

Objects that Matter: Olson, Bergvall, and the Poetics of Articulation

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On October 29, 2005, I spent the afternoon at the Noulipo Conference at the RedCat theater in downtown Los Angeles. The conference was devoted to the Parisian avant-garde movement, Oulipo, and to the pertinence of that movement to recent American poetry grounded in constraint-based writing and procedural methods of composition. The session that I attended included a panel on “The Politics of Constraint,” at which Juliana Spahr and Stephanie Young delivered what has since become a notorious performance of their “Foulipo” manifesto—short for Feminist Oulipo. Isn’t it curious, Spahr and Young asked, that the homosocially male and mathematically inclined coterie of the Oulipo were holding their meetings at exactly the same time that feminist body art by women like Carolee Schneeman, Shigeko Kubota, Marina Abramovic, and Eleanor Antin asserted the irrevocable impact of the sexual revolution upon the international art scene? What could have been, Spahr and Young wanted to know, if the practitioners of Oulipo and of feminist body art had more openly thought through the consequences of each practice for the other, back in the 1960s and ’70s? And what might yet emerge if we thought through, and *practiced*, that disjunctive conjunction today?

But it was the *way* that Spahr and Young posed these relatively straightforward questions that has continued to elicit controversy and in some cases belittling dismissals—most recently on Ron Silliman’s influential blog.ⁱ On stage at the RedCat, Spahr and Young read a text from which they had deleted all instances of the letter “r”—a procedure referred to as *slenderizing* in the *Oulipo Compendium*.ⁱⁱ The first sentence of their text thus reads “One day we wee talking about wok fom the 70’s, all that body pefomance wok that suddenly began to happen, all at once.”ⁱⁱⁱ And as they read from their slenderized text, Spahr and Young proceeded to strip naked—and to redress, as it were—three times over the course of their performance. Their strategy was thus to splice the two signature gestures of the movements under investigation: getting naked in public (in the

case of feminist body art), and the subjection of a text to a uniformly applied, pre-determined operation (in the case of the Oulipo). “Take off your clothes and say procedure,” reads the epigraph to their text from *Yesterday’s News*, by Bay area poet Taylor Brady.

In a critical response to this performance, Kenneth Goldsmith has characterized Spahr and Young’s manifesto as “awash in nostalgia”—nostalgia for a bygone era of spontaneous happenings in which the body was at once a paradise regained and a battleground to be fought for.^{iv} But to my mind Goldsmith’s critique manages at once to state the obvious and to miss the point: Spahr and Young were explicitly engaged in an *investigation* of their own nostalgia, and of the conditions under which a look back at art and literary history might offer a new way forward. As they put it, “we wee having one of those moments, when you look at something fom the past, something that is supposed to be ‘ove,’ something we’e all supposed to be beyond, and it looks all fesh and special and esonant and cucial...that moment when wok goes fom tied and oveexposed to shimmeing.”^v The Foulipo manifesto is about a missed opportunity. And isn’t it occasionally productive—even if it entails an act of contextual displacement that must *itself* be investigated—to look back from where we are, after what we might have missed?

I want to look back at another missed opportunity in literary history, and forward to how we might re-frame the operation of gender and sexuality in contemporary experimental writing by recognizing the way in which what was missed “back then” may be more relevant than ever right now. So let me back up a bit, and begin with a simple question—one that, as I hope to show—is not unrelated to those so effectively posed by Spahr and Young. What if Charles Olson’s poetics were remembered today not under the banner of those well-worn categories—“Projective Verse,” “Open Field Poetry,” or “Black Mountain Poetry”—but rather by that other name that Olson *also* gave to his poetic practice: *objectism*. Would we think of Olson any differently if that term were the first association that came to mind when we heard his name? How might that association alter considerations of the pertinence of his work to contemporary poetry and poetics? And—the major question that I want to take up here—how

might a contemporary practice of what Olson called “objectism” mobilize the approach to the body and the poem that that term entails, for an interrogation of differential genders and sexualities? What would have to change if that project—which I think is latent in Olson’s poetics—were moved from the background to the foreground? What would a feminist or a queer poetics of objectism look like and sound like?

Objectism is the central term of the so-called “stance toward reality” that Olson outlines in the second half of his 1950 manifesto, “Projective Verse.” He defines it as follows:

Objectism is the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego, of the “subject” and his soul, that peculiar presumption by which western man has interposed himself between what he is as a creature of nature (with certain instructions to carry out) and those other creations of nature which we may, with no derogation, call objects. For a man is himself an object, whatever he may take to be his advantages.^{vi}

This is, no doubt, a famous passage. But if the term “objectism” nonetheless remains far less familiar than the other tags by which Olson’s poetics have been identified, that is probably because both Olson’s supporters and his detractors have routinely associated his work with two other programs that would seem at odds with the proposition “man is himself an object.” First, his work has been closely associated with the mid-century poetics of “organic form” championed by Denise Levertov and Robert Duncan. And second, the emphasis that Olson places upon bodily rhythms as the basis of the poetic line has been linked to the phenomenological valorization of the “lived body” (promulgated by Merleau-Ponty and, more recently, Francisco Varela).^{vii}

Joseph Conte aligns Olson with the tradition of organicist poetics stemming from Coleridge, juxtaposing this lineage valuing “form as proceeding” with that of procedural work valuing “form as superinduced.”^{viii} Marjorie Perloff takes Olson’s breath poetics as a primary exemplar of the ’50s vogue for “the natural look,” linking his sensibility in this regard with that of Ginsberg, Levertov, Duncan, and the Lowell of *Life Studies*.^{ix} While Steve McCaffery condemns “a surprising belatedness, a residual organicist romanticism” in Olson’s poetics,^x the same residues are rather naïvely celebrated in a recent

contribution to the *OlsonNow* blog by Paul Nelson, who begins his essay by replacing the iconic headings of Olson’s “Projective Verse” manifesto [(projectile (percussive (prospective”] with his own: “(organismic (holistic (exploratory.”^{xi} Don Byrd’s more sophisticated analysis of Olson’s cybernetic inclinations in *The Poetics of the Common Knowledge* ultimately aligns his poetics with “the logic of the living” and the principles of “biological autonomy” propounded by Maturana and Varela’s theory of autopoiesis.^{xii} And in his 1979 volume *Enlarging the Temple*, Charles Altieri provides a formulation that I would offer as a synecdoche for the emphasis that both Olson’s friends and enemies have placed on the primacy of the organic and the biological in his poetics. Olson’s method, Altieri writes, “is imaginative participation in what all beings share by being alive.”^{xiii}

There are, of course, many passages in Olson’s vast output of prose and poetry that confirm his investment in the organic, the biological, and the vital. But he is interested in these modalities of existence insofar as they qualify particular objects—not insofar as they distinguish certain entities as *essentially* different than others. Proprioception, for example, is characterized by Olson as “the data of depth sensibility/the ‘body’ of us as object.”^{xiv} Proprioception may be a faculty particular to certain kinds of organisms. But Olson is careful here to specify that the body’s operations as an organism are only a *subset* of its facticity as an object. And I take this thinking of the “the ‘body’ of us as object”—as first and foremost an object—to be at odds with the sort of organicism for which the wholistic systematicity and continuous self-production of the organism radically distinguish it from entities lacking those qualities—entities that are thus categorically differentiated from organisms and referred to as “objects” by *virtue* of that distinction. What I think is lost in widespread representations of Olson as a purveyor of the natural look, as a champion of organic form, as an apostle of the “lived body,” or as an antecedent to autopoietic theory is precisely his rejection of “being alive” as a criteria for participation in “what all beings share.” Olson states unequivocally that it is because “man is himself an object” that one might hope to participate not in what all beings share by being alive, but rather, as he puts it, in “the secrets objects share.”^{xv}

This stance toward reality applies to the poem as well. Olson makes clear that composition by field is “a matter, finally, of OBJECTS,”^{xvi} and that body of the poet is included as one among “the larger field of objects”^{xvii} in which the poem takes place. “Every element in an open poem,” he writes,

must be taken up as participants in the kinetic of the poem just as solidly as we are accustomed to take what we call the objects of reality; and these elements are to be seen as creating the tensions of the poem just as totally as do those other objects create what we know as the world.^{xviii}

Among the “elements of the poem” that he refers to here, Olson would include the body of the poet, the typewriter with which the poem inscribed on paper, the material words, letters, and sounds of which the poem consists, and the physical things and historical events that it describes.

But how does Olson conceptualize the “object” as a category that could cover all of these very different things? I want to highlight four key tenants of that conceptualization.

- First, objectism affirms a stance toward reality according to which all entities are *ontologically* common. However they might be qualified by differential qualities and capacities, a human body and a stone *are* in one and the same sense. When Olson says that “man is himself an object,” he makes this sort of ontological claim. It’s the centrality of this ontological claim that I think differentiates objectism from the epistemological emphasis of Objectivism—its prioritization of the clear and distinct rendering of experience (“simply pointing to things—and clearly enough or accurately enough” as George Oppen says).^{xix} And this distinction is what Robert von Hallberg misses when he writes that “in 1950 Olson was arguing...for an epistemological shift toward what he called ‘objectism.’”^{xx}
- Second, the object is an inherently relational category. Objects are constituted *through* relationality. But rather than making “the subject” the active term of a relation while considering “the object” as a passive term, Olson wants to think of all physical things and collectives of physical things as involved in a *field* of relationality.

- Third—as a corollary to the previous point—objects and relations *between* objects are mutually constitutive. Particular things are differentiated not *from* one another, but rather *through* their relations with one another. That principle might entail certain problems of boundary formation—the problem of where one thing begins and another ends, or of how particular things are individuated. And for Olson this issue cannot be resolved absolutely, but only on a local, contextual basis.
- Fourth, and finally, objects are *active*, not inert. They are *provisionally* stable, and they are saturated with movement and energy even when they seem to be utterly static. And this principles applies equally to subatomic particles, stones, parts of speech, or human bodies.

Taken together, these principles of “objectism” are gleaned and extrapolated from Olson’s researches into post-classical physics and Riemannian geometry, and they are also broadly consonant with his admiration for Alfred North Whitehead’s philosophy. They are also principles that resonate with a number of materialist philosophical programs currently being carried out by thinkers like Jean-Luc Nancy, Bernard Stiegler, Catherine Malabou, Graham Harman, Bruno Latour, Isabelle Stengers, Ray Brassier, and Alberto Toscano,^{xxi} as well as with the 21st century research and development programs of Artificial Life, nanotechnology, and biotechnology—programs attempting to fabricate synthetic materials and hybrid entities that seriously challenge any comfortable distinctions between organic and inorganic bodies, or living and non-living beings.^{xxii} The term that Whitehead used for any element of the universe whatsoever was “actual entity,” and it was a term that he used interchangeably with the expression “actual occasion.” Olson, like Whitehead, wants a term by which to refer to the interior activity and relational particularity of any given thing. And he tries to rehabilitate the term “object” for that purpose. Olson thinks of poetry as the means by which to construct what Whitehead would call “a common world” in which particular differences *among* objects are sustained *by* the relationality of their being in common, and in which their radical equality is sustained *through* the differences that they articulate amongst themselves.^{xxiii}

But as we know, one of the major problems with this apparently promising program is that Olson's work fails to adequately incorporate gender and sexuality as specificities that must matter to *any* thinking or practice of equality and difference—even among objects. “*Man* is himself an object,” Olson writes, and his unwillingness to adequately complicate the gendering of that supposedly universal noun makes clear that its presumption of universality is not innocent.

This is not to say that Olson missed the problem of gender and sexual difference entirely. As Rachel Blau DuPlessis has pointed out, mid-century poets like Olson, Ginsberg, and Creeley were certainly critical of and resistant to dominant models of male subjectivity in the 1950s (the figures of the organization man, the breadwinner, etc). But it remains the case, Blau DuPlessis argues, that these poets “implicitly or explicitly rejected the possibility of making a bilateral gender critique.”^{xxiv} They benefited from destabilizing gender norms that applied to men, but they also benefited by reinforcing gender norms as they applied to women. Blau DuPlessis writes:

To see men investigate and even change some gender ideas, without their appreciating that women could want, in parallel ways, to investigate, and even change gender ideas is to feel a lost opportunity, one on which we might still be able to make good. For these critical poetries of fifty years gone understood only part of what needs to be known, knew only part of what needs to be done.^{xxv}

The category of the *object*, however, might seem to retain some interest for thinking through what it is that “needs to be done.” It troubles the boundary between nature and culture, and it unsettles the self-evidence of organic or biological unity. Insofar as it evades the essentialist categories of “man,” “woman,” or “the human,” might the object be taken up as a *queer* concept? Recent work by Vivian Sobchack, Sarah Ahmed, and Graham Harman has already begun to elaborate such a conceptualization.^{xxvi} Objectism also poses an interesting problem for the critique of *objectification*. For if we accept the premise that all entities are objects, and that we can say so “with no derogation,” then what will be problematic is not an address others as objects. Rather, what will lead to inequality and violence is the assumption or assertion that some entities are subjects while others are not. Considered on these terms, the sexism

endemic to Olson's work may not be due so much to a failure to recognize women as particular subjects as it is due to a failure to recognize particular women as particular objects—which is precisely the peculiar sort of respect that he accords to Creeley, or a glacier, or a fishing boat. Rather, Olson either reifies women as *archetypes* or positions women as *subject*. “Necessary woman,” he writes in the *Maximus Poems*, “renders service / of an essential / and intimate / kind.”^{xxvii} The relation of servitude and subordination here is that between Lord and subject, and this is a putative relation between “men” and “women” that is everywhere implicit in the chauvinist appeals to “all the real boys” who constitute the projected audience of Olson's essays and manifestos.^{xxviii} Olson's objectism attempts to constitute a common world of physical bodies through a radically egalitarian materialism. But Olson fails in that project when “the ‘body’ of *us* as object” has to be articulated in terms of the differential genders and sexualities that his collective pronoun leaves uninterrogated.

The problem of the *collective*, however, might nonetheless suggest an approach to fully incorporating the problem of gender and sexuality into an objectist poetics. How might an investigation of bodies as *differentially configured collectivities of objects* be mobilized by a feminist or a queer poetics? If *the* object is always relational through and through, and therefore an internally articulated collective of relational objects, how might that articulation be *rearticulated*? How might a poetics of such articulations enable us to critically engage the contemporary ideological and technoscientific conditions under which normatively gendered bodies are *replicated* today? I want to devote the remainder of this piece to a consideration of how Caroline Bergvall's 2001 volume, *GOAN ATOM*,^{xxix} begins to answer those questions. And though I hardly want to argue for Olson's “influence” on Bergvall, I do want to argue that Bergvall's writing takes up and begins to make good on the “lost opportunity” in Olson's poetics. Her writing exposes the limits beyond which Olson's objectism was unwilling or unable to go, and it invents the means of working through those limits.

On the opening pages of Bergvall's volume we find a succession of two lettristic grids, printed in a bold sans serif font.

.	T	S		S	S	.
S	S	O		G	T	S
G	G	F		O	A	A
C	A	A		C	F	G

The abstract order of the grid as a form of organization is mediated and offset by the concrete bulk of the units that constitute it. This opening gesture lets us know unambiguously that the words we will encounter in the pages thereafter are *composed* of letters, and that these letters are themselves physical marks on a page that have been organized and reorganized into arrangements that are not only sequential, but also spatial. Like Olson, Bergvall evidently wants us to consider the page as a relational field on which signs are not just written, but *configured*, and where their status as differential units depends on their distribution in space. Following these grids we find a list of three numbers, leading us to the title pages of the book's three subsections COGS, FATS, and GAS.^{xxx}

	S				.
G					S
O				A	
C					G

Extracted from the second of the two opening grids, the titles are printed according to the position on the page of its discrete units. The suggestion is that the formal structure of the book—its division into sections—is inextricable from the spatial arrangement of the material particles of which it is composed.

Following the leaf on which we find the page numbers of the book's three sections, this tension of the book's material components against their formal configuration is reasserted as we encounter an illegible, unintelligible, unpronounceable constellation of inkblots.^{xxx1}



If the volume insists on the obvious fact that written letters are material units, it also insists that we pay attention to what they are made of. Bergvall's feminist poetics merges with her materialism here, as the menstrual thematics punctuating *GOAN ATOM* figure these blots as an instance of textual spotting. They index an excess of corporeality—whether textual or bodily—over the orthographic or hygienic regimes that would attempt to contain or discipline the boundaries of unruly fluids and physicalities. But the appearance of these fluids on the page is also ordered and discrete, involving a certain topological grammar of its own. These are at once unbounded flows and bounded objects that mark the page in a *particular* configuration. I would suggest that the advantage of thinking of such particular configurations in terms of *objects*, in the case of either Olson's or Bergvall's work, is that such an approach foregrounds the manner in which any "flow" is articulated into discrepant components. And it's this articulation of discrepancies *between* such components that prevents any reduction of the collective to a unity, and that enables one to measure the particularity of parts.

Two thirds of the way through *GOAN ATOM*, we arrive at a passage that decisively formulates the objectism at play in the opening pages of the volume.

Blt ● by Bolt
Every single P
art is a crown
to Anatom^{xxxii}

The open inkblot of the boldface letter “**o**” in the first line forms the circumference through which a bolt might be screwed, and here Bergvall suggestively engages with the sexual mechanics of body parts that are so thoroughly implicated in her volume that they are discernible even at the level of the grapheme. But the larger import of this passage is its formulation of what I want to call Bergvall’s *poetics of articulation*. This is a poetics that operates blot by bolt: through minute reconfigurations of the particulate units from which physical bodies are constructed. It is a constructivist poetics in which “art” poses the problem of “parts,” and vice-versa. The co-implication of blots and bolts and their mediation by a detached concrete signifier (the letter **o**) suggests that bodies, machines, and inscribed marks are all equally organizations of parts that can be reorganized. The problem of *composition* for such a poetics is thus to ensure that every single “part” is a crown. If the “Adam” that we might hear through “Anatom”—and also in Bergvall’s title, *GOAN ATOM*—would seek to claim every part as a subject of his sovereignty, then the task of Bergvall’s poetics is to de-subjectify those parts. The problem of politics and aesthetics that Jacques Rancière terms “the distribution of the sensible”^{xxxiii} is to organize texts, anatomies, or socio-political situations in such a way that every single part is granted its singularity—not as a part of a whole to which it is subordinated, but as part of a collective. When every single part is a crown to anatom, each will claim as much sovereignty as any other. The problem of *collective* articulation is how to organize and productively disorganize the bounded field of relational elements that collectively constitutes any text, body, or socius.

It’s due to passages like this that I think “objectism”—as conceptualized by Olson as an egalitarian ontology—offers a helpful frame through which to grapple with the conceptual and literary-historical stakes of Bergvall’s work. But we can measure the significant distance between Olson’s and Bergvall’s objectisms by juxtaposing the manner in which they *articulate* their work into lines, and in performance. Consider the following passage from Olson’s “In Cold Hell, In Thicket”:^{xxxiv}

The question, the fear he raises up himself against
(against the same each act is proffered, under the eyes

each fix, the town of the earth over, is managed) is: Who
am I?

Who am I but by a fix, and another,
a particle, and the congery of particles carefully picked one by another,

as in this thicket, each
smallest branch, plant, fern, root
—roots lie, on the surface, as nerves are laid open—
must now (the bitterness of the taste of her) be
isolated, observed, picked over, measured, raised
as though a word, an accuracy were a pincer!

this

is the abstract, this
is the cold doing, this
is the almost impossible

So shall you blame those
who give it up, those who say
it isn't worth the struggle? ^{xxxv}

“Who am I but by a fix, and another,” Olson asks, “a particle, and the congery of particles carefully picked one by another.” Olson’s concern here is with precisely the condition of “objectism” that he endorses as an ontology, and that his poetics takes up as a first principle. The poem is about the fact that there is no getting out of this condition, and the task that his poetics proposes is therefore to go further into it. The problem for Olson is how to save the object itself from objectification. How prevent the reduction of the object to an abstraction by engaging its interior activity, and by situating it within the field of relationality by which it is constituted. He does this by fusing the rhythm of the body with that of the poetic line, separating and distinguishing each breath unit from the others, while holding them together in a co-constitutive corporeal field. The “struggle” that Olson elaborates is to intervene in and to organize the congery of particles that the world is—that we also are—without making pincers of our precisions, a cold hell out of our accuracies.

In the following passage from *GOAN ATOM*, Bergvall is concerned with much the same problem:

What of it

bodymass is heavily funded
Swirling aHeads
roll out of place
mount alterity
part on display
round up
to as perfect a square as Octopus
ever canned
be
roll on roll on
MOTion
begs out of
g
GA
g
ging
Dis
g
orging
b
loo*
p
uke
s
Uck
ack
ock
S
OG
ex
Creme
ental
eaT
ing sp
Am
mon
Am
mon
sp
you
d out
the 1 called
the one called
wholly
quartered
Beloved
Beloved

chok
 en the Egg
 SP
 in
 your
 arm
 to ram
 my Hoop
 of larm
 b
 (click)
 Look
 !
 You yo
 Footy
 facey
 (click)
 yoyo
 and a leg loops
 into the
 BAC of the
 my thRoat
 and Ro
 und and Ro
 und and the Rolling Eye up we gl gloue
 in the bl**dy dans hole ^{xxxvi}

Bodymass, as Bergvall puts it in the second line, is heavily funded. The body is so quantified and calculated by its immersion in the generic substance of Capital that alterity—she implies three lines later—might seem little more than a part to be played or to be mounted and put on display. Olson recognizes the *problem* of objectism in the content of his lines, while attempting to *solve* that problem through the breath poetics that is integral to their form. But Bergvall’s disintegrative lines and the disruptive glitches in their articulation index the breakdown of the formal coherence that Olson’s breath poetics attempts to salvage.

Bergvall performs the condition that Olson’s poem describes: the decomposition of the body into a congerie of particles, registered here as graphemic and morphemic fragments that remain stubbornly resistant to any reintegration. If the relational interface situating the body within the larger field of objects that Olson attempts to establish depends upon respiratory rhythms, the

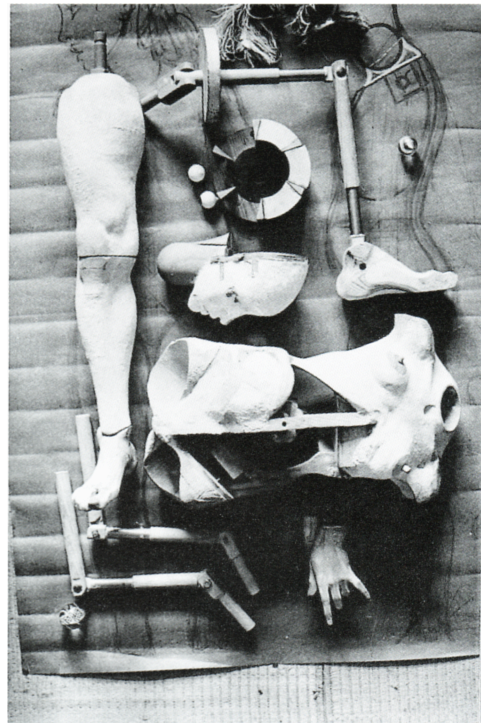
rhythms of flows and blockages that are of interest to Bergvall pertain to menstruation, excretion, conception, and parturition. But these rhythms are not sufficient to establish any sense of embodied plenitude or formal coherence. Bergvall's infantilizing idioms toward the end of the passage seem to suggest that at the very moment of its birth, the body is decomposed or photographically *framed* into discrete objects, or body *parts*. "Footy / facey / click," she writes. These are the parts that seem to be lodged in the back of the poet's throat, blocking the respiratory rhythms upon which Olson's formal recuperation of an integral field relies. The struggle, for Olson, is not to save the human or the organism from the condition of the object, but rather to persist within a condition of objectism without thereby giving way to atomization. But if Bergvall finds that Olson's solution to that problem—breath poetics—is blocked in her case, blocked by the *decomposition* of the body, then the question becomes how to work *through* that blockage rather than pretending it isn't there. *GOAN ATOM* thus proceeds within a condition of textual atomization. This condition of fragmentation, however, also lends itself to a project of collective reorganization, and Bergvall thus mobilizes it a means of poetic production that might be used to *rearticulate* the problem that Olson poses: that of "the body of us as object."

Whereas Olson's "us" is purportedly generic—and therefore implicitly masculine—the *feminist* stakes of Bergvall's re-articulation of that collective body are most immediately obvious in her engagement with the figure of the doll. The subtitle of *GOAN ATOM* is "Doll." An epigraph to the book informs us that "anybod's body's a dollmine." And a character named DOLLY, the late cloned sheep named after Dolly Parton, appears as one of the several *dramatis personae* populating the pages of the volume as if it were a contemporary incarnation of *commedia dell'arte*. Bergvall has explained that her interest in the figure of the doll emerged from an examination of the so-called "articulated dolls" built and photographed by the Surrealist artist Hans Bellmer in the 1930s. The first of Bellmer's articulated dolls, produced in Berlin in 1933, consisted of a molded torso made of flax fiber, glue, and plaster, with a masklike head and a wig of long hair covered by a beret. The midsection of the torso is cut away, revealing a mechanical system of gears and levers, and the right leg of the doll appears to

have been “amputated” and replaced with a prosthetic limb. In Bellmer’s 1934 photograph of this figure, the doll is posed in front of a dual-perspective anatomical drawing, while a double exposure of Bellmer himself leans broodingly over his composition. Another photograph shows the disassembled anatomical components of the doll neatly arranged as if for inventory, and Bellmer would continue throughout the ’30s to produce and photograph dozens of dolls in various arrangements.^{xxxvii}



Hans Bellmer, *Untitled*, 1934, black-and-white photograph.



Hans Bellmer, *Untitled*, 1934, black-and-white photograph.

In an interview conducted in 1999, while she was writing *GOAN ATOM*, Bergvall comments on the relation of her work to Bellmer’s.

[In Bellmer’s work] the whole certainty of the female body, the female gender (because he used a ‘girl’ doll) becomes problematized. Even though his take remained very misogynistic and even paedophilic, the whole notion of the fixity or the stability of the body does begin to break down...The Doll project for me was a way of playing with language, of disarticulating language at the level of the syllable very often. It was also a way of setting up word games, puns—some of them fairly bad, others very sexual, erotic, of adding on games where you suddenly switch into French. This is a way of thinking about this multiple body. I suppose, this unfixed body that for me today, at the end of the nineties rather than the surrealist

thirties, has my own take on it. This has a lot to do with issues of gender but also to do with issues of genetic engineering...with the links that are being made in our collective imagination about gender and sexuality at the moment which Bellmer wasn't able to tap into in the same way.^{xxxviii}

Thus, when **DOLLY**, the cloned sheep, enters *GOANATOM*, she enters entered.

Enter DOLLY
Entered enters
Enters entered
Enter entre
en train en trail
en trav Ail Aïe
La bour La bour La bour
wears god on a strap
shares mickey with all your friends^{xxxix}

If the *mis-en-scene* of pastoral poetry evokes a rural lad tending to his sheep as he composes verses, Bergvall updates this scene for the 21st century, in which it is the sheep itself that is composed in a laboratory. Bellmer's doll, reborn as the darling of contemporary technoscience, cannot enter that scene without *already* having been entered by the machinations of genetic engineering which brought her into the world. And as Bergvall's punning fusions of French and English make clear, as soon as Dolly enters the world "she" is already working. "Enter, entre" gives way to "en train en trail," situating spirit or drive (*entraîn* in French) within the viscera of the body (or *entrail* in English). *Entraîn* is a term used in the expression "*travail avec entraî*"—to work energetically, or with spirit. But here Bergvall points up the embodied *duress* of labor by following particles of the word *travail* with the exclamation "Aïe"—roughly the French equivalent of the English "ouch." The separation of "La" from "bour"—exposing the feminine article in labour—conflates childbirth with women's work. This is a move that is equally pertinent to second-wave feminist struggles to have domestic labor recognized as "real" work, or to the contemporary domination of women's time and bodies in the sweatshops of Latin America or Southeast Asia under global capitalism. "La Bour" is also the brand name of a self-priming pump used in the mining industry, with a special mechanism to remove potentially disruptive "entrained air" from the water that circulates through it. So the term La Bour

figures labor at once as “feminine” praxis or capacity, as the exploitation of women’s bodies, and as a kind of perpetual motion machine built to eliminate any potentially disruptive elements that might disturb its operation.

What is at issue here is the imbrication of sex and gender—body parts and parts of speech—in the means of production and of reproduction. Discussing chromosomal definitions of “sex” in *The Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick makes the basic point that perhaps “*the primary issue in gender differentiation and gender struggle is the question of who is to have control of women’s (biologically) distinctive reproductive capability.*”^{xl} The figure of Dolly indexes the technocultural moment at which the capacity to produce and to reproduce “female” bodies is claimed by men, even as those bodies are put to work for the production and reproduction of cultural and monetary capital both in and outside of the laboratory. Thus labor itself “wears god on a strap” insofar as the capacity to reproduce is claimed as phallic—even as that phallic capacity is exposed as artificial (as psychoanalysis makes it clear that the phallus always is). The phallus operates here as a token of, supplement to, or substitution for biological sex organs, making those organs obsolete even as their gendered division is reproduced and sustained as *part and parcel* of the status quo.

AH YES
puts in the EVERY HOST
but sheeped
like a dolly
part out part ed
partout prenante
every little which way
through the mid-
Come ‘n
gain a bit
Come a kiss
(is made of this)
: it’s a girl
Come a kiss
: and it’s not
In fact it was
inconvenient^{xli}

Dolly is “sheeped *like* a dolly”—like a toy that reinforces normative gender divisions based on the determination that “it’s a girl.” Bergvall plays upon Dolly’s

phantom surname, Parton, to suggest that the reciprocal determination of sex and gender—supposedly a matter of physical body parts—is in fact a matter of distribution. Gender is a matter of how the “parts” of the body are seized upon, parceled out, and put together. The partitioning of a body is “partout prenante”—completely or entirely *gripping*—insofar as what any body “is” is supposedly determined by whatever one finds or doesn’t find right through the mid-.

I have referred to Bergvall’s “feminist and queer poetics.” Her work is *feminist*, insofar as it critiques the biological determination of the “female” by particular body parts or by singular genes, abstracted from the particular embodied contexts in which they operate. Her work is *queer* insofar it engages the gendered body and the material text as collectivities that—*because* they are articulated into differential parts, can be rearticulated in a multiplicity of ways that are irreducible to binary determinations of sexuality or the normative rules of grammar. The “inconvenience” that the second stanza above mentions might be taken to refer to the irreducibility of corporeality to binary genders, and the excess of sexuality over discrete sexes or sexual orientations.^{xlii}

One can imagine a reading of Bergvall’s work that might proceed along the lines of Julia Kristeva’s *Revolution in Poetic Language*.^{xliii} One might say: Bergvall’s disassembly of normative grammar and monolingual propriety—her liberation of the grapheme and the phoneme from their subordination to the referential semantics of the word—reasserts the rights of the semiotic against the domination of the symbolic order. Bergvall’s writing—such an approach might proceed—releases and indexes the pulsations of pre-Oedipal libidinal flows characteristic of pre-genital sexuality, and prior to the disciplining of polymorphous orality into articulate speech.

All of this may very well be the case, and certainly Kristeva’s work is an important influence on Bergvall’s poetics. But the contexts in which Bergvall situates her formal strategies—both her engagement with Bellmer’s dolls and with genetic engineering—make it hard to see those formal strategies as a celebratory reassertion of sublimated *jouissance*. The fracturing of Bergvall’s language, the disintegration of the body into its parts and pulses, the recombinant operations of cutting and splicing and through which *GOAN ATOM*

rearticulates those parts and pulses into novel arrangements: these are precisely the operations of the masculinist projects that Bergvall’s text takes on. Moreover, genetics exposes the fact that code—the Symbolic—is of and in the body through and through, and that an engagement with the parameters of embodiment within the discourse networks of contemporary technoscience will have to work through a symbolic order that cannot be disengaged from any prior real onto which it is inscribed.^{xliv}

Rather than tapping into a condition that is *prior* to the entrance of the body and of orality into the symbolic, I would argue that Bergvall’s strategy is to work *within* the articulation of the body and the text by rules, practices, discourses, and technologies. Bergvall performatively mimics and exacerbates the division of bodies into body parts, and of orality into parts of speech. In doing so she attempts to retain the plurality of those divisions and discrepant parts, and to redistribute those parts into inconvenient arrangements. If I think “objectism” is a helpful term in thinking through that sort of practice, that is because it focuses our attention upon discrete units of articulation, and upon the difficult project of retaining the multiplicity of those units against their integration into totalities, or their coherence as subjectivity.

Bergvall’s formal strategies of performative mimicry and rearticulation are perhaps most immediately and aggressively manifest in her piece *Ambient Fish*, which exists in two different versions: as a text piece included in *GOAN ATOM*,^{xlv} and as a flash animation on the Web.

Ambient fish fuckflowers bloom in your mouth
Ambient fish fuckflowers bloom in your mouth
Ambient fish fuckflowers bloom in your mouth
Ambient fish fuckflowers bloom in your mouth
Ambient fish fuckflowers loom in your mouth
Alien fish fuck fodder loose in your ouch
Alien fish fuck fodder loose in your ouch
Alien fuck fish fad goose in your bouch
Alien phoque fresh fat ease in your touche
Alien seal fresh pad easing your touch
To fish your face in the door
a door a door
fuckflowers bloom in your mouth

will choke your troubles away
will choke your troubles away
will choke your troubles away
will shock your double away
will soak your dwelling away
suck rubble along the way
suck rubble a long way
suck your oubli away
watch a getting away
take the gamble away

will choke your troubles away

Ambient fish fuckflowers bloom in your mouth
Ambient fish fuckflowers bloom in your mouth

will choke your troubles away
will choke your troubles away

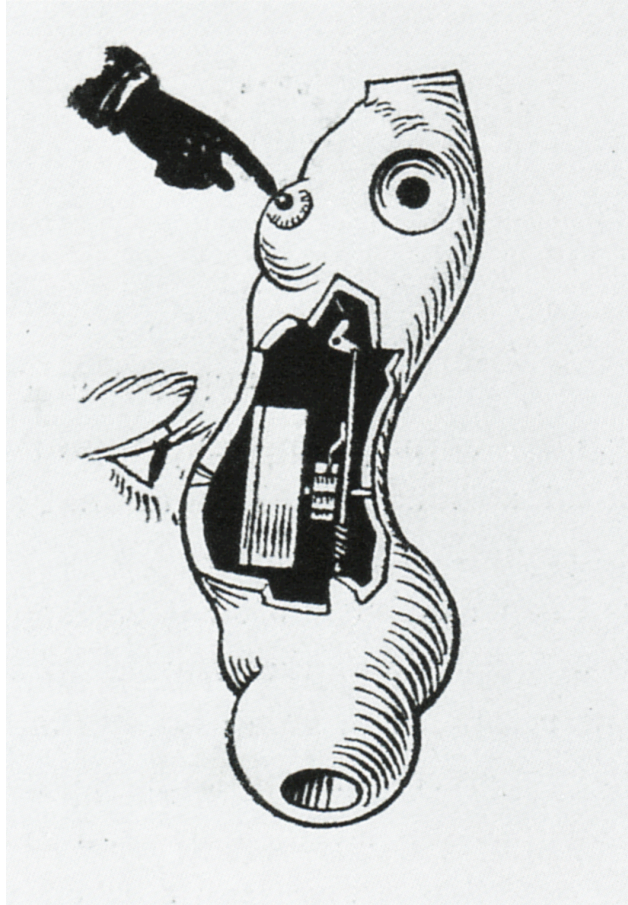
**Ambient fish fuckflowers bloom in your mouth
Ambient fish fuckflowers bloom in your mouth
Ambient fish fuckflowers loom in your mouth
Alien fish fuck fodder loose in your ouch
Alien fish fuck fodder loose in your ouch
Alien fuck fish fad goose in your bouch
Alien phoque fresh fat ease in your touche
Alien seal fresh pad easing your touch
To fish your face in the door
ador ador
fuckflowers bloom in your mouth**

**will choke your troubles away
will shock your double away
will soak your dwelling away
suck rubble along the way
suck rubble a long way
watch a getting away
watch a ramble away
take the gamble away

choke your troubles away**

In the text version, the simultaneously solicitous and threatening refrain “ambient fish fuckflowers bloom in your mouth | will choke your troubles away” undergoes a series of semantic and phonetic transformations, from “Ambient fish fuck flowers loom in your mouth | will soak your dwelling away” to “Alien fuck fish fad goose in your bouch | suck your oubli away” to “Alien seal fresh pad easing your touch | take the gamble away.” In performance, Bergvall reads the piece in a disconcertingly calm, smooth voice that works in tension with the profanity of its vocabulary. The form of this piece—the iterative permutations to which it subjects its material—analogically deploys the recombinant operations of genetic engineering. The content of the piece—its ominous evocation of ambient aquatic invaders breaching the interiority of the body through its orifices—conflates the molecular probes, micro-catheters, and drug delivery systems of 21st century biomedical technology with the language of advertising and the omnipresence of pornography in the online society of the spectacle.

The electronic version of *Ambient Fish* confronts that online context on its own turf: the worldwide web. The visual framing of this version engages with one of Hans Bellmer’s most famous images, in which an iconic hand points to or presses the nipple of a female torso like a button, while a disembodied eye stares through the navel of the torso at a mysterious interior mechanism.



Hans Bellmer, *Untitled*, 1934, linocut on pink paper.

Early in *GOAN ATOM*, Bergvall quotes a passage from Bellmer's essay "Memories of a Doll Theme," in which he instructs himself to "lay bare suppressed girlish thoughts, ideally through the navel, visible as a colorful panorama electrically illuminated deep in the belly."^{xlvi} On the introductory webpage of the electronic version of *Ambient Fish*, we find two vertically aligned red buttons. If we click on the top button, the same stylized artificial breast icon that we find on the cover of *GOAN ATOM* appears and rotates under the finger of the cursor.

ambient fish
by caroline bergvall



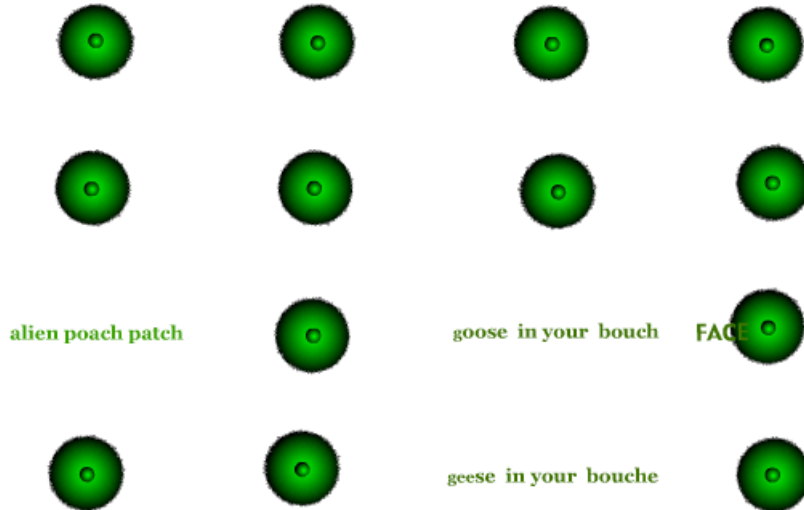
from GOAN ATOM (part 1) - RemPress: Cambridge, UK 1999

contact: goanatom@dircon.co.uk

Screenshot, *Ambient Fish*, Caroline Bergvall,

<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bergvall/amfish/amfish.html>

When we click on the lower of the two buttons, we gain access to the panorama that Bellmer wanted to “lay bare,” as Bergvall imagines that panorama might be imagined in 1999.



Screenshot, *Ambient Fish*, Caroline Bergvall,

<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bergvall/amfish/amfish.html>

In Bergvall's Flash piece, the female body is reduced to a grid of reified, cathected body parts which are exchanged, one by one, for the fragmented utterances of an alternately articulate and disarticulated voice. Detached breast for detached voice: one *objet petit a* for another. Bergvall's grid of generic partial objects plays up the Object Oriented Programming of the code in which her piece was written, fusing the base of informatic production with the user-friendly superstructure of our icon-driven operating systems. The equation of breast, with icon, with web browser button suggests that however user-friendly they may seem, as far as any electronic interface is concerned the particular faces and bodies of their users are indifferently reduced to a click on the mouse.

Certainly, *Ambient Fish* engages in an elaborate critique of objectification. But even as Bergvall's piece registers the reduction of the body to a collection of *abstract* objects, it simultaneously deploys that reduction as the very means of its *concrete* poetry. Bergvall seems always to be equally concerned with the objecthood of the body and of body parts as something that happens *to* female bodies—a condition that is imposed upon them and in some sense *makes* them “female”—and as a phenomenon through which what Bergvall calls the multiple or unfixed body might be rearticulated *for* and *by* a feminist and queer poetics. And in this latter case objectism would function not as a way out of objectification, but as a way of engaging its political ramifications and of reconfiguring the decomposition of the integral body in which it results. That is the project through which Bergvall performs a *détournement* of Bellmer's dolls, and I would argue that in doing so she also succeeds in reinventing Olson's “stance toward reality” for a feminist and queer poetics proper to the technocultural milieu of the 21st century.

In an endnote to *Bodies that Matter*, Judith Butler refers to Marx's consideration of the object in his first thesis on Feuerbach. Marx, Butler notes, “calls for a materialism which can affirm the practical activity that structures and inheres in the object as part of that object's objectivity and materiality.”^{xlvii} I have been reading Bergvall's objectism in relation to Olson (after Whitehead), but we might also position it in relation to Butler (after Marx). Butler argues that “according to this new kind of materialism that Marx proposes, the object is not

only transformed, but in some significant sense, the object is transformative activity itself. And, further, its materiality is established through this temporal movement from a prior to a latter state. In other words, the object *materializes* to the extent that it is a site of *temporal transformation*.^{xlviii}

This is precisely the kind of materialism upon which Olson based his poetics—a thinking of the object as inherently active, temporally mutable, and relational, rather than inert, self-identical, and passive. Butler usually speaks of *bodies*, but here she seems to be asking: what if objects mattered as much as bodies? Or perhaps: What if bodies mattered *as* objects? What sort of gender trouble would that cause? This last is a question that Olson doesn't ask, but Butler, like Olson, thinks of what a body *is* in terms of what it *does*. If Butler wants to challenge the biological self-evidence of the body by arguing that gender is *a series of actions*, then Butler's interest in Marx's understanding of the object as transformative activity is consonant with her understanding of the body. What if Butler's landmark book were titled *Objects that Matter*? How would that have altered the development of gender and sexuality studies? What if we remembered *both* Olson's poetics and Butler's theory of gender performativity by the name of "objectism"?

I have been trying to argue that if we put those two objectisms together, we might end up with a book like *GOAN ATOM*. These are the questions that I think are implicit in Bergvall's volume: If we can think of corporeal states as mutable collectives of relational parts that never quite cohere into a single stable "body," then how can poetry write the rearticulation of that collective? What would have to change in our collective articulation of body parts and parts of speech to really speak "with no derogation" of the multiple body of *us* as object?

Notes

ⁱ Ron Silliman, *Silliman's Blog* (Nov. 5, 2007), <http://ronsilliman.blogspot.com/search?q=foulipo> (accessed 01/30/08). Silliman writes: "In the actual instance of Young & Spahr, the constraint placed on their piece on the body & writing was not the omission of the letter r from portions of the text nearly so much as it was historical amnesia. They're permitted to discover that they have bodies by virtue of forgetting that everybody else got there first. At one level, this is not unlike children who cannot imagine the erotic lives of their parents."

- ⁱⁱ Harry Matthews and Alastair Brotchie, eds., *Oulipo Compendium* (London: Atlas, 1998): "Slenderizing (*asphyxiation, lipossible*). A text will obviously contract if one can remove from it all instances of a particular letter; no less obviously, not every text can be subjected to this excision and still make sense" (225).
- ⁱⁱⁱ Spahr and Young's "Foulipo" manifesto is available in *Drunken Boat* 8 (2006), <http://www.drunkenboat.com/db8/oulipo/feature-oulipo/essays/spahr-young/foulipo.html> (accessed 01/30/08).
- ^{iv} Kenneth Goldsmith, "A Response to Foulipo," *Drunken Boat* 8 (2006), <http://www.drunkenboat.com/db8/oulipo/feature-oulipo/essays/goldsmith/response.html> (accessed 01/30/08).
- ^v Spahr and Young, "Foulipo."
- ^{vi} Charles Olson, "Projective Verse" in *Collected Prose*, ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 247.
- ^{vii} See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002); Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).
- ^{viii} Joseph Conte, *Unending Design: The Forms of Postmodern Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991), 28.
- ^{ix} Marjorie Perloff, *Radical Artifice: Poetry in the Age of Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 134-135.
- ^x Steve McCaffery, *Prior to Meaning: Poetry and the Protosemantic* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern UP, 2001), 48.
- ^{xi} Paul Nelson, "Organic Poetry" *OlsonNow*, ed. Michael Kelleher and Ammiel Alcalay, <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/olson/blog/> (accessed 01/15/08).
- ^{xii} Don Byrd, *The Poetics of the Common Knowledge* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 288-294, 347-370.
- ^{xiii} Charles Altieri, *Enlarging the Temple: New Directions in American Poetry During the 1960s* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1979), 102.
- ^{xiv} Charles Olson, "Proprioception" in *Collected Prose*, 181.
- ^{xv} Olson, "Projective Verse" in *Collected Prose*, 247.
- ^{xvi} *Ibid.*, 247.
- ^{xvii} *Ibid.*, 243.
- ^{xviii} *Ibid.*
- ^{xix} George Oppen to Robert Duncan in *The Selected Letters of George Oppen*, ed. Rachel Blau DuPlessis (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 300.
- ^{xx} Robert von Hallberg, *Charles Olson: The Scholar's Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 84.
- ^{xxi} See Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978); Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, trans. Jeffrey S. Librett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press); Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, and Dialectic*, trans. Lisabeth During (London: Routledge, 2005); Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago: Open Court, 2002); Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Isabelle Stengers, *Penser Avec Whitehead: Une Libre et Sauvage Création de Concepts* (Paris: Seuil, 2002); Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Alberto Toscano, *The Theatre of Production: Philosophy and Individuation Between Kant and Deleuze* (London: Plagrave Macmillan, 2006).
- ^{xxii} On nanotechnology, the concept of the object, and biopolitics, see Nathan Brown, "The Inorganic Open: Nanotechnology and Physical Being," *Radical Philosophy* 144 (July / August, 2006): 33-44.
- ^{xxiii} On Olson's relation to Whitehead, see Robin Blaser, "The Violets: Charles Olson and Alfred North Whitehead" in *The Fire: The Collected Essays of Robin Blaser*, ed. Miriam Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 196-228; and Don Byrd, *Charles Olson's Maximus* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980).
- ^{xxiv} Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "Manhood and its Poetic Projects: The construction of masculinity in the counter-cultural poetry of the U.S. 1950s," *Jacket* 31 (October 2006), <http://jacketmagazine.com/31/duplessis-manhood.html> (accessed 01/14/08). See also Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "Manifests" in *Blue Studios: Poetry and Its Cultural Work* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006): 73-95; Michael Davidson, "Compulsory Homosexuality: Charles Olson, Jack

Spicer, and the Gender of Poetics" in *Guys Like Us: Citing Masculinity in Cold War Poetics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003): 28-48; and Andrew Mossen, "'In Thicket': Charles Olson, Frances Boldereff, Robert Creeley, and the Crisis of Masculinity at Mid-Century," *Modern Literature* 28.4 (2005): 13-39.

^{xxv} Ibid.

^{xxvi} See Vivian Sobchack, "The Passion of the Material: Toward a Phenomenology of Interobjectivity" in *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 286-318; Sarah Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Graham Harman, "On Vicarious Causation," *Collapse* Vol. II (March 2007): 171-205. In this last piece, and in *Guerilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* (Chicago: Open Court, 2005), Harman puts forward a theory of "weird realism," as part of his "object-oriented philosophy." In working toward a queer concept of the object—or a concept of the queer object—Harman's work might be productively read alongside that of Sarah Ahmed, in particular.

^{xxvii} Charles Olson, *The Maximus Poems*, ed. George Butterick (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), III.84.

^{xxviii} Olson, "The Gate and the Center" in *Collected Prose*, 169.

^{xxix} Caroline Bergvall, *GOAN ATOM* (San Francisco: Krupskaya, 2001). Cited hereafter as *GA*.

^{xxx} Bergvall, *GA*, 19, 45, 61.

^{xxxi} Ibid., 17.

^{xxxii} Ibid., 56.

^{xxxiii} Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004).

^{xxxiv} An audio file of Olson reading of this passage (in which his breath lines are extremely marked) can be accessed through *PennSound*:

http://media.sas.upenn.edu/pennsound/authors/Olson/Olson-Charles_In-Cold-Hell.mp3.

^{xxxv} Charles Olson, "In Cold Hell, In Thicket," *The Distances* (New York: Grove, 1960), 29.

^{xxxvi} Bergvall, *GA*, 47-49. Bergvall's reading of this passage can be accessed through *PennSound*: http://mediamogul.seas.upenn.edu/pennsound/authors/Bergvall/Studio-111/Bergvall-Caroline_from-Goan-Atom-1_01_UPenn_4-6-05.mp3

^{xxxvii} On Bellmer's work, see Sue Taylor, Hans Bellmer, *The Anatomy of Anxiety* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000). On the relation of Bellmer's dolls to materialist poetics, see Daniel Tiffany, *Toy Medium: Materialism and the Modern Lyric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000): 87-94.

^{xxxviii} Caroline Bergvall and John Stammers, "Speaking in Tongues: Caroline Bergvall in Conversation with John Stammers," *Jacket* 22 (May 2003), <http://jacketmagazine.com/22/bergv-stamm-iv.html> (accessed 01/13/08).

^{xxxix} Bergvall, *GA*, 23.

^{xl} Eve Sokofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 28.

^{xli} Bergvall, *GA*, 54.

^{xlii} In her interview with Stammers (op. cit.), Bergvall notes, "My motivation has been very much to do with gender and very much to do with sexuality. These are very strong motivators which to me are to do with how you use language to construct or de-structure assumptions about gender, about sexuality, about female gender. Where do you situate the use of language within that so that you don't fall into a kind of identity-based writing, or identity-based art, but so that the whole question of identity becomes questioned.... There are other writers such as Wittig and Brossard, who are two conceptual French lesbian writers, or Kathy Acker or Dennis Cooper, who have developed ways of trying to deal with language in a conceptual manner so that they could find a language that might bring those aspects of the body and of sexualized, unstraightened bodies into language." *Jacket* 22 (May 2003).

^{xliii} Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). See, especially, 25-30.

^{xliv} Donna Haraway has pointed out that gene fetishism—the fixation upon "genes" or "the genome" as singular determinants of biological traits—operates through the double move of abstracting a master molecule or its function from the larger context in which those functions are performed and by abstracting the systemic unity of a total "code" from the corporeal interactions of multiply particular, temporally involved agents. See *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™* (New York: Routledge,

1997). Bergvall's work reminds us both that codes are of and in the body that instantiates them, and that no single part of the body can determine its unity as a gender or a systemic totality.

^{xlv} Bergvall, *GA*, 72-73.

^{xlvi} Hans Bellmer, "Memories of the Doll Theme," trans. Peter Chametzky, Susan Felleman, and Jochen Schindler, *Sulfur* 26 (Spring 1990), 33. Cf. Bergvall, *GA*, 21.

^{xlvii} Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 250.

^{xlviii} *Ibid.*