

S·L·O·W
R·E·A·D·I·N·G
C·L·U·B

(intimacy)

A PRACTICE FOR SLOW READING

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UNERGONOMIC READING #1 (45 DEGREE TILT)

SPINES OF BOOK AND READER, ASKEWN BY 45 DEGREES.

READING TOGETHER IN GROUPS. BODY AT HALF ELEVATION. STAIRWELL VOICES.

WORD AT A TIME

THE LOAD SHARED BY SMALLEST PIECES (A WORD, FOR EXAMPLE) IS SHOULD-
DERED. BETWEEN TEXTS; WITH THE CANNY USE OF A SILENCE WEDGE.

READING TOGETHER & UNSYNCHRONOUSLY. COURTROOM VOICES.

SKIN ON SKIN (WANTING NOTHING & DESIRING EVERYTHING)

WHILE PARTNERED, THE MUTUAL, COMFORTABLE TOUCHING OF SKINS IS HAD
(E.G. HOLDING HANDS, TOUCHING WRISTS, A DESIRELESS FINGER IN THE NA-
VEL).

THUS, PRACTICE ALTERNATING BETWEEN WANTING NOTHING AND DESIRING
EVERYTHING FROM TOUCH AND TEXT ALIKE. BEDROOM VOICES.

EARPLUGS

HYPERBOLIC FORM, GIDDY, EXPRESSES ITSELF AGAINST THE INNER SKINS.
THAT IS, WHILE READING ALOUD, PLACE EARPLUGS INTO THE EARS.
READING OUT LOUD & TOGETHER. PERFORM IN JOY. IN-PUBLIC VOICES.

PUNCTUREFOLD (RECLINING)

ELBOW AND FLOOR. SPEAK ONLY WORDS POISING AT THE COLUMN'S LEFTLY
PERIMETER. RETIRE OTHERWISE INTO THE SKIM OF SILENT READING.
OSCILLATING AND UNTOGETHERLY. DRAWING ROOM VOICES, NO VOICES.

WHITE NOISE

TWO ROLES: READER AND LISTENER, IN PERPENDICULAR RELATION.

L FINDS A SEATED POSITION WITH THE R'S HEAD LAYING IN LAP. L PLACES
HANDS ON THE VOCAL CHORDS OF THE R. HEAD STILL IN LAP, R READS
ALOUD THE TEXT. REPEAT AND REPEAT. OXYCOTTON NOISING FROM THE
WINGS, BATHROOM VOICES.

SEA, SEA RIDER

from **TROUTFISHING IN AMERICA** (1967)

by Richard Brautigan

The man who owned the bookstore was not magic. He was not a three-
legged crow on the dandelion side of the mountain. He was, of course,
a Jew, a retired merchant seaman who had been torpedoed in the North
Atlantic and floated there day after day until death did not want him.

He had a young wife, a heart attack, a Volkswagen and a home in Ma-
rin County. He liked the works of George Orwell, Richard Aldington and
Edmund Wilson. He learned about life at sixteen, first from Dostoevsky
and then from the whores of New Orleans.

The bookstore was a parking lot for used graveyards. Thousands of
graveyards were parked in rows like cars. Most of the books were out of
print, and no one wanted to read them any more and the people who had
read the books had died or forgotten about them, but through the organic
process of music the books had become virgins again. They wore their
ancient copyrights like new maidenheads.

I went to the bookstore in the afternoons after I got off work, during
that terrible year of 1959. He had a kitchen in the back of the store and he
brewed cups of thick Turkish coffee in a copper pan. I drank coffee and
read old books and waited for the year to end.

He had a small room above the kitchen. It looked down on the book-
store and had Chinese screens in front of it. The room contained a couch,
a glass cabinet with Chinese things in it and a table and three chairs. There
was a tiny bathroom fastened like a watch fob to the room.

I was sitting on a stool in the bookstore one afternoon reading a book
that was in the shape of a chalice. The book had clear pages like gin, and
the first page in the book read:

Billy the Kid

born November 23, 1859
in New York City

The owner of the bookstore came up to me, and put his arm on my shoulder and said, "Would you like to get laid?" His voice was very kind.

"No," I said.

"You're wrong," he said, and then without saying anything else, he went out in front of the bookstore, and stopped a pair of total strangers, a man and a woman. He talked to them for a few moments. I couldn't hear what he was saying. He pointed at me in the bookstore. The woman nodded her head and then the man nodded his head. They came into the bookstore. I was embarrassed.

I could not leave the bookstore because they were entering by the only door, so I decided to go upstairs and go to the toilet. I got up abruptly and walked to the back of the bookstore and went upstairs to the bathroom, and they followed after me. I could hear them on the stairs. I waited for a long time in the bathroom and they waited an equally long time in the other room. They never spoke.

When I came out of the bathroom, the woman was lying naked on the couch, and the man was sitting in a chair with his hat on his lap.

"Don't worry about him," the girl said. "These things make no difference to him. He's rich. He has 3, 859 Rolls Royces."

The girl was very pretty and her body was like a clear mountain river of skin and muscle flowing over rocks of bone and hidden nerves.

"Come to me," she said. "And come inside me for we are Aquarius and I love you."

I looked at the man sitting in the chair. He was not smiling and he did not look sad. I took off my shoes and all my clothes. The man did not say a word. The girl's body moved ever so slightly from side to side. There was nothing else I could do for my body was like birds sitting on a telephone wire strung out down the world, clouds tossing the wires carefully.

I laid the girl. It was like the eternal 59th second when it becomes a minute and then looks kind of sheepish.

"Good," the girl said, and kissed me on the face.

The man sat there without speaking or moving or sending out any emotion into the room. I guess he was rich and owned 3, 859 Rolls Royces.

Afterwards the girl got dressed and she and the man left. They walked down the stairs and on their way out, I heard him say his first words.

"Would you like to go to Ernie's for dinner?"

"I don't know," the girl said. "It's a little early to think about dinner."

Then I heard the door close and they were gone. I got dressed and went downstairs. The flesh about my body felt soft and relaxed like an experiment in functional background music. The owner of the bookstore was sitting at his desk behind the counter.

"I'll tell you what happened up there," he said, in a beautiful anti-three-legged-crow voice, in an anti-dandelion side of the mountain voice.

"What?" I said.

"You fought in the Spanish Civil War. You were a young Communist from Cleveland, Ohio. She was a painter. A New York Jew who was sightseeing in the Spanish Civil War as if it were the Mardi Gras in New Orleans being acted out by Greek statues.

"She was drawing a picture of a dead anarchist when you met her. She asked you to stand beside the anarchist and act as if you had killed him. You slapped her across the face and said something that would be embarrassing for me to repeat. You both fell very much in love.

"Once while you were at the front she read Anatomy of Melancholy and did 349 drawings of a lemon.

"Your love for each other was mostly spiritual. Neither one of you performed like millionaires in bed.

"When Barcelona fell, you and she flew to England, and then took a ship back to New York. Your love for each other remained in Spain. It was only a war love. You loved only yourselves, loving each other in Spain during the war. On the Atlantic you were different toward each other and became every day more and more like people lost from each other.

"Every wave on the Atlantic was like a dead seagull dragging its driftwood artillery from horizon to horizon.

"When the ship bumped up against America, you departed without saying anything and never saw each other again. The last I heard of you, you were still living in Philadelphia."

"That's what you think happened up there?" I said.

"Partly," he said. "Yes, that's part of it."

He took out his pipe and filled it with tobacco and lit it.

"Do you want me to tell you what else happened up there?" he said.

"Go ahead."

"You crossed the border into Mexico," he said.

"You rode your horse into a small town. The people knew who you were and they were afraid of you. They knew you had killed many men with that gun you wore at your side. The town itself was so small that it didn't have a priest.

"When the rurales saw you, they left the town. Tough as they were, they did not want to have anything to do with you. The rurales left."

"You became the most powerful man in town."

"You were seduced by a thirteen-year-old girl, and you and she lived together in an adobe hut, and practically all you did was make love.

"She was slender and had long dark hair. You made love standing, sitting, lying on the dirt floor with pigs and chickens around you. The walls, the floor and even the roof of the hut were coated with your sperm and her come.

"You slept on the floor at night and used your sperm for a pillow and her come for a blanket.

"The people in the town were so afraid of you that they could do nothing."

"After a while she started going around town without any clothes on, and the people of the town said that it was not a good thing, and when you started going around without any clothes, and when both of you began making love on the back of your horse in the middle of the zocalo, the people of the town became so afraid that they abandoned the town. It's been abandoned ever since.

"People won't live there.

"Neither of you lived to be twenty-one. It was not necessary.

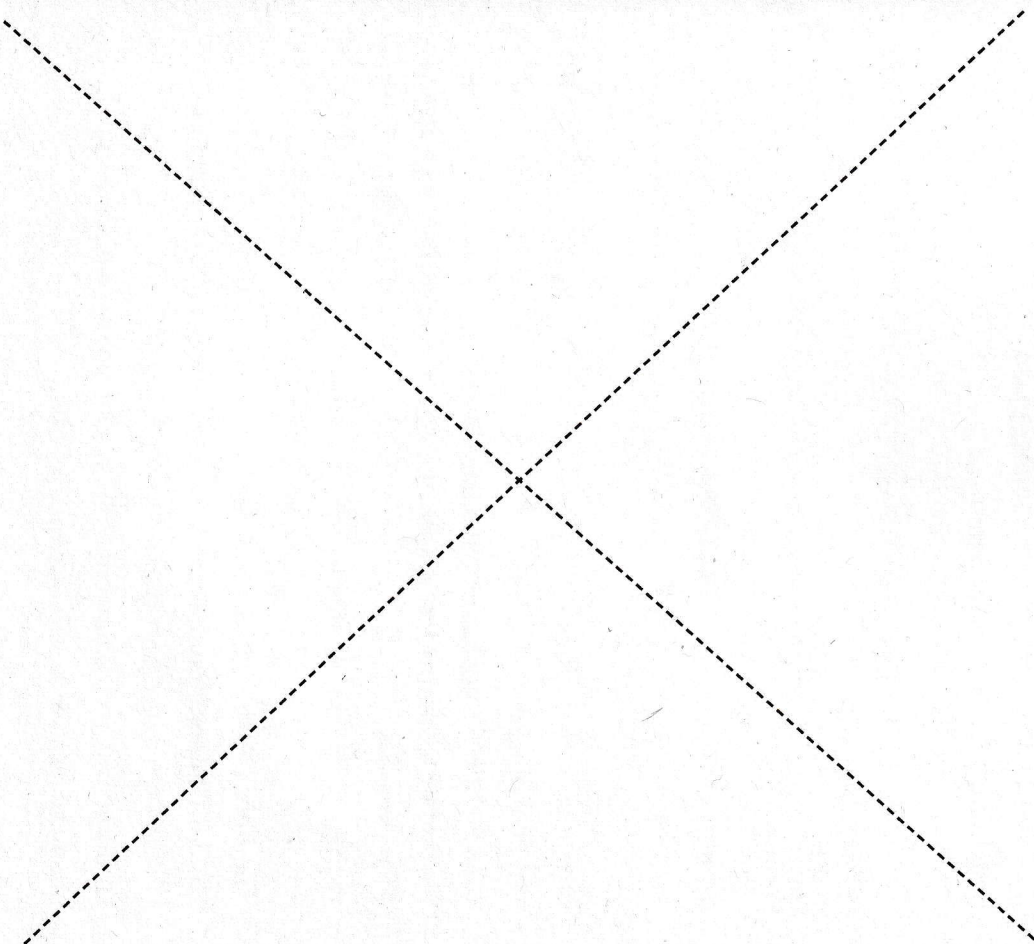
"See, I do know what happened upstairs," he said.

He smiled at me kindly. His eyes were like the shoelaces of a harpsichord. I thought about what happened upstairs.

"You know what I say is the truth," he said.

"For you saw it with your own eyes and traveled it with your own body. Finish the book you were reading before you were interrupted. I'm glad you got laid."

Once resumed the pages of the book began to speed up and turn faster and faster until they were spinning like wheels in the sea.



from **BEAM 30: THE GARDEN** (1996)

by Ronald Johnson

through the twilight's fluoride glare Mercury in perihelion
(rotating exactly three times
while circling the sun twice)
to Pluto foot tilt up the slide at either plane
and build a Garden of the brain.

Internetted eternities, interspersed
with cypresses

ply ringed air about the many spectacled apples there.
Flamestitch niches orb in swivel orb, The Muses thrush at center
turning. *Phospheros arborescens* they sing
sense's

struck crystal clarities
to knock the knees
(or scarlet hollyhock, against a near blue sky).

No end of fountains lost among the shrubberies full eye may bare.
Fixed stars
with fireflies jam the lilac.

The Lord is a delicate hammerer.
Gold hive upon gray matter
He taps synapse ("carrying to") ("carrying away")
an immense bronze pinecone moon-knit at the end of a vista
of sunny *jets d'eau*, silver poplars. All

shivered in a pool.

Literally, a flowing: form-take-hand
-with-form
(That Which Fasteneth Us)
pillar to pillar the great dance arch itself through all that
is or was or will be, 3/4 time. This will be a glade
at the head of one stream

and a resonant gnomon before it will stretch regions of signaling
gnat-like resiliencies in the atmosphere
of where we are —
or were.
Or will be, when the mingled frame of mind
of man is celebration.

Gates, which separate the wings
of tiered ilex, open
in caverns of atoms passing from one into another's zenith
of periodic movement, vast helicoidal shift:
a vaulting of arteries
beating their heads against the dark.

This is the body of light.

GIOVANNI'S ROOM (1956)

by James Baldwin

I scarcely know how to describe that room. It became, in a way, every room I had ever been in and every room I find myself in hereafter will remind me of Giovanni's room. I did not really stay there very long—we met before the spring began and I left there during the summer—but it still seems to me that I spent a lifetime there. Life in that room seemed to be occurring underwater, as I say, and it is certain that I underwent a sea change there.

To begin with, the room was not large enough for two. It looked out on a small courtyard. Looked out means only that the room had two windows, against which the courtyard malevolently pressed, encroaching day by day, as though it had confused itself with a jungle. We, or rather Giovanni kept the windows closed most of the time. He had never bought any curtains; neither did we buy any while I was in the room. To insure privacy, Giovanni had obscured the window panes with a heavy, white cleaning polish. We sometimes heard children playing outside our window, sometimes strange shapes loomed against it. At such moments, Giovanni, working in the room, or lying in bed, would stiffen like a hunting dog and remain perfectly silent until whatever seemed to threaten our safety had moved away.

He had always had great plans for remodeling this room, and before I arrived he had already begun. One of the walls was a dirty, streaked white where he had torn off the wallpaper. The wall facing it was destined never to be uncovered, and on this wall a lady in a hoop skirt and a man in knee breeches perpetually walked together, hemmed in by roses. The wallpaper lay on the floor, in great sheets and scrolls, in dust. On the floor also lay our dirty laundry, along with Giovanni's tools and the paint brushes and the bottles of oil and turpentine. Our suitcases teetered on top of something, so that we dreaded ever having to open them and sometimes went without some minor necessity, such as clean socks, for days.

No one ever came to see us, except Jacques, and he did not come often. We were far from the center of the city and we had no phone.

I remembered the first afternoon I woke up there, with Giovanni fast asleep beside me, heavy as a fallen rock. The sun filtered through the room so faintly that I was worried about the time. I stealthily lit a cigarette, for I did not want to wake Giovanni. I did not yet know how I would face his eyes. I looked about me. Giovanni had said something in the taxi about his room being very dirty. 'I'm sure it is,' I had said lightly, and turned away from him, looking out of the window. Then we had both been silent. When I woke up in his room, I remembered that there had been something strained and painful in the quality of that silence, which had been broken when Giovanni said, with a shy, bitter smile: 'I must find some poetic figure.'

And he spread his heavy fingers in the air, as though a metaphor were tangible. I watched him.

'Look at the garbage of this city,' he said, finally, and his fingers indicated the flying street, 'all of the garbage of this city? Where do they take it? I don't know where they take it—but it might very well be my room.'

'It's much more likely,' I said, 'that they dump it into the Seine.'

But I sensed, when I woke up and looked around the room, the bravado and the cowardice of his figure of speech. This was not the garbage of Paris, which would have been anonymous: this was Giovanni's regurgitated life.

Before and beside me and all over the room, towering like a wall, were boxes of cardboard and leather, some tied with string, some locked, some bursting, and out of the topmost box before me spilled down sheets of violin music. There was a violin in the room, lying on the table in its warped, cracked case—it was impossible to guess from looking at it whether it had been laid to rest there yesterday or a hundred years before. The table was loaded with yellowing newspapers and empty bottles and it held a single brown and wrinkled potato in which even the sprouting eyes were rotten. Red wine had been spilled on the floor; it had been allowed to dry and it made the air in the room sweet and heavy. But it was not the room's disorder which was frightening; it was the fact that when one began searching for the key to this disorder, one realized that it was not to be found in any of the usual places. For this was not a matter of habit or circumstance or temperament; it was a matter of punishment and grief. I do not know how I knew this, but I knew it at once; perhaps I knew it because I wanted to

live. And I stared at the room with the same, nervous, calculating extension of the intelligence and of all one's forces which occurs when gauging a mortal and unavoidable danger: at the silent walls of the room with its distant, archaic lovers trapped in an interminable rose garden, and the staring windows, staring like two great eyes of ice and fire, and the ceiling which lowered like those clouds out of which fiends have sometimes spoken and which obscured but failed to soften its malevolence behind the yellow light which hung like a diseased and undefinable sex in its center. Under this blunted arrow, this smashed flower of fight lay the terrors which encompassed Giovanni's soul. I understood why Giovanni had wanted me and had brought me to his last retreat. I was to destroy this room and give to Giovanni a new and better life. This life could only be my own, which, in order to transform Giovanni's, must first become a part of Giovanni's room.

In the beginning, because the motives which led me to Giovanni's room were so mixed, had so little to do with his hopes and desires, and were so deeply a part of my own desperation, I invented in myself a kind of pleasure in playing the housewife after Giovanni had gone to work. I threw out the paper, the bottles, the fantastic accumulation of trash; I examined the contents of the innumerable boxes and suitcases and disposed of them. But I am not a housewife—men never can be housewives. And the pleasure was never real or deep, though Giovanni smiled his humble, grateful smile and told me in as many ways as he could find how wonderful it was to have me there, how I stood, with my love and my ingenuity, between him and the dark. Each day he invited me to witness how he had changed, how love had changed him, how he worked and sang and cherished me. I was in a terrible confusion. Sometimes I thought, but this is your life. Stop fighting it. Stop fighting. Or I thought, but I am happy. And he loves me. I am safe. Sometimes, when he was not near me, I thought, I will never let him touch me again. Then, when he touched me, I thought, it doesn't matter, it is only the body, it will soon be over. When it was over, I lay in the dark and listened to his breathing and dreamed of the touch of hands, of Giovanni's hands, or anybody's hands, hands which would have the power to crush me and make me whole again.

THE WRITING OF STONES (1970)

by Roger Caillouis

trans. by Barbara Bray

proposed by Cookies

JUST AS MEN HAVE ALWAYS SOUGHT AFTER PRECIOUS STONES, SO THEY HAVE ALWAYS PRIZED CURIOUS ONES, THOSE THAT CATCH THE ATTENTION THROUGH SOME ANOMALY OF FORM, SOME SUGGESTIVE ODDITY OF COLOR OR PATTERN. THIS FASCINATION ALMOST ALWAYS DERIVES FROM A SURPRISING RESEMBLANCE THAT IS AT ONCE IMPROBABLE AND NATURAL. STONES POSSESS A KIND OF GRAVITAS, SOMETHING ULTIMATE AND UNCHANGING, SOMETHING THAT WILL NEVER PERISH OR ELSE HAS ALREADY DONE SO. THEY ATTRACT THROUGH AN INTRINSIC, INFALLIBLE, IMMEDIATE BEAUTY, ANSWERABLE TO NO ONE, NECESSARILY PERFECT YET EXCLUDING THE IDEA OF PERFECTION IN ORDER TO EXCLUDE APPROXIMATION, ERROR, AND EXCESS. THIS SPONTANEOUS BEAUTY THUS PRECEDES AND GOES BEYOND THE ACTUAL NOTION OF BEAUTY, OF WHICH IT IS AT ONCE THE PROMISE AND THE FOUNDATION.

FOR A STONE REPRESENTS AN OBVIOUS ACHIEVEMENT, YET ONE ARRIVED AT WITHOUT INVENTION, SKILL, INDUSTRY, OR ANYTHING ELSE THAT WOULD MAKE IT A WORK IN THE HUMAN SENSE OF THE WORD, MUCH LESS A WORK OF ART. THE WORK COMES LATER, AS DOES ART, BUT THE FAR-OFF ROOTS AND HIDDEN MODELS OF BOTH LIE IN THE OBSCURE YET IRRESISTIBLE SUGGESTIONS IN NATURE.

THESE CONSIST OF SUBTLE AND AMBIGUOUS SIGNALS REMINDING US, THROUGH ALL SORTS OF FILTERS AND OBSTACLES THAT THERE MUST BE A PREEXISTING GENERAL BEAUTY VASTER THAN THAT PERCEIVED BY HUMAN INTUITION—A BEAUTY IN WHICH MAN DELIGHTS AND WHICH IN HIS TURN HE IS PROUD TO CREATE. STONES—AND NOT ONLY THEY BUT ALSO ROOTS, SHELLS, WINGS, AND EVERY OTHER CIPHER AND CONSTRUCTION IN NATURE—HELP TO GIVE US AN IDEA OF THE PROPORTIONS AND LAWS OF THAT GENERAL BEAUTY ABOUT WHICH WE CAN ONLY CONJECTURE AND IN COMPARISON WITH WHICH HUMAN BEAUTY MUST BE MERELY

ONE RECIPE AMONG OTHERS, JUST AS EUCLID'S THEOREMS ARE BUT ONE SET OUT OF THE MANY POSSIBLE IN A TOTAL GEOMETRY.

IN STONES THE BEAUTY COMMON TO ALL THE KINGDOMS OF NATURE SEEMS VAGUE, EVEN DIFFUSE, TO MAN, BEING HIMSELF LACKING IN DENSITY, THE LAST COMER INTO THE WORLD, INTELIGENT, ACTIVE, AMBITIOUS, DRIVEN BY AN ENORMOUS PRESUMPTION. HE DOES NOT SUSPECT THAT HIS MOST SUBTLE RESEARCHES ARE BUT AN EXEMPLIFICATION WITHIN A GIVEN FIELD OF CRITERIA THAT ARE INELUCTABLE, THOUGH, CAPABLE OF ENDLESS VARIATION. NONETHELESS, EVEN THOUGH HE NEGLECTS, SCORNS, OR IGNORES THE GENERAL OR FUNDAMENTAL BEAUTY WHICH HAS EMANATED SINCE THE VERY BEGINNING FROM THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE UNIVERSE AND FROM WHICH ALL OTHER BEAUTIES DERIVE, HE STILL CANNOT HELP BEING AFFECTED BY SOMETHING BASIC AND INDESTRUCTIBLE IN THE MINERAL KINGDOM: SOMETHING WE MIGHT DESCRIBE AS LAPIDARY THAT FILLS HIM WITH WONDER AND DESIRE.

THIS ALMOST MENACING PERFECTION—FOR IT RESTS ON THE ABSENCE OF LIFE, THE VISIBLE STILLNESS OF DEATH—APPEARS IN STONES SO VARIOUSLY THAT ONE MIGHT LIST ALL THE ENDEAVORS AND STYLES OF HUMAN ART AND NOT FIND ONE WITHOUT ITS PARALLEL IN MINERAL NATURE. THERE IS NOTHING SURPRISING ABOUT THIS: THE CRUDE ATTEMPTS OF THAT LOST CREATURE, MAN, COULD NOT COVER MORE THAN A TINY PART OF THE AESTHETICS OF THE UNIVERSE. NO MATTER WHAT IMAGE AN ARTIST INVENTS, NO MATTER HOW DISTORTED, ARBITRARY, ABSURD, SIMPLE, ELABORATE, OR TORTURED HE HAS MADE IT OR HOW FAR IN APPEARANCE FROM ANYTHING KNOWN OR PROBABLE, WHO CAN BE SURE THAT SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD'S VAST STORE THERE IS NOT THAT IMAGE'S LIKENESS, ITS KIN OR PARTIAL PARALLEL?

EVEN SETTING SUCH SIMILARITIES ASIDE, HUMAN BEINGS ARE ATTRACTED AND AMAZED BY MANY MINERAL FORMATIONS: SPINY TUFTS OF QUARTZ; THE DARK CAVES OF AMETHYST GEODES; SHINY SLABS OF VARISCITE OR RHODOCHROSITE AGATE; FLORINE CRYSTALS; THE GOLDEN, MANYSIDED MASSES OF PYRITES; THE SIMPLE, ALMOST UNSOLICITED CURVE OF JASPER, MALACHITE, OR LAPIS LAZULI; ANY STONE BRIGHTLY COLORED OR PLEASINGLY MARKED.

CONNOISSEURS, IN SUCH CASES, ADMIRE THE QUALITIES OF A MATERIAL THAT IS CONSTANT AND UNCHANGING: PURITY, BRILLIANCE, COLOR, STRUCTURAL RIGOR—PROPERTIES INHERENT IN EACH KIND AND PRESENT IN EVERY EXAMPLE. THEIR VALUES ARE INTRINSIC, WITHOUT EXTERNAL REFERENCE. THE PRICE A PURCHASER PAYS FOR THEM DEPENDS ON WEIGHT, RARITY, THE AMOUNT OF WORK INVOLVED, JUST AS WITH A LENGTH OF SATIN OR BROCADE, A BAR OF REFINED METAL, OR A GEM. LIKE SUCH COMMODITIES, THESE STONES ARE EXCHANGEABLE, SINCE THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ONE OF THEM AND ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE SAME KIND, SIZE, AND QUALITY.

THE WHOLE PICTURE CHANGES WHEN SINGULARITY IS WHAT IS SOUGHT AFTER. THE STONE'S INHERENT QUALITIES AND SPECIAL GEOMETRY ARE NO LONGER OF PRIMARY CONCERN, PERFECTION NO MORE THE SOLE OR EVEN THE MAIN CRITERION. THIS NEW BEAUTY DEPENDS MUCH MORE ON CURIOUS ALTERATIONS BROUGHT ABOUT IN THE STONE ITSELF BY MEANS OF METALLIC OR OTHER DEPOSITS, OR ON CHANGES IN ITS SHAPE DUE TO EROSION OR SERENDIPITOUS BREAKAGE. SOME PATTERN OR PECULIAR CONFIGURATION APPEARS IN WHICH THE IMAGINATIVE OBSERVER DESCRIBES AN UNEXPECTED, IN THIS CONTEXT AN ASTONISHING AND ALMOST SHOCKING COPY OF, AN ALIEN REALITY.

SUCH SEMBLANCES EMERGE FROM THEIR LONG CONCEALMENT WHEN CERTAIN STONES ARE SPLIT OPEN AND POLISHED, PRESENTING THE WILLING MIND WITH IMMORTAL SMALL-SCALE MODELS OF LIVING BEINGS AND INANIMATE THINGS. ADMITTEDLY SUCH MARVELS ARE THE RESULT OF MERE CHANCE, SUCH RESEMBLANCES ONLY APPROXIMATE AND DUBIOUS, OCCASIONALLY FARTHECHED OR EVEN ARBITRARY. BUT ONCE PERCEIVED THEY SOON BECOME TYRANNICAL AND DELIVER MORE THAN THEY PROMISED. THE OBSERVER IS ALWAYS FINDING FRESH DETAILS TO ROUND OUT THE SUPPOSED ANALOGY. SUCH IMAGES MINIATURIZE, FOR HIS BENEFIT ALONE, EVERY OBJECT IN THE WORLD, PROVIDING HIM WITH STABLE DUPLICATES WHICH HE MAY HOLD IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND, CARRY ABOUT FROM PLACE TO PLACE, OR PUT IN A GLASS CASE.

MOREOVER, SUCH A DUPLICATE IS NOT A COPY; IT IS NOT BORN OF AN ARTIST'S TALENT OR A FORGER'S SKILL. IT HAS BEEN THERE

ALWAYS: WE ONLY HAD TO FIND OUR WAY INTO ITS PRESENCE. ORDINARY ROCKS AS WELL AS VARIOUS TYPES OF MINERAL SPECIMENS MAKE UP THIS PREY OF PAN. IN CHINA, POETS AND PAINTERS WOULD SEE IN A CLEFT STONE A MOUNTAIN WITH ITS PEAKS AND WATERFALLS, ITS CAVES AND PATHS AND CHASMS. COLLECTORS RUINED THEMSELVES TO POSSESS CRYSTALS IN WHOSE TRANSLUCENT DEPTHS THEY DISCERNED MOSSES, GRASSES, AND BOUGHS LADEN WITH FLOWERS OR FRUIT. AN AGATE MAY SHADOW FORTH A TREE, SEVERAL TREES, GROVES, A FOREST, A WHOLE LANDSCAPE. A PIECE OF MARBLE CAN SUGGEST A RIVER FLOWING AMONG HILLS; THE CLOUDS AND LIGHTNING FLASHES OF A STORM, THUNDERBOLTS AND THE GRANDIOSE PLUMES OF FROST; A HERO FIGHTING A DRAGON; OR A GREAT SEA FULL OF FLEEING GALLEYS, LIKE THE SCENE THE ROMAN SAW REFLECTED IN THE EYES OF THE EASTERN QUEEN ALREADY PLANNING TO BETRAY HIM.

ONE KIND FREQUENTLY DEPICTS A BURNING TOWN, WITH ITS TOWERS AND STEEPLES AND CAMPANILES CRASHING DOWN. ON THE AGATE OF PYRRHUS ANTIQUITY MADE OUT APOLLO WITH HIS LYRE, SURROUNDED BY THE MUSES, EACH WITH HER SPECIAL ATTRIBUTES. IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY GAFFAREL, RICHELIEU'S LIBRARIAN AND THE KING'S CHAPLAIN, DEVOTED A WHOLE WEIGHTY VOLUME TO GAMAHÉS, HEALING TALISMANS MADE OF STONES INSCRIBED WITH NATURAL ASTROLOGICAL HIEROGLYPHS. PRINCES AND BANKERS OF THE SAME PERIOD COLLECTED UNUSUAL SPECIMENS SOUGHT OUT FOR THEM AT GREAT EXPENSE BY THE NUMEROUS AGENTS OF SPECIALIST MERCHANTS. [...] LEARNED MEN, AMONG THEM ALDROVANDI AND KIRCHER, DIVIDED UP THESE MARVELS INTO FAMILIES AND TYPES ACCORDING TO THE IMAGES THEY MANAGED TO DISTINGUISH IN THEM: MOORS, BISHOPS, LOBSTERS, STREAMS, FACES, PLANTS, DOGS, FISHES, TORTOISES, DRAGONS, DEATH'S HEADS, CRUCIFIXES — EVERYTHING A MIND BENT ON IDENTIFICATION COULD FANCY. THE FACT IS THAT THERE IS NO CREATURE OR THING, NO MONSTER OR MONUMENT, NO HAPPENING OR SIGHT IN NATURE, HISTORY, FABLE, OR DREAM WHOSE IMAGE THE PREDISPOSED EYE CANNOT READ IN THE MARKINGS, PATTERNS AND OUTLINES FOUND IN STONES.

THE MORE UNUSUAL, DEFINITE, AND UNDENIABLE THE IMAGE, THE MORE THE STONE IS PRIZED. STONES THAT OFFER RARE AND REMARKABLE LIKENESSES ARE REGARDED AS WONDERS, ALMOST

MIRACLES. THEY SHOULD NOT EXIST, AND YET THEY DO, AT ONCE IMPOSSIBLE AND INESCAPABLE. AT THE SAME TIME THEY ARE TREASURES, THE RESULT OF THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF CHANCES, THE WINNING NUMBER IN AN INFINITE LOTTERY. THEY OWE NOTHING TO PATIENCE, INDUSTRY, OR MERIT. THEY HAD NO MARKET RATE OR PRICE. THEIR VALUE IS NOT COMMERCIAL AND CANNOT BE CALCULATED IN ANY CURRENCY; IT LAUGHS BOTH AT THE GOLD STANDARD AND AT PURCHASING POWER. IT IS NOT CONVERTIBLE INTO LABOR OR GOODS. IT DEPENDS SOLELY ON THE COVETOUSNESS, PRIDE AND COMPETITIVENESS GENERATED BY THE DESIRE TO POSSESS OR THE PLEASURE OF POSSESSING THEM. EACH STONE, AS UNIQUE AND IRREPLACEABLE AS A WORK OF GENIUS, IS A VALUABLE AT ONCE POINTLESS AND PRICELESS, WITH WHICH THE LAWS OF ECONOMICS HAVE NOTHING TO DO.

GIOVANNI'S ROOM (1956)

by James Baldwin

I repent now—for all the good it does—one particular lie among the many lies I've told, told, lived, and believed. This is the lie which I told to Giovanni but never succeeded in making him believe, that I had never slept with a boy before. I had. I had decided that I never would again. There is something fantastic in the spectacle I now present to myself of having run so far, so hard, across the ocean even, only to find myself brought up short once more before the bulldog in my own backyard—the yard, in the meantime, having grown smaller and the bulldog bigger.

I have not thought of that boy—Joey—for many years; but I see him quite clearly tonight. It was several years ago. I was still in my teens, he was about my age, give or take a year. He was a very nice boy, too, very quick and dark, and always laughing. For a while he was my best friend. Later, the idea that such a person could have been my best friend was proof of some horrifying taint in me. So I forgot him. But I see him very well tonight.

It was in the summer, there was no school. His parents had gone someplace for the weekend and I was spending the weekend at his house, which was near Coney Island, in Brooklyn. We lived in Brooklyn too, in those days, but in a better neighborhood than Joey's. I think we had been lying around the beach, swimming a little and watching the near-naked girls pass, whistling at them and laughing. I am sure that if any of the girls we whistled at that day had shown any signs of responding, the ocean would not have been deep enough to drown our shame and terror. But the girls, no doubt, had some intimation of this, possibly from the way we whistled, and they ignored us. As the sun was setting we started up the boardwalk towards his house, with our wet bathing trunks on under our trousers.

And I think it began in the shower. I know that I felt something—as we were horsing around in that small, steamy room, stinging each other with wet towels—which I had not felt before, which mysteriously, and yet aimlessly, included him. I remember in myself a heavy reluctance to get dressed: I blamed it on the heat. But we did get dressed, sort of, and we

ate cold things out of his icebox and drank a lot of beer. We must have gone to the movies. I can't think of any other reason for our going out and I remember walking down the dark, tropical Brooklyn streets with heat coming up from the pavements and banging from the walls of houses with enough force to kill a man, with all the world's grownups, it seemed, sitting shrill and dishevelled on the stoops and all the world's children on the sidewalks or in the gutters or hanging from fire escapes, with my arm around Joey's shoulder. I was proud, I think, because his head came just below my ear. We were walking along and Joey was making dirty wisecracks and we were laughing. Odd to remember, for the first time in so long, how good I felt that night, how fond of Joey.

When we came back along those streets it was quiet; we were quiet too. We were very quiet in the apartment and sleepily got undressed in Joey's bedroom and went to bed. I fell asleep—for quite a while, I think. But I woke up to find the light on and Joey examining the pillow with great, ferocious care.

'What's the matter?'

'I think a bedbug bit me.'

'You slob. You got bedbugs?'

'I think one bit me.'

'You ever have a bedbug bite you before?'

'No.'

'Well, go back to sleep. You're dreaming.'

He looked at me with his mouth open and his dark eyes very big. It was as though he had just discovered that I was an expert on bedbugs. I laughed and grabbed his head as I had done God knows how many times before, when I was playing with him or when he had annoyed me. But this time when I touched him something happened in him and in me which made this touch different from any touch either of us had ever known. And he did not resist, as he usually did, but lay where I had pulled him, against my chest. And I realized that my heart was beating in an awful way and that Joey was trembling against me and the light in the room was very bright and hot. I started to move and to make some kind of joke but Joey mumbled something and I put my head down to hear. Joey raised his head as I lowered mine and we kissed, as it were, by accident. Then, for the first time in my life, I was really aware of another person's body,

of another person's smell. We had our arms around each other. It was like holding in my hand some rare, exhausted, nearly doomed bird which I had miraculously happened to find. I was very frightened; I am sure he was frightened too, and we shut our eyes. To remember it so clearly, so painfully tonight tells me that I have never for an instant truly forgotten it. I feel in myself now a faint, a dreadful stirring of what so overwhelmingly stirred in me then, great thirsty heat, and trembling, and tenderness so painful I thought my heart would burst. But out of this astounding, intolerable pain came joy; we gave each other joy that night. It seemed, then, that a lifetime would not be long enough for me to act with Joey the act of love.

But that lifetime was short, was bounded by that night—it ended in the morning. I awoke while Joey was still sleeping, curled like a baby on his side, toward me. He looked like a baby, his mouth half open, his cheek flushed, his curly hair darkening the pillow and half hiding his damp round forehead and his long eyelashes glinting slightly in the summer sun. We were both naked and the sheet we had used as a cover was tangled around our feet. Joey's body was brown, was sweaty, the most beautiful creation I had ever seen till then. I would have touched him to wake him up but something stopped me. I was suddenly afraid. Perhaps it was because he looked so innocent lying there, with such perfect trust; perhaps it was because he was so much smaller than me; my own body suddenly seemed gross and crushing and the desire which was rising in me seemed monstrous. But, above all, I was suddenly afraid. It was borne in on me: But Joey is a boy. I saw suddenly the power in his thighs, in his arms, and in his loosely curled fists. The power and the promise and the mystery of that body made me suddenly afraid. That body suddenly seemed the black opening of a cavern in which I would be tortured till madness came, in which I would lose my manhood. Precisely, I wanted to know that mystery and feel that power and have that promise fulfilled through me. The sweat on my back grew cold. I was ashamed. The very bed, in its sweet disorder, testified to vileness. I wondered what Joey's mother would say when she saw the sheets. Then I thought of my father, who had no one in the world but me, my mother having died when I was little. A cavern opened in my mind, black, full of rumor, suggestion, of half-heard, half-forgotten, half-understood stories, full of dirty words. I thought I saw my

future in that cavern. I was afraid. I could have cried, cried for shame and terror, cried for not understanding how this could have happened to me, how this could have happened in me. And I made my decision. I got out of bed and took a shower and was dressed and had breakfast ready when Joey woke up.

I did not tell him my decision; that would have broken my will. I did not wait to have breakfast with him but only drank some coffee and made an excuse to go home. I knew the excuse did not fool Joey; but he did not know how to protest or insist; he did not know that this was all he needed to have done. Then I, who had seen him that summer nearly every day till then, no longer went to see him. He did not come to see me. I would have been very happy to see him if he had, but the manner of my leave-taking had begun a constriction, which neither of us knew how to arrest. When I finally did see him, more or less by accident, near the end of the summer, I made up a long and totally untrue story about a girl I was going with and when school began again I picked up with a rougher, older crowd and was very nasty to Joey. And the sadder this made him, the nastier I became. He moved away at last, out of the neighborhood, away from our school, and I never saw him again.

I began, perhaps, to be lonely that summer and began, that summer, the flight which has brought me to this darkening window. And yet—when one begins to search for the crucial, the definitive moment, the moment which changed all others, one finds oneself pressing, in great pain, through a maze of false signals and abruptly locking doors. My flight may, indeed, have begun that summer—which does not tell me where to find the germ of the dilemma which resolved itself, that summer, into flight. Of course, it is somewhere before me, locked in that reflection I am watching in the window as the night comes down outside. It is trapped in the room with me, always has been, and always will be, and it is yet more foreign to me than those foreign hills outside.

from **COMPOSING LISTENING** (2011)

by Bill Dietz

While the tub fills, he sets up a small CD-player and looks for his most recent bath mix. He tests the water occasionally, adjusts the volume on the small CD-player. Not too loud. Making the already tinny sound even thinner. It blends with the rush of the faucet. He strips, gets into the tub one foot at a time, slowly lowering himself into the hot water. Easing the more sensitive parts of his body in. The tracks on the CD are essentially static – instrumentals, soundtracks, lower tempo dance numbers. Often, he immerses his head in the water, hears through it. The CD repeats. As the temperature changes, he lets out water to make room for more hot. The hairs on his body sway. His genitals float. He comes close to sleep. He adjusts his body to the metal of the tub, listens with one ear submerged. The CD repeats. He imagines, fantasizes, masturbates a bit. His fingers and toes prune. He washes himself, leaving the water foamy. He stays in the tub as the water runs out, feeling its light receding tug and his own weight returning. By the time he's standing, he's returned, forgotten listening.

THE YELLOW WALLPAPER (1898)

by Charlotte Perkins Gilman
proposed by Hilde Heynen

I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! But John would not hear of it.

He said there was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another.

He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction.

I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more.

He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have perfect rest and all the air I could get. "Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear," said he, "and your food somewhat on your appetite; but air you can absorb all the time." So we took the nursery at the top of the house.

It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, I

should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings an things in the walls.

The paint and paper look as if a boys' school had used it. It is stripped off—the paper—in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down. I never saw a worse paper in my life.

One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committed every artistic sin.

It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide—plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions.

The color is repellant, almost revolting; a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight.

It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others.

No wonder the children hate it!

I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long.

[...]

* * * * *

I'm really getting quite fond of the big room, all but that horrid paper.

Out of one window I can see the garden, those mysterious deep-shaded arbors, the riotous old-fashioned flowers, and bushes and gnarly trees.

Out of another I get a lovely view of the bay and a little private wharf belonging to the estate. There is a beautiful shaded lane that runs down there from the house. I always fancy I see people walking in these numerous paths and arbors, but John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try.

[...]

I wish I could get well faster. But I must not think about that. This paper looks to me as if it knew what a vicious influence it had!

There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down.

I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere. There is one place where two breaths didn't match, and the eyes go all up and down the line, one a little higher than the other.

I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have! I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy-store.

I remember what a kindly wink the knobs our big, old bureau used to have, and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend.

I used to feel that if any of the other things looked too fierce I could always hope into that chair and be safe.

The furniture in this room is no worse than inharmonious, however, for we had to bring it all from downstairs. I suppose when this was used as a playroom they had to take the nursery things out and no

wonder! I never saw such ravages as the children have made here.

This wall-paper, as I said before, is torn off in spots, and it sticketh closer than a brother—they must have had perseverance as well as hatred.

Then the floor is scratched and gouged and splintered, the plaster itself is dug out here and there, and this great heavy bed which is all we found in the room, looks as if it had been through the wars.

[...]

* * * * *

I'm getting really fond of the room in spite of the wallpaper. Perhaps because of the wallpaper.

It dwells in my mind so!

I like here on this great immovable bed—it is nailed down, I believe—and follow that pattern about by the hour. It is as good as gymnastics, I assure you. I start, we'll say, at the bottom, down in the corner over there where it has not been touched, and I determine for the thousandth time that I will follow that pointless pattern to some sort of conclusion.

I know a little of the principle of design, and I know this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alteration, or repetition, or

symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard of.

It is repeated, of course by the breadths, but not otherwise.

Looked at in one way each breadth stands alone, the bloated curves and flourishes—a kind of "debased Romanesque" with delirium tremens—go waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity.

But, on the other hand, they connect diagonally, and the sprawling outlines run off in great slanting waves of optic horror, like a lot of wallowing seaweeds in full chase.

The whole thing goes horizontally, too, at least it seems so, and I exhaust myself in trying to distinguish the order of its going in that direction.

They have used a horizontal breadth for a frieze, and that adds wonderfully to the confusion.

There is one end of the room where it is almost intact, and there, when the crosslights fade and the low sun shines directly upon it, I can almost fancy radiation after all — the interminable grotesque seems to form around a common centre and rush off in headlong plunges of equal distraction.

It makes me tired to follow it. I will take a nap I guess.

* * * * *

[...]

I never thought of it before, but it is lucky that John kept me here after all, I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see.

Of course I never mention it to them any more—I am too wise,—but I keep watch of it all the same.

There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will.

Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day. It is always the same shape, only very numerous. And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind the pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder — I begin to think — I wish John would take me away from here!

* * * * *

[...]

On a pattern like this, by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind.

The color is hideous enough, and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, but the pattern is torturing.

You think you have mastered it, but just as you get well underway in following, it turns a back-somer-

sault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream.

The outside pattern is a florid arabesque, reminding one of a fungus. If you can imagine a toadstool in joins, an interminable string of toadstools, budding and sprouting in endless convolutions—why, that is something like it.

That is, sometimes!

There is one marked peculiarity about this paper, a thing nobody seems to notice but myself, and that is that it changes as the light changes.

When the sun shoots in through the east window — I always watch for that first long, straight ray — it changes so quickly that I never can quite believe it.

That is why I watch it always.

By moonlight — the moon shines in all night when there is a moon — I wouldn't know it was the same paper.

At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candlelight, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be.

I didn't realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind, that dim sub-pattern, but

now I am quite sure it is a woman.

By daylight she is subdued, quite. I fancy it is the pattern that keeps her so still. It is so puzzling. It keeps me quiet by the hour.

I lie down ever so much now. John says it is good for me, and to sleep all I can.

Indeed he started the habit by making me lie down for an hour after each meal.

It is a very bad habit I am convinced for you see I don't sleep.

And that cultivates deceit, for I don't tell them I'm awake — O no!

The fact is I am getting a little afraid of John.

He seems very queer sometimes and even Jennie [sister of John/caretaker] has an inexplicable look.

It strikes me occasionally, just as a scientific hypothesis, — that perhaps it is the paper!

I have watched John when he did not know I was looking, and come into the room suddenly on the most innocent excuses, and I've caught him several times looking at the paper! And Jennie too. I caught Jennie with her hand on it once.

She didn't know I was in the room and when I asked her in a quiet, a very quiet voice, with the most restrained manner possible, what she was doing with the paper — she turned around as if she had

been caught stealing, and looked quite angry — asked me why I should frighten her so!

Then she said that the paper stained everything it touched, that she had found yellow smooches on all my clothes and John's, and she wished we would be more careful!

Did not that sound innocent? But I know she was studying that pattern, and I am determined that nobody shall find it out but myself!

* * * * *

THE PRINCIPAL OF CLADDING (1898)

by Adolf Loos

trans. by Jane O. Newman & John H. Smith

Even if all materials are of equal value to the artist, they are not equally suited to all his purposes. The requisite durability, the necessary construction often demand materials that are not in harmony with the true purpose of the building. The architect's general task is to provide a warm and liveable space. Carpets are warm and liveable. He decides for this reason to spread out one carpet on the floor and to hang up four to form the four walls. But you cannot build a house out of carpets. Both the carpet on the floor and the tapestry on the wall require a structural frame to hold them in the correct place. To invent this frame is the architect's second task.

This is the correct and logical path to be followed in architecture. It was in this sequence that mankind learned how to build. In the beginning was cladding. Man sought shelter from inclement weather and protection and warmth while he slept. He sought to cover himself. The covering is the oldest architectural detail. Originally it was made out of animal skins or textile products. This meaning of the word is still known today in the Germanic languages. Then the covering had to be put up somewhere if it was to afford enough shelter to a family! Thus the walls were added, which at the same time provided protection on the sides. In this way the idea of architecture developed in the minds of mankind and individual men.

There are architects who do things differently. Their imaginations create not spaces but sections of walls. That which is left over around the walls then forms the rooms. And for these rooms some kind of cladding is subsequently chosen, whatever seems fitting to the architect.

But the artist, the architect, first senses the effect that he intends to realise and sees the room he wants to create in his mind's eye. He senses the effect that he wishes to exert upon the spectator: fear and horror if it is a dungeon, reverence is a church, respect for the power of the state if a palace, piety if a tomb, homeliness if a residence, gaiety if a tavern. These effects are produced by both the material and the form of the space.

Every material possesses its own language of forms, and none may lay

claim for itself to the forms of another material. For forms have been constituted out of the applicability and the methods of production of materials. They have come into being with and through materials. For forms have been constituted out of the applicability and the methods of production of materials. They have come into being with and through materials. No material permits an encroachment into its circle of forms. Whoever dares to make such an encroachment not-withstanding this is branded by the world a counterfeiter. Art, however, has nothing to do with counterfeiting or lying. Her paths are full of thorns, but they are pure.

[...]

But is the living space that has been constructed entirely of rugs not an imitation? The walls are not really built out of carpets! Certainly not. But these carpets are meant only to be carpets and not building stones. They were never meant to be taken as such, to imitate them in form or colour, but to reveal clearly their own meaning as a cladding for the wall surface. They fulfil their purpose according to the principal of cladding.

As I already mentioned at the outset, cladding is older even than structure. The reasons for cladding things are numerous. At times it is a protection against bad weather - oil-base paint, for example, on wood, iron, or stone; at times there are hygienic reasons for it - as in the case of enameled tiles that cover the wall surfaces in the bathroom; at times it is the means to a specific effect - as in the colour painting of statues, the tapestries on walls, the veneer on wood. The principal of cladding, which was first articulated by Semper, extends to nature as well. Man is covered with skin, the tree with bark.

From the principal of cladding, however, I have derived a very precise law which I call the law of cladding. Do not be alarmed. It is usually said that laws put an end to progress and development. And indeed, the old master's got along perfectly well without laws. Certainly. It would be idleness to establish laws against thievery in a place where thievery is unknown. When the materials used for cladding had not yet been imitated, there was no need for laws. But now it seems to me to be high time for them.

The law goes like this: we must work in such a way that the confusion

of the material clad with its cladding is impossible. That means, for example, that wood may be painted any colour except one - the colour of wood. In a city where the exhibition committee decided that all the wood in the Rotunda should be painted "like mahogany", in a city in which wood graining is the exclusive type of painted decoration, this is a very daring law. There seems to be people here who consider this type of thing elegant. Since the railway and tram cars - as well as the entire technique of carriage building - come from England, they are the only wooden objects that display pure colours. I dare to assert that this kind of tramcar - especially one of the electric line - is more pleasing to me with its pure colours than it would be if, according to the principals of beauty set out by the exhibition committee, it had been painted "like mahogany".

[...]

Wood staining is, of course, an invention of our century. The Middle Ages painted wood bright red for the most part, the Renaissance blue; the Baroque and Rococo painted interiors white, exteriors green. Our peasants still retain enough good sense to paint only with pure colours. Don't the green gate and the green fence of the countryside, the green jealousies against the fresh whitewashed wall have a charming effect? Unfortunately several villages have already adopted the taste of the exhibition commission.

[...]

Applied to stucco work, the principal of cladding would run like this: stucco can take any ornament with just one exception: rough brickwork. One would think the declaration of such a self evident fact to be unnecessary, but just recently someone drew my attention to buildings whose plaster walls were painted red and then seamed with white lines. Similarly, the type of decoration so beloved in kitchens - imitation stone squares - belongs in this category. In general, any and all materials used to cover walls - wallpaper, oil cloth, fabric, or tapestries - ought not to aspire to represent squares of brick or stone. It is thus easy to understand why the legs of our dancers when covered with knit stockinets have such an

unaesthetic effect. Woven underclothing may be dyed any colour at all, just not skin colour.

The cladding material can keep its natural colour if the area to be covered happens to be of the same colour. Thus, I can smear tar on black iron or cover wood with another wood (veneer, marquetry, and so on) without having to colour the covering wood; I can coat one metal with another by heating or galvanising it. But the principal of cladding material to imitate the colouration of the underlying material. Thus iron can be tarred, painted with oil colours, or galvanised, but it can never be camouflaged with a bronze colour or any other metallic colour.

[...]

But no, you imitators and surrogate architects, you are mistaken! The human soul is too lofty and sublime for you to be able to dupe it with your tactics and tricks. Of course, our pitiful bodies are in your power. They have only five senses at their disposal to distinguish real from counterfeit. And at that point where the man with his sense organs is no longer adequate begins your true domain. There is your realm. But even here - you are mistaken once more! Paint the best inlays high, high up on the wood ceiling and our poor eyes will have to take it on good faith perhaps. But the divine spirits will not be fooled by your tricks. They sense that even those intarsia decorations most skillfully painted to look "like inlay" are nothing but oil paint.

IF I DIE ON THE ROAD (1970)

by Virgilio Piñera

trans. by Juliana Canal Paternina

(I)

Si muero en la carretera no me pongan flores.

If I die on the road do not put me flowers.

Si en la carretera muero no me pongan flores.

If on the road I die do not put me flowers.

En la carretera no me pongan flores si muero.

On the road do not put me flowers if I die.

No me pongan si muero flores en la carretera.

Do not put me if I die flowers on the road.

No me pongan en la carretera flores si muero.

Do not put me on the road flowers if I die.

No flores en la carretera si muero me pongan.

Do not Flowers on the road if I die put me.

No flores en la carretera me pongan si muero.

Do not flowers on the road put me if I die.

Si muero no flores en la carretera me pongan.

If I die do not flowers on the road put me.

Si flores me muero en la carretera no me pongan.

if flowers I die on the road do not put me.

Flores si muero no en la carretera me pongan.

Flowers if I die on the road do not put me.

Si flores muero pongan en me la no carretera.
If flowers I die put me on the do not road.

Flores si pongan muero me en no la carretera.
Flowers if put I die me on do not the road.

Muero si pongan flores la en me en carretera.
I Die if put flowers the on me on road.

La muero en si flores pongan no me carretera.
The die on if flowers put me do not road.

Si flores muero pongan en me la no carretera.
If flowers I die put on me the do not road.

Flores si pongan muero me en no la carretera.
Flowers if put I die me on do not the road.

Si muero en las flores no me pongan en la carretera.
If I die on the flowers do not put me on the road.

Si flores muero no me pongan en la carretera.
If flowers I die do not put me on the road.

Si en la carretera flores no me pongan si muero.
If on the road flowers do not put me if I die.

Si en el muero no me pongan en la carretera flores.
If in the I die do not put me on the road flowers.

(II)

Voy en cacharrito, en una cafetera,
going in a junky car*, in a coffee pot*

yo voy por la carretera;
I go on the road;

yo voy, voy yendo por la carretera.
I go, go going on the road.

Yo voy a un jardín de flores que está por la carretera,
I go to a garden of flowers that is near the road,

yo voy en un cacharrito, en una cafetera,
I go in a junky car, in a coffee pot,

voy a comprarles flores a mis muertos,
going to buy flowers to my dead ones,

pero no me pongan flores si muero en la carretera.
but do not put me flowers if I die on the road.

(III)

Si muero en la carretera me entierran en el jardín
If I die on the road bury me in the garden

que está por la carretera, pero no me pongan flores,
That is near the road, but do not put me flowers,

cuando uno tiene su fin yendo por la carretera
when one has his end going on the road

a uno no le ponen flores de ese ni de otro jardín.
one gets no flowers from that or any other garden.

(IV)

Si muero, si no muero,
If I die, if I don't die,

si muero porque no muero
if I die because I don't die

si no muero porque muero.
if I don't die because I die.

Si muero en la carretera.
If I die on the road.

Si no muero pero en la carretera si muero.
If I don't die but on the road I do die.

Si muero porque no muero en la carretera.
If I die because I don't die on the road.

Si no muero porque muero en la carretera,
If I don't die because I die on the road,

no me pongan f, no me pongan l, no me pongan o,
do not put me f, do not put me l, do not put me o,

no me pongan r, no me pongan e, no me pongan s,
do not put me w, do not put me e, do not put me r, do not put me s

no me pongan flo, no me pongan res,
do not put me flo, do not wets,

si muero en la c.
if I die in the r.

GIOVANNI'S ROOM (1956)

by James Baldwin

I remember that life in that room seemed to be occurring beneath the sea. Time flowed past indifferently above us, hours and days had no meaning. In the beginning, our life together held a joy and amazement which was newborn every day. Beneath the joy, of course, was anguish and beneath the amazement was fear; but they did not work themselves to the beginning until our high beginning was aches on our tongues. By then anguish and fear had become the surface on which we slipped and slid, losing balance, dignity, and pride. Giovanni's face, which I had memorized so many mornings, noons, and nights, hardened before my eyes, began to give in secret places, began to crack. The light in the eyes became a glitter; the wide and beautiful brow began to suggest the skull beneath. The sensual lips turned inward, busy with the sorrow overflowing from his heart. It became a stranger's face—or it made me so guilty to look on him that I wished it were a stranger's face. Not all my memorizing had prepared me for the metamorphosis which my memorizing had helped to bring about.

Our day began before daybreak, when I drifted over to Guillaume's bar in time for a preclosing drink. Sometimes, when Guillaume had closed the bar to the public, a few friends and Giovanni and myself stayed behind for breakfast and music. Sometimes Jacques was there—from the time of our meeting with Giovanni he seemed to come out more and more. If we had breakfast with Guillaume, we usually left around seven o'clock in the morning. Sometimes, when Jacques was there, he offered to drive us home in the car which he had suddenly and inexplicably bought, but we almost always walked the long way home along the river.

Spring was approaching Paris. Walking up and down this house to-night, I see again the river, the cobblestoned quays, the bridges. Low boats passed beneath the bridges and on those boats one sometimes saw women hanging washing out to dry. Sometimes we saw a young man in a canoe, energetically rowing, looking rather helpless, and also rather silly. There were yachts tied up along the banks from time to time, and houseboats, and barges; we passed the firehouse so often on our way home that the

firemen got to know us. When winter came again and Giovanni found himself in hiding in one of these barges, it was a fireman who, seeing him crawl back into hiding with a loaf of bread one night, tipped off the police.

The trees grew green those mornings, the river dropped, and the brown winter smoke dropped downward out of it, and fishermen appeared. Giovanni was right about the fishermen; they certainly never seemed to catch anything, but it gave them something to do. Along the quays the bookstalls seemed to become almost festive, awaiting the weather which would allow the passerby to leaf idly through the dogeared books, and which would inform the tourist with a passionate desire to carry off to the United States, or Denmark, more colored prints than he could afford, or, when he got home, know what to do with. Also, the girls appeared on their bicycles, along with boys similarly equipped; and we sometimes saw them along the river, as the light began to fade, their bicycles put away until the morrow. This was after Giovanni had lost his job and we walked around in the evenings. Those evenings were bitter. Giovanni knew that I was going to leave him, but he did not dare accuse me for fear of being corroborated. I did not dare to tell him. Hella was on her way back from Spain and my father had agreed to send me money, which I was not going to use to help Giovanni, who had done so much to help me. I was going to use it to escape his room.

Every morning the sky and the sun seemed to be a little higher and the river stretched before us with a greater haze of promise. Every day the bookstall keepers seemed to have taken off another garment, so that the shape of their bodies appeared to be undergoing a most striking and continual metamorphosis. One began to wonder what the final shape would be. It was observable, through open windows on the quays and sidestreets, that hôteliers had called in painters to paint the rooms; the women in the dairies had taken off their blue sweaters and rolled up the sleeves of their dresses, so that one saw their powerful arms; the bread seemed warmer and fresher in the bakeries. The small school children had taken off their capes and their knees were no longer scarlet with the cold. There seemed to be more chatter—in that curiously measured and vehement language, which sometimes reminds me of stiffening egg white and sometimes of stringed instruments but always of the underside and aftermath of passion.

THE WOMAN WHO WAS FUCKED AND FUCKED OVER FOR A CRANE (13th century)

by Garin

trans. by Ned Dubin

However much I have been lax
since first I was set to this task,
I'll now compose a fabliau
about something I came to know
in Vézelay by the exchange.
It's not at all within the range
of my purpose to say who told it;
it's short enough and soon unfolded,
but listen, if you're curious.

Garin the story-teller says
that once there lived a castellan,
neither a fool nor uncouth man,
but courtly, and well-cultured too.
He had a worthy daughter, who
was beautiful beyond compare,
but the castellan didn't care
that any man have conversations
or see her, save on rare occasions.
He kept her shut up in a tower,
he loved her so, and would allow her
only her nurse for company—
no silly, foolish woman, she,
but worldly-wise and disciplined,
who saw to it her charge was penned
and oversaw her education.

Whilst engaged in the preparation
of the girl's breakfast, it occurs
on one fine morning to the nurse
that they could use another plate,
and off she hurries, doesn't wait,
back to their home, which was quite near,
to fetch the needed kitchen gear.
She didn't think to lock the tower.

A young man at that very hour
came walking by there, and he had
a crane he recently had bagged
clutched in his right hand.

Now, the girl,
who liked to look out at the world,
was sitting by the window-pane
and saw him pass by with the crane.
She called to him and said,
"My friend, what bird have you there in your
hand,
on your father's soul?" He explains,
"By Orléans and all her saints,
my lady, it's a large, fine crane."
The girl replies, "In God's own name,
it's fat and fair and just mature;
I've never seen its like, I'm sure.
I'd buy it from you, if I could."
"My lady," he says, "well and good.
If that would please you, I will sell."
~~"What are you asking for it, tell?"~~
"My lady, for a fuck it's yours."
"Saint Peter help me now, because
I haven't any fuck to trade!
God knows, if I had, we'd have made
a bargain quickly—I'm not cheap—
and the crane would be mine to keep."
"Lady," he says, "surely you jest.
I certainly would not suggest
a fuck unless you had a lot.
Be quick and pay me what you've got."
She swears to God that, just her luck,
she's never ever seen a fuck.
"Young man," she says, "come on up now
and look for yourself high and low,
'neath bed and benches, all around,
to see if a fuck can't be found."

The youth, who was well-bred and courtly,
came to her in the tower shortly,
pretending to search thoroughly.
"Lady," he said, "it seems to me
there may be one under your dress."
She'd not much sense and knew still less,
told him, "Come, fellow; have a look."
Without delay the young man took

her in his arms with might and main
 who was enamored of his crane,
 placed her in bed and grabbed her shift
 and hiked it up, went on to lift
 her legs way up and held them high,
 and her cunt quickly caught his eye,
 and roughly he thrust in his rod.
 “Young man, you’re searching much too hard!”
 the maiden says, sighing and gasping.
 The young man couldn’t keep from laughing,
 involved to the hilt in his game:
 “It’s just I’m giving you my crane—
 take full possession of the bird.”
 “You never spoke a truer word,”
 the girl says; “now be off with you!”

He left her sad and thoughtful, too,
 went from the tower and traveled on,
 and her nurse came back thereupon
 and saw the damsel with the crane.
 She trembled, and the blood did drain
 out of her face, and she was short:
 “Young lady, what’s this bird? Who brought
 it here? Now tell the truth to me!”
 “I bought it just now, honestly,
 from a young man, who sold the bird
 and brought it in here, you’ve my word.”
 “What did you pay?” “One fuck, no more,
 I gave him nothing else, be sure.”
 “Wretch that I am! Woe’s me! A fuck?
 How could I have such awful luck
 as to have left you here alone?
 I curse my mouth for what I’ve done
 that ever it ate or drew breath!
 I deserve to be put to death
 and will be, too, I think, quite soon!”
 You’d think the nurse about to swoon
 and fall to the floor altogether,
 but still she sets out to defeather
 the crane and dress it for the pot:
 a garlic sauce, she says, is not
 what’s called for—pepper’s her intention.
 (I often have heard people mention
 in many places that I’ve been:
 “Adversity that ends up in
 the pot at least gives some small comfort.”)
 Some it may please and some discomfit,
 so what?—the nurse seasons the crane
 and then has to go out again
 to get a knife to open it,
 and the young girl returns to sit
 down by the window and look out.
 She saw the young man, still about
 and glad of what had taken place.
 The maiden called him straightaways

and said, “Come back here, sir, and quick!
 My nurse was angered to the quick
 because you took my fuck away
 when you sold me your crane today.
 Do give it back, and be so kind
 not to begrudge it me or mind.
 Come here, and let us two make peace.”
 “Missy, I’ll do just as you please,”
 the young man said; then up he came
 and stretched her out and did the same:
 he went between her legs and pounded
 the fuck right back where he had found it.

When he had done, he didn’t stay,
 but took his crane and went away
 instead of leaving it behind.
 The nurse returned, thinking she’d find
 the crane and put it up to roast.
 “Don’t hurry; it’s all labor lost,”
 the maiden told the woman, “for
 the man who just went out that door
 unfucked me and took back his bird.”
 The nurse, no sooner had she heard,
 made of her grief such a display
 and called down curses on the day
 she’d left the maiden in the tower
 that day for some man to deflower:
 “Why was I given you to watch?
 So heedlessly have I kept watch
 that here you have been fucked again
 and I don’t get a bit of crane!
 I gave the man his chance myself:
 “*The careless shepherd feeds the wolf!*”

from **KISSING ARCHITECTURE** (2011)

by Syvlla Lavin

proposed by Laura Hermann

A kiss has been many things in many places. In the seventeenth century, Martin von Kempe wrote more than a thousand pages on kissing. But even von Kempe could never have imagined that kissing would serve as a theory of architecture. The kiss offers to architecture, a field that in its traditional forms has been committed to permanence and mastery, not merely the obvious allure of sensuality but also a set of qualities that architecture has long resisted: ephemerality and concillience. However long or short, however socially constrained or erotically desiring, a kiss is the coming together of two similar but not identical surfaces, surfaces that soften, flex, and deform when in contact, a performance of temporary singularities, a union of bedazzling convergence and identification during which separation is inconceivable yet inevitable. Kissing confounds the division between two bodies, temporarily creating new definitions of threshold that operate through suction and slippage rather than delimitation and boundary. A kiss puts form into slow and stretchy motion, loosening form's fixity and relaxing its gestalt unities. Kissing performs topological inversions, renders geometry fluid, relies on the atectonic structural prowess of the tongue, and updates the metric of time. Kissing is a lovely way to describe a contemporary architectural performance.

Kissing is also a gentle way to say goodbye to an old architectural drama in which architecture is inevitably cast as a tragic figure, sometimes victim sometimes villain but always closer to failure than to success. While architecture's sense of disciplinary inferiority ultimately derives from the antique pyramid of expression that placed language and poetry at its lofty apex and building down amid the mud and toil of the ground, architecture's Sisyphean effort to achieve elevation only became more futile with the development of modern capitalism on the one hand (to which architecture is inevitably attached) and avant-garde strategies of opposition on the other (to which architecture is attached not inevita-



"Peak," Landscape agate (Mexico 92x80mm)

bly but by desire). Architecture's original sin was that it could not tell stories in the manner of poetry and painting, although it has certainly tried, offering up such gestures of atonement as *architecture parlante* and postmodernism. Abstraction solved that problem, because by at least the nineteenth century, painting and all the typically figurative and narrative forms, from graphic design to the novel, were no longer interested in telling stories, and therefore the promise of parity between architecture and the other arts seemed almost in reach. But the very abstraction that made it possible for painting to define itself no longer in terms of the literal content of its images also made it possible for capital to seemingly float free from the literal labor of its production — capital that most obviously, more obviously than in painting, was needed by architects to build. Different mediums understood and exploited the apparent freedom of this world (which Marxism called the superstructure) in different ways, but for architecture this fantasy freedom became just another source of envy and a new form of cultural privilege — the glorious stance of the rejecting, angry avant-gardist in need of nothing but a paintbrush — to which it did not have access. Consider this irony: abstract expressionism is historically coincident with the invention of corporate architecture.

One important strain in contemporary architectural discourse is defined by the net result of these convergent histories of capital and culture. Today the discipline is crippled by a futile debate between those who hold that architecture has failed to establish autonomy and those who contend that architecture has failed to develop adequate means of engagement. During the past thirty years, some have even argued that architecture's most important social role is to reveal and repeat this symptomatic hopelessness. As a result, the field has generated a plethora of responses to this double bind, referred to variously as postmodernism, deconstruction, or the neo-avant-garde, that have in common the pursuit of devices for admitting, articulating, describing, mapping, and representing architecture's cultural paralysis. Today, I would say at last, this disciplinary Tourette's syndrome, where suddenly and even in the face of tremendous productivity architecture still blurts out a sense of shame, is starting to be understood as self-imposed and more likely to prolong paralysis than move the discipline further. It is precisely release from

architecture's suspended state of repeated mea culpas that kissing offers.

Andy Warhol once wryly remarked, "Two people kissing always look like fish". Now, however much Elmo the Muppet loved his pet goldfish, fish are not generally known for returning such affection. To turn kissers into fish is therefore to call into question not only the romantic tradition of the kiss as expression of love but of the kiss as expression of any traditional set of emotions. Warhol's comment does not eliminate the force of kissing, as he ascribes to it an utterly transforming capacity — it takes a lot of something to turn a person into a fish — but it does interrupt the chain of signification into which kissing is historically locked. "Two people kissing always look like a fish" makes it possible to argue that kissing does not *a priori* signify a particular set of emotions but rather produces sensation and affect that are subsequently named *a posteriori* and variously by culture, language, and disciplines.

Warhol's comment had to be about fish. First, fish are cold-blooded and therefore a good species to use to evacuate feeling from flirting. Second, fish do not have faces. Sometimes, they even have both eyes on one side of their heads. It's hard to feel dreamy looking at a flounder staring at you from two adjacent globules, and a far cry from looking longingly at the big-eyed, small-nosed, pouty-lipped visage of, say, an overly cathected Disney rodent. Kissing cold-blooded fish not only divorces the kiss from traditional notions of emotion, love, and death, but kissing gets in the way even of the language and apparatus we use when we do want to express such emotions. No one can speak when kissing. Kissing is distorting and obstructing to the mouth. In short, kissing interrupts how faces and facades communicate, substituting affect and force for representation and meaning.

If fish don't love you, they don't hate you either. Fish are not like the traditional psychoanalytic mother, of which it is said that there are two kinds, critical scolders and idealizing kissers. Even if alienating and deforming, kissing cannot be critical. A critical kiss is a bite, not a kiss. And kissers, whether or not they like each other, inevitably lack the separation needed for critical distance and opposition. Kissing fish are also not

like the Lacanian mother through whose gaze the infant's uncoordinated body becomes a legible face, because kissing aborts the regime of faciality in toto. In the middle of a kiss, there is inadequate space for any of the things that are needed for a face to appear as a face, and certainly no room for the mother's detached gaze to give the infant autonomy. Bringing architecture and kissing together is therefore not only to reconsider architecture's relation to other mediums but to think beyond prevailing modes of the critical. Because architecture has served long and well as a model of failure, disaster, and complicity, it now really deserves a kiss, needs to kiss, needs a theory of kissing.

WHISPERING

JG SAYS: "THE LANGUAGE OF LOVERS IS NOT WRITTEN DOWN, IT IS WHISPERED INTO THE EAR AT NIGHT IN A HOARSE VOICE."

TWICING

CLAD TEXT WITH ITS DOUBLE AT THE DISTANCE OF A LINE.
THAT IS, WHILE READING, SPEAK TWICE EACH LINE.
IN GROUPS OF 4-6, ONE READER EACH HER PARAGRAPH. LECTERN VOICES.

IF I DIE ON THE ROAD

IF ON THE ROAD I DIE
READING OUT LOUD & UNTOGETHERLY. GARDEN VOLUME.

BRACKETS

WHILE PARTNERED; LET PROXIMATE THE HAND TO HAND (BY BACKS). AT THE
SOUND OF LIPPING PALMS, CHANGE SPEAKER.
NEGOTIATE THE PLAYING OF ROLES. SPEAKEASY VOICES.

STROBE

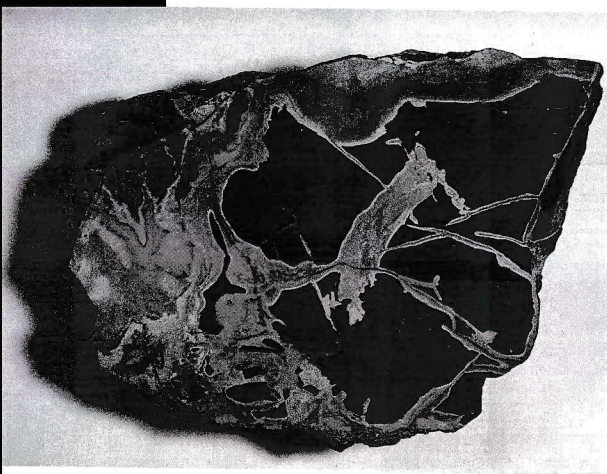
TEXT WITHDRAWS (COVILY).
READING OUT LOUD & TOGETHER. WITH CONTESTING DILATION AND QUIVER-
PUPILS. ARCADE VOICES.

BACK TO BACK

SITTING BACK AGAINST BACK (NOT NECESSARILY SOLITUDE) AND READING IN
ONE'S HEAD; IN THE STRANGE THICK OF READING BY ONE'S SELF.
PLEASE, PLEASE LEAVE AS YOU PLEASE

(src)

"Bird on branch" agate (Mexico, 120x88mm)



(intimacy)
24/09/2017
in the context of 'How do Buildings Care?'
La Loge, Brussels