Hypermnesia

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> Can one imagine an archive without foundation, without substrate, without substance, without subjectile? And if it were impossible, what of the history of substrates?
> —Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*

production/distribution

For the last few years I have curated Eclipse, an online archive of some of the most radical small-press writing from the last quarter century, presented as both facsimile image files and text documents. Additionally, the site also publishes carefully selected new works of book-length conceptual unity. In the admittedly lurid terms of the index page, the site features "exemplars of the new *trobar clus*, adventures in diminished reference, lost classics of modernism, *écriture actuelle*, hard-core composition, ephemeral memos filed by the Research Division of the Bureau of Resistance, and a series of sacrifices in which the victims are words."[1]

1. Available at http://english.utah.edu/eclipse.

The archive was created as a response to three realizations about the state of poetry in America around the turn of the twenty-first century. First, that poetry had reached an impasse of Malthusian proportions: the amount of poetry being written was increasing geometrically, while the amount of poetry that anyone could read soon hit an arithmetic limit.[2] With a staggering volume of poetry published every year, the primary concern for the genre had shifted from production to distribution. The problem was not how to publish more books, but how to get the many good ones, already long published, to the right audience. The Internet seemed to offer an obvious solution. At the time, the Internet's potential to create new distributive paradigms, such as the peer-to-peer networking of digital music files, was just becoming apparent.

Second, from the reader's point of view, that the overwhelming production of poetry—the fact that there was far more poetry being published than any person could physically read—meant that the tools for efficiently filtering the mass of recent poetic texts became a matter of readerly necessity rather than mere convenience. Unfortunately, the peak in the overproduction of poetry happened to coincide with changes in publishing which made the contours of the poetic landscape and the affiliations between books much more difficult to sort. For decades, the system of postwar literary publishing in America had been so inflexibly partisan that one could confidently know, with a quick look at the bibliographic paratexts—the blurb writers, the masthead of editorial board members, the acknowledgments or patron lists, catalogs of publisher backlists, the distributor, or most simply the publisher (a glance at the device on the spine would do)—whether a book of poetry could be discounted out of hand or handily counted on. But suddenly, it seemed, a new paradigm had reconfigured the entire field.[3] To begin with, many of the writers who had pioneered the radically asemantic and nonreferential poetry of the 1970s and 1980s had shifted their attention by the early 1990s to more discursive, grammatically complete, and idiomatic forms. Subsequently, moreover, the techniques of the avant-

2. I explore the implications of this fact in the introduction to *The Consequence of Innovation: 21st Century Poetics* (New York: Roof, 2008).
3. For a far more detailed account of both the ancien régime of poetry publishing and its new configuration, see, respectively, Jed Rasula's exceptionally clear-eyed views in *The American Poetry Wax Museum: Reality Effects, 1940–1990* (Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1996) and "Innovation and 'Improbable Evidence,'" in *Syncopations: The Stress of Innovation in Contemporary American Poetry* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004).

garde (such as paratactic disjunction, for example) were put in the service of poetry that was otherwise antithetical to the avant-garde; on the surface, this new poetry might look like the texts of poststructural textual experiment, but behind the fragmented phrases were poems of mystical presence and the confessions of coherent subjects grounded in fixed and familiar identities.

Symptoms of these changes broke out in seemingly unrelated organs of the body poetic. Some of the writers associated with Edward Foster's generously eclectic Talisman House Publishers, for instance, betrayed an almost druidic animism in lyrics that could not be easily assimilated into either Romantic traditions of nature writing or conventional devotional verse; the numinous poems of Gustaf Sobin, for one example, were rooted in a linguistic facture and a play of materiality more legible to readers of Louis Zukofsky than of W. S. Merwin. At the same time, West Coast writers such as Ivan Argüelles and Will Alexander wrote ecstatically surrealist poems— what one might term a poetry of speculative spiritualism—which achieved their hallucinated effects by deploying specialist vocabulary as a device of disorientation and estrangement.[4] More widespread and widely read, however, were a number of writers—Jorie Graham, Anne Carson, C. D. Wright, Lucie Brock-Broido, Alice Fulton, among the most prominent—unashamed to flaunt intelligence (or in some cases merely a pseudo-intellectualism) at a time when most poetry of whatever stripe, bound to ethoi of either emotional authenticity or bald sentiment, was proudly antitheoretical and anti-intellectual. But, and here is the catch, unlike the theoretically informed and intellectually driven Language poets, these writers were not willing to relinquish the traditions and establishments (Iowa via the Ivy League) of poetry and publishing. Idiosyncratic and nonconformist without being revolutionary, they were eager to rattle conventions without risking the foundations of the most classic, conservative, and established institutions of poetry. Promoting such writing as the next big thing from "the most exciting younger poets," Stephen Burt christened it "elliptical poetry."[5] As Burt characterized them: "Elliptical Poets are always hinting, punning or swerving away from a never-quite-unfolded backstory; they are easier to process in parts than in wholes. Elliptics seek the authority of the rebellious; they want to

4. For related tendencies in more mainstream writing, see Roger Gilbert, "Awash with Angels: The Religious Turn in Nineties Poetry," *Contemporary Literature* 42, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 238–69. The poetic trajectory of Donald Revell or Hank Lazer would provide another perspective on this turn.

5. Stephen Burt, "Shearing Away," *Poetry Review* 88, no. 1 (1998): 4–7.

challenge their readers, violate decorum, surprise or explode assumptions about what belongs in a poem, or what matters in life, and to do so while meeting traditional lyric goals."[6]

In the context of such syncreticism, with its attempt to render avant-garde techniques subservient to "traditional lyric goals," Eclipse was meant to feel intransigent, a repudiation of the secret peace treaty seemingly signed between "the lyric tradition" and "language poetry."[7] As I hope to show below, even the most minor formal techniques, such as ellipses, are never mere stylistic ornaments simply interchangeable with some other surface veneer (free surface effects, after all, are what lead to capsize). Rather, formal devices constitute part of the deep structure of a text, inseparable—in every case—from any consideration of thematic content. To imply that they could be capriciously taken up or exchanged at will masks ideologies rather than laying them bare, and it ignores the historical dimensions of linguistic forms—including the forms of eclecticism, incoherence, and rhetorical collage. Whatever choices may be available to writers who employ one formal device rather than another, those choices carry consequences which the Ellipsists seem to ignore. By bringing together a critical mass of texts which clearly considered the implications of their forms, and which deployed those forms *without* regard to traditional lyric goals, Eclipse was meant as a counterexample to the new rapprochement. At the very least, I hoped it would provide a proving ground for any claims—*pace* Burt—of poetic "difficulty," "challenge," or "rebellion."

Following these formal indiscretions, publishers had also become markedly more promiscuous: university and trade presses that could once be trusted to publish only conservative workshop verse were now publishing

6. Burt, "Shearing Away." Burt's description echoes in Andrew Zawacki's characterization of Gustaf Sobin, whom I mention above: "Sobin's poetry dances on a wire between largely traditional aims and an innovative style which, while emergent from Duncan, Olson, and Char and embraced by experimental writers, is as internally consistent and recognizable as Hopkins or Heraclitus" (Andrew Zawacki, untitled review, *Boston Review* 24, no. 6 [December 1999/January 2000]).

In his essay, Burt does not mention Carson, but he does name Liam Rector, Karen Volkman, and Susan Wheeler (among others). The space of an overtly intellectual lyric, one should note, has also been staked by poets whom I would not want tarred by the broad brush of the elliptical, above all the extraordinary poetry of Susan Howe, Forrest Gander, and Cole Swensen.

7. I take the terms from the title of a conference in April 1999 convened at Barnard College by Allison Cummings and Claudia Rankine: "Where Lyric Tradition Meets Language Poetry: Innovation in Contemporary American Poetry by Women."

the coterie poets of the small-press avant-garde. At the same time, many of the journals that had once published that small-press avant-garde had folded, and those that took their place were generally much more eclectic. Moreover, the small presses that had developed around the tightly knit avant-garde communities of the 1970s were also branching out, in large part because they had slowly begun to include a younger generation of writers. Douglas Messerli's Sun & Moon Press—one of the premier publishers of Language Poetry in the 1980s—seemed especially symptomatic, forced by economic exigencies to dilute its once proudly hardcore list with out-of-copyright translations of nineteenth-century French and Scandinavian novels. Worse yet, books announced as forthcoming from Sun & Moon were years behind schedule, and the press had effectively ceased operations long before officially folding in 2004. It seemed like a symbolic sign of the times.

So much so, in fact, that the name *Eclipse* is an explicit homage to Sun & Moon, a mark of the archive's aspiration to document the moment of its predecessor's apogee and to carry on the early mission of presses like Messerli's, even after the disappearance of those illustrious celestial bodies. The hope was that the spirit of the small-press revolution—the do-it-yourself ethos of stapled mimeographs and chapbooks printed on a proof press in someone's garage—could be reengineered for the Web. That goal may well be hubristic, or wrongheaded, or simply overly ambitious, but I want to underscore the essentially *arrière-garde* nature of the impulse: an old-believer defense of the true cause first advanced by the avant-garde before its flagging, attenuation, sabotage, or defeat.

Indeed, the third realization provoking Eclipse was that the literary history of Language poetry was starting to be told in a way that ignored or elided its early definitional phases. "Language poetry" was beginning to stand for some works from the late '80s or early '90s, with no mention of the quite different poetics that had given rise to the name a decade earlier. Furthermore, some critical accounts of Language poetry were being written by people who had never so much as seen most of the primary documents.[8] I distinctly remember a discussion following a conference panel,

8. Beyond the obvious reasons, access to primary materials is uniquely necessary for the literary historian of Language poetry, since the early critical literature on the subject frequently defined the poetry in terms of its publishing venues; "Language poetry," in short, became simply whatever was published by a handful of specific presses and journals. Those early essays included tantalizing—and seemingly de rigueur—catalogs of fugitive titles: "*Tottel's*, *Hills*, *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, *A Hundred Posters*, *This*, *Roof*,

where a participant—apparently angling for some street cred—claimed he thought he remembered originally reading the poem under discussion in *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*; had he ever seen an issue, he would have known that the journal published only articles rather than poems. At the time, "Language poetry" was especially divisive, and partisans heatedly championed or dismissed it with equal fervor and equal inscience. With Eclipse, I wanted to help raise the level of the debate by making unknown material readily available to both the detractors and champions. As someone with old-fashioned views about the duties of literary history, I found the critical climate outrageous and unconscionable; it was as though scholars of the Renaissance were writing histories of Cavalier poetry without ever having read Lord Herbert of Cherbury. Possible, and not unimaginable, but hardly the diligent assiduity one expects of scholars. Similarly, I wanted professors to be able to teach classes on contemporary poetry that included these works, a task made nearly impossible when the books—published in editions of only a few hundred copies—were already out of print within years of their debuts. Moreover, since they had been published by noncommercial presses and distributed by alternative networks, these books were represented in only a very few libraries, often sequestered in special collections.

The Difficulties, and *Poetics Journal*" (Douglas Messerli, "Introduction," in *"Language" Poetries: An Anthology* [New York: New Directions, 1987], 8); "to Messerli's list I would add the magazines *Temblor*, *Lucy and Jimmy's House of 'K'*, and *Ottotole* and the small presses Tuumba, Roof, The Figures, Sun & Moon, and Burning Deck as all being important in sustaining and developing Language writing" (Hank Lazer, "Opposing Poetry," *Contemporary Literature* 30, no. 1 [1989]: 144); "poetry magazines such as *This*, *Tottel's*, *Roof Hills*, *Miam*, *Qu*, *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, *The Difficulties*, *A Hundred Posters*, and more recently (though not as the predominant group) *Sulfur*, *Temblor*, *Sink*, and *Tramen*" (George Hartley, *Textual Politics and the Language Poets* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989], xi); "*This*, *Hills*, *Roof*, *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, *Tottel's*, *Miam*, *The Difficulties*, *A Hundred Posters* and *Qu*" (Ron Silliman, "Language, Realism, Poetry," in *In the American Tree* [Orono, Maine: National Poetry Foundation, 1986], xx); "*Tottel's*, *Jimmy and Lucy's House of 'K'*, *Poetics Journal*, *Roof*, and *The Difficulties*" (Marjorie Perloff, *Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991], 174). I am guilty of it myself: "*Joglars*, *Tottel's*, *This*, *Hills*, *A Hundred Posters*, *Roof*, and *Miam* [. . .] *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*; *The Difficulties*; *Paper Air*; *Temblor*; *Poetics Journal*; and *Jimmy & Lucy's House of 'K'*" (Craig Dworkin, "Language Poetry," in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of American Poetry* [2005]). For anyone who wanted to pursue these talismanic publications, the situation was frustrating; the "little magazines" of modernism—a century old—were easier to find in libraries than any of these journals which had been published only a few years earlier.

The compass of Eclipse extends well beyond Language poetry, which is certainly not its only concern, but for all of the diverse works included in the archive the hope is the same: that they might stay the disappearance of furtive and fugitive traditions, trouble familiar histories, disrupt smooth genealogies, generally "thicken the plot" of canonical literature, and remind us in unshakably palpable ways that something else can always—indeed *has* always, already—been done. This more general lesson is ultimately, I would wager, more important than the access the archive provides to any particular text. Crude effigies of mythical figures more whispered of than ever actually seen, the digital files that constitute the archive—that constitute any digital archive—are a set of little fetishes against forgetting.

reproduction/distribution

Two contradictory and competing desires have defined the early history of digital media, and their contest is legible in the Eclipse archive. On the one hand, digital media offer the dream of lossless reproduction: easily generated copies, identical from generation to generation. Unlike the decades-old mimeograph that might be represented on Eclipse—each copy inked slightly differently and each unique object slowly burning in the oxygen of its environment: the staples of its binding rusting and leaching into the jaundice of the acidifying paper—the numerical sequence that constitutes the scanned image of that mimeo does not fade, or chip, or tear, no matter how many times it is read or reproduced (and indeed, each time the image is summoned by a Web browser to be read the file is copied and reassembled).

On the other hand, the utility of a Web-based repository (as opposed to a traditional library, even if it digitally duplicated its holdings) is predicated on radically *reducing* the information of its contents. The efficient distribution of database files to networked machines—the imperative of the Internet that data be effectively transferable—depends on the compression of data into reproductions that intentionally contain far less information than the original. Indeed, for many formats, such as MP3 and standard JPEG, the files retrieved by the user not only contain less data, but data that are in fact different from the original (though close enough to still be usable). Accordingly, the aim of the initial document scanning for Eclipse is to acquire as much data as possible, regardless of the resulting file size; documents are scanned in color resolved at 300 pixels per inch, without filtering, and stored as uncompressed lossless TIFF documents. Conversely,

the aim for the JPEG files made available to the archive's users on the Web site is to include as little information as necessary. The characteristics of digital media generate a continual dynamic between fidelity and degradation, accurate facsimile and serviceable impersonation.

One can see the same distinction in the different ways that "digital literature" has been understood in its brief history. The design tools that initially captured the imagination of scholars such as George Landow appealed because they permitted users to control the precise look of documents; with the click of a button one could change the typographic appearance of a document (font, spacing, margins) in ways and to degrees that had formerly been available only to patient professional printers. Although these tools were the origin of the markup languages that have defined the Web, literature on the Internet has developed quite differently. In contrast to the typographic prescriptions of word processing and desktop publishing, which allow users to specify precisely how a text will appear, HTML and the related markup languages used to shape the look of text on the Web are only ever suggestions. The tags of HTML are general structural descriptions; by its very nature, the end result of markup is impossible to fix precisely: the compatibility and interpretation of different browsers cannot always be accounted for; their future protocols cannot be predicted; users can always override embedded instructions; and screen sizes, resolution, and color settings vary widely from device to device. Once again, the twin impulses of the digital archive—to preserve and to present, to reproduce and to distribute—are at fundamental odds with one another.

Titles archived on Eclipse are therefore available in two formats. Raked-light photographs, presented as image files, show each page or opening (the facing pages of a codex) and display as much unmediated bibliographic data about the original document as possible (proportion, typeface, color, et cetera). Reset text, presented as a low file size PDF, allows greater accessibility (such as the ability to display texts in Braille readers) and the freedom to excerpt and modify texts. This same tension between fixity and fluidity is manifested not only at the local, tactical level of choices about file format but also at the more abstractly strategic level of the concept of the digital archive itself. The ambition of any archive is to preserve and conserve, but to archive inked paper as digital media is a curiously paradoxical attempt to stay the ephemerality of one medium through media that are even more tenuous, mutable, and prone to the sheer unrecoverability of technical obsolescence. Some of the earliest Eclipse files are stored on zip drives (remember those?); the first incarnation of the site displayed

those files in a Multiresolution Seamless Image Database [MrSID] format, which was supposed to soon replace PDFs (don't hold your breath); during the hundreds of hours spent carefully reducing file sizes because 1MB was considered far too ridiculously large to download with any practicality, computing speeds, bandwidth, and digital storage capacity have increased by an order of magnitude. The archive wagers that the current range of media employed on Eclipse (CD, XHTML, JPEG, PDF) are all sufficiently standard and widespread to ensure that any future technologies will have to account for relatively easy migration. The only safe bet, however, is that the current technology will be superseded—and that the current state of the archive will soon be unreadable. The archive of the archive, in short, will be too difficult to emulate. Which is a serious problem from the point of view of bibliography, a perpetual loop from which the literary object can no longer escape. By archiving books, the archive itself adds to their bibliographic information, and the digital archive produces entirely new editions. As Jacques Derrida puts it: "the archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out onto the future."[9]

facsimile/translation

Part of what the archive seeks to conserve with its insistence on representing the pagination and typography of the originals is precisely what a digital archive necessarily loses: the facture and material specificity of the book or printed document as an object. In the context of "new media," this focus on the "old(-fashioned) media" of the page and the book may seem quaint or retrograde, but those attachments are not, in fact, romantically nostalgic. They are coldly semiotic.

Every material aspect of a text—layout, typeface and font, binding, ink, et cetera—produces a full semantic charge. As decades of communications theory and textual editing have reiterated, media and physical support are not incidental to the meaning of a text; rather, they are—in themselves—an inextricable part of that meaning. To take a minor, and seemingly incidental, number as an example: "0146–2083." The numerals are printed on the copyright page of Lyn Hejinian's 1978 book *Gesualdo*, which appeared as "Tuumba 15" from her own Tuumba Press. Like all the

9. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 68. Hereafter, this work is cited parenthetically as *AF*.

early Tuumba books (and unlike the occasional volumes that have appeared under that imprint since the press's resurrection in 1999), it carries an ISSN (International Standard Serial Number), rather than an ISBN (International Standard Book Number), a fact likely to be lost in most transcriptions of the book's "content," but one that a facsimile captures. The distinction indicates the status of the early Tuumba books as volumes of a serial publication, classifying them with journals or magazines rather than books. That categorization underscores the connection of individual volumes to others in the series, and it explains their sequential numbering, calling attention to the division of the early Tuumba catalog into two series of twenty-five numbers each. Furthermore, the ISSN number suggests some of the broader contexts in which *Gesualdo* might be read: the economic and political history of postal rates, arts funding, and global standardization; the community of readers established by subscription; the rhythm and spontaneity of periodical publication—the pamphlet, broadside, newsletter, or journal—in contrast to book publication.

Similarly, as codexical objects, one of the striking aspects of the early Tuumba Press books is the discrepancy between their printing—carefully hand-set type printed with a Chandler and Price platen press on relatively heavy, high-quality grades of elegantly textured stock—and their saddle binding, which Hejinian has referred to as "roughly stapled."[10] These objects, originally priced between one and three dollars, thus gesture toward both a fine-press tradition of luxury bookmaking and the do-it-yourself spirit of hastily assembled and nominally priced publications from the '60s avant-garde. With their combination of a reverent attention typical of fine-press printing and the affront to that tradition by rough staple binding, the Tuumba publications simultaneously index the antiquarian and the modern, specialized craft and anonymous commercial practice, the codex and the pamphlet. That discrepancy has a great deal to say about the economic conditions of publication during the period, a time when letterpress machines were available to individuals from outside the established bookmaking tradition because second-hand presses, more plentiful and affordable than ever before, were being abandoned by small businesses and commercial print shops in response to improvements and dramatic cost

10. Hejinian explains: "Part of the things I liked about Tuumba Press was that it was letterpress on beautiful paper—and then roughly stapled. And they only cost a couple of dollars" (Lyn Hejinian and Craig Dworkin, "Roughly Stapled: An Interview with Lyn Hejinian," *Idiom* #3 [Berkeley, 1995], available at http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/hejinian/roughly.html).

drops in technologies like offset and photostat. But the tension also enters into the semantic economy of the poetry published by Tuumba Press.

Consider, once again, Hejinian's own *Gesualdo*; after a brief introduction, the first section opens:

Gesualdo, *gathered*	Gesualdo extraordinary and because he gathered thought (as these things were bound) one doubts and hopes and after four years murdered. Gesualdo had time around even in these days appeared. Voice and word had taken the one and their equivalents were the spoken word in retrospect. Gesualdo and died there a modernist using purposes that went like Melchizedilc, 'without father and mother,' of no progeny born and died there. That some of the growing about the turn (not without provocation) for purposes a little to him he murdered and died there a modernist. [. . .]

Through a vocabulary drawn from bookbinding—"gathered, "bound," "the turn"—the character of Gesualdo and the eponymous book are conflated with a careful indeterminacy. Later in the poem, "opening" and "set" similarly evoke the form and format of the printed book (its "extension"):

> [. . .] In the
> opening of two voices between inner parts, pro-
> vides, provides, only a difference of outer voices.
> We hope to set the lengthy self complete, long-
> er, alert, savouring through extension.

That lexicon draws attention to the bibliographic details of *Gesualdo*, which, unlike all of the other Tuumba books, is not stapled but neatly and tidily hand-sewn. A discrepancy within a series of discrepancies, *Gesualdo—as a book—*is more aligned with the old-fashioned legacy of fine-press printing than any of the other "roughly stapled" titles published by Hejinian's press.[11] The design of the text, including a liberal use of elegant decorative devices,

11. The binding and physical details of *Gesualdo* also place it in marked contrast to the poem's reprinting as part of a collection of Hejinian's early books, *The Cold of Poetry* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1994), 63–80, a perfect-bound book with glossy-coated covers printed offset on heavily bleached, untextured stock that is trimmed to a squatter format with narrower margins.

furthers that alignment; apparently written as sections of prose, the text is set in a narrow block with italic marginal glosses that specifically recall the revised 1817 version of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and, more generally, the ostentatious extravagance of wastefully wide margins in certain examples of fine-press printing, including the neomedieval tradition of Arts and Crafts printers such as William Morris.

Corroborating these associations, *Gesualdo* is set in Caslon, an early eighteenth-century typeface. Before becoming so ubiquitous as to be a default choice for modern job printers, Caslon had been revived by the printers of the Arts and Crafts movement as an antique face with old-fashioned connotations, first through Charles Whittingham's Chiswick Press and later with the Essex House Press (part of the Guild of Handicraft). Despite what he saw as some "great shortcomings," William Morris repeatedly praised the "clear and neat and fairly well designed" Caslon as a balm to soothe the offense caused by his bête noire, "the sweltering hideousness of the [modern] Bodoni letter."[12] The design of *Gesualdo* is thus neatly recursive, evoking an earlier tradition of evoking earlier traditions. By not drawing attention to the discordant histories of printing and binding on display in all the other Tuumba books, *Gesualdo* allows the text's rhetorical tensions between old-fashioned subject and postmodern agrammaticality to come to the fore, shifting the attention away from Hejinian's heretical binding practice and toward the collage technique of her poetic composition. Ultimately, this emphasis on the dissonance between form and content, between the presentation of the poem and its subject, is perfectly congruent with Hejinian's ostensible theme: a late Renaissance composer known for his strikingly "modernist" chromatic dissonances.

These are far from isolated instances. The staples absent from *Gesualdo*, for example, play a pointed role in Lorenzo Thomas's *Dracula*, published by Angel Hair Books in 1973. In the context of the famous vampire of Thomas's title, the twin puncture wounds of the staples—now rusting into the low-grade commercial paper with an evocatively brown-red stain—align form and content in a way that encourages the reader to consider the textual status of the vampire himself. Which is precisely what Thomas asks the reader to do more directly; the second section of the poem opens:

> Start the thing over again:
> DRACULA is not a myth but

12. William Morris, *The Ideal Book: Essays and Lectures on the Arts of the Book*, ed. William S. Peterson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

> Just another cheap novel
> Written in the boring 18th
> 19th century made into the
> Worst film of 1932 1958 and
> Unless we get wise to our-
> Selves next year over again
> Then what is all this

In the "19th century" mode of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the bite of the vampire's teeth and the analogue bite of the primitive typewriter into the paper used by Mina Harker is one key to the story, and Thomas's book is also filled with puncture as printing: the blood-drawing needles of a "remarkable" "tattoo"; the "duplication designs" of a "bus ticket" awaiting the bite of the driver's ticket punch; and an illustration (by Britton Wilkie) of a medieval scribe sitting at his writing desk and contemplating the bloody punctures of the nails affixing Christ to the cross.[13] The poem asks "what is all this[?]" and the material text answers: a textual vampire in which form and content implicate one another and must be taken together ("all this"). Mimeographed from typewritten stencils in a method that echoes the punch of the ticket taker and the purple bruise of the tattoo—and which "bleeds" through the paper, to use the printing term—the ghost of Thomas's mode of production haunts the facsimile of his book in a way that the sterilizing reprint of the poem in *The Angel Hair Anthology*, reset in a new face and cleanly printed, safely exorcises.[14] In contrast, the haunting of production, the revenant of material, is what the digital archive attempts to record. "The structure of the archive," as Derrida realizes, "is *spectral*" (*AF*, 84).

Reading the details of bibliography back into the narrative of Thomas's poem, I should emphasize, need not distract from the social narrative of its trenchant critique, where vampirism is figured as a racialized influence on America, with both myth and history turning on the rhetoric of "blood." The counterculture production of the original Angel Hair publication and the counterculture printing of the tattoo, for instance, enter equally into narratives of standardization and "monotonous" social regimentation,

13. See Friedrich A. Kittler, *Discourse Networks, 1800/1900*, trans. Michael Metteer, with Chris Cullens (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), 356 passim; John M. Picker, "The Victorian Aura of the Recorded Voice," *New Literary History* 32, no. 3 (2001): 769–86; and Lisa Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 215–18.
14. Anne Waldman and Lewis Warsh, eds., *The Angel Hair Anthology* (New York: Granary Books, 2001), 404–10.

with their equally insistent demands for homogeneity. As Friedrich Kittler remarks, with an insight that applies equally to Thomas's poem, "Stoker's *Dracula* is no vampire novel, but rather the written account of our bureaucratization. Anyone is free to call this a horror novel as well."[15] The standard typewriter face of Thomas's *Dracula* and the rough-edged imperfections recorded by the mimeograph are, accordingly, profoundly ambivalent. On the one hand, they evoke both the individual and idiosyncratic directness of a typed page, free from the intervening procedures of commercial printing and registering both the unique wear of a particular typewriter's letterforms as well as the erratic force behind each keystroke. On the other hand, the typewriter and the desktop duplicator themselves, of course, were the epitome of everyday small-business drudgery and the emblem of bureaucracy: paperwork.

Where the typography and technique of *Dracula* are thus ambivalently positioned with regard to the poem's topic, and those of *Gesualdo* are at productive odds, the avant-garde procedural technique of Tina Darragh's disjunctively collaged and abstract book *on the corner to off the corner* is clearly *announced* by the typography on every page; her poem is set in a typeface named, appropriately, Avant Garde. A landmark design of the 1960s, Avant Garde was originally designed by Herb Lubalin for the logogram of Ralph Ginzburg's eponymous magazine, a short-lived, hardcover showcase of Pop sensibility and design. Tightly fitting, strikingly slanted, and strangely ligatured, the geometrically rigid sans serif with an extraordinarily large x-height was intended as a display face and was initially drawn in only an all-caps uppercase. In 1970, however, the International Typeface Corporation designed a version of Avant Garde that included lowercase letters which, though obviously derived from Lubalin's original, have a very different effect: unligatured, rigidly uniform, tidily clean, predictably spaced, and giving a predominantly rounded appearance to the page due to the wide interiors of the perfect circles described by its curved characters' counter shapes. The discrepancy between the upper- and lowercase letterforms of Avant Garde underscores and perhaps in fact explains the lowercase form of the book's title, as well as the irony of its cover design: a set of gridded instructions for drawing an uppercase alphabet: roman on the front cover, italic on the back, but both unremarkably plain and neither with the striking distinction of Lubalin's uppercase Avant Garde, even though these

15. Friedrich A. Kittler, "Dracula's Legacy," in *Literature, Media, Information Systems: Essays*, ed. John Johnston (Amsterdam: G + B Arts International, 1997), 74.

alphabets are printed in the one place—a title design—that his typeface would have been most appropriate.

Examples could be multiplied, but I want to consider just one final instance of the bibliographic information recorded by the archival scanning protocols for Eclipse, which scans pages even when they are ostensibly blank (such as the verso sheets of Thomas's *Dracula*, which record the bleed of the ink). Containing some of his earliest published poetry, Charles Bernstein's collection *Disfrutes* has gone through several editions: one hundred copies published by Peter Ganick in 1979 and distributed hors commerce; three hundred copies as the second title from the first series of chapbooks issued by Ganick's Potes and Poets Press (Needham, Massachussets) in 1981; a reprint from Potes and Poets (Elmwood, Connecticut) in 1999; and an online HTML version in 2005 (http://epc.buffalo.edu).[16] Only the 1981 edition was bound into self-wraps (paper cover wrappers that mime the folds of a dust jacket with vestigial flaps). The back interior flap lists the other pamphlets in the series, as well as pricing information and the address of the publisher, but the front flap is unprinted—simply a 2.75-inch pleat in the cover stock. The flap bears no text and serves no purpose, but its mechanism foregrounds two elements of the book which remain unmarked in all of the other editions.

The first element hailed by the self-wraps is the book's title, the second-person singular present subjunctive conjugation of the Spanish verb *disfrutar* (to enjoy), which derives etymologically from the pleasure of separating something, like the segments of an orange or the ripe fruit from its branch (*dis* [to separate] + *fructus* [fruit]). The word is thus linked to the kind of aesthetic tactile activity the pliant wrapper flaps invite: a separating and unfolding, a prying and repleating that can only be pursued for the physical satisfaction of handling the surprisingly thick card stock. The flaps serve no purpose and have no function (they are not "fruitful" in any sense of productive activity); accordingly, the language of the book, as the title implies, is surely meant to be manipulated for aesthetic rather than utilitarian ends. As Ludwig Wittgenstein puts it: "do not forget that a poem, although it is composed in the language of information is not used in the

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16. On the publication chronology of Bernstein's manuscripts, see Loss Pequeño Glazier ("An Autobiographical Interview with Charles Bernstein," *boundary 2* 23, no. 3 [Fall 1996]: 38). Glazier indicates elsewhere that *Disfrutes* was also privately printed in an edition just prior to the first Potes and Poets edition, although I can find no other record; see Joseph Conte, ed., *American Poets Since World War II*, Fifth Series, Dictionary of Literary Biography, vol. 169 (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research, 1996).

language-game of giving information."[17] And indeed, the radically fractured and abstract poems contained in *Disfrutes* seem motivated more by spatial composition and the microphonemic affinities of internal rhyme than by reference, much less "giving information." Moreover, the etymology of *disfrutar* is necessarily metaphoric, a figural proposition that contrasts with the aggressively metonymic and material play of Bernstein's poems. One of those poems illustrates the point, and provides the second element put into play by the play of the self-wraps' ply:

> can and why
> (who stares a clair-
> ol boundary
> i made
> it
> a
> all bound-
> ary

With "boundary" folded across the boundary of the line break to bring out the word *bound*, the poetics ("i made / it") of the text replicates the folds with which the book is bound in turn. Like the title, the folded word does not quite *refer* to the design of the book's binding, or even intentionally name it, but the two material events—one textual and one bibliographic—mime one another, enacting and reenacting a quiet little drama in which the same idea or concept can be tested against several of the varied material forms it might inhabit.

   A reading that attends to material specificity does not imply a material necessity, however. As the other editions of *Disfrutes* attest, Bernstein's poem (which predates its binding into any particular edition) obviously works perfectly well on its own, without the self-wraps of the 1981 edition. In all of the cases I have examined, the material conditions of each text could, of course, be different; my point is simply that they are not. Nor am I arguing that the resonance between book and poem is of monumental significance; substrates cast a hazy shadow over the texts they bear, shading some words and highlighting others in the chiaroscuro of material form, but it is only ever a minor change of emphasis—comparable perhaps to the kind of attention given to the title poem in a collection, or the placement of

17. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), §160.

a first or last poem in a volume—a subtle waver of the hermeneutic seis-mograph available to be read by those attentive to the tremors of textual context. But then again, it's just a small blank flap to begin with.

avant/arrière

By focusing on the minute particulars of bibliography I do not mean to privilege first editions or suggest that earlier versions of a work have more or better information (whatever that might mean). Media obey a law of conservation, and their information is gained and lost at precisely equal and inverse rates. This law applies to digital media as well, and while certain information is lost in the translation from print to screen (most obvi-ously a range of haptic and tactile sensation, from the texture of paper to its pliability, the heft or buoyancy of the book in the hands; the angles at which it can be tilted), other information accrues. Despite a tendency to consider more durable and palpable media as somehow more "material," digital texts are not dematerialized but rather rematerialized (as anyone with dry eyes or strained tendons from sitting too long at a computer knows). Any work we encounter—at the moment of its encounter—is materially specific.

Jacques Derrida has diagnosed this dynamic as both the founda-tional mode and fatal malady of the archive: "[. . .] the archive always holds a problem for translation. With the irreplaceable singularity of a document to interpret, to repeat, to reproduce, but each time in its original uniqueness, an archive ought to be idiomatic, and thus at once offered and unavailable for translation, open to and shielded from technical iteration and reproduc-tion" (*AF*, 90). The cancellations that follow from the translating activity of the archive—texts simultaneously offered and withdrawn, displayed and obscured—are precisely why the idea of an "avant-garde archive" is so paradoxical, and why Eclipse is fundamentally an act of the *arrière-garde*—not simply retrograde, but a kind of belated prolepsis: looking unblinkingly backward to the forward-looking view of the preceding first wave. The con-tent of Eclipse, however, only exacerbates what would be the paradox of any archival endeavor; "*every* archive," as Derrida notes, "is at once *institu-tive* and *conservative*. Revolutionary and traditional. An *eco-nomic* archive in this double sense: it keeps, it puts in reserve, it saves, but in an unnatu-ral fashion, that is to say in making the law [*nomos*] or in making people respect the law" (*AF*, 7). The act of archiving is inherently conservative—the point of the archive is to conserve *something* of the objects it contains. This is true even when the dream of the archive is to preserve the radi-

cality of its materials, not as museum pieces of the past but as forgotten provocations that still possess the capacity to operate as an avant-garde. The paradox of the "avant-garde archive" highlights the Janus-faced logic of all archives, which look in two directions as they realize their own position: they conservatively index the past, and they index the future with a wagered risk (or revolutionary delusion), anticipating some user and some use, some moment for which the archived material is being saved.[18] So although Eclipse may look, at first glance, like a mausoleum focused on the past—a necrophilic obsession with the out of print—the concern of the archive is in fact the amnesiac present, and a future that the archive believes will still be in need of the avant-garde lessons which previous generations never fully learned. "It is the future that is at issue here, and the archive as an irreducible experience of the future" (*AF*, 68). Or, as Louis Zukofsky might put it, the archive preserves "the must of an ever."[19]

Conservative and revolutionary, simultaneously generating and obliterating bibliographic information, Eclipse is "an *eco-nomic* archive in this double sense" as well: as a repository, "it keeps, it puts in reserve, it saves," but it also destroys with an irreversible expenditure. To properly scan the books included in the archive, staples must be removed and sheets unbound, or at least severely creased and folded; other bindings must be hyperextended—leaving them broken and deformed, with individual pages separating from the brittle glue of their misnamed perfect binding. As much as it assembles a collection, Eclipse also constitutes the destruction of a library. In the economy of rare books, the procedures of archivization ruthlessly depreciate its holdings. Additionally, although Eclipse has always been hosted on servers at my university employers (first at Princeton and now at the University of Utah), the archive has little value for an academic career because it is electronic and Web-based, a mode of publication that if

18. For Derrida, the archive also points to the present in a transformative way because "archivable meaning is [. . .] codetermined by the structure that archives." As he explains, "archival technology no longer determines, will never have determined, merely the moment of the conservational recording, but rather the very institution of the archivable event. [. . .] To put it more trivially: what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way" (*AF*, 18). Or, as Kenneth Goldsmith has insisted on several occasions, "if it doesn't exist on the internet, it doesn't exist." See, for instance, A. S. Bessa, "Exchanging Email with Kenneth Goldsmith: An Interview," *ZingMagazine* 11 (Winter 2000), available at http://www.zingmagazine.com/zing11/bessa/index.html; and Marjorie Perloff, "A Conversation with Kenneth Goldsmith," *Jacket* 21 (February 2003), available at http://jacketmagazine.com/21/perl-gold-iv.html.
19. Louis Zukofsky, *"A"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 268.

no longer seen as detrimental to a CV is still not recognized as constituting a legitimate contribution to scholarship. Professionally, the relation of time and reward with respect to the digital archive is directly inverse. Moreover, one of the founding principles of the project, and one I have had to insist on when negotiating with university administrators, is that it must be available entirely free of charge, and to anyone. Eclipse, in short, operates as part of a gift economy. Labor intensive—the site is coded and tagged by hand, with each of the thousands of pages scanned and proofed and processed in time stolen from sleep—and unremunerated, Eclipse accrues no interest and makes no investments. The archive is a depository of loss, a crypt of expenditures which can never be accessed or deaccessioned.

Derrida recognizes that gift economy as part of the general archival logic that removes objects from use, but he also locates it in the specific case of the Freudian archive, which returns us to the dynamic of *arrière* and *avant*, conservation and revolution, the passé and the novel: "Freud can only justify the apparently useless expenditure of paper, ink, and typographic printing, in other words, the laborious investment in the archive, by putting forward the novelty of his discovery, the very one which provokes so much resistance, and first of all in himself, and precisely because its silent vocation is to burn the archive and to incite amnesia, thus refuting the economic principle of the archive, aiming to ruin the archive as accumulation and capitalization of memory on some substrate and in an exterior place" (*AF*, 12). With the substitution of a few words, the sentence might describe Eclipse and its literature of novelty and resistance, the symptomatic projection of my own fears and desires about literary history, and the futile endgame of attempting to escape the laws of media by moving from the regime of print to the substrate of digital media. As a gift, the archive cannot be acknowledged; to function as a gift it must go out to unknown recipients who cannot repay or even accredit the receipt of its offerings. There can be no remit of the archive's facture. It remains a destructive accumulation, a bibliographic potlatch in which the survival of books—*books* and not merely their "content"—can only be guaranteed by their destruction.