



DRIFTWOOD PRESS



PRESENTS



ERASURE SEMINAR



SHOWCASE



POEMS & INTERVIEWS

FROM OUR INAUGURAL STUDENTS





The following booklet is a class compilation. In the final months of 2018, *Driftwood Press* ran its inaugural Erasure Seminar, in which students listened to lectures, joined in group reading and discussion, and had their work critiqued by instructor Jerrod Schwarz. At the end of this course, students were offered to submit the best erasures they made in the course. From these submissions, Jerrod Schwarz decided on one from each student to be included in this booklet; each student's best work is here presented alongside process interviews.

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R e t a i l u s

Consume credit by stopping a few

\$

cash profits.

customers

share charges

rates increase

banks

pinch profits

drive up prices

from pigs ears to groceries

costs add up

and plastic provides,

privilege.

“I hate them,” he said.

especially because the banks charge

10

20

50 cents

turning the transaction to a loss.

merchants restrict

merchants refuse

credit customers.

THE CON[REDACTED] E NATION 35

But the desire to be ruled, though [REDACTED] gratified [REDACTED] under a democracy, may be [REDACTED] under a despotism. though the desire to be ruled does not preclude [REDACTED] a collectivist basis, [REDACTED] a capitalistic basis.

There is no doubt [REDACTED] the desire to be ruled holds sway, [REDACTED] cosmopolitan [REDACTED] and socialistic in its attitude. [REDACTED] Much is implied by [REDACTED]

the desire to be ruled; much results from the desire to be ruled. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the desire to be ruled. [REDACTED] may be used in an arbitrary sense to cover all that is implied by the desire to be ruled.

Universalism has an external and [REDACTED] internal aspect. Externally, it implies [REDACTED] subordination. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] All nations are [REDACTED] one corporation; they recognise some common superior. That superior may be [REDACTED]

the Holy Roman Emperor

or [REDACTED] the Hague Tribunal. [REDACTED] Intimacy [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] of state with state will vary directly with [REDACTED] the recognised superior. [REDACTED] to that superior [REDACTED] ultimate obedience must be paid, even if [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] cost. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Since nations are [REDACTED] a species of loose confederation. [REDACTED] war will [REDACTED] be replaced by [REDACTED] some individual

[REDACTED] war being nothing more [REDACTED]

INTERVIEW

What was the catalyst for writing this erasure poem?

My irrepressible interest in the body politic.

Where did you find your source text, and why did you choose it?

On archive.org, a website of documents which are no longer restricted by copyright. The keyword search I chose was “desire.”

What was the hardest part about writing this erasure? What was the easiest?

The hardest part, given the current raging—and enraging—state of affairs, was to try to address more than the present moment. Other than that, the whole process was enjoyable. I’m a fan of writing, and I love trying my hand at erasure.

If you had to narrow it down, what is your favorite line or phrase from the poem?

The “refrain,” and “There is no doubt the desire to be ruled holds sway, cosmopolitan and socialistic in its attitude.” The mix of registers here (and elsewhere) form a type of impenetrable “State Speak”, while still implicating each one of us as individuals within this—or that—corporate... Eh, I mean, *state*.

How is writing erasure and blackout poetry different from writing in more traditional poetic forms?

For me, a way of thinking about this is that traditional forms are comparable to painting; erasures, to sculpture.

What advice would you give to those who want to write erasure poems themselves?

Make several copies of original document, make several attempts at sculpting an erasure of interest and weight. As Beckett said, “Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”

CHAPTER XI

I am
ring at the gate She looked after
dark
the candle in her hand look over her shoulder.
square basement of the House We traversed the whole

I found myself

detached

reappeared
the opposite
that look as if
the extinct
clock
had

stopped

room,

some

room

a gloomy

to go and stand

till

the

mind,

opened the ground,

a rank ruin of cabbage,

a pudding

colour,

burnt

homely

snow

shadow of

wind

melted from the cold

I could see

the shining

fire in

all my joints

the consciousness

under

close inspection.

bugs

made

of

somebody's

pleasure

rigidly repress a yawn

dead, so very blank was the

this
body
would be much more commendable to be somebody else's
enemy, far more natural.

to love

"The idea!"

rather

in

the importance of
trimmings to mourning the deepest

The idea!"

firm. I was

was disgraced. I cried

in violent

consolation to know
rain and

The ring of a distant bell, the echoing
call along the
conversation

The i-de-a!

She stood looking at me, and, I stood looking at her.
"Am I pretty?"
"Yes; I think you are very pretty."

me now? monster, what do you think of

I'll never cry for you again
a declaration
afterwards. of the pain she cost me

INTERVIEW

What was the catalyst for writing this erasure poem?

I essentially wanted to dissect the language of a piece of literature that, even though I first read years ago, has still stuck with me. Charles Dickens is no stranger to extensive word use and play, which, I suppose, is vital when one is getting paid by the word. Most people roll their eyes when I tell them that *Great Expectations* is my favorite book, as it surely brings nightmares of their high school English classes. However, despite the obvious reasons for Dickens' deployment of verbose language, and the equally verbose reaction from a generation of public school students, I know that much of my writing, and much of my love for words, was bred from this novel. I wanted to pay a certain homage to where the inspiration for my language came from through this reorganization of Dickens' language.

If you had to narrow it down, what is your favorite line or phrase from the poem?

"burnt homely snow melted from the cold shadow of the wind"

How is writing erasure and blackout poetry different from writing in more traditional poetic forms?

It's almost like having a fill-in-the-blank vs. an open-ended question on a test. With a fill-in-the-blank question, or, perhaps, erasure/blackout poetry, you are presented with a context and then required to answer based on said context. In comparison, an open-ended question, or more traditional forms of poetry, leave the test-taker with an infinite amount of ways to answer, thus requiring a different skill set to complete. They both ultimately test your knowledge of the subject matter (your ability to write poetry). Blackout/erasure and any form of poetry just bring to light a different way of getting to that final product. In some respects, one is easier than the other, but it is not a question of passing the test as much as it is the process that got you to your answers in the first place.

T h e B l e e d i n g H o u r s (O r i g i n a l)

The house is quiet, I am left alone
The fibrils of our love come creeping back to me
On vinyl, underlaid by hiss and moan.
I see myself running forward in time
But backwards in my dreams, my ankles tied
Thalassic indigo thick as molasses
I un-drown and meet myself, laid waste at your side.
But you, so unnerved by those clamorous vineyards,
Hardly I see you smell my rajanigandha hair
(That I) Let cascade unto your worried face,
I saved you from gales, I clung to your arms
In a violent whirlpool we held each other firm
Not the strongest gush could break our bonds,
Not the strongest wave could wash away our hopes.
Through the venetian blinds, behold my dear,
The sunshine to break you away from your fears,
But leave me wrapped in mine, though sun shines still
On boulevard and river bank, where you were not
Though I held your empty frame like a gust of wind.
I count the flowers as they bloom in spring
But never do they bring you round to me again.
I don't even want to touch you.
I don't want to gaze in your eyes.
But I want to examine you, surreptitiously,
till you are nothing but a man
And break the bonds of glamour that held us there
In the whirlpool, where I hoped forlornly.
That you were there as my shadow emerging
As rays of suns forgot to singe your outline.
Through your darkest days I knew I was the sole sunshine
I dazzled you too much, I dread and blinded you away
And like an afraid child you huddled to a remote place
I couldn't bring you back from ever again.
I cried, all days and nights
I prayed for you though, my dear, I sang you lullabies,
But woke you up from your old nightmares,
And taught you how to dream again...
I fed you dreams from my own heart
A gently gulping artery
A baby bird, my love, a nidifice
The sun struck open all our cerulean shells
And beat upon our eyelids,
Pink pearl warmth
We woke and saw the daylight
Rub us raw.
But then you fluttered to the azure sea,

Leaving behind our dream-circled nest and me.
Before I caressed your wings, you bade me goodbye
And away and away you went
Like a kite flying boldly overhead
And wooing its holder to leave the ground...

o u r s (E r a s u r e)

one

time

your

arms

could

break

boulevard

o f l

touch .
your eyes

break the
whirlpool

of

my love
our

dream

INTERVIEW

What was the catalyst for writing this erasure poem?

I was intrigued by the possibility of different ways I could project my text-to-self connection through the erasing process. I could erase a few lines and leave the next few, but then I could have also done the other way around, and that shows how the maximum impact of the lines is so dependent on the spur of the moment. I loved this unpredictability of the erasing process.

What was the hardest part about writing this erasure? What was the easiest?

Struggling to steer the erasure poem to one direction when the primary text offers very little to do so has been challenging. I needed to be frugal and very aware of what I let go and what I keep on. The easiest part would be looking at a primary text and thinking about millions of ways the erasure could take its shape. The hardest part was sticking to one.

h i s p o s t

redacted from Walt Whitman's "This Compost"

1

I thought I was safe

to meet my lover

O how can it be

every

generation

deceiv'd

press
it
foul

2

Behold

The bean bursts noiselessly through the mould

e rection of the wheat out
of graves

he-birds

break through

strata of sour

That it is safe to allow it to lick

with its tongues,

That all is clean forever and forever,

tastes so good,
juicy,

when I recline
every spear rises out of what was
once a catching disease.

such sweet things
harmless and stainless

exquisite winds

accept
at last.

INTERVIEW

What was the catalyst for writing this erasure poem?

I was intrigued by the idea of taking someone else's text and using erasure to collaborate in giving it a second life.

Where did you find your source text, and why did you choose it?

I revisit Whitman's work often and this is the bicentennial year of his birth, so I got to wondering how he would be responding to our world today.

What was the hardest part about writing this erasure? What was the easiest?

My original version is erased to resemble the gay pride flag, each line wearing a different color in that rainbow. It was difficult for me, not being artistically adept, to make it look aesthetic.

The easiest and most delightful part was finding a path to connect his words. It was invigorating to let go and imagine his spirit leading me through his poem that focuses on diseased and sickly materials and the parasitic tendencies of humanity to celebrate human dignity and hope.

If you had to narrow it down, what is your favorite line or phrase from the poem?

"exquisite winds accept at last"

These last words resonated for me a sense of how what is right could be eternal.

How is writing erasure and blackout poetry different from writing in more traditional poetic forms?

It's like riding shotgun with an original text or like jamming with a fellow musician that you may love or loathe.

What advice would you give to those who want to write erasure poems themselves?

Be brave and listen carefully.

FORCE OF ATTRACTION AND INERTIA

of our night-wandering Sun has just been explained by Professor Hansen, of Göttingen, as a curious result of the attraction of Venus.

Take a single instance of the perturbations of Jupiter and Saturn, which can be rendered evident. The times of orbital revolution of Saturn and Jupiter are nearly as five to two.

Suppose the orbits of the planets to be as in Fig. 3, both ellipses, but not necessarily equally distant in all parts. The planets are as near as possible at 1, 1'. Draw inward each other by mutual attraction, Jupiter's orbit bends outward, and Saturn's becomes more nearly straight, as shown by the dotted lines.

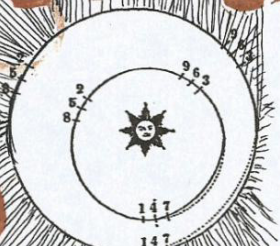


Fig. 3.—Changes of orbit by mutual attraction

A partial correction of this difficulty immediately follows. As Jupiter moves on ahead of Saturn it is held back, retarded in its orbit by that body, and Saturn is hastened in its orbit by the attraction of Jupiter.

Now greater speed means a straighter orbit. A rifle-ball flies nearer in a straight line than a thrown stone. A greater velocity given to a whirled ball pulls the elastic cord far enough to give the ball a larger orbit. Hence, being hastened, Saturn strengthens and nears its proper orbit, and retarded Jupiter approaches its true orbit.

But if they were always to meet at this point, as they would if Jupiter made two revolutions to Saturn's one, it would be disastrous. In reality, when Saturn has gone around two-thirds of its orbit to 2, Jupiter will have gone once and two-thirds around and overtaken

INTERVIEW

What was the catalyst for writing this erasure poem?

I work with late-nineteenth century science and nature texts, both for traditional poetry inspiration and for found poetry. For me, nearly all erasure work is creative play, a challenge to discover a poem lurking within sometimes dry, sometimes arcane, text. The farther the poem is from the original text and its intent, the more it pleases me.

Where did you find your source text, and why did you choose it?

I originally found *Recreations in Astronomy* on the *Forgotten Books* website and ordered a copy of the actual book through Bookfinder. Even if I don't erase in the original book (something I find very difficult to do) I like to have a copy of it. For this poem, I worked from a print from the pdf.

I chose this particular page because it had an image on it and I wanted to incorporate that.

What was the hardest part about writing this erasure? What was the easiest?

The hardest part was the stamping of the circles. My goal was to experiment more with the visual aspects of erasure, to expand on my usual black ink cross-hatching and line work that you see underneath. It was challenging to stamp over it, knowing there was little way to repair if I didn't like the balance of images, or stamped over something important. The easiest was locating the poem. That is usually the way for me.

If you had to narrow it down, what is your favorite line or phrase from the poem?

I love that last line, because it is almost a stand-alone poem, because even though it ends the poem, something remains lively, in motion. There is no period. It opens further in wordless way, and there are possibilities of meaning that delight me.

How is writing erasure and blackout poetry different from writing in more traditional poetic forms?

For me, it is a break from the purely cerebral effort of writing. My hands and eyes are engaged in a different way; there is color and texture and form to play with. At the end, you stand up with a bit of visual art to display. It is a bit of an antidote to spending long hours typing, then holding some paper with black marks on it, hoping someone will read it.

What advice would you give to those who want to write erasure poems themselves?

Experiment! Learn what gives the most pleasure and satisfaction in the creating of erasures. Consider the relationship you want to have with the original text.



INTERVIEW

What was the catalyst for writing this erasure poem?

The catalyst for this erasure poem was reverential in nature, attempting to transform a bleak existence into something different. To me, it was symbolic of the Phoenix rising out of ashes. The metamorphosis and turning inside out of the poem symbolizes not utopia, but room for peace within dissonance. It resists reductionism and speaks of the dimensions of complexity.

Where did you find your source text, and why did you choose it?

The source text is my own. I would never submit this source text for publication because it creates too much visibility and vulnerability for me. I chose it because for a few moments I could direct empathy towards the text instead of consistently wishing for its entire removal from my life.

What was the hardest part about writing this erasure? What was the easiest?

The hardest part was reinventing something I wished eradicated into something reverential, and then synthesizing visual elements to reflect such evolution. The easiest part—what's easy?

If you had to narrow it down, what is your favorite line or phrase from the poem?

I think my favorite phrase is: "a hope...instead of this." The phrase leaves space for possibility, even in contexts that are fragmented, disillusioning, and painful. It demonstrates the ability of the unconscious to reveal itself as phenomenological.

How is writing erasure and blackout poetry different from writing in more traditional poetic forms?

Writing erasure and blackout poetry is different because it presents the maker with plural methodologies for creation instead of creating in the purely textual realm. It allows the writer more space for reinvention of self and otherness. It's an amazing process.

What advice would you give to those who want to write erasure poems themselves?

Don't be afraid to experiment and try different approaches. Leave behind some of those preconceived ideas about what is text and what is visual. Let the erasure/blackout recreate you as you work in the medium.