

Christmastown: Notes on the Texts

from 1986:

Three voiced periods; fiction, ninety-nine pages with three sections of 33 pages. Ostensibly a meditation on the Catholic Trinity, it is an attempt to represent in textual form the constant, obsessive turning over of thoughts in their elliptical repetitions. Using repetition instead of narrative as its mode of assemblage, it utilizes the symbolic foundations of the text (type face, phrase, ·, line, page) in the place of a narrated even which, although constantly on the horizon of the reading, never takes place. Each of the sections seeks to represent the symbolic grounding of the human subject— a base on which an imaginary identity or meaning takes shape and is determined— inscribed in the process of the reading itself. As such it seeks to be a material, that is, objective representation of an essential human drama: the drama of the human subject in the experience of the law (language) which determines the very possibility of intersubjective life.

Lessons in Letters; fiction, eighty-eight pages. founded on the Rabbinical fantasy of interrogating the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and, as a result, being in turn interrogated by them, it is composed of twenty-two intersecting four page vignettes, each an attempt to represent a different state of subjective flux— perceptual essences, visceral and bodily sensations, fantasy, memory, eruptions of desire and of unconscious configurations, etc. In the elliptical ordering of these fragments, flashes, pulsions, bursts of speech— all presences around an absence (· / ...)— each type face/case represents a different voice in the dramatic choral weave of this representation of human subjectivity. As such it is an attempt to write subjective experience, from dream state to preconsciousness to consciousness, literally taking place in the locus of language.

from 1990:

Three voiced periods

In *Three voiced periods*, ostensibly a non-rationalist meditation on the Catholic Trinity by a non-believer, the Trinity is viewed as a conception of human subjectivity possessing its own logic and lucidity; a conception antithetical to any modern psychologistic conception.

As such *Three voiced periods* is an attempt to envision human subjectivity as the obsessive pulsions of a plurality of voices, as an interfacing network and overlapping and associatively interpenetrating phrases or voices.

cf. Julia Kristeva: “The Trinity itself, that crown jewel of theological sophistication, evokes, beyond its specific content and by virtue of the very logic of its articulation, the

intricate intertwining of the three aspects of psychic life: the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real.”

In this sense *Three voiced periods* exists as an image of psychic life, as does the Trinity (as does psychoanalysis: the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real); but beyond being simply founded on the Trinity or on a psychoanalytic conception, I have used the tertiary structure and the jagged pulsive rhythms of the text as a framework in which to inscribe three particular psychical experiences (one could even say psychotic visions!) that I have had and which I have come to consider as illustrations of the fundamentals of human subjectivity.

What should be noted first and foremost are the effects of the text’s rhythms and how they are truncated: this is the primary register of meaning in the text and is what one should come away with: the recognition of an ‘other’ rhythm, of an ‘other’ breathing, tearing, tugging at you through the palpable play of the surfaces and their effects; that is, tearing at the surfaces that consciousness is, founded as it is on repetitive (obsessive) unconscious configurations.

This is how the text attempts a de-centering of the speaking subject: by showing it as an effect always at the edges, revolving, as it were, around an empty center or absence.

This conception is a distinctly non-modern, non-psychologicistic conception of the human subject: that is, not of a central feeling, thinking, sensing being, but of the human subject as a plurality of voices forged and dominated by obsessive pulsions.

Lessons in Letters

Lessons in Letters is structured in quaternary, as an interweaving of four voices each announced by a material cue— type face, upper or lower case,— in this dramatic representation of human intersubjectivity: all four manifestations on the surface of the text weaving themselves around a central absence.

Lessons in Letters can be approached as a “stream of consciousness” with a fourth dimension added: the three dimensions of the “steam of consciousness” structured verbally, that is, involving a tacit ply between the ear and the mouth—

- 1) the voice, both self and other;
- 2) visceral sensations, made cognate on a verbal model;
- 3) perception, which is organized verbally;

the fourth dimension, a “timelessspacelessness” which disrupts, altering the flow of the “stream” while serving to channel it, is an unknown, an impossible, an unexpected configured repetitive grounding which can only be known, that is, represented in a fragmented or algebraic form; as such it is non-verbal, involving no tacit play between ear and mouth.

Lessons in Letters is founded, ostensibly, on the “Alphabet of Ben Sira”, a secular Jewish text of the middle ages, of which there are three distinct versions. Each version consists of twenty-two (the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet) aphorisms and

vignettes, each dealing with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, arranged in alphabetical order.

For *Lessons in Letters* I have taken at face value Willem de Kooning's statement that "content is a glimpse", or in this case a collection of glimpses: competing, complementing glimpses of "reality", of realities disrupted and framed by glimpses of an unknowable which appears momentarily during instances of desire, of fear, of anxiety, etc., only to disappear again into its unknowability; an unknowable real, that is, an unconscious.

Matko

I like to refer to *Matko* as a Lenten hymn, as a poetic record of the loss necessary to any re-birth in the name, in the symbolic (which is language) represented specifically by the Name-of-the-Father, that is, a name which signifies a symbolic chain and not merely a name which is a simple sign, with a single referent. The Name-of-the-Father, as a specifically Lacanian concept, represents an existence distinct from the mother-child dyad.

Matko can perhaps be understood in reference to the following quotation from Boris Pasternak's *Safe Conduct*—"The creation was called a tragedy. And that is what it ought to be called. The tragedy was called "Vladimir Mayakovsky" [by Vladimir Mayakovsky]. The title contained the simple discovery...that a poet is not an author but the subject of a lyric..."

from 1991; program notes from a full-length performance of *Three voiced periods* at an exhibition of paintings by Jacek Nowacki:

Three voiced periods uses as its literal pretext a meditation on the Christian Trinity in order to explore the symbolic grounding of the human speaking subject. It utilizes the concept of self-difference, in place of the self-reference that characterizes popular narrative forms, in an attempt to dissociate the reader/listener from semblance and its corollary, the spectacle. Repetition is used as its mode of assemblage. The aleatory ordering of the phrases presents the sexed subject as incantation; indeed, the incantatory character of the text seeks to expose the muscles, so-to-speak, as they operate tetanically beneath the skin. Inscribed in the anonymous style of the chorus is a constant pulsing of voices proposing that you are an effect of an incantation spoken by something which can only ever be experienced as other, an uncontrolled and uncontrollable pulsion of unconscious voices, phrases, and configurations, and that you as unitary, centered being exist as a fiction, an illusion, a fading effect of just such a choral incantation, just as meaning is an effect appearing and fading in the truncated rhythms of the text. The incessant, pulverizing wash of voices in their broken textual rhythms (each 'voiced period' / drum beat represents the rupture of self-difference and the rupture between

subjects: elided, re-established, incessant) seeks to break down the edifice that you are, leaving in its wake only glimpses of the fundamental paranoia on which our cadaveric sense of self is founded. In presenting this text in such a setting I have had in mind the Homerists in Fellini's *Satyricon*, who enter the feast and amidst the clatter of dishes and conversation introduce the flowing rhythms of classical Greek, mingling them with the Latinate rhythms of the scene. I would introduce just such other rhythms into the present scene, an archaic, deeply resonant counterpoint amid the clatter of drink and conversation, like the ignored breathing behind, beneath, in the gaps of the conversations, washing over and under the gazes mingling, overflowing, hidden. Even though the text seeks to be a fundamental drama, there is no classical dramatic (trinitarian) structure to the text, no beginning, middle, or end: the narrated event never fully appears on the horizon of the reading. As such, it is a form of rarefied narrative, of pure suspense, meant to be entered and left at anytime, at numerous times throughout the reading, as it grips you, as your attention is drawn elsewhere. To these ends bear in mind Willem de Kooning's statement that "content is a glimpse", as well as this from Philippe Sollers: "It is very difficult to implant as suspicion in someone that he is not in the process of living his own life, but rather a series of repetitions of which he is not conscious."

from 1998, Christmastown 'Sample Pack' back cover:

Christmastown (365 1/4 pp)

1. Three Voiced Periods (99 pp)
2. The Apochryphon of Betty (50 pp)
3. *The Ark of the Covenant* (29 1/4 pp)
4. Matko (20 pp)
5. A False Father (30 pp)
6. The House (49 pp)
7. Lessons in Letters (88 pp)

Christmastown is an on-going seven text collection exploring the constitution and make-up, the very possibility of the speaking, that is, split human subject. Within a variety and multiplicity of styles I situate this project—inscribing the symbolic foundation and dissolution of the human subject—within an attempt to explore the very possibilities of literature.

As the title itself suggests, *Christmastown* places its subject firmly in the Judeo-Christian tradition. From mysticism to meditation on the Catholic Trinity, from gnosticism to rabbinical fantasy, from classical rhetoric to contemporary cultural artifacts,

Christmastown is a means of discovering, through language, glimpses of what we are—whether as enunciation, as performative, as trace, as gap, or as relation to the Other, that is, to non-being.

I try to inscribe a specific deformation, a shift in literature—I try to introduce a different relationship to language, as well as to narrative, raising them both from transparency. This shift can perhaps be illustrated by the fact that although my three major concerns throughout *Christmastown* are the same as Flaubert's self-proclaimed three major concerns—the musicality of phrases, the transition from phrase to phrase, and repetition—I entertain a different relation to them, and that difference, that displacement is the record of the shift I seek to inscribe.

In the wake of Joyce, informed by a post-Céline phraseology, I define myself as both a realist (who speaks of visions) and a materialist (who insists on the materiality of language), believing that literature offers us the possibility of a unique insight into our very make-up, since it is the case that we, as humans, can only exist in language.

Matko

Matko can be approached first of all in reference to the following quotation from Boris Pasternak's *Safe Conduct*— “The creation was called a tragedy. And that is what it ought to be called. The tragedy was called “Vladimir Mayakovsky” [by Vladimir Mayakovsky]. The title contained the simple discovery...that a poet is not an author but the subject of a lyric.” And, I would add, the effect of one as well.

As such, *Matko* is a lenten hymn, a poetic record of the process of loss which is necessary for any rebirth or resurrection in the name: “The necessary condition that renders human animals capable of becoming speaking beings—subjects of unconscious desire—is that a proper name be tied to an image of the body and joined to the libidinal experience of loss.” (Ellie Ragland). Precisely as that for which an “I” can then be substituted.

Matko can thus be thought of in reference to the concept of the Name-of-the-Father, that other name for the symbolic as such which allows for the metaphorization of the mother's desire, disrupting any and all illusions of unity. As such it is a symbolic structure necessary to social functioning, allowing you to come to be in language. “The result of this substitution or metaphorization is the advent of the subject as such, the subject as no longer just a potentiality, a mere place-holder in the symbolic waiting to be filled up, but a desiring subject.” (Bruce Fink).

Three Voiced Periods

As both an image of the mind which utilizes repetition as its major mode of assemblage (“...repetition is the principle underlying the essence of human identifications...

...the *libidinal* glue that gives consistency to being and body." Ellie Ragland) and as a novel which refuses to think in novelistic terms, *Three Voiced Periods* attempts nothing less than a fundamental inscription of the human psyche, nothing less than a representation of an elemental grammar of human subjectivity.

In part a meditation on the Catholic Trinity, precisely as an image of the mind contrary to human reason, *Three Voiced Periods* is closer to a spiritual exercise or to a Zen text than to what is commonly considered fiction. It uses this meditation in an attempt to inscribe the symbolic grounding, unsettling and renewal of human subjectivity.

A rhythmic entity which must be entered into, something akin to another breathing pattern or to a low-level pulsing which permeates us but which we are oblivious to, the seemingly aleatory ordering of the phrases—there are rules governing their use—presents the subject as precisely the movement, the transition from phrase to phrase.

In part a chronicle of three shattering mental experiences or, for lack of a better word, 'visions' (precisely as traumatic encounters with the real— "the real of unassimilated traumata"—with the elemental, unsymbolizable meanings or configurations which produce us), it attempts to inscribe these 'visions' in signifiers which insist around an always missed real. Each of the three sections of the text corresponds to one of the three 'visions,' which can be descriptively characterized as *intrusion*, *infusion*, and *pulsation*.

The text itself is a fundamental drama—the characters of this drama being *the voice*, *the other*, *an exploded and exploding body*, *the illusion of an event*, etc.—and is a kind of rarefied narrative, a kind of pure suspense in which the narrated event never fully appears on the horizon of the reading and in which the enunciation and its disruption are revealed to be the real story.

Three Voiced Periods puts forth the idea that we are, each one of us, only ever the effects of the constant pulsing of language ("the automatic functioning of the signifier"), of a chorus that incessantly speaks us, and that what we are is not unlike an incantation disrupted by the real. "It is very difficult to implant a suspicion in someone that he is not in the process of living *his* own life but rather a series of repetitions of which he is not conscious." (Philippe Sollers).

Three Voiced Periods is an incessant pulsing of voices proposing that you are only ever an effect of just such a pulsing and of the 'grammar' which orders it, issuing, as it were, from some part of you that can only ever be experienced as other. It puts forth the idea that 'you' as a unitary, centered being exist only as a fictive, imaginary effect of just such a choral incantation, just as meaning is an effect appearing and fading in the truncated rhythms of the text.

In the end, the incessant, pulverizing wash of voices seeks to break down the edifice that 'you' are, leaving in their wake glimpses of the fundamental paranoia on which your cadaveric sense of self is founded. "This is the encounter with the real that is beyond automaton, the return or insistence of signs. The real is that which lies beyond automaton. This is where Lacan introduces repetition. It is not repetition that is important, but what is missed." (Bruce Fink).

Lessons in Letters

Lessons in Letters is founded on *The Aleph-Bet of Ben Shira*, a secular Jewish text of the Middle Ages. I know of three extant versions of the text, each consisting of twenty-two (the number of letters in the Hebrew aleph-bet) aphorisms or vignettes in alphabetical order, each one usually phrased as a question addressed to a letter of the aleph-bet. Founded then on the rabbinical fantasy of interrogating the letters of the aleph-bet—and as a result being interrogated by them—*Lessons in Letters* is composed of twenty-two intersecting four page sections, each representing different states and aspects of subjective flux.

As a quaternary, an interweaving of four ‘voices,’ each announced by a material cue and regulated by rules of usage, *Lessons in Letters* is an attempt to write subjective experience and its attendant grammar (and subsequent disruption) literally taking place in, and as, language. Each type style or case represents a different ‘voice’ in the dramatic choral weave of the text, and all four of these manifestations on the surface of the text weave themselves elliptically around an absence [· ; ...]. From dream state to preconsciousness to consciousness, all cradled in language in a variety of modes, the text thus makes use of such things as ‘stream of consciousness,’ fantasy, dialogue, fairy tales, pulp forms, newscasts, etc., in its dramatic mix.

For *Lessons in Letters* I’ve taken at face value Willem de Kooning’s statement that “content is a glimpse.” Or in this case, a collection of glimpses. Competing, complementing glimpses of ‘reality,’ of realities disrupted and framed by glimpses of an unknowable presence which appears during instances of anxiety, desire or fear, only to disappear again into its unknowability. Glimpses of an Other as that loss that necessarily accompanies speech.

Description becomes glimpse in the kind of “action prose” that the text attempts: prose that *is* something, not merely representing something. And to that end it’s a question of emphasizing the performative aspects of language—specifically the musical and the concrete—in order to inscribe the unnameable, that is, the real.

Throughout *Lessons in Letters* I’ve sought nothing less than a generalized poetry, a musical fleshing out of a threadbare fabric in which you can clearly see the weave. Concerned as it is, in part, with identification in the context of a progressive dissolution of the image, *Lessons in Letters*, in which everything is reduced to material constituents, is anti-spectacular in its essence. In the movement of the text perhaps you can get a glimpse of something other than what resembles you.

Two further notes: First of all, in the Hebrew language, unlike other, ‘modern’ languages, each letter originally possessed a meaning of its own: i.e. *aleph* meant cow, *ghimel* meant camel, and *nun* meant fish. Secondly, the choice of Hebrew is not without significance—it is with Hebrew that we perhaps encounter the beginnings of our phonetic alphabet.

The Apocryphon of Betty

“Language is the Alien presence.” So can be stated the theoretical basis of *The Apocryphon of Betty*, an exploration of the ‘Alien abduction’ phenomenon which treats it as a strictly and fundamentally human phenomenon. Partially shaped by the mirror experience (which makes a whole out of a fragmented body of pulsations, drives, and desires), by the simple fact that you only ever see yourself from the perspective of an other who is internalized, this phenomenon is even more fundamentally forged by the encounter with language, by the fact that language is another presence, with an altogether Other desire.

Attempting to use multiple textual strategies to present this human phenomenon in a variety of modes—analytic, scientific, sociological, archaic, popular, etc.—in an attempt to trace the complex weave of memory, ‘self,’ and cultural artifacts, *The Apocryphon of Betty* presents this multiplicity of modes as defensive, dramatic responses to the sheer trauma of the encounter with an Other desire.

Proposing a link between gnostic and popular traditions, as well as a link between the abduction phenomenon and the gnostic tradition, *The Apocryphon of Betty* also attempts to elucidate the fundamental relation between memory and narrative, between affect and signifier (all the while attempting to relegate history to the soiled pages of fiction). It does so in part by being based on the idea that any ‘recovery’ or construction, from a body of fragments, of a coherent memory is always the construction of a coherent narrative awash in an insistent, pulsing sea of affect. In the abduction experience these affective states include anxiety, shame, indignation, total abjection, fear and terror to the point of paralysis, and the invasion, that is, the establishment of bodily boundaries. An ‘abduction’ takes place on the crux of signifier and body, hence its ‘inter-dimensional’ quality.

“We are all abducted by language.” When we enter language we are literally taken over by it, by its program so to speak. This means that we all inescapably encounter that which we can only ever know as trauma (which is only ever trauma after the fact)—the desire of an Other, the very locus of otherness. “From the Freudian point of view man is the subject captured and tortured by language.” (Jacques Lacan). There are humanoid Aliens because they represent something that we can only see if it resembles us—language, and its strange workings or desire (What do they want?) mapped onto us and our world. We inhabit language but we aren’t alone there, there’s always an Other *there*.

Hence the many different “Apocrypha”—the multiplication of fragments and forgeries, the lack of a coherent whole is not only a strategy for writing a fiction, but one as well for rendering reality unreal, *alien*. “...[I]n a culture where the speaking subjects are conceived as masters of their speech, they have what is called a “phallic” position...fragmentation...calls into question the very posture of this mastery.” (Julia Kristeva).

“We are all abducted,” and that means that there’s always something missing, that there’s always something that can’t be remembered: there’s a gap, a space, a nagging

emptiness, the pure void of subjectivity...And that's where you come to be as 'recovered' memory, as a response to the traumatic glimpsing of an Other desire, that effect of the signifying chain.

from 1999:

The Apocryphon of Betty is a 50 page face-to-face counterpoint made up of forgeries of numerous and various forms of popular media and literature, and affective dialogue pages (are they dialogues with an Alien? a hypnotist? an agency of the self?) which purport to be genuine. As such the text is situated on the knot of memory, narrative, and body as cultural artifacts. The typographic effects, besides reflecting the usages around us, are used in order to represent language as a performative presence. These affective pages revolve around the reappearance of certain image/objects (eyes, slit of mouth, voice in your head, etc.), the transformation of what was pleasurable into what is unpleasurable and vice versa, and the confusion of past and present. In all *The Apocryphon of Betty* is an attempt to explore and explode a popular, modern manifestation of an ancient human experience, the experience of otherness, through the auspices of trying to find an answer to the modern human phenomenon of the Alien abduction in a Poe-esque 'tale of ratiocination' (Betty and Barney Hill were an interracial couple who were the first to claim that they were abducted by Aliens and taken aboard a UFO).

Lessons in Letters is an 88 page text founded on "The Alef-Bet of Ben-Shira", a secular Jewish text of the Middle Ages. It's composed of 22 (the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet) 4 page vignettes. Each letter in the Hebrew alphabet originally meant something; i.e. Alef meant cow, Ghimel meant camel, Nun meant fish, etc. These vignettes include myriad stories, dialogues, symbolic configurations, fables, newscasts, snatches of dreams, and each vignette is loosely organized thematically around the original meaning of the letter. For instance the section included, Nun or fish, is a fairy-like tale of a little girl trading her reflection with a talking fish for a way back to the world of people and illustrates the trade off of narcissism (as an island) for entrance into the world of verbal discourse. These vignettes are all mixed in the musicality of language in an attempt to represent the shifting and slipping of thought and feeling, in an attempt to represent human subjectivity as taking place before and outside of that theater of identity and sexual roles, caught in the

enigmatic and performative net of language as symbolic presence and institution.

from 1999, *The Apocryphon of Betty*, back cover:

The Apocryphon of Betty

In *The Apocryphon of Betty* I try to inscribe a fundamental questioning: What is it that constitutes the Real for us, and where is it to be found? Does our world consist of nothing more than forgeries of truths made manifest as representations of authority, and affective histories which purport to be genuine? If so, where is the Real in all of this? This I take to be a task of literature, to not only ask such questions, but to violently seek responses in the form of localizations of the Real. To that end I have attempted to present a process of thought, an inscription of the Alien abduction phenomenon (treating it as a strictly human phenomenon), a writing-event the theoretical premise of which can be expressed in the phrase, “Language is the Alien presence.”

A counterpoint made up of forgeries of popular media and literature on the one hand, along with affective dialogue pages (dialogues with an Alien? a hypnotist? an agency of the self?) which purport to be genuine on the other hand, it uses multiple reading strategies to present this phenomenon in a variety of modes—analytic, scientific, critical, archaic, popular, etc. As such the text is situated on the knot of memory, narrative, and body as cultural artifacts. *The Apocryphon of Betty* presents this variety of modes as defensive antipodes to sheer viscerality, as dramatizations of the traumatic encounter with the Other’s desire. Just as it presents affective dialogues as attempts to recover and repeat that encounter.

Establishing a link between Gnostic and popular traditions, as well as a link between the abduction phenomenon and the Gnostic tradition, it also highlights the fundamental relation between memory and narrative—the ‘recovery’ or construction of a coherent memory always being the construction of a coherent narrative. And those always awash in an insistent sea of affect: pleasure/unpleasure, fear, abjection, anxiety, shame, indignation, and the invasion (that is, the establishment) of bodily boundaries.

“We are all abducted by language.” This means that we all encounter that which we can only ever know as trauma (which is only trauma after the fact)—the desire of the Other. And one definition of the Other is the locus of language. *The Apocryphon of Betty* contends that there are humanoid Aliens because they represent something we can see only if it resembles us—language, and its strange workings or desire, mapped onto our world. We inhabit language, but we aren’t alone there; in language there’s always another presence. The experience of this presence is partially shaped by the mirror experience, by the fact that you only ever see yourself from the perspective of the other, an other who is internalized.

“We are all abducted,” and that means that there’s always something missing, there’s always something you can’t remember. A gap, a space, a void... And that’s where you come to be as ‘reconstructed’ memory, as reaction to that Real.

from 2000:

The Apocryphon of Betty

“Language is the Alien presence.” So can be stated the theoretical basis of *The Apocryphon of Betty*, an exploration of the ‘Alien abduction’ phenomenon which treats it as a strictly and fundamentally human phenomenon. Partially shaped by the mirror experience (which makes a whole out of a fragmented body of pulsations, drives, and desires), by the simple fact that you only ever see yourself from the perspective of an other who is internalized, this phenomenon is even more fundamentally forged by the encounter with language, by the fact that language is another presence, with an altogether Other desire.

Attempting to use multiple textual strategies to present this human phenomenon in a variety of modes—analytic, scientific, sociological, archaic, popular, etc.—in an attempt to trace the complex weave of memory, ‘self,’ and cultural artifacts, *The Apocryphon of Betty* presents this multiplicity of modes as defensive, dramatic responses to the sheer trauma of the encounter with an Other desire.

Proposing a link between gnostic and popular traditions, as well as a link between the abduction phenomenon and the gnostic tradition, *The Apocryphon of Betty* also attempts to elucidate the fundamental relation between memory and narrative, between affect and signifier (all the while attempting to relegate history to the soiled pages of fiction). It does so in part by being based on the idea that any ‘recovery’ or construction, from a body of fragments, of a coherent memory is always the construction of a coherent narrative awash in an insistent, pulsing sea of affect. In the abduction experience these affective states include anxiety, shame, indignation, total abjection, fear and terror to the point of paralysis, and the invasion, that is, the establishment of bodily boundaries. An ‘abduction’ takes place on the crux of signifier and body, hence its ‘inter-dimensional’ quality.

“We are all abducted by language.” When we enter language we are literally taken over by it, by its program so to speak. This means that we all inescapably encounter that which we can only ever know as trauma (which is only ever trauma after the fact)—the desire of an Other, the very locus of otherness. “From the Freudian point of view man is the subject captured and tortured by language.” (Jacques Lacan). There are humanoid Aliens because they represent something that we can only see if it resembles us—language, and its strange workings or desire (What do they want?) mapped onto us and our world. We inhabit language but we aren’t alone there, there’s always an Other *there*.

Hence the many different “Apocrypha”—the multiplication of fragments and forgeries, the lack of a coherent whole is not only a strategy for writing a fiction, but one as well for rendering reality unreal, *alien*. “...[I]n a culture where the speaking subjects are conceived as masters of their speech, they have what is called a “phallic” position...fragmentation...calls into question the very posture of this mastery.” (Julia Kristeva).

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Lessons in Letters

Lessons in Letters is founded on *The Aleph-Bet of Ben Shira*, a secular Jewish text of the Middle Ages. I know of three extant versions of the text, each consisting of twenty-two (the number of letters in the Hebrew aleph-bet) aphorisms or vignettes in alphabetical order, each one usually phrased as a question addressed to a letter of the aleph-bet. Founded then on the rabbinical fantasy of interrogating the letters of the aleph-bet—and as a result being interrogated by them—*Lessons in Letters* is composed of twenty-two intersecting four page sections, each representing different states and aspects of subjective flux.

As a quaternary, an interweaving of four ‘voices,’ each announced by a material cue and regulated by rules of usage, *Lessons in Letters* is an attempt to write subjective experience and its attendant grammar (and subsequent disruption) literally taking place in, and as, language. Each type style or case represents a different ‘voice’ in the dramatic choral weave of the text, and all four of these manifestations on the surface of the text weave themselves elliptically around an absence [• ; ...]. From dream state to preconsciousness to consciousness, all cradled in language in a variety of modes, the text thus makes use of such things as ‘stream of consciousness,’ fantasy, dialogue, fairy tales, pulp forms, newscasts, etc., in its dramatic mix.

For *Lessons in Letters* I’ve taken at face value Willem de Kooning’s statement that “content is a glimpse.” Or in this case, a collection of glimpses. Competing, complementing glimpses of ‘reality,’ of realities disrupted and framed by glimpses of an unknowable presence which appears during instances of anxiety, desire or fear, only to disappear again into its unknowability. Glimpses of an Other as that loss that necessarily accompanies speech.

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Two further notes: First of all, in the Hebrew language, unlike other, ‘modern’

languages, each letter originally possessed a meaning of its own: i.e. *aleph* meant cow, *ghimel* meant camel, and *nun* meant fish. Secondly, the choice of Hebrew is not without significance—it is with Hebrew that we perhaps encounter the beginnings of our phonetic alphabet.

from 2000:

The House is a 49 page text composed of seven, 7 page sections each named for a day of the week. It is, simply stated, a series of meditations on the ways and modes in which we *dwell*. These include the everyday liminal or surface qualities which render our abodes individual, as well as the structures which shelter us and organize our world— time (the invisible history of the days of the week, etc.), language (“Language is the house of Being,” Martin Heidegger), and belief (our *houses* of worship). Metaphorically it extends this meditation to include our conceptions of self; for instance, the way we ‘line our selves’ (a problematic statement since such images are more correctly thought of as signs of our exteriority) with those images with which we identify.

The Apocryphon of Betty (1999) is a 50 page text made up of parodic forgeries of numerous and various forms of popular media and literature treatments of the Alien abduction phenomenon, and its academic and scientific reception. *The Apocryphon of Betty* is an attempt to explore and explode a popular, modern manifestation of an ancient human experience, the experience of *otherness*. It does this by seeking to find an answer to the modern human phenomenon of the Alien abduction in a Poe-esque ‘tale of ratiocination’. The “Betty” of the title refers to Betty of Betty and Barney Hill fame. They were an interracial couple who in the early 1960’s were the first to claim that they were abducted by Aliens and taken aboard a UFO and examined. Their alleged experience, founded on the recovery of ‘lost time’ while under hypnosis, has become a paradigm for all the alleged abductions which have followed.

Lessons in Letters (1996) is an 88 page text founded on “The Alef-Bet of Ben-Shira,” a secular Jewish text of the Middle Ages. It’s composed of 22 (the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet) 4 page vignettes. Each letter in the Hebrew alphabet originally meant something; i.e. *Alef* meant cow, *Ghimel* meant camel, *Nun* meant fish, *Samech* meant dwelling, etc. These vignettes include myriad stories, dialogues, symbolic configurations, fables, newscasts, and snatches of dreams. Each vignette is loosely organized thematically around the original meaning of the letter. These vignettes are presented within the musical-

ity of language in an attempt to represent the shifting and slipping of thought and feeling. The vignettes seek as well to represent human subjectivity taking place before and outside of the theater of identity and sexual roles, caught in the enigmatic and performative net of language, or the *Letter* as symbolic presence and institution.

from 2002:

The House is a 49 page text composed of seven, 7 page sections each named for a day of the week. It is, simply stated, a series of meditations on the ways and modes in which we *dwell* in space and time, and is founded on my belief that the material organization of space and time reproduces conceptions of the cosmos, and of the mind. Metaphorically it extends this meditation to include our conceptions of self; for instance, the way we ‘line our selves’ (a problematic statement since such images are more correctly thought of as signs of our exteriority) with those images with which we identify. In this sense it deals with the very idea of *inside* and *outside*.

The Apocryphon of Betty (1999) is a 50 page text made up of pastiches of numerous and various forms of popular literature and media treatments of the Alien abduction phenomenon, along with its academic and scientific reception. *The Apocryphon of Betty* explores a popular, modern manifestation of a universal human experience, the experience of *Otherness*, which is meant to imply as well the experience of *the desire of the Other*, something inherently traumatic. It does this by seeking to find an answer to the modern human phenomenon of the Alien abduction in a Poe-esque ‘tale of ratiocination’. The “Betty” of the title refers to Betty of Betty and Barney Hill fame. They were an interracial couple who in the early 1960’s were the first to claim that they were abducted by Aliens and taken aboard a UFO and examined. Their alleged experience, founded on the recovery of ‘lost time’ while under hypnosis, has become a paradigm for all the alleged abductions which have followed.

Lessons in Letters (1996) is an 88 page text founded on “The Alef-Bet of Ben-Shira”, a secular Jewish text of the Middle Ages. It is composed of 22 (the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet) four-page vignettes, and deals with the enigmatic and symbolic presence of the letter in our lives. It’s the case that each letter in the Hebrew alphabet originally had a meaning; for instance, *Nun* (נ) meant fish, and this included section deals with the necessity of giving up any imaginary unity in order to accede to verbal, symbolic language. Each vignette is loosely organized thematically around the original meaning of each Hebrew letter, and these vignettes include myriad stories, dialogues, symbolic configurations, fables, newscasts, and snatches of dreams.

Three voiced periods (1991) is a 99 page text which uses repetition and discontinuity as its modes of assemblage, and seeks to make us aware of the roles that

such modes play in our lives and our very constitution as human subjects. In this sense it is meant as *a fundamental drama of human subjectivity which is prior to that theater of identity and sexual roles* that contemporary literature seems mired in. Ostensibly a meditation on the Catholic Trinity (as a image of the mind contrary to reason), it is as well founded on the *gnawa* music of North Africa which is used in exorcisms and spiritual rites. The highly repetitive and rhythmic structure of *gnawa* music is meant to produce physical effects in the listener, and this is the case in *Three voiced periods*.