Journal of British and Irish INNOVATIVE POETRY

Louis Armand, 'The Interpunct.' (2026) 18(1): *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.16995/bip.17441

Open Library of Humanities

The Interpunct

Louis Armand, Charles University, litteraria@gmail.com

The Interpunct marks a fundamental relation between the poetics of complexity & the limits of form. It relates – by a recursive tropological movement – the notion of a semantic minimum to an entropic maximum: those seemingly diametrical points at which "incoherence" fatally intrudes & at which "structure" necessarily obtains. The term Interpunct appears throughout Richard Makin's "unclassifiable" text, Work, in which the topics (topoi) of semantic labour & entropy are insistently explored & autoproductively "put to work." By an itinerary that harks back to the psychogeographies of Iain Sinclair & the dialectical/acrostic schemas of Ann Quin to the critical formalism of Rosalind Krauss, the Interpunct essays a "theory" of complexity contiguous with contemporary developments in experimental speculative physics.

Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by the Open Library of Humanities. © 2026 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/. Articles published by the Open Library of Humanities may also contain other CC-licensed material, or material used or reproduced under an exception or limitation to copyright. Such material is not subject to the article's license. It is either marked with its own license, or marked that it has been reproduced with permission or under fair-use.
OPEN ACCESS

Please note that this essay is accompanied by an introductory article by David Vichnar entitled 'Sculpting Empty Space': An Introduction to Richard Makin's Poetics.

> Where now? Who now? When now? Unquestioning. I, say I. Unbelieving. Questions, call them that. Keep going, going on, call that going, call that on. —Samuel Beckett, *The Unnameable* (1952)
>
> Writing should go on. —Gertrude Stein, *Lectures in America* (1935)

In her 1985 volume of essays, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde & Other Modernist Myths*, Rosalind Krauss notes that, "Over the last ten years rather surprising things have come to be called sculpture."[1] She goes to elaborate how the term "sculpture" has been applied apparently without discrimination to "narrow corridors with TV monitors at the ends; large photographs documenting country hikes; mirrors placed at strange angles in ordinary rooms; temporary lines cut into the floor of the desert." For Krauss the situation of sculpture can be taken as paradigmatic of an erosion of categorical imperatives in the arts from the mid-1950s, following a decade of Greenbergian purism in which it was the task of the artist to hold fast, against the corrosive invasion of kitsch, at the frontiers of genre – not to push outward, but to defend against the subversion of art's manifest destiny ("universal categories," as Krauss says, "to authenticate a group of particulars"[2]). To a Greenbergian eye, "Nothing, it would seem, could possibly give to such a motley of effort the right to lay claim to whatever one might mean by the category of sculpture." Krauss' caveat – "Unless, that is, the category can be made to become almost infinitely malleable"[3] – is tempered thus:

> I would submit that we know very well what sculpture is. And one of the things we know is that it is a historically bounded category and not a universal one. As is true of any other convention, sculpture has its own internal logic, its own set of rules, which, though they can be applied to a variety of situations, are not themselves open to very much change. The logic of sculpture, it would seem, is inseparable from the logic of the monument.[4]

Coining the expression "sculpture in the expanded field," Krauss poses the apparent formlessness of sculptural works against an historical formalism of the monument, in

---

[1] Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde & Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985) p.247.
[2] Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, p.248.
[3] Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, p.247.
[4] Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, p.249.

which the seeming decoherence of the category "sculpture" is, as it were, materialised. The example cited by Krauss to open her discussion of the "expanded field" is an otherwise minor earthwork by Mary Miss, entitled *Perimeters/Pavilions/Decoys* (1978):

> Toward the centre of the field there is a slight mound, a swelling in the earth, which is the only warning given for the presence of the work. Closer to it, the large square face of the pit can be seen, as can the ends of the ladder that is needed to descend into the excavation. The work itself is thus entirely below grade: half atrium, half tunnel, the boundary between outside and in, a delicate structure of wooden posts and beams.[5]

The description evokes a dialectical counterpart to the set design of Beckett's *Happy Days*, in which the female protagonist is buried waist-deep & then neck-deep in a mound of earth. It evokes other works of an entropological "anti-aesthetic," too, like Robert Smithson's *A Heap of Language* (1966) & Richard Serra's *Splashing* (1968) – the latter a palimpsest of molten lead flung at the foot of one of Leo Castelli's New York warehouse walls like an old-school hot metal typesetting catastrophe. Something approximating a theme emerges here, of a certain materiality of language, of *the text*, impinging on the spatiotemporal "logic of the monument." The title itself – *Perimeters/Pavilions/Decoys* – alerts us to the game at hand: whether or not anything on display here is what it seems, it is precisely the question of seeming that stands at the centre.

Here, the status of the "work" as "text" is in no way peripheral to the problem of categorical erasure with which Krauss commences: the "logic of the monument" doesn't limit this problem, rather it instantiates erasure itself as the necessary basis of any consideration of categorical thought. Which is to say, the difference-within-the-same which is the underwriting structure of all categorisation, all signification, all discourse as such. But what's the use of such an instant universalism unless it speaks to the particularity of that species of erasure with which the "logic of the monument" is constructed? Anything less must appear utterly trivial – as trivial, in fact, as a pile of dirt.

"A New Order of Space"

In the final diaristic pages of her 1969 novel, *Passages*, Ann Quin evokes the seemingly contradictory idea of a "metamorphosis" that is "made to *order*" – a negative-dialectical mechanism that, in her earlier text *Berg* (1964), is figured by the anagrammatical inversion of the protagonist's name: "A man named Berg, who changed his name to Greb, came to a seaside town intending to kill his father."[6] Across

---

[5] Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, p.247.

[6] Ann Quin, *Berg* (London: Calder, 1964).

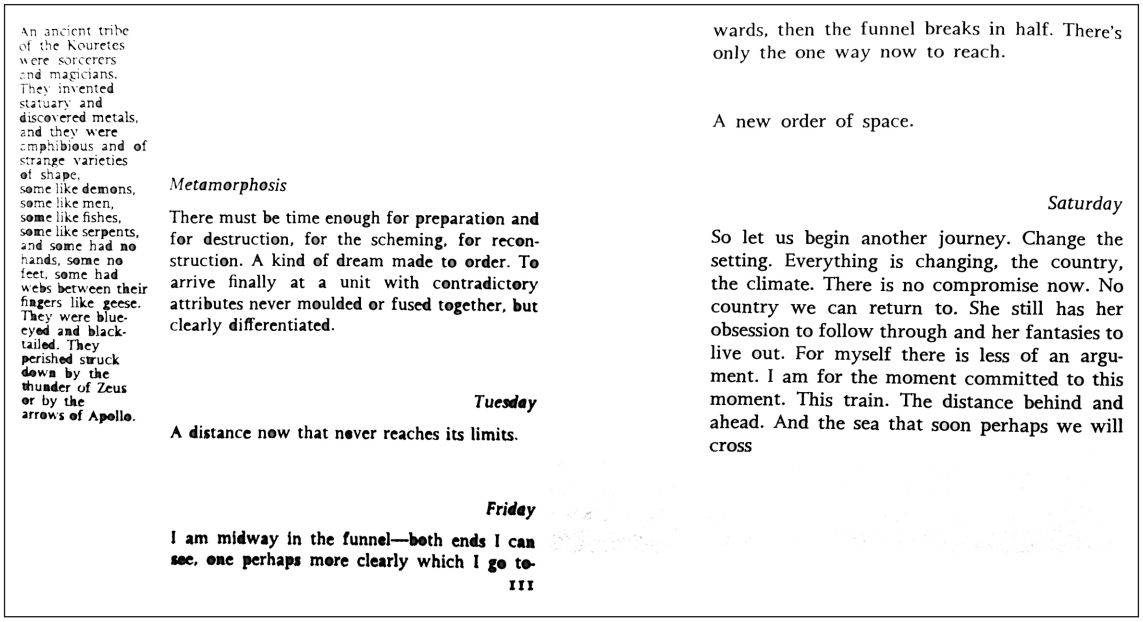
the interval separating the first & last pages of this "novel," a narrative unspooled between two views of a window, the one "blurred by out of season spray," the other "just cleaned."[7] A reflection-effect of chiasmatic erasure & re-inscription (father, son, mother, lover) presents itself as the central conceit, which is to say as a pervasive topos of its decentring. In *Passages*, this effect is extended beyond narrative schema to the "formalism" of the work's bibliographical codes. The polysemy suggested in the book's title participates a general reversioning of the *text-as-subject* into a general tropology of "metamorphosis," played out between the physical "marks on the page" & the semantic rites of "ordering":

> *Monday.* Day after day I search for the girl. Ah yes and then supposing I do eventually find her, what then? Perhaps the orgy my imagination composes is better than the actual thing? The bend of her body under the whip, would I really arrive at the same satisfaction a second time? But a dozen times I go over it, half awake, in dreams sometimes it is the other woman who handles the whip, who dances over me, my body covered in sperm, sweat and blood. And in her mind, as we make love in front of the mirror, what forms does she really see there?[8]

The above passage is accompanied by marginalia, recording a description of a Minoan fresco, which parallels, doubles or inverts it: "A girl acrobat has hold the horns of a bull at full gallop, one of the horns runs under her left armpit. She is about to perform a backward somersault over the animal's back. A second female performer behind stretches out both her hands as if to catch the flying figure or to steady her when she comes to earth the right way up." At the top of the following page, the Cretan acrobats, or the S&M performers, seem to metamorphose into "a child on a swing in some large gardens." One entry further down, before a short passage headed *Metamorphosis*, Quin (writing now in the first person) adds: "I am on the verge of discovering my own demoniac possibilities and because of this I am conscious of not being alone within myself. // The question then: who is it that today inhabits me?"[9] The typographic/typological character of this metamorphosis renders the teleology of its *form* recursive or even superpositional, a concatenation of "units" – as Quin says – where each textual quantum decoheres into "contradictory attributes never moulded or fused together, but clearly differentiated," inaugurating a "new order of space":

---

[7] Quin, *Berg*, p. 1;168.
[8] Ann Quin, *Passages* (Chicago: Dalkey Archive, 2003) p.110.
[9] Quin, *Passages*, p. 111.



An ancient tribe of the Kouretes were sorcerers and magicians. They invented statuary and discovered metals, and they were amphibious and of strange varieties of shape, some like demons, some like men, some like fishes, some like serpents, and some had no hands, some no feet, some had webs between their fingers like geese. They were blue-eyed and black-tailed. They perished struck down by the thunder of Zeus or by the arrows of Apollo.

Metamorphosis

There must be time enough for preparation and for destruction, for the scheming, for reconstruction. A kind of dream made to order. To arrive finally at a unit with contradictory attributes never moulded or fused together, but clearly differentiated.

Tuesday

A distance now that never reaches its limits.

Friday

I am midway in the funnel—both ends I can see, one perhaps more clearly which I go towards, then the funnel breaks in half. There's only the one way now to reach.

A new order of space.

Saturday

So let us begin another journey. Change the setting. Everything is changing, the country, the climate. There is no compromise now. No country we can return to. She still has her obsession to follow through and her fantasies to live out. For myself there is less of an argument. I am for the moment committed to this moment. This train. The distance behind and ahead. And the sea that soon perhaps we will cross

III

It's precisely this "contradictory" element – between a *schematic* & what we might call a *schizmatic* textual apparatus – that suggests the rudiments of a theory of writing that is also a monument of praxis: an oscillation ("a child on a swing"), a feedback operation of "distance" that "never reaches its limits." Quin's "new order of space" – articulating a formal ambivalence by way of an anticlassicism of the "fragment" ("invented statuary... of strange varieties of shape") – establishes a certain proximity to what Krauss, in the final chapter of *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (1977), calls "a new syntax."

Drawing upon the figure of the double-negative in reference to a 1969 short (3-minute) film by Richard Serra – *Hand Catching Lead* – Krauss frames a special syntax of "relentless persistence" – of "one thing after another" – as distinct from what Donald Judd had described as a classical &/or rationalist "a priori system" of "balance" ("you do something in one corner & balance it against something in the other corner"). The double-negative – evoking both an asymmetrical spiral that is "repetitive, austere & nearly without incident" & the *revolutionary movement* of a negation-of-negation – expresses itself in a sculptural/textual operation that is also the object of its own de/stabilisations: not in the form of a dialectical synthesis, but in the radical form of an ambivalence-of-ambivalence. Krauss' monumental logic of accumulative, concatenated "form" – articulated by way of repetition compulsion that is also a "grasping machine" (via McLuhan via Robert Browning) proposes that all categorical thought must exceed its grasp, *else what's a metaphor*?

A latter counterpart to Quin's anti-formalism can be found in the work of post-Situationist "psychogeographer" Iain Sinclair, whose serial works of urban archaeological counter-erasure produce monumental anagrams of semantic topography, "caught" in superpositional freezeframe. Frame after frame. Like Serra's *Hand Catching Lead* – & its direct inspiration, Yvonne Rainer's *Hand Film* (1966) – Sinclair's perambulations through entropy, repetition, accumulation, monumentality, mirror Quin's *dérives* of backmasking & permutation, exposing a "secret" system of *differences-without-terms* productive of a quasi-Diracian hypothesis on textual antimatter. Here, Joycean "ambiviolence" marks something like an encounter between quantum complexity & special relativity.

Psychotic geography

Lights Out for the Territory (9 Excursions in the Secret History of London) – Sinclair's 1997 "psychotic geography" of London, "bisecting the capital's boroughs and re-working conventional delineations of the city as a series of 'zones'"[10] – begins with an epigraph from the Hastings writer & artist, Richard Makin, & recounts a bizarre quest by Sinclair to track down one of Makin's guerrilla "site-specific" installations, *seminarium*, at Greenwich University's Technology Faculty. Sinclair quotes from the curatorial text:

> *Makin was given complete freedom regarding the site and the nature of the piece... The piece is textual and is condensed from the site's appellation, the artist working with the constraints of synonyms, associations and the etymology of the compounded words* seminar room*. These served to focus heterogeneous responses to the subject environment and its broader surroundings and were instrumental in producing a poetic constellation evoking various motifs corellational to the function of that environment. The yield is an equivocal conjunction intended to investigate a pondering and contemplation of simultaneously the presented semantic arrangement and the function of the host space, the receiver situated within the weave of locus and stream of words that have emerged from the nominative of a particular physical domain: a transparent and resonant superimposition of word and place.*[11]

The scene was thus set for a framing of Makin's work, virtually unknown to the mainstream of British contemporary literature, within a border zone between psychogeography, installation art, experimental writing & avantgardist subversion. Yet, through the manifold detours of Sinclair's text, "Richard Makin's assault on

---

[10] Dan Smith, "Lights Out for the Territory," *Richmond Review* (1996) https://www.richmondreview.co.uk/lightsou/

[11] Qtd in Iain Sinclair, *Lights Out for the Territory* (London: Granta, 1997) 7.

Seminar Room 178 of the University of Greenwich"[12] never arrives, or is indefinitely delayed, an open-ended detour, a missed-encounter, a void at the centre of *Lights Out* which presages Makin's own "site-specific" graffiti & its inevitable erasure (yet, left unattested in this way, could it be said to have existed at all?).

"The writing is that it is," Sinclair later wrote of Makin's 672-page tome *Dwelling*, published by Reality Street in 2011, "ghosting a text that is never gratuitous, offering nothing that isn't there... An author who is what he says." Like Makin's subsequent books – *Mourning, Concussion Protocols, Work – Dwelling* first appeared in serialisation, itself a work of textual performance: "More fire-trap than cut-up, aeolian ash: the horror of leaving an empty space in an artistic composition. Separated flake by flake, pieced together and sandwiched between sheets of glass, like the joints of a finger. Incomplete, wanting one syllable in the last step. Incomplete to stop."[13] The text seems to come into existence as a series of ephemeral installation pieces, distributed through the evasive interstitial zones of an "unclassifiable" experimental underground that verges at times upon (& at times slips over into) a fringe of criminality, violence & moral incomprehension.

Unlike another of his contemporaries, Stewart Home – whose infamous pastiche of Quin's *Berg – 69 Things To Do with a Dead Princess* (2002) articulates the malaise of post-Thatcherite class consciousness under "New Labour" & the tabloid conspiratorial diversions around the death of Diana, Princess of Wales on 31 August 1997 – Makin's preoccupations lie with effects of corrosive sublimation in the collective linguistic unconscious. Where the "ambiviolences" of Home & Sinclair are more of general narrativized relativity, Makin's are quantised, barely formulated before decohering into sub-narrative event-states:

> Of feeling alien within your own tongue / Yes, that is what we must do, we must take the most minute precautions
>
> The end of political independence brought a new interest to the life of the individual – any strip of water appeared metallic in the dull autumnal light. We are wedged between the indifference
>
> There was a pattern – he began every operation with a diversionary move. What happened next was divine influx, as we have said: renewable silence. Hell was something electroneural
>
> Now, a playful alienation, a familiar pet-name of the commonwealth[14]

---

[12] Sinclair, *Lights Out for the Territory*, p. 15.
[13] Richard Makin, *Dwelling* (Hastings: Reality Street, 2011).
[14] Richard Makin, *Mourning* (London: Equus, 2018) p. 14; 262; 279; 89.

Makin's "alienism" is here fused to a textual praxis, subversive of terms like "experimental" in their current revisionist iteration by institutions engaged in selectively recuperating the literary *personae non gratae* of the late twentieth & early twenty-first century in a miserable attempt to buy credence for their own sham productions. The current rehabilitation of Quin, for example, by an industry that for 60 years assiduously erased her from literary history. If Makin "represents" anything, it is the ambiguous & *distasteful* character of the desire to represent, to account for, & to detoxify the "unpresentable" within a framework of agreed/agreeable aesthetic & social values:

> Of the order of things I am still uncertain. However, I am convinced there are some bacteria that enter through the labyrinth of the ear and attack the nervous system. It seems as if death, the extinction of the ego-consciousness, brings with it a considerable extension of knowledge: an illumination – radiant, void and inseparable.[15]

Black holography

Erasure extends into all aspects of signification & is a statement about power – power exercised through the control of meaning & the submission of language to the status of property. Erasure is also the articulation of a contrary power – "writing power." This is the power of what Derrida refers to as *différance* – irreducibility, polysemy, supplementality, but also as the inscription of a certain erasure within the framework of a metaphysics of presence for which the action of signification is first & foremost a *paternalistic act* by the "father of the logos" (Plato). By placing metaphysics under the sign of erasure ("sous rature"), Derrida brought into view not a "negative dialectics," as has often been supposed, but a fundamental *ambivalence* in the way signification operates *in the absence of an "authorial" presence*. Makin:

> The book is generally regarded as being written by a single hand. Origin denotes a spirit disembodied, always... Origin is late from old of unknown origin[16]

Much has been said about Roland Barthes' "death of the author" & Michel Foucault's "author-function," but Derrida's erasurism, like Makin's, isn't concerned with a post-mortem condition of the text, as if language must continuously mourn or emancipate itself from the impositions of origin or paternal authority. Nor is it merely a trope designed to evade the totalising power of an Hegelianism that refuses to give

[15] Richard Makin, *Concussion Protocols* (Prague: Alienist, 2015) p.55.
[16] Makin, *Concussion Protocols*, p.40.

up the ghost. Writing power isn't simply the "other side" of ideology, for example. It isn't *one form of power among others* or a *power in opposition*. Writing power evokes a "solicitation," as Derrida says – a calling-for & simultaneously shaking-from-within – of power "itself": an *inscriptive erasure* or *erasive inscription*.

In January 2017, Adam R. Brown & Leonard Susskind published a paper entitled "The Second Law of Quantum Complexity,"[17] outlining what in effect serves as a "general theory" of erasurism. In it, Brown & Susskind hint at how, analogously, a residual notion of the "author-function" might be seen to devolve into an operation that I have elsewhere called *entropement*: an auto-poetic language-effect understood as a probability field (an idea initially derived from Claude Shannon's "statistical model"). Complexity, in the title of Brown & Susskind's paper, refers to system dynamics characterised by unpredictability, nonlinearity, randomness & indeterminacy, & is analogous to the tendency of entropy in any closed system to increase (until equilibrium or entropic maximum). Derived from observations about the growth of blackholes (whose entropy is determined by its surface area[18]), but revealing a general principle of materiality, Brown & Susskind proposed that the tendency of complexity to increase represents a quantum analogue of the second law of thermodynamics, wherein a system increases in complexity *even after it reaches "thermal equilibrium."* As with entropy, however, complexity, too, eventually reaches a state of "complexity equilibrium," at which point it can be said to have inhabited every possible configuration of states that it is capable of. At this stage, somewhat reminiscent of a Viconian *ricorso*, the system *spontaneously resets* & returns to its initial "simple" state to recommence its evolution.

Discussing these findings, George Musser offers the following schematisation, which he calls "The Five Stages of Quantum Systems":

> The first is **initialization**. The system starts simply: just a bunch of particles or other building blocks, acting independently.
>
> Then comes **thermalization**. The particles bounce around and collide with one another, eventually reaching thermal equilibrium. Their shenanigans also begin to link the particles through quantum entanglement. In a process that Susskind calls "scrambling," information is disseminated through the system until it no longer resides in localized places, much as a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can affect weather over the whole globe…

---

[17] Adam R. Brown & Leonard Susskind, "The Second Law of Quantum Complexity," *High Energy Physics – Theory* (4 January 2017): arxiv.org/abs/1701.01107.

[18] Or as the number of Planck areas in the blackhole's horizon area.

> Next is **complexification**. Here, the system is in thermal equilibrium but has not stopped evolving. It keeps getting more complex, but in a way that is almost invisible to standard measures such as entropy. Theorists rely instead on circuit complexity, which expresses the increasingly intricate linkages among entangled particles…This stage lasts exponentially longer than thermalization.
>
> Then the system reaches complexity **equilibrium**, where complexity hits a ceiling. Although the system *continues to change*, it can no longer be said to evolve — it has no sense of directedness, but wanders among equal states of maximal complexity.
>
> The last stage is called **recurrence**, where the system stumbles back into its original simple condition. For this to happen by accident is highly improbable. But eternity is a long time, so it ultimately does happen, after a period of time that is not merely exponential, but an exponential of an exponential. The whole process then repeats.[19]

This *ricorso* implies a strange topology of the so-called "original" state – a *tropology*, rather, of inscriptive-erasure, of resetting & recommencing, a Joycean "ambiviolence" in which the end ("fin") is *both* immanently & spontaneously entangled with another beginning ("again"), as in the "cyclewheeling history" of *Finnegans Wake* viewed through the holography of its portmanteaux.[20] It may serve, too, as an analogue to the superpositionality & what Krauss, with Yve-Alain Bois, calls the *formless* – after Bataille's *l'informe* – a "strange integer" of indifference which Bataille first likens to a "tooth deadened by novocain" & later, more explicitly, to "inkspots," a "spider" & "spit."[21]

Bataille's infamous non-definition of *l'informe*, published as a "dictionary" entry in the journal *Documents*, notes that "It is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to brings things down [*déclasser*] in the world."[22] The formless – like a "heap of language" – points to a base materiality that "operates," as Krauss says, as an un(re)presentable substrate, perturbing any system of meaning or *mimetic ideology* vested in formalism by a sub-versive declassification. The formless devalorises, by the persistent erasure of categorical distinctions – from the particulate to the universal, tropic to schematic, paperspace to hyperspace. Moreover, it does this *without any (contradictory) investment of ("use") value.* Whatever paradigmatic function Krauss & Bois envisage for the formless, it remains (must remain *by definition*), irrecuperable for, & irreducible to, any paradigm whatsoever.

---

[19] George Musser, "In New Paradox, Black Holes Appear to Evade Heat Death," *Quanta* (6 June 2023): https://www.quantamagazine.org/in-new-paradox-black-holes-appear-to-evade-heat-death-20230606/ – bold & italics added for emphasis.

[20] Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, FW pp. 185.35.

[21] Georges *Bataille*, "Informe," *Documents* 7 (December 1929) p.382.

[22] Qtd by Yve-Alain Bois, "The Use Value of 'Formless,'" in Rosalind Krauss & Yve-Alain Bois, *Formless: A User's Guide* (New York: Zone Books, 1997) p. 18.

From text to work

In his "monumental" poetics of entropy, *Work* (2022), Makin enigmatically instructs the reader to "Strike him out. Extend erasure to any objects found existing out of joint. Retain only the more imposing samples, tapering away beyond form"[23] ("in so doing he has cleverly erased our remaining alternatives"[24]). The author, as point-of-origin ("Origin is mid-solitary"[25]), is *sous rature*, in the Derridean sense of ghosting a text the way entropy ghosts complexity: "Note the haste with which fragments are written down before the thought can slip away: alternatives and erasures, the erratic configuration of parts. I believe too there survives some trace of the original, your residue."[26] Makin calls this point-of-origin an "interpunct":

> Word-separating spaces disappeared some time between six and eight, before the interpunct landed. Language says the interpunct has a variety of uses. It was female. The interpunct is present. I am unicode.
>
> The fragmented sign is a typographical anomaly. I am attempting to reference the numbered sections of a document using an old-fashioned card index. Frequency is an illegal cipher.[27]

Interpunct (unicode U+00B7), "also named interpoint," is a "sign"[28] – a "black hole" or lacuna – whose gravitational force "centres" or "constellates" a mass of signifiers presupposing a signified, each the phantasmatic project of a *difference-without-terms*. It isn't only, as Amy Catanzano suggests in "Poetry in Superposition," that language "can be treated as a dynamic complex system that increases in complexity as its interactive elements increase, though not toward fundamental synthesis, narrative, and ethics or spatial, temporal, and conceptual direction. As each element becomes more interactive, a poem becomes less chiral, more multiversal, more *immarginable* (Joyce)."[29] Such a multiversality is always-already inscribed/erased at its point-of-origin, interpunctually. The sign, as non-site of a re-presentation that is both "present" & "immarginable," indexes future itineraries of epochal recursion:

---

[23] Richard Makin, *Work* (London: Equus, 2022) p.334.
[24] Makin, *Work*, p.380.
[25] Makin, *Work*, p.226.
[26] Makin, *Work*, p.385.
[27] Makin, *Work*, p.232.
[28] Makin, *Work*, p.235.
[29] Amy Catanzano, "Poetry in Superposition: An Essay-Poem in Quantum Poetics," *Crisis and Critique* 9.1 (31 September 2022): https://www.crisiscritique.org/storage/app/media/2022-08-31/amy-catanzano.pdf.

> See, one reckless idea after another. When people read, they have no way of knowing what has been erased, what has been given sanction to remain.[30]
>
> The physical evidence is erased and the crime scene dissolved.[31]
>
> Apparently the numbers are a mannerism and must be erased. It is imperative that you leave this instant, transfigure yourself through the portal.[32]

If the entropy of black holes implies a spacetime comprised of infinitesimal, recombinable "pieces," its textual analogue for Makin lies in the interpunctuality of sign-stuff – "a small particle of disgust"[33] like Blake's "grain of sand" containing (un)imaginable vortices of recursion, singularity, Hawking radiation – an inscriptive-erasure that *goes on*. Redolent of Duchamp's *infrathin*, Bataille's *strange integer,* Stein & Beckett's attritive *goings-on*, etc., the micropoetics of Makin's *interpunct* dislocates the observable frame of the so-called textual object into a "distance," as Quin says, "that never reaches its limits." And whereas, for example, Smithson's *Heap of Language* performs a mirror displacement of Krauss' "logic of the monument," from complexity to decoherence – a movement exemplified in Smithson's 1966 essay, "Entropy and the New Monuments," in which he writes: "Instead of causing us to remember the past like the old monuments, the new monuments seem to cause us to forget the future"[34] – Makin's interpuncts *(re)produce* the future, from a kind of archaeologic-linguistic detritus, "an entire alphabet nailed into the earth."[35] Such augury recalls moments of Samuel R. Delany's glitched, hallucinogenic post-apoc-futurism in *Dhalgren* (1974), reduced to a matrix of erased, disassembled, reassembled street-signage:

> After the smashed glass of an army surplus store came movie marquees: no letters at all on the first, a single R on the second; the one line on the next, he had time to reconstruct was "Three Stars says the Times." On the next R, O, and T were stacked on top of one another; E, Q, and U were followed by a space of three letters and then a Y...
>
> ECK N W'S
> S R OGS
> ND
> T E G TA Y
>
> announced the next marquee.[36]

---

[30] Makin, *Work*, p.140.
[31] Makin, *Work*, p.167.
[32] Makin, *Work*, p.230.
[33] Makin, *Work*, p.228.
[34] Robert Smithson, "Entropy & the New Monuments" (1966): https://holtsmithsonfoundation.org/entropy-and-new-monuments.
[35] Makin, *Work*, p.199.
[36] Samuel R. Delany, *Dhalgren* (London: Gollancz, 2010) 329.

Relating a categorical thought of futurity to a certain foreclosure on the logic of its (dis) assembly, these "new monuments" index a temporality that decoheres under pressure – not of accumulation, but – of a recursion *in advance of itself*. If such a movement has elsewhere been likened to a circuit of repetition-automation, it's tempting here to draw a further analogy with quantum complexity to consider that the "meaning" of this circuit doesn't arise from some erased, détourned, repressed or hidden element which yet may be made manifest, but is itself a byproduct of signification's "lossiness." Like a syntacto-grammatical probability machine, the circuit operates a process of "postselection"[37] which deletes redundancies *both* in its simplest & most complex forms (the interpunct is itself a matrix or, as Joyce says, "polyhedron" of all inscription). In short, it transforms an "information paradox" arisen from "featureless complexity" into *language.*

Limits of disorder

In physics, such limit-effects or thresholds can be defined by Ramsey numbers, fundamental quantities that correspond to the limits of possible disorder in a given system. Ramsey numbers define such limit-effects geometrically, by measuring general conditions for the existence of substructures with regular properties – specifically, how many vertices & edges (called "graphs") can be contained in a random collection before inevitably giving rise to predictable forms or patterns. If the emergence of structure is an ongoing & recursive movement, constantly haunted by decoherence, then we are led to conclude that a signifying minimum mirrors an entropological maximum. For Brown, Susskind & others, this relation has a "textual" status, expressed in terms of *information*: the minimum unit to carry information stands in inverse relation to the time required to extract information from maximum complexity – just as the infinitesimal stands in relation to the exponential, each falling withing a bounding limit (Planck; Bekenstein).

Where Delany's reconnoitering of semiotic apocalypse implies a negative teleology, where sign-wreckage remains – like Linea-B – to be somehow deciphered anew against a backdrop of randomness, Makin's interpunct evokes a shrinking boundary of semiotic spacetime folding back onto an inflationary interior. We're not speaking here merely of

[37] Postselection is an operation that allows an experimenter to rig a random process in order to obtain a desired outcome. "Say you want to flip a coin and get 10 heads in a row. You can do it, provided you have the patience to start over every time it comes up tails. Similarly, the encoding program begins measuring the semiclassical qubits but reboots every time it gets a 1. Eventually, when it has measured most of the scrambled qubits and successfully gotten a string of zeros, it throws those qubits away. The few remaining, unmeasured qubits represent the pixels of the quantum image of the black hole as viewed from the exterior. Thus, the code squeezes a large semiclassical RAW file into a compact quantum JPEG." Charlie Wood, "Quantum Complexity Shows How to Escape Hawking's Black Hole Paradox," *Quanta* (2 August 2023): https://www.quantamagazine.org/new-calculations-show-how-to-escape-hawkings-black-hole-paradox-20230802/.

an interstice between the semic & the asemic, the categorical & the "infinitely malleable," but a relationship between (de)coherence & (im)possibility. As assembly theorist Lee Cronin says, "It's one thing to say that an object is possible according to the laws of physics; it's another to say there's an actual pathway for making it from its component parts."[38] In other words, complex textual structures don't just emerge from some zone of pure possibility, because – by itself – "the combinatorial space is too vast."

Language, in this view, is simply too complex to have been assembled "by chance" alone. In such cases, "something," argues Cronin, "must have guided that process even before a 'Darwinian'-type selection took over." This isn't to imply some species of "intelligent design" at work in the evolution of signspace, but rather that "complex objects can't arise in isolation – they can only occur in conjunction with others." The matrical character of signifying genesis, here, isn't a punctum birthing contingent histories (Makin's "poison of lineage"[39]) but a generalized condition – the very "stuff" of semantic spacetime. (Cronin: "The information is in the assembly, not the initial conditions."[40]) Language – like what mathematicians call anti-de Sitter space – might thus be thought of as a "bunch of particles" on its "periphery" correlating to an "interior" semantic spacetime – where "probability" corresponds to "signifiability" along a (recursive) fold of postselection. Selection (inscriptive-erasure), while of necessity *autonomous of all elements of the system*, would nevertheless not be autonomous of the system itself, being its *ongoing articulation*.

If we accept this view, then the question of selection – as *assemblage* – must inevitably give rise to questions about structure – of coherence, representability, meaning, etc. Just as selection implies valency, so an interpunctual "limit effect" is implied in the evolution from apparent randomness to structure – from the asemic to the semic, from "unreadable" stuff to "readable" text, from "featureless complexity" into *language*. How such an effect might obtain & where it might be located have been vexing problems for theories of language vested in linguistic-semantic formalism. Less so for a line of thought running through the work of e.g. Lacan & Derrida, incorporating key ideas of complexity & cybernetics. Structural emergence & decoherence are crucial to what we call *erasurism*, which is ultimately concerned with thresholds of representation & bears consequences for mimēsis in general. What we call inscriptive-erasure – understood in its broadest ramification – lies at the very heart of what it means to *represent*.

---

[38] Qtd in Philip Ball, "A New Idea for How to Assemble Life," *Quanta* (4 May 2023): https://www.quantamagazine.org/a-new-theory-for-the-assembly-of-life-in-the-universe-20230504/.

[39] Makin, *Work*, p.199.

[40] Qtd in Ball, "A New Idea for How to Assemble Life."

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.