

poems: recycles

Working Notes

Dorothy Alexander

Working Notes for *Final Warning*

In these poems techniques developed out of found poetry are applied to a contemporary newspaper clipping. Found is posited here as an ecopoetic, not only because of its inbuilt credentials as recycler, but, more pertinently, for the non-hierarchical and inclusive nature of its processes, its capacity for comment and irony. It invites an act of multiple attentions (down to the smallest detail). It encourages heightened responsibility, in both writer and audience, for engagement with the word as depository and potential manipulator of meaning. My hope is that this dynamic of paying *particular* attention and taking responsibility serves as exemplar for engagement with larger issues and strengthens resistance to notions of outside agency.

For 'ugh' I used a technique devised during my PhD in which a word pool is formed by searching along and down through the lines of text in a kind of extreme word search (in this instance twenty eight pages of words were generated). Poems are constructed from within this word pool, and the letters of each word are then (re-)placed on the page in direct relation to the base text. This results in shapes which could be described as being like broken strands of DNA, liquid swirling down a hole, strange plant forms, but I do not favour such analogies. They are poems, things made of words, wherein the line is subsumed into a non-linear kinetic with an increased emphasis on the materiality of the word. I have come to think of them as 'scaffolds of Babel'.

'oOps' and 'EXIT .EXTINCT' were words found within the above process. The original article had a picture of the sun's surface behind it, hence the use of yellow.

The text used was an extract from the front page of *The Independent* on 3rd February 2007¹ whose banner headline was 'Final Warning', and which had five purported scenarios for temperature rises by 2100 from +2.4° up to +6.4°.

¹ Michael McCarthy, *The Independent*, London, 3rd February, 2007.

LaTasha N. Nevada Diggs

About kantan pescado

The kantans, or riffs, are part of a larger experiment called macaronics. The macaronic verse is a form that deals with several languages being utilized in one piece. The general rule in macaronic verse is two or more languages. Over time, I've complicated the verse more by looking at two or more poetic forms. In particular, forms non-western in origin. The Kantan Chamorro, a song verse indigenous to the Chamorro people in Guam and the Mariana islands, used the verse during festivities and as a way to flirt. To be honest, I am not an expert on the Kantan Chamorros. However, what intrigued me is the Chamorro language and the idea of these songs being "battle verses." To me, these verses share a similarity to the freestyle ciphers present in the Hip Hop community. I wanted to recycle by way of remixing (like a DJ would) the original verses through language, through sound, while maintaining the flirtation and connection to the environment that is may be part of these Pacific people.

Tina Darragh and Marcella Durand

Working Notes for *Deep eco pré*

Durand and Darragh's collaboration began as a cross-reference of coincidences. Curious about their common interest in the poetry of Francis Ponge, Durand e-mailed Darragh in the summer of 2001 to begin an exchange that would yield an "interview" in the *Poetry Project Newsletter* (no. 186, October/November 2001), spark an ongoing poetic collaboration "Deep eco pré", and prompt the construction

of a companion essay, “Deep Eco Pré-Cautionary Ponge-ABLEs,” for a panel discussion on ecology and poetry held at the Kelly Writers House, Philadelphia, PA, March 3, 2004 (published in *ecopoetics* no. 4/5, 2004-2005).

During their initial e-mail exchange, the collaborators discovered another coincidence – a joint interest in the work of the environmental activist/philosopher Michael Zimmerman with whom Durand had studied at Tulane University and to whose work Darragh had turned to elucidate the interrelationships between and among Heidegger, ecology, postmodernism, and fascism. Darragh and Durand began to cross-reference texts from Ponge’s *The Making of the Pré* (University of Missouri Press, 1979, translated by Lee Fahnestock) with Zimmerman’s *Contesting Earth’s Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity* (University of California Press, 1994).

From Ponge, the collaborators took as their poetic practice the tracking of “things” in terms of other “things” in order to move away from the anthropocentric “nature poem” as a representation of the poet’s “deep dark interiors” (Durand, PPN, p. 14). Starting with straightforward juxtapositions of texts from both authors, Durand and Darragh would then overlap language and space out sounds in honor of Zimmerman’s call to keep deep ecology, social ecology and ecofeminist ideas from lapsing into the logic of identity. The procedure underscores the necessity for these forms of radical ecology to continuously challenge and compliment one another as a way to foreground social justice issues and emancipatory goals.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis

Working Notes for “Draft 71: Headlines with Spoils”

Will anything teach us? A poem with both affect and information has as much chance as anything to give rise to understanding, via an incantation of words that

turns the mind, detours our thinking, makes us face our world, and, perhaps even motivates us to political action. An aesthetic act, like any kind of analysis, puts things together and allows for intellectual and visceral connections, alterations of seeing, understanding, and consciousness. In my poems information-with-feeling emerges in lots of ways—through genre, tone, linebreak, page space. Here something like the ideogrammic configuration, or throws of material down, can help us see relationships that were not necessarily seen before. So I chose to cite actual headlines that struck me, selected from the vast plethora of news that washes over us. Headlines are linked to manifestoes in their typography. So this poem tries to make a larger, darker font size underline our condition, as if it is a counter-manifesto by simply citing the news. The configuration here is malfeasance (in government), interested and criminal denial (of ecological and world-affecting harms done), servitude and economic bondage (definitely in production, but even in ideologies around consumption), and social control for profit of the few. Writing comes out of the world as it is lived, perceived, experienced and suffered. It can hardly avoid what is happening in the Now; it can only try to figure out ways of saying what it sees.

I wrote “Draft 71: Headlines with Spoils” in 2005; a lot of the poems in Torques: Drafts 58-76 have had enough. Many are written in revulsion towards the Bush regime or coup in US politics and towards the fundamentalist turn in the world at large. Many of them implicitly or explicitly ask what good is it to write poetry. Torques says I am twisted, bent, pulled, under tension, by the political and social reality of Now. I have been asking myself for years how to communicate my deep social and political questions in aesthetic forms that give pleasure but which also disconcert and destabilize one’s complacency. But I don’t have a lot of answers to that question. I just keep asking it.

Drafts as a whole has thematic and emotional investments centering on loss, struggle, and investigation, on endless commentary and gloss, like midrash, and on the unsayable and “anguage”—the language of anguish—and hope.

Cynthia Hogue

Working Notes

These poems adopt voices without identifying them. The voices come from the languages of domains other than the poetic—the political, the journalistic, the ecological, and other artistic mediums, as in the Artist’s Notes from Agnes Denes’ exhibition and residency at Bucknell University (USA) in 2003, where I was teaching at the time. I was very inspired by the scope of her artistic works, by the magnitude of her vision, and by her ecological ethos. The poem “From the Book of Dust” is a tribute to her, and also a collage of parts of her artist’s statement, though perhaps obviously, I have edited, cut, and shaped the quotations (even in one or two cases intentionally misquoted). In all the poems, I inhabit (or “I” inhabit) and put to different use the language of the original text, so that there is some otherness that goes unremarked, but not unsensed, going in to creating the poem. In “The Ecology of the Disappeared,” I forged together bits of two lost articles in *The Nation* on the disappeared of General Pinochet’s Chile and reports on early, skeptical (and government-sponsored) scientific studies of global warming. “After a Hurricane There’s Nowhere to Go” plays with the serious problem of disappearing coastal marshlands, which buffer coasts from hurricanes, and the fact that a 69 year old woman, who happens to have the same name as I, had for years been battling (I discovered after Hurricane Katrina swept half of New Orleans away) with officials and developers about flood control after storms. She might have simply been trying to keep her own house from flooding—I played fast and loose with details—but the problem is, as we all now know, a global one. Finally, “Now Politically the U.S.,” includes in the indented portions lineated quotations from a letter written by the American poet, W.S. Merwin, who wrote back in the late 1980s (at the same time as the Sanctuary movement beginning in Arizona in the U.S.) asking recipients to protest the destruction of lowland rainforests in Hawaii. At the time, for reasons too complicated to detail, my phone was tapped, and Merwin’s

words punctuate, even interrupt, lived and historically-situated experience that nonetheless has an eerie currency.

As for recycled language, I'm fascinated by the betwixt and between that emerges, the way meaning is forged in the interaction between the new use and the found text, a meaning which is dynamic and discovered rather than static or planned. There's a kind of ecology at work in these poems, however, that is more literal than, say, the way modernists used collage. "From the Book of Dust," among the others, is quoting an artist who creates works that shape Nature, using Nature as her medium in many cases, and in turn, Nature then recycles the artist's Works, the analysis of which the poem actively contemplates. Of course, figuratively, language originally intended for one use has been turned toward another in these poems.

I find myself often asking these days: What can shift our human consciousness? Some sort of shock can open us up, though shock can also shut us down out of fear, as did citizens of the U.S. after 9/11. To open up to an other (after all, a metaphor for we are always, already "open" to otherness) is to be more active in our awareness of relationship, that the creative happens between the one and the other (whatever that one and that other may be). The anthropologist Victor Turner said that the great creative cultural moments are in the betwixt and between, the liminal, where transformation (both social and existential) can be imagined, envisioned. I think about the gender dynamic going on in the world right now, among the various fundamentalisms into whose vortex we've all been whirled, and I want to get to another paradigm, but I can only get to its border. I can only get to the between.

Janis Butler Holm

Working Notes

"Seminar" is a cut-up poem produced by removing nouns from selected passages.

a.rawlings

Ecopoetry

As a long-term resident and recent citizen of Canada, I've had ample time to consider how and why the country's landscape is bound to its self-perception and international reputation. I immigrated to rural Northern Ontario from small-town Indiana, USA in my formative years, encouraged to notice and constantly reminded of the natural resources in my immediate surroundings. As a teenager, a close friend's father was a conservation officer for the provincial Ministry of Natural Resources (a job I considered mystical, important). And when I left my log cabin in the woods to attend university in Toronto, I found myself pining for pine.

Northern Ontario's natural resources identified home to me, and formed the basis for my first major literary project, *Wide slumber for lepidopterists*. My close high-school friend had become my artistic collaborator, sharing for the project his photography and preoccupations. *Wide slumber* focused on a night in the life of entomologists obsessed with moths, plotting how scientists' subconscious behaviour and information processing might be affected by intimate study of and interaction with another species.

Ecopoetic

Environmental awareness, dependence, even obsession have been present throughout Canada's history-- its national identity rooted in the rural and natural, its literary canon brimming with lyric nature poetry. Over the last year, eco- and poesy have become popular syntactic and syllabic fellows in literary discussion. A notable marker for the recent widespread popularity of these terms in CanLit may have been the 2006 EcoPoetics Symposium, held at Brandon University in Manitoba. The gynocentric symposium included not only discussion of green literature and the poet's role as activist but also troubled the relationship between the feminine and ecocritical.

For me, the symposium posited the question of how ecopoetry, ecopoetic, and ecopoetics differ in definition. I've since focused on a personal definition for ecopoetics and application of this poetic theory to my own work.

Ecopoetics

If the page is a landscape and letters the species populating it, how would landscape or soundscape translate in a textual environment? I've embarked on a new textual project, *echology*, exploring questions like this one. *echology* treats text as an environment (as its own ecosystem, microcosm) and considers text in its environment (context). Employing a series of literary constraints, *echology* reduces (lipograms, economy of language), reuses (cut-up method, repetition), recycles (found text), and sustains (anagrams, homolingual and homophonic translation).

With a reduction of linguistic resources, (how) is my expression limited? The selection of poems featured here begins to plumb the depths of this query, through a meditation on repetition and humanity's impact on its immediate environment. Given the English language user's propensity towards pronoun-

heavy, possessive, and humancentric syntax, I have chosen to focus many poems in *echology* using a lipogrammatic constraint that includes only sounds and letters produced using those found in pronouns (excluding demonstrative). The letters used in English pronouns (excluding demonstrative) collectively represent 15 letters (58% of the alphabet). The only vowel excluded is 'a'. The consonants are confined to f, h, l, m, n, r, s, t, w.

The section included here echoes Christian Bök's line "Wolves evolve" (from "Vowels," *Eunoia*).