question: "How can I explain that difference in outlook without simply appealing to the principle of changing tastes?"

[105] Owen, 203.

use:[106] the Mystic Writing Pad is exemplary example for the hidden curriculum. But, before quoting Owen on the palimpsest, it helps to look more closely at Frye on allegory.

He distinguishes between what he calls "naive" allegory and "free-style" allegory. "[A]ll commentary is allegorical interpretation, an attaching of ideas to the structure of poetic imagination".[107] Frye makes other distinctions as well, but these are the categories in terms of the degree to which the interpretation of the allegory is directed or dictated from within its own form. It seems to me that the reflective or second-order nature of this interpretation makes Frye's concept of allegory identical to that which we have been calling the exemplary example.

"[A]ctual allegory" says Frye, occurs "when a poet explicitly indicates the relationship of his images to examples and precepts, and so tries to indicate how a commentary on him should proceed."[108] This helps me understand the antipathy Borges expresses concerning allegory. In Frye's words,

> The commenting critic is often prejudiced against allegory without knowing the real reason, which is that continuous allegory prescribes the direction of his commentary, and so restricts its freedom. Hence he often urges us to read Spenser and Bunyan, for example, for the story alone and let the allegory go, meaning by that that he regards his own type of commentary as more interesting. Or else he will frame a definition of allegory that will exclude the poems he likes. Such a critic is often apt to treat all allegory as though it were naive allegory, or the translation of ideas into images.

Naive allegory is discursive writing in disguise, says Frye, and it "belongs chiefly to educational literature on an elementary level: schoolroom moralities, devotional exempla, local pageants, and the like." We can add many examples from the spoof-

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106 *pace* Derrida, *pace* Freud.

107 Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (1957), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971, 89-90.

108 Frye, 89-90.

ads in II.ii., whereas in the free-style version "allegory may be picked up and dropped again at pleasure."[109]

Recall now Ulmer's point that the other, parallel, miming text called 'Writing' is of the same "kind" but "different" according to the "law of the law of genre".[110] This phrase was coined by Derrida, and he calls this law

> a principle of contamination, a law of impurity, a parasitical economy. In the code of set theories, if I may use it at least figuratively, I would speak of a sort of participation without belonging -- a taking part in without being a part of, without having membership in a set. The trait that marks membership inevitably divides, the boundary of the set comes to form, by invagination, an internal pocket larger than the whole; and the outcome of this division and of this abounding remains as singular as it is limitless.[111]

With his characteristically limitless play of forms, of countless vocabularies grounding one another, Derrida puts me in my place once again. He shows me that Peters' "shared impersonality" is the dialectic between the sharing which is the play and the set come to form which is text. Play has at least two senses crucial to this point: the give-and-take or play of discussion which is the performance, and the freedom of movement or openness or space for activity which the give-and-take of forms at play both demonstrates and authorizes through its own self-workings. In imagining the inter-working of these senses of 'play', I am better able to understand Derrida's notion of 'supplement' or 'surplus value'. The extra play on the line extending from floating form to shifting ground may cause the line to snap. The differential movement between floating and shifting is set up and provoked by this extra play. Once the line snaps, allegory may be picked up and dropped again at will, which is to say, one decides when to suspend one's disbelief. "In allegorical structure, then," says Owen, "one text is *read through* another, however

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109 Frye, 90.

110 Ulmer, "The Object of Post-Criticism, 94.

111 Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre", Glyph, 7, 1980, 206.

fragmentary, intermittent, or chaotic their relationship may be; the paradigm for the allegorical work is the palimpsest.[112]

This knowing as making, producing, doing, and acting -- this "epistemology of performance", as Ulmer calls it -- is the miming which forms the 'open' work which, as Eco says, is the "dialectic between form and the possibility of multiple meanings."[113] It is now fair to say that this epistemology is grounded in no ordinary chaos. The forms are at play figuring it all out.

. . . . .

It is often the case that the arts are used as a respite from the serious, difficult, 'real' work of schooling. In this context they're sometimes called 'art activities'. How many of us recall Friday afternoons as a kind of playtime or free-for-all in the elementary school classroom when 'making a mess' was at least tolerated if not encouraged. And what about storytime, the joy of being read to? Does it lose some of its mystery once we can read for ourselves?

My mother had a wonderful friend who lost her sight completely when she was well into her nineties, and I remember those phone calls when Mom would be reading to her friend from Dale Estey's The Elephant Talks to God.[114] She would read a passage; it would remind one of them of something, and off they'd go into "I remember the time when . . . ". That's when I'd move out of earshot, knowing I was soon to become the character of a 'sub-plot'.

> The elephant was a slow thinker. When he was finally finished with an idea, it was thoroughly digested. So it was some weeks after his talk with God that he decided he may as well try once again. After all, there would not be questions if there were no answers. The other elephants shook their heads as they watched him walk away, and then returned to their grazing.

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112 Owen, 204-205.
113 Eco, 60.
114 Dale Estey, The Elephant Talks to God, illustrations by Angela Webb O'Hara, Fredericton: Goose Lane, 1989.

The elephant walked for half a day as he did before, had a meal of sweet grass in the clearing, and then raised his head and trumpeted loudly.

"I had a feeling I'd see you again," said a voice from the sky.

The elephant was somewhat taken aback. "I'm sorry if I called too loudly," he said.

"That's all right." A cloud hovered over his head. "I heard you through the trees anyway."

"That last time I spoke to you didn't help much," said the elephant.

"I know," answered the voice. "You expected too much."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm God," answered God. "I'm not supposed to make things easy."

"Well, I've had an idea," said the elephant.

"Fire away," answered the cloud.

"I want to talk to a Pope.

"A Pope?" The voice was mildly surprised. "Which one, we have a lot of them up here."

"Anyone will do," replied the elephant. "I figure a Pope might be able to understand my problems more, coming from earth and all."

"You're not even a Roman Catholic," said God.

"What difference does it make? I'm only an elephant, you said so yourself."

"I just threw that in to get you thinking," said God. "No slur intended."

"You mean that?" the elephant half smiled.

"Of course," said God. "I created you, didn't I? Nothing I created is without worth."

"Thanks," said the elephant.

"That's okay," said God, and the cloud started to move away. "Look, about the Pope. Come back in a month and we'll see what happens."

"You don't mind," the elephant hesitated. "I mean, about me wanting to speak to him instead of you."

"That's what Popes are for," answered God.[115]

This passage raises countless questions:

What is assumed by the metaphor THOUGHT IS FOOD OR NOURISHMENT?
Are there questions without answers?
What form do I expect answers to take?
What if answers don't correspond to questions? How will I recognize them?
How do I come to terms with my own expectations and those of others?
What if I don't help very much?
Am I supposed to make things easy?

---

[115] Estey, 15-16.

> Do I have to experience what you do in order to help?
> What are the limits on doing things to get someone thinking?
> If everything has its own value, what's the basis for comparison?
> Are teachers (like popes) intermediaries?

This is only one list -- mine -- and if you or I were to try again, each of us could generate a whole new list. There are also the questions I have about how my mother and her friend reacted to this story. I often thought how wonderful it would be to record their conversations. And now, in a way I have. Allegory is so flexible. I imagine by now you've noticed the multiple framings: one allegory within another.

"I threw that in to get you thinking," said God. "No slur intended."

. . . . .

I have used 'creative writing' as a break from the formal curriculum in my language arts classroom.[116] Having moved from secondary school education to the study of education and teacher preparation, I have found that in courses on philosophy of education, both those I have taken and those I now give ('give' and 'take' being metaphors of 'course'), there is no justification, other than one of taste, for assuming a break in kind between the 'course' of study and its frame. Proust taught us this with his exposition on a plate of cookies, and Derrida demonstrates it over and over again with his use of mundane objects, chance phrases, and post-card stories. As God said to the elephant, "Nothing I created is without worth", which is also to say there is nothing intrinsically wrong or defective about abstract language or the logical processes it manifests. There is, however, a problem in assuming that, as Ulmer puts it, academic discourse is medium-specific. Because I cannot understand a thesis as a work of art is not to say it can't take such a form. Because I assume these words are part of a set piece contained within the covers of this

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[116] My first years as an English teacher were at a boarding school where, at that time, classes were still held on Saturday mornings, a time in my class regularly devoted to 'creative writing'.

object called 'book' is not to say that the relationships of these words are primarily and necessarily restricted by their container. I make choices; I construct and accept boundaries. Beginning as I have, from concepts of the 'open' work, which devolve into open concepts, I create for myself a problem of boundaries. Can there be too much openness? The fear, in pedagogical contexts, is that openness may preclude discipline [L. *discere*, learn]. Thinking of the two in terms of the time and space one needs to come to know [*con*, with + *sciere*, know], the limits or boundaries of knowledge are of our own making. Bringing my boundaries to the coming to knowledge of someone else is the responsibility and the testimony of teaching. If I can engage with my students in a mutual coming to knowledge, then I feel it more likely my views will be tempered, that the risk of propaganda may not be so great. How will they have confidence in me as teacher if I do not demonstrate any certainty? I am certain there is always another question, and that together we will work out a mutual understanding, for now at least and to the best of our collective capacities, experience, abilities. The media of 'classroom' are in the mutual discovery which is both an uncovering and an in(ter)vention of the ways of working together. The movement of this invention is the rhythm of this epistemology of performance. What I have been describing is probably always happening, whether we attend to it or not.

. . . . .

I invite the reader now to look back, then forward, to re-view my composite miming of the structural composition of Snow's Authorization in which Hans Arp's sculpture, Interregnum, is figure to me in my environment as ground.

fig. 4.04

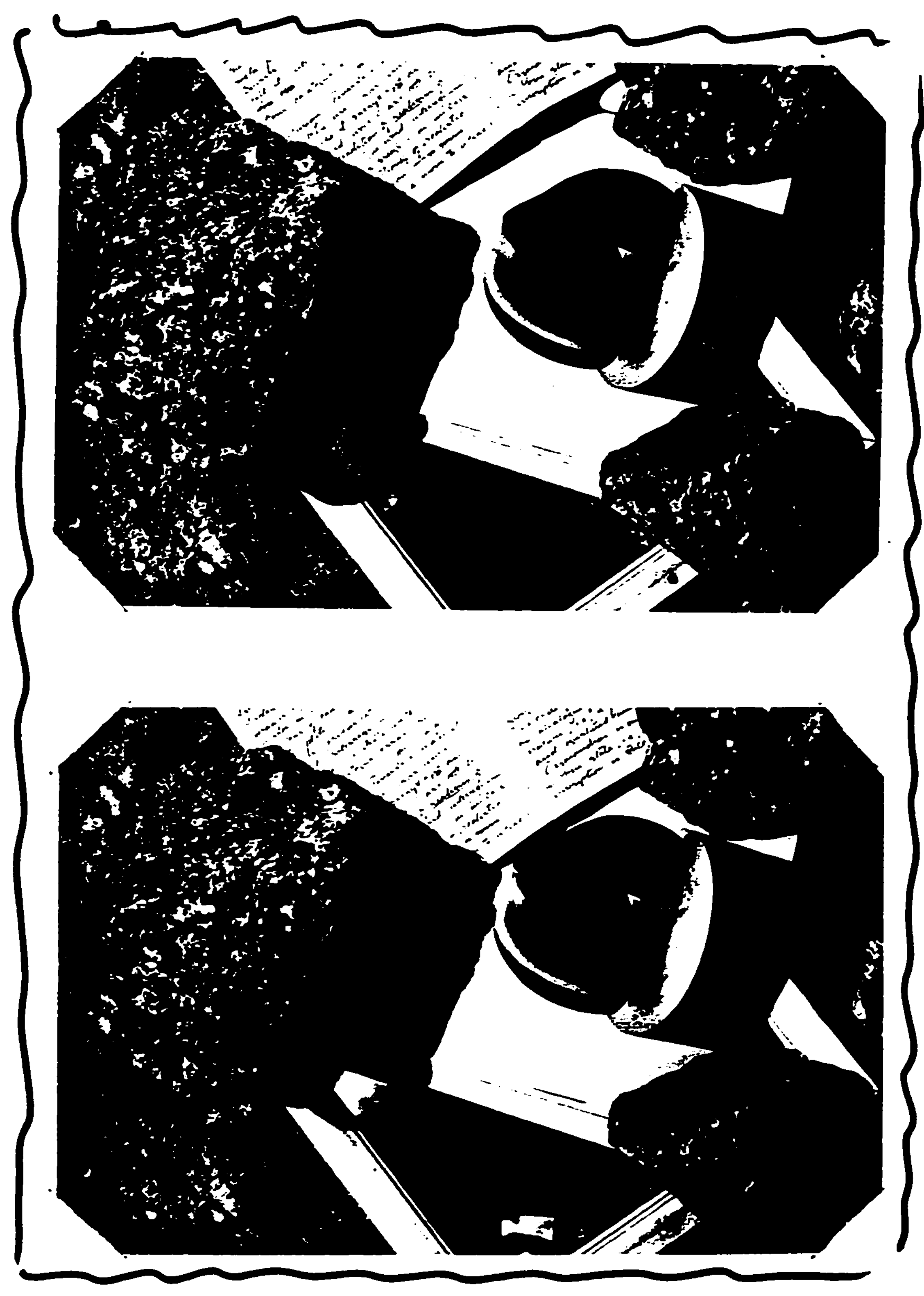

fig. 4.05

fig. 4.06

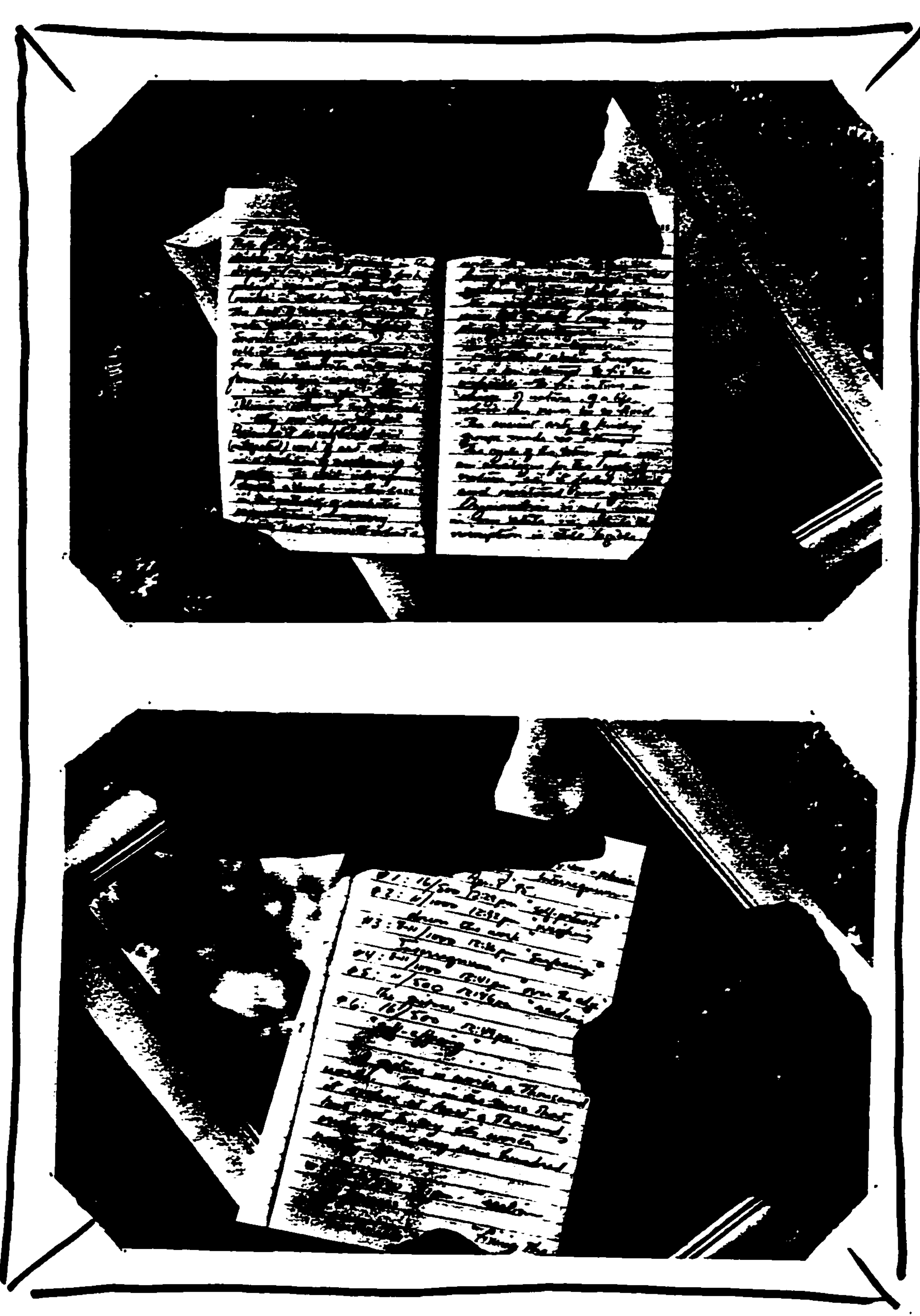

fig. 4.07

There are many interruptions in this performance. Arp intervenes to form the natural object 'stone' into the intentional object 'Interregnum', leaving traces of the plain, quarried rock as supplement to the resemblance of 'natural object' which his working has produced. There is the play as well of 'natural object' turned instrumental in my use of a rock to fix the page for the viewer. All the while, I am playing in the background which is mirror and therefore simultaneously the scene of my performance. Read the titles of the shots, and you will see what the movement of this process showed me: By the time I call my shot "fixing the unfixable", I retain the structure of mimesis but without representing anything since nothing can be fixed, neither in the sense of being mended, not in the sense of being firmly fastened in place. Look at #8: 16/500, 1:04pm. With thousands of words, I simultaneously write myself in and out of the picture. Here is the play, the performance, the give-and-take of appearance and supplement in the disclosure of the palimpsest.

Easter Sunday '95 TX 400 + polarizer
Media essay: "Interregnum-ization" see Apr. 8 '95.
#1: 16/500 12:29 pm "self-portrait"
#2: 11/1000 12:32 pm "weighing down the work"
#3: 8-11/1000 12:36 pm "Surfacing: Interregnum"
#4: 8-11/1000 12:41 pm "over the edge"
#5: 11/500 12:46 pm "reading the pictures"
#6: 16/500 12:49 pm. "self-effacing"

. . . .

"A picture is worth a thousand words." True, in the sense that it evokes at least a thousand; but not to say its worth more than any nine hundred ninety-nine.

. . .

#7: 22-16/500 1 pm: "realism of process"
#8: 16/500 1:04 pm. "fixing the unfixable".

fig. 4.08

In speaking of the 'ruin' and 'runes' of representation in modernist art and text, Jo Anna Isaak cites Julia Kristeva's call for a linguistics

> other than the one descended from the phenomenological heavens; a linguistics capable of accounting for a nonetheless articulated *instinctual* drive, across and through the constitutive and insurmountable frontier of *meaning*.[117]

Isaak elucidates:

> What is necessary, according to Kristeva, is a desire *for* language, a passion for its materiality as opposed to its transparency, in order to carry the venture to the point where abstraction is revealed as resource, as infinite potential, to that point where meaning has not yet appeared (the child), no longer is (the insane), or else functions as a restructuring (writing, art).[118]

Here are the extremes, the oppositions, grounding one another in 'Writing'. Isaak's above words mark the end of her introduction, an amusing accidental miming of our place right now. She asks her reader

> not to interpret the texts, but on the contrary to appreciate what pluralities constitute them, to gain access to them by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one.[119]

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[117] Julia Kristeva, Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, Leon S. Roudiez, ed., Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez, trans., New York: Columbia University Press, 1980, 128. Cited in Jo Anna Isaak, The Ruin of Representation in Modernist Art and Texts, Ann Arbor: U.M.I. Research Press, 1986, 20.

[118] Kristeva, 20.

[119] Kristeva, 20.

V. Postlude

Derrida delivered a paper called "Aporias" at Cerisy-la-Salle, July 15, 1992, as part of a conference in his honour, "Le Passage des frontières (autour de Jacques Derrida)."[1] The title page of his essay reads:

APORIAS

DYING -
awaiting (one another at)
the "limits of truth"

MOURIR -
s'attendre aux "limites de
la vérité"

The paper is in two parts beginning with "Finis". Derrida begins by giving the source for the phrase, "limits of truth", cited in his sub-title. Diderot uses it in an essay on Seneca to refer to the "general defect" of "letting oneself be carried beyond the limits of truth."[2] This surely relates to the question this work asks about the place and prerogative [L. *prae*, first + *rogare*, ask] of discourse. If academic discourse is not medium-specific, how far can it be stretched and still speak with authority? The question asks about itself and about the self asking oneself about it. "Reader reads reader": Is reading a self-consideration? A question of questionable merit? A self-indulgence, perhaps? What are the "limits of truth"? Derrida asks:

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[1] Derrida, Aporias, v.

[2] Denis Diderot, Essai sur la vie de Sénèque le philosophe, sur ses écrits, et sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron, in vol. 7 of Oeuvres de Sénèque traduites en français par feu M. Lagrange Paris: Frères de Bure, 1778.

> What does "beyond" mean in this case? By itself, the expression "limits of truth" can certainly be understood - and this would be an *indication* - as the fact that the truth is precisely limited, *finite*, and confined within its borders. In sum, the truth is not everything, one would then say, for there is more, something else or something better: truth is finite [*finie*]. Or worse: truth, it's finished [c'est fini]. However, by itself, the same expression can signify - and this time it would not be an indication but the *law* of a negative *prescription* - that the limits of truth are borders that must not be exceeded. In both these cases it remains that a certain border crossing does not seem impossible as soon as truth is confined. As soon as truth is a limit or has limits, its own, and assuming that it knows some limits, as the expression goes, truth would be a certain relation to what terminates or determines it.[3]

"[T]ruth would be a certain relation to what terminates or determines it." Derrida tells us how Diderot, in reading the third chapter of Seneca's De brevitate vitae, blushed to think it the story of his own life and remarked "Happy is he who does not depart convinced that he has lived only a very small part of his life!" Derrida says that this chapter from Seneca contains

> a *rhetoric of borders*, a lesson in wisdom concerning the lines that delimit the right of absolute property, the right of property to our own life, the proper of our existence, in sum, a treatise about the tracing of traits as the borderly edges of what in sum *belongs to us* [*nous revient*], belonging as much to us as we properly belong to it.[4]

The subtleties of the passage are lost if one does not think, with each use of an English word with the root 'proper', of the French *propre* which can mean both "proper" and "own".[5]

The English word *proper*, as in a "proper English gentleman", carried a connotation of superficiality, a note lent to one set of values and behaviours by another, ours, coming after it. The "hail fellow well met" of the new world carries its cachet of plain-speaking, down-to-earth reliability. The one aspect

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[3] Derrida, Aporias, 1-2.

[4] Derrida, Aporias, 3.

[5] Jacques Derrida, Margins of Philosophy (1972), Alan Bass, trans., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, translator's note, xi. Bass refers to Derrida's phrase *son propre autre* as meaning its own other, the other proper to it.

can as easily be feigned as the other. The OED denotation III.9 for *proper* reads "fit, apt, suitable". One step back etymologically, the meaning is "belonging or relating exclusively or distinctively", as in a proper name or noun. The first denotation brings us parallel with French usage, "own". If we go further away from the original sense of the word, to OED entry III.10, we get "In conformity with social ethics, or with the demands or usages of polite society, becoming decent, decorous, respectable, genteel, 'correct'." Here the lexicographers have included a sense of the word which they place in inverted commas in keeping with current usage. Being seen to be 'correct' or proper is not necessarily the same, however, as acting properly, that is, in accord with the "proper of one's existence". The OED quotes from Mrs. Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852), chapter xvi: "When will you learn what's proper?" This one line evokes a hierarchy of difference, about which it seems fitting to ask, "Proper to whom?"

The "limits of truth", Derrida implies, are our proper boundaries, a step [F. *pas*, step; no, not] across which neutralizes difference. Being one's proper self, one's own self, is being both self and proper other. What is my other possible case, my other possible self?

I have referred several times to the correspondence theory of knowledge, that choice of metaphor for the inescapable 'how' of existence. It is as if accepting this metaphor allows it to 'transfer' itself somehow to assumptions about learning. I do not attempt to refute this theory in the sense of offering an alternative other, that is, than the alternative we call 'doubt'. The rhetoric of human affairs, it seems to me, is rife with talk of "meeting challenges", "taking up the gauntlet", stating the "bottom line". All of these metaphors are merely reductive if they do not meet their own (proper) challenge, which is to say, meaning its own other which is proper to it.

I mentioned humility, a difficult subject when speaking inventively, i.e., from the doubting self, the proper one, its own other (*son propre autre*), whose purposes are implicated in acting properly. Dickens gives us the archetype of false humility in the obsequious Uriah Heep:

> ". . . Now confess, Master Copperfield, that you haven't liked me quite as I have liked you. All along you've thought me too umble now, I shouldn't wonder?"
>
> "I am not fond of professions of humility," I returned, "or professions of anything else."

Uriah goes on to tell David a little of his life story, going to a foundation school, "a public, sort of charitable establishment", where he was taught "a deal of umbleness".

> "We was to be umble to this person, and umble to that; and to pull off our caps here, and to make bows there; and always to know our place, and abase ourselves before our betters. And we had such a lot of betters!" . . . "'Be umble, Uriah,' says father to me, 'and you'll get on. It was what was always being dinned into you and me at school; it's what goes down best. Be umble,' says father, 'and you'll do!' And really it ain't done bad!"
>
> It was the first time it had ever occurred to me that this detestable cant of false humility might have originated out of the Heep family. I had seen the harvest, but had never thought of the seed.
>
> "When I was quite a young boy," said Uriah, "I got to know what umbleness did, and I took to it. I ate umble pie with an appetite. I stopped at the umble point of my learning, and says I, 'Hold hard!' When you offered to teach me Latin, I knew better. 'People like to be above you,' says father. 'Keep yourself down.' I am very umble to the present moment, Master Copperfield, but I've got a little power!"[6]

Here is an example of learning being sacrificed to the demands of conformity, a false authority. The potential of the young Uriah was twisted under the weight of a rigid, closed, empty formality, turning the boy into a fawning, hypocritical

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[6] Charles Dickens, David Copperfield (1850), New York: Washington Square Press, 1958, 552-553.

version of himself. Forced into putting "seeming before being",[7] into deferring his own (proper) self, Uriah grows into a charade of everything he professes in his desire for power, that which was lorded over him, which all those 'betters' have and which he lives to attain. The question, "When will you learn what's proper?" is not really a question at all. It could be a real question, if it were asking, "When will you come into your own (proper) self, the knowledge that implies responsibility and is thereby a knowledge for power?" But the question as it stands in Stowe's novel is a veiled criticism and possibly a command. A phrase used today in place of this more 'proper' question is "Smarten up!"[8] The speaker has a code of conduct or set of values to which someone is expected to conform. But we have seen that allowing for the possible other case means more than entertaining an opposite position. The opposition will have an 'other' as well, an 'other' beyond oppositions. Call it paradox, mystery, or the absurd.

. . . . .

I began this writing with an 'open' work which I came across by chance, and which, as it turns out, remains open in many ways, not the least of which is the fact that I have never heard whether my submission became part of an art exhibition. I assume by the fact that it did not come back to me by return post that it was received somewhere by someone, even if only to make its way into an inactive file or a waste basket. Sitting somewhere in *poste restante*, it has done something, for here I am still thinking about it and asking my reader to do so. The fact that I have never heard back makes it more intriguing, a provocation for imagining all kinds of scenarios of how the "Daily Meals" show might have been mounted. I see food photos in magazines and wonder if anything similar was submitted. I see television appeals for donations to organizations helping to feed the hungry and feel the shame

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[7] See IV., fn. 10.

[8] Michael Jackson notes that "[i]nterestingly the modern version is not a question."

that comes with turning my daily meal into a kind of game. And yet, as I have been saying, the give and take, the daily round, is that from which and to which we work.

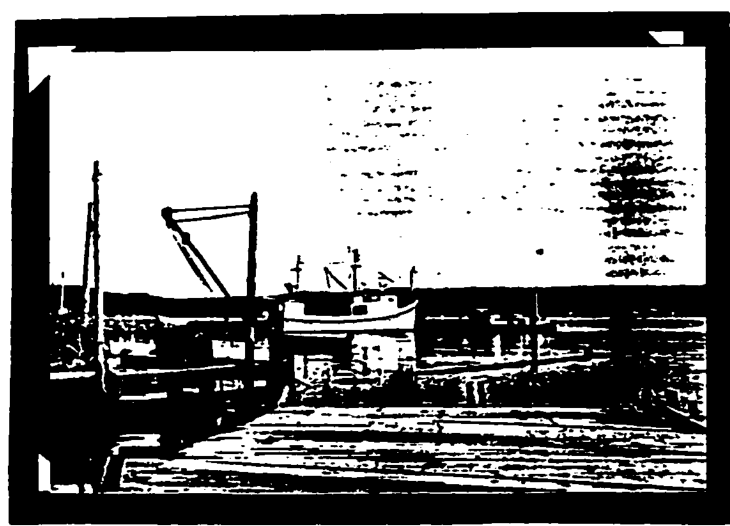
"No ordinary chaos"

an invitation to a work

As part of my research in education, I invite you into an 'open' work. Take a minute to think of:

a reflection . . . a picturesque scene . . . a short conversation.

Then, figure out a way to represent any part or all of them. The photo below is an example of all three. It's a reflection of light. It's a picturesque scene of a calm harbour. And, it's a short visual conversation between the photographer and everything that caught her eye at that place in time. The conversation now extends to you, the reader.



I've used a visual example to catch your attention. But, you can use any medium. Perhaps you have a hobby like toll painting, carving, quilt-making, or writing your family history. If your response is too fragile or expensive to send, you could describe it in words, or in a sketch or snap-shot. The main thing is to take some time and enjoy figuring it out. There's no such thing as a 'wrong' answer!

If you'd like to know how the project is going, and how your response figures in it, please include a contact address. Send your submission by April 4th, 1997 to:

"No ordinary chaos", c/o The Post Office, Terence Bay, Nova Scotia, B3T 1YO.

fig. 5.01

In February, 1997, I posted the above invitation on the bulletin board of the village post office, and distributed copies to a handful of individuals and groups. People have responded in various ways, mostly in conversation. What mattered to me, what I had learned from the "Daily Meals" exhibition, was not how or even whether people responded in ways that reached me. What mattered was not documenting specific responses but creating the opening. Unlike the countless prescriptive documents I encounter daily -- applications, directions, guarantees, guides, manuals, bills, cheques -- this is an open invitation, an 'at home' with the self. Glance at it, read it, copy it, post it who knows where, or do nothing whatsoever -- the opening is there. As I said at the start, "open-work is a play of positive and negative space. Every closure of one form is the inevitable opening to others."[9] Since an 'open' work never closes, I double back on my gesture by issuing the invitation again. (The address is there for what it's worth.) And I bring this Writing to a new opening in the forms which follow into a work.

. . . . .

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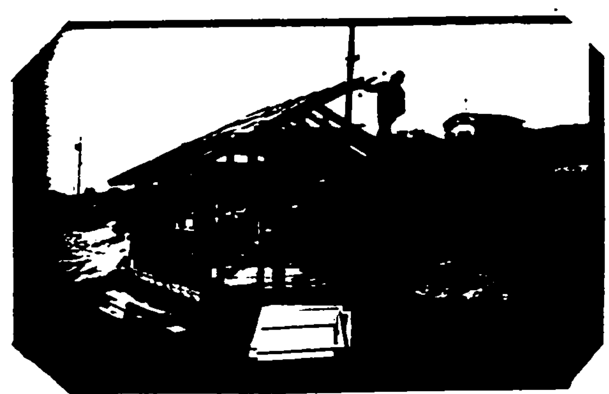
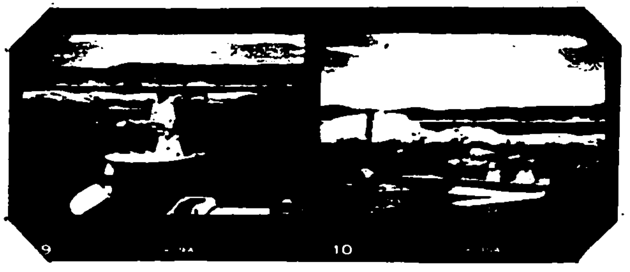
[9] I.,1.

An audio journal[10]

January 8 '97. On the road to Windsor.

My thinking has been swirling around the same central themes for many years now. I began in the language arts, my 'higher education', but my life had some artistic tendencies before that. I used to sing Teresa Brewer songs to my mother's customers when they came to have their hair done at our place. And, my father drew an excellent 'Jiggs' from the funny papers and I followed his lead with my renditions of 'Mighty Mouse'.

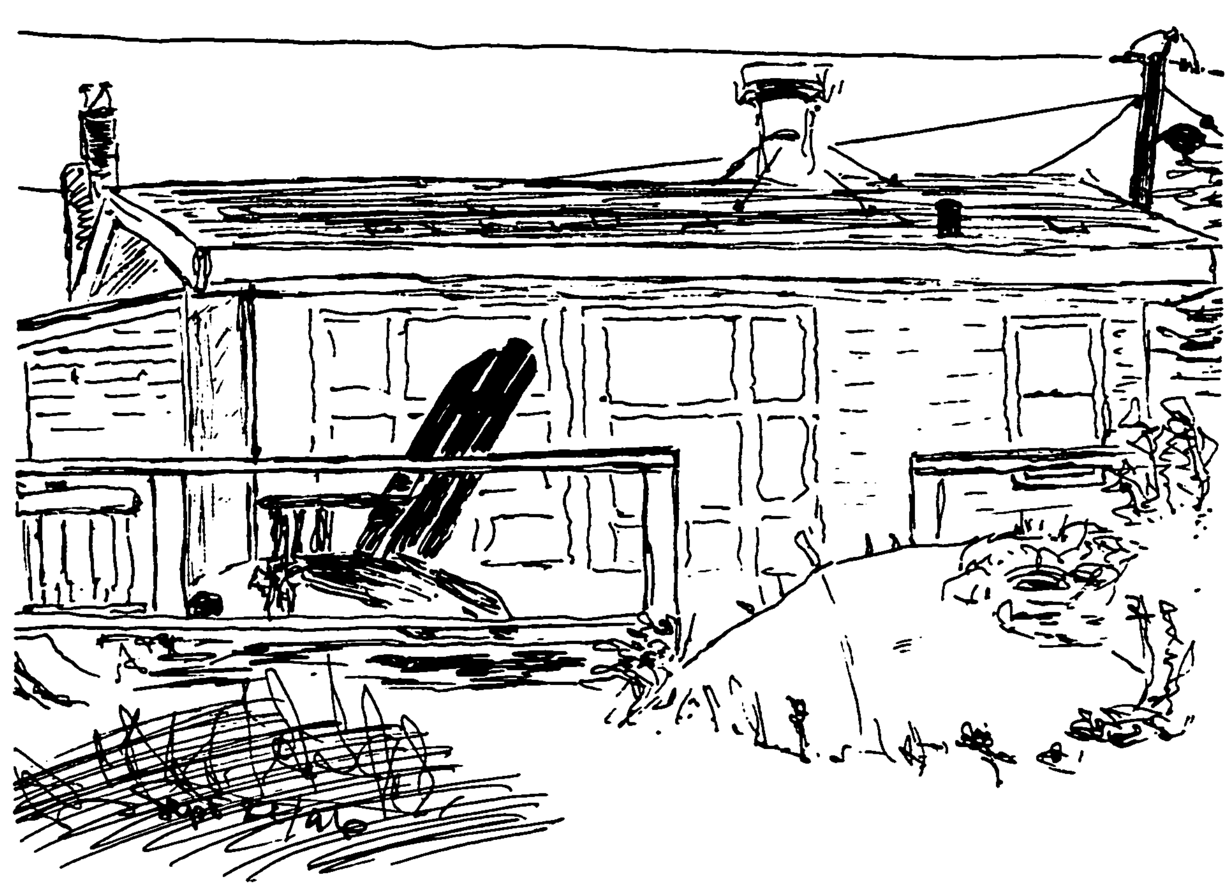




[10] The visuals weaving through this audio journal (leading up to the three responses to my invitation) were chosen from a collection of images formed during the six years of research for this project. They were placed as you see them following the imposition of chance operations. They are not numbered as 'figures' because they do not serve to illustrate in the usual way of providing a pictorial image for something in writing. Rather, they are part of the text.

I remember the first time I consciously thought about what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wanted to be a cartoonist. I can't recall if I proclaimed this openly at school, which is where these kinds of wishes came to the fore. If I did, it wasn't frequently, because it got peculiar reactions.

My father tells of being late one day at St. Mary's Boys' School in Halifax, there on Argyle St., back in the 'dirty thirties', I believe. The principal stopped him in the hall and asked to see his copy-book, and there -- the only thing inside that book was a drawing Dad did of . . . who was it? Not Tom Mix, but another cowboy hero, Ken Maynard, I believe. And the principal said to my dad that he'd be better off quitting school and getting a job.



My parents sent me to art class run by a friend of my Aunt Barbara - a wirey, energetic woman named Peggy Covert. But 'Mighty Mouse' and the exploits of cartoon characters, which is what I did, wasn't what went on there, and I found my fledgling attempts at moulding clay very crass and rudimentary. I can't remember them in any detail.

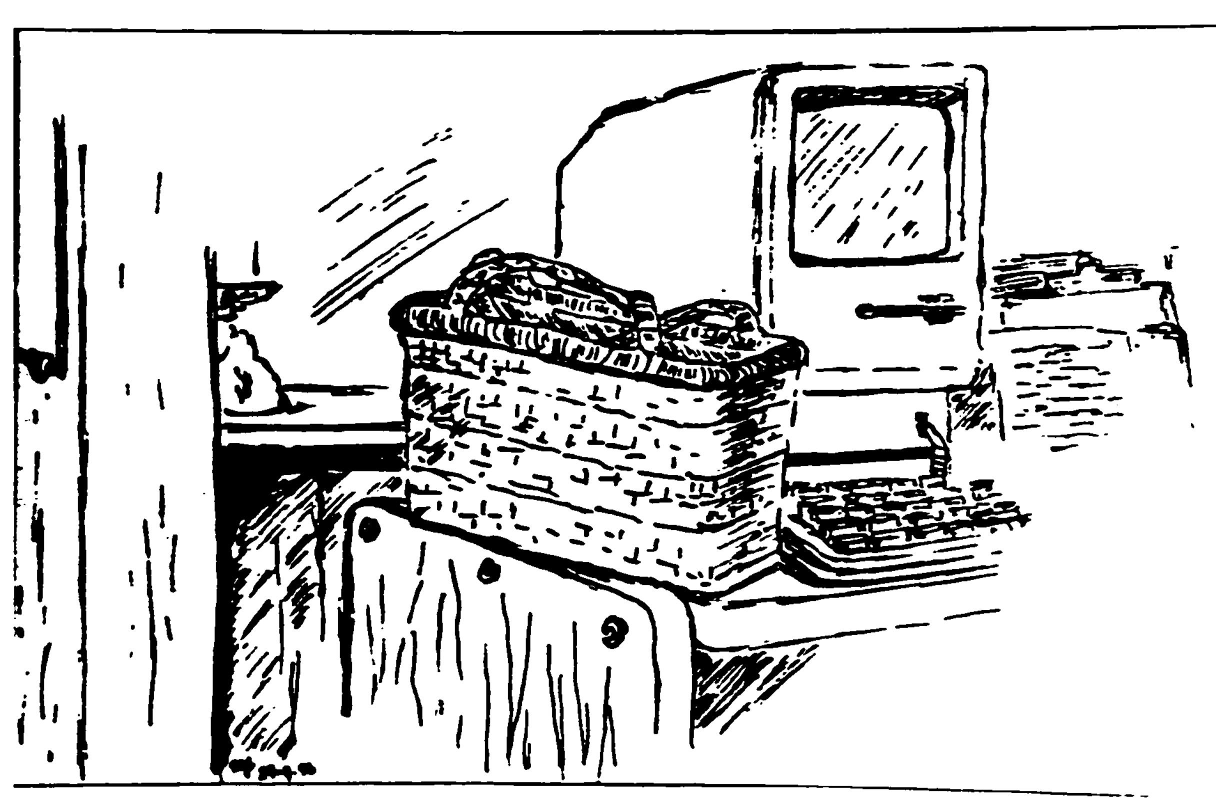
How my parents got the impression I had this artistic tendency is . . . mystery.[11] Although, as I say, doubtless I was copying my dad's quick hand with the pencil. He had, after all, painted a whole series of cartoon-like images from nursery rhymes around the upper border of my bedroom. I remember Humpty-Dumpty in particular. Was he the first in the series? I think so. Where did my parents find these figures I wonder? Where are those books? Did they go to my cousins? They got handed down through the family somewhere . . . gone. Ah, those colours - the pumpkinny orange and the robin's egg blue. Those are still vivid. In fact, that same blue was used to paint my cedar chest which stood below the window between the twin beds in my room.

[11] More accurate, no doubt, to say, they veered me in the direction of art. (And I mean this in all its senses.)

But aesthetics was something I learned on - how can I say it? - a more sentient level as well. Not so much in the products of my direct activity but in my environment, the way in which furniture was arranged in our house, those kinds of aesthetic choices were 'developed' in a kind of way. I'm not really sure . . . . . My aunt, who is more than ten years older than my mother, had a very comfortable house full of antiques of every sort from coloured glass to furniture and kitchen crockery. The house on Victoria Road had a sturdiness and a solidity about it, an older Dartmouth home, older than ours but not as old as some of the grander and larger ones on rolling, well-appointed lots closer to the centre of town.

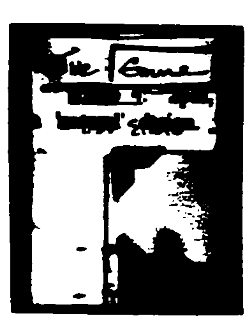
Auntie Barbara was an avid collector of antiques. We would go and root through these dusty, dank, old garages and barns and places that people would open up to her, just full of the most amazing assortment of things. And from that curio-randomness, out of it would come an order, a selection which was re-ordered onto rich pieces of finely crafted hard, dark wood, and onto window-ledges full of glass of different colours, the brilliance of fine glass, in front of the windows on the landing on my Aunt's staircase - beautiful, beautiful things. . . . Beautiful things.

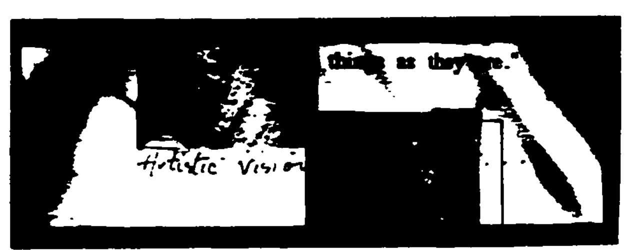
We had beautiful things as well. And what I've come to think more and more about is that we all have beautiful objects in our lives. It's not a matter of one thing being (technically) more valuable, more able to elicit money from someone wishing to purchase it. That's not the kind of value to which I refer. We all have things that are a part of us: the things that paper our memories, the backdrops, the sets . . . as our lives progress. As we look back into that curio-cabinet of the mind, at all the curiosities, there are sets, there are shapes, forms, various textures, there are smells. We are sentient beings.



I experience these shapes, these forms on an elemental level. Not on a level of sameness but a level of equalness, of equity. Because we are collections of elements within these elements. And to become more consciously aware of these things, of this condition, of our sentient selves, is to be aesthetically educated, developed. The aesthesis.[12]

Whom am I quoting when I say these things?
No, I'm speaking from experience.
This is what I believe based on experience.
It's a very simple statement.
It's a very simple thesis.
I begin with a very simple view.
There's nothing new in this view.





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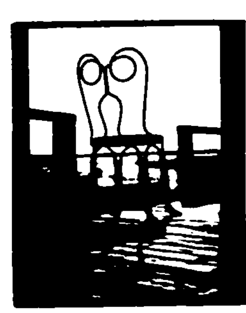
[12] aesthetic: f. Gk. *aisthetikos*, of or pertaining to things perceptible by the senses, things material as opposed to things thinkable or immaterial. [As Dewey points out, however, the intellectual also has its sensory aspects or aesthetic. See I.I. fn. 25.] Also, perceptive, sharp in the senses; f. verb stem *aisthe-* 'feel, apprehend by the senses.' (*aisthanomai* - perceive). The word was applied by Baumgarten (1750-58, Aesthetica) to 'criticism of taste' considered as a science or philosophy. Protest was made against this use by Kant (1781, Crit. R. V. 21) who applied the name in accordance with the ancient distinction to 'the science which treats of the conditions of sensuous perception' (OED).

This is something
I believe most people will accept.
Those who wish to dispute it,
Disprove it on a level of empirical evidence,
Are doing something different from what I'm doing.

I'm not interested
In proving what I'm saying to be
Empirically true,
Because empirical evidence only proves
What the tester manages to arrange circumstance to show.

Empirical testing proves
What the tester sets out to prove or disprove,
Because proof and disproof are opposite sides
Of the same condition,
Or set of circumstances within a frame.



The proof or means of testing
Depends on the tester's framework,
The methodology of choice,
Methodology most rigorous.
I'm not out to do that.
That's not my speciality, nor my interest.

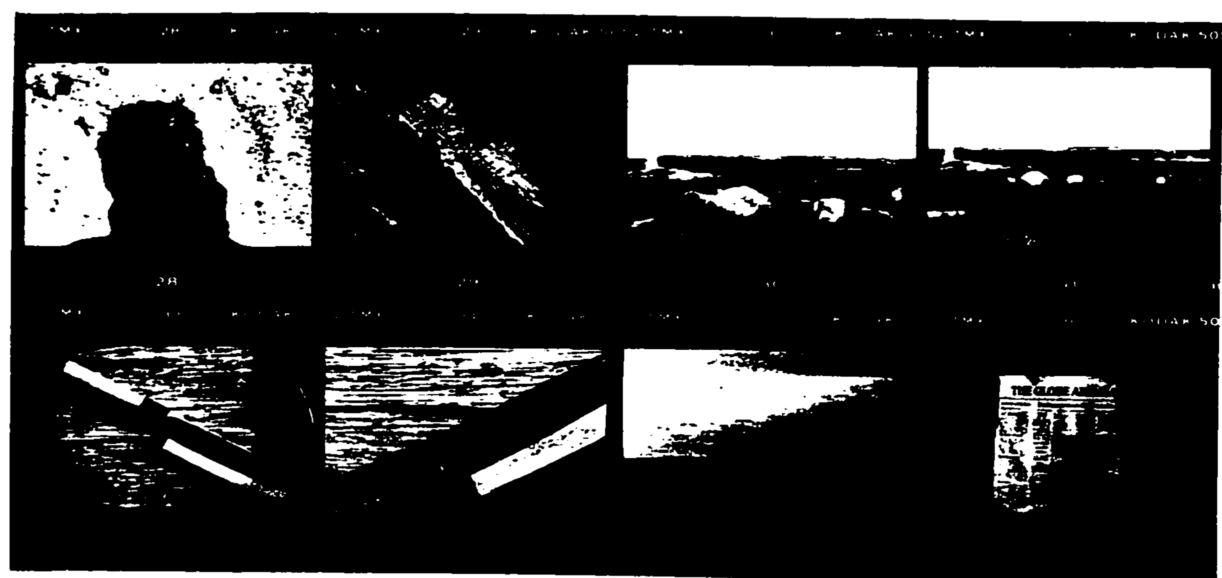
I'm interested in supposing something and seeing where that leads and examining the seeing. My supposition is that we are sentient beings, we all have an aesthesis. How conscious we are of these things, of our sentience, as it were, is a facet of our aesthetic development, of our education, if you like.

. . . . .

I've mentioned a few examples from part of my aesthesis, or album of epistemological profiles. I left out learning to play the harmonica and the guitar, and sitting around the campfire at MacKinnons' farm down in River John singing cowboy songs: "The Streets of Laredo", "Red River Valley", then on to high school and Peter, Paul, & Mary, Bob Dylan, and then a dramatic glissando up into the world of opera. What did I think I was doing? I was attempting to be a specialist practitioner, and I've come to realize that aesthetic education is more than technical prowess, is more than successful performance or production. In fact, those two things may be working in completely different directions.

Ruth Prescesky identifies two types of musicians: those who come into a music education programme seeing themselves as performers and those who see themselves as participants.[13] And my experience of seeing myself as a performer has made it a difficult struggle to come to see myself as a participant. Have I made it? I guess I won't know until another way of seeing myself is formed.

. . .



So what of the approach to arts and aesthetic education which focuses on great works, on beautiful clarity, on the perfection of form, on the Platonic notion of ideal form? This is not the type of formalism in which I am interested, at least not

[13] Ruth Prescesky, School of Music, Acadia University, successfully defended her dissertation in January, 1997. I am as yet unaware of the full title of her work. I hope she will forgive this loose reference, which is based upon my understanding of her presentation, "The Role of Narrative, Metaphor and Image in the Stories of Music Education Students", at the Sixth Annual Conference of Atlantic Educators' (Acadia University, Nov. 1-2, 1996) and upon the conversation which has ensued from it.

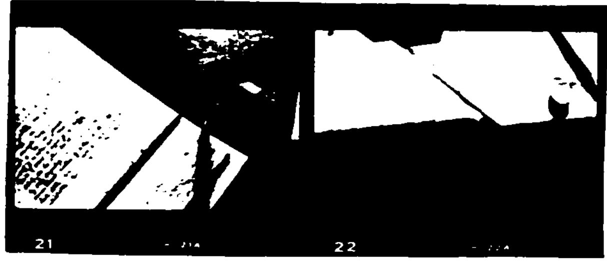
from an empiricist view of 'ideal' as objectively true. I have stated that we are formally engaged by our nature as sentient beings. We are one of the shapes in the bigger form in which we see and represent ourselves. We are conscious of the other shapes. Or, at least, there's a consensus that we are. With these other shapes, we are figure in one person's picture, and ground in someone else's.

. . .

We are all always expressing our aestheses. Some of us do so by talking about it on a sensory level. I describe the

Rivulets running up my windshield,
Branches on a huge arching trunk,
A wet patch across the windshield of my vision
Where the blade is torn.

Fog on the road
Drawing me away to other
More voluptuous and alluring paths.



This is a direct reflection of a sentient experience. It is a meta-experience, an experience which feels its own . . . what shall we call it? . . . its own motion? . . . This is realism of process.

. . .

Many years ago when I first started thinking about this written work, the one you're reading now, my professor, John Portelli, told the story of the difficulty he had with the last chapter of his doctoral dissertation. He just couldn't get anything to come together. And then, finally, he was standing on the street in Montreal, waiting for a bus, with a tape recorder, and began to talk his final chapter. And, that's how he got it out and onto the paper. What you're reading now is a transcription from a tape I'm making, as I drive along the 101 highway in Nova Scotia from Halifax toward Windsor in the Annapolis Valley on a very cold blustery January day. The roads have been salted and every car and truck that passes kicks up moisture although it's very cold and snowing. At the ground level, with the salt on the road for the morning traffic, a spray comes off the tires of passing cars. It comes onto my windshield and, as the salt dries in the wind, it creates a kind of screen through which I look. I try to use my windshield wipers, my washer-fluid, but with that little patch broken on my wiper blade, I continue to make things almost as bad every time I try to clear the glass.

. . .

To think of this little padded shelter in which I sit, careening down a smooth . . . this pathway, this hard and smooth trail riven through rock and fir and scrubby landscape - to think of things this way, to think of transportation as a sentient experience, an aesthetic experience . . . What is my aesthesis of driving a car?

> To keep windshield clear,
> Use defroster.
> In winter this means
> Cold feet.

. . .

Audio journal, January 9th, a short conversation. For the purposes of this work, I employ a medium with which I am acquainted but with which I've no expertise or technical training. In engaging in this form of mediation, I continually and unconsciously make compositional choices. But, for the most part . . .[audio obscured by high wind] . . aid to aesthetic responses. Dondis[14] talks about the horizontal-vertical axis - our visual legacy as a result of gravity. In our environment it's the basic up-down relationship. One might take this out into the metaphorical world as well and talk about . . . [wind, again] . . . So, back to these choices. For the most part I am capturing, attempting to capture a moment, a convergence, a conspiration of elements, some of which may not be visual at all. But some of which are responses to the feelings I get from the meeting of my visual perceptions and my sentient self. A short conversation.

[14] Donis A. Dondis, A Primer of Visual Literacy. Cambridge & London: MIT Press, 1973.

In respect to what I just said about a short conversation and in reflecting on the photographs I took just before making that entry, I want to ask: How many ways are there of seeing this as a conversation? Conversing with myself. Conversing with my surroundings. Surely that, too. Normally, though, a conversation is thought to be between or among people. The art of conversation. The conversation piece: that which stimulates polite chit-chat or deeper exchanges of thoughts and . . . But you're reading this, and as you do other words emerge. So, there's that conversation, the one you're having with yourself.

. . .

A little later that day.

Since I began this work in nineteen ninety-two? one? . . . the fall of ninety-one — [tape runs out]

. . . . .

Later that day, on the road to town.

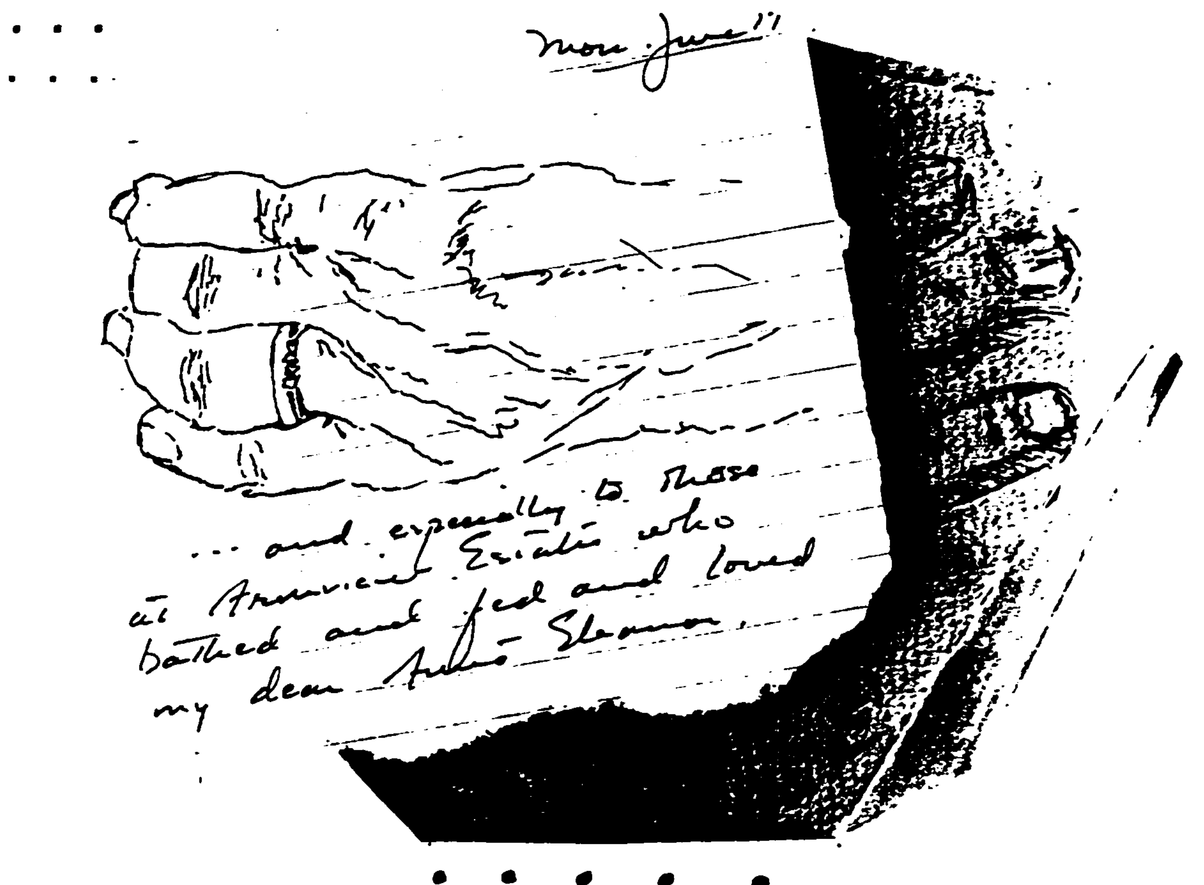
Since beginning this work in the fall of 1991, I have suffered difficult times. It's been a very fruitful period in my life. But, it's also been a period of great loss and suffering. It's important, I think, that these things happened at the same time although it's certainly made this project . . . It's not fair to say it's made it take longer without also saying how it has made it so much richer than it possibly could have been had I not been . . . reading Berger's book on the avant-garde while sitting by my grandmother's bedside in hospital or . . . doodling and drawing in an effort to 'keep busy' there at the nursing home with my aunt as she lay unconscious. These are dramatic scenes in my life, scenes of great pathos, scenes engraved, inscribed in my memory, inscribed in every way, and through every sense.

And here am I, writing about the "conditions of sensuous perception", the aesthesis. So, although I might write my gains and my losses out of the picture, they can't be out of the picture. They can only be out of . . . [sight?] . . . They can only be . . . unknown, but there, unknown to others, unknown to the average reader but not unknown to those who know what my life was like. And since this is about aesthesis, one's aesthetic education or development, and I am my own subject, then inevitably these experiences are being reflected.

They may only be reflected indirectly. They may be directly reflected because I may choose . . . I may choose to include the sketch of my aunt's hand which I made just before her death, with her wedding rings . . . those oh, so important things.

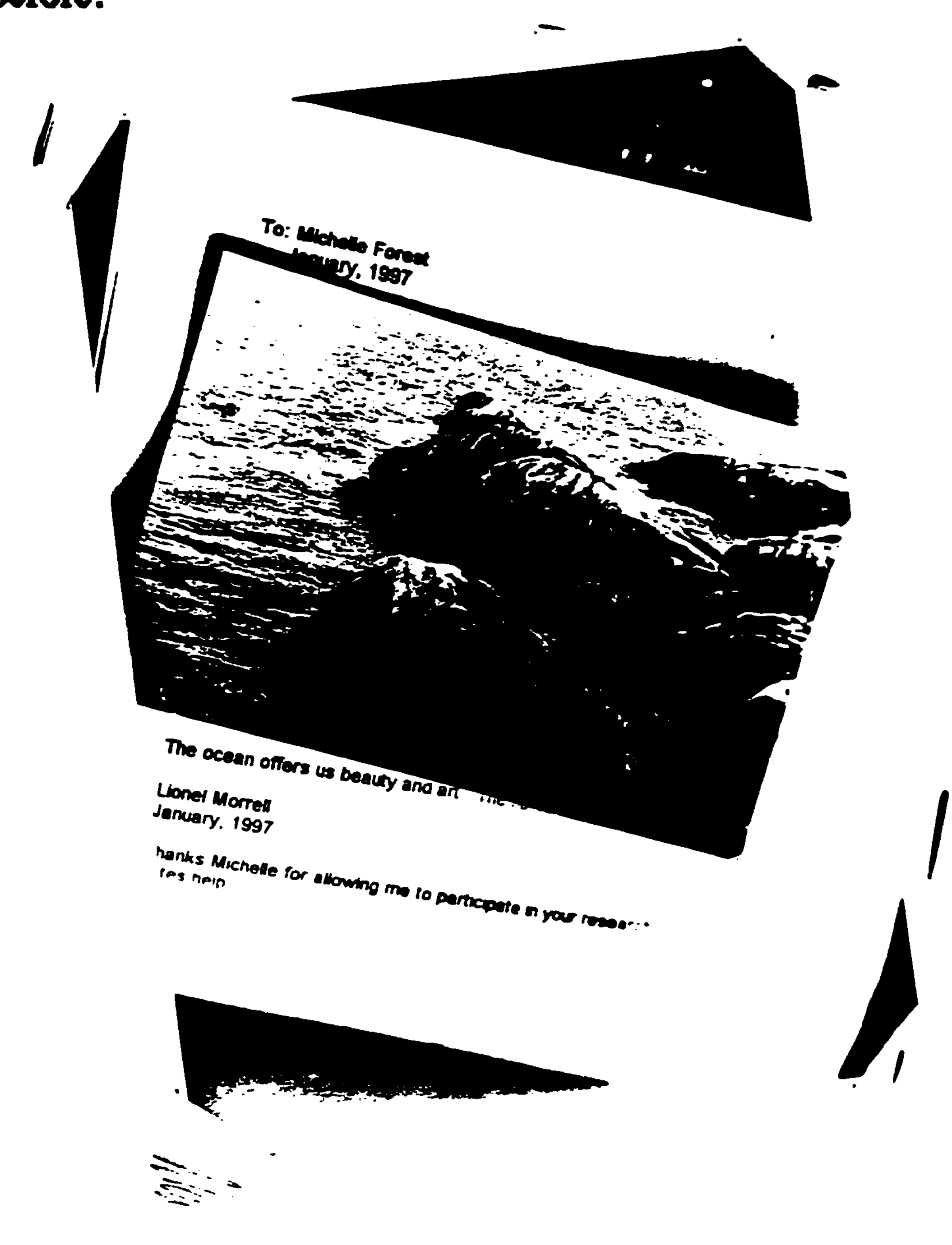
. . .

. . .



• • • • •

In responding to my invitation into this work, my neighbour sends the image of a scene I know so well but have never seen before.



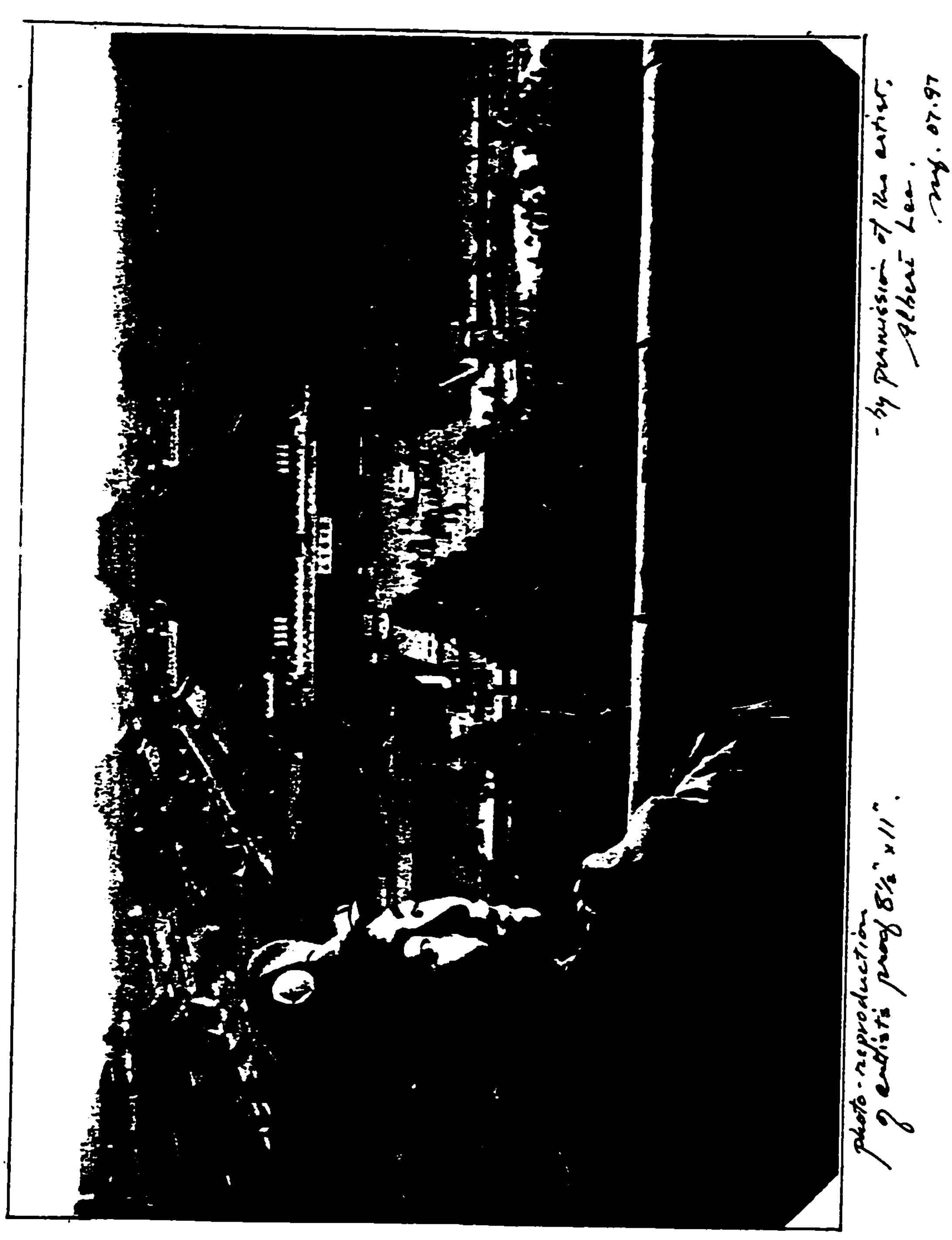
(This is my black and white duplication of his colour print.)

He says:

> The picture illustrates a moment in time, a maritimer's reflection of coastal life. Water is the constant in which the other parts are dependant, i.e., water-boat, water wharf, water-nets, water-lively-hood, water-life.
>
> The photo elements conjure up in my mind a calmness that is both real and surreal. The picture has a dreamlike quality; it draws you in; almost like being there – stretched out on the wharf enjoying the warmth of the sun while the waves carry you away.
>
> An inescapable fact is that if you remove yourself from the ocean (over an extended period of time), for one reason or another, it always draws you back. I do not know why this occurs, perhaps it is the grandness, its reflective colours, the everlasting movement, its devastating power or the meditative qualitites it imbues in a person. It must be all of these.
>
> The ocean offers us beauty and art. The harvest awaits.

. . .

I didn't mention that a professional photographer friend of mine had also been intrigued by the "Daily Meals" notice, to the point that he set up his own 'shoot'. I haven't seen the results, and I don't believe he sent them to the post office box. It was well past the submission date when I told him about the exhibition. He did respond to my invitation to a work, though. He called me from Toronto just as he was settling his affairs and setting off for China on assignment and asked if I'd like him to submit a photo I had once admired. He said he thought it represented "no ordinary chaos".



On the back, he had written:

Beijing, China, '85 "no ordinary chaos"
(Chinese soldier overlooking Forbidden City and Tianamien Square)

. . .

A dear friend, whom I have known since our schooldays at St. Peter's in Dartmouth, suffered the death of his brother shortly after I invited him to join this work. As I explained earlier and to everyone who expressed an interest in my invitation, tangible responses are not necessary. But feeling he'd like to participate, he sent me this letter:

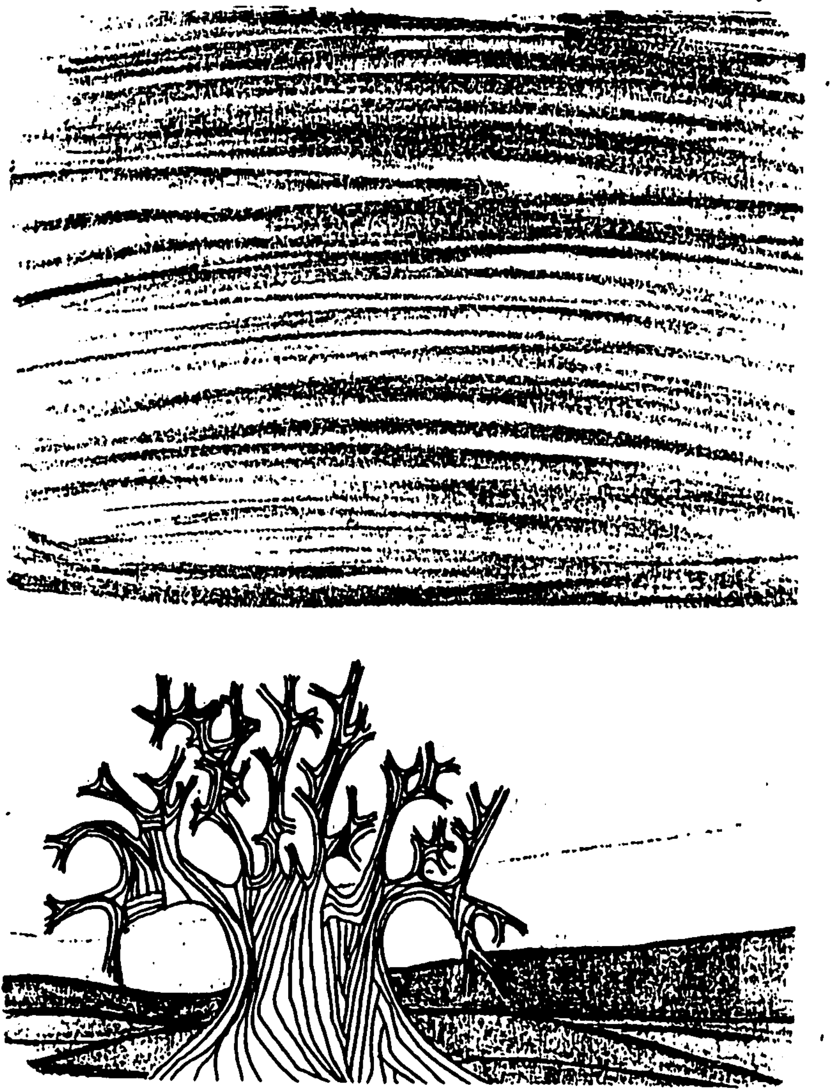
March 18, 1997

Dear Michelle,

Though I feel creative I don't seem to be able to produce anything of value. I hope the enclosed will be of interest to you. It may be too personal or inappropriate for "chaos" but I'll let you decide.

Love,
T____

Enclosed was a photocopy of a hand-made card with this image, entitled "Tomorrow is a New Day", and the message:



I did not know your family member in life, but I did meet him in death... I arrived shortly after the accident to the scene on Friday, February 7, 1997. I can assure you that his passage from life to death was quick... I hope that it is of some comfort for you to know this... I also hope that it is a comfort for you to know that I stayed by his side that morning until the arrival of the ambulance. I felt (and feel) that no one should be left alone, even in death... I knew that he was someone's son, brother, father, lover, friend, and this was the least I could do. His death, touched many people that morning, and I'm sure in some way it's changed us all. It makes us all realize how precious life is... and how our stay here on earth, so temporary.

Please accept my very deepest wishes of sympathy to all your family.

Sincerely,
M

Production Notes

I. Font Check on MacPlus (up-graded) in Microsoft Word 4.0 for Imagewriter II

1234567890 times 12
1234567890 times 12b
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1234567890 Oswald Black 18

cover page: title, e.g., ". . . no ordinary chaos", Times 18; sub-title, etc., Times 14

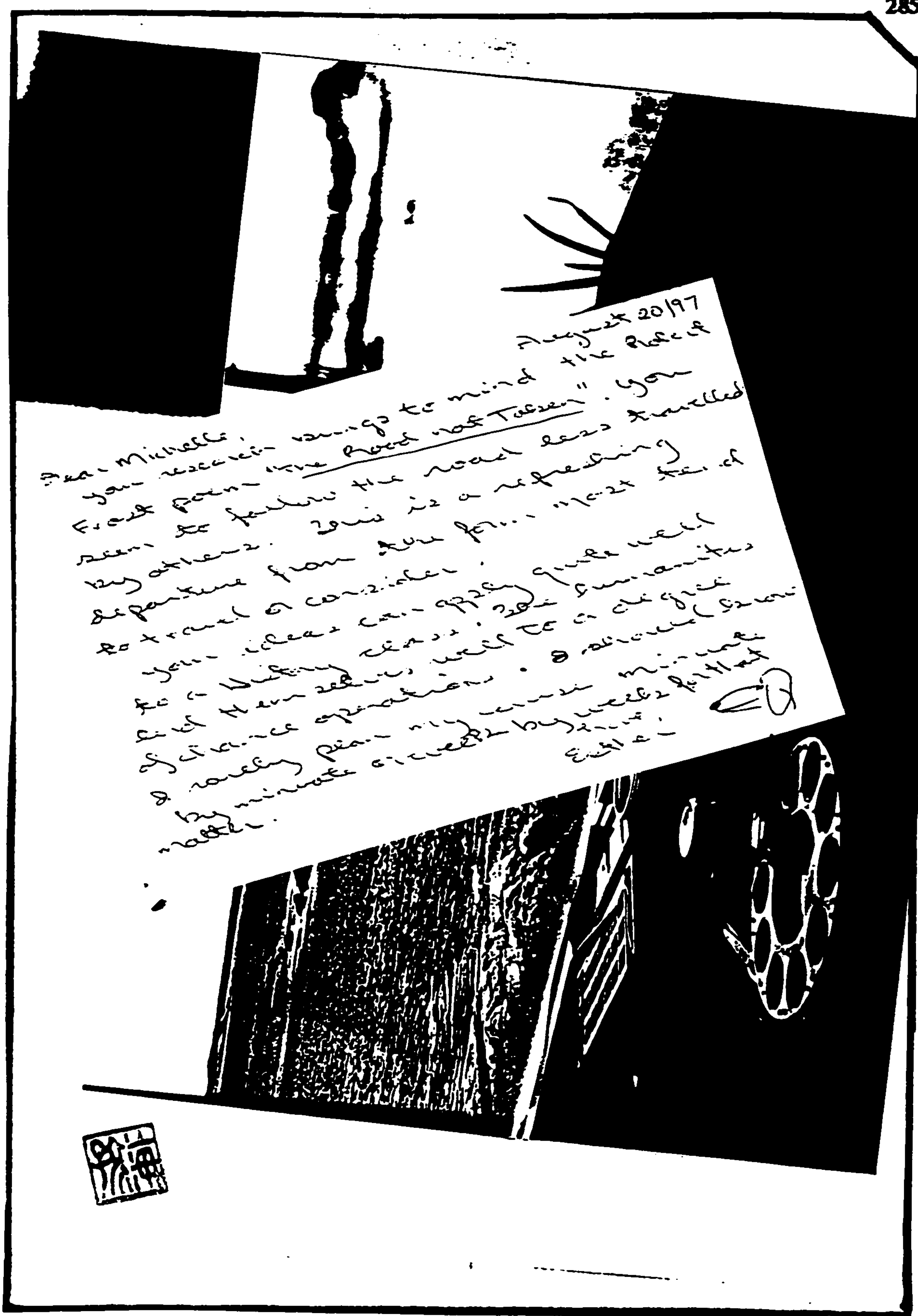
main text: Times 14 or Bodoni 12 (using underlining rather than italics), or

footnotes: Geneva 10? courier 12

titles: Times 14 bold

plate titles: ~~Times 12b~~ Times 14 Italics

plate numbers: Bodoni 12, e.g., fig 6.01, or Times 12b, e.g., fig 6.01*



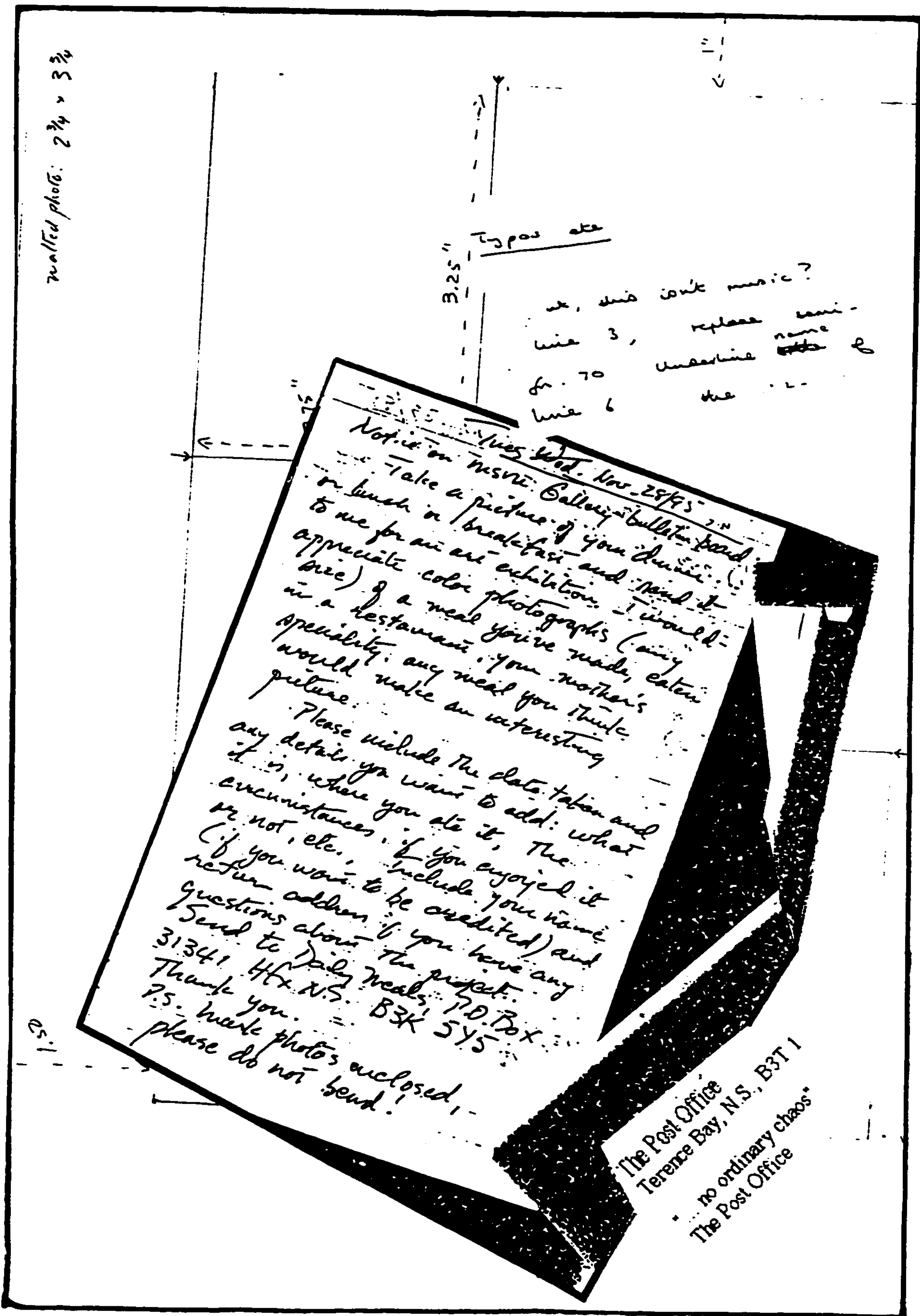
August 20/97

Dear Michelle,

Your research brings to mind the Robert Frost poem "The Road not Taken". You seem to follow the road less travelled by others. This is a refreshing departure from the [illegible] most tend to travel or consider.

Your ideas can apply quite well to a Writing class. The humanities [illegible] will be a degree of science operations. I [illegible] minute & rarely plan my [illegible] minute by minute [illegible] by weeks [illegible] matter.

[illegible]



Tues Wed. Nov 28/93
Notice on NSCAD Gallery bulletin board

Take a picture of your dinner or lunch or breakfast and send it to me for an art exhibition. I would appreciate color photographs (any size) of a meal you've made, eaten in a restaurant, your mother's speciality: any meal you think would make an interesting picture.

Please include the date taken and any details you want to add: what it is, where you ate it, the circumstances, if you enjoyed it or not, etc. (if you want to be credited) include your name and return address if you have any questions about the project.

Send to Daily Meals, P.O. Box 31341, Hfx N.S. B3K 5Y5

Thank you.

P.S. [illegible] photos enclosed, please do not send!

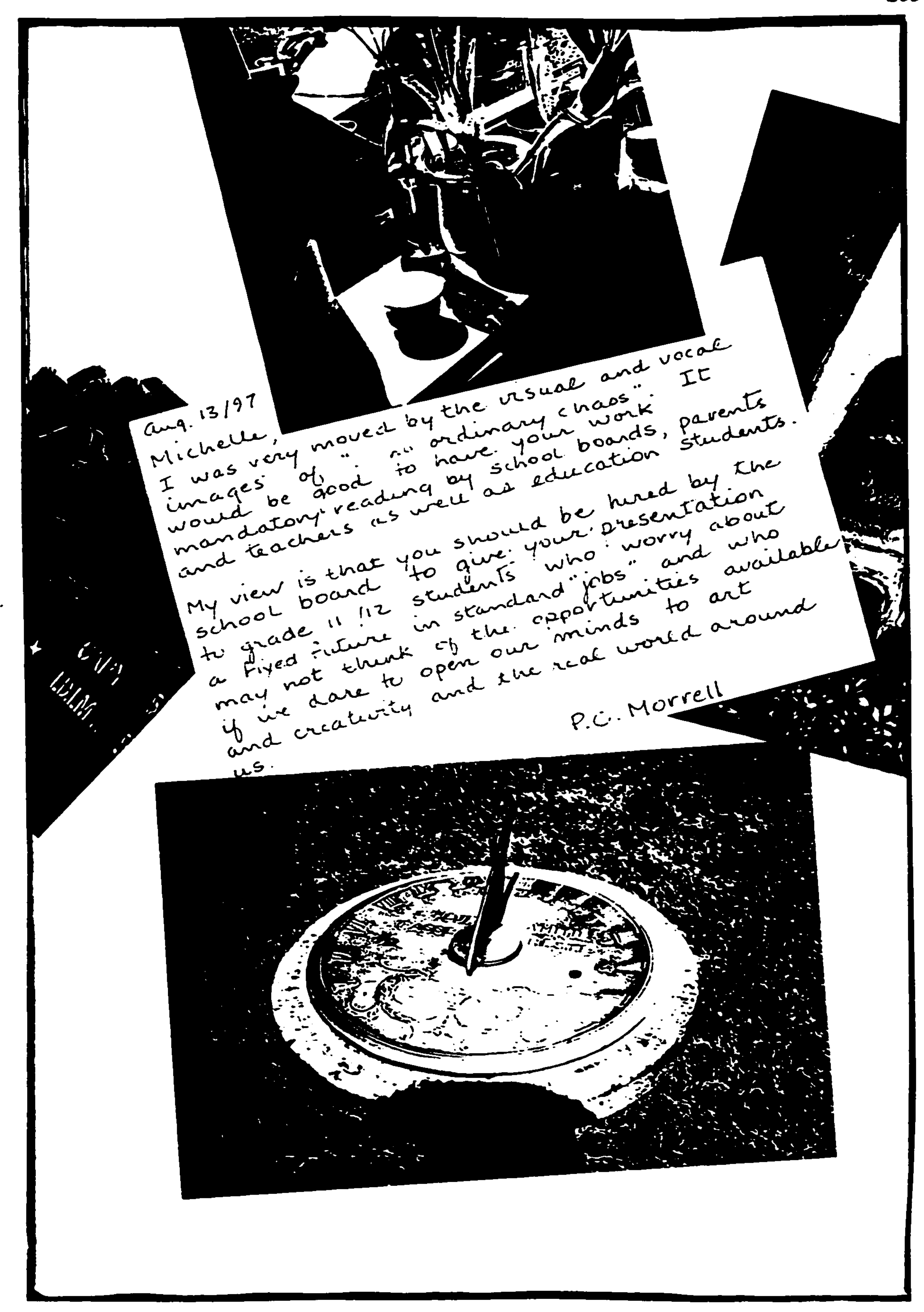
... is not so much a reason for disliking the work, as for not about it. I'm not suggesting that there is any imperative f... judgement, or for liking 4'33". But ... accompanies th...

This is what they drink it now in Poland

Love

Teresa

The palimpsest



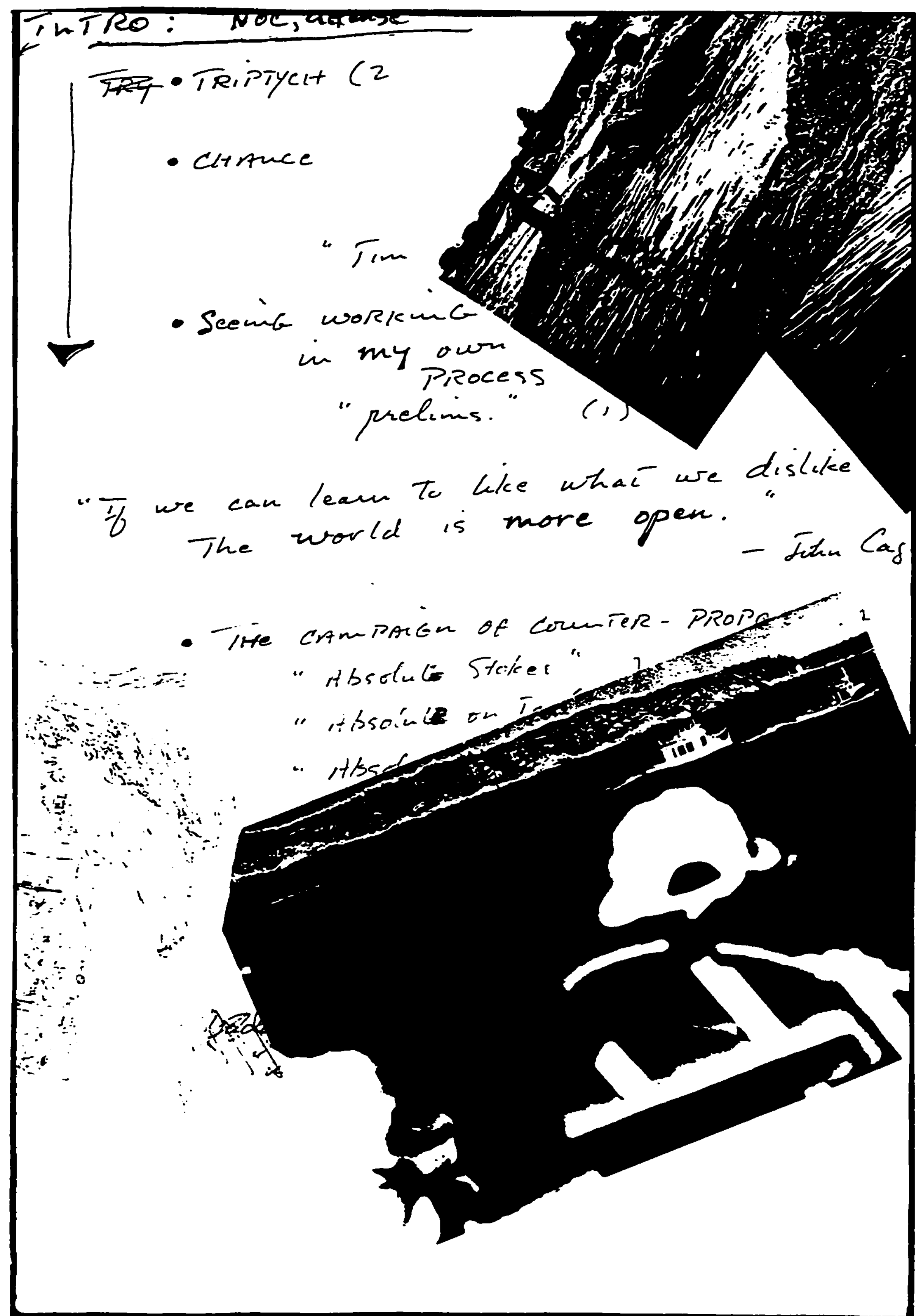
Aug. 13/97
Michelle,
I was very moved by the visual and vocal
images of "... an ordinary chaos". It
would be good to have your work
mandatory reading by school boards, parents
and teachers as well as education students.

My view is that you should be hired by the
school board to give your presentation
to grade 11/12 students who worry about
a fixed future in standard "jobs" and who
may not think of the opportunities available
if we dare to open our minds to art
and creativity and the real world around
us.

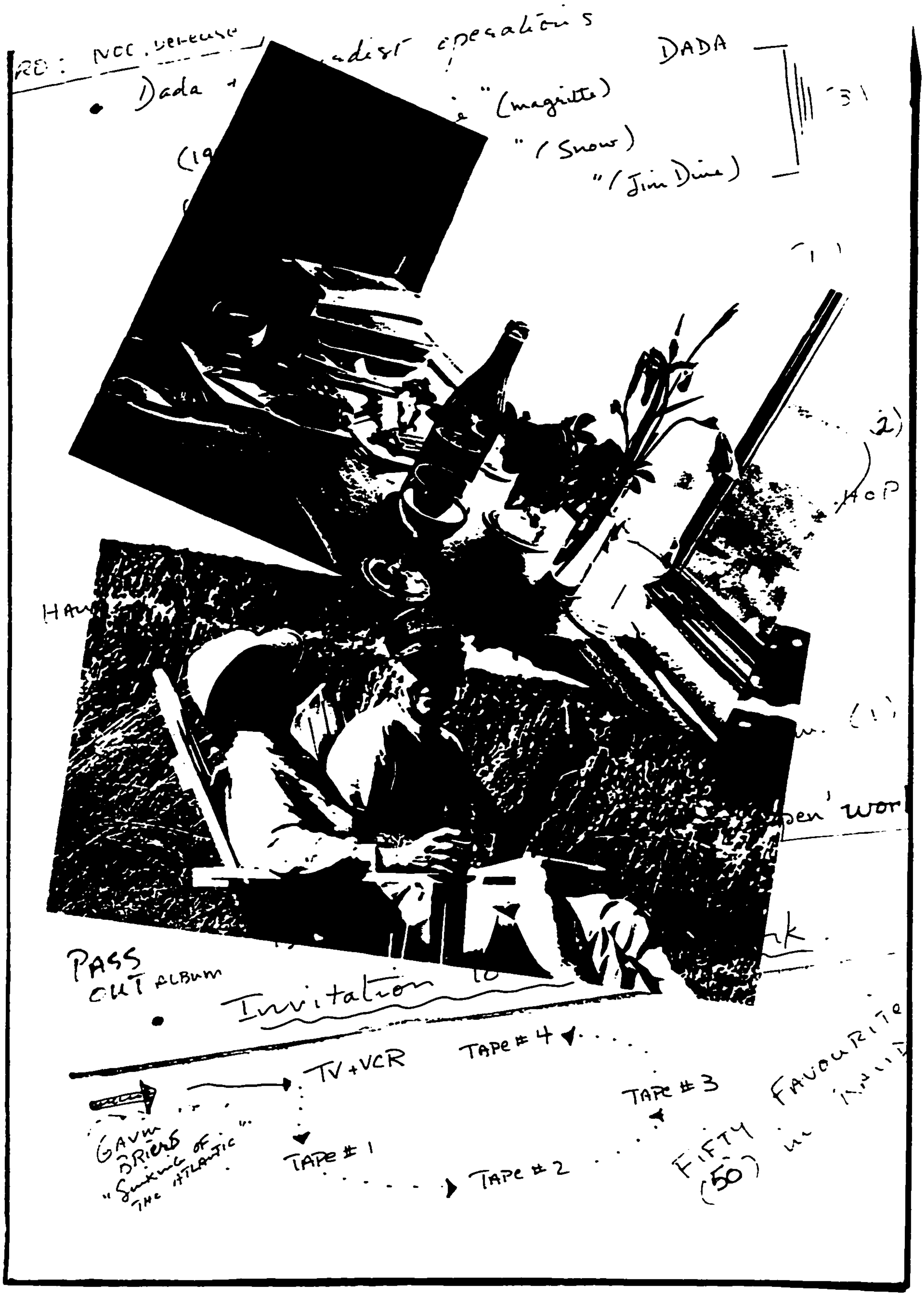
P.C. Morrell

Here's wishing you...

It is a tribute to those who have supported this work that it appears as it does, aberrant in form, iconoclastic in method, absurd, confused, self-questioning in content. You know who you are.


INTRO:
• TRIPTYCH (2
• CHANCE
" Tim
• Seeing WORKING
in my own
PROCESS
"prelims." (1)
"If we can learn to like what we dislike
The world is more open."
— John Cag
• THE CAMPAIGN OF COUNTER-PROP
" Absolute Stakes "
" Absolute on T
" Abs

Marcel
Jeannette
Bill
Nikki
chaos - Where Brilliant Dream are Born
The Farmers
Judy
Jennifer


RE: NCC, Defense
operations
DADA
Dada
(magritte)
(Snow)
(Jim Dine)
2)
HoP
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OUT ALBUM
Invitation
TV+VCR
TAPE # 4
TAPE # 3
TAPE # 1
TAPE # 2
GAVIN
BRIERS
"Sinking of
the Atlantic"
FIFTY
(50)
FAVOURITE

"The law of chaos is the law of ideas,
of improvisations and seasons
of belief."

– Wallace Stevens "Extracts from
Addresses to the
Academy of Fine
Ideas"

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…contact info

Wed. Aug 20 '97

'Acknowledgement'
a word with knowledge as its root in combination with the prefix 'a' in its second sense, according to the OED.

2. f. ME a- f. OE an, on; prep. away, on, up, out, (arise); orig. ar-.

know-ledge, know² (i.e., recognize, identify, be able to distinguish) + OE -lǣcan (lāc as in wedlock) [suffix denoting action].

Knowing (as a process) is an owning up to one's indebtedness.

This work is a series of acknowledgements.

"... no ordinary chaos"
The Post Office
Terence Bay, N.S., B3T 1Y0

Nickelle, 10 Aug 97

I thought it absolutely awe inspiring the way you deftly handled those lousy rambling questions from your inquisitors.

Many congratulatory hugs and love to you Doc.

The cottage party was great meeting so many nice people. Cheers. W.K.

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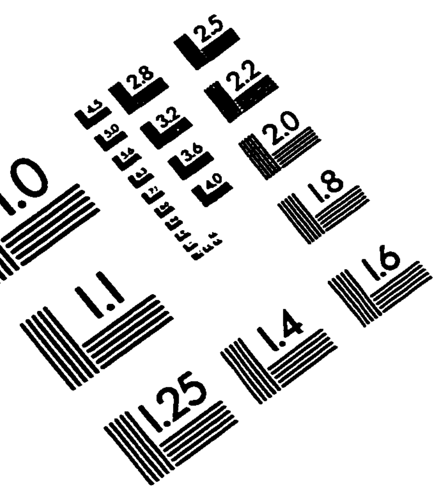
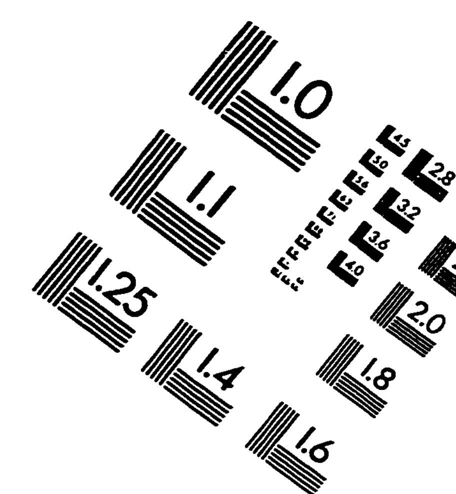
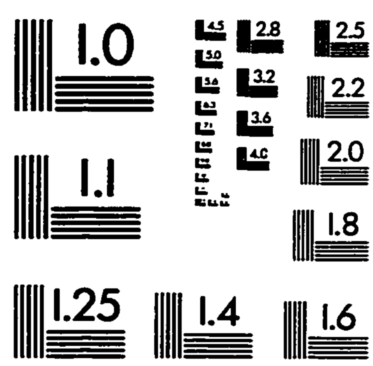
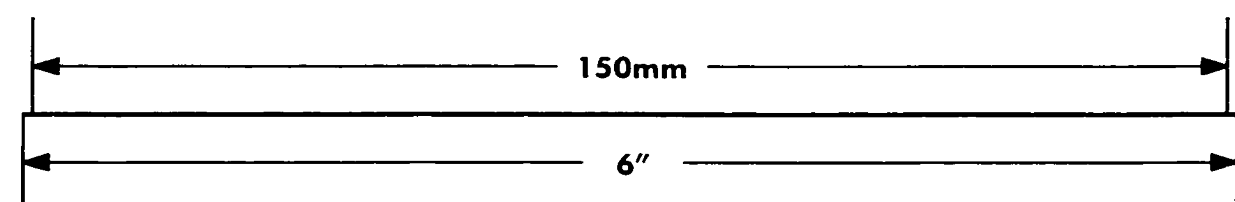

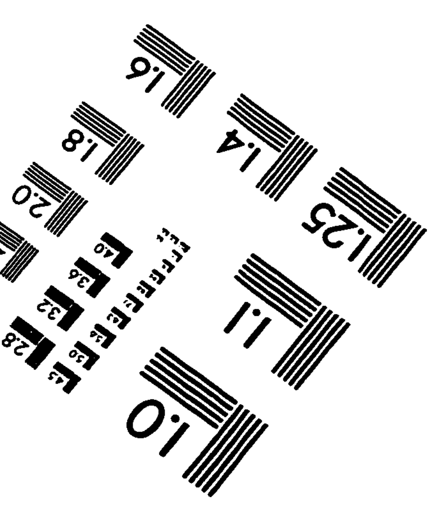

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