

now

Fall lecture / Reading



INAUGURAL LECTURE
SIGNAL ESCAPES:
CONTEXTS, COLLABORATIONS,
AND CONTINGENCIES SINCE 1990

Professor W. Scott Howard

11.8.2019

Department of English & Literary Arts
Sturm 281
Reception: 4:00pm
Lecture: 4:30pm

Friday, Nov. 8

4:00 →

Signal Escapes:

Contexts, Collaborations,
and Contingencies
Since 1990

- ask Joel
- print the slides
- study out the
- answer your

- double check
our reservation
@ Little Theater

W. Scott Howard
Signal Escapes: Contexts, Collaborations, Contingencies

Contingencies since 1990

title slide

Univ. of Denver
Nov. 8,
2019

1.

Thank you all so much for being here on a Friday evening at the end of week mid!

Thank you to Maithe ^{NWOSU (our dept. chair)} for setting in motion these new full prof. lectures, which are part of a whole sequence of activities initiated by Maithe, including the dialogues alumni's faculty conversations → These initiatives are valuable for our community

Thanks to my family, Terry, Kat + Gaven.

* Thanks to Clark Davis, ~~my collaborator~~ for his reflections on my work

* Thanks to Graham for stepping-up, ~~just~~ two weeks ago, to give the first of these new full prof. lectures

~~have been~~ And → Thanks to Joel Lewis!

* My presentation won't be a lecture, not really, ~~just~~ ~~my~~ This will be 40 minutes of reflective storytelling with moments of interpretive intensity, ~~my~~ and poetic performance in the spirit of signal escapes:

Contexts, Collaborations, and Contingencies
since 1990

* what have I been doing here for the past 21 years?

→

* I've been thinking about this for months, of course, enjoying the moments to reflect upon my work since arriving at DU in 1998

* DU has changed in so many ways since then and so have I!

* So many stories that I could tell, and I have only well, ~~now only 35 minutes!~~ and I've enjoyed the process of selecting & collating

* What have I been doing here since 1998, for the past 21 years? In order to answer that question, I would like to go back a bit further & further into the 1990's

* One of our colleagues, Colt Swensen, was fond of saying, during our dept. meetings, "we're all uniters" *

to which I would add "and makers" * ↳ which brings us to the OED

* Poiesis = to make, create, produce; Greek creative production; work of art, chiefly literary, ↳ and that's a word,

* one of the sources for the words we know as poetics and poetry

~~Etymology: Poiesis~~

* Poesis = poem, poems, poetry

* Poetics = all things

Eythropoiesis → which bumps me to 1997 my dissertation year @ UW (3)

Eythropoiesis + we are all self-creating poems
* Job Ad

* the DU job ad from MCA JIL + talk back
I was hired as an assistant professor for this job in Poetics + Poetry...
* I vividly remember

* Toronto, January 1989 interview with my colleagues, Eleanor McVey + Ben Runkel

on the table + 32.3+4
* an issue of Denver Quarterly on the coffee table
+ Jay could not be a student because they are hardly on track of Colorado for the weekend

and I said, I'm so happy to see Denver Quarterly! because I've been reading the journal since 1990 in our Small Press + Journals section at Powell's Books!

* Powell's magazine at night
* Ben asked if I would consider this...

* and here I am now serving as Editor of Denver Quarterly an opportunity that has found me at the right time all these years later
* Editor/DQ Page + Masthead

* Working w/ an extraordinary group cohort of colleagues
* DU's story

* There's great synergy here! what are the chances
* what are the chances...?

* Well, Susan Howe might say that read + pause
* A + A223

DU has shown me what is possible and more so!

for “the locust / tree [...] as such / as such [...].”³⁸⁸ How did this arrangement come about?

Howe: In the whole of this book, these facing pages and the last paragraph on page 63 would be my favorite parts. To see passages of *Paterson* scribbled in pencil on his prescription pads at SUNY Buffalo’s Poetry Collection³⁸⁹ was stunning. I am so happy with these two pages—finally cutting the work down to these two manuscripts and the lines I wrote to accompany them. Here, I don’t see the difference between poetry and prose. “Ask the librarian behind the desk for a cardboard box of labeled file folders containing singular whispering skeletons. Place one in my looking-glass hands.”³⁹⁰ Writing two sentences like this, after much shuffling, feels like one of Ricky Jay’s card tricks. Gertrude Stein, another great magician, in one of her “Lectures in America” referring to English literature of the sixteenth century, hits the nail on the head: “It was no longer just a song it was a song of words that were chosen to make a song that would sound like the words they were to sing.”³⁹¹

WSH: *As such—as such*. This is the moment of chance that abides within the everyday?

Howe: Yes, the miracle of chance. Beauty is chance and there is a rigor in the quest.³⁹² Frank O’Hara’s “In Memory of My Feelings” is dedicated to Grace Hartigan. Midway through the poem, he comes up

³⁸⁸ *Spontaneous Particulars*, 40, 41.

³⁸⁹ The William Carlos Williams Collection, 1902-1960, The Poetry Collection of the University Libraries, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York: <http://library.buffalo.edu/pl/>[.]

³⁹⁰ *Spontaneous Particulars*, 41.

³⁹¹ Gertrude Stein, “What Is English Literature,” *Lectures in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 30.

³⁹² “Rigor of beauty is the quest. But how will you find beauty when / it is locked in the mind past all remonstrance?” *Paterson (Book I)* (New York: New Directions, 1946), unpaginated.

* but chance is contextually contingent! chance
is the signal escape...

→ That's out

at least!

* A+A 223-224 *

A moment from the book that
includes my conversation w/ Susan Howe;

↳ but while discussing synergies
among several writers & works; concepts &
collections from Anne Hutchinson & C.S. Peirce
to Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams,
& Frank O'Hara, among others.

~~* The book develops a history in response to Susan's work~~

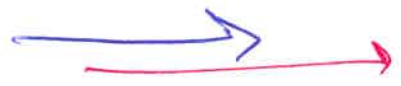
* Powell's #2

* Susan Howe's work found at Powell's, where I
co-managed (w/ Vanessa Renwick) the SP&T section; and managed
the Literary Criticism section & the Critical Theory sections
from 1990 to 1993.

* For those here who may not already be familiar...

* image of * Susan NDP

Susan Howe is



Artifact: Susan Howe's factual telepathy (currently scheduled for late-2018), inform my approach to this next book, which will adapt and amplify those methods and studies to new questions about Howe's works. For example: How and why do Susan Howe's artist books and gallery installations engage the collaborative fields of book design, typography, engraving, lithography, and new materialist philosophy? How and why do Howe's spoken word and electronic musical performances transform archival materials into public-facing artifactual encounters? How and why does this artist's persistent care and concern for manuscripts and scribal practices shape dynamic intersections among these kindred transdisciplinary and multimodal materials and methods?

"*Colliding Phenomena*": *Susan Howe's Facing Pages and Sonic Materialisms* will bring focused and integrated new levels of attention to these matters and perspectives across a selected number of Howe's key works from 1987 to 2017 (as noted, below, in my outline for the book's main chapters). The book will be a significant contribution not only to the field of English and Literary Arts (my home Department) but also to new directions in the Humanities as shaped by the DU's CICLA initiatives (which I will address briefly, below).

The Author of more than thirty-five books and recipient of the 1980 American Book Award, the 2011 Bollingen Prize in American Poetry, and the 2017 Frost Medal from the Poetry Society of America, ^{she} Susan Howe (1937) is a prolific poet and essayist, scholar and educator, visual and sonic performance artist. Howe's transdisciplinary and multimodal works embody dialogues among different fields of research, creativity, and public engagement (especially theatre, history, and painting) which perhaps underscores the combined influences of her mother, Mary Manning Howe (who wrote novels and plays, and had been an ^{actor} ~~actress~~ on the Dublin stage); her father, Mark DeWolfe Howe (who was Professor of Law at Harvard with a keen interest in American colonial history); and Howe's own studies of both acting (in Dublin after finishing high school) and

* WSCC

painting (at the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts, where she received her diploma in 1961).
Howe often begins a composition with fragments of discourse (e.g. biographical or historical
anecdotes, literary puzzles, cultural mythologies) and then stitches those narrative threads into a
canvass of questioning and answering, always critically attentive to the role of language as a
material, sonic, textual, and visual mediator of human experience.

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 images

*TTTT
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 2

*TTT
 3

During the 1990s, Susan Howe's works of poetry and prose were numerous and yet radically characteristically singular. There were at least eight books between *Singularities* (1990) and *Pierce-Arrow* (1999), and each of those volumes gathered smaller books, discrete sequences, individual texts, and ephemera. Although Howe's earlier volumes, such as *Secret History of the Dividing Line* (1978) and *Defenestration of Prague* (1983), underscore a similar poetics and praxis of "colliding phenomena" ("Sorting Facts" 341), her books published during the 1990s navigated two significant transitions in her prolific career, both of which proved to be generative: a difficult shift from analogue to digital compositional practices; and an equally challenging migration from small press publishing (with presses such as North Atlantic, Awede, Paradigm, Sun and Moon) to working with Wesleyan and New Directions. This dynamic context amplified and complicated Howe's agency as a documentary and visionary poet, engendering the intersections among archival materials, compositional processes, book arts methods, and sonic materialisms that have since become defining characteristics of her poetry, prose, and transdisciplinary multimodal performances. My new book will investigate the arc of this key transformation for Susan Howe's legacy.

Howe rediscovered her work in new ways in the midst of these multimodal transdisciplinary shifts. Her volumes of poetry since the 1990s combine a documentarian's scrupulous attention to detail, a visionary's defiance of authority, and a minimalist's care for

* These snippets are from the 2013 gallery installation of Susan's TOM TIT TOT at Yale Union

vi
 Portland, OR

*TU
 images

*TU
 2

→ You might be asking, So, what and what is TOM TIT TOT ?

→ book + book again

Susan Howe and R. H. Quaytman, *TOM TIT TOT* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2014)

University of Denver Libraries
Historical Object of the Month
<https://dulibraries.wordpress.com/category/historical-object-of-the-month/>

“TANGIBLE THINGS / Out of a stark oblivion”:
Spellbinding *TOM TIT TOT*

W. Scott Howard
Department of English
<https://portfolio.du.edu/showard>

DU TTT 1
→

TOM TIT TOT is a unique letterpress volume of textual montage, visual art, and collaborative design and production by Susan Howe and R. H. Quaytman, the poet's daughter.

- Image of book cover here?

↓ →
→

The unpaginated book, measuring 12 3/4 x 10 inches and hand-bound in green Japanese buckram by Mark Tomlinson in East Hampton, Massachusetts, was published by the Library Council of The Museum of Modern Art in a main edition and a deluxe edition.

DU TTT 2

- Image of title-page here?

Multi-faceted instances of the work first appeared respectively in 2013 and 2014 within context of Howe's exhibitions at the Yale Union and the Whitney Biennial.

TOM TIT TOT was hand-printed at The Grenfell Press by Brad Ewing and Leslie Miller, who designed the volume with Howe and Quaytman.

- Image of colophon here?

The printmaker Brett Groves worked closely with Quaytman to produce all of the images, which include the frontispiece, “The Temple of Time,” printed as a six-color silkscreen at Axelle Editions; digitally at the Lower East Side Printshop; and by letterpress at The Grenfell Press.

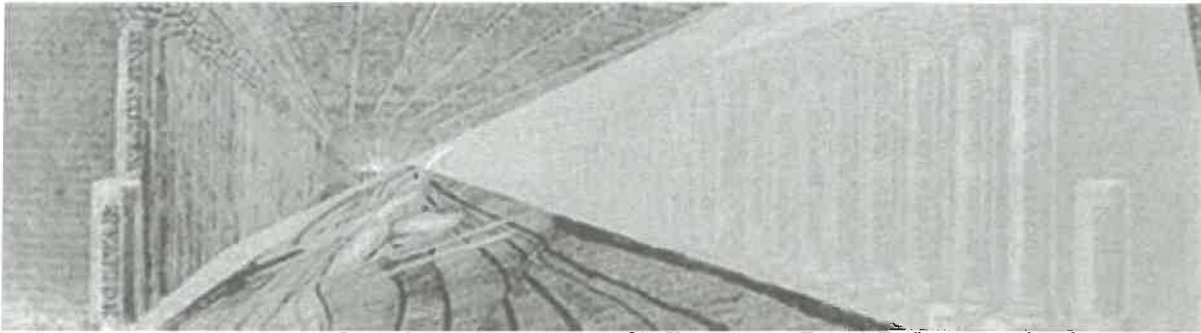


Image Source: "Susan Howe and R. H. Quaytman, *Tom Tit Tot*." Museum of Modern Art, 2014: <http://www.moma.org/learn/resources/library/council/howequaytman>

The volume's title alludes to an English variant of the German *Rumpelstilzchen* story collected by Joseph Jacobs in *English Fairy Tales* (1890) in which these words—"Nimmy nimmy not / Your name's Tom Tit Tot"—break the spell. Whereas the spinning of flax into skeins weaves the folktale's plot, here the collaging of "words from images twi[sted] / [f]rom their original source / [h]istory scattered to the fou[r] [w]inds" shapes Howe's transfiguration of texts into letterpress pages of concrete poems resembling textiles or wordwhorls.

- Kate's images of the poems here?

Howe fashioned her sixty-seven poems for *TOM TIT TOT* from splicings of typeset excerpts from a range of documents in American and British literature, folklore, poetry, philosophy, art criticism, and history from 1815 to 2013 as well as from Hellenistic and Roman sources—all of which are acknowledged in a bibliography. ~~These works include, for example: Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," Coleridge's *Collected Letters*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Spinoza's *Ethics*, Yeats's *Collected Poems*, and Elizabeth Sussman's and Lynn Zelevansky's *Paul Thek: Diver: A Retrospective*.~~

The geographical atlases and histories of Emma Hart Willard (1787-1870), an American author, educator, and civil and women's rights activist, inspired Quaytman's design and images for *TOM TIT TOT*. Two of Willard's visual representations, *Picture of Nations* and *Temple of Time*, inform Quaytman's frontispiece. ~~*TOM TIT TOT* includes three more images (each untitled) by Quaytman printed by letterpress at The Grenfell Press. One of these could easily be mistaken for a carbon typing sheet, or a detached opaque interleaf: this shiny black, moveable page includes, in the bottom right-hand corner, a composite of thumbprints in white. Another of Quaytman's images limns a slightly unraveled knitted baby's sock, which also resembles a winding-cloth and derives from a photoengraving in Thérèse de Dillmont's *Encyclopedia of Needlework* (1886).~~

- Image of baby sock here?

The third of these images, appearing just before the bibliography, echoes the artist's frontispiece. Quaytman also designed the pattern stamped in gold on the book's spine, which was created from a woodblock handmade by James Cooper that alludes to the edges of the plywood panels used in the composition of the artist's painted and silkscreened works.

TTT
TTT4

TTT5

DU
TTT Z

to
Puff
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again

return to page 7, →

- Image of spine here?

→ { The poems in *TOM TIT TOT* emerge from a sequence of Howe's residencies, gallery exhibitions, performances, lectures, publications, and works-in-progress (since 2010) dedicated to the artist, Paul Thek (1933-1988), and also to the collector, Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924). In 2013 (October 5-December 6) the Yale Union gallery in Portland, Oregon hosted a multi-faceted presentation of *TOM TIT TOT*, highlighting the first in a discrete series of the work's public appearances and Howe's first solo exhibition. This event was curated by Andrea Anderson and Robert Snowden.

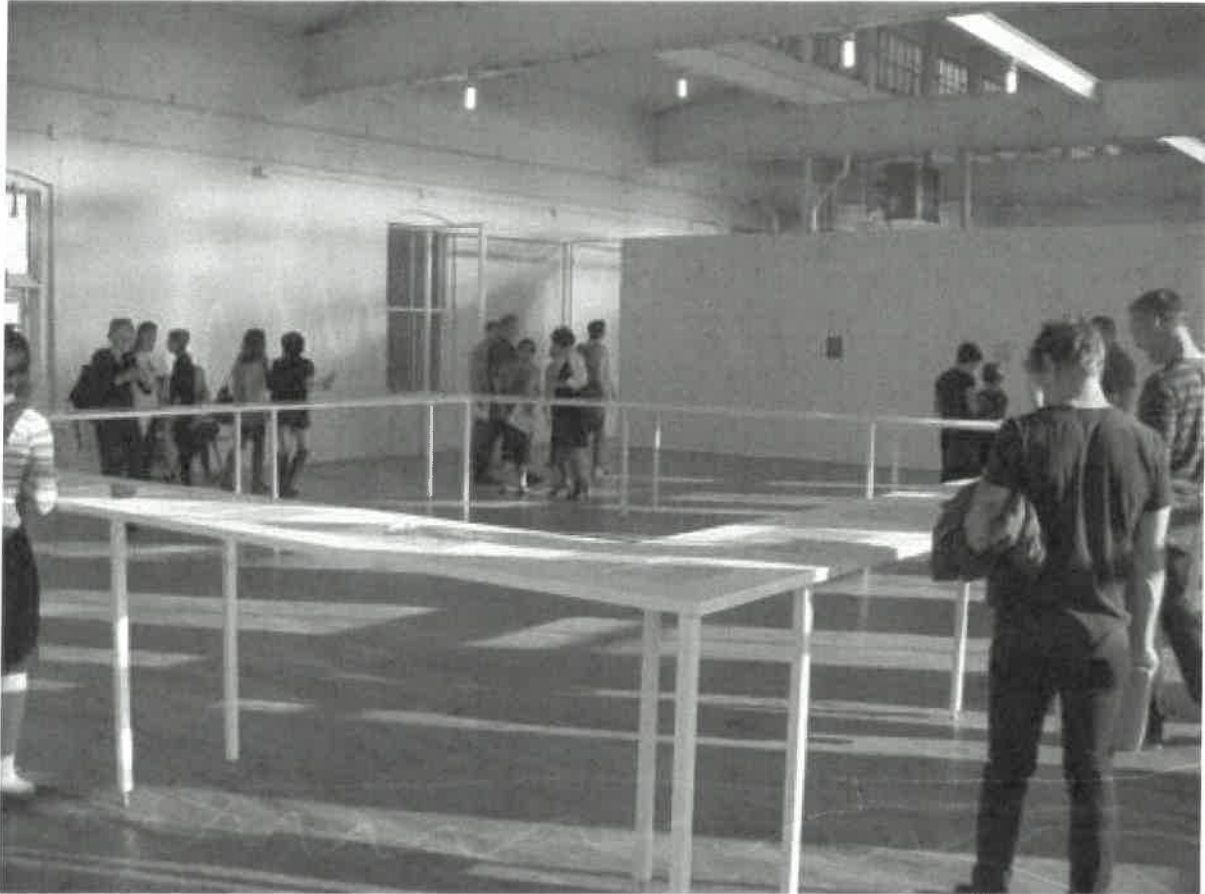


Image Source: W. Scott Howard

One of the gallery's walls arranged poems from an unbound copy of Howe's *Frolic Architecture* (Grenfell Press, 2010) together with related photograms by James Welling. An open-square table designed by Scott Ponik displayed the sixty-seven letterpress poems from *TOM TIT TOT* as thirty-three facing pages and one single page, each visible through a pane of glass set flush with the table surface.

→

So what and where is ~~TTT~~ ~~TTT~~ ~~TTT~~?

* DU TTT 1 *

Thanks to our wonderful colleagues at our library, Peggy Keeran, Michael Levine-Clark, Kate Crowe, Shannon Tharp, Kristen Korfitzen and Rebecca Macey among others!

we have a copy of TTT in our fine press & artist's books collection

* DU TTT 2 *

from September -> Dec, 2015 ~~at~~ library

~~Redwood book shop~~

hosted an exhibit of TTT that I co-curated and for which Susan offered an artist's statement

* DU TTT 3 *

~~credit~~

And thanks to our library's Collection Development Grants, I've been able to contribute to our efforts to grow a collection of Susan Howe's artist books

* Library Record *

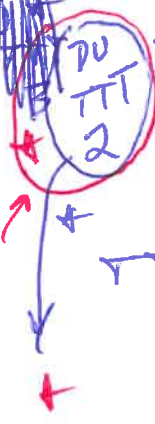
Susan Howe's artist books

These artist books are highly collaborative and deeply experiential

~~the~~ ~~work~~ ~~that~~ ~~in~~ ~~co-teaching~~ ~~with~~ ~~Keyston~~ ~~Traci~~ ~~Riddell~~ ~~&~~ ~~Thomas~~

we recently had an exhibit class ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~lot~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~library~~ ~~for~~ ~~an~~ ~~adyn~~ ~~and~~ ~~it~~ ~~was~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~artist~~ ~~books~~

* building this collection and sharing Susan Howe's work is ^{especially} ~~important~~ meaningful because she was



the Leo Block visiting Professor at DU for the 1993-94 academic year, ~~So, out and gone~~

~~So our legacies are shared~~ ~~So our papers and kindred~~
~~Our legacies~~ ~~our legacies~~
~~are shared~~ ~~are shared~~
~~our legacies~~ ~~are shared~~

Our legacies are connected and meaningful and there are
several faculty and students here
who know Susan and admire
her work, including Ben Rumble
and Graham Foust, who studied
w/ Susan at SUNY Buffalo.

→ to p. 9

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Promotion Application Narrative

This is my first academic job since graduating in 1998 from the University of Washington with my PhD in English and Critical Theory. The cross-disciplinary and trans-historical, multi-modal and theoretical nature of my graduate training in two doctoral programs prepared me for my tenure-track job at DU, which was advertised in the 1997 MLA/JIL as "Poetics and Poetry. Concentration in either American or English literature of any period. Cognate comparative specialty desirable." I should note that I have always understood "either American or English literature" as signifying *both/and*.

Since arriving at the University of Denver in 1998, my teaching and public engagement, my research, writing, and publishing have consistently integrated these fields of artistic and cultural production: poetics and poetry; Renaissance & early modern literature and culture; modern & postmodern American poetry and poetics; critical theory, historiography, and digital humanities. My work celebrates Poetics and Poetry from the pre-Socratics through the postmoderns, and engages the humanist legacy of *praxis*—that is, grounding knowledge in forms of social action. My path has therefore underscored intersections of lyric poetry and political discourse from An Collins to Robert Hayden; of dramatic performance and cultural/media critique from Shakespeare to Johanna Drucker; of historiography and social contract theory from Milton to the Objectivist writers.

wsh
DU 1
*

My first published journal article, in 1996, studied Susan Howe's *a bibliography of the king's book; or, eikon basilike* through comparative theories of gift and sacrificial economies. That project amplified my abiding interest in Howe's poetry and prose. My dissertation, in 1998, investigated the seventeenth-century English elegy as a form of historiography, and shaped many of my subsequent publications concerning a range of poets from Ben Jonson and Katherine Philips to Lorine Niedecker and William Bronk. These paths of inquiry persist in my presentations and teaching, research and writing.

*
wsh T96

Since my promotion with tenure in 2004, my work has increasingly included digital media studies and forms of artistic making as dynamic avenues for praxis in my fields of expertise, and especially in my community of the Department of English and Literary Arts, where we value intersections of creativity and critique, scholarship and service, teaching and research. Collaborative and collective forms of knowledge sharing and artistic production inform my open-access, peer-reviewed, MLA-indexed journals; my edited digital collections; my poems and poetry collections, and my sonictexts.

* Recon
* Appoz
* wsh
* activities

On all of these levels, my work engages the whole community at DU from first-year undergraduates to doctoral students; from my home department to the Emergent Digital Practices program, the University Honors program, and the DU/Iiff Joint-PhD program.

* Appoz

My work at DU has moved along ^{those} the trans-disciplinary and multi-modal paths outlined above, while at the same time emphasizing the centrality of the literary work as an agent for positive social change—*poetics and praxis*—within context of the materials and methods, the lives and times of the language, the artists/writers, the primary texts and contexts as well as their shared moments and legacies. My concerns with book history and library collection development, for example, illustrate my work's engagement with materialist perspectives on individual agency and public action. My undergraduate and graduate courses that have underscored the significance of the works of women writers as well as of writers representing a diversity of ethnicities and races, of politics and religions; of manuscript, print, and digital cultures, and of arguments in the field concerning literary canons, time periods, and theoretical methodologies have also consistently highlighted the value of comparative studies shaped by attentiveness to the mediation and remediation of creativity and critique. The medium is always the message.

Our fields of artistic, cultural, and intellectual work are not changeless, disembodied, transcendent forms; they are distinctive media grounded within and shaped by the precarious conditions of our shared experiences. Collaboration, dialogue, and public engagement (through teaching and presentations, research and publication, readings and discussions, performances and spontaneous acts of open-access knowledge sharing) are more important than ever for the future of the Humanities. *Language matters.*

Among the many formative experiences during my doctoral training at the University of Washington, my Teaching Fellowship in 1996 from the Pew Charitable Trusts prepared me to contribute to twenty-first-century academic communities that value trans-disciplinary and multi-modal methodologies; the integration of research, teaching, service, and community engagement; and the responsibility of risk-taking so that new forms of artistic, cultural, and social exchange may emerge. *Diversity matters.*

I am excited to be working in a community that embraces these priorities. For example, my home department's recent emergence as the Department of English & Literary Arts signifies our understanding that creative writing and literary studies are enriched by their vital relationships with other fields of creativity and critique within as well as across institutional units. Our division's emerging identity as a unified College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences also prioritizes these values of collaboration, dialogue, and community engagement. Within these dynamic contexts, I am grateful for the opportunity to be working with my colleagues in English & Literary Arts, Emergent Digital Practices, and Philosophy for the PRAXIS initiative sponsored by DU's Center for Innovation in the Liberal and Creative Arts. That program seeks to build a sustainable model for collaboratively designed and delivered undergraduate courses, including Keystone experiences, that will integrate trans-disciplinary critical theoretical methodologies with multi-modal materials and means for connecting classroom learning to public-facing events and workshops, internships and professional development training, community and social engagement at DU and in Denver.

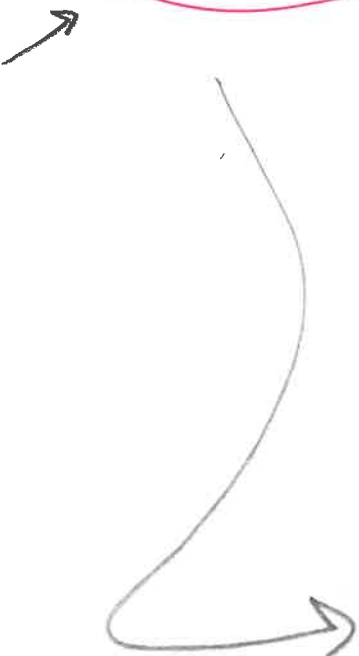
* Water
* Appo?
* Inches
* Water

* Inches

* Broadside
In Loops

From a 2011 collaborative broadside with English Knowledge, post + visual + on-line, and Ganglia's team at Denver
 women we wear the years and through knots
 subtle tangles

A A + A cover



“signal escapes”: the fabric of poetry

“books are not seldom talismans and spells”¹

“The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable.”²

“Poetry brings similitude and representation to configurations waiting from forever to be spoken”³

Susan Howe is a poet of *signal escapes*,⁴ and this is a collection of essays from someone who fell under an enchantment with her work in the midst of a bookstore near the Willamette River on a rainy day.

From January 1991 to August 1993 (with the Portland, Oregon-based documentary film artist, Vanessa Renwick),⁵ I co-managed the *Small Press/Journals* section and the *dew.claw* reading series at Powell’s Books (the Burnside Store). Collection development, ordering and pricing, sorting and shelving were orchestrated autonomously (often with endearing idiosyncrasies) by the section managers during those years before computerized inventory. Our haptic and happenstance practices

¹ William Cowper, *The Task*, vi, cited in Holbrook Jackson, *The Anatomy of Bibliomania* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932), 24.

² Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 223.

³ Susan Howe, *The Europe of Trusts* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1990), 14; and (New York: New Directions, 2002), 14.

⁴ George Sheldon, *A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts: the times when the people by whom it was settled, unsettled and resettled: with a special study of the Indian wars in the Connecticut valley, With genealogies*, 2 Vols. (Deerfield, MA: E. A. Hall & Co., 1895-1896), [Greenfield, MA: Press of E. A. Hall & Co.], 1:166; and Susan Howe, *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time* (Windsor, VT: Awede Press, 1987), unpaginated (np).

⁵ Oregon Department of Kick Ass: <http://www.odoka.org/about/>[.]

12.

→ papers 8 + 9 *

“colliding phenomena”:¹⁵

factual telepathy as Editorial Poetics & Praxis

→ page 8 *

sieve catacomb¹⁶

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[B]ewilderment is like a dream: one continually returning pause on a gyre [...] the shape of the spiral that imprints itself in my interior before anything emerges [...] For to the spiral-walker there is no plain path, no up and down, no inside or outside. But there are strange recognitions and never a conclusion.¹⁸

I have vivid memories of my first moments with the Awede edition (1987) of *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time* and the paradigm press edition (1989) of *a bibliography of the king's book; or, eikon basilike*. These volumes were (and for me still are) *bewildering*. I had no idea then of what sorts of difficulty and pleasure these books were bound to bring my way; how deeply they would sink into my life and change my world. Their audacious, fierce, playful, and hauntingly elegiac quests immersed my senses of perception (and visceral proprioception) in charged, helical, unbound intersections of archives and artifacts. Looking back these

→ *page 9

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¹⁵ This essay first appeared as a conference presentation, “‘colliding phenomena’: Susan Howe’s *factual telepathy* as Editorial Poetics & Praxis,” *National Poetry Foundation*: June 29, 2017, Department of English, University of Maine, Orono, ME.

¹⁶ *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time* (Windsor, VT: Awede Press, 1987), unpaginated (np).

¹⁷ *a bibliography of the king's book; or, eikon basilike* (providence: paradigm press, 1989), unpaginated (np).

¹⁸ Fanny Howe, “Bewilderment,” *The Wedding Dress: Meditations on Word and Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 9.



many years later (by way of Fanny Howe's meditations), I recognize that path as a spiral-walker's endless journey of uncanny wonderment.

These two small press volumes—*Articulation* and *Eikon*—were subsequently republished, respectively, in *Singularities* (1990) and *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (1993). And through those reconfigurations, the poems (and my relationships with them) were transfigured anew, following a radical "movement of the Same towards the Other which never returns to the Same."¹⁹ With some hindsight, I can see now that these openwork texts are concrete, lyrical/social, polyvocal strophic assemblages of *factual telepathy* embodying major turning points in Susan Howe's materials and methods that would shape her poetics and praxis in other works going forward, including essays such as "Encloser" (1990), "Sorting Facts" (1996), and "Ether Either" (1998), and especially the books, *Pierce-Arrow* (1999), *Souls of the Labadie Tract* (2007), *Frolic Architecture* (2010), *THAT THIS* (2010), *Spontaneous Particulars* (2014), *TOM TIT TOT* (2014), and *Debths* (2017). In all of these dynamic works, we simultaneously experience language through both sides of the page and across facing pages; these cross-genre, sequential collages invite our dialogue with inter- and intra-texts—recalling the Latin, *textus*—experienced as woven compositions of *radical contingencies*.



By 'radical', I mean a fundamental concern for and critique of the linguistic roots of reality; and by 'contingency', I mean chance affinities among and within, against and through materials/methods that are neither designed nor foreseen, yet possible due to accidents, conditions, or forces whether immanent or imminent. Howe's *factual telepathy*—engaged as an editorial gesture ~~and~~ and constitutive trope ~~and~~ ~~occupies~~—occupies physical and phenomenal territories, playing at

* page 10

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¹⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 91.

²⁰ This early instance (among the first) of Howe's typographic gestures *sous rapture* occurs on [page 13] of the unpaginated Awede text of *Articulation*, and echoes with a recent companion instance of emphasizing what is said unsaid: "TANGIBLE THINGS // Out of a stark oblivion *disenter*". *Debths* (New York: New Directions, 2017), 49.

→ A paper 10-11



the edges of font and figure, sound and sense, Across and through, within and between the pages in *Articulation* and *Eikon* (as well as in the other essays, poems, and volumes invoked above), numerous instances (too many to address in this short essay) may be encountered of Howe's collagist-typographic field of action.

If you're familiar with Susan Howe's books from the 1970s collected in *Frame Structures* (1996) and/or with her volumes from the 1980s collected in *The Europe of Trusts* (1990, 2002), you might be saying to yourself at this point, "Well, sure, Susan has always worked in these ways." And you would be correct! Howe's poetry and prose from *Hinge Picture* (1974) to *The Quarry* (2015) and beyond lovingly and persistently recovers and releases "language Lost // in language / Wind sweeps over the wheat // mist-mask on woods"²¹ threshing the linguistic and material ruins of history for voices and visions, ghosts and gifts on the brink of oblivion that could repair personal and collective traumas. YES and yes AND YET [...] what I'm also noticing is that distinctive collagist-typographic, polyvocal gestures of "invisible colliding phenomena"²²—which I'm tracking here vis-à-vis the kindred notion of "factual telepathy"²³—first emerge in *Articulation* and *Eikon* and the other works collected in *Singularities* and *The Nonconformist's Memorial*—editorial/tropological artifacts that are not quite yet present in Howe's typescripts and published works from the earlier 1980s and 1970s, including her early word squares and watercolor broadsides (c. 1958-1973).²⁴ To my eyes and ears, *Articulation* stages the first perfor-

²¹ "Speeches at the Barriers," *The Europe of Trusts* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1990), 99; and (New York: New Directions, 2002), 99.

²² Susan Howe, "Sorting Facts; or, Nineteen Ways of Looking at Marker," *Beyond Document: Essays on Nonfiction Film* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 341.

²³ "Sorting Facts; or, Nineteen Ways of Looking at Marker," *New Directions Poetry Pamphlet #1* (New York: New Directions, 2013), 7.

²⁴ Susan Howe Papers, YCAL MSS 338, Series VI, Art Work, 1958-1973, Box 21, Artist's Book, "Untitled, handmade artist's/poet's book including original drawing, painting, collage, and text;" and Boxes 22-30, Drawings, "Includes drawings/manuscripts done in series by Susan Howe, representing transitional

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Art in Art & Stone on Stone:⁴⁴

Susan Howe is a North American author

The Quarry

I am a North American author. I was born in 1937. Into World War II and the rotten sin of man-made mass murder [...] Where did the poison of racial hatred in American begin? Will it ever end? Why are we such a violent nation? Why do we have such contempt for powerlessness?⁴⁵

... she writes...

For me there was no silence before armies [...] I wish I could tenderly lift from the dark side of history, voices that are anonymous, slighted—inarticulate.⁴⁶

Poetry is *factual telepathy* for Susan Howe (*The Quarry*, 91, 111). By this phrase, Howe means that her writing occupies charged contradictory zones among phanopoetic, physical, and phenomenal territories. Readers will find the essays collected in *The Quarry* challenging and rewarding, transgressive and transporting—not only for their relevance within the scope of Howe’s work since 1974, but especially for their celebrations of rigorous creativity (in cinema, literature, philosophy, and visual art) that regenerate legacies of violence into works of hope. Howe’s writing searches through the linguistic and material ruins of history for voices and artifacts, ghosts and gifts that could repair personal and collective traumas. Her essays forge elegiac passages of resistance and rescue across the “River of battlefield ghosts” in collaborative quests for the “River of peace and quietness” (23). Howe’s abiding care with

⁴⁴ A shorter version of this essay first appeared as “Art in Art / Stone on Stone: Susan Howe’s Quarrying” in *Talisman: A Journal of Contemporary Poetry & Poetics* 44 (2016): <http://talismanarchive3a.weebly.com/howard-howe.html>.[.]

⁴⁵ Susan Howe, *The Birth-mark: unsettling the wilderness in American literary history* (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 38, 164.

⁴⁶ *The Quarry*, 177, 181.

(and concern for) our cultural and intellectual inheritance is revolutionary and redemptive. Her work is a force for social change. We need Susan Howe's learned and generous nonconformity today perhaps more than ever.



This essay primarily concerns *The Quarry*, but I'll occasionally also refer to Howe's companion collection, *The Birth-mark*—first published in 1993 by Wesleyan University Press—which New Directions republished and released on the same day as this new volume: Pearl Harbor Day. Legacies of disaster—of cultural, racial, and spiritual violence—of traumas collective and personal—invest Howe's writing with a dynamic and austere force for recovery. As the entwined epigraphs for this essay illustrate, *The Birth-mark* and *The Quarry* are contingent & contiguous elegiac twins—fierce, merciful, and visionary volumes of poetic prose juxtaposed within “the double and paradoxical nature” (*The Quarry*, 103) of Howe's kaleidoscopic array of interdisciplinary and multimedia performances and publications. This timely release of both books (in 2015) celebrates Howe's scrupulous-aleatory research, avant-gardist criticism, and visionary poetics since 1974, underscoring her preeminence as one of the most innovative and influential American writers of her generation and our time.

In her conversation with Maureen McLane published online in *Paris Review* (2012), Howe affirms that she believes “in the sacramental nature of poetry.”⁴⁷ And in *Spontaneous Particulars* (2014), Howe refers to her artistic practice as an intuitive “sense of self-identification and trust, or the granting of grace in an ordinary room, in a secular time”.⁴⁸ How does she accomplish such paradoxical fusions between fact and fiction, personal and political, sacred and secular realms? Howe's volumes of poetry combine a documentarian's scrupulous attention to detail, a visionary's defiance of authority, and a minimalist's care for dynamic relationships between form and content, figure and ground in all media. This is also

⁴⁷ Susan Howe, “The Art of Poetry: Interview by Maureen N. McLane,” *The Paris Review* (Winter 2012): [http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/6189/the-art-of-poetry-no-97-susan-howe\[.\]](http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/6189/the-art-of-poetry-no-97-susan-howe[.])

⁴⁸ *Spontaneous Particulars*, 63.

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uncanny ability to regenerate their sources, returning to the archival groundwork “the silent voice of stone on stone” (218). That immersive, artifactual and contextual *thisness* is Susan Howe’s ending-beginning “Art in art” (214). Her linguistic collages, which alternate between philosophic rigor and poetic rapture, invite our intuitive co-creative agency, as in this deftly complex passage from “Sorting Facts”:

He loses her to look for her. Escape into air from living
underwater, she could be his mother glimmering into sight

if a bird beats the air must it oh

oh must it not resound

across the moving surface of time, a dark wing the hauntedness
all that is in the other stream of consciousness. (*The Quarry*, 98)⁵¹

In these lines, Howe imbricates/intercalates her readings of Chris Marker’s film, *La Jetée* (1962), Laurence Olivier’s cinematic production of *Hamlet* (1948), and her memories of watching “newsreels, cartoons, previews of coming attractions” (103) during the 1940s at the University Movie Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts—among numerous other contextual motifs and materials engaged in this particular essay—in her search “across the moving surface of time” for “a dark wing the hauntedness all that is in the other stream of consciousness.” Everything has co-creative agency when placed within and against Howe’s animist-materialist-vitalist canvasses, which juxtapose fragments into dialogues between “materialism and spiritualism” (157)—always critically attentive to the roles of language and silence, time and space as mediators of human experience. Howe’s poetic prose reconfigures personal and public forms of grief expression, relentlessly and lovingly folding texts and contexts over and over, entangling her archival source materials within and

⁵¹ These lines have been reformatted for presentation here.

* Image of the Love
* Spinnakers

* Thanks to
Joe Brann?
Indigo Deany?

+ the editors
at LunaMopolis

* In 2016 The Love published my poetry chapbook,
Spinnakers which collects a sequence

of works that, - in some ways, emulate
Susan Howe's poetry + poetics, and which,

in ~~many~~ other ways, collage ~~with~~ auto-biographical
references w/ echoes from

* Fickle Man

local, national, + international
events during 2015 + 2016;
various texts + contexts;

disturbances ~~and~~ and dreams that
were and still are so worrisome.

→ chief among them, legacies of hatred + violence;
~~that have been amplified for centuries~~
and war machines . . . and ghosts.

+ etc.

→ In homage to my father, who was a WWII Navy pilot

→ each page = a two-page assemblage who fought and
suffered to save.
protest + prayer and Morse transcodings

→
* anagrams, etc.

→ Since the book came out,
I've been making these sonic image texts
in collaboration w/ my daughter, Kat,
~~who is a brilliant artist.~~

→ I'll play one of these recordings for you now
that accompanies Fichte Maw
→ we have also made a movie
(work-in-progress)
→ *play* → part → *Movie* → "Ghost Ships" image
*only poem sets 3
then turns 3!

→ read "Ghost Ships" 2:30, then stop
while movie plays → Thank you so much!

→ "Ghost Ships" image

"subtext + ghost ships
willow sliver slips"

"an enubus sliver broke"
— Gerhul's report @
Ophelia's death

→ *Concordance

— and the spark for Susan Howe's
most recent artist book, Concordance,
2019, which we have in our library's
collection

