

The Carrot and The Stick

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My method of procedure in generating texts for performance hasn't really changed in eight years in at least one rather peculiar way. I keep sending myself orders on 'how to proceed'—reminders of what I'm aiming at, and piles of these orders accumulate on my desk next to the notebook filled with the scratching that eventually gets shaped into a 'play'. What I REALLY want to be able to stage some day are these obsessive theoretical out-pourings—but I don't know how, yet . . .

One does not think words, or sentences, or acts, or stories—but only, wherever you are at this minute, waiting to make something—twist, and that twist is, somehow, the unit. And the work is built out of such units.

A certain rhythm of interruption and shifts on a repeating 'frame'. (Frames too, alter, but are always frame-like.)

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The art . . . must be isomorphic with the feeling aroused by itself. That means, chasing its own tail, which means in turn perpetual motion. The feeling comes after the art which causes the feeling, and yet the art which causes that feeling, made isomorphic with the feeling—and this all conceived *not* as a temporal process. But somehow learn how, in the instant, to shape the moment so that it will be resonant to whatever effects it will produce. Then, when the effect *does* occur, one is truly able to perceive the 'structure' of that effect. That's what we should build—models of effect-structures.

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Usually, feelings are aroused and out of those feelings one acts. Hate is aroused, murder results. The act *issues* from the emotion. How much better, to discover within the emotion, some sort of framework, along the struts and supports of which one can align one's body, one's imagination, one's gestures—so that the 'act', rather

than issuing from the emotion, etches its rather imaginary configuration in the materials of the real world. (The motive, of course, not change, but lucidity. The spiritual motive.)

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About four years ago, I discovered how, when suffering from a headache, to lie down on the couch and stop ‘fighting’ the pain, telling the headache to ‘expand’ as it were, until I was alone in a center of a vast web of the throbbing pain—and somehow in that center was a stillness and the pain—no longer resisted—vanished. In the same way—try to generate in the text certain points that are ‘bad’ (whatever that means) in a way that the pain of the headache is bad, and rather than trying to fight to eliminate those points—enter them, let them (the badness) inflate like an entire world in which you can find an entire structure within which a whole life of rigor, passion and intelligence can be lived. The end may be slightly different than the end of “headache elimination,” but the starting point is the same. A relaxation and allowing of ‘bad’ material to expand to the very horizons so that *I am on the inside of it*, rather than *it* being experienced as a foreign agent within *me*.

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Trying to be centered . . . on the circumference. Something inside of you (like a headache, or your response to a ‘bad’ line of dialogue) is a feeling. Relax and let it expand to the horizon, then you are alone at the center. The feeling . . . has become the structure (world) within which you move. Then your movements (your art) indeed become isomorphic (you move along roads laid down by the expanded feeling) . . . with the feelings they, originally, created!

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I’ve always wanted my art to be *about* whatever it was that gave me the energy to make it. My works, therefore, are a mode of literary criticism, in which the object under analysis is itself.

Most literature expresses how the artist feels about a certain sustained ‘subject’. I invariably choose to express how I feel about the preceding moment of generated text. Mostly, how I feel about the energy that generated that preceding moment. Or rather, the relationship between that energy and the one out of many possible ways it chose to crystallize itself. Continual judgments and reflections upon what just was ‘there’. So the critique of the play is not so much built into the play—it is the body and flesh of the play. Indeed, the critique of a play that isn’t there—and I feel the play *shouldn’t* be there, because if it were there—it would only be there for the *moment* of its performance while what would remain (forever) would be the

memory of performance in individual spectators' minds—that memory (selective, judgmental, *etc.*) immediately a form of critique, and so I chose to make the work out of 'what-it-is-that-remains' rather than what is momentary (non-existing). So what is articulated and organized is not so much acts, as responses to and reflections upon acts.

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To understand the work, one should not, of course, ask what it 'means', but only—what need does it answer. In my case, the most consistent, passionate need . . . is the need to FILL A SPACE in which I find myself (mentally). That is, I suppose, a kind of erotics of thought . . . using thought to manipulate the imagination, which is a body. Fill that space (where one is now, and then now, and then now) not by being at the center (center: the placing (there) of a 'subject') but rather by a twist administered to the imagination-body: an un-natural extension of some sort, generating a new periphery, a difference.

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We lack a center, always. By definition (man). It's wrong to try and provide a center (the play should imitate what-it-is to be a self, which is to be centerless). We are peripherally defined creatures. Joy and exhilaration will be attained in the work if it imitates what we really are, which is a process involving a lack at the center which receives a collection of in-mixed traces, so that our mental antenna are constantly feeling out to the 'edges' where we imagine those traces to originate. Don't, therefore, think of filling the 'space' of the moment, but in the moment, distribute oneself at the periphery. That would be, a union (of 'X' with) *other* codes, traces. Then let that union, that in-mixing be the agent that does the act-ing. The 'I' doesn't act—the generated sentence, the gesture that results from fold layed back upon fold, the idea that appears as a wrinkle where one line of input stumbles over another—those are the agents of the 'act'.

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My experience continually (life experience, making-art experience) is one of "hummm, that's not quite right" and I try to back away for a new angle of approach, and be seized, there, away from my center, inspired (which means jolted out of line, twisted) by a trace, otherness, irrelevance, 'error', which in speaking through me will, as it were, change the rules of the game.

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The irony, which is still at the motivating place of the drama, simply attacks different 'objects' these days. With the Greeks, it was the irony of an act producing a result opposite to its intention (will effort followed by reversal and revelation). From Shakespeare to Ibsen, the irony was relocated in statements, where a statement is made and can no longer be believed to say what it says, because we know the character is lying, or pretending, or calculating. Now, the irony is in the very *field* of discourse. It pulls the very sentence apart. There is no longer a speaker, towards whom an ironic perspective is to be employed . . . but the total field of words, gestures, acts available to the 'speaker'—each 'item' in that field is now perceived as ironically meaning its opposite, causing its opposite to 'be' the minute it is performed. That is the modern, ironic, consciousness. The performing (or naming) 'A' evokes (invokes) in that instant, immediately, non-A. It is only against the field non-A that A can make its entry. We KNOW that. It is one of the few things we, in the historical period, know in a more *lived-in* mode of knowing than men of earlier eras.

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Poetics of production:

- 1) A 'meaningless' event.
- 2) A field of experience.
- 3) A point of view relating 1 to 2.

Think of life as a 'music' of these three interpenetrating moments/realms. The borders between them shifting all the time, of course. An item 'A', could shift, oscillating between 1, 2 and perhaps even 3.

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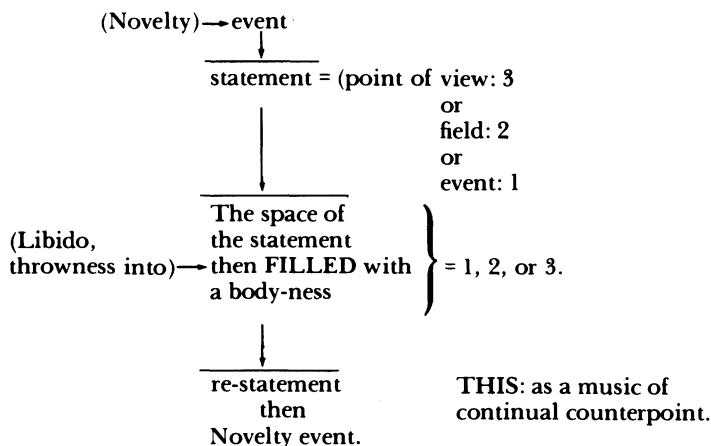
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3

Listen-speak-click of release that's no-mind. Ah!

Learn-create-objective letting-be. Ah!

A possible sequence:



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The most interesting task is to discover the *shape* of the now-moment. So it becomes a matter of forms, more than a matter of structure.

What is the form of the present, and each succeeding present? Then, see what-can-be-done with the form that is the real form of the here-now. Those here-nows as the building blocks of some other structure. But the quality of the blocks determines the possible 'style' of the overall structure.

Now, the form of 'now' can be determined only as I try to twist my body (mental) until it FILLS somehow the moment, till it touches the borders of the moment. The meaning then, cannot be in a superimposed fable, but is in the modes found of being able to inhabit (fill the spaces of the present, and the sequence of those modes. Meaning is—"how do you live in a space?" Spaces arise, the way mutations are delivered upon the planet—and then life tries to inhabit that new, mutant species. In the attempt to make an arisen space 'habitable' (a species is also a 'space' for living)—meanings arise, such as "that plant is poisonous." I am concerned with such meanings.

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Meaning? Make an item (the play) that other items can allude to when they are making an effort to crystallize their own meaning-to-themselves. The play doesn't allude to a real world, through having a 'meaning'. Rather it is there to 'give meaning to' anything *else* that wants to take meaning from *it*.

What we need are models for a 'way-of-being-in-the-world' that we'd like to remember as a possibility. I'd like, myself, to be 'tuned' to the world in the way the play I create is tuned. I establish the world of the play so that hopefully, I can turn to it, and begin resonating to its rhythms.

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I generate a text, I make a composition out of what I 'know', that is to say—a collection of 'meanings' carried around inside me. One meaning . . . in conflict with another meaning. That means, of course, a continually shifting frame of reference. That means of course . . . that there is no conclusion . . . no beginning, middle and end . . . but, intermissions. Until I die, But then I won't be able to write about it.

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In the work of art, you are never talking about what you are talking about. You are always using talking-about-subject-'A' to really talk about subject 'B'. But most of the audience doesn't understand that, which makes of the theater especially a rather

absurd undertaking (if you would make art). Why do I do it? Well, I had my reasons, but I'm not sure I'll do it much longer.

One reason one makes art is to have more control than usual over what goes out and into one. Because if you are making a work of art, you devote a significant number of the available hours of the day to controlling that input and output. So the work of art is always a picture of one's ideal world, a postulated utopia. But again, it is not the 'things you are talking about' which constitute the content of that utopia, those 'things' are used to talk *really* about something else. So the utopia—there, before your eyes—is unseen by most people. Why both talk about what you are talking about? Ah—to talk about it is to first catch it, so that it can be 'displayed' (talked about in theatrical language). To catch it, to make it hold still, you have to kill it. Everything that is talked about (displayed on the stage) is a dead thing. I don't want to 'kill' what I REALLY want to talk about (utopia) so I have to talk about OTHER things I don't mind killing and then those dead things are talking about other things that somehow—because they don't have to be 'displayed', don't have to be killed.

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To EXPRESS something means you first killed it.

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One can hardly help generating things that give pleasure. We are built to 'take pleasure in'. But the effort must be made to try and insure that pleasure will feed not the 'I' (which should be the developer of will) but rather the disassociated not-I within us. The not-I is both a more sensitive, subtler, more intricate pleasure-experiencing machine than the I—and the sole field within the person which will NOT degenerate through repeated pleasure stimulation. Clearly the 'I', the ego, does so degenerate into sensualism if fed too rich a diet of pleasure. But inside of us there is all that 'passes through us' (the other, which is always threatening to disrupt the selfhood we feverishly hold onto) and that 'other' in us takes the pleasure it is fed, breaks it into a hundred small pieces and sends it flying to feed different parts of that energy system which because it is always challenging the coherence of the inner 'I', forces us to new efforts of will and invention.

How to feed the 'other' in us (the not-I, as opposed to ego) with pleasure? Ahh—but everything in this collection of notes is really speaking to that primary end, dealing with that primary problem.

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Ritual as anti-doing, the anti-pole to force (See Erik Gutkind). My life of writing is a ritual, I make nothing through force. I copy certain things (or, let rise certain things) and that doing-so renders me transparent. Erases me as a 'force'. My work . . . erases me. So, I am not. What I am finally, is a part of the composition that arises through me.

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We can postulate two (of many) systems going on inside us.

1) A 'receive perception' system (always a clean slate).

2) A memory store.

Those are 'imagined' systems, suggesting new ground rules for the game of art-making. As opposed to such an imaginary system there is a more verifiable neurological bi-part system in which

1) Certain neurons PROTECT us against the strength of incoming stimuli.

2) Certain others receive stimuli.

The fact is that we pick up the frayed ends of system 1 on system 2.

So I can suggest to myself—write the PROTECTION against noticing, generate gesture of defense against input.

Also:

The perceived may be read in (on) the past (the memory slate upon which past perceptions have left their imprint).

'Pure' perception would go in, and vanish, and be not.

Real perception is resistance to perception.

Can you imagine what kinds of texts, suggested by above procedures, might be generated? Would they not resemble my texts?

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Old paradigm: Universe consists of forces that solidify into units (Gestalts, objects, events) to which we *respond*.

New Paradigm: Universe consists of forces that leave traces which are not fully identifiable consciously, of which we see only residual evidence—and if we respond it is an 'error' of responding to what we *project* into those traces.

If you believe 1, your art tries to make something visible, and the life copied by that art is a responding-to-input from the 'world'.

If you believe 2, your (my) art tries to erase things (because they are obstacles) and the life copied by that art is a 'something else' that tries to resonate to inner output.

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The TREE of senses.

Man is currently the 'seeing' creature—that sense defines him vis-à-vis other creatures, who have more highly developed 'lower' senses.

Smell (taste)

Then: hearing

Then: seeing (man's current level)

Then: thinking (the next level, not yet achieved.)

THINKING . . . as a sense. As a way to respond to what is present

. . . by THINKING what is present, rather than smelling, hearing, seeing it.

So, try to make a new art about THINKING—THINKING treated as a *sensing*, as the sixth sense!

Try to imitate (anticipate) the next stage in the evolution of consciousness.

What that amounts to is a planned opposition (within the work) or restriction of organic releases (pleasure): which is also a way consciousness could be thought of—a restriction on immediate release in sensation.

Past achievement of man: to turn 'tree' into a sign, which can be held in the head. That's what men have achieved—symbol-making, sign-making ability, in which conscious experience mediates between man and encountered tree.

The next step might be to restrict the emotional release man now gets through his encounter with signs, and so see the sign (object) dissolve into a kind of web-of-association awareness. See the signs become nothing more than polarity-traces. That web-consciousness then mediates between man and signs and he no longer sees the 'signs'—just as in encountering the tree in the field he no longer really sees the 'tree'. Instead of the tree—he flashes the sign in his head 'tree'. So in the future—he no longer flashes the sign—but the entire web-of-associations and differences in which tree-sign occurs as an item.

Then: thinking . . . as a sense. In the way that 'seeing' now mediates between man and experience—separates him from experience because it translates outside into inside—so thinking could be a similar translator . . . KNOW THAT, and make the ENJOYMENT of that be the art enjoyment. Because to separate himself from nature, and then from experience even . . . seems more and more to be man's destiny! Man *is* the abstracting animal. Keep going.

KEEP GOING!

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