

Hey Geoff

So finally getting back to you on the beautiful work you sent months ago. I've read in through several times and found it continually opening itself in new ways, unfolding patterns of sight and sense that are remarkable in their ability to simultaneously ground and unmoor -- images that announce them selves in the process of their own action/activity, never straying from the flickering sense of perceptual space and bodily experience working in tandem.

Your text is struck through with the present participle tense -- the ongoing-ness of experiential space. As I open to the first page, beginning with a blue that wraps both "our", the shared closeness of an inner dialogue that positions separate bodies, and "around" that field between, the potential space of experience, I am thinking primarily of the infusion of blue in our world -- that it is the color of both sky and water because of the way light is absorbed and refracted. We begin with sight, with light as a subject that contains its own conditions, shapes experience, literally "colors" the field on which forms play. That the act of splintering, that sight is an acknowledgement of the break that we live in, allows this text to address the phenomenological complexities inherent in the act of writing. It challenges us to perceive sight, which shifts to the camera image of the eye several lines down, as an act of navigating complex relationships between the "see-er" and the "seen" as an "effort to form one's mind". A startling and absolutely necessary concern with which to open this aggregate of shifting space.

Your engagement of the "caustic" (the corrosion, or destruction of living tissue, from the Gk. *kaustikos*: "burning") speaks directly to how the shapes shift in your first couple pages; the morphological approaching a limit, a horizon, where articulation is muted to the frontier, the "unknown" beyond. The space that people are often unable approach in their "mood", their "shielding"; that we are entrenched in positions of comfortable "primacy" that the "opening of the field" as Duncan puts it is not just a freeing act of shifted perception, but also one that removes many of the social/political barriers people rely on to feel "solid" and safe. Particalization, changing of states, is acknowledging the body as something in process, effectually non-static, as a place to begin understanding human experience -- but always with the reminder that this process is something difficult to endure; a burning, a corrosion of previously assumed ontological safety nets.

You then provide us a place of "restoration", but it is one that necessitates "creeping // new str / ... esses"; a phrase that reframes this idea of a splintered, experiential process of perception as one that needs (as I read it) new modes of actions "in time", new ways of expressing the verb of existence. Also questions of how "to be" within a perceptual space (is this integration possible?), and what this interrelation of self and environment means for the perceiver, who notices detail and creates dialects through this perceiving -- the impossibility of it, melting into the space of warmth, the cleansing space of the "meld".

Questions of the "they" and the "self" enter the text (the "they" responding to the withdrawn, fragmentary "I", the ego in the process of de-centering itself, although shored up by the acknowledgement of a very present bifurcation, a split that traces the terms between perceivers). Experience IS something that "solos", but that this solo-ing is not a complete withdrawal, but is rather has the ability to counteract the systems of safe definition, of "cloying rhythm" -- one that projects a potential "our" into a space yet to come ("later"). You bring in the remarkably visceral filmic images of the sheep slaughtering at this point -- the vibrant color of the red blood against the white wool, and this again reminds the reader of the inherent ethical implications of sight, of our ability to both "look" and "look away", the complicity of aesthetically perceiving violence (that this too involves and eye-->I and an other acted upon, a relationship complicated by an inherent imbalance in power). We are left with the vibrancy of the violent act, that it nests itself in our perception and memory far more so than "dull colors" the rocky field of location we must hold as "witness" (I think immediately of Rob Halpern's "filling throats with so much rock" ("Situation--Being on a Rock"), that we strain to express --and in your case, take in--our place of "being"). What can the poem hope to accomplish in this place? A poetry's attempt at "response" that is erased through the process of time, noting the inability of any center to hold (as Yeats puts it). As the "I" is "here" responding to a "here" in a state of anxiety, of locational collapse in the act of writing, what passes before the "eye".

The "eye" (you note) is always in the process of "trying to reach something even", trying to find a solid place to rest in the perceptual momentum of time, and that this resting partially resolves itself within the image (in fact

those particular memory images which preoccupy the mind, collections of form and color which create emotional resonance beyond bare understanding). That we can make the choice to place a measure of "hope" here, in these assorted afterimages, mental landscapes that have passed into memory -- that images are always "situations" which require a perspective of multiplicity, of recognizing that the opening is also a fault, an error, a "wound" in the sense that it requires an admission of the vulnerable, unstable condition of examined "being". And finally that in the poem, its aggregation of these errors, these "noises" of multitudes and environments, even though the blood is coiled, the many are entombed -- passed through one's individual constraints -- there is the possibility of overcoming, "arising" from one's "obtuse [...] regard".

How to escape the filters of the panoptical first person author? To move away from an overarching sense of the "how" is key -- the question's "filters", its conditions that space must be labelled, scored with given meaning -- into a less defined, abjected position. Where the self is a passing shape, a mutable, winding thing that regards by turning to what is left.

This turning, "winding" self situates as an "outer rim" -- I am thinking in terms of the arresting of finite linear perception (theoretically) on the lip of the event horizon, the hole, the collapse or caustic burn in temporal continuity; where all can be received as a "long single tone". There is an unwillingness to "begin here", to dissolve the single body that emerges again, in all of its immediacies, its needs that remind the reader again of the "blood" that mixes with "gravel" of the immolated body that comes back into focus after approaching the edge of the spiral -- there is no easy and definite shift to pure, ego-less expanse because there are always the conditions of the body to contend with, and the political/social/ethical considerations that a body among others necessitates. Also that this apprehending of, this standing outside cause a self-reflexive pause, a consideration of the separateness of the perceiver (again we are brought back to our beginnings, that there is a perceiving self and things that constitute a field of experience, colors which are filters through which light carries a sense of knowing ("origins", "organs", places of beginning -- here the "eye" as an organ is presented as an "instrument", a "tool", instead of a sole arbitrator of the "real", by which to experience). An uncanny sense of sight mediating what is "real", establishing borders, seemingly static Euclidean forms, placed against the open event of "visualizing the fantasy fields", what the mind's (internal) eye may perceive; how conceptually dissecting the biological apparatus of visual perception allows us to be both in the body, the immediate solidity of a physical self, and at the same time understand its porousness, how things pass through a body in constant movement, continuous change.

To meet in agreement (a sort of perceptual "negative capability") closes this section of "Not of Distends" -- to accede that there are profiles, colors vibrantly interplaying, strewn, scattered here and there; a "purple mind" behind the eyes, the "red cilia" swaying in their functional, active bodily processes; NOT conditioned by perception, NOT solitary "seen" things. That really the dialectic of "self" and "other" is found in the faulty representation of time as pointillist, as a static collection, as if "your being there [could be] making a simulacra of the real instant". Here the occident, the curve (the rim) breaks through, the colors "shim shim shimmer" (a beautiful sonic "revving") actively and the eyes, that descend out of singular, observational position, supersede barrier, and are finally able to see the "fallen occupier" the "fallow private sieve" that lies at the heart of the walled-off world of the internal.

whew! that's my take on this infinitely engaging, active, bright, alive piece that (I think) poses an important holistic look at the poetic image, and its ontological implications. I have heard Leslie Scalapino's work described as closely aligned with "objectivist" poetic concerns (in her diminishment of the overarching "inner self" as a primary mode of expression), and, in a sense, advancing those poetics to their . In "Not of Distends" I see you doing something very similar with certain "imagist" poetics, creating a multivalent dialogue around the conditions of sight as a process, both imploding and expanding the space between see-er and seen. This work is beautiful and I am so looking forward to seeing more; thank you for sharing and I hope some of this is helpful in some way shape or form and not too far off the mark.

In much peace

-J