

# Psychosocial Disability and Post-Ableist Poetics: The “Case” of Hannah Weiner’s *Clairvoyant Journals*

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Hannah Weiner told me today she saw words so that she wouldn’t have to have instincts.

(Bernadette Mayer, April, 1981, letter to Bill Berkson)

Basing itself on the instincts, nineteenth-century psychiatry is able to bring into the ambit of illness and mental illness all the disorders and irregularities, all the serious disorders and little irregularities of conduct that are not, strictly speaking, due to madness. On the basis of the instincts and around what was previously the problem of madness, it becomes possible to organize the whole problematic of the abnormal at the level of the most elementary and everyday conduct. This transition to the miniscule, the great drift from the cannibalistic monster of the beginning of the nineteenth century, is finally converted into the form of all the little perverse monsters who have been constantly proliferating since the end of the nineteenth century. (Michel Foucault, *Abnormal* 132)

In an example of late-twentieth-century synchronicity, as Michel Foucault delivered a lecture which would be a crucial component of disability studies’ theoretical portmanteau, Hannah Weiner turned the monstrous elements of language and consciousness to the service of poetry, a poetry of the “everyday” and the “miniscule.” The manuscript page of that project, *The Early and Clairvoyant Journals*, dated “Feb 5” reads, in part and eerily apropos, “TAUGHT OBEDIENCE as children, INDEPENDENCE/I was going to say I saw TAUGHT INDEPENDENCE . . . NOT

1 See Allen's preface to *The New American Poetry: 1945–1960* and Rothenberg's preface to *Revolution of the Word: A New Gathering of American Avant Garde Poetry 1914–1945*. Rothenberg is adamant that, as he says in the blurb he contributed to Weiner's selected writings (*Hannah Weiner's Open House*), "her art both early & late insures her standing within the twentieth-century avant-garde, it connects her as well to the experience & writings of many traditional poet-mystics."

THAT SIMPLE says my ms. our." The words she "saw" started speaking back. A full decade before writing to Bernadette Mayer regarding the dialogic visions of language she associated with psychic powers and others with some form of psychopathology, Weiner wrote in her diaristic *Hell Books* project her own prognosis: "To be master of my mind, yes, that would be what the dialogues with my mind will I hope some day add up to" ("hell day 7"). It seems she taught herself a great deal in those 10 years. Foucault's chronicle of the forced domestication of antisocial behaviors – those that disturb the self-preservation "instincts" of the body politic – rhymes well with Mayer's characterization: that the hallucinatory sources of Weiner's written work subvert medicalized and commercially viable figures of the proverbial mad genius of letters. This is a time when American poets found *disobedience* to be a critical value in their development of an avant-garde that could deploy experimental compositional forms and processes in the interest of a quickly maturing counterculture. What makes Weiner's work of the period a vivid example is that where she subverts the blandly naturalized tradition of modern verse, against which Donald Allen and Jerome Rothenberg defined their signal assessments of the modernist legacy and the mid-century modernism of Black Mountain, Beat, and New York schools, she simultaneously complicates the very myth of the poet as seer that informs her claim to be a "clairvoyant," to have special access to hallucinatory "pictures and early words," even audible voices.<sup>1</sup> Ever protesting the culture of obedience she found to be based on ideo-linguistic constructs of power, Weiner's work chronicles the cultivation of her health, fitness, and power. For Weiner, writing becomes a way of exercising her survival instincts, rather than giving over to received ways of being. As a sort of avant-garde journalist, she finds independence in "silent teaching," her figure for radical interdependence strictly at odds with the rampant essentialist recuperation that followed and fueled ongoing civil rights struggles. Her work provides a formal index of a variability of self, scrutinizing the social realm in which one becomes subject to the vicissitudes of power. The various "instincts" one is liable to associate with poetic expression are highly complicated when one takes seriously her claim to have done away with outmoded recourse to intentionality, beauty, and formal propriety. Working in diverse forms, which defy conventional grammar, syntax, rhetoric, and prosody, Weiner's claims on poetic form are developed in direct proportion to the challenge she raised against conventional identity politics.

Born in 1928, Weiner would emerge in middle age as one of the most vibrant among three important vectors of artistic production in the United States: conceptual/performance arts, New York School poetry, and so-called Language Writing. A Radcliffe graduate (her thesis was an unremarkable reading of Graham Greene's novels), Weiner divorced from a practicing psychoanalyst in the mid-1950s, henceforth inhabiting the New York City avant-garde circles that would produce a relatively "miniscule" batch of iconic names in the history of art and literature, all of which were far more "everyday" references by the time she passed away. After a

2 Césaire: "Because we hate you and your reason, we claim kinship with dementia praecox with the flaming madness of persistent cannibalism" (18–19). Picabia: "Prejudice Against Imbeciles//Ideals cannot survive/without the insane" (388).

nearly forgotten decade of performance-oriented activity, Weiner composed and published several deeply challenging books of writing under the sign of poetry, ranging from autobiographical yet highly disjunctive works like *Spoke* (1984) and *Page* (2002), to marginally more discursive works like *Little Books/Indians* (1980) and *We Speak Silent* (1997). Weiner's work has been read as an aesthetic accommodation of the symptoms of schizophrenia. Yet Weiner's diagnosis is the stuff of legend; her biopsychiatric and therapeutic care regimes are more discussed than documented. In the *Early and Clairvoyant Journals*, one can read her psychic and physical disturbances as the dramatic conflict or *agon* of the subsequent narrative of refusal (to medicalize or overcome them) and adaptation (to the hard-earned distinction between disabling and inspiring impositions), thus reading this legend as a psychogeographic key to her "case" – in this sense, the dramatic conflict undermines the dramatic question. This would be congruent with techniques of transgressive appropriation familiar from radical modernist poets such as Aimé Césaire and Francis Picabia, not to mention Antonin Artaud's reversal of established narratological frameworks in his "theater of cruelty."<sup>2</sup> It is not an issue for most critics the degree to which Weiner actually suffered symptoms of extreme paranoia, debilitating psychosomatic complications to her sciatic and variously medicated body, not to mention enormous pressure to enable her creative production through the fetishization of the madwoman persona that her frequent lucidity, delicious sense of humor, and upbeat personality betrayed.

Of course, accusations of madness customarily call into question the amount of craft, deliberation, and intentionality one is able to deploy. This very questioning could be said to be inscribed in the avant-garde's very mode of production, from Dadaism and Surrealism's valorization of the irrational to the utopian projects of mid-twentieth-century American countercultural aesthetics. Even if the healthy conjecture that avant-garde art provides can be said to diagnose a sick society, Weiner's "avant-garde journalism" shouldn't be read at the expense of the very *real* suffering she endured (Durgin). In her reading of the *Clairvoyant Journal* as a trauma narrative, Maria Damon duly emphasizes Weiner's own recognition that she inhabited a shared reality of difference, yet experienced it so differently that she was "at pains" to resist its being "normalize[d]". Bernstein's 1978 review essay of *Clairvoyant Journal* asserts that the text's "pervasive citationality" is recognition that "we all see words," and that to think differently of the language in which we live is to succumb to a "*compulsive* obedience to it" ("Making Words Visible" 269). He goes on to suggest that doing so was not without its costs, that Weiner fell "prey to [her] own discoveries" (269). In hindsight, poet, psychoanalyst, and theorist Nick Piombino describes a range of disabling symptoms, from delusional thinking and mood swings redolent of bipolar disorder to a peculiarly severe "defensive self-inflation, even grandiosity" against the marginalization of artistic labor. Members of the New York City writing community in which she traveled in her final years, like Bernstein, Piombino, and Andrew Levy, concur that her death was precipitated by the multiple ways in which her symptoms compromised her ability to both solicit care and care for herself. Others' assessments as to the cause of her somewhat

3 I am deeply indebted to Weiner's brother, Maurice Finegold, for his willingness to discuss with me Weiner's life and legacy.

premature death in 1997 vary wildly. Medical records appear to be unobtainable,<sup>3</sup> though she did admit to receiving state or federal disability benefits on account of "schizophrenia," a diagnosis that might have been reason for her brief hospitalization in the early 1990s. Biographical readings, however, fall short not only because research is bound to be inconclusive, but also because her work is far too explicitly motivated and aesthetically consistent to illustrate a psychiatrically deranged subjectivity and much too innovative to reflect the conventions of literary fiction, lyric poetry, or so-called life-writing. "Hers . . . might have been but a 'remarkable case,'" wrote Jackson Mac Low in his blurb to the *Clairvoyant Journal*, "were it not for the fact that she is an artist. Her achievement—& it is a considerable one—lies in her having developed a specific literary form through which to convey her remarkable experience." The dramatic conflict is between "literary form" and "remarkable experience" as the former must bend to the demands of the latter's sociopolitical need to be remarked by a disabled artist of the highest order of achievement: the development of a "specific literary form."

While Weiner never self-identified as disabled and her brand of poetic self-awareness conflicts with the tenets of contemporary "crip" poetics, her work has been read as dependent upon other postmodern identity categories, such as her Jewishness, her gender, and her position relative to American paracolonialism (especially the American Indian Movement). This essay aims to utilize the conflicts and confluences between Weiner's "clairvoyant" work and disability studies' salient findings and frameworks. The two approaches coalesce if we read her work according to what Allen Thiher calls "cybernetic theories of the psyche," wherein "mind is considered to be constituted by . . . the transindividual milieu of language, reason, mathematics, and harmonious relations" (282). If the works that she designated as "crazy" through the figure of "clairvoyance" represent such a psyche, they also diagnose that milieu as somehow impaired, turning the mirror on the psychosocial environment in which ableist assumptions operate (for a critical survey of Weiner's strategies as such, see Durgin and Goldman). But disability studies has begun to propose a rendition of "the transindividual milieu" of disabled bodies and minds, perhaps somewhat neglecting the ways in which minds and bodies differ in their abilities to claim disability as an identity category. And it is this sort of complication that makes her work exemplary for ways in which disability studies can theorize the dependencies of psychic and social regimes of dependency. In part, this essay answers the call of disability studies scholars such as David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, who have isolated literary tropes of disability as key to "the dependencies of discourse" as well as disability studies' own dependencies on dubious "people-based research practices," calling instead for textual studies that reveal these dependencies and, at best, promise to disrupt homogenizing notions of impairment (*Narrative Prosthesis* 1–13, *Cultural Locations* 199–203).

In order to understand the worth of Weiner's work to this critical project, I will begin by investigating mental health conditions as the categorically displaced center of dependency theory. The investigation unfolds as a necessarily partial exposition of

4 For the use of this moniker outside of dependency theory frameworks, see Wilson and Beresford, and especially Marks.

the theoretical underpinnings of one of the more controversial articulations of an ethics based on the interdependence of persons with disabilities and those not generally so depicted. The point is to generate a new hermeneutic position from which to read Weiner's most innovative work within its somewhat concealed genealogy of poetic and critical milieus. To grasp the full import of this thoroughly postmodern poet, the narrative of her "remarkable experience" must be read as a particular bearing of what has been called "psychosocial disability."<sup>4</sup>

## Dependency, Dismodernism, and Psychosocial Disability

Disability studies is an interdisciplinary field devoted to articulating the "social model" of disability. This model recognizes the social environment in which bodily impairments confront unaccommodating and thus disabling obstacles as the material ramification of "ableist" ideology. Its figures of embodiment have been based largely on physiological modes of difference, as these modes are more readily visible to audiences to whom disability rights advocacy is typically addressed. That "madness" and other impairments of the mind aren't directly observable generally reinscribes modern science's formative separation of the mind from the body, despite this modern basis for the priority the health industry gives to the life of the disease, rather than the life experience of the individual it may render, in some respects, disabled. (The social model itself is pitted against the medical and business models on this same humanistic basis.) The most vivid trajectory of disability rights activism has, not coincidentally, centered on building important new modes of independent living through retooling of civic infrastructure. Until recently, theories of subjectivity harnessed and propagated within disability studies have given priority to figures of physical embodiment and independence. Dependency theory, however, envisions a more complex notion of embodiment within frameworks openly critical of the modern subject's identity with its innate freedom, autonomy, and reason.

My take on dependency theory emphasizes the hermeneutic ramifications of its most radical claims. By "dependency theory" I mean any conception of disability that differentiates itself from the bogus dialectics of ability and inability by observing that they are indivisible from the social conditions of visibility, vis-à-vis impairment. In other words, dependency theory recognizes a sort of observer's paradox as its point of departure; if no member of society can be legibly divided from it, how do we understand and honor the differences in mind and body that allow us to care for one another as members of a body politic? My focus here is on Lennard Davis's essay, "The End of Identity Politics and the Beginning of Dismodernism: On Disability as an Unstable Category." Just as Davis's foundational study, *Enforcing Normalcy*, located the ableist circuits of this dialectic as a product of specifically modern epistemologies, "Dismodernism" becomes an ethical foil for the impasse, as he sees it, between essentialism and constructivism. He finds both approaches wanting, due to their more or less arbitrary reliance on modern, Cartesian, liberal assumptions of

individuality, autonomy, and universal rationality. Davis's definitions of the economy of care-giving resonate with Eva Kittay's definition of "care" as, in part, an "attitude" that is both an act and an "affective bond" (259–60). In defining "a dismodernist ethic," he emphasizes what he calls "caring *about* the body," writing in summation that:

with a dismodernist ethic, you realize that caring *about* the body subsumes and analyzes care *of* and care *for* the body. The latter two produce oppressive subjection, while the former gives us an ethic of liberation. And the former always involves the use of culture and symbolic production in either furthering the liberation or the oppression of people with disabilities. (29)

"[T]he use of culture and symbolic production" within disability studies itself is characteristically diagnostic; representations of impairment are interpreted as symptomatic of how the category of disability is socially constructed, or how pathos is artificially extracted from routines of biological mutation and subsequently stigmatized. Dependency theory aims to go beyond this sort of hermeneutic determinism wherein ideological "norms" are retrofitted to more adequately resemble biological elasticity. Instead, it aims for a hermeneutic elasticity definitive of nothing less than the very continuum of human ability. Witness, for example, Tobin Siebers' recent work on "Disability and the Right to Have Rights," where *interdependence* figures as "a structural component of human society" and disability is construed as "a critical concept that reveals [this] structure" (not paginated). "Dismodernism" is a "critical concept" that "transcend[s]" rather than synthesizes the affective or essentialist right to have rights with the lucidity of *critico* to which constructivists have traditionally laid claim (Davis, *The End of Identity Politics* 23). Kittay's notion of care is predicated on an example of mental retardation, elaborates the need for "a right to care and support for care," and concerns "the most vulnerable of disabled people" as well as the "personal and emotional resources" their rights demand (272). Davis's notion of caring *about* the body is predicated on the transience of mental illness, elaborates the instability of impairment as a diagnostic ramification through that transience, and concerns "the most marginalized group" among postmodern identity categories (23, 29).

Perhaps the scope of such claims is radical, but the primary reason I will characterize "Dismodernism" as a radical expression of dependency is that a hinge figure within the development of this notion is Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze's method of "schizoanalysis," developed in collaboration with the psychoanalyst and cultural critic Félix Guattari, might be dismissed as "transgressive reappropriation" of psychiatric categories. Mitchell and Snyder rightly characterize the practice of transgressive reappropriation as often "ambiguous to the values of our own disability movement" (*Narrative Prosthesis* 40). But whose movement is it? Couldn't disability as a minority identity itself depend upon such cacophonous ambiguities as mental "health" issues present? Weiner's claim to "clairvoyance" instead of schizophrenic hallucination – "I

see words” – regenerates interest in such questions while it develops the Deleuzian connection within Dismodernist dependency theory, especially as “affect” figures largely in the construction of schizoanalysis. It should then disclose a horizon of Davis’s “new category based on the partial, incomplete subject whose realization is not autonomy and independence, but dependency and interdependence” (29). Thus, it should come as no surprise that disabilities associated with the mind rather than the body – and those that challenge mind-body duality – appear crucial to Davis, if little articulated with any specificity within his essay.

But before reading Weiner’s work as a means of specifying this horizon, I shall generate a category of “psychosocial formulations” through a close reading of the most recent edition of the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM-IV). I do so not as a transgressive gesture, but as a gauge of the lack of dialectical grounding between psychic and social registers in a hermeneutic approach to dependency that may mark a complicity between the otherwise autonomous experiences of *being* diagnosed and the *life* of that being. Just as, for Simi Linton, the prefix *Dis* is “the semantic reincarnation of the split between disabled and nondisabled people in society,” that reincarnation depends upon the other denotation of such a “cleavage”: the fundamental multiplicity of dismodernist subjectivity (30–31). This radical subjectivity can then be more visibly rendered as the forging of *new* modes of narratological and formal practice, and linked to the most innovative poetics of our time.

In DSM-IV, Appendix I consists of an “Outline for Cultural Formulation & Glossary of Culture-Bound Syndromes,” the former being “meant to supplement the multiaxial diagnostic assessment and to address difficulties that may be encountered in applying DSM-IV criteria in a multicultural environment.” Like a good dismodernist, I assume there is no “ideal reader” that would render any environment as less than a “multicultural” one. And, like a good dismodernist, I take disability to be the “cultural formulation” that “supplant[s] the categories of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.” Indeed, the DSM’s outline begins with the “Cultural identity of the individual,” moving through the “predominant idioms of distress”; “Cultural elements of the relationship between the individual and the clinician,” which may cause “difficulty . . . in determining whether a behavior is normative or pathological”; and “factors related to psychosocial environment” ostensibly synonymous with what the authors deem “culturally relevant interpretations of social stressors . . . and levels of functioning and disability.” This list stands neatly alongside the “Psychosocial and Environmental Problems” that form the fourth “axis” of the DSM-IV’s diagnostic criteria. To read the list is to brush up on the primary concerns of humanistic disability studies and the Disability Rights Movement generally – “problems related to the social environment, educational problems, occupational problems, housing problems, economic problems, problems with access to health care services, [and] problems related to interaction with the legal system and crime.” Indeed, as the authors themselves point out, “In addition to playing a role in the initiation or exacerbation of a mental disorder, psychosocial problems may also develop as a

consequence of a person's psychopathology." So it is that they constitute a "General Medical Condition," which the authors are at pains to distinguish from "Mental Disorders" in the introduction to the manual. However strained may seem the logic as articulated, it is their own best rhetorical effort to acknowledge the clinical horizons of their discipline. The distinction, they assert, "should not be taken to imply that there is any fundamental distinction between mental disorders and general medical conditions, that mental disorders are unrelated to physical or biological factors or processes, or that general medical conditions are unrelated to behavioral or psychosocial factors or processes." Logically, the domains of the "mental" and the "psychosocial" are communicative and transvaluative. However, rhetorically, the category of "General Medical Condition," coincidentally that rubric under which a clinical lens would heap most impairments exemplary in mainstream humanistic disability studies, serves as a buffer. It allows for the illogical rhetorical doxa of a disassociation of the mental and the psychosocial. I believe this has to do with received notions of "cultural relevance" in light of advocacy efforts, which thereby adopt the exclusionary dialectics of mainstream postmodern identity politics: that is, the essentialist/constructivist impasse Davis announces with the very notion of dismodernism.

A "psychosocial formulation" is, in short, the none-of-the-above option in the diagnostic pantheon. It is the excluded middle or liminal space where impairment meets world to become disability. To use clinical language, it does not "present" because it resists given diagnostic surmise; and yet it won't "pass" as normal. In its downright baffling novelty, it is the golden mean of the pathological. Its very novelty implies the responsibility to examine its construction, reception, or any other component of its "aboutness." If it is not beyond interpretation, there remains the need to elaborate on the specific role of psychosocial formulations vis-à-vis the privileged role of "symbolic production." Is it, as Thiher has it, a matter of modernist vindication or of postmodern cybernetic disruption – both of which seem to suffer the ethical ambiguities of transgressive reappropriation? I don't think either is the case. Deleuze conceived of symbolic production, especially literary production, as a kind of diagnostic labor concerned with novelty – with, as John Rajchman so characteristically put it, "the problem of making visible something unseen and intolerable" (43). Psychosocial formulations allow us to cut through ableist tropes of visibility to the core of *recognition*, the recursive cognition that comprises minority identity.

Minority identity is, for Deleuze, a literary production and thus a question of poetics. "The multiple *must be made* . . . with the number of dimensions one already has available . . . the only way the one belongs to the multiple: always subtracted" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 6). This is what the *Dis* in "Dismodernism" purports to do. By defining the body as "never a single physical thing so much as a series of attitudes toward it," (22) Davis lodges it within recognition (aboutness) rather than the ready discernibility (epistemological certainty) tropes of visibility tend to indicate. He then multiplies the category of disability by pointing to ways in which "impairment is not a

- 5 The reference is specifically to Ian Hacking's *Mad Travelers: Reflections on the Reality of Transient Mental Illnesses*, and the socio-historical contingencies of diagnoses most recently termed "dissociative fugue." Hacking's work, including his earlier studies of multiple personality disorder, concerns the feedback loop between visible traits or behaviors and diagnostic regimes.
- 6 The contrast between Derrida and Deleuze is pursued at length in Protevi.

neutral and easily understood term," given the transience of such attitudes.<sup>5</sup> The essay adopts a slightly polemical tone at this point, when it claims "dismodernism" will "replace" one binary with another (31). But it only nominally transcends the dialectic between this new sense of "the body" and the psychic "flow" of Deleuzian subjectivity, "the rhizomatic vision of Deleuze" (31). Given the evident importance to Davis of this theoretical investment, his gloss of the "rhizome" figure is, in my estimation, inadequate. Though he rightly notes its countervailing "denial of universals," (31) those which may have been sufficient for Foucault or Jacques Derrida, such agonistic denials are not exactly indicative of the Deleuzian model of subjectivity.<sup>6</sup>

In the oft-cited introductory essay of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* Vol. II, the rhizome is a figure pitted against "aborescence," like a tree's roots, branching off to reaffirm the autonomy of and rhetorically reincarnate the still center of the self (4–5). The "tree" or "root book," according to Deleuze, is a dialectical one, and thus its disruptive potential is disingenuously championed by conventional Marxist and psychoanalytical critical methodologies (4–5). "Schizoanalysis" is the definitively asystematic adoption and valorization of irrational trains of thought, flows that critically participate in liberatory and unapologetically affective interpretative engagements. Through schizoanalysis, then, Deleuze posits himself as the quintessential antidialectician. There is perhaps no more direct refutation of the deconstructive axiom – "*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*" – than in the definition of the rhizome in contrast to the root book.

All multiplicities are flat, in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions: we will therefore speak of a plane of consistency of multiplicities, even though the dimensions of this "plane" increase with the number of connections that are made on it. *Multiplicities are defined by the outside. . . .* The ideal for a book would be to lay everything out on a plane of exteriority of this kind, on a single page, the same sheet: lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations. (9, italics mine)

In the interest of caring *about* the body, Deleuzian subjectivity precludes speaking *for* a body politic and renders speaking *of* it redundant. Hence, Davis's notion of "Dismodernism" questions the supposition that lived experience is autonomous, even the arborescent root structure of narrative representation, the fountainhead of the singular root book branching out in dichotomous tangents.

An attention to visibility *qua* recognition might also be extrapolated from the specifically literary or "poetic" function of the "ideal book." Literature is a "clinical" act in which, according to Deleuze, "the writer makes a diagnosis, but what he diagnoses is the world . . . assess[ing] the chances of health . . . the possible birth of a new man . . . as the total work" (*Essays* 53). In order to do so, it must be "minor"; it must not speak for or mimetically represent a given minority voice. If it stands for a people, it is a people that, like the multiple, must be created. Hence, in their short

but influential book on Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari claim that “there isn’t a subject” in minor literature; “there are only collective assemblages of enunciation . . . revolutionary forces to be constructed” (18). Insofar as Weiner figures “clairvoyance” as a diagnostic ability and “silent teaching” as a prognostic act, reading the *Clairvoyant Journal* may disclose particularities of such a poetics, but Deleuze’s rendition of how this poetics of minority recognition plays out is nearly as evocative and, I would suggest, uncanny. Note the trivocal and silent (“unheard of”) characteristics of the poetic “Sign” as Deleuze describes it:

[L]anguage does not have signs at its disposal, but acquires them by creating them, when a language acts within a language so as to produce in it a language[,] an unheard of and almost foreign language. The first interjects, the second stammers, the third suddenly starts with a fit. Then language has become Sign or poetry, and one can no longer distinguish between language, speech, or word. And a language is never made to produce a new language within itself without language as a whole in turn being taken to a limit. The limit of language is the Thing in its muteness—vision. The thing is the limit of language, as the sign is the language of the thing. (*Essays* 98)

When Weiner pursues this limit by collapsing this trio of voices (if no one is primary, “starts” and “interject[ions]” become one sole “stammer”), it is by virtue of an ostensibly telepathic relation, a shared (“almost foreign”) pathology. This relation is textual in essence (semiotic, in the Deleuzian sense of “Sign or poetry”) and social in its construction (“defined by the outside”); the “impasse” Davis seeks to transcend is always-already transposed to a new form of becoming “clairvoyant” – “the Thing in its muteness—vision.” Just as Weiner qualified her modernist claim on authorial intention by declaring “I see words” (the phrase is imprinted on her forehead in the author photo that comprises the cover of *Clairvoyant Journal*), so becoming-minor produces a language that is “silent” precisely because it is at its limit.

Another reason Davis’s Deleuzian investment is a radical move has to do with the social *body* schizoanalysis proposes. It is irreducible and indivisible, a “body without organs,” a “delirious” or “schizophrenic” body in the sense that a poetics of affect is required, though not prescribed, to produce it. The agency of first-person subjectivity is a question of one’s “consistency” with the lived experience of others, and in such an arena intentionality appears to Deleuze as more a miracle than a mirror of the individual. In summation:

The organless body attracts the organs, appropriates them for itself, and makes them function in a regime other than the one imposed by the organism, in such a way that each organ is the whole body—all the more so, given that the organ functions for itself and includes the functions of all the others. The organs are thus “miraculously” born on the organless

body . . . *I feel* that I am becoming a woman, *I feel* that I am becoming god, that I am becoming clairvoyant, that I am becoming pure matter . . . Schizophrenic delirium can be grasped only at the level of this “I feel” which every moment records the intensive relationship between the organless body and machine-organs. . . . If schizophrenia seems like the sickness of today’s society, we should not look to generalizations about our way of life, but to very precise mechanisms of a social, political, and economic nature. Our societies no longer function on the basis of codes and territories. Quite the opposite. They function on the basis of a widespread decoding and deterritorialization. (*Two Regimes of Madness* 20–22, 28)

The Deleuzian model of dismodernization entails a radical diversity of intentionalities, literally rooted in the assemblage rather than generalized from the root. But they will each be instances or modalities of intention insofar as they posit a social ethics of what we are doing to signify “us” in a situation of mutual and simultaneous implication and constitution. Intention and instinct become identical to the contemporary, to the now in which we find ourselves temporarily abled, neither soundly encoded as “normal” or impaired, nor stably inhabiting “the body” we’ve been taught to obey. This focus on the contemporaneity of experience compels us to ask: What are the tempos of observation? What becomes<sup>7</sup> of the human as “subject,” especially in light of perceived impasses of postmodern identity politics? Didn’t we constitute – and don’t we constitute – this impasse? Are “we” not the vanishing point? If, as the rhizome suggests, intention is identical to the contemporary, what modalities of *being-identical* do we observe there? And upon what determinations do they depend for their subject positions?

I submit that these modes of identification depend upon psychosocial formulations to the degree that such formulations also describe the conditions of a post-ableist poetics. I say “post-ableist” to lighten the load of the trope of “schizophrenia” rather than to discount the rhizomatic subject such poetics represent. Such tropes have customarily served as euphemisms for disorderly or “knight’s move” thinking. For instance, Roman Jakobson’s work on “The Language of Schizophrenia” valorizes the extraordinary ability – the transcendent *qua* nonlinear thought patterns – attributed to those so afflicted. For another, Frederic Jameson’s blithe characterization of the Language poet Bob Perelman’s poem “China” as an example of the “schizophrenic fragmentation” of late capitalist cultural logic is well known, although the way it assumes the poem to function on an unproblematically mimetic level seems at least inconsistent with that logic (28–31). Linguist Richard Cureton even asserts that “textbooks in poetry and poetic stylistics are not organized synthetically by poetic ends but schizophrenically by poetic means,” for which he proposes a “cure” (91). Cureton either ignores or discredits the distinction made over the last several decades by many poets and theorists between

7 Contemporary philosophers of “becoming,” particularly those contributing to feminist discourse, may prove to be a crucial link between the Deleuzian gestures of dependency theory and the full methodological and ontological ramifications of “schizoanalysis” and the literary “clinic” for disability studies. Take Elizabeth Grosz’s work on “Prosthetic Objects” and its insistence on interdependence and telepathic relations. Prostheses function according to neither of the modalities of transgressive reappropriation: cosmetics or rupture; rather than “a confirmation of a pregiven range of possible actions . . . prostheses may actualize virtualities . . . inducing a mutual metamorphosis, transforming both the body supplemented and the object that supplements it” (147–48).

8 And to write is to narrate, pitting the autonomy of lived experience against the pressure to historicize, a paradox to which historian and theorist Sande Cohen has very recently granted the trope of schizophrenia. Since “schizophrenia comes into historiography when one actively notices the restrictions placed on what can count as a narrative subject,” Cohen suggests we “schizophrenize” history (105–06).

prosody and poetics as a larger, interdisciplinary field. But this is a crucial distinction to uphold if one is to make formal claims or consider formal elements of literary work, where we grant that work enough dignity and intentionality to be and accomplish more than “essentially a fractal elaboration of rhythmic qualities” of the language(s) in which it is written (92). It is not simply symptomatic, but it is critical labor, diagnostic labor, to write.<sup>8</sup> A post-ableist poetics will also be a dismodernist poetics, a rhizomatic and schizoanalytic practice, transforming the discrediting tropes of psychosocial disability into viable critical concepts.

And Weiner’s work is especially indicative of the circuits of the psychosocial. In a brief statement of poetics composed just before she began to develop her clairvoyant writing ploys, she marks a bridge between her *Code Poems* (using the found language of *The International Code of Signals for the Use of All Nations*, maritime mores and semaphore codes) and the *Clairvoyant Journal*:

I consider this code an exploration of linear communication, which has served the binary neurological function of the brain. The most useful thing for me here, in the code, is the understanding of the equivalents: one kind of signal may equally be substituted for another with the exact same meaning. It then becomes very clear when a different, non-linear thinking appears, as in “knight’s thinking” (schizophrenic thinking). Here, as in the chess game, the move is two up in a linear fashion, but then one jump to the side, to a conclusion or connection that may baffle the listener if he is expecting a linear-causal relationship. (*Open House* 54)

Forty years prior to the most radical articulations of dependency theory, Weiner was teaching its tenets to herself and others. Though, to be sure, the learning curve was steep.

## Hannah Weiner’s Post-Ableist Poetics

Dependency *per se* is theorized in the *Clairvoyant Journal*, making it difficult to interpret as an expression of the lived experience of a person with a disability. While her “self” is a privileged site for this conjectural work, we must adjust our hermeneutic expectations to allow for the text to work on affective and critical levels simultaneously. In this sense, the book diagnoses itself in order to reflect the conditions of that diagnosis. The fact that it doubts itself in this way explains the ironic force of Charles Bernstein’s comparison of the work to Descartes’ *Meditations* (“Hannah Weiner,” unpaginated). The dependent relations depicted in the *Clairvoyant Journal* are also difficult to pinpoint because it presents itself as an internal monologue – or, more precisely, a trio of voices rather than a “linear-causal” expression. These voices are formally “flat” in the Deleuzian sense that they “fill or occupy all of their dimensions . . . on a single page.”

1st CHAKRA

BEGIN  
BEGIN WITH ME

*Hooray* GET OUT is a JOE musical not an order COME SOON NO I PASS  
NO pass the *paper* wine YOU HAVE ORDERS *fix the page* WRONG BAR  
*Too late* u met Michael at the Tin Palace PARTY free pass OMIT to La Mama  
*good night Bernadette* BEGIN Going backwards: QUARTER TO TEN:  
see GO OUT WHERE YOU TRY SOBOSSEKS FIRST. *agent London*  
ACTION. *dont hesitate* MISS TIN PALACE SEE MICHAEL GO WORDS  
He knows an agent WOWget *linoleum* TALK TO MARJORIE see Joe, hello to  
Bob *conscious person* at NO  
NOW SINGLE DONUTS eat the glazing NO DOUBLEDAY POPULAR  
SO ELSE WOWie DRUNK *leave more space dont underline that's an*  
*order* SO WHAT

*serious now dont hesitate* tonight followed *all wrong go to bed*  
*no periods orders go to bed glad get out is New York dont repeat 3 months*  
*dont sit down dont perspire dont do it leave get it get it at door noney*  
*mother's word be careful drunk also* HERE where? *bed alright dont per-*  
*spire hear shout NO dont explain* GO TOMORROW *Explain the interference*  
it stops you from *bed doing* what the other words tell you *omit* DONT GO  
BE A FOOL It's 7 1ST CHAKRA see clock DONT EXPLAIN THE CHAK-  
RAS NOW RHYS KNOWS FOUR GO TO BERNADETTE'S it's 7 WOW  
BEGIN Going to Phil Glass concert POPULAR WIFE GO TOMORROW  
Tomorrow is Joe's musical and a party DONT GO BOTH This is silly  
2 MOS *dont comment yourself* SO HUMBLE ENOUGH Rosemary is  
*back in town* Read THINK Einstein's definition of thinking *Bernadette* doing  
*No more periods*  
*pre-thought thinking* SO AM I says the refrigerator in the pink bulb GET OUT  
Change the bulb Bernadette's MAYER EXPERIMENTS this book is mind con-  
trolled the WALK Bernadette language *ex communicate her words so through* it  
goes through The way I QUOTE to destroy a word is to change its *litters too*  
*heavy* Systematically derange the SIS I MUST DO IT *cut it short* SLOW  
I QUOTE Pick any word at random let mind play around until ideas *pass try this*  
*with so* SO WITH RHYS it's CHARMING'S word He *behave through*  
*yourself* SAW ME YOUR NOVEL CUT IT SHORT PLEASE PASS THE PAGE

Above is a page from the book, as typeset by Barrett Watten and published in 1978 by Lewis Warsh and Anne Waldman's Angel Hair Editions. It is the culmination of a larger project undertaken over the course of a decade, and culminating in four discrete journals (the first two, *The Fast* and *Country Girl* were also published in book form). The entirety was published by UCSD's Archive for New Poetry as *The Early and Clairvoyant Journals* – online, as hi-resolution scans of the original manuscripts, which I edited and for which I wrote an extensive critical introduction. The excerpt on the next page is from the online edition of the manuscripts, an edition that presents the entirety of the extant material designated as either the “clairvoyant journal” (9) or one of three immediately preceding journals in which the development of the phenomenal and literary-formal aspects of Weiner's “clairvoyance” is jointly depicted.

By “2/28,” 1974, Weiner had formalized the visions to which she was more or less privy – more or less because by this time she proceeds on the realization that while the three voices in the work may contradict and goad each other, she is not alone in such elementary linguistic discordances. Typographically differentiated, one insists, “BEGIN/BEGIN WITH ME,” while another begs to “*feel different*” – a “transindividual

2/28

GO FOR A SAMAHDI  
feel different

1st CHAKRA

BEGIN  
BEGIN WITH ME

Hooray GET OUT is a JOE musical not an order COME SOON  
NO I PASS NO pass the paper wine YOU HAVE ORDERS fix the page  
WRONG BAR Too late u met Michael at the Tin Palace PARTY free pass  
OMIT to La Mama good night Bernadette BEGIN Going backwards:  
QUARTER TO TEN: see GO OUT WHERE YOU TRY SABASSICS FIRST, agent  
London ACTION, dont hesitate MISS TEN PALACE SEE MICHAEL GO WORDS  
He knows an agent WOW get linoleum TALK TO MARJORIE see Joe, hello  
to Bob conscious person at NO  
NOW SINGLE DONUTS eat the glazing NO DOUBLEDAY POPULAR  
SO ELSE wowie DRUNK leave more space dont underline that's an  
order SO WHAT  
  
serious now dont hesitate tonight followed all wrong  
go to bed no periods orders go to bed glad get out is New York  
dont repeat 3 months dont sit down dont perspire dont do it leave  
get it get it at door noney mother's word be careful drunk also  
HERE where? bed alright dont perspire hear shout NO dont explain  
noney  
GO TOMORROW Explain the interference it stops you from bed doit  
what the other words tell you omit DONT GO BE A FOOL It's 7  
1ST CHAKRA see clock DONT EXPLAIN THE CHAKRAS NOW RHYS KNOWS FOUR  
GO TO BERNADETTE'S it's 7 WOW BEGIN. Going to Phil Glass  
concert POPULAR WIFE GO TOMORROW Tomorrow is Joe's musical and  
a party DONT GO BOTH This is silly 2 MOS dont comment yourself  
SO HUMBLE ENOUGH Rosemary is back in town Read THINK Einstein's  
definition of thinking Bernadette doing pre thought thinking  
SO AM I says the refrigerator in the pink bulb GET OUT Change the bulb  
Bernadette's MAYER EXPERIMENTS this book is mind controlled the WALK  
Bernadette language ex communicate her words so through it goes through  
The way I QUOTE to destroy a word is to change its litters too heavy  
Systematically derange the SIS I MUST DO IT cut it short SLOW  
I QUOTE Pick any word at random let mind play around until ideas pass  
try this with so SO WITH RHYS it's CHARMING'S word through  
He behave yourself SAW ME YOUR NOVEL CUT IT SHORT PLEASE PASS THE PAGE

milieu,” as Thiher put it (282). If the hermeneutic frameworks of disability studies provide a kind of “pre thought thinking” such as Weiner describes the stuttering self-reflexivity of this narratologically, prosodically, and visually dense page, it can also restore this work to its rightful context. Its “plane of consistency” must be given its proper bearing as such, though we encounter it as, in Bernstein’s words, a “pervasive citationality.” Weiner’s work has a reputation within the critical discourse on avant-garde poetics for representing an aberration of a particular sort. At the same time, its formal innovations are celebrated and its penchant for disjunctive self-disclosure often times emulated: “Pick any word at random let mind play around until ideas pass [.]” Short of reading the early journals in their full complexity – which I attempt in my introduction to the online edition – beginning to read from the fully formed *Clairvoyant Journal* means revisiting the particular “ME[s]” of her environs.

Weiner was, along with Mac Low, one of the prescient elders of Language Writing. Both were of the generation of the New American Poetry, after the title of Donald Allen's infamous anthology, *The New American Poetry: 1945–1960*, although neither happened to appear there. And while Weiner does represent a crucial bridge between New York School and Language Writing, her major works are finally irreducible to the agreed tendencies of either. Open New Direction's concise, if somewhat premature, anthology, "*Language*" *Poetries*, and you'll find Mac Low and Weiner at the front of the class. Yet both are often best understood in the context of the international avant-garde of "intermedia arts" which, in hindsight, has a very tenuous place in the literary historical master narrative gauging two diverging postmodernisms at mid-century: one leading from high-modernism to domesticated moderns such as W. H. Auden, Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Richard Wilbur, and Elizabeth Bishop; and the other variously radicalizing high modernist experiments as social ethics. This "other" postmodernism includes examples of the Objectivist movement of the 1930s (Louis Zukofsky and George Oppen being its best known proponents, William Carlos Williams its immediate influence), Charles Olson<sup>9</sup> and other proponents of "open form" surrounding the experimental Black Mountain College in the 1950s, and the "Deep Image" and "Ethnopoetics" movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Robert Bly and Jerome Rothenberg are crucial progenitors, respectively).

The New York School's experiments in multiplying lyric voice went hand-in-hand with bringing the content of lyric poetry down to earth, including as much metaphysical epiphany as (often comically) mundane subject matter. It was coy when others were confessional. It was ugly and flamboyant when others were pretty and measured. Its first generation was overshadowed by the work of Frank O'Hara, whose litmus of the postmodern soliloquy, "In Memory of My Feelings," wears its motif of "a number of naked selves" conspicuously (Allen 244–50). Its second generation was exemplified by Ted Berrigan, who in 1973 announced that "We are involved in a transpersonified state / Revolution." The said "Revolution" has been the subject of much commentary among literary historians, under such rubrics as "community" and "coterie."<sup>10</sup> Initially somewhat marginalized and forgotten were the women of either generation, particularly Barbara Guest, a close ally of O'Hara, and Diane DiPrima, whose *Dinners and Nightmares* (1961) was published for the trade in 1974, and whose humorous depiction of the monstrosities of the mundane foreshadows the *Clairvoyant Journal*, excerpts of which took another couple of years to debut in little magazines. Even less well known are the peripheral engagements between a central figure of the New York School, Weiner's close friend Bernadette Mayer and the performance and conceptual art scenes vis-à-vis life-writing. Mayer's early prose journals such as *Studying Hunger* (1976) and *Memory* (1976) were influential at the time, at least as influential as her notoriously experimental workshops conducted at St. Mark's Poetry Project. For her part, Weiner spent this period moving between these groups, eventually becoming a contributor to the mimeograph magazine 0–9, a virtual home for this cross-pollination. Art historian

9 Olson's influence on the intermedia work of feminist artist Carolee Schneemann is but one salient example of the complex circuits of influence between these mid-century artists and poets, as later generations took their writing "off the page and into the dustbin of history" (Perreault 8).

10 See Kane, Lehman, and especially Shaw. See also Weiner's two pieces written about Berrigan, "obligated" and "Day 52" in *Hannah Weiner's Open House* for touching and relatively conventional iterations within the New York School idiom.

Christine Poggi summarizes the concerns of such artists as “an investigation of beholding, understood as necessarily corporeal, temporal, and implicated in the construction of subjectivity, power, and desire” (255). Melding essentialist and constructivist tendencies, the favored modes of 0–9’s contributors were aleatory compositional procedures, improvised performance tactics, and audience participation. And it was in that magazine that Weiner’s aforementioned *Code Poems* were documented, in addition to other important early works by later luminaries of performance art, such as Vito Acconci and Adrian Piper (Acconci and Mayer coedited the magazine). Meanwhile, Mac Low’s extension of experiments in egoless composition of poetry – themselves inspired by the work of John Cage in music and the Fluxus movement in visual arts and performance – had its impact on early Language poets. These poets were deeply suspicious of New York School essentialism while it drew from aspects of its notions of collective subjectivity. Language Writing further de-emphasized the ego underwriting traditional lyric verse; where the New York School used it at variance with settled modes of address, Mac Low and Language poets like Bruce Andrews, Bernstein, and Lyn Hejinian called its very use into question. From this rich confluence came Weiner’s twin strategies of “clairvoyance” and “silent teaching,” developed out of work seen as, in Daniel Barbiero’s estimation, “a limiting case of both Language writing and of lyric” (361).

In 1970, Weiner’s experiments with LSD appear to have triggered the phenomenal aspects of “clairvoyance.” *The Fast* tells of a three-week period of visual and auditory hallucinations she is at pains to integrate into a regime of self-care, itself predicated on the yogic teachings of Swami Satchitananda as well as her prior interest in signaling. Gradually, over the course of *Country Girl* and the third journal, *Pictures and Early Words*, she calibrates the narrative agency of these phenomena to the form that narrative takes, so that Weiner’s “own voice” is rendered in standard lower case, another in capitals, and a third in italics. The three are “seen;” thus as lyric “voices” they are “silent.” The capitals represent the personality of an “advisor” and are transcribed from outer visions – these words and phrases are seen on any given surface, including her own forehead such that she can perceive them. The underlined/italicized words and phrases toy with the orders given by the capitals and question Weiner’s “own” reactions to them – they provide a kind of comic relief, where the others often seem to scold. It is crucial to recognize that, by 1972, this comic, third “voice” appears solely on the manuscript page during the compositional/transcriptive process. Taken together, the voices’ interactions represent an improvisational moment or choral ensemble, what in 1960s performance art parlance came to be called “simultaneities.”<sup>11</sup> But the latter two are disruptive in the sense that Weiner’s “own” lyric, narrative voice is constantly preempted in a memory play that produces highly paratactic structures. This trivocal verse form earns the title of “verse” through its emphasis on the relationship of visual to vocal signs – at base, the full dynamic of traditional prosody. The page or “large-sheet” becomes the nexus of a painterly attention to form, as Weiner would later describe it; the line is less the measure than the “frame” of the 8 1/2 × 11

11 Mac Low published hundreds of poetic “simultaneities” in the 1960s and 1970s, making a clear impression on Weiner’s work.

manuscript page (Weiner and Bernstein). This page-oriented work would comprise nearly all of her poetry until her death in 1997.

Having dismodernized lyric form in this way indivisible from apparent psychopathological episodes, to read these words is to dismodernize that supposed impairment. A formative text in the larger destabilizing of the category of impairment comes to mind here – Georges Canguilhem's *The Normal and the Pathological*. Canguilhem grants "disease" a "biological norm of its own" within the evolution of the body; the "capacity to establish new constants with the value of norm" is contingent upon it (211). Weiner simply figures this capacity as a semiotic one. Her "seen" words are those of "silent teachers": aspects of her "self," "those poets who were teaching during the period," and the cybernetic field of ambient language (e.g. advertising copy) (quoted in Wallace 149). Calling the situation "ironic," she uses irony literally, as a community-building field of experiential knowledge<sup>12</sup> – "group mind" is how she put it (*Clairvoyant Journal* audiocassette liner notes, unpaginated). This interdependence foreshadows dependency theory's hermeneutic structure insofar as Canguilhem defines pathological instances as generative instances of biological elasticity, which, on a biopsychiatric model, become analogous to the semiotic "signals" of Weiner's "disease." As Canguilhem implicates a priori categories such as "physiology," Weiner implicates first-person subjectivity by formalizing such relations as "telepathic" cognitive (thus semiotic) events. As she put it in a précis of a writing workshop for St. Mark's Poetry Project:

To anyone who insists on writing "I" would she concentrate on another and write that person's being and thought. It would shift to the other, still incorporating understanding problem of self. Are you telepathic you can do so the mind can be strong and have power be kind you can be felt. ("If Workshop")

Weiner uses "silent teaching" to diagnose a telepathic rejoinder of, first, the pathological and the psychopathological.<sup>13</sup> In the following passage from the *Clairvoyant Journal*, she can then assert the dependencies of psyche and socius by demonstrating an indivisibility of form and psychic content.

The excerpt on the next page shows all the salient marks of the project. The lyric battle for inscription is introduced with the third voice (in italics), from the "group mind" ("How can I describe anything when all these interruptions keep *arriving* and then/tell me I dont describe it well WELL"); note also the characteristic repetition of the capitals (orders bear repeating) mockingly breaking the seamless syntax of the words "*arriving*" on the page during transcription. Weiner's dark whimsy is here, undoing any pretentious scenario of self-love and preservation, here figured as prayer to "Our father who art *be right over*" and elsewhere as hippie free love or masturbation; the artworld coterie as an aspect of "group mind" ("JOAN ARAKAWA"), provocatively mingling the advisory and ironic voices; and the routines of embodiment, as mundane as they are ecstatic<sup>14</sup> ("... counting down ...

12 As Wayne Booth famously detailed in *A Rhetoric of Irony*, irony has victims in those who are excluded from the community it builds – the opposition between pronouncements and the knowledge upon which they depend is what is reflected in the way ironic statements seem to mean something else. "Ironic pathos [builds] brotherly cohesion among those who see the essential truth" (29). Weiner's use of irony in this, essentially satiric, sense bids us to qualify the degree to which, as rhetorician Catherine Prendergast notes, "the diagnosis of schizophrenia necessarily supplants one's position as rhetor" (47).

13 See also "Awareness and Communication" in *Kiosk*.

14 One interesting way in which the capitals function, in this case "ORGASM," is through linking the ordinary and the extraordinary through the norms Weiner presents with gender inflections. A reference to "periods" in the *Clairvoyant Journal* is never only a reference to one, menstruation, or the other, terminal punctuation.

3/10

How can I describe anything when all these interruptions keep *arriving* and then tell me I dont describe it well WELL *forgive them* big ME COUNTDOWN got that for days and yesterday it didn't stop GO TO COUNTDOWN GO TO COUNTDOWN CALL DAVIDs <sup>get</sup> COUNTDOWN finally GO TO COUNTDOWN at the door so OK I go see these maroon velvet pants I'm not BUY \$40 pants BLOOMINGDALES all over again I leave GO TO COUNTDOWN: refuge, get in a taxi, start for home, no peace, get out GO TO COUNTDOWN ok it's only money go back and buy the pants it's better than seeing GO TO COUNTDOWN for the rest of my life *peace* so they fit well UNTIL MICHAEL COOPER For a while I tried to get away with *negative* COUNTING by counting down 10, 9, 8, 7 while breathing GO TO MAKE CLEARer FAR OUT B at the door RHYS RHYS IMPORTANT (notes) HAVE A DOUBLE L image of pink embroidered pillow case appears on blanket, get it out I GO NOW *girlfriend, negative* MOTHER made it when I was 2 S JANA <sup>she's fasting</sup> TRY HARDER across her chest and F DRESS WARM across Charlemagne's groin Joan's U head says LAUGHS as she <sup>laughs</sup> QUINK THICK SAY IT L Rhys *rhythm* VERY IMPORTANT says <sup>radio</sup> LY DESCRIBE *go ahead* in Charlemagne's white pants WOOL white hat IMITATED Hawai JOAN ARAKAWA (more notes going back 3 days) YOU WONT OBEY PORK CHOP <sup>buy the</sup> BUY THEM *pig* in pork chop color along the edge of <sup>frying</sup> NOT APPLE PIE in pink and white sash

ORGASM <sup>deaf</sup> <sup>ment</sup> go to a museum  
 get exci JUNK <sup>eat</sup> <sup>fruit</sup> <sup>it</sup> CANT GET THE SPACING  
 I T W R I T E S I T S E L F  
 it's a nice arc

Try praying: Our father who art *be right over*  
 A song: Here we go round the mulberry bush the *grapefruit John* the mulberry *mush* GIVE UP  
 GRAPEFRUIT' IS THE NAME OF Yoko Ono's book, APOLOGIZE is on a Ringo Star2 record 2 r's Call Jerry MISS ROTHENBERG MISS DAVID ANTIN  
 SNOWING IN VERMONT <sup>delightful</sup> Dream about Jason Epstein very huge  
 loud SHUT UP in hs office, <sup>JOHN</sup> I rejoice <sup>laugh</sup> DESCRIBE CHARLEMAGNE  
*how old 33 spiritual discipline*  
*not in dollars not too negative*  
*no money*

## MONEY

while breathing . . . ORGASM”); the formal, metacritical content (“CANT GET THE SPACING”); specifically, the graphic and sometimes verbal representations of the negative in the dialectic of contraction/apostrophe – that is, the lack of punctuation in “dont” and “CANT” and the excess of “lyric” (apostrophic) address; and finally the figure of commodity/capital exchange as a linguistic negotiation. These marks are salient insofar as their combined effect is to critique the autonomy of lived experience by demonstrating a tableau or “large-sheet” in which the autonomy of lived experience loses its didactic purport and amplifies the silence roaring all about us. As readers, we are disallowed the gaze of the sympathetic voyeur looking over and across, toward a fix for the deviant, pathetic narrator. The irony of the frequent

order to “SHUT UP” is that it equally applies to the silent and putatively sympathetic act of reading.

This “lyric battle,” as it were, seems to have been begun with an invasion of the second (CAPITAL) voice. The percepts and affects follow upon one another so nearly as to merge, percepts amending one another as separate voices – “GO TO MAKE CLEARer” – and quickly lapsing into affective reactions: “FAR OUT BLISSFULL.” And it is not only the iconic or chimerical effects of the capital letters and horizontal placement that raise these words to the status of Deleuzian “Signs.” Notice how “grapefruit” begins as a sort of affective percept. Weiner considers the imperative to eat grapefruit as one of her many internal dialogues regarding mastery of self-care. But self-care becomes synonymous with regard for (and from) the coterie of “silent teachers” almost immediately; “GRAPEFRUIT IS THE NAME OF Yoko Ono’s book.”

Given the blending of voices, silent teaching emerges from the work of clairvoyance in the text by thrusting readers into a temporal zone of simultaneity that, for all we can know, is that very zone in which the *Clairvoyant Journal* was composed. This temporal figure of extraordinary experience is rendered as mundane as the fact of the page’s existence. This is not an unproblematic *disability* reading, of course, given the ways in which the page must either be visually or aurally accessed.<sup>15</sup> One characteristic of silent teaching is that it is ironic in the sense that irony reflects and builds community – it selects, elects, and excludes members. Irony and questions of identity are well-known allies. But Weiner’s form of irony does not also imply insincerity. Looking back at “2/28,” we can read sincerity as not the sound of a familiar voice of reason and feeling, but as the sustenance of the simultaneity across which language and consciousness place their orders.

The gulf between the rote date stamp and the first order is, on an ideational and formal level, vast: “2/28 . . . GO FOR A SAMADHI” – as though one could enter the Buddhist state of spiritual relinquishment (whose only Western analogue is death) like one could go for an afternoon stroll. It’s tempting to begin reading the page like a second-generation New York School list poem at this point. In fact, in a separate piece devoted to the influence of Ted Berrigan, a pre-eminent writer of list poems, Weiner satirizes the ambivalence of the form by ending her list with the day’s last task – actually an admonition: “Do not make lists, said Ted” (*Hannah Weiner’s Open House* 62). In “2/28,” the next entry stems from the second voice, whose imperative is quite meaningless, or entirely contrary, in the putative narrative of things to do this last day of February. The Buddhist rhetoric continues to issue from the ticker-tape capitals, quickly devolving into (irony of ironies) a sort of playground fight for attention, “BEGIN/BEGIN WITH ME.” If a theme or even a narrative seems to be developing here, it is quickly relativized to our own instance of reading when Weiner’s “own” voice first emerges mid-sentence. It is crucial that this sentence’s subject is *apparently* cancelled by the preceding voices. *What* is a “musical not an order”? Given only to read all that’s come before as a compound subject, the narrative gives up the ghost: even reflection back upon the day, not to mention

15 The question of prosodic access was crucial to Weiner, and enriched by her early attention to performance. Meticulously rehearsed studio recordings of the *Clairvoyant Journal* were released by New Wilderness Audiographics one year prior to the Angel Hair edition of the text. These recordings remain in circulation and are somewhat iconic in the early history of Language Writing.

projection into the day's events the list poem would suggest, "Going backwards" is just that. "serious now dont hesitate tonight followed all wrong go to bed/no periods orders go to bed" Not only does the narrative frame contradict itself, but so does any given voice, "dont explain GO TOMORROW Explain the interference," until an affectionate friend introduces herself: "Bernadette language ex communicate her words." How does our narrator insinuate we excommunicate her words, "destroy a word," "QUOTE" or "CUT IT SHORT"? "Pick any word at random let mind play around until ideas pass try this with so SO WITH" – the palindrome is skewed only by being shared. But isn't that textuality itself, to be the only shared entity between authorial and critical agents? Isn't that what prods the desire to recombine intention and context as this text so peculiarly reminds us? The palindromic simultaneity of future and past is only present in the passing of either moment as it becomes what it will – a language within a language, perhaps, but certainly nothing like any poetic form before it in the New American tradition. "PLEASE PASS THE PAGE," and this is just what we do. Our only alternative is to leave *this* moment behind.

## Conclusion

Deploying disability as a critical concept may imply dismodernizing impairment. And models for so transcending dialectical circuits between ability and inability, such as Weiner's rapprochement between New York School multiplicity, intermedia's reliance on simultaneity, and Language School semiotic deconstruction, delineate the estimable hermeneutic structure this dismodernizing process entails. Whether or not we adopt the tag of "schizoanalysis," our methods of reading bear revision. Dismodernizing our instincts as readers might mean nothing short of a recalibration analogous to the most radical forms of intentionality – those without presumed reliance on an autonomous authorial agency. If textual-based study is the way forward for disability studies, we must do justice to the full complexity of the dependencies of author, text, and reader. Weiner is a "remarkable case" because her work disallows any other level of engagement, while at the same time dramatizing the psychosocial formulations that render our shared cultural environments a material reality. But Weiner's twin notions of "clairvoyance" and "silent teaching" not only speak to important contemporary questions with which dependency theory must grapple, but they impress upon us how unremarkable – in the sense of ordinary or mundane – these frequently malignant psychosocial circuits are, that they occur to us as routinely as our own literacy. In this cybernetic field, madness may be less a mystical, privileged access to heightened awareness compensating for subjection to an unaccommodating, ableist environment. It may instead be a critical concept that allows the discourses of disability and poetics to generate newly ethical ways of authorizing subjects.

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