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NEW FORM

That particular conjunction of events which includes the history of your body, your experience, and your art vertically, and the time and circumstances you are in horizontally, seeks an expression that is inevitably unique, or new.

A formal problem or limit represents a limit of what you can make or say or see at a particular moment. You might make a new form by following a desire or an intuition into a further, more contemporary part of you, such as varying the line length according to the horizon, embedding scientific terms into an equivocal or into a lyric context, using thought imagistically.

I find the idea of newness interesting, during a time when there is no recognized critical aesthetic. Criticism is at the edge of what it can discern or say, and so it's interesting to seek emerging form in fashion, in the margins of the arts, on the street, in experimental physics.

I have an intuition of a new form, as a new expertise in the topology of expression, emotion, and culture.

At first I characterized this new form by an idea of the horizontal, a horizontal cut across experience and culture, synchronistically and democratically, rather than familiar vertical cut into tradition and essence.

But now I want to say it is a topological section or point of view, which could then include both verticals and horizontals along a complexity of a continuous surface, and with a new set of formal dynamics.

It's something which might take collage further.

It's my intuition about an aesthetic, or perhaps an intuition about a poem, and would require a new craft or form, analogous to the invention of a mathematics of surfaces.

It's an aesthetic I've noticed in younger or "newer" writers that is just beyond my grasp. I have an urge to understand what they know that enables them to generate this ungraspable form, and it is an urge from the intuition which desires a way to express convolutions of experiences and meanings in me, which are somehow all rising into a present tense, or tense of one time, or one surface.

It could be a way to write a poem across fragmented concentrations, for example, if you are raising children, instead of by traditionally pursuing a single line. It could be a way to write a poem that responds to the barrage of layered stimuli in the world.

A friend tells me that, when she sees a deer next to a rock on a far hill, she learned as a child, by concentrating, to make the deer appear larger and closer, and the rock to diminish. When I ask a Yupik boy how he finds an animal on empty tundra, he tells me, you just look for the animal, until you see the animal.

The scientific notion of color as wavelengths of light—that we have in the light on our hands all possible colors—may not be true if you can call memory into being using a color. We can imagine a person inventing a color, now, seeing it for the first time, and that that new color's entrance pertains to a new appropriateness in the environment for it to be seen, not a predisposition.

This could be how a new form takes place.

P.S. It's interesting for me to see that this essay written twenty years ago still accords with my ideas about poetry. Today I might replace the word "topological" with "holographic," because I meant both surface and implication.

LYRIC

I'm very happy to be included in this inquiry so richly proposed in Postmodern Lyricisms.

There's a mystery between words and music, like the mysteries of the classical world.

In my mind, words can function like plastic syllables of bird song, and they operate ontologically at that depth.

There is the appearance of pouring out, of spontaneity, and the order of spontaneity packed by strong feeling, as if in the present tense.

How this lyric materializes in the contemporary is our mystery.

And my intuition leads me to wonder if the contemporary lyric might open out across a field, field composition, rather than the sequential line, song line.

A field of intense feeling, mystery and music.

I've been reading the work of Karen Volkmann for this kind of packed feeling in sound.

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Gillian Conoley

The New Page

Once I began thinking about this panel, about the postmodern lyric and what new forms and directions the lyric might take or be taken to—I have been thinking about the page. It seems to me that the page itself is in another time of unusual upheaval. We can think of various manipulations of page and how each variation of the page has affected the words— We can think of Keroac’s ingenious scroll and how the presentation of an ongoing page as material aided the riffs of *On the Road*, how the use of a teletype scroll in 1950’s America also linked Keroac back to ancient scribes for whom the scroll was the norm while at the same time seeming utterly new, the latest news, unfurling before us, unending, erupting as if from the deafening noise of an Associated Press wire machine before the soft purr of computers brought us our daily horrors. We can think of course of Olson, who in his great essay *Projective Verse* unleashed the notion of the page as an open field, a plane for breath, on which words were allowed to sprout, as he said, like fresh vegetables on the field, and we must of course go back to the great precursors Mallarme and Apollinaire, Apollinaire being, to my mind, a poet who saw the page more as canvas, while Mallarme, in his great unprecedented work *A Throw of the Dice*, threw the page into much more of a 3-dimensional space— traversing gutters, enacting void, creating pages which had more in common with rooms than the flat, lateral plane of the page or canvas. Technology has brought us to a moment when much material (poetry or otherwise) is being read from and written on a glossy, celluloid-like substance that has properties of appearing to have depth and dimension, a page that is lit and projected before us, and that, like film, has great properties of seduction, a page that arrives and is delivered in a much more frontal gesture than the lateral, tactile properties of the paper page. Whether or not one “gets one’s news,” either poetic or otherwise, from a computer, whether or not one composes on a computer or reads from a computer, as a daily practice, we must acknowledge that for most, the computer document screen or webpage receives as much “eye time” if not more, than the paper page. And so we have a new page, a cultural and technological shift that effects the art of writing and reading—the page is now endless, the