

A PRACTICE FOR SLOW READING

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UNERGENOMIC 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 SHOULDERED. 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 NAVEL).

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 Marin 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 bookstore 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 Emie'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.

