

Stage Notes and/as/or Track Changes: Introductory remarks and magical thinking on printing: An election and a provocation.

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In this issue we include contributions from the individuals presiding at the panel All in a Jurnal's Work: A BABEL Wayzgoose, convened at the second Biennial Meeting of the BABEL Working Group. Sadly, the contributions of Daniel Remein, chief rogue at the Organism for Poetic Research as well as editor at Whiskey & Fox, were not able to appear in this version of the proceedings.

From the program:

**2nd Biennial Meeting of the BABEL Working Group Conference
“cruising in the ruins: the question of disciplinarity in the post/medieval university”
September 21st, 2012: Session 13
McLeod C.322, Curry Student Center
Northeastern University, Boston, MA.**

Traditionally, a wayzgoose was a celebration at the end of a printer's year, a night off in the late fall before the work began of printing by candlelight. According to the OED, the Master Printer would make for the journeymen “a good Feast, and not only entertains them at his own House, but besides, gives them Money to spend at the Ale-house or Tavern at Night.” Following in this line, continent. proposes in its publication(s) a night out and a good Feast, away from the noxious fumes of the Academy and into a night of revelry which begins, but does not end, at the alehouse or Tavern. continent. proposes that the thinking of the Academy be freed to be thought elsewhere, in the alleys and doorways of the village and cities, encountered not in the strictly defined spaces of the classroom and blackboard (now white) but anticipated and found where thinking occurs.

Historically, academic journals have served a different purpose than the Academy itself. Journals (from the Anglo-Fr. journal, “a day,” from O.Fr. jornei, “day, time; day’s work,” hence the journalist as writer of the news of the day) have served as privileged sites for the articulation and concretization of specific modes of knowledge and control (insemination of those ideas has been formalized in the classroom, in seminar). In contrast, the academic journal is post-partum and has been an old-boys club, an insider trading network in which truths are (re)circulated against themselves, forming a Maginot Line against whatever is new, or the distinctly challenging. All in a Journal’s Work will discuss (in part) the ramifications of cheap start-up publications that are challenging the traditional ensconced-in-ivory academic journals and their supporting infrastructures. The panel will be seeking a questioning (as a challenging) towards the discipline of knowledge production/fabrication (of truth[s]) and the event of the Academy (and its publications) as it has evolved and continues to (d)evolve. Issues to be discussed will revolve around the power of academic publishing and its origins, hierarchical versus horizontal academic modules (is there a place for the General Assembly in academia?) and the evolving idea of the Multiversity as a site(s) of a (BABELing) multivocality in the wake of the University of Disaster.

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“Of course most people don’t think of editing/publishing as theatre but as something boring or parasitical (vis-à-vis a ‘source’ text), a textual backwater populated by people with glasses. But I think publishing a book today is theatre, socially networked theatre.... Facebook and Flickr are our era’s administered and generic version of sixties happenings!”

—Tan Lin¹

1. “Writing as Metadata Container, An Interview with Tan Lin,” Chris Alexander, Kristen Gallagher, Danny Snelson, Gordon Tapper, Tan Lin, *Jacket2*. January 20, 2012. <http://jacket2.org/interviews/writing-metadata-container>. To explore Lin’s notion of ambient textuality, plagiarism, and parallel, cross-platform publication in the 21st century, also see Lin’s sampled novel, “The Patio and the Index,” *Triple Canopy* 14, October 24, 2011. (http://canopycanopycanopy.com/14/the_patio_and_the_index), as well as the *Edit* event, organized at the Kelly Writers House at the University of Pennsylvania, April, 2010 (<http://aphasic-letters.com/edit/publications.html>).

Electing a Mascot: The Barnacle Goose

After pitching the idea for this panel with the editorial help of my continental cohorts I became fascinated with the image of the goose—dead and roasted as it may be—and its relationship to the space of the printing press. For a long while after proposing this gathering I was seriously under the sway of delusions of grandeur, imagining that we might roast a goose (or goosefu) and, preparing a meal as one prepares a text for publication, feast in something approaching a warm and well-nourished revelry.

I should note, by way of introduction, that a substantial part of my undergraduate experience involved learning to typeset and work as a devil, as typesetters mischievously call it, in a letterpress studio. This accounts in part for my fascination and helps to explain the fact that, when I began to leaf around in medieval bestiaries in lieu of being able to procure a goose, I was almost immediately struck by a fantastic monster that I hereby elect to be the mascot for our so-called para-academic practice(s)—the relatively famed, but no less fabulous for it, barnacle goose.

The barnacle goose is a creature that first makes its way into 12th century manuscripts with Giraldus Cambrensis in 1186. Phenomenologically speaking the monster is a tree, a tree which, when approached closer is seen to be birthing geese budding from the buds that hang like ripe fruit from its branches. As the story goes these trees were found over water; the fledgling geese, once wrested from their pods would take off in flight or fall to their watery death, where they would be transformed into driftwood. In retrospect we presume the barnacle goose was posited as a consequence of the fact that geese born in more northern regions, migrating to Ireland and western Europe at large, were never seen to give birth. And I should note that this is far from the only other animal posited to be born from trees at around this time, my other favorite being medieval accounts of Moroccan tree-climbing goats.²

In particular I've thrown up the mascot of the barnacle goose and singled it out from the quires of its bestiaries because its thoroughly hybrid origins lead us to name two very real creatures we can find point to in abundance; discrete materialities of the world cobbled together in textual fancy: on the one hand, the modern day *barnacle goose*, a common species of goose and, on the other, *goose barnacles*, a particular type of crustacean with incredible feathery tendrils and—I can't help but mention—one of the largest body mass to penis size ratios of all of the animals in the kingdom. Why is this bit of genital trivia relevant? Because they're all hermaphroditic and in rare cases have been found to reproduce just with themselves—to inseminate themselves and give birth to their kin. So I think it must be stressed, as a symbol for what we're really here to talk about, it's not a boy's club thing so much as a very queer thing and, I contend, *para-* in every perfect sense of the word...

2. For a fascinating and fecund exploration of medieval plant-animal hybrids in relation to media ecology, see Whitney Trettien, "Becoming Plant: Magnifying a Microhistory of Media Circuits in Nehemiah Grew's *Anatomy of Plants* (1682)" *postmedieval* 3.1 (2012):97. See also the crowd-review version of the essay: <http://postmedievalcrowdreview.wordpress.com/papers/trettien/>

Alongside the natural world, a monstrous imaginary concatenation;
Alongside the hulls of so many institutional structures, funding sources and resources, Serresian parasites in all manner of mutualist, symbiotic, or properly parasitic positions; migratory and adrift;
The tree, center stage in the 21st century adaptation of *Waiting for Godot* that is unraveling in ateliers across the world, is a barnacle goose birthing a flurry of miscegenous texts beyond medium and genre.

Provocation 1: Chaosmosis

“Genre is obsolete.”

— Ray Brassier³

And so, here I was getting carried away in daydreams about this generative and genealogical symbol under which to think all of the diverse projects we are all involved in as architects of the dressed word, (well dressed, bespoke, mansy, butch, careless, or roguishly punk attired as those words may be), when it also dawned on me, mid-flight here from Denver, that we are, even in lieu of being able to roast geese together, very much so literalizing what was never just the metaphor of the wayzgoose—a tradition, as you know, celebrated to mark the crepuscular turn into fall—as we are poised here, tomorrow being the first official day of fall on our calendars in the US marking the seasonal change from at which point it will no longer be possible to print without the aid of candlelight. A beautiful thought, that tipped into magical thinking on account of a little quick math I was able to do to come to the conclusion that we can all be delighted to know that as we proceed into the autumn with our printing projects always ahead of us and still to be set, we will tonight be bathed not only by the artificial candlelight of our screens, but also in part by photons raining down on us at 186,282 miles per second—photons from an aspect of 9 cyg, a stereoscopic binary deep within Cygnus, the swan but not-so-distant-relative of the goose, with a distance of 572 Light years away; photons that are raining down on us, will rain down on us all winter, have been raining down on us all year, and which had their origin in the combustion cores at a center of 9 cyg 572 years ago, in 1440, the year which we point to today as the common year in which, as we all know, Gutenberg is said to have brought the movable type to the western world, inaugurating an era that stretches farther into the past and future than McLuhan could justify; the proliferation of so much ambient text; insurrectionary coups on (and re-crystallizations of) genre—perceived amidst so much ambient light—enveloping this campus, just now.

So, with that thought, and perhaps a new mascot, Nico Jenkins...

3. “Genre Is Obsolete,” Compléments de *Multitudes* 28 (2007) <http://multitudes.samizdat.net/Genre-is-Obsolete>