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“signal escapes”: Susan Howe’s *factual telepathy* from *Articulation* to *Debths*

Susan Howe is a poet of “signal escapes”.¹ Each of her volumes and studio recordings suggests and subverts origins and endings, engendering a trajectory of converging and diverging hybrid forms. Within this context of Howe’s contiguous yet contingent works, *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time* transmits a “telepathic solicitation of innumerable phantoms”.² Since the Awede Press edition, Howe has revised and republished *Articulation*; she has also published paratextual materials in dialogue with this body of work—each offering reflections upon her historical imagination. Why has this poet returned so often to these “fictitious deeps // Cries open to the words inside them”³?

Howe’s reconfigurations of these materials and methods from *Articulation* to *Debths* reveal the emergence and development (1987-2017) of her major trope of *factual telepathy*, which recovers voices on the brink of ruin—“TANGIBLE THINGS // Out of a stark oblivion disenter”⁴—by amplifying and remediating contradictions among and between source documents. My presentation investigates *Articulation* through Howe’s critique of the poem’s archives and artifacts; through her studies of the captivity narrative which inform that critique; through the complete arc of the poem’s elaborations which further that critique; and through new historical evidence concerning the excursion of Rev. Hope Atherton, which Howe “assume[s] [...] for an emblem foreshadowing a Poet’s abolished limitations in our demythologized fantasy of Manifest Destiny.”⁵ My presentation offers a new argument to the field, engaging Howe’s works of resistant mourning that shape conditions for positive social change.

W. Scott Howard received his PhD in English and Critical Theory from the University of Washington. He teaches poetics and poetry in the Department of English and Literary Arts at

¹ *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time* (Windsor, VT: Awede Press, 1987), unpaginated.

² *The Quarry* (New York: New Directions, 2015), 52.

³ *Singularities* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1990), 23.

⁴ *Debths* (New York: New Directions, 2017), 49.

⁵ “The Falls Fight,” *Singularities*, 4.

the University of Denver. He is the founding editor of *Reconfigurations: A Journal for Poetics and Poetry / Literature and Culture*. His collections of poetry include *ROPES* (with images by Ginger Knowlton) from Delete Press, 2014; and *SPINNAKERS* (The Lune, 2016). His forthcoming critical works include *Archive and Artifact: Susan Howe's factual telepathy* (from Talisman House); and *Poetics and Praxis 'After' Objectivism* (co-edited with Broc Rossell) from the University of Iowa Press. Professor Howard's work has received support from the Modern Language Association, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Beinecke Library, Yale University. He lives in Englewood, CO and commutes year-round by bicycle.