

**Joan Retallack**

T H E R E I N V E N T I O N O F T R U T H

Acknowledging the gap between reality and representation makes it hard to limn differences among realities and representations. Such difficulties can lead to epistemological despair. This is where poetry comes in.

Dita Fröller, *New Old World Marvels*

*noft there ere rein invent iono trut*

counter factuals  
the world is full and doesn't ask for more  
I'd like to know better than to claim a song of songs  
or the illumination of things by human minds  
a late 19<sup>th</sup> century author wrote  
Niagara Falls is nature committing suicide  
yes no the quest for a statuesque naturalism  
goes far beyond even that  
far beyond the German Alpine film  
know what I mean  
neither a saffron anecdote nor a whispered truth  
the didactic impulse can be violent and not so brief  
less what it teaches than what it makes you want

*oft rut herein einven entiono trut*

evidence that everything has some kind of effect  
doesn't solve the problem of why not

the problem of the instability of memory  
complicates politics of responsibility  
or as luck would have had it had one only known at the time  
an evening identical to this already all too familiar  
lock-in rate of synchronized swimmers with bony smiles  
for many millennia the reinvention of truth  
came as a surprise: suppose an inverted triangle  
to be gradually dipped in water, wrote CS Peirce  
of values in a universe of chance  
I confess  
I want the fabulist tone to explode in their faces  
*oft ruth herein the entiono he*

a beggar approached saying excuse me sir  
that I thought of myself as a woman at the time  
may not be the most significant what's wrong with this picture  
or the most disturbing forgery of a sort not heretofore detected  
Fred sends his Hi Honey Fran blows a kiss  
hey what's going on  
why mention this now  
the vanity of the resistance to narrate can seem frivolous  
when so many would give their mind's eye  
but then there it is all safely tucked into a grammatical past  
your mind: you can be the proud owner of this formidable machine  
is it a matter of accuracy alone or something else

(asked to) (sings)

*vent io no in io no in trut*

it can be startling to hear a sentence begin with we  
the place of absence so precisely marked  
always the point of departure for something tragic and mistaken  
and brutal and catastrophic many times over never farce

in a bright saturation of urgent green urgent orange crackup blue and  
white  
the aforementioned swimmers bob about with bony smiles  
can any of this be traced to pleasure v. reality principle debates  
or lack thereof in Greek or Roman or Viennese classicisms  
in the monster meadow all seemed to disappear in the happy meadow  
oh in the happy tears oh the spot of red that snapped the chaos into  
place  
this much can be conjectured now: that Isaac Newton's world  
was more involved with magic than mechanics  
may be what made gravity conceivable to him  
but where to go from there

*vent there no trut ono ein noft her*

at any moment the phantom eloquence may begin  
what instruments are needed to calibrate the viscosity of this plenum  
how to broach a bloated strategy against this shiny interruption  
why assume trees and people are controlled by genes  
and rivers aren't and people are  
the poet had stopped singing to talk

what if all the poets stop singing to talk  
another Kantian c-c-categorical nightmare obliterates the screen  
and but I don't think I really believe  
this may not be fun but it's true  
and but can the I that just said that be trusted  
might not I or that other I say this only to wangle a better position  
to wave down the next empty cliché to get home fast  
before the next catastrophe unfolds in the crowded streets

