

# Out of Iowa



The University of Iowa Department of English

Winter 2003-2004

## The English Department gets wired

With the advent of digital technologies, new forms of electronic writing and art are challenging what we ordinarily describe as "literature," and the English Department has been quick to respond.

Three years ago, the Department of English opened a new multimedia lab for faculty and graduate students (Huntley Multimedia Lab, 310 EPB) to encourage and support research and instruction using electronic media. The Huntley Lab is equipped with state-of-the-art

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## From the Chair: report on the English Department's 2001-2002 external review



When Charlie Marlow suggests to his buddies on the Nellie that "One can't

live with one's finger everlastingly on one's pulse," he offers good advice, although his story strongly suggests he is unable to follow his own counsel.

Nor can the English Department follow his advice, since the budgetary squeeze at the University of Iowa more and more seems to lead not just to pulse-taking with increased frequency, but to continuous self-monitoring of everything.

Most of the accounting and monitoring hoops the English Department must now regularly jump through seem annoying busy-work, but one part of our increasingly rigorous pulse-taking regimen has been very beneficial for us.

In 2001, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences mandated that the English Department undertake a Self-Study as the first step in an External Review. We had last done this in 1992, so it was

clearly time for us to take stock of where we were and where we wanted to go. This process led to three important documents: our Self-Study, the Report of the Reviewers, and the English Department's Response to the Review.

Edited versions of each of these three documents are available and can be viewed at http://www.uiowa.edu/~english/about/readingmatters/index.html (by clicking on "Review") in hopes of giving a useful overview of our department's strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations.

Brooks Landon Chair

### As state funding diminishes, your donations mean more than ever

This year, the generous donations from you - the alumni and supporters of the Department of English — have meant more to us than ever. As state funding diminishes and the economy languishes, gifts large and small play a significant part in maintaining excellence in the department. We want you to know the many ways that your gifts have contributed to our mission of providing an outstanding education for undergraduates and graduate students and to the teaching and research successes of our faculty members.

With your strong support,
• We have expanded our

undergraduate and gradustudent scholarships, both in numbers of awards and dollar amounts. · We continue to attract high caliber graduate students and faculty members to Iowa City. · We have hosted cutting edge conferences, such as this year's New Media Poetics, the Techno conference and the graduate student Craft, Critique and Culture conference, that involve many of our students. · We have been able to enrich academic experience of students and faculty by bringing exciting guest lecturers to share their research.

• We have been able to provide greater access to technology for students and faculty members and to incorporate training in sophisticated new forms of electronic media into students' studies.
• We have maintained our membership in the Dickens Project, an invaluable summer seminar for faculty members and graduate students alike.

We have also used your gifts to leverage additional funds to support our teaching and research mission so that even small gifts go a long way. For example, on the strength of your gifts, our chair, Brooks Landon, can initiate proposals and requests for fund-

ing from the College of Liberal Arts and the Office of the Provost. Many grants require departments to sustain the program or project launched by initial funding. Your continued support allows us to move forward confidently as we develop new courses, expand our writing programs, build our media courses, develop our Honors Program, and work annually to recruit an exciting and diverse group of students.

Your gifts help us to provide a nurturing, intellectually exciting environment even in these difficult days of diminishing state funding. (written by Gayle Sand)

## New Faculty

Over the past four years, eight new faculty members have come to our department to fill out the medieval, early modern, and 18th century areas of study, as well as early American and post-colonial studies.

In 2000, Lori Branch received her Ph.D. in English from Indiana University and joined the University of Iowa as assistant professor of Restoration and 18th-century British literature. Her current project, Rituals of Spontaneity: Novelty, Repetition, and the Quandaries of Resistance in 18th-Century Britain, explores how and why modern Anglophone culture comes to value spontaneous experiences and emotions. Examining Puritan enthusiasm and works of John Bunyan, moral sense philosophy from Shaftesbury to Adam Smith, Grub Street's sentimental novels, Christopher Smart's incarceration for spontaneous prayer, and Wordsworth's famous definition of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of emotion recollected in tranquility," she argues that the story of spontaneity is the story of the secularization of goodness, the frequently problematic articulation of ethico-religious value in mercantile and scientific discourses. What is most fascinating to her are the ways that quests for spontaneous experiences can be quite ritualistic, oftentimes masking participants' cooperation in their constructedness. Professor Branch has spoken about her work at international conferences and universities at home and abroad, including Copenhagen, Oxford, Aberystwyth, and Princeton. Her essay, "The Benefit of Doubt: The Ethics of Rereading," appeared in Critical Ethics: Text, Theory & Responsibility (Macmillan, 1999).





Matthew Brown completed his Ph.D. at the University of Virginia in 1996 and taught at Coe College, Louisiana State University, and Northern Illinois University before joining the UI faculty in 2001 as an assistant professor. He holds a joint appointment with the UI Center for the Book and specializes in early American literature and book history. His research focuses on the role of writing, printing, and reading in 17th-century New England's literary culture. He likes showing students how a poem or novel's physical format influences an author's conception or a reader's interpretation of the work. Similarly, the initiatives at the UI Center for the Book are equally exciting for Brown, as the program integrates the fine arts, the humanities, and the information sciences in its appreciation of books and book arts.

Claire F. Fox joined the English Department in 2001. Her teaching and research interests include inter-American cultural studies, Mexican and U.S.-Mexican border arts and culture, visual culture studies, and cultural policy studies. She is the author of *The Fence and the River: Culture and Politics at the U.S.-Mexico Border* (U. of Minnesota Press, 1999), and her essays have appeared in *Iris, Discourse, Social Text, Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, and *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature*. She is currently working on a book about hemispheric cultural policy and art criticism during the Cold War period.





**Priya Kumar** joined the English faculty in January 2001. She completed her Ph.D. at McGill University in Montreal, and her M.A. at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, India. Prior to arriving at Iowa, she taught at the University of Virginia. In Spring 2000, Kumar was a Rockefeller Fellow at the Institute on Violence, Culture and Survival and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities.

As an assistant professor in postcolonial studies, her specialty is South Asian literature and culture. Her areas of research and teaching include nationalism and minority culture; discourses of cosmopolitanism and secularism; testimony and trauma theory; postcolonial feminist fiction and theory; the literature of displacement and exile. She has published essays on the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in *Interventions* (Routledge, 1999), on the Urdu writer, Qurratulain Hyder (Routledge, 2001), and on the South African writer, Bessie Head (*Africa Quarterly*, 1994).

Priya is currently working on a book project on secularism, religious violence, and collective memory in the Indian subcontinent.

## New Faculty (continued)



Kathy Lavezzo comes from the University of California-Santa Barbara, where she finished her Ph.D. in 1999. She has an M.A. from the University of Virginia and a B.A. from UCLA. Her dissertation, "Angels on the Edge of the World," plays on the angles/angels pun in old stories of St. Gregory — how he saw captive Anglo-Saxons in Rome, called them angels, and so motivated early missions to England. But the real subject of the piece is English self-perception and self-definition as influenced by its location on the edge, or beyond the edge, of the "known world." From the view of Rome and Europe, England was beyond the pale, and a place to which angels, or devils, had much greater access than mere women and men. Lavezzo teaches Chaucer, medieval literature, and some courses in 18th century literature.

Harry Stecopoulos, assistant professor of English, came to the English Department in 2002 and teaches courses on modern U.S. literature, culture, and performance, with specific interests in the novel, cultural studies, and postcolonial theory. His publications include the co-edited anthology *Race and the Subject of Masculinities* (Duke, 1997) and essays on Stuart Hall and Edgar Rice Burroughs. An article on Faulkner and Wright will appear in *Prospects* (2003). He is currently working on two book projects. The first, "Locating the Global South: Race, Region, and Empire in the American Century" examines the relationship between U.S. Southern literature and U.S. imperialism from the 1890s to the 1990s. The second, "Staging Change: U.S. Drama, Media Culture, and New Social Movements," reads political dramas of the 1960s and 1970s in light of contemporary critiques of the media and the public sphere.





**Thomas Swiss** joined the English Department's faculty in 2001. His teaching and writing have most recently focused on "New Media" literature and its relationship to image and sound. He is interested in the interplay of digital texts, the institutions that support and promote them, and the emerging audiences that respond to them. He is also interested in and writes about poetry and the rhetoric of music criticism.

Thom is always delighted to work with students on writing and research projects in areas where he might have some experience or expertise. Over the next few years, Thom will be teaching courses on Digital Rhetoric, Multimedia Writing, the Rhetoric of Popular Music, the New York School of Writers, Artists and Musicians, and the Language of Conceptual Art.

Thom shares an appointment with the University's Project on the Rhetoric of Inquiry (POROI) and is the editor of *TIR Web*. His books include *Measure*, *Rough Cut*, *Mapping the Beat*, *The World Wide Web and Contemporary Theory*, and others.

**Doug Trevor** received his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1999, after a B.A. from Princeton and a license from the University of Tours, where he studied Rabelais and Montaigne. "The Reinvention of Sadness" is his subject, demonstrating how writers in early modern England—Spenser, Donne, Jonson, Burton, and Milton—more and more self-consciously cast themselves as both learned and melancholic persons. Doug is interested in the degree to which sadness, depression, and melancholy become equated with intellectual attainment and possible spiritual redemption.



## English Department Conferences: Crafty and New

# craft critique culture

#### Craft, Critique, and Culture

Craft, Critique, and Culture, the University of Iowa's 3rd Annual Interdisciplinary Conference on Writing in the Academy, was held March 28-30, 2003.

Craft. Critique, Culture is an interdisciplinary conference focusing on the divisions between critical and creative approaches to writing both within the academy and in the larger world. This conference also had a special focus on "experimental" writing and writing which mutates traditional generic, cultural, and national boundaries. The conference aimed to create a venue for the exploration of the experimental as a capacious rubric that encompasses both the avant-garde(s) and other writing which militates within and against dominant discourses. How does writing enact social and political transgression through linguistic experimentation? How can writing which takes place alongside and across geographical and cultural interstices offer alternatives to the dominant modes of language? How can we read popular literatures in the context of a financially and socially authorized discourse? By looking at writing that transgresses traditional boundaries, whether geographical or social, this conference sought to include a variety of concerns, including border-crossing, intermedia, hybridity, experimental writing, and the avant-garde.

Keynote speakers included:

• Rachel Blau DuPlessis, poet, essayist, feminist critic and scholar with a special interest in modern and contemporary poetry

- Aldon Nielsen, Kelly Professor of American Literature at the Pennsylvania State University
- Mark A. Nowak, associate professor at the College of St. Catherine in Minneapolis, author of *Revenants* (Coffee House Press, 2000)
- Wang Ping, Chineseborn author of *American Visa* (short stories, 1994), *Foreign Devil* (novel, 1996), and *Of Flesh and Spirit* (poetry, 1998), all from Coffee House Press

#### Topics included:

- Writing in/against empire
- · Cross-cultural avant-gardism
- Language writing and political conflict
- Popular literature, ideology, and the culture industry

- Intermedia and performativity
- Race, gender, and experimental writing
- · Jazz and literature
- · Migratory aesthetics
- Literature that teaches new ways of reading
- Sound, performance, and orality
- Aesthetics as cultural ideology
- The Academy and the New Belletrism
- Writing along national/ cultural boundaries
- Youth (counter) cultures and ideology
- Social movements (ie. Abolitionism, temperance) and dominant ideologies
- Theory and practice of translation



## ha ha

## New Media Poetry

Aesthetics, Institutions and Audiences October 11-12, 2002

A number of the leading critics and writers in the field of New Media poetry gathered in Iowa City in October, 2002. The focus was on poetry composed for digital environments, exploring cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural accounts of this work in the broader context of contemporary arts and culture.

The conference looked at the possibilities for poetry offered by the electronic convergence of words, images, and sound and highlighted the changing contexts in which literature is produced as a result of the electronic word. It also examined emergent reading possibilities and strategies and considered some of the new forms of distribution and archiving made possible by the Web.

Sponsors of the event included

the International Writing Program, Iowa Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities, the English Department, International Programs, American Studies, POROI, and Comparative Literature.

The conference was organized by **Dee Morris**, the John C. Gerber Professor of English at the University of Iowa, and **Thom Swiss**, a Professor of English and Rhetoric of Inquiry at the University of Iowa.

## American literature giant John Gerber dies

John Christian Gerber, 95, died Wednesday, June 25, 2003, following an extended illness. Following funeral services, he was buried in Oakland Cemetery. Memorials may be directed to the University of Iowa Foundation for the John C. Gerber Professorship.

Gerber was born on Jan. 31, 1908, in New Waterford, Ohio, the son of Christian and Mary Leonora Hauptmann Gerber. He married Margaret "Peggy" Wilbourn of Morgantown, West Virginia in 1941.

He received his B.A. in 1929 and his M.A. in English from the University of Pittsburgh. He earned his doctorate in American literature at the University of Chicago in 1944, where he was also an instructor.

After receiving his doctorate, Gerber accepted a teaching position in the English Department at the University of Iowa in 1944. Remaining there for 32 years, he served as head of the department from 1961 to 1976. He was director of the School of Letters from 1967 to 1976 and was named the Millington F. Carpenter Professor of English in 1975. After retiring from Iowa in 1976, he was offered a position as chair of the English Department of the State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany, where he remained until 1984.

He received numerous academic awards.

including the Executive Award from the National Council for the Teachers of English; the Award for Distinguished Service from the Iowa Council of Teachers of English; the Founder's Award and the Twentieth Century Leadership Award from the Conference on College Composition and Communication; an honorary degree as Doctor of Letters from Morningside College in 1977; Academic Laureate for Continued and Sustained Service to the University from SUNY in 1984, and the State of New York Legislative Resolution of Commendation in 1984.

The Gerber Lounge in the English Philosophy Building at the UI is dedicated in his name. Also, the John C. Gerber Professorship was created by the English Department in 1998. The John C. Gerber Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching is given annually by the English Department.

While at the UI, he was active on many committees, such as the University Faculty Council, which he chaired in 1951 and 1958, the Iowa Center of the Arts, serving as coordinator from 1984 to 1986, and Friends of the University Libraries from 1994 to 1997. He also served as a consultant for various government agencies, including the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Department of Education.

A leading authority on Mark Twain and

American humor, Gerber wrote, edited, or co-edited more than 14 books and published numerous articles. He chaired the editorial board of the Iowa-California scholarly edition of *The Works of Mark Twain*. At the age of 80, he published



a critical biography of Twain, as well as a pictorial history of the University of Iowa. At the age of 87 he published a history of the English department at the UI. He wrote several memoirs, including an account of his 1928 cross-country motor trip, entitled "O Marvelous Model T." He also wrote a series of one-act plays, which were performed enthusiastically, if not so artfully, by members of the UI faculty and their spouses.

John Gerber is survived by two daughters, Barbara Gerber Barrett of New York City and Ann Gerber Sakaguchi and husband Hiroshi of Sebastopol, California; four grandchildren, Rachel Gerber Barrett, John Morio Sakaguchi, Kaya Margaret Sakaguchi, and Sasha Ann Barrett; and two great grandchildren, Devin McClain and Jordan Christine Barrett. He was preceded in death by his parents; his wife, Peggy; and a brother, Louis.

### Retirements at the UI: Moving on to new things



After graduating *magna cum laude* from Harvard, **Arch Coolidge** earned his M.A. and Ph.D. at Brown while at the same time serving first as a teaching assistant and then as instructor. He came to our department in 1956 and was appointed full professor in 1974. His many publications have included books on Dickens, the theory of narrative, English law in its American context, Greek drama, and — what he calls the new American literature

— film. "Because I am interested in the relations of ideas to literary forms, each of my five books examines broad common patterns shared by many literary works and events," Arch has said.

He has also published many scholarly essays and reviews, mostly on Dickens, the subject of his first book, a seminal study of Dickens as serial novelist, and the focus of a graduate seminar he taught several times. He has served on virtually all departmental committees, and was twice elected to our departmental Executive Committee. He has been an active member of the University Faculty Research Club, the Midwest Modern Language Association, and the MLA. His classes on the English novel, literature and culture

of the 18th and 19th centuries, and the literature of sensibility endeared him to hundreds of students who remember him for his soft-spoken, attentive responses to their ideas and for his thoughtful lectures on the cultural contexts of the texts they read.

He is also one of the few members of our faculty who through the years have chosen to teach what once was the core literature course of liberal arts, Classical and Biblical Literature. Arch had this to say about his teaching: "I became a teacher in 1946, so my ideas about instruction are a combination of my ideals and experience, which I may say continues to thrust new facts and new methods upon me. As for ideas, I believe students need encouragement more than correction, a chance to explore their own reactions to literature more than being stuffed with details by some academic taxidermist. I believe a teacher should be friendly, open-minded, well prepared — a person who loves his material and thinks about it again and again." He has served on many Ph.D. comprehensive and dissertation committees, and for a number of years was a member of our M.A. examination committee.

Colleagues and students alike will remember this learned and gentle man. We wish him and Mrs. Coolidge many years of good health and happiness. (written by Carol de St. Victor)

## Retirements (continued)

Bob Kelley graduated from Creighton in 1960 with a B.A. in English and Speech, and soon after began his doctoral work at Indiana University, where the eminent scholars Irvin Ehrenpreis and Philip Daghlian persuaded him to become, like them, a scholar of the 18th century. Bob came to our department as an instructor in 1966, and was promoted to full professor in 1975. His publications include four editions of texts as well as several reviews and essays on 18th-century writers. Bob has never abandoned his devotion to the Enlightenment, as his courses on the English novel and Literature and Culture of 18th-Century England attest. He will leave the department having taught more than 200 courses in biography and autobiography, travel literature, continental literature, classical and Biblical literature, gothic/horror fiction, and literature of all genres. A few of his course titles suggest the wide-ranging approach to literature and culture his students have long admired: The Country and the City in Literature and Art; Play, Game, and Sport in Literature; Marriage and Divorce in History, Art, and Literature; Knaves and Fools: History, Satire, Portraiture, and the Rise of the Novel.

"I know that I am considered a 'hard' teacher who demands a great deal (sometimes too much?) of students, who gives students a great deal of freedom but also the responsibility that goes with it. I am not a spoon-feeder. My pedagogy does not suit many students, but I have been pleased and flattered over the years by the number of students who write, e-mail, or call me to say how profitable their exposure to my courses was."

His service to the ongoing administrative work of our department has been prodigious. In addition to serving at one time or another on most departmental committees, he has chaired our Curriculum Committee, our Graduate Admission and Finances Committee, our M.A. Examination Committee, two of our search committees, our Continuing Education Committee, and our committee on Graduate Studies. He served on the Board in Control of Athletics for 14 years, four of which he served as chair. He has also served the university as a member of an Internal Review Committee, the General Education Coordinating Committee, the Review Committee on Centers of Student Life, the Strategic Planning Committee for the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, and the Task Force on the Future of UI Athletes.

Colleagues, students, and many friends from across the university and the business communities of Iowa City and Cedar Rapids will remember the culinary and conversational pleasures awaiting them always at the home of Bob and his wife Dixie. (written by Carol de St. Victor)

On May 14th, 2002, faculty and staff from across campus joined to bid farewell to Professor **John Harper**. John retired from the University after being with the Department of English for 36 years. At his retirement, tributes were read from Chair Brooks Landon, former chair Dee Morris, Miriam Gilbert, Teresa Mangum, and Harry Stecopoulos.

Hired in 1966, John was the department's first administrator under former chair John Gerber. One of John's first responsibilities was to move the entire department into its newly constructed home, the English-Philosophy Building. In 1976, John joined the faculty and served as Director of Operations and Curriculum, among many other roles.

As his farewell gift from the department, John received best in house tickets to the Broadway show *Oklahoma*, along with flight, lodging, and amenities in New York. John will still be seen around EPB working on *The Teaching of English at Iowa, Volume II*. John will have an active retirement, tending to his pastoral duties and making all of Iowa City and Coralville a stage.

Congratulations and sincere thanks to John for his long-standing commitment to the department. (written by Gayle Sand)



Alan Nagel was hired in 1968 by Comparative Literature (then a part of the Department of English), but put off his arrival at Iowa for a year so that he could teach for a year in Italy as a Fulbright Fellow. His leadership abilities were immediately apparent; he chaired the graduate program in Comparative Literature from 1971-75 and became the director of the interdepartmental B.A. in Letters, a

position he held from 1971-82. Promoted to associate professor of English and Comparative Literature in 1972, and to full professor in 1980, he took on a variety of administrative positions: Director of General Education in Literature Program 1985-88; chair of the interdis-

ciplinary program Literature, Science, and the Arts from 1981-88, and, undaunted, again between 1991 and 1996. He was elected to Faculty Senate for two terms, 1992-98, and served on Faculty Council from 1992-95. He chaired the University's Strategic Planning Committee on Diversity (1993-94), and in 1999-00, he chaired the Provost's Task Force on Interdisciplinary Faculty Issues. He was the guiding force for a U.S. Department of Education-sponsored project on "Risk, Ethics, Decision-Making, and Public Policy" (1992-94). Out of this project came the LSA course, Making Choices, which introduces students to philosophical ethics and the psychology of judgment and decision-making.

Alan was working — in the trenches — long before interdisciplinarity and diversity became familiar buzzwords. His committee service for the College of Liberal (continued on p. 7)

## Retirements (continued)

Arts and Sciences, and for the wider university community, stretches over years and through many fields: intellectual activities in the residence halls, services for the handicapped, the Judicial Commission, the Educational Policy Committee, Liberal Arts, Faculty Assembly, Cultural Diversity Task Force, the International Writing Program, and Campus Planning.

In 1995 the Faculty Senate named him as a recipient of the Brody Award for Faculty Excellence and Service to the University and the State of Iowa, the first member of the English Department to be so honored. This prestigious award reflected on a university level

what we in the departments of English and Comparative Literature have known for years, namely that Alan's love of learning is exceeded only by his commitment to making learning possible. He has taught at all levels from General Education courses to courses for English majors and Letters majors to graduate courses in criticism and Renaissance literature.

Here at Iowa, his colleagues and his students value his intellectual generosity, which, like the hospitality he and his wife Kris Arnold have extended to so many, has helped to sustain the wider academic community. (written by Miriam Gilbert)

#### Revising the undergraduate major

Early in the spring term of 2003, the department faculty voted to institute significant changes to the undergraduate major that will take effect in the academic year 2004-05. Where our current major stresses different models of reading - genres, individual authors, cultural studies - our new major will emphasize the different areas of inquiry in which our faculty are involved as scholars and writers: Medieval and Early Modern Literature, Modern British Literature (1660 - present), American Literature, Transnational Literature and Postcolonial Studies, Literary Theory and Interdisciplinary Studies, and Creative and Nonfiction Writing. Majors will be required to take one course in each of these six areas and to declare any one of them as an area of concentration in which they will take at least two more courses. Additionally, where our current major simply asks students to take three courses in literature written before 1800, our new major

demands a more specific historical spread, asking students to take two courses each in Early Literatures through the 17th Century, 18th- and 19th-Century Literature, and 20th- and 21st-Century Literature.

It is the faculty's hope that these changes will provide greater structure and clarity of purpose to our students as they negotiate the wide range of courses offered in our department. The new organization of course offerings will encourage students to make historical and conceptual connections in their studies and to perceive possible areas of concentration. English majors will emerge from this curriculum with both historical and cultural breadth of knowledge, as well as the experience of advanced study in a particular field. While our old major has served us well, the department feels these changes will better serve students and faculty alike. (written by Eric Gidal)

#### Wired (continued)

Macintosh and PC computers and authoring software dedicated to the exploration, analysis, and production of work in the arts and humanities.

In the Fall of 2002, the Department on the expanded its commitment to new media research and production by creating a dynamic



A student uses the technology in the English Media Lab.

environment for undergraduate multimedia projects with the opening of a newly renovated, multi-suite media lab in EPB (English Media Lab, 303 EPB). The undergraduate media lab hosts 7 digital workstations, several digital camcorders, portable tape recorders, and studio microphones and mixers, which are placing in our students' hands powerful and creative tools for exploring new forms of textuality and addressing theoretical questions about culture and technology.

These resources, heavily funded with Student Computing Fee Grants, have supported the rise of New Media Studies in English, which include an assortment of multidisciplinary classes ranging from New Media history and electronic magazine publishing to sound art, radio essays, and writing with digital video. As learning increasingly intersects with technology, we are finding new ways to explore the materiality of words, the sound of writing, and the image of thought. (written by Jeff Porter)



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