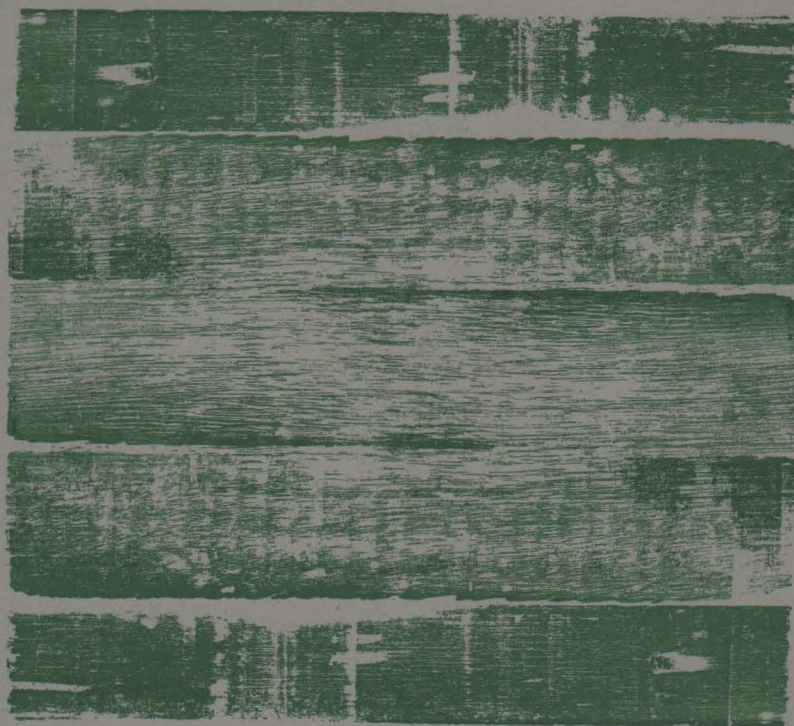


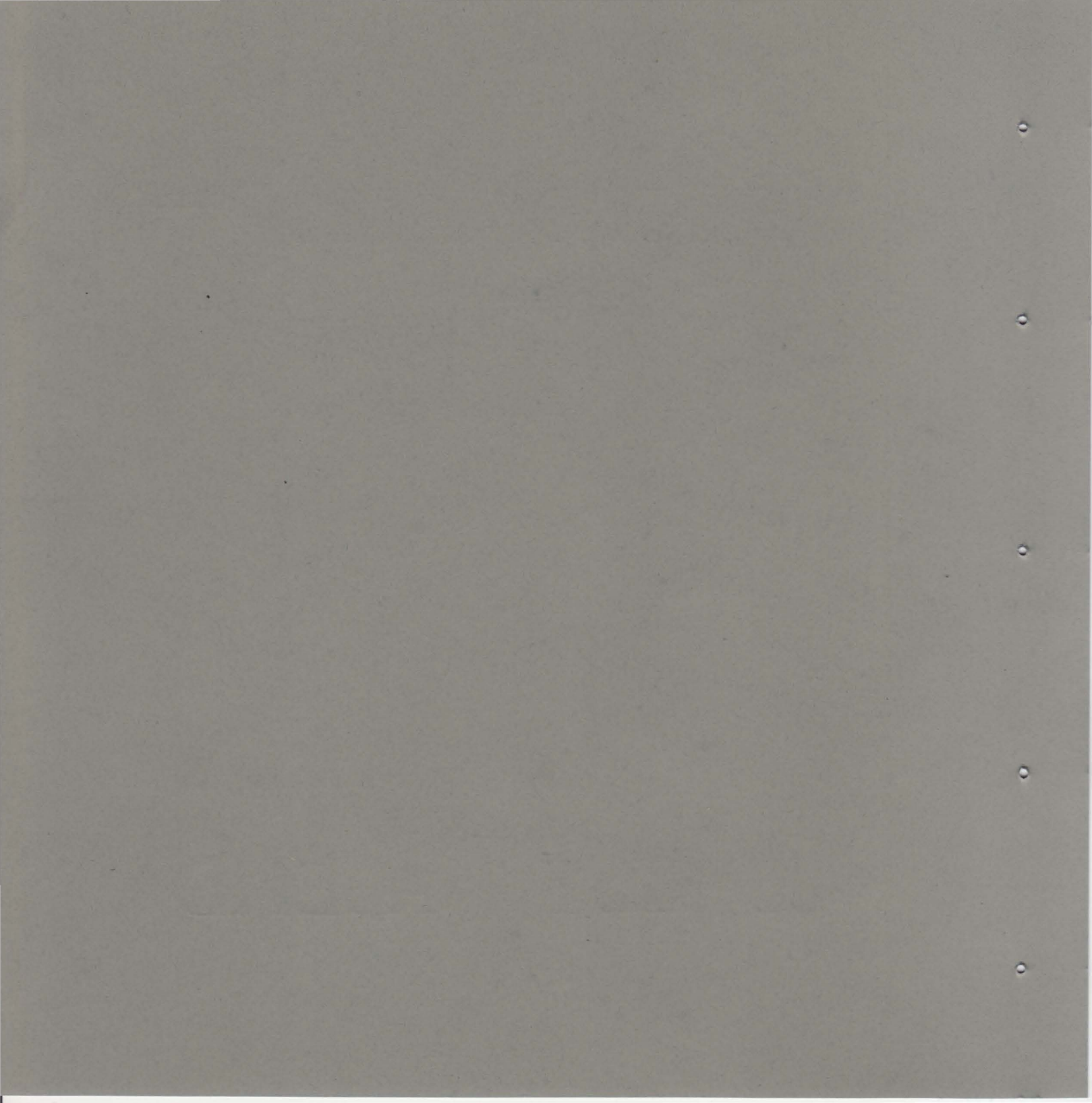
EXCLOSURES



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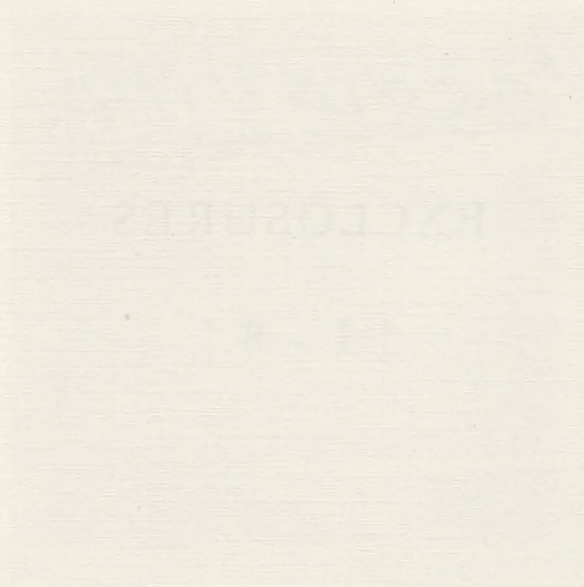
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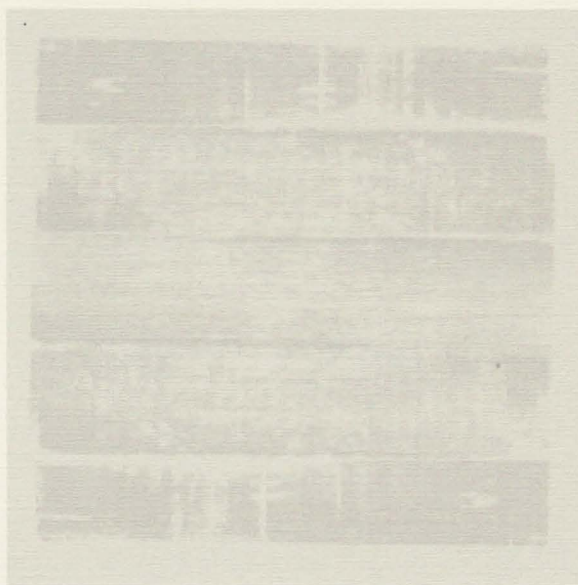
EXCLOSURES

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EXCLOSURES

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EMILY ABENDROTH

ALBION BOOKS 4.3

EXCLOSURES

[1 - 8]

EMILY ABENDROTH

ALTON BOOKS 43

Everyone wants a human life and a connected life where they struggle not only for themselves, but for others with whom they are kin. And that kinship can cross many lines. It's not always a kinship of blood or village. It's more than that. It can be a kinship of identification with others' struggles. That can always happen. And it has always happened.

LONI DING
(1931-2010)

EXCLOSURE I

The people were sometimes given a legal option of deciding their own [sex] [race] [gender] [class] [political affiliation] [hour of maximum ovulation] although a subsequent [medical] [behavioral] [credit] [asset management] [genealogical] or [book shelf & file] examination was invariably required in order to confirm the legitimacy of this selection.

Furthermore, it was insisted – despite “choice” – that each [person] [object] [country] [talisman] [currency] [border collie] had one “true” [value] [diet] [pronoun] [language] [symbolic valence] [uncle] that could only be reliably affirmed by the appropriately accredited [physicians] [internet-based poll] [DNA experts] [psychoanalysis] [handwriting tests] [neo-natal massage].

The “best” “truest” and “most legitimate” [fill in here] as determined by morphology, financial solvency, first glance, sociology, or expedience.

EXCLOSURE 1

Leaving to every actual experiencing body the task of navigating that discrepancy —
The palpable tension between their own existence and the only existent categories.

The “official logics [surviving] to erase any need to operate outside official logics”ⁱ
But always failing there. Both happily and excruciatingly failing

there.

EXCLOSURE 2

Excerpt from a three-day, eight-hour conversational exchange between Margaret Mead and James Baldwin on August 25-27, 1970.

MEAD: I found a health questionnaire – this is in the 1940s – and one of the questions was: “Why should you comb your hair?” This was for the second and third grades. The right answer is: “To keep your hair out of your eyes.” And little black boys whose hair couldn’t have gotten into their eyes, and who knew it, all gave the right answer and got one hundred percent on it.

BALDWIN: Yes, and were started on the road to madness.ⁱⁱ

*The right answer is uncorrespondent. Or corresponds only to despondency.
It is an event that amplifies a body's already-well-argued-for irrelevancy.*

*The answer we chance to say only by approved hearsay
whether to earn a dubious A or to keep at bay, our precarity
in all of its gray unyielding exhaustion*

what a hair lock blocks what a hair bun shuns

*No terms have been provided by which to understand it in its own right.
And is "its own" right? And is "its own" its own?*

*the what-we-heards
the what-we-purgeds
the what-we-forded*

*uncorded now
and troweling*

EXCLOSURE 3

There can be no reducing it
this bitter riff wherein human poverty will necessarily deduce its right to fallen wood
the "privilege" to haul in at least *that*
when shat upon
when forced to lease whatever miserable material pieces
it might crease or wobble or touch

As tightly bunched as these toes are in this crudely composed shoe
how could we ever propose to unglue or to neatly disaggregate:
the common rights *to* forests versus the common rights *of* forests

the official title to the land versus a given human's entitlement not to starve versus
the vital forces of a thick fir canopy in all of its terse and glimmering autonomy

the progressive parceling or even pulverization of cowering surroundings
versus the power to in some way reject such towering intensifications

The dense soft tissues as they are fenced in or shredded

the reddened gristle
the shards and bone spurs
each laid in turn before the jury

our peers versus our piers
an impossible dichotomy

ENCLOSURE 3

In 1836, in Baden [Germany], there was one conviction of woodstealing for every 6.1 inhabitants. By 1841, there was a conviction for every 4.6. By 1842, one for every four.ⁱⁱⁱ At what point, if ever, does the ratio in itself raise the question of who indeed is fleecing the provinces? And to what princely ends?

He said: They tried to survive and they was demonized?

Why was they demonized?

What is it you mean in moutbin' off to me concernin' what it be that I mean?

What I be meanin' is why all the colored streamers?

Why there no be beams of support HERE?

Why FEMA?

He thought: Only a society like this would dare the self-peril of generating a term like "pre-delinquents."

Only one that malignant could take the words "just desserts" and re-shirt them into meaning nothing more nor less than the vestments of a violent and summary retribution, an institutional rationalization for the wholesale destruction of personhood. The sweet that you once deserved become the flesh no one bothered to conserve.

EXCLOSURE 4

"This form of [home alarm system] was now recognized by some as a specific war tactic...

[vetting for "viable" candidates]

[taxonomical fetishization]

[citywide curfew]

[Sunday dinner]

[elevated admission or tuition constraints]

...when before it was thought of only as [an act of idiosyncratic personal intolerance]."^{iv}

[evidence of market competition]

[a necessary movement toward order]

[one inevitable inconvenience of life among society]

[a safety measure]

[reasonable precaution]

*There were certain people who found themselves feeling increasingly preoccupied
by the fact of having been occupied.*

*While other people were finding their occupations to feel as if a colonization
of their very own beings.*

*Each act in its keeping, leading to a toxically corrupting — if variable — takeover
of the already harried prospect of what it means to “spend” one’s day
or to be “spent” by it.*

To quietly find oneself flat out spent.

EXCLOSURE 5

The times were anti-evanescent
mis-scented
trenchant

The strategy of obfuscation via obliteration was only one method of many within:
a roaring war over phantom weapons using roaring weapons to make phantoms
a motley, but deadly, tautology that was not taught as such to the taut-skinned soldiers

That was not taught at all to those who were not.

Those caught up in the throws of their own uniforms were repeatedly informed:
"To camouflage one's movement, try incendiary firestorming.
Try formulating a renewed stock in shellshock as a talking base
for diplomacy. Try mace. Try tasers."
"In all cases, remain unfazed. To disappear one's surroundings – to raze them –
is itself another way of hiding."

As for those who suffered being hided

The not-armed and the elided

*were often wryly propelled into impermanent congregations of bodies currently
unable to corroborate their dissent to the satisfaction of their violators.*

*Or, it might be said, were fatally compelled into affirmation only by default, by fracture
only as vaulted into the category of "no longer existent to present resistance."*

EXCLOSURE 6

INSTRUCTION 1: Describe the structure of feeling of the erstwhile enslaved.
of the erstwhile endowed.
of the erstwhile franchises.
of the erstwhile disenfranchised.

INSTRUCTION 2: Describe erstwhile.

INSTRUCTION 3 (*Bonus*): Describe earmarking. Now describe the marks of your own ear.
Compare. Are the two descriptions distinguishable? And if so,
how so?

*What is the figurable distance between cosmo vision and a flock of pigeons
between the drizzliest of mists and a surprise visitor
between a chrysalis and being fisted
between "you're listless" and "you're aghast"
between Nebraska and should I ask her
between tertiary forms and all-too-gourmand norms*

*What is the distance of a witness
of an ever-digressing and uninvested display of finesse
of a lasso whose formerly harnessed fascicles have long since
loped off or bolted away*

EXCLOSURE 7

We packed with us [two garbage bags of necessities]
[a long-barrel shotgun and some snack bars]
[one co-signed form releasing our children to a close relative's care]
[woolens]
[a billfold of notarized, but forged, citizenship papers]
[four books on tape]

because we wanted to be prepared in the case that we were [subject to involuntary seizure].
[evicted]
[found guilty]
[the victims of crippling loneliness]
[stopped for questioning]
[anaesthetized]
[freezing to death]

As of today, in its breathlessness, it is customary to be ready for any emergency.
As of yesterday, it had been slightly less so, though hardly a jovial row for the going.

EXCLOSURE 7

As of tomorrow, Mary, who can know what we'll be towing behind us?

*We've no choice but to run. We've no choice but to clear the forest, my dearest,
in order simply to see, despite the reality that the trees are also our only shelter.*

Clearly, we can be detained by customs at any moment.

*Clearly, if variously, we have been stained and reigned in and chagrined
by our customs at every moment.*

*We wait and wait and wait. Only then to be plated with fisti-cuffs.
To be stuffed in a small chamber with nineteen other documentless
chambermaids by trade and made to arrange for our own deportations.
Impatiently required by a tiresome medley of authorities to comport ourselves
well in the so doing.*

So just how are you doing Mary? Just how are you and I undone?

EXCLOSURE #8

In *Our Country's Good*, a play by Timberlake Wertenbaker, a group of prisoners is exiled from England to Australia in 1787. They are the First Convict Fleet and their new colonial Governor proposes that rather than featuring solely the morbid entertainment of their own hangings, the prisoners might further take on the task of presenting a bonafide piece of English theater. At first, the prisoners are heatedly and repeatedly flogged; later, they are ogled and fielded for their artistic capacities. Sometimes, both things happen not in sequence, but at once. The following scene occurs between the 2nd Lieutenant cum Director and his new cast of shackled actors. In it, the prisoner LIZ, in her leanness, is entreated to portray a lady of means.

RALPH [2nd Lieutenant]: Have you ever seen a lady [a rich lady] in her own house?

LIZ: I used to climb into the big house when I was a girl, and just stand there, looking. I didn't take anything. I just stood. Like this.

RALPH: But if it was your own house, you would think it was normal to live like that.

WISEHAMMER: It's not normal. It's not normal when others have nothing.

RALPH: When acting you have to imagine things. You have to imagine you're someone different. So, now, think of a rich lady and imagine you're her.

(LIZ begins to masticate.)

RALPH: What are you doing?

LIZ: If I was rich, I'd eat myself sick.

DABBY: Me too, potatoes.^v

Me too, Doritos.

You too, in vitro.

Bucking your presumed role by lolling and binging

causing others to cringe as you lay bare its hidden-but-persistent-there

sugar-lick opulence, its violence

until tense and sick

until really sick

as if nausea itself could be a trick against conformity

Against distasteful imitation, you paste a masterful commitment to unconvincingness

an unwavering determination to keep alive the circumstance's thriving cruelties

Insisting on the value of "poor" artistry,

you offer the audience something elsewise in the rising form of a grisly mis-imagination

an infectiously "inappropriate" dilation of the mouth and sweat glands.

You stand there masticating as if to break the very gates.

You stand there elated and far from mousy.

One seriously lousy and dangerous actor.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ From *The Poetical Wager* by Joan Retallack. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

ⁱⁱ From *A Rap on Race: Margaret Mead and James Baldwin*. Boston: Lippincott, 1971.

Elsewhere in this same extensive and impassioned conversation, the following exchange occurs:

BALDWIN: A great deal of what I say is based on an assumption which I hold and don't always state. You know my fury about people is based precisely on the fact that I consider them to be responsible, moral creatures who so often do not act that way. What I am demanding of other people is what I am demanding of myself.

MEAD: Yes. But I think you have to expand it to realize that there are things happening on both sides of the lines that are being drawn.

BALDWIN: Oh, I know that. I have watched it. I have lived too long and too hard a life and been saved by too many improbable people not to realize that (143).

ⁱⁱⁱ Statistics taken from "Karl Marx, The Theft of Wood, and Working Class Composition: A Contribution to the Current Debate" by Peter Linebaugh, *Crime & Social Justice* 6 (Fall-Winter 1976), 5-16.

^{iv} From *The Transformation* by Juliana Spahr (brackets not in original). Berkeley: Atelos, 2007.

^v From *Our Country's Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker. Illinois: The Dramatic Publishing Co., 1988.

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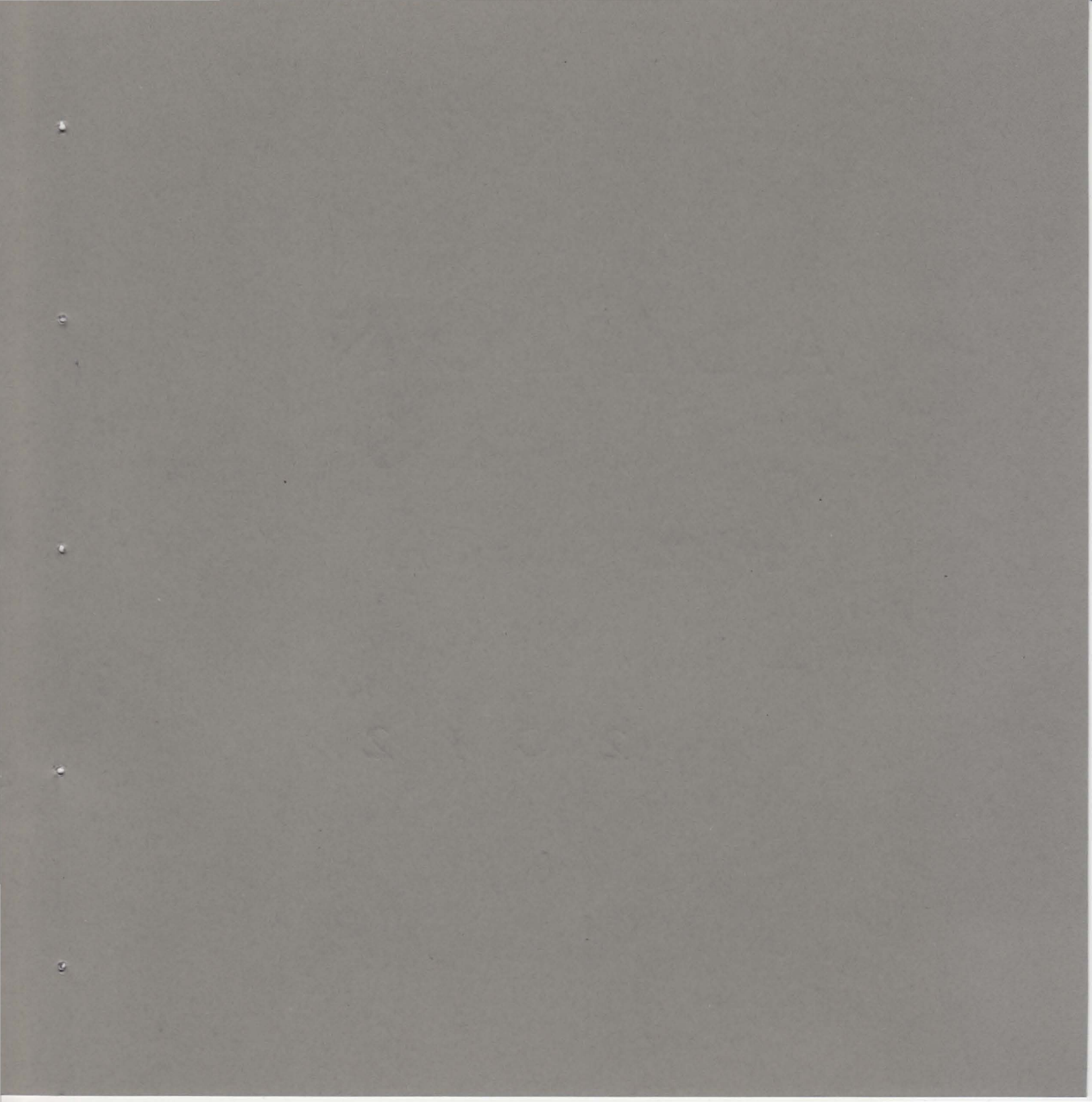
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