

# Buried in the Rubble

## The Intersection of Art and Text in the Twenty-First Century

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Photographs from the performance piece, “Words! Words!” This was a combined text and performance piece collaboration between Halifax artist Scott Saunders and myself. Angela Penton (above) and Scott Saunders were the performers in the project shot in late August, 2014. Photographs by Todd McLean.

“What marks the contemporary period is *terrifyingly normal*.”

(Brad Evans, *Liberal Terror*. Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013: 1.)

“Nobody was curious to read the text, not knowing whether they were looking at interred prose or poetry, sad or pleasant. Nobody was affected by the interdiction.”

(Broodthaers in Buchloh, *Formalism and Historicity*: 99.)

“in the beginning  
words scattered  
by chance  
and in all directions!”

(Raymond Federman, Take It or Leave It, in R.M. Berry, “The Avant-Garde and the Question of Literature,” in (Louis Armand, Editor), *Avant-Post: The Avant-Garde under “Post-” Conditions*. Prague, Czech Republic: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006: 47.)

“When text becomes context, when it leaves behind the single-minded project of following a singular lifeline, a singular i, when it drops out of narrative as heroic climax and opts for narrative as the relation of context, of what surrounds us, then we are in the presence of a writing that ditches dualistic polarities (the good guys vs. the bad guys, fags, bitches, blacks ... you see how many of us there are), dodges the hierarchies (the achieved, the significant vs. the inessential, the failed—which goes to the root of our fear about life: was it all for nothing?). It’s all there in the so-called “nothing.”

(Marlatt, *Readings from the Labyrinth*: 127.)

“Longing for nothing is often the only way to get anywhere.”

(Bernstein, “How Empty is My Bread Pudding,” in Armand, Ed., *Contemporary Poetics*: 9.)

“Psychogeography: a beginner’s guide. Unfold a street map [...], place a glass, rim down, anywhere on the map, and draw round its edge. Pick up the map, go out into the city, and walk the circle, keeping as close as you can to the curve. Record the circle, keeping it as close as you can to the curve. Record the experience as you go, in whatever medium you favour: film, photograph, manuscript, tape. Catch the textual run-off of the streets; the graffiti, the branded litter, the snatches of conversation. Cut for sign. Log the data-stream. Be alert to the happenstances of metaphors, watch for visual rhymes, coincidences, analogies, family resemblances, the changing woods of the street. Complete the circle, and the record ends. Walking makes for content; footage for footage.”

(Merlin Coverly, *Psychogeography*. Harpenden, Herts, UK: Pocket Essentials, 2010:

“Words become tedious. Or they become dull like knives with overused blades. Or they become sacred.”

(Viktor Shklovsky, *Shklovsky: Witness to an Era*: 193.)

“The readers’ perception of the most elusive thing, the ‘authorial intent,’ [...], is often crucial in determining the moral tone of a utopian text, and this is no less relevant in case of dystopias. Most modern dystopias strive to avoid this problem by sending clear and unmistakable signals about the quality of their fictional *topos*: writers of dystopias, especially in the late twentieth century, almost competed to present the most gruesome, brutal, oppressive human society possible, avoiding even the slightest possibility of doubt that their nightmare world possesses any commendable qualities. Such single-minded concentration on the ‘badness of the bad place’ makes many of these works somewhat dull and tedious; moral ambiguity is a necessary condition of both successful utopias and dystopias.”

(Pintér, *The Anatomy of Utopia*: 139.)

“[...] just as [Walter] Benjamin’s Kabbalistic insight that arbitrary linguistic signs harbored the remnants of mimetic magic and that even the merest commodity may contain redemptive ‘splinters of messianic time,’ it may be the sudden flitting of a moth on a garden path [...].”

(Pecora, “Be Here Now,” in Ghosh and Kleinberg, Eds., *Presence*: 44.)

“As in the Games of Chance  
When the dice is thrown  
The game is done.  
It is already too late.”

(Alice Becker-Ho, *Comme aux jeux de hasard*, in Hussey, *The Game of War*: 371.)

“Today the philosopher confronts disintegrated language. The ruins of words are his material, to which history binds him; his freedom is solely the possibility of their configuration according to the force as pre-given as to invent a word.”

(Theodor W. Adorno, “Theses on the Language of Philosophy,”  
in Burke, Campbell, Kiloh, Palamarek, and Short, Eds.,  
*Adorno and the Need in Thinking*: 37.)

“Language is not content to go from a first party to a second party, from one who has seen to one who has not, but necessarily goes from a second party to a third party, neither of whom has seen. It is in this sense that language is the transmission of the word as order-word, not the communication of a sign as information. Language is a map, not a tracing. But how can the order-word be a function coextensive with language when the order, the command, seems tied to a restricted type of explicit proposition marked by the imperative?”

(Deleuze and Guattari, trans. by Massumi, *A Thousand Plateaus*: 85.)

“The worldly signs, though they function in a void, are only the more material for that. The signs of love are inseparable from the weight of a face, from the texture of skin, from the width and color of a cheek—things which are spiritualized only when the beloved sleeps. The sensuous signs are still material qualities, above all odors and tastes. It is only in art that the sign becomes immaterial at the same time that its meaning becomes spiritual.”

(Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*: 84-5.)

“And everywhere I looked, there were signs [...]. Most were black letters on white [...].”

(Jack Finney, *Time and Again*, 1970, in Goldsmith, *Capital*: 467.)

“This approach must focus on two basic, interdependent areas: one, the intersection between text and reality, the other, that between text and reader, and it is necessary to find some way of pinpointing these intersections if one is to gauge the effectiveness of fiction as a means of communication.”

(Iser, *The Act of Reading*: 54.)

“I am now trying to render light simply as an unfolding energy. And when I handle energy in black on a white surface, I ought to hit the mark again. I call to mind the entirely reasonable black made by light on photographic negatives. Moreover, the lesser thing is always made special note of, so one imagines the situation of singling out a few highlights on a white surface by means of lines. To heap up an untold quantity of energy lines, because of these few highlights. That would be the real negative.”

(Paul Klee, *The Diaries of Paul Klee*, 1968,

in John David Dewsbury and Nigel Thrift, “‘Genesis Eternal’: After Paul Klee,” in Buchanan and Lambert, Eds., *Deleuze and Space*: 102.)

“Allegory is a mode of representation in which each element of what is said or depicted stands for something else. In allegory, the apparent or surface meaning is a veneer which conceals the actual, hidden sense. One narrative appears disguised as another; it is a palimpsest. Each object represented may have a host of competing possible meanings. [...] Meaning is elusive and multiple. Benjamin points out that ‘any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else. With this possibility destructive but just verdict is passed on the profane world: it is characterized as a world in which the detail, the forms of nature, in that they can mean anything and everything, come to mean, precisely nothing. Allegory involves the hollowing out of meaning. Language becomes an expense of empty signs ‘signifying nothing’.”

(Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis*: 135.)

“What is Art? Ever since the nineteenth century the question has been posed incessantly to the artist, to the museum director, to the art lover alike. I doubt, in fact, that it is possible to give a serious definition of Art, unless we examine the question in terms of a constant, I mean the transformation of art into merchandise. This process

is accelerated nowadays to the point where artistic and commercial values have become superimposed. If we are concerned with the phenomena of reification, then Art is a particular representation—a form of tautology.”

(Marcel Broodthaers, “To be *bien pensant*...or not to be. To be blind,”  
in Greaney, *Quotational Practices*: 62.)

“The poet Charles Baudelaire, writing in the middle of the nineteenth century with modernity in full swing, was one of the first to take note of the connections among evanescence, memory, and creativity. For Baudelaire, modernity was by definition inimical to the past; it assumed that for the new to achieve a secure footing, everything old and outworn had to be swept away. In the nineteenth century such an attitude often implied outright destruction of the past. Especially in ‘progressive’ circles in Europe, demolition was the preferred mode of dealing with outdated survivals, as was evident in Baron Haussmann’s approach to the renovation of Paris in the 1850s and 1860s, which Baudelaire witnessed firsthand. As the premier urban planner of his day (or *artiste-démolisseur* as he preferred to call himself), Haussmann razed a large portion of *vieux* Paris in order to create a modern, streamlined capital city. In the course of doing so he not only tore down ancient buildings and ripped up old streets, squares, and passageways that had been part of the Parisian *habitus* for generations; he also abolished the long-standing personal and communal relationships existing in and around these sites. For those who experienced the shock of such transformations of the environment, the world began to look and feel quite different. As old stabilities and certainties were destroyed, life began to seem not anchored and dependable, but, as Baudelaire put it, increasingly ‘ephemeral, fugitive, and contingent’.”

(David Gross, *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000: 144-5.)

“The city is the proper place for a revolt, a revolution, for it is there that the banality and triviality of everyday life run their course. A possibility that arises from a resistance does to the class struggles and consciousness found in the residue of the conditioning operation of everydayness. The city exposes itself as the public dump of social conflicts and dramas. The great ambiguity is lifted: by veiling its strategy with the city and the ideal of the city, power unwittingly discloses its global project [...]. Rational argument battles the truth of everyday life. Positivism suffers from a distortion between rational organization and this place of principle and interest which deploys its irrationalism, its utopia again. The functionalist philosophy of Le Corbusier is killed by urban practice. The vacant lot is still filled with old moles and history does not dig itself in. The dump is not useless, nor is utopia, and contradiction even less so. The tragedy of Capital plays itself out in the urban forum.”

(Hubert Tonka, “Critique of Urban Ideology,” in Craig Buckley and Jean-Louis Violeau, Editors, and Jean-Marie Clarke, Translator, *Utopie: Text and Projects, 1967-1968*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2011: 166.)

“In your ruins I find shelter.”

(Samuel Beckett in a letter to E.M. Cioran, April 21, 1969,  
downloaded March 27, 2016.

<http://planetcioran.blogspot.ca/2006/10/em-cioran-on-beckett.html>)

“Think of ruin in two stages. One is the force—neglect or abandonment, human violence, natural disasters—that transform buildings into ruins. Ruins can be created slowly or suddenly, and they can survive indefinitely or be cleared away. The second stage of ruin is the abandonment or the appreciation that allows the ruin to remain as a relic—as evidence, as a place apart, outside economical and utilitarian purposes, the physical site that corresponds to room in the culture or imagination for what came before. The forces that create ruins have been plentiful in the United States, but the desire or neglect that allows ruins to stay has been mostly absent. The great urban ruins have been situated on what is, first of all, real estate, more than it is sacred ground or historical site; and real estate is constantly turned over for profit, whereas a ruin that has fallen out of the financial dealings of a city (unless it has become a tourist site, like the Roman Coliseum).”

(Solnit, *Storming the Gates of Paradise*: 286-7.)

“The founding assumption of The Rubble Club is that when an architect’s building is demolished within his or her lifetime, an injustice or moral wrong has occurred. Like all associations, the Club has rules of membership, and losing one of one’s buildings is not the only prerequisite. The destroyed building’s architect must be alive, and he or she must not have been party to their building’s destruction. Moreover, the building must have been built with ‘The intention of permanence.’ If the design was intended to be temporary (to come down), then demolition is to be expected and, presumably, accepted. Finally, the building must be deliberately destroyed. It does not count if it is destroyed by accident.”

(Cairns and Jacobs, *Buildings Must Die*: 211.)

“Thus do I see myself in the end, banished, rejected and banished like a beggar here, ha, ha, ha. I was crowned and adorned to be led to the altar as a sacrificial animal. Even on the last day, they mocked my sole possession, stole my poem from me with flattering words, and kept it. My only possession is now in your hands, that which gained me entry to every place, which would yet save me from hunger. Now I see it all, why I must fall; so my song will not be perfected, so my name spreads no further, so my enviers may find a thousand faults, so I am finally, completely forgotten.”

(Goethe, *Torquato Tasso*, in Silverman, *Male Subjectivity on the Margins*: 258.)

“There is an element of irony in utopia. The utopia seems to say something plausible, but it also says something that is crazy. By saying something crazy, it says something real. This point parallels my earlier comments about utopia being on the mar-

gin between the realizable and the impossible and on the margin between the sane (if fictional) and the insane (the pathological).”

(Paul Ricoeur writing on Fourier in Ricoeur, *Ideology and Utopia*: 303.)

“If words are used in ordinary ways, what one intends to speak of is what they mean. It can also happen, however, that one wishes to talk about the words themselves on their sense. This happens, for instance, when the words of another are quoted. One’s own words then first designate words of the other speaker, and only the latter have their usual meaning. We then have signs of signs. In writing, the words are in this case enclosed in quotation marks. Accordingly, a word standing between quotation marks must not be taken as having its ordinary meaning.”

(G. Frege, “On Sense and Reference,” 1892,

in Herman Cappellen and Ernie Lapore, *Language Turned on Itself: The Semantics and Pragmatics of Metalinguistic Discourse*. Oxford and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007: 91.)

“We are in the middle of the night. I once tried to combat it with words ... At the time I learned that whoever fights against the night must move its deepest darkness to deliver up its light and that words are only a way station in this major life struggle: and they can be the final station only when they are never the first ...”

(Walter Benjamin, *Correspondence 1910-1940*, (1940),

in Stephen Polsky, *Walter Benjamin’s Transit: A Destructive Tour of Modernity*. Bethesda, Dublin, and Palo Alto, CA: Academica Press, 2010: 34.)

“So do I,” the White Queen whispered. And I’ll tell you a secret – I can read words of one letter! Isn’t that grand? However, don’t be discouraged. You’ll come to it in time.”

(Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, in Manguel, *A Reader on Reading*: 155.)

“Quite simply, our walk ends with this objectless divagation: in order to provoke a tenuous but precise sentiment in some of those present, to whom, moreover, I have cautiously referred. Their discomfort—and it’s a lot!—their stumbling block, would make them, these people of letters, more the newspaper hawkers, speed up or avert their eyes before a vulgarization of the sacred format, the volume, under our gaslights; it seems like language stripped naked and flung out to the street corner.”

(Mallarmé, Trans. by Johnson, *Divigations*: 224.)

“The book lover became the Book Fool, and the devourer of books became the book-worm, both parodies of the enraptured reader. In short, he became so immersed in his books that he spent the night reading from dusk to dawn, and the days from dawn to dusk, until at last, from little sleeping and much reading, his brain dried up, and

he came to lose his wits.’ This is how, in 1605, Cervantes defined the Book Fool we know as Don Quixote. And yet, when Cervantes portrayed his brave knight, he was not quite defining the reader rendered mad by his books. Rather, Cervantes was defining a society madly afraid of its own untruths.”

(Manguel, *The Traveler, the Tower, and the Worm*: 105-6.)

“In considering these texts as potentially containing or performing a messianic function, we have been maintaining a disconnect between authors and their texts. This disconnection is evidence of something particular (although not unique) to the texts we have examined, a quality whereby the authors’ own authority is subverted by the text they themselves have written. Here, the text voids its own pose as a meaningful or ‘true’ in a way that delivers the author (and the reader) from a particular and fated perspective. To understand this as a messianic delivery must be read as happening without the author’s ‘permission’ or intention coming into play (if it did, we would be right to suspect this as yet another false prophecy, another form of self-denying idolatry). Its source is external, miraculous (to us). It comes unexpectedly and, as we have seen, without being recognized for what it is.”

(Martel, *Textual Conspiracies*: 238.)

“Go back to the beginning: “Is the avant-garde viable under prevailing ‘post’ conditions?” What is “viable”? Does this mean “who’s listening”? or does it mean “having a real-world impact”? Does viable mean capable of being actualized, or surviving, developing, practicable? To me, viable is a strange word. Really, anything can be done; can be made. The issue is—what is worth doing. [...] Should I not think about the birds, the shellfish, the tides? Is mastery, heroism and imperial vantage the only model of ambition? [...] Further, the model of sheer rupture is tiresome. It disallows the poise of an artwork, or says to the reader/listener/ consumer that the sense of achievement, peace, poise, pleasure, awe, sense of location, satisfaction at the end of the artwork is null, or is a coarse satisfaction, not prone to change the world.”

(Rachel DuPlessis, “Post-Avant/Avant Post: An Imaginary Conversation inside Real Practice,” in Armand, Ed., *Avant-Post*: 32.)

“[...] the earth itself still turning on its axis and revolving around the sun, the sun revolving around the luminous wheel of this galaxy, the countless unmeasured jeweled wheels of countless unmeasured galaxies, turning, turning, majestically, into infinity, into eternity, through all of which life ran on—all this, long after she was dead, men would still be reading in the night sky, and as the earth turned through those distant seasons, and they watched the constellations still rising, culminating, setting, to rise again [...] would they not, too, still be asking the hopeless eternal question: to what end? What force drives this sublime celestial machinery?”

(Lowry, *Under the Volcano*: 323.)





“This is not your first journey, you already know that cities like this have an obverse: you have only to walk in a semicircle and you will come into view of Moriana’s hidden face, an expanse of rusting sheet metal, sackcloth, planks bristling with spikes, pipes black with soot, piles of tin, blind walls with fading signs, frames of staved in straw chairs, ropes only good enough for hanging yourself from a rotten beam. From one part to the other, the city seems to continue, in perspective, multiplying its repertory of images: but instead it has no thickness, it contains only a face and an obverse, like a sheet of paper, with a figure on either side, which can neither be separated nor look at each other.”

(Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*. London: Vintage Books, 1997: 95.)

“In the banal communication and trivial discourse of everyday life, only the region of signals and its borderland of signs are brought into play. Thus traffic lights, the Highway Code, its application and its consequences, the accidents which do or do not happen as a result, are in themselves sufficient to provide clichés for conversation to an enormous number of people on a virtually worldwide scale. If the motor-car has modified the entire ‘world of objects,’ it has also modified the semantic field; it plays a key role in the trivialization of the ‘modern world,’ something against which other aspects of modernity are reacting.”

(Henri Lefebvre, Trans. by John Moore, *Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes, September 1959-May 1961*. London and New York, NY: Verso, 2011: 286.)

“Is there a key that opens the cultural meaning of the modern metropolis? The proliferation of differences that characterize metropolitan modernity is so great that it seems unlikely that there is a single ‘text of the city,’ the explication of which would reveal the city’s cultural script.”

(Thomas Bender, *The Unfinished City*, 2002 in Goldsmith, *Capital*: 469.)

“Now the situation becomes clearer. As the text constructed itself with respect to an empty place (‘Nothing shall have taken place except the place,’ writes Mallarmé in *A Throw of the Dice*), it in turn comes to be the empty site of a process in which its readers become involved. The text turns out to be the analyst and every reader the analysand. But since the *structure and function of every language take the place of the focus of transference* in the text, this opens the way for all linguistic, symbolic, and social structures to be put in process/on trial. The text thereby attains its essential dimension: it is a practice calling into question (symbolic and social) *finitudes* by proposing new *signifying devices*. In calling the text a practice we must not forget that it is a new practice, radically different from the mechanistic practice of a null and void, atomistic subject who refuses to acknowledge that he is a subject of language. Against such a ‘practice,’ the text as signifying practice points toward the possibility—which is a *jouissance*—of *a subject who speaks his being in procession/trial through action*. In other words, and conversely, the text restores to ‘mute’ practice the *jouissance* that constitutes it but which can only become *jouissance* through language.”

(Kristeva, Trans. by Walter, *Revolution in Poetic Language*: 210.)

“IT’S LIKE PARADISE HERE. Everything seems pastel-hued as you drive by, with the radio on. The car is stolen, but so long as the police didn’t see you it won’t matter. You don’t really have to be anywhere or do anything. The hotels and condos are comfortable and discreet. If you need money, mug someone. The body makes a satisfyingly squishy sound when you kick it. There are adventures. You get to meet some interesting people. It is a city of gangsters, hustlers, and honeys. It’s all tourism, drugs, guns, cars and personal services. Nobody makes anything, except maybe ‘ice cream,’ porn, and counterfeit money. Everybody buys, sells, or steals. Vice City is a nice place. It is not quite utopia. And nor is it some dark dystopia. There’s no storyline here, where paradise turns nasty, in which the telling early detail turns out to be a clue to the nightmare beneath the surface, the severed ear of *Blue Velvet*. Without the possibility of dystopia, there’s no utopia either. Terry Eagleton: ‘All utopian writing is also dystopian, since, like Kant’s sublime, it cannot help reminding us of our mental limits in the act of striving to go beyond them.’ In Vice City there is no ‘beyond.’ As one would expect in a high-end land of vice, its offer is all-inclusive.”

(Wark, “Atopia (On Vice City),”  
accessed from Academia.edu, 27 March 2016: 75-6.)

“These intersections make any calculus of predictions even more complicated; there are points where the line that one of us is following bifurcates, ramifies, fans out; each branch can encounter branches that set out from other lines.”

(Calvino, *t zero*: 148.)

“[A]ffirmative art generally may become a cipher of despair. Conversely, pure negativity of content has always an admixture of affirmation. The brilliance radiated today by all anti-affirmative works is the appearance of an ineffable affirmation, the dawn of a non-existent that pretends it has being ... This relation between the existent and non-existent is the Utopia figure of art. While art is driven into a position of absolute negativity, it is never absolutely negative precisely because of that negativity. It always has an affirmative residue.”

(Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, in League, *Adorno, Radical Negativity, and Cultural Critique*: 105.)

“I am now trying to render light simply as an unfolding energy. And when I handle energy in black on a white surface, I ought to hit the mark again. I call to mind the entirely reasonable black made by light on photographic negatives. Moreover, the lesser thing is always made special note of, so one imagines the situation of singling out a few highlights on a white surface by means of lines. To heap up an untold quantity of energy lines, because of these few highlights. That would be the real negative.”

(Paul Klee, *The Diaries of Paul Klee*, 1968, in John David Dewsbury and Nigel Thrift, “‘Genesis Eternal’: After Paul Klee,” in Buchanan and Lambert, Eds., *Deleuze and Space*: 102.)

“Language is ‘a bridge between the world and these other things ... To utter a word is to affix a seal as a witness of man’s presence. The word is not part of the world; it is the seal of man.’ Through our engagement with language, we span the gap between self and world.”

(Franz Rosenzweig, “Understanding the Sick and the Healthy,” in Miller and Morris, Eds., *Radical Poetics and Secular Jewish Culture*: 231.)

“Allegorical writing (particularly in the form of appropriated conceptual writing) does not aim to critique the culture industry from afar, but to mirror it directly. To do so, it sees the materials of the culture industry directly. This is akin to how ready-made artworks critique high culture and obliterate the museum-made boundary between Art and Life. The critique is in the reframing. The critique of the critique is in the echoing.

Note the desire to begin again.”

(Place/Fitterman, *Notes on Conceptualisms*: 20.)



“Terror—or at least terror(ism)—is not a new problem. Ever since Maximilian Robespierre orchestrated his *régime de la terreur* (1793–5), it has become a permanent feature of the modern political vernacular. While Robespierre’s ‘reign of terror’ is credited with coining the term, for the most part the phenomenon has been directly associated with internal challenges to sovereign authority. A supplementary function, then, to ‘legitimate’ juridical power, terror has been condemned for occupying an *excessive* or extra-judicial position in relation to the legitimate order of things. Importantly, given that no sovereign power has ever perceived itself to be illegitimate—that is to say, from the moment of its inception it always believes in the timelessness of its rule—terror has effectively been openly recruited into a profound metaphysical game in which notions of truth, order, righteousness, and justice have continued to depend upon each other.”

(Evans, *Liberal Terror*: 12.)

“The war on terrorism has increasingly morphed into a war on dissent. As Kate Epstein argues, one ‘very real purpose of the surveillance programs—and perhaps the entire war on terror—it so target and repress political dissent. ‘Terrorism is the new Communism,’ and the war on terror and all its shiny new surveillance technology is the new Cold War and McCarthyism.’ Everyone, especially people in communi-

ties of color, now adjusts to a panoptical existence in which ‘living under constant surveillance means living as criminals.’ As young people make diverse claims on the promise of a renewed democracy, articulating what a fair and just world might be, they are increasingly met with forms of physical, ideological, and structural violence.”

(Henry Giroux, *The Violence of Organized Forgetting: Thinking beyond America’s Disimagination Machine*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 2014: 41-2.)

“Grids happen.” As such, intersectional identities and assemblage must remain as interlocutors in tension, for if we follow [Brian] Massumi’s line of thinking, intersectional identities are the byproducts of attempts to still and quell the perpetual motion of assemblages, to capture and reduce them, to harness their threatening mobility. Endless becomings surface on our radar screens when, drawing on the philosopher Henri Bergson, Massumi tells us, ‘Position no longer comes first, with movement a problematic second. It is secondary to movement and derived from it. It is retro movement, movement residue. The problem is no longer to explain how there can be change given positioning. The problem is to explain wonder that there can be stasis given the primacy of process’.”

(Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*: 213-4.)

“I’m delighted. I love enemies, though not in the Christian way. They amuse me, stir my blood. Being always on the alert, catching their every glance, the hidden meaning of every word, guessing their next step, confounding their plans, pretending to be taken in and then with one fell blow wrecking the whole elaborate fabric of their cunning schemes—that’s what I call living!”

(Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time*: 113.)

“Our dreams of the future are henceforth inseparable from our fears. Today, reconciled with the terrible, we are seeing a contamination of utopia by apocalypse: the heralded ‘new earth’ increasingly assumes the aspect of a new Hell. But this Hell is one we are waiting for, we even make it our duty to precipitate its advent. The two genres, utopian and apocalyptic, which once seemed so dissimilar to us, interpenetrate, rub off on each other, to form a third, wonderfully apt to reflect on the kind of reality that threatens us and to which we shall nonetheless assent with a correct and disabused yes. That will be our way of being irreproachable in the face of fatality.”

(E.M. Cioran, *History and Utopia*, quoted in Anthony Vidler, “Air War and Architecture,” in Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle, Editors, *Ruins of Modernity*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010: 36)

“The profane motifs of *One-Way Street* will march past in the project, hellishly intensified ... [I]t is a project that will just take a few weeks.”

(Benjamin, in Scholem and Adorno, Eds., *The Collected Correspondence*, in Gilloch, *Walter Benjamin*: 88.)

“The dialectical image is a way of seeing that crystallizes antithetical elements by providing the axes of their alignment. Benjamin’s conception is essentially static ... He charts philosophical ideas visually within an unreconciled and transitory field of oppositions that can perhaps best be pictured in terms of coordinates of contradictory terms, the ‘synthesis’ of which is not a movement toward resolution, but the point at which their axes intersect ... His unfolding of concepts in their ‘extremes’ can be visualized as antithetical polarities of axes that cross each other, revealing a ‘dialectal image’ at the null point, with its contradictory ‘moments’ as its axial fields.”

(Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*: 210.)

“What is at stake is the place of human thought and perception in the coming evolution of the topology of power. Advancing its evolution involves a topological projection transforming the arena of power from a conventionally centered ‘battle-space’ into a cutting ‘edge’ carving its own operational space in time: the just-in-time of infra real-time. The edge is the wedge for making hierarchy as good as horizontal. Its full spectrum is the space-time continuum on which individual intelligence becomes collective, network-distributed cognition gets bare-lively embodied, such that what is produced is not knowledge but power: immediately, self-augmentingly, decisively. Where once was human cognition, now whirs the machinery of a full-spectrum will to power: knowledge-power (without the actual knowledge).

It is not about information. It is about taking information to the edge. It is about making it ‘pointy’: a direct weapon of war.”

(Massumi, *Ontopower*: 99.)

“The role of language as a medium for the transaction between walker and street rests on a double affinity. Where [Michel de] Certeau (following Barthes) saw the pedestrian’s itineraries as speech acts, a *parole* drawing on the rigid langue of the planned city grid, [Jacques] Réda sees the streets themselves, in their endless variety—bifurcations, widenings and narrowings, links (passages), *aporias* (impasses)—as a constituting a parole to which walking (and then rationally articulating the ‘logic’ of one’s path) can serve as an echo or reply. Through his steps, the walker engages in dialogue with the city. And just as the parole of the aesthetic determinants, cannot be limited to any of these (partly because a street cannot be isolated from its physical context—where it leads, what runs into it, invariably end up, in Réda’s experience, not as an ordered, analytical discussion, but as a *parcours disloqué*, where writer (and reader) never know where the next paragraph, or page, will land them.”

(Sheringham, *Everyday Life*: 332.)

“The ‘speech’ of the ‘word’ has a unique character. It is totally unlike symbols, which can be deciphered with the aid of metaphor and metonymy. The speech of the word is made up in rhyme: an unsayable followed closely by its rhyme or, depending on the particular context, a group of rhymes generated by the same word. Everything is there, from perfect rhyme to assonance, from audible and sigh rhymes by meaning and even rhymes for lack of rhyme like a textbook on poetics ... What precipitates

on the two sides of the line of fracture is the word and its derivative: its speech or rhyme.”

(Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, “The Wolf Man’s Magic Word: A Cryptonymy,” 1986 in Glanton, *Epic Negation*: 324.)

“If the symbol is a motivated sign, then allegory, conceived as its antithesis, will be identified as the domain of the arbitrary, the conventional, the unmotivated.’ In pointed opposition to the symbol, allegorical signifier and signified do not ‘flow into each other’ but instead are set off in in mutual and frequently antagonistic opposition to one another: due to its ‘brittleness,’ allegory can easily break into its component parts. Allegory thus causes a kind of semiotic distress; it works to disfigure and unsettle the world of things so that ‘only the fragments of the world are left to it now, as object of its brooding’ (Benjamin 1999, 349). According to Benjamin, as the ‘allegorist’ dislodges things from their context and, from the outset, relies on its profundity to illuminate their meaning, ‘his or her world image’ cannot be explained apart from the passionate, distraught concern with this spectacle.”

(Golston, *Poetic Machinations*: 39.)

“It isn’t the promise of resolution that the allegorical presents but the fact of an irresolvability, an impasse. And it is this impasse—as a negativity rather than a totality (and, indeed, as a register of a collapse of totality)—that, at the moment, gives us the best hope of better things to come [...] To match is to take two predictably related elements and make them unpredictably relevant. Matching in this way generates what the Russian formalist writer, Yurii Tynianov, calls oscillating signs, a type of which is the pun ... And the oscillating sign is one in which two principal signs jostle for primacy, as in the pun.”

(Golston discussing the work of Lyn Hejinian in Golston, *Poetic Machinations*: 225.)

“Contemporary theories of allegory thus grasp this structure as the intersection of two principles: that of the autonomy, or complete isolation and non-dependence of their terms (which are in that sense not fragments) and at the same time as the marking of those items as conceptually incomplete, as relational terms in a larger signifying structure. Both of these features are then combined in the self-designation of allegory as a process rather than any achieved structure or substance. Allegory thus looks back to hallucination as a perceptual isolation of its objects, and forward to the ‘part object’ as the exemplification of a larger drive that can never be fully satisfied.”

(Jameson, *The Hegel Variations*: 126.)

“Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are

its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here: the squint eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half-dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the ‘normal’.”

(Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, quoted in Judith Raiskin, “Inverts and Hybrids: Lesbian Rewritings of Sexual and Racial Identities,” in Doan, *The Lesbian Postmodern*: 159.)

- “It’s generally agreed that the components of a classic Margarita are tequila, triple sec, and fresh lime juice. But how much of each? The secret is proportions; balance accounts for the difference between a good drink and a bad one.
- Having made many, many margaritas according to all sorts of proportional directives, I have finally determined (for my own tastes, at least) that the very best margaritas are concocted as follows:
- *For one drink*  
*1 1/2 oz. tequila (100% agave a must, preferably a ‘reposado’)*  
*1 1/2 oz. triple sec or Cointreau*  
*1 to 1 1/4 oz. of lime juice*  
*Salt for the rim of the glass*
- *Shake all the ingredients with cracked ice in a cocktail shaker until the exterior frosts. Strain into a glass over rocks, or ‘up’ into a cocktail glass. A slice of lime as a garnish, while not strictly necessary, is a civilized touch.”*

“The Consul found himself claiming to see an obscure relation, apart from any verbal one, between Taxila and Tlaxcala itself: for when that great pupil of Aristotle’s—Yvonne—Alexander, arrived in Taxila, Taxila’s king, who likewise had seen in an alliance with a foreign conqueror, an excellent chance of undoing a rival, in this case not Moctzuema but the Paurave Chenab? Tlaxcala ... The Consul was talking, like Sir Thomas Browne, of Archimedes, Moses, Achilles, Methuselah, Charles V, and Pontius Pilate. The Consul was talking furthermore of Jesus Christ, or rather Yus Asaf who, according to the Kashmiri legend, *was* Christ—Christ, who had, after being taken down from the cross, wandered to Kashmir in search of the lost tribes of Israel, and died there, in Srinagar.

But there was a slight mistake. The Consul was not talking. Apparently not. The Consul had not uttered a single word. It was all an illusion, a whirling cerebral chaos, out of which, at last, at long last, at this very instant, emerged, rounded and complete, order: “The act of a madman or a drunkard, old bean,” he said.”

(Lowry, *Under the Volcano*: 309.)

“Utopians!

And why not! For me this term has no pejorative connotations. Since I do not ratify compulsion, norms, rules and regulations; since I put all the emphasis on adaptation; since I refute ‘reality,’ and since for me what is possible is already partly



read, I am indeed a utopian; you will observe that I do not say utopia; but a utopian, yes, a partisan of possibilities.”

(Henri Lefebvre, quoted in David Pinder, *Visions of the City*. London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2011: 239.)

“What lies shattered amid the rubble, the highly significant fragment, the scrap: this is the noblest material of Baroque creation. For it is a common feature of Baroque literature to heap up fragments—incessantly and without any strict idea of a goal—and, in the unremitting expectation of a miracle, to view stereotypes as instances of intensification. [...] piece for piece, the elements from which the new whole is to be blended. No—is to be constructed. For the perfect vision of this new thing was: ruin.”

(Benjamin, “The Ruin,” in Jennings, Doherty, and Levin, Eds., *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*: 180-181.)

“Everything decomposed itself into fragments that fragmented in turn: nothing was achieved by way of a definite notion.”

(Julio Cortázar, *Hopscotch*, quoted in Ubilluz, *Sacred Eroticism*: 132.)

“He had turned, little by little, a disturbance into words, he had made a pillow of old words, for a head.”

(Beckett, Watt, in Eric Migernier, *Beckett and French Theory*: 42.)

“The millennia stand like a cesspit. In the pit there are strewn machines, pieces of cast iron and tin, screws, springs ... A dark, gloomy pit. And in the pit shine bits of rotten wood, phosphorescent fungus—mold. These are our feelings! This is all that’s left of our feelings, of our soul’s blossoming. The new man comes to the pit, gropes around, climbs in, chooses what he wants—some machine part comes in handy, a nut—and the rotten wood he tramples, snuffs out.”

(Yury Olesha, *Envy*, 1927, quoted in Rolf Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal: Soviet Literature & the Alchemy of Revolution*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2003: 118.)

“But, she said to the priest, ‘I am not dead yet. I’ve heard the angels farting on the ceiling.’”

(Jean Genet, *Our Lady of the Flowers*. New York, NY: Grove Press, 1994: 32.)

“Let us here stress the special philosophical and utopian character of festive laughter and its orientation toward the highest spheres. The most ancient rituals of mocking at the deity have here survived, acquiring a new essential meaning. All that was purely cultic and limited has faded away, but the all-human, universal, and utopian element has been retained.”

(Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*: 12.)

“The [allegorical] text operates on what may be called a vertical and a horizontal axis, and the two continually intersect: as the narrative progresses, its agents appear in various forms and at various levels of abstraction, and the means by which they are signified affects and constitutes the narrative: allegorical events proceed ... through the inter-conversion of static ideas and their temporal embodiments.”

(Carolyn Van Dyke, *The Fictions of Truth: Structures of Meaning in Narrative and Dramatic Allegory*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999: 324 and 327.)

“Is there a key that opens the cultural meaning of the modern metropolis? The proliferation of differences that characterize metropolitan modernity is so great that it seems unlikely that there is a single ‘text of the city,’ the explication of which would reveal the city’s cultural script.”

(Thomas Bender, *The Unfinished City*, 2002, in Goldsmith, *Capital*: 469.)

“Shark up some memorable last words at least. There seems to be time. Nonsense, I’ll mutter to the end, one word after another, string the rascals out, mad or not, my last words will be my last words.”

(Barth, *Lost in the Funhouse*: 49.)

“You Bolsheviki prick? You member of the *Brigade Internationale* and stir up trouble?

‘No,’ answered the Consul firmly, decently, but now somewhat agitated.

‘Absolutamente no.’”

(Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*: 357.)

“In its precise arrangement and iteration of words, the linguistic constellation tries to achieve what the words on their own cannot, namely, a respectful proximity to the thing and the redemptive promise of the name. Because of the magical entwinement of name and thing has been irretrievably lost, and replaced by the reified, designating name, the utopic hope that one day names will be reconciled with things can only be expressed negatively. For Adorno, resisting the temptation to name—to identify—is the first move towards finding the right names for things; thus, if ‘materialism is imageless,’ it is likewise nameless.”

(Palamarek, “Adorno’s Dialectics of Language,” in Burke, Campbell, Kiloh, Palamarek, and Short, Eds., *Adorno and the Need in Thinking*: 65.)

“[...] dear Satan, don’t look so annoyed, I beg you! And while waiting for a few belated cowardices, since you value in a writer all lack of descriptive or didactic flair, I pass you these few fouled pages from the diary of the Damned Soul.”

(Arthur Rimbaud, *A Season in Hell*, in Palmer, *Active Boundaries*: 292.)

“For utopia, as we have seen, is not just an ideal vision of the future, nor a blueprint for its realization, but a dialectical method for exploring our limitations and our

possibilities, a dialectical method for exploring our limitations and our possibilities, a dialectic that allows us to examine our historical situation with anxiety and hope. The method of this dialectical exploration is unique and its effects can be liberating: utopia displaces social reality with dream, giving us access to the forces of manipulation and domination that constrain us, and invite us to dream our own utopian dreams. The crucial effect of this dialectic is that it enables us to apprehend our own present moment as a moment in history. In defamiliarizing and restructuring our perception of the present moment, utopia becomes an index for history itself, our social history as well as our personal history.”

(Peter Ruppert, *Reader in a Strange Land*: 166.)

“Art lived and will continue to live by its own laws. But in its depths, it undergoes the same stages experienced by all humanity, advancing toward the most revolutionary achievements. And if it is true that only now, when humanity has taken the road of the ultimate Revolution, can we speak of Humanity with a capital H, even more so, can Art be written with a capital A only if its revolutionary in its essence.”

(Marc Chagll, “Art on the Anniversary of October,” 1918, in Namli, Svenungsson, and Vincent, Eds., *Jewish Thought, Utopia, and Revolution*: 107.)

“My word I poured. But was it cognate, scored  
Of that tribunal monarch of the air  
Whose thigh embronzes earth, strikes crystal Word  
In wounds pledged once to hope,—cleft to despair?”

(Hart Crane, “Voyages, VI,” in Marjorie Perloff, “Unoriginal Genius: Walter Benjamin’s Arcades as Paradigm for the New Poetics,” 2, 61, *Études Anglaises*, 2008: 229-252.)

“It is this understanding of different perspectives which makes possible what Vygotsky called the ‘zone of proximal development’ (ZPD). The child grasps a word: this is ‘our’ word, or ‘the’ word; but she also senses that the adult has a deeper grasp, and a wider use. The nearer reaches of this deeper grasp are on the edge of her awareness, as it were. These nearer reaches constitute the ZPD. We can speak of ‘proximal development’ here because the child is on the threshold of this zone, and therefore adults can bring her across by interacting with her in this zone. All along the zone is sustained by her sense that there is something more to learn here. But this also means that the zone is sustained by the good pedagogical sense of the teacher, who has to have her own sensitive grasp where the child is, of what the object commonly focused on means to her.”

(Taylor, *The Language Animal*: 60.)

“*das vorletzte Wort.*”

“Almost the last word.”

(Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, quoted in Richter, *Thought Images*: 190.)



“But this the end of the story is not entirely the happy ending that one might take it to be. This miraculous self-annihilation of the subject is dubious on two accounts. It represents, it is true, the extreme limit of baroque melancholy. But in the moment of faith, the faithless betrayal of the objects emerges as the price that the brooding subject must pay in order to escape from the devil’s circle of melancholy allegory. This is the theological answer of which the baroque was capable: the puzzle motif ends when the puzzler, just at the moment when the ‘solution’ becomes revealed as both necessary and impossible, transmutes the puzzle itself as a sign of its own opposite—walks away from the puzzle altogether.”

(Max Pensky, *Melancholy Dialectics*: 135.)

### Abstract

#### Buried in the Rubble: The Intersection of Art and Text in the Twenty-First Century

Over the last eight years my research has focused on overcoming the over-simplified dichotomy between the concepts of utopia and allegory. In the late twentieth-century United States, for example, postmodernist critics such as Craig Owens, Douglas Crimp, and others, drew upon the critical legacy of allegory that descended from Charles Baudelaire in the mid-nineteenth century, as well as Walter Benjamin's dialectical appropriation of allegory in the 1930s, as a means of reframing and critiquing the legacy of modern enlightenment and utopian thought. Using the fragmentary and ambiguous form of allegorical poetics enabled post-modern philosophers on both sides of the Atlantic, such as Jean-François Lyotard and Michel Foucault, to challenge the metanarratives of Progress, Linear Time, Truth, and the Technological/Scientific method underpinning many, though not all, advocates of utopianism in previous centuries, as well as the defenders of the project of Modernity, such as Jürgen Habermas.

My paper draws upon the allegorical legacy of Baudelaire and Benjamin, not to restate the post-modern orthodoxy surrounding their postmodern appropriation in the late twentieth century, but to provoke new thoughts and imaginings about the potential to be realized from attempting to allegorize the re-joining of utopian and allegorical modes of critique together with historical materialism. This necessitates a constructive tension between utopianism and allegory that will suggest a form of allegorical poetics that moves beyond the stale impasse between modernism and postmodernism while bringing allegorical poetics and historical materialism into more critical and productive relationship. My method of presentation draws upon the radical quotational strategies of Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* and Ernst Bloch's *Spuren*, as well as his *The Principle of Hope*, along with the techniques of allegorical poetics that rely on quotations advocated by more contemporary scholars such as Marjorie Perloff, in her book *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the Twenty-First Century* (2010), and Patrick Greaney's, *Quotational Practices: Repeating the Future in Contemporary Art* (2014).

### Keywords

Art History, postmodernism, poetry