

MEDICINES OF LANGUAGE:  
ECOSOMATIC POETICS AND EMBODIED PRACTICE

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## A b s t r a c t

The aim of this thesis, written to satisfy the degree requirements for a PhD by publication, is to present the theoretical framework, methodologies, findings and impact of my 25 years of research (books, essays, articles, performances and poems published in literary magazines) in order to demonstrate its originality and contribution to the knowledge and practice of Ecosomatic poetics. Through creative and scholarly outputs, my research over the past 25 years has been to demonstrate how language is an embodied field of somatic awareness. Drawing on somatic phenomenology, psychosomatic psychology, and conceptual poetics, this thesis presents the key findings of the research including insights into relationships between poetic language and the innate healing capacities of the bodymind system as it relates to corresponding ecologies. Although it is my hope that this thesis reveals ways that Ecosomatic poetics might contribute to larger methods and philosophies surrounding mental health and somatic healing modalities, I am not attempting to prove or quantify any medical claim or posit any miracle cure in this document. As poet Tyrone Williams writes in his generous impact statement, “Kristin’s writings are the at the forefront of current social, cultural and political movements driven by an understanding that the very notion of the human ‘body,’ and perhaps the human itself, must be rethought, reconceptualized, beyond and above Cartesian dualisms.” Indeed, this thesis and corresponding bibliography posits a poetics of reading and writing in which language itself is conceptualized as medicine, embodiment, and energy.

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I, Kristin Prevallet, confirm that the material here presented for examination is my own work. I confirm that this thesis is not being submitted for any other academic award and that any copyrighted material has been cited according to the legal guidelines provided to me by the Library, Technology and Information Services division of the University of Gloucestershire. The views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and not of the University.

Kristin Prevallet

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## Introduction

This is a PhD by publication consisting of a thesis (mandated to be a maximum of 25,000 words) and a bibliography presented both chronologically and by genre. The thesis explains the originality, contribution and significance of my published work in the area of Ecosomatic poetics. The bibliography documents the over 150 poems, articles, essays and reviews in a variety of journals, anthologies, books, and literary magazines. In addition, although I am an artist who is committed to the written word, I have always been aware that my work is not limited to the page. I continually seek out ways to expand the energy and intent of the poetic work into performances, public actions, pedagogies, performances, and acts of art.

This thesis tells the story of my Ecosomatic practice through my personal story, readings of writers who have influenced my theory and method, and most importantly, a contextual analysis of how my own published works inform and expand the field. Although I am primarily a poet, over time I came into an awareness that poetic language embodies cycles of change, both personal and social. Most recently, I have expanded my work even further to become a practitioner of healing (language) arts. I hope that this thesis will provide a contextual foundation for my work—from the very beginning of my life, to the present moment—revealing how my contribution to this field is unique, even as the field of Ecosomatic arts is itself ripe with an abundance of cross-pollinating influences.

The poetics that shape this thesis are from a lineage of philosophical and artistic influences that move fluidly between literary movements that bridge Modernism and Post-Structuralism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>, with Eco-poetics and Ecosomatic poetics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The theoretical and artistic shift that happened between these two centuries is one that I, through my work, have been particularly attuned to; therefore, this thesis tells the

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<sup>1</sup> These 20<sup>th</sup> century movements include Symbolism, Surrealism, Post-structuralism, Deconstructionism, the Beat Generation, the New American Poetry, l=a=n=g=u=a=g=e poetry, and diasporic literary movements, most specifically, Négritude and Post-colonialism.

story of my deep engagement with the communities, thought experiments, publishing activities, and conversations that have occurred on the fault-line between the avant-garde of the 20th century (centered around post-structuralism and deconstructionism), and the avant-garde of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (which brings the immersive, intuitive, subtle intelligence of the body into the fabric of literary and artistic forms). Taken as a whole, my published works seem to be a rejection of the alienating and at times elitist assertions put forward by literary criticism and literary works grounded in postmodernism—assertions that, from the late 1980s to the early 2000s, announced the death of the author as an antidote to identity politics, and a hailing of irony signifying nothing. To my mind, this all pointed towards a sinister cultural attitude that is profoundly anti-human and pro-algorithm: machines will do the writing. In other words, in the efforts to dismantle systems through the displacement of the signifier, the author (the body) is being sidelined, as if it were necessary to apologize for being a living, breathing, suffering person with a mind and organs that are always moving with and among language. I'm sure I would have achieved a PhD long before now had I bought into postmodern theory and practice, even in the slightest! But I remain defiantly committed to its unraveling and passionately work towards centering language back into the body, where, after all, writing surfaces.

From my own vantage point, the problems with North American poetry and poetics at this moment are the separation of poetic practice from embodied practices. This is a problem because it means that body-centered, somatic practices struggle with legitimacy within the academic milieu. If the body does come into critical and scholarly papers, it is through identity with a capital "I." Stories of deeply experienced political and social traumas are inserted into avant-garde forms, which is sometimes interesting, but rarely points towards anything other than a kind of vague assertion of identity as itself being both the disease and the cure. Although the parameters of this thesis do not allow me to fully articulate the theoretical and historical underpinnings of the shift in contemporary poetics from postmodernism to somatic poetics, I do hope that the thesis will reveal my particular focus: the import and relevance of language as it pertains to the role of poetry in shaping human consciousness and bodymind healing....a consciousness that, to my mind, is central to the larger shift away from the technologizing of the human experience and towards a

wider awareness of the importance of unseating the anthropomorphic sovereignty that is driving the human—and most other living things— to ruin.

#### SCHEMA

The thesis is organized into three distinct sections. The first section, “Ecosomatic Rising: Early Reflections” covers some of the early personal and academic experiences that laid the foundation for my work in building a practice of Ecosomatic poetics. This section is important because my contribution to the field cannot be understood as separate from my biography; this section therefore goes into personal details as a means of drawing forth the trajectory that led me towards the practice of this embodied poetics.

In the section, “Theory and Methodology,” I explain what I mean by Ecosomatic poetics; from there, I get into why the theory and practice of Ecosomatic poetics is important to the field of both contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century poetry, and the healing modalities that it often excludes. In this section, I am not focusing on my own work as much as I am analyzing the literature and theory that has allowed my work to find fruition. Because the seeds of my practice were planted into the complex ecosystem of my history, it became clear to me that to become a writer meant learning as much as I could about the literary movements, authors, and works of art that attempted to integrate phenomenological theory into avant-garde forms. This section is foundational so that in subsequent sections, I am able to demonstrate how my published works are both a continuation of the previously articulated understanding, and a departure into my own unique contribution.

After establishing the theory and method, the next section presents the nexus of the thesis. I call this section “Strata” because it reveals nine key layers which have, over time, built my Ecosomatic practice through my scholarship, activism, collaboration, and published work. This section reveals how my work is deeply enmeshed with the “theories and methodologies” outlined in the previous section. The explanation of all this is what I am referring to as Strata: intersecting layers of thought, personal story, literary research, writing and performance outputs that form my published research. In this section, I reveal the layers that most inform my publishing and research praxis as they relate to the aforementioned theory and methodology. Although presented within discrete sections, they

are meant to be read as overlapping and intersecting with one another, rather than in any chronological order, or isolated within a category.

Finally, the complete list of my publications (organized both chronologically and by genre) adds yet another layer to the thesis by documenting my published output; my website [[www.trancepoetics.com](http://www.trancepoetics.com)] includes selected links and recent work.

#### NOTE ON THE COMPOSITION

The composition of this thesis was formed through a complex methodology which, aside from gathering and organizing all of my published output (printed and digital), involved the creation of an archive. In other words, I used the organizing logic of the thesis (chronological) and sorted my papers into plastic bins that conform to the same dimensions of time. This thesis is therefore accompanied by 12 plastic bins that align with the table of contents. Once this archive was assembled, I was then able to draw out themes that appear at different times throughout my life and sort these themes into a strata. The organizing principle of the strata enabled me to map the practical methodologies that I encountered at different times in my research with established theories. Through this process I discovered that in fact, I had been using these methodologies all along; in fact, the poetry I had been composing had been revealing the very linguistic devices I am now using to convey my theory and practice of Ecosomatic poetics.

In this thesis, I attempt to weave together my personal story and intellectual/artistic journey through my publication output of poetry, performance, and essay. I also reveal both my practice and my process of creating works of poetry in the eco-poetic and Ecosomatic lineages. I attempt to show how my work as a poet is both shaped by, and a reflection of, my lived experience as a human body moving through the world. In short, I am integrating arts-based research with my autobiography in order to create an heuristic and phenomenological analysis of my personal and professional life as a poet in the world. Central to this methodology is an assertion that the poem itself contains knowledge, lineage, information, and a philosophical theory of language that brings the body—both of the poet herself, and the audience who is reading/receiving the poem— into a radical



relationship with the world. This unfolding of poiesis is itself the method that serves and reveals the work of art as being in relation to the bodies of all beings who come into contact with it. In short, this thesis reveals my life-long work and dedication to poetry and other medicines of language.

## I. Ecosomatic Rising: Early Reflections

As a child, I had a conflicted relationship to language. On the one hand, it was my refuge. I started keeping a diary when I was six years old; as an only child, it was my one reliable companion. On the other hand, I quickly learned that speaking my mind or asserting my particular individuality would result in being sharply reprimanded, or worse, slapped hard across the face.

I came into the world an unwanted child, born to a mother whose own individuality had been sharply curtailed by her own strict father. She was a lesbian and a rebel; an athlete and an outdoorswoman. Yet, she was forced to marry a nice Catholic boy and “settle down.” The end result of this attempt to cage a free spirit was not conducive to bringing a child into the world. My mother began drinking heavily—gin was her poison. My mother, suffering herself from her own childhood abuse, now an alcoholic, not only physically abused me as a baby but also abused my father, who divorced her when I was only one year old. That he left me with her is another story; what is relevant to this thesis is how I discovered and used language as a means of both artistic expression and survival. Language got me out of my childhood environment; it connected me to a community of other artists and writers who were working through their own Ecosomatic expressions.

It is relevant to my intellectual journey of Ecosomatic poetics that I begin with the story that only my body is able to tell. Until I was in my 20s, I refused not only to be touched but I also was deeply withdrawn and often refused to speak; in particular, my mother’s touch sent me into fits of panic and anger, causing me to retreat to dark places (under the bed, in the closet), or to the top of a very tall oak tree that was growing in the front yard of the house. There, I wrote in my diary. And although as a child I wrote of non-consequential things (boys who annoyed me, the particulars of the day), from a very early age writing was the remedy through which my body could calm down; imagination and fantasy were screens of protection—when I was writing, I could not be harmed.

My mother jokingly called me “tactilely retarded” (strangely, this was a term of affection); these days I might have been diagnosed with any number of spectrum disorders.

Although my understanding of mental health is not prescriptive, I do appreciate scholarly research in illuminating biochemical mechanisms and how the complex bodymind system calibrates in response to early childhood trauma. For example, in 1973, Anna Jean Ayres, an occupational therapist and educational psychologist, coined the term “sensory processing disorder” to describe how a child’s “bad” behavior is actually an indication of the brain’s attempt to organize sensory information (Ayres, 1973). Researchers now understand so much more about the developmental effects of a mother’s stress and substance abuse on the formation of her child’s brain and other organs. Recent studies show that prenatal stress, not to mention the effects of alcohol and drug use, have long lasting effects on a person’s ability to regulate their behavior: key symptoms include patterns of withdrawal and “a desire to escape the situation when certain types of tactile stimuli are experienced” (Ayres, qtd. Schneider, p. 100). Inevitably, the complexity of preverbal trauma results in a wobbly foundation that distorts a person’s ability to connect in relation to other people and the environment. It is clear from many decades of research that with early childhood trauma comes a perpetual collapse of the central functions humans use for self-expression: language and the body (MacKinnon, 2021). Through personal, scholarly, experimental, and performative expressions, I have come to understand that language is inexorably intertwined with the bodymind system. A body is an integrated ecosystem operating into and among a complex web of interconnected parts; in this way, the human is an ecosystem entangled with language as it unfolds unto *poiesis*: the opening of my world is the hinge of an inner syntax which rises and falls with thought, circulation, movement, action, and utterances.

Personal history is the one way to describe the embodiment of this theory. For myself, I witnessed a radical transformation of my mother, who did eventually turn her life around. When I was seven years old, she found religion through a radical community of nuns who wholeheartedly accepted her, complexity and all. Suddenly—and I do believe this is the power of language, in her case, the Bible— I was surrounded by loving, wise women and my mother found words that she could live by (2019b). Unfortunately, her epiphany was short-lived; when I was 15, she contracted a vicious breast cancer and when I turned 18, she tragically died—she was only 46 years old. I was never able to process my earliest childhood through coming into some alternate, more positive relationship with her.

Inevitably, during this time, home was chaotic and lonely; I effectively failed out of high school. I fled to Paris for no other reason than that my last name was French. There, I lived for two years, exploring an unstructured reality of traveling, seeking out my ancestors, and auditing literature courses at the Sorbonne and the American University. The Sorbonne had a foreign language school, and I enrolled just to walk through the courtyard and into the great mahogany halls, painted with classical murals. I took classes for a semester with the American University and found myself amongst the children of wealthy diplomats who had no real interest in their studies. I, driven with a passionate hunger, was an eager participant, reading every page of the long novels I was assigned—Beckett, Kafka, Woolf, Baldwin, Proust— and lingering after class to talk with my teachers. Although I didn't get very good marks on my papers and I failed my French classes, I settled into a newfound confidence. I earned extra money by singing Rod Stewart songs in the Metro with a band of Chinese boys who needed a blond American singer to front their band. I camped out in the plaza of Beaubourg, seeking out the bohemians and the literary types who were studying there—I followed them around, meeting in cafes and talking with great passion about Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. We stayed up late and woke up even later to smoke Marlborough Reds and drink espresso. I barely understood what these people were saying but the fluency of their ideas was intoxicating. I wanted to learn how to talk the way that they did; listening to their language set me on the path that is charted through the strata of this thesis. I elaborate on the influence of these early years in Paris in the “Palimpsest and Gramayre” section.

After two years, I returned to my home state to complete my BA in English at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Here, I was thrust into a vibrant literary community that was centered around the experimental filmmaker, Stan Brakhage. Just down the hill was Naropa University's Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, which revolved around the poets Allen Ginsberg and Anne Waldman. Here, I was thrust into the middle of a conversation that would steer me into a lifetime of deep exploration into the roots of language, spirituality, performance, poetry and teaching—many of my published works and performances were generated through my affiliation with Naropa. I was an open vessel to these lineages; I found in poetry wise elders, guides, and most importantly, contemporaries with whom I could begin to speak. Anne Waldman, who would become my mentor, spoke

to her students about the importance of what poet Charles Olson called, in a letter to Ed Dorn, “The Saturation Job”: this means the commitment to learning one thing with great gusto, really diving into every facet of it, and from there, knowing that you can learn anything. The result of this practice, according to Olson, is that your lifetime opens up “assiduously” (Olson, 1955). He writes,

Best thing to do is to *dig one thing or place or man* until you yourself know more abt that than is possible to any other man (sic). It doesn't matter whether it's Barbed Wire or Pemmican or Paterson or Iowa. But exhaust it. *Saturate* it. Beat it.

And then U KNOW everything else very fast: one saturation job (it might take 14 years). And you're in, forever.

I chose Surrealism to become my “saturation job.” In this artistic and literary movement I found a treasure trove of writers and artists who seemed to float through and among language, dream, and imagery with playfulness, exposing sexual taboos, and releasing unabashed, unembarrassed somatic expressions. The artists and writers—particularly the women—became my obsession. Through them, I learned how to use sentences as hinges, bringing together impossible worlds by breaking syntax and disobeying rules of grammar. The trance-experiments of the Surrealists found a wide variety of altered waking and near-somnambulistic states of mind in order to generate the artwork or poem.

After receiving my B.A. in English, I followed my boyfriend, the poet Alan Gilbert, to the University of Buffalo, where he had been accepted into the PhD program. My earnest research into linguistics, poetics, and the avant-garde began in earnest during the five years that I was in Buffalo. But at the time, I was not enrolled in the university; I was an interloper, living between the cracks of different artistic communities and real life constraints. Aside from auditing courses in the Poetics program, I was fulfilling requirement for a Masters in Media Study, making films and staging acts of public performance. I was also dancing with a choreographer named Steve Porter who was ingeniously blending African dance with Martha Graham's pieces. Meanwhile, I was temping with a shady “mortgage store” and volunteering with the Literacy Volunteers. I was a shapeshifter, skirting around various artistic communities and menial jobs.

Eventually, I got a job working full time in the university's Poetry/Rare Books Collection, and my research pivoted once again. Under the tutelage of the curator Robert Bertholf, I began cataloguing the papers of the Scottish poet and collage artist, Helen Adam. Like Ernst, Adam's collages were assembled from fashion and science fiction magazines; they conveyed women in the throes of transformation—from the human to the animal; from the domestic to the wild. And it was through Adam that I felt the ballad rhythm, the incantation of rhythmic prosody, that shook my energetic core. After cataloguing her archive, I spent another five years researching her life and influences. With grants from the Mellon Foundation, I traveled from Edinburgh to London to New York to San Francisco. I followed in her footsteps; I interviewed anyone who remembered her. I wrote a thesis that summed up my research and placed Helen Adam within the canon of 20th Century American poetry. I published three peer-reviewed papers on her work (Prevallet, 1997b, 1999a, 2002a). Eventually, I would assemble all of this writing into a 565 page volume of her collected ballads, poems, collages, and essays. The volume, *A Helen Adam Reader*, was eventually published by the National Poetry Foundation and also includes a CD with her film and collages (Prevallet, 2007a). This volume, along with the cataloguing of the archive, the scholarly research, and the three peer-reviewed essays that were published in academic journals and anthologies, elevated my status from innovative poetic interloper to independent scholar.

I moved with Alan from Buffalo to a beautiful loft overlooking the East River in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. I began teaching with Poets and Writer's Collaborative, a program that sends poets into New York City Public School English classes for residencies. I was living the life of a poet: juggling day jobs while trying to carve out time to write, and then in the evenings, going to readings, art exhibits and concerts.

I had just begun to crawl out of the deep, chaotic, mental and emotional mine field of my childhood when my father—a man whose felt protection never manifested and who I knew only by his taking me to his new family home every-other-weekend—suddenly killed himself. Naturally, the blow of this was deeply destabilizing and it would take the next ten years to fully process the loss. As I had always done, writing and researching became my refuge. I became deeply preoccupied with trying to understand the culture of toxic

masculinity and its obsession with self-inflicted violence. I composed an essay called “Blood on the Illusion” that investigates Pro Wrestling, the abject artist Paul McCarthy, and the perpetuation of violence against one’s self that is a symptom of living under the illusion of capitalism (Prevallet, 2012a). I also composed the book *I, Afterlife: Essay in Mourning Time* (Prevallet, 2007b). These pieces marked a shift in my own work and also contributed to the larger field of poetics: here, the confessional honesty of my personal story is presented through the container of avant-garde forms. In other words, I tell the story of my father with full emotional transparency within a fragmented narrative structure.

## HEALING

There is a stubbornness in me, an unrelenting drive towards poetry; simultaneously, I have never been content with the boundaries of the printed page. Although pedagogy, translation, and teaching remain central to my life, for a ten year period I found I could not engage with poetry. I turned away from the muse and found my way to the practice of hypnosis. In this therapeutic modality I found a relationship to language that opened up an entirely new skillset. My love of sentences and my embodied understanding of forms was transformed as I found myself to be a very effective weaver of words, effortlessly leading people into trance. I became certified in Reiki and Hypnotherapy—certifications which ensured my outlier status on the margins of both poetry and therapy. But I was in it, determined to find the connection. I integrated all of the different linguistic models I was weaving into a book, a series of courses, and a therapeutic practice I called *Trance Poetics* (Prevallet, 2012c). It is in this unique synthesis of poetics and practice where my contribution to 21<sup>st</sup> century poetics is situated. As an independent healing artist and scholar, I am helping to formulate a new area of poetic research: the integration of somatic healing with poetic language.

Between 2010 and 2022, as a practitioner of healing arts, I have been able to work with a wide cross-section of people, all of whom were looking for techniques for personal transformation. During this time, I published two books: *Trance Poetics: Your Writing Mind* (2012) and *Visualize Comfort: Healing and the Unconscious Mind* (2014a). These books bring

together the field of poetics with methods drawn from my research into hypnotherapy, reiki, and the bodymind connection. Although written primarily for my clients and therefore self-published, these two books do mark a significant turning in my output. In addition, I was able to integrate this work into numerous poems and essays published in literary magazines, professional association journals, and anthologies (Prevallet 2015a, 2016a, 2016b, 2019a, 2021a). This is the research that brings me to this thesis; it is the articulation of how my published work synthesizes disciplines, theories, and practices into the field of inquiry now called Ecosomatic poetics.

## II. Theory and Methodology

There are subtle but measurable relationships between thinking and the body: in fact, there is an inseparable synchrony that integrates language and the flow of blood through the electromagnetic field of the heart. Just thinking about a fish swimming slowly in deep water can lower a heart rate and effectively redirect rage: this is a biochemical truth that has been the focus of many books and studies. Obviously, thinking affects the nervous system and in so doing, language is the vehicle. To believe this pre-proposition would point the way towards an understanding of how the language of poetry—a complex arrangement of words that gestures towards a somatic exchange between bodies—can be a transmissible, healing phenomena.

To begin is to enter the rivulet of swirling principles that, in my practice, underlie how I am conceptualizing a “somatic poetics”:

- 1) thinking is embodied (Merleau-Ponty 1964; Kristeva 1984);
- 2) the body is an ecology intricately enmeshed with language (Deleuze, 1987; Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Cuppers, 2022; Stecopoulos, 2006)
- 3) In so being, language effects subtle biochemical changes in the body (Quasha, 2019);
- 4) the awareness of this relationship between language and physiology opens the human towards a wider and more expansive relationship with all of the systems—linguistic, social, ecological, planetary, as well as those in which animals, plants, stars, and other humans are



intricately entwined in an ever-evolving composition (Stibbe, 2015; Merleau-Ponty 1964; Quasha 2019; Cuppers 2022; Glissant 1997; Williams, 2016) .

To unfold the wide strata of my Ecosomatic practice and understanding, I turn towards the seminal theory posited by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in 1964. In attempting to understand how human bodies orient and understand ourselves in relationship to the world and to each other, Merleau-Ponty recognizes a phenomenal field which is necessarily invisible, beyond the purview of what previous philosophers (namely those in the Cartesian tradition) had deemed to be rational intelligence as separate from emotional, biochemical, sense-being (1969, p. 212)<sup>2</sup>. Merleau-Ponty recoils from this separation, declaring: “I am my body, at least wholly to the extent that I possess experience (212).” Language is key to how bodies experience life, and experience is expression; to live, bodies “sing the world” and through singing, bodies find “the emotional essence” (200). It is through language that bodies reach out to understand other people, and it is through language that bodies perceive objects and things. This field is akin to the electromagnetic field that surrounds our bodies as it moves among us, and as we move into and around it. The body is not moving *in* space, it *is* space. In this way, the body is itself a cohesive but evolving system that moves towards, against, through, and among the always changing world. (198).

Of course, speech and language communicate ideas and directions, plant suggestions and affirm or deny another body’s positionality in a cultural order. This cultural order is dependent on categories and classifications: designations of “inside” vs. “outside” and being able to see disparate objects as all fitting into classifications. The test of a person’s ability to use speech to define experience within categories designates some bodies as “normal” and others as “neuro-divergent.” And yet, Merleau-Ponty’s observation is that even those with anarthria (the loss of power to articulate speech) have not lost language; what is lost is the

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<sup>2</sup> “We have become accustomed, through the influence of the Cartesian tradition, to jettison the subject: the reflective attitude simultaneously purifies the common notions of body and soul by defining the body as the sum of its parts with no interior, and the soul as a being wholly present to itself without distance. These definitions make matters perfectly clear both within and outside of ourselves: we have the transparency of an object with no secret recesses, the transparency of a subject which is nothing but what it thinks it is. The object is an object through and through, and consciousness a consciousness through and through. There are two senses, and two only, of the word ‘exist’: one exists as a thing or else one exists as a consciousness. The experience of our own body, on the other hand, reveals to us an ambiguous mode of existing” (“Body As Expression and Speech” in *Phenomenology of Perception* p. 212).

ability to designate categories (187-188). Able-bodied beings assume that not being able to articulate one's experience in coherent sentences is a deficit, an abnormality. But to Merleau-Ponty, "the bond between the flesh and the idea, between the visible and the interior armature which is manifests and which it conceals" is itself extremely difficult to articulate, even for philosophers; it is only painting and literature that seem able to even get close to revealing this "bond." ("Visible and the Invisible," p. 149).

Herein lies the field of language in which as I an artist have found solace, syntax, and play. The recognition that when all bodies, whether abled or neuro-divergent, experience language as aligned with sense-self, healing unfolds. (Here, I think about healing as a slow suturing of those wounds caused by the cultural perpetuation of insisting on the mind and the body as separate entities.) Following Merleau-Ponty, I drop deeply into a sensitivity towards grammatical constructs such as *prepositions* which are the gatekeepers of binary categories (inside vs. outside; within vs without; around vs. through, etc.). To experience language as consciousness, I find in poetry an articulation *beyond* prepositions. The language of bodysenseself carries my ultimate contribution to the field of Ecosomatic poetics: the integration of practices of therapy and poetics to open the field of bodymind healing.

Merleau-Ponty's radiating beacon of an embodied theory opens the question of language: what does language have to do with the body? Isn't language evidence of a thinking *mind* which operates independently of *body*? The answer is no so fast: how about the possibility that *bodies are themselves an expression of language*. Thoughts and speech are indecipherable from each other; thinking is itself the world into which thoughts are projected and the body pulls itself towards objects in the world: in this way, language plays a role in how things appear to us in the world. Language makes for a kind of flare so that everything that is hidden in the background of our senses recedes in order that what we are focused on is that which is coming forward. Language (thoughts, naming) calls the world into being. It is in this way that I see an object and through the act of naming it I become aware of moving towards it. This hidden background (the space that surrounds you, extending from the particles in your cup of tea to the stardust floating between celestial bodies) is always open for our attention to turn our towards—to soften our focus in to a

gaze that attracts more of it, to turn our language and our thoughts towards it—but “it” is not within our physical schema to be able to grasp the entirety of it. And when this glimpse catches us, when the periphery becomes us, it is the whole thinking body that is activated, pulling within us that awesome arc of intentionality that might be called “just being.” The body is not simply a sensory machine, passively receiving stimuli: it is with language that the body rises up towards the world. I surrendered fully into this embodied understanding, and through my body came pages and pages of essays, poems, performances, and enactments that open Merleau-Ponty’s theory into a life-practice.

In spite of Merleau-Ponty’s clarifying theories on the inseparability of bodies from the languages they embody, his philosophy stops short of recognizing any somatic practices that might integrate theory and practice, what philosopher Richard Shusterman calls “disciplines of consciousness reflection”: breath work, meditation, movement, etc. Shusterman writes, “Lacking in Merleau-Ponty’s suburb advocacy of the body’s philosophical importance is a robust sense of the real body as a site for practical disciplines of conscious reflection that aim at reconstructing somatic perception and performance to achieve more rewarding experience and action” (Shusterman 2004, p. 177). Although this certainly seems to be the case, I would emphasize the central role that Merleau-Ponty allocates to poetry and painting. It is clear that these disciplines are not simply metaphors that illustrate a concept; they are the keys that open up lines of inquiry and effectively illustrate—if not prove—the validity of his philosophy. He writes,

“As the artist makes his style radiate into the very fibers of the material he is working on, I move my body without even knowing which muscles and nerve paths should intervene, nor where I must look for the instruments of that action. I want to go over there, and here I am, without having entered into the inhuman secret of the bodily mechanism or having adjusted that mechanism to the givens of the problem...For me, everything happens in the human world of perception and gesture, but my ‘geographical’ or ‘physical’ body submits to the demands of this little drama which does not cease to arouse a thousand natural marvels in it. Just my glance towards the goal already has its own miracles.” (Qtd. Shusterman, 2004, p. 161).

For myself, a practicing poet who brings poetry into conversation with embodied practices, I believe it is important to recognize that being a practicing poet or painter is a somatic practice and is itself a profound, as Shusterman posits, “discipline of conscious reflection.” Central to my definition of Somatic Poetics is how awesome it is that the body navigates language in these marvelous ways; how language navigates the body (the somatic) among the ecology through which that body finds itself breathing. Philosophy may struggle to find the language to embody this understanding of the activity of the language-body, but through poetry it can be perceived, felt, and rendered as a daily practice.

Ecosomatic poetics is one way the language-body pulls itself into a practice of being in a body while simultaneously breaking down the systemic hierarchies that keep bodies trapped in prepositions and other conceptual and grammatical categories that effectively divide self from world, I from other. Poets are the trapeze artists of linguistics: we allow language to express texture, flexibility, malleability, and play. We defy grammar that keep categories locked into useless binaries by writing poems that defy prepositions: language is metaphoric and in English, prepositions are language’s hinges—they link the body to the space and time around which it is folded. We can also use prepositions and sentence structures to open the world even wider to see new things, even within the enclosures of grammar. In a recent article I composed for the Body Mind Centering Association’s annual journal, *Currents*, I write (2021):

A preposition locates a subject in place and time. But it is a figment of grammar, an inflection of speech. It reinforces the illusion that human experience can be categorized. And because language creates reality and is used rhetorically by those in power to classify, shape and design the lives of others, it means that some humans get be more “located” in time and space than others.

[]

It’s the subtle work of poets to think about language and all the ways that as human bodies we are contained by it. And to break the containers, unbind your language, and walk through the illusion of categories (nowhere more present than in the sentence, “I can’t wait until we get back to normal” (which has, quite literally, now shattered itself.) If you’re feeling anxious, frayed at the seams, overwhelmed, unable to focus, terrified of the future, perpetually in a state of discomfort,

there is nothing wrong with you. It's just that the enclosure you thought protected you turns out to be an illusion.

The Ecolinguist Arran Stibbe, in an essay called “Language, Discourse and Ecosomatic Awareness,” reveals how metaphoric categories, deeply embodied, effectively separate us from each other, and from our environments. He writes,

The connection between Ecosomatic awareness and language is that how we perceive ourselves, our bodies, and our environment is inevitably influenced by the discourses to which we are exposed: stories that run across society that the self is ‘separate from the body.’(Stibbe, 8)”

To experience this, Stibbe enacts a thought experiment to track the mismatch between his somatic awareness of temperature and the narratives predicted by weather forecasts: he tracks his lived body experiences and compares them with these forecasts (126). He tracks, in other words, what happens in the chasm between actual felt experience and the assumptions built into the forecast (e.g., that rain is a nuisance or hot sun is glorious). Stibbe folds Ecosomatic awareness (the language-body) into linguistics by examining specifically how capitalist culture uses language to tell stories that effectively perpetuate the illusion that each individual body is a self with a mind that is effectively superior to the living systems among which those bodies are dependent for survival. Stibbe exposes the wizard behind the curtain: the mediators who use language as a tool of oppression, creating a samsara of human experience which tricks us into repeating the stories that perpetuate hierarchies and social systems that differentiate skin colors and classes, able-bodied beings from those who are neuro and physically divergent. Stibbe writes,

Behind patterns of language are underlying messages, stories, which can influence how we see ourselves in relationship to our own bodies, the bodies of others and the physical environment. They can influence where we go, how we move, what we notice and how we respond to the world around us. The influence of these stories can be unconscious since they are so prevalent within our culture that we may see them as ‘normal’ or ‘ordinary’ without noticing how they are shaping our experience. But when we become aware of these stories and understand that there are other possible stories to live by, we can consciously seek other stories which can reshape how

we see our bodies and the world (8).

He concludes with a blueprint for co-survival with other living and emerging things:

If Ecosomatic awareness leads us to personally liberating new forms of movement and interaction with the environment that enhance our wellbeing, then we can consider ways to extend that liberation to other people and other species by challenging some of the basic stories that Western civilisations are based on (14).

Stibbe's attempt to reshape the perceptual field through which some bodies see other bodies in the world through the lens of metaphors, stories and messages perpetuated by white supremacy, caste systems, and capitalist culture, points towards a necessary shift happening in discourses of contemporary poetics and performance studies as well. This shift is central to my own poetics, and is reflected broadly in many other poet-practitioners who are my contemporaries in this emerging field of somatic poetics. The Ecolinguistic, Ecosomatic, Eco poetic turn takes umbrage with binary thinking within inside/outside, civilization/wilderness dichotomies at the root of language practices that effectively stigmatize racial categories and inflict harm on bodies that do not express as white, and bodies that exist "outside" in realms of social and economic precarity.

Intersecting with somatic poetics, which will be further elaborated in subsequent chapters, is the crucial distinction between poems "about" nature and "Ecopoetics," which poet Marcella Durand crystallizes as being paramount to:

...ecological living—it (the poem) recycles materials, functions with an intense awareness of space, seeks an equality of value between all living and unliving things, explores multiple perspectives as an attempt to subvert the dominant paradigms of mono-perception, consumption and hierarchy, and utilizes powers of concentration to increase lucidity and attain a more transparent, less anthropocentric mode of existence. How much more interesting is writing a poem that incorporates the incredibly complex discoveries about, say, global warming into the very fabric of the poem itself? (Durand, 2010, p.118).

This practice of using language to fold ecological complexity into the fabric of the poem, what Durand calls a "close concentration on systems *as systems*," is important. After

all, the body is a system that itself is involved in the complex ecosystem of which it is part. In this way, the body of the poem that folds ecological complexity is the body of the poet experiencing language as she/he/they encounter the world. And so Eco-poetics is Ecosomatic poetics with one slight addition: the breathing body.

But once we enter the field of this expansive practice, we of course run into a problem: in espousing any kind of breakthrough consciousness or utopic reality, we find ourselves stuck within the very binary categories that we are attempting to dissolve. We are stuck, in other words, positioning our “outside” as better than their “inside.” Prepositions—while perhaps easy to shuck to serve the composition of the poem—are not so easy to erase within ourselves. The poet Tyrone Williams, in his seminal essay “Outsider Eco-poetics: Notes on a Problem,” challenges any claims that an Eco-poetic (and I would add, an Ecosomatic) poem-practice somehow transcends the human by reminding us that “anthropocentrism is inescapable within the practice of any poetics” (np). Williams concludes his essay by bringing the body to the fold: after all, without it, language becomes a word-salad of disembodied signatures on the time-stamp of climate catastrophe. The poem needs the container of the book, just as the emerging consciousness needs the body. Williams writes,

The body, finite by definition, is also what the book mimics, and what is outside the book, attempts to exceed. This means a rethinking of the concept of the body, to say nothing of the book. For in the end a resistance against the biocentrism of the body as such, against the anthropocentrism of the book as such, might offer glimpses into an eco-poetics no longer at the apogee of its orbit about a center. Imagine, if we can, an eco-poetics untethered from the earth, a body no longer bounded by the concept of a globe or sphere. Imagine a body adrift from embodiment, a book, like love, unblurred...like love, unblurred...like love, unblurred...like love, unblurred (Williams, 2013)

This exquisite imagining of the body “adrift from embodiment” is, I believe, what an Ecosomatic poetics is attempting to conjure as praxis. It is with a wide pantheon of poets who embody these philosophies of language to whom my work is presenting both a desire and an offering. Drop the word “soma” into this expanded middle where merging and blending are happening, genetically and linguistically. My work is in service to the

movement (always in flux, always changing) through which bodymind effectively awes us to receive connections and acknowledge dependences on all intertwining systems.

ECO SOMA, ECOPROPRICEPTION: KUPPERS AND QUASHA

To begin, I must call forth the body who is doing this writing. I must do this because my entire methodology is based on the integration of bodymind systems; I am not a disembodied voice. I take this imperative from Petra Kuppers, poet and performer, whose texture of self, body, language, movement, and poetry is always grounded in her body experience as a “White, citizen of the perpetrator nation Germany, a disabled wheelchair/scooter user, a settler on Anisinaabe territory, a consumer in a Global North economy, a cis woman, queer, an artist and an academic, in pain and in joy” (Kuppers, 2021, p.2). In her seminal book *Eco Soma*, Kuppers invites readers to “unsettle” ourselves as we join her to survive in difference, which is ultimately acknowledgement. She wheels us through her deep investigation into “intersubjectively charged” spaces of theater, performance, poetics, technology and geography where “consciousness of embodiment and of cultural formation intersect” (29). She writes:

I use ‘eco soma’ to refer to felt things that come close and create emotional response, poetic-in-between, listening for new sounds, creating new pathways. With eco soma, I refer to creative flights of connection that combine bodily, emotional and imaginative responses...I offer these terms, eco and soma, not as a coinage or a territory move but as two words in search of connection, with a space between and around them, in spin with one another and producing layered pearlescent illuminations fueled by breath (20).

Kuppers’ invitation to refuse “coinage or territory moves” in the presentation of a method is a humbling, necessary reminder that my work too is always enmeshed with my bodymind consciousness as it moves the world through my white, citizen of imperial Capitalist America, temporary settler on Weckasgeek territory, cis woman, hetero, poet, scholar, teacher, single mother, trauma survivor, bodymindsenseself. To shift the fundamental stories, metaphors, and patterns that have enabled me to move through spaces of privilege—spaces that helped me integrate my early childhood trauma into a



thinking, loving, teaching being— I must out of necessity begin with the acknowledgement that the work I have produced through my orientation within these spaces is indebted to a constellation of influences, a pantomime in which I played but a small part. The shift I would like to present is how my research, scholarship, and publishing output remains in constant motion towards the liberation of other sentient beings and is always in relation to the multiplicity of the plant and animal ecosystems into which I am folded as one part.

My work in this enfolding field of language, presence, and cross-pollination is to find, interrogate, apply, fail, and transmigrate connective forms of language through my body; my published work and scholarship is, I hope, a contribution to the conversations that are folding Eco-poetics, Ecosoma, and Somatic poetics into a philosophy of language and the body that applies Merleau-Ponty's work to the creative arts. That is, transcending those negating categories of mind that separate humans into hierarches and castes, effectively putting homo-sapiens "above" animals and plants just because we possess the language of self-obliteration.

Revealing how language moves into grooves of flux and change that connect humans to the ecology into which they are sustained is easily appreciated in a poem; but to appreciate this in our own selves is tricky. My research into the practice of somatic poetics extends outwards towards a therapeutic modality that is helpful to all creative beings struggling to transcend the biochemistry of psychic and physical wounds. I will go into the modality that I have created, with specific examples, in a subsequent chapter. For now, let me continue to trace the methodology that creates the foundation for this work.

#### POETS, PATIENTS, HEALERS

As both a writer and a therapeutic practitioner, I have spent many years researching, through poetry, the tremors of my unconscious *materia mundi* as extending towards the wide realities of the many people I have worked with as both a teacher and a healer. As this field of Ecosomatic poetics finds her readers, I believe this will correspond in no accidental way with the near-impossibility of poets to be meaningfully employed by the academy. In this way, more and more language artists are doubling as healers as a means of economic

survival and as a way of maintaining our poetic practices. It will be the contribution of these practices to the larger ecological and psychological movements that will find additional relevance, outside of the publishing and performing of poems.

One of the luminaries of this healing poetics is the poet and publisher of Station Hill Press, George Quasha. His most recent collection of essays, *Poetry in Principle*, which is prefaced by Edward Casey, presents a useful synthesis of his work and understandings (Quasha, 2019). What I and others are referring to as “Ecosomatics,” Quasha calls, “ecoproprioception.” This is the “Principle” behind Quasha’s understanding, and Casey understands it as follows:

here the artist and the healer alike ...allow themselves to merge with the larger environment in action of ecoproprioception in which one’s self-perception is “non-separate from environment (ix).

Quasha’s blurring of boundaries between his body and the natural world has resulted in a collaboration with stones: with them he works to find, as Casey writes, “the exactly right if precarious level of balance that allows each group to stand on its own” (qtd. Quasha, p, x). Quasha finds, in other words, an axial principle that unites two stones to merge and sustain each other in a poignantly precise sculpture that demonstrates how healing works in the human body. Quasha then applies this understanding to the touch of the healer—hands moving in axial massage align along somatic principles that enable a body to go *through* the surface to the other side. Cocteau’s film *Orphee*, important to the development of my own evolving poetics, is a key source for Quasha as well. In the scene where Orpheus walks through the mirror and into the hell realm, Quasha reads the principle of “transitive mirroring: Orpheus passing through his ‘reflection’ to its elsewhere....Sense of self comes to include sense of other” (54). In other words, prepositions dissipate as language opens to the field of perceptual being.

The “sense of other” allows the poet to come into a larger sense of reciprocity and feedback as primary instruments—useful knowledges—of how healing works. In this way, Quasha forms a useful hinge to my own published attempts to articulate the nebulous interplay of the connections between language and healing. Here it is useful to

distinguish that what I, and I believe Quasha, is talking about is not the healing power of a poem itself but rather, the poet as a patient and a healer in his/her/their own right. A poet is an injured body through whom language is embodied as an art form which effects both perception and consciousness. In this way, principles from poetics are the instrument and the medicine.

Quasha writes:

Language in actual use contains hidden ideology. And it functions according to our active belief structures, which in many respects are not consciously recognized. It is difficult to sustain active attention without first getting at our underlying beliefs and ideology and letting them also evolve in more creative, less persona-history-encumbered language (58).

A 'healthy' poetics is able to avoid constructing yet more ideological fixities, while still thinking in precise and complex ways. Inside language....there is feedback—indeed *feedthrough*—amidst body, mind and language. They work with and through each other, and create a new *linguality*—reality-creating language (92-93).

Quasha's long-time research into both language and the body inspired the seminal book *Visceral Poetics* by my contemporary, the poet Eleni Stecopoulos (2016). Stecopoulos cites Artaud's understanding that poetry is "anarchic insofar as its appearance is the consequence of a disorder that brings us closer to chaos" (p. 49). Very much in conversation with my own work, her book is "a document of method...(to commemorate how) fascination with language shaped my experience of illness and healing" (vi). *Visceral Poetics* refers to Stecopoulos' mirroring of her writing and reading practice with her own encounters with various healers. In other words, she is reading and writing her body as she simultaneously seeks out doctors and healers to help her with a confounding medical condition—doctors described it as "idiopathic" but the healers she began seeing revealed her symptoms to have profound "etiologies and meanings" (vii). Not easily communicated through standard usages of grammar and syntax, it is language and poetics that can even approximate the complexity of her quest.

In an introduction written for a poetry reading by Robert Kocik, Stecopoulos quotes H.D. and articulates a radical vision of bodymind consciousness as epistemology and poetics (Stecopoulos, 2014):

H.D. wrote that “Religion, art, and medicine, through the latter ages became separated. They grow further apart from day to day.” In analysis with Freud, this connection was revived for H.D.: an Apollonian time signature where poetry, prophecy or divination, illness, and healing are symptomatic of each other, in sympathy with each other. So we begin under this time signature, in this key, and from here we can travel into psychotherapy, hypnosis, prosody, poetry, medicine, consciousness, cosmology.

Traveling through various healing modalities took Stecopoulos on an incredible journey, both personally and intellectually. Her articulation of language’s relationship to her body as it moves between suffering and relief, like Quasha’s, is to assert the vitality of both language and the body. This is a radical critique of any attempt to think about either language or the body as mechanistic, opportunistic, whole, or striving for some unattainable perfection (i.e. perfect health or grammatical correctness.) Stecopoulos’ and Quasha’s work in these realms has been central to my research, particularly as I embarked on the journey of moving my poetic research into a clinical phase. I spent ten years quite literally practicing and refining this knowledge to help people in a therapeutic setting; people who were attempting to pivot a habit or complex into an embodied state of being that *felt better*.

My poetics became a clinical practice. I studied Jungian psychology, Freudian theory, became a certified practitioner of Reiki and hypnosis, and simultaneously continued my deep investigations into poetics, outside of any academic support. I came to understand the unintelligible *grammaryre*, the syntax beneath grammar that moves with the same energy, flow, and co-dependence as the body’s complex ecosystem of blood moving among organs. The poetics: that the poem reveals this movement; that the poem, like the human, is unstable: is in constant motion. It is energy through language, a grammar of thought, that keeps thought, and its corresponding biochemistry, moving. The poem shows this: it presents thinking as *being* arising in a body. It is through this deep understanding—that to move thought is not just a matter of playing with language and calling myself a poet; to move thought is to heal and to survive. Without the movement of thought, there is only

death because staying in stasis is unrelenting. This is the cave of healing where language is the doctor and the medicine that moves energy between inarticulation (stasis) and rhythm (movement). As Quasha writes,

For many years I've practiced within an evolving poetics related to what Wallace Stevens called "The poem of the mind in the act of finding/What will suffice..." I take this to mean that a function of poetry is to reveal what can be thought/experienced in mind through language, indeed to make new thinking possible or even to discover new dimensions of the thinkable, beyond all categories...A poetic act can range widely therein, from,, say, a direct political poem with a clear message to a Paraphysical one with an inconclusive (non-)message, and there's nothing to stop the poem from weaving between such extremes with its own kind of unforeseeable coherence. The mind may register a thinking event within that act which opens a door to further unprecedented thinking—one that *suffices* by revealing what was never even clearly desired ( 71).

Likewise, in my own work I am weaving between the extremes of clear articulation within a grammar, and inconclusive (non-)messages that rupture prepositional awareness and challenge expectations that the reader will be able to "make sense" out of what I am saying. And yet, something is left behind in the poetic act of transmission from writer to reader. A feeling in the body; the recognition of a moment in time; the surfacing of a memory. As a writer I relinquish my control over what the reader will experience and yet strongly believe—lest why would I do this?—that something profound is being transmitted via the articulation of the art; and to not experience it would be to suffer in the lack.

#### TRANCE POETICS

I began calling the work I was doing "Trance Poetics" because trance is a word that conjures the hypnotic sense of a poem's rhythm on the body of the reader, as well as the trance that the writer enters to compose the poem. It conjures, in other words, both the state of language and the state of mind (the practice) through which the poem comes into being. An inquiry formed in my research: if trance is a mental event poised between nebulous states of consciousness and hallucination, then does language also exist in this realm? If trance is the opposite of rational intelligence, then is it possible for language to

express itself as irrational, and is that a trance? How does language bring us akin to dreams, drugs, and out of body experiences? Is it possible that this systematic derangement is key to the necessity of coming into an linguistic consciousness of the inseparability between our bodies and the ecosystems through which we are dependent?

What my research has pointed to is the trance of poetics that is also a revolt; it is the defiance of prepositions; the absence of categories and the refusal to live a life folded into culturally salient categories. It evokes the unconscious upheaval of the senses and a retreat from “normal” states of consciousness into some nebulous and uncertain terrain where “the unknown” dictates forces unleashed as powers beyond nominal awareness. If there is a tendency to spend mental energy trying to still what is inevitably flowing, trying to fix in space and time all that is inexorably in a constant state of change, then that effort might be relieved through a widening sense of language. Bodies, after all, do not cohere towards a different set of rules from the particles colliding, and ever moving, within them—what Francisco Varela calls the “emergent self” (Varela, 2001). He writes, “Emergent selves are based on processes so shifty, so ungrounded, that we have an apparent paradox between the solidity of what appears to show up and its groundlessness” (np). And so, why would we assume that language behaves any differently?

Important to this emerging of a methodology is the possibility that poems themselves contain all of the philosophical content that is necessary to bring a theory and practice of Ecosomatic poetics to light. One early poet-practitioner of this methodology is Akilah Oliver, whose poetry is itself an embodied consciousness of language, but whose life was tragically cut short before she could articulate it through theory or prose. In her book *A Toast in the House of Friends* which she described as “a resistance of the silence around expressions of public grief. It attempts to approximate an ecstatic— which is the other side of grief (Oliver 2009, transcribed by KP).” In the book there is a poem called “meditations (redemption chant)” which echoes through every sentence that I write. It is a chant that in all its power conjures a beloved, but not a beloved as an external entity: a beloved within language itself. A beloved that holds the body of the poet so dearly, and with such grace, that shame, grief, fear, and thoughts of suicide dissipate. The poem is long, it unfolds in blossom to break open a broken heart even wider with every line; language itself “holds the

space” through repetition and incantation for the body to settle down, to circumnavigate whatever it is grieving as it encounters—through every cell—language’s medicine (Oliver, 2009).

Holding the space for Oliver’s work to continue swirling in the psycho-poetic-geographic field of somatic poetics, I acknowledge the information network that connects the bodies of writers and artists to the observing bodies of readers and viewers. Call this the “sphere of influence” which acknowledges the movable consciousness of bodies and the forms that bodies create. Because the catastrophic future—the one we seem to be headed towards—hasn't happened yet, and simultaneously, is happening all the time. And so we keep creating and imagining, not stopping moving, learning, becoming aware of ourselves as alive and therefore participating in the emergence (Prevallet, 2012c).

### III. Strata

PALIMPSEST AND GRAMARYE (1990-1999)

Before returning to the body, I dwelt for many years in the prism of the mind and began to create a life. Between 1990 and 1999, my “saturation job” into Surrealism revealed a tree with many branches; a series of portals that led me to investigate not just the artists and writers (particularly women) who were working in defiance and collaboration with their male counterparts at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also the philosophies that helped to locate the artistic outpouring in a larger historical context. I followed the breadcrumbs from Max Ernst and Leonora Carrington back in time to the Symbolists (Voltaire, Baudelaire and Rimbaud) and from there, to the Négritude movement centered around Aime Césaire. Through this line of inquiry I stumbled into a metaphysical approach to language that promised the possibility for personal, social and political revolt.

The Occult is a system of knowledge that is revealed only through the written word and corresponding drawings. It is a mass of documents that attempt to give form and shape to what is hidden, beneath the surface, not easily comprehended by the metaphoric constructs of the dominant social order. I found the texts on alchemy to be the most lucid in that they reveal a *process* and a *system* for seeing into the unintelligible and drawing it forward into form.

I dipped my foot into the labyrinth of these obscure texts and followed one image through the maze: a pelican piercing its breast, blood splattering to feed her children. As a literary conceit, symbolism seemed to be a key to unlocking meaning from obscure texts, and so I began to research this singular image. I followed it into books of medieval bestiary and discovered that the pelican is a symbol of sacrifice, death, and incarnation: the alchemical process that transforms dead material (stone) to life (gold). This investigation led me to write an essay called “The Poetics of Gramarye: Alchemy of the Word” about the hidden syntax behind conventional uses of grammar (Prevallet, 1994). Grammar may organize words into slots that then enable sentences to form—but what happens to language when not conforming? In my early research, I was looking for the *materia mundi* of



language as an embodied energy. At this point, I begin to trace the seeds of an Ecosomatic understanding into which I would spend the next 25 years researching and publishing. I wrote:

“It is not only documents of the occult that have a gatekeeper, for even the structure of ordinary and verbal and written language conceals mystery. Grammar (the study of the structure of language), gramarye (occult knowledge and learning) and grimoire (French for cryptic writing such as a magician’s spell book) are all doublets of the old French etymology, *gramaire*. Before the late middle ages, when these three words branched into their own definitions, the study of Latin, which then included study of the occult, was seen as an unintelligible, erudite study, not able to be comprehended by common folk. Gradually, Latin began to be taught in ordinary schools as a practical study, and a grammar was separated from gramarye. The rules (grammar) for the system of ordinary language became separated from the study of magic. Grammar and gramarye, that is, were once unified and the study of a system and that which is seemingly beyond systems were understood simultaneously....Poetry, like alchemy, has access to the gramarye within grammar” (154)

This seed paragraph, dense in its attempt to find some solid ground with a complex theory, became the inspiration for a series of poems ultimately published in tiny magazines that were floating around at the time: “Edible Shame,” published by Michael O’Leary’s *LVNG* (1998c), “What She Said,” published by Hoa Nguyen and Dale Smith’s *Mike and Dale’s Younger Poets* (1998d), and “Mad Sarah” published by a broadside and chapbook collective formed by graduate students (Juliana Spahr and Jena Osman) at the University at Buffalo called “Self Publish or Perish” (1997c).

What all of these works have in common is an elaboration on the concept of the palimpsest. Of import to any study of 20<sup>th</sup> century poetics, the concept was brought to light by the poet H.D. who, through her sessions with Sigmund Freud, followed the archeology of her mind to the Egyptian city of Karnak. There, she discovered for herself what Freud meant by *palimpsest*: that the mind, like these ancient cities, reveals—in the present moment—the traces of the ruins of the past. Memory, in Freud’s formulation, is metaphorically understood to be structured like the ancient city of Rome, built on the layers of all the

architecture that came before it (Freud, 2014). In the famous passage from *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud writes:

Let us, by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past—an entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one. This would mean that in Rome the palaces of the Caesars and the Septizonium of Septimius Severus would still be rising to their old height on the Palatine and that the castle of S. Angelo would still be carrying on its battlements the beautiful statues which graced it until the siege by the Goths, and so on. But more than this. In the place occupied by the Palazzo Caffarelli would once more stand—without the palazzo having to be removed—the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus; and this not only in its latest shape, as the Romans of the Empire saw it, but also in its earliest one, when it still showed Etruscan forms and was ornamented with terracotta antefixes. Where the Coliseum now stands we could at the same time admire Nero’s vanished Golden House. On the Piazza of the Pantheon we should find not only the Pantheon of today, as it was bequeathed to us by Hadrian, but, on the same site, the original edifice erected by Agrippa; indeed, the same piece of ground would be supporting the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva and the ancient temple over which it was built. And the observer would perhaps only have to change the direction of his glance or his position in order to call up the one view of the other (725-726).

This passage and its insight into how an architecture of the psyche might be metaphorically understood as an evolving site in which nothing is forgotten, only submerged forms a key bridge that links my early poetic research and my later incorporation of that research into a practice of hypnosis. Later, it would appear in the methodology for Ecosomatic poetics: the idea that one’s entire life—every sound, subtle body sensation, event, and repetitive gesture— is somehow encoded as *strata*, in a geologic sense, that moves like a current does to the sea; or, the strata of geography that forms the mountain, its grooves and contours in a fractal relationship reveal a geography of mind that moves in sympathetic relation with one’s body moving through space and time. In other words, I was finding texture in the wide field that brought poetry into the realm of the unconscious mind.

My reading of H.D. cumulated in a lyric essay, written in 1999 but published almost twenty years later in the journal *Seedings*, edited by Jerrold Shiroma (Prevallet 2017). In this essay I trace how H.D.'s poetic language reveals an understanding of the palimpsest as more than metaphor: it is both a movement of mind and a healing practice as all the parts of her fractured psyche consolidate into the present (np):

Part of the potential of palimpsest within poetic language is the ability to layer mythology, history, time, space, and ritual into a single text of a single language which allows all the layers, no matter how disparate, to be constantly present.

Myth is not a single-sourced truth that preserves primordial states of consciousness.

It is a multi-chambered structure in which every story has its origin in splinters of other stories, and those splinters are themselves impossible to trace.

Fused together in new patterns and combinations, myths provide resources of potential re-creations: H.D. recreates herself when she embodies the myths as flesh within her flesh; bones within her bones.

This movement of the palimpsest as it shakes loose somatic, psychic, and unconscious material within the body is a line of thinking that I followed early in my published work. During this time, I also composed a thought experiment addendum to "Poetics of Gramarye" which was published by Jena Osman in her legendary magazine, *Chain* (1998a). It was called "The Transformation of Isis into Mary: an Iconic Language Experiment" in which I attempt to take my research into language's hidden energy one step further: to reveal, within the fixity of the symbol, the element of change. It began with a series of three collages which I arranged into a diptych, conceptually designed as an interpretation of H.D.'s palimpsest, in which "Every layer of stone represents a new style and era, with differing interpretations of hieroglyphic stories of the myths upon myths buried there" (Prevallet, 1998a). I further described the collage as follows:

A language must have a matrix—and the matrix here presented is the 1 and 0, the code out of which computerized realities are made manifest. On top of the 1 and 0 matrix (taken from a programmer's manual) is a picture of modern

day Karnak, its ruins a layering of centuries of architectural revision. The panels work in succession, telling a story. In panels 1 and 2, Isis reins over Karnak, but her image is gradually fading. In panel 3 she is emerging into her Christianized image, holding the baby Horus, Panel 4 shows Mary's final possession of Isis's image, with Horus now replacing Christ (192).

In this and other work from this period, the concept of *palimpsest* became integral to my inquiry as I embarked on the journey of building, layer by layer, the strata of my work.

It was through the surfacing of this youthful thought experiment that I attempted to bring what is invisible into a form where it could be seen; this is where my deep research into the medicinal power of poetic language would begin to take shape. In my earliest years as a writer I was keen on revealing what lay beneath the surface of my waking consciousness; I couldn't have known it at the time, but language was the base element through which the material of my preverbal trauma would eventually find form. And the process of this revelation would, over time, evolve as a cornerstone that helped to build the field of an Ecosomatic poetics, practice, and methodology.

H.D. opened an understanding of the palimpsest, which then evolved to become more complex. I was beginning to understand imagination in a more nuanced way, and I began to read and think about how language seeps into and creates "reality." The thought experiments published in *Chain* were bridges that moved me from my early research into Surrealism and Alchemy, to my later research into Modernism and Psychoanalysis. Both psychoanalysis and the occult conjoin in my search for forms that might connect links both within my own life, and within the nexus of a broken world (1998a, 1999h, 2000a, 2002b, 2007f, 2013, 2010a.)

From this early project my research into language as *form* gained momentum and cumulated in a book published by the artist and poet Lee Chapman's First Intensity Press. *Perturbation, My Sister* is a series of prose poems based on Max Ernst's *Hundred Headless Woman*, a collage novella that transformed 18th century pulp and romance lithographs into a montage revealing unspeakable desires, all conveyed through juxtapositions of animal and human form (Prevallet, 1997a). Cutting up women's bodies in this way, Breton and Ernst can

certainly be criticized for their gross objectivation of the female form; but for me, a body that knew only retreat and reaction, seeing the female form expressing itself through veils that varied from seductive to surrendering, falling into forms as if into water, was nothing short of a deep breath into a life of the mind.

This book was my initial foray into the practices of Ecosomatic poetics as it came through an intense investigation into word and image enjambments, ruptures, and syntactic play through rhythm, thesis, stasis, and contrast. The book is a bridge into the sentences that conjoin and flicker with unconscious associations which then slowly, over time, and in small therapeutic doses, reveal language's *poiesis*—the grid of consciousness around which an inner world finds words to shape it into reflections of something larger. It would take another 20 years to connect this *poiesis* of language back to my body's preverbal articulations, and another 30 to bring a knowledge of language as an energy medicine to my life's work. But in *Perturbation, My Sister*, the inquiry into this research begins: analysis, response, metaphor, parataxis, play:

Analysis: Spread a man's legs and see the precise angle of the architect's pen as he designs the facade of a house. When a beam falls carrying with it the tireless builders of bridges, the architect's compass must narrow the circle that connects the project of building to the possibility of touching the sky. If he refuses, then his mind will reside in his foot and he will be forever consumed with the futility of flying.

(Then again, a hung man holds up facades with the straight stiffness of his dangling arm. As his body decays, the wood might assume his shape, as it is said that the angled arches of cathedrals are designed from the perfect curve of a just broken neck.)

Response: The door is a wooden stream that knows our duality better than mirror or water, for coming and going we reveal everything. If ever we are at the exact same moment entering and exiting, then the door would shut its wood into itself and emerge half man half woman. Both would grope for the possibility of skin, but to connect would mean that doorknobs would be rendered obsolete (43).

As one seeking knowledge hidden in the occult syntaxes beneath grammar, I was keen to read as much as I could about how language is a membrane separating unformed

and formed realities; it shapes what one pays attention to, and this effects both consciousness, and the future trajectory of one's life. This understanding became important to me as layers of inquiry and the accumulation of knowledge became deeper as I traveled from one intellectual refuge to another. Eventually, I began to teach what I myself was trying to learn: that all of these layers of time and space were a movable strata, constantly in flux. And poetic language reveals their malleability. This realization would become the key that unlocked the connection between language, thought, and the somatic movement of the body.

Inevitably, my research on gramayre, Freud, memory, and H.D. cumulated in a series of formal experiments in which the daily newspaper became a key material source for my work. My archive includes many files of clippings and scrapbooks in which I am attempting to find some hidden poetic syntax beneath the strata of the daily news. The result was many poetic experiments that were published between 1997 and 2006, including "Lyric Infiltration" (2002f) and the chapbook "Lead, Glass and Poppy" (1997d); these contrapuntal poems (weaving distinct language forms together) were then included in my books *Scratch Sides: Poetry, Documentation, and Image-text Projects* (2002b) and *Shadow Evidence Intelligence* (2006g).

In these books, I document the process of creating these contrapuntal poems. For example, I described my poem "Lyric Infiltration" as "a cut-up technique devised when looking through my notebooks and trying to find a form for my rambling poetic notes" (2002b, p. 71). Using William Burrough's technique of the cut up to create a third text that effectively synthesizes the language of the primary sources into a new pattern of association, I designed my own form:

- 1) Compose poetry that is tonally in the lyric/epic tradition. Put it aside.
- 2) Make a scrapbook of news stories over a period of six months.
- 3) Type up one-line descriptions of each news story.
- 4) Break apart the lyric poems and fit them together with the one line descriptions.
- 5) Pick a news story/editorial to be infiltrated (mine are excerpts from longer stories).
- 6) Begin jamming the poetry and one-line descriptions into the news story. Pay no attention to grammar and syntax at first.
- 7) Revise the now jammed news story so that it is grammatically correct but maintains the accidental synchronicities of meaning.

This description also describes the composition of *LEAD, GLASS, AND POPPY* (1997) which was written using synchronous thinking and contrapuntal form: actively seeking out coincidences; force connections between images in dreams and images in the street; see links between ideas in one's head and stories in the news; read connections between different newspapers on different days. To assemble this poem, I used the December 24, 1995 *New York Times* in which there was a story about Patrick Vaurnet's sun cult which resulted in the suicide/ murder of fifteen people whose charred bodies were found France, arranged in a sunburst pattern. This clipping aligned with my discovery of the painter Anselm Kiefer and his charred books. After the connection was established, I began collecting other newspaper clippings that synchronized around themes of the sun, burning, and social violence. A serial poem in 10 parts, the poem is written as a *contrapuntal* which weaves the language of the newspaper with the lyric language which reflects the theme. The two were then shaped into a sunburst pattern (13). Here is one panel:

<p>The spine in the book is a crease in time  and we're lowly waverers  between the cracks  of what might seem to be  unthinkable but true  (because printed)  for certain, and spreading.  Through the tracks buried over  where have you been  when needing you  stuck here where the dawn  and the day that meets it halfway  can't get it together in time to say:  "Here is a house.  There is another's home.  At the corner is an arsenal.  Pick this up and explode, here."</p>	<p>France-2 television  broadcast what it said was  a taped telephone conversation  between two disciples of the sun cult shortly  before they died  in Switzerland in 1994. They chat about  a program which says the sun is halfway  through its life.  "But in any case it's been organized,  we're going to Jupiter."  "So Venus is out? I think we'll first  go to Venus."  "We'll see. I don't give a damn.  The main thing is to go where we have to go."</p>
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The most extensive series of newspaper/synchronicity-based poem-projects was *The Parasite Poems*, which was published in a variety of literary magazines (1999b-g; 2000a) and eventually was published as a chapbook by Andrea Brady and Keston Sutherland's Barque Press (1999i). In *The Parasite Poems* I create a palimpsest of poetic forms in which the poem is quite literally layered with footnotes. In this poem, the palimpsest is a metaphor for the invisible layers of information, sound, and subtle body energies that travel through language in any given moment. Each poem reveals a current of language from the news that operates like a radio, broadcasting a signal that ripples below the surface of the poem. It is not a direct relationship that these poems reveal; newspaper language and poetic language do not directly correspond. Rather, the news is a frequency of language, a sonic juxtaposition that rides the same airwaves as does the poem. The words and images create a doctrine of correspondences; a revelation of slippery movements between images. Meaning is left to chance and the poems consolidate only in the mind of the reader. Here is an example (p. 16):



## QUEEN FINDS GRACE AMONGST SNAKES

Muck out of it was found  
the heart of the ancient city,  
blocks of granite, a sphinx  
crusted with sand and brine.  
Inscribed to a two-timing king  
who bit her breast  
and blamed the asp,  
who wound her clairvoyance  
and broke her back,  
when like a child  
she forgot to fall  
and followed her grace  
down among the liars.

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Cleopatra's royal quarters were found buried deep in the sewage of Alexandria.  
After being sodden in brine even the hardest stone cannot withstand being  
exposed to air.

I dove into a pool filled with dead bodies.

The lily leaf beetle protects itself by covering its larvae with its own  
excrement.

<sup>1</sup> "Down among the Sewage, Cleopatra's Storied City" (*New York Times*, 10-29-97).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Dream* (4-16-98).

<sup>4</sup> "News in Brief" (*Greenville News*, 12-23-97).

Footnotes in this composition are breadcrumbs. I learned this from the poet Jack Spicer, whose poem "Homage To Creeley" is the template for the layout of *The Parasite Poems*. In my essay, "Jack Spicer's Hell," (1999h) I describe Spicer's use of footnotes as follows:

"A hell of meaning," writes Robin Blaser to describe the poem-parts of *Homage to Creeley*, which sit above a line separating them from the explanatory notes below. "The Orphic explanatory note to the poem makes it clear that in the telling, the voice of the poem is a ghostly other and outside of meaning" (CB, 281). The poem is separated from its explanation, and the line between them is a mirror. Like lovers, the poem and the note are two halves of one whole. The poem is Eurydice, in the hell-land of ghosts, and the "Orphic note"—like the notes played from Orpheus' lyre—is

what brings her (the poem) back to the surface.

In my many years of working with collage, parataxis, and polyvalent textual experiments, the archetype of Orpheus and Eurydice's descent into the underworld is, like the metaphor of the palimpsest, a cornerstone which will hold a foundational pillar for my future research. As mentioned earlier in my discussion of George Quasha's work, Cocteau's *Orphée* was a rhizomic cluster that helped me, over time, to consolidate an understanding of Ecosomatic poetics. I was first introduced to the film in 1991 by my teacher and mentor, Stan Brakhage; later, after I realized how important Cocteau was to Spicer as well, I translated Cocteau's poem "L'Ange Heurtebise" for a special issue on Brakhage published by the *Chicago Review*; I then composed an essay, "Angels in the Apparatus" in which I analyzed Brakhage and Cocteau's cinematic and aesthetic connection with Cocteau (2001a).

This attempt on my part to infiltrate the conversation happening between Cocteau, Spicer, and Brakhage (that male pantheon) seeded a growing awareness within me. In other words, I found these experiments to be a way of probing my own unconscious, preverbal trauma in a manner that allowed me to freely express its unintelligibility without losing my foothold on reality. It is in this way that poetry is a medicine: there is a therapy happening in the cutting up, synchronous associative thinking, creation, and dissemination of poetic works. In doing this work, the mind moves into and among associations; this prepares it for the deeper work of processing trauma. And it is in this way that poetry and the work of somatic, bodymind healing come into alignment both as a method for generating creative work, and a practice for living.

THE ARCHIVE (1994-2003)

Given my deep immersion into the Palimpsest, it follows that my research would soon evolve into another way of conceptualizing and understanding palimpsestic thinking: the archive. In 1994, after temping in factories and shady offices around Buffalo, NY, I finally got a job at the Poetry/Rare Books collection at the University at Buffalo. I was hired as a graphic designer and I spent my lunch breaks meandering through the vast archive, brushing my hand along the stacks that held the papers of great literary luminaries including James

Joyce, Robert Duncan, and Basil Bunting. One afternoon, as I was wandering, I quite literally tripped on a box whose contents were spilling out all over the floor. My eye caught a black binder with a large label: "Black Magic." I sat down and flipped through the pages of this strange collection of newspaper clippings, binders of collages cut out from pulp and fashion magazines, and drafts of poems. I had stumbled on the archive of the poet Helen Adam—a beckoning that would consume the next 15 years of my research and publishing life.

As if possessed I, bedazzled, begged the assistant curator, Mike Basinski, to let me catalogue this forgotten and abandoned archive on my lunch break. Most of the boxes were still unpacked. I found them just as they had been shipped: files of disheveled papers, old books, photographs, collages and scrapbooks; manuscripts and letters stuffed into grocery bags, puzzle boxes, and envelopes; a few odd trinkets, a set of China plates, hand-decouped vases, and art-nouveau statuettes. Basinski told me right from the beginning that a pattern would eventually be decipherable and what appeared to be a hodge-podge of various, non-related objects and sheets of paper would gradually reveal the poet's own innate method of organization. Of course, this turned out to be exactly the case and I found myself embarking on yet another saturation job. Gradually, I was able to organize the disparate elements of the archive into 78 grey boxes (Adam, archive holdings).

As I became more and more fascinated with Helen Adam, the living clutter of her life—scraps of paper haphazardly tossed into bags and envelopes, cut-out images from magazines and crumpled fragments of poems—all became significant. Little did I know that 13 years of my life would be consumed researching and publishing works devoted to Helen Adam. I would, in that time, have catalogued her entire archive, written several conference papers about her, edited a collection of her works, made a soundtrack for her film, and recited her ballads at my poetry readings. I set about the process of reconstructing her life, and published three articles that appeared in peer review journals (1997b, 1999a, 2002a). These articles formed the introduction to a volume of Helen Adam's work (2007a), and for my efforts, I was awarded a Master's Degree in Humanities through the University of Buffalo. Back then I thought of ghosts as literal presences—now I understand them to be more akin to possession. How else can I explain my drive to exhume this person I never met, to reassemble all that she left behind into some cohesive whole?

Here I was encountering a palimpsest of Adam's life and uncovering not only her personal story, but also the story of a woman forgotten by literary history. To complete this project, I had to understand the methods of archival research: filing, categorizing, and annotating. I became deeply committed to this work. As I pursued a method that would allow Helen Adam's archive to come into view, it was as if I was searching for clues to my own tangled past. Peter Nichols writes about the poet Ezra Pound's relationship to the archive in a way that resonates with my own. He writes,

"The 'form' of the past is thus reconstituted in the present, and the labour of reconstruction is at once a memorializing of something lost and the creation of a substitute for it. Renaissance Italy (to Pound) is ... both ideal and 'real,' not merely the figure for some original loss, but the actual space in which traces of a recoverable history are pursued (260).

I read this to mean that the archive, like the cities of Rome and Karnak, reveals the past to be an *actual space*. And yet, although there are recoverable traces of it, they are merely traces: the truth-value of what's left behind is suspect. Modernist poets, writing from the center of the machine of progress, show through the form their poems take on the page that they don't believe in a recoverable past, or a recoverable reality. But like Freud's Rome, the material evidence of a recoverable history is the foundation which allows *a body* to begin the journey of recovering the lost parts of herself.

As I entered into a role of the poet as a steward of the archive—both personal and collective—I began thinking about my project as a phenomenological endeavor. I sorted piles and piles of random ephemera searching for textual evidence of something stable, "*du vrai*." The dialect of academia demanded that I write about Helen Adam's archive in a way that is narrative and analytic—as if these fragments can read objectively, without any trace of the person for whom I am constructing a narrative. My introduction to *A Helen Adam Reader* (2007a) is written in such a way that my position as the archivist was erased and simultaneously propped up as the authoritative account on Adam's work and life. I'm not suggesting that it should have been written any other way—but there are anxieties that come through: namely, the arbitrary canonization process of literary movements that effectively erased the ballad tradition from the modernist aesthetic. There is also the anxiety about how stories are told and narratives are constructed; this is an anxiety that I

have constantly filtered through my work as a poet. Inevitably, this line of thinking would carry over into my work as a somatic healing practitioner, helping a wide range of people to surface, out of the somatic ephemera of their experience, a narrative retelling of their repetitive behaviors, complexes, and fears.

Of course, I could not have been conscious of what I was doing at the time—but in my need to reveal *du vrai* I took what was a blank slate and inscribed my own psychic screen into a frame that would reconstruct a biography. Herein can be found the trace of my obsession with the recovery of unconscious forces and occult knowledge hidden just beneath the surface. I did compose one essay that expressed my relationship to the archive as a personal strata of the psyche. It's called "Meaning: An Archive" and I delivered it as part of a keynote address for a conference on the archive hosted by the University of Buffalo's library (2004).

Before the archivist and the scholar, there is the story of how the objects, scraps, and manuscripts were separated from the person who originally owned them. We all save and collect fragments of our past, store them in attics and closets, but for what? The material evidence of our existence? The security of someday unburying a forgotten truth, the key to our most profound neurosis? The profound human struggle, as Benjamin jotted on a random scrap of paper is "against dispersion." The writer embraces this struggle and keeps every scribble on every napkin, every notebook. Files these scribbles away in the closet, every note, doodle, defining childhood object, scrap of material. There are the lucky few whose boxes of random scraps are sent away, preserved in an university archive, to be assembled by someone else in the unpredictable future. Perhaps this is the only afterlife we can be sure of.

But it was more than my own depth-process that Helen Adam's archive drew out. By diving so deeply into her ephemera, I had to research the ballad tradition that was at the heart of her life and work. I traveled to Scotland where I interviewed the great Scottish historian and poet, Hamish Henderson. I sat in his living room and he played me recordings of his favorite ballads. I felt that familiar shiver—the *grue*—and was possessed by the beat of a distant drummer: the ballad tradition as it carried seeds of song and story through the winds of Aberdeen in Northern Scotland, down through the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century English ballad collectors who published them, thereby ensuring their perpetuity. The broadsides

then traveled with immigrants to the shores of America, making their way down to Appalachia. The ballad rhythm is embodied and once felt, it effects your biochemistry—from the flow of your blood to the neurons firing in your brain. It is the language of soma, as the song overtakes and a feeling opens itself into a new form: the arc of a story reveals itself and the story has found in you a singer. This understanding of rhythm into the poetic form of the ballad is one of the cornerstones that has built my practice of Ecosomatic poetics.

There was also the personal history that connected my own life to these songs. These were the tunes that my mother sang on her guitar during those evenings of quiet reprieve from her sullen terror: folk songs, litanies, and cowboy ballads. When she was singing, she was articulate, kind, and lucid. This is where psychoanalysis and literary research meet: listening to the old ballads, I was reconstructing a different relationship to my mother. This is the mother I needed to remember. I heard her voice coming through me; I had been hearing these songs as a child but never thought about how important they were to the foundation of my literary and healing research practices. I had forgotten the sound of her voice. The palimpsest of memory was surfacing another layer, the strata that braids together divergent sources and weaves them into meaning.

As I reflect back on my published works I find that my own work has always been deeply inspired by this ancient pulse, passed down through the ballads and songs to my mother. It is one of the pillars that grounds my research and lays the methodology for Ecosomatic poetics: words put into rhythms quite literally effect the nervous system, and the nervous system effects how you relate both to your environment, and to other sentient beings (Bettermann, 2004). The influence of these rhythms is acutely felt both in the body of the performer and in the body of the listener. It is a transmission of energy which opens a transmission of knowledge and information, passed down from an ancestral past.

In my own work, the importance of rhythm comes through in many published pieces. For example in *Scratch Sides*, I included the satirical “Final Request” which I wrote to the tune of my mother’s favorite songs, “Get Along Lil Doggies” (Prevallet, 2002b). Very early on in my publishing career, the Australian journal *Boxkite* published “Trespass,” another love poem that is measured not through sentences that make sense but rather, through the

ghostly trance of iambic pentameter as it keeps pace with the beating of the heart  
(Prevallet, 1998b):

How while sleeping did the night in its premature envy creep  
upon not dreams, not sex, not nights fired in another's light  
but upon what sullen history is made when turning back  
we've fallen to the hours gone in a lapse of daylight  
over what wonderment of rooftops, vain delights  
here upon I and I, not sticky in this deep  
but rhythm of all that cannot be said

ai-uu-uo-nod f-ick 0 ai-ain-up-on ec-ic-in a-h eich-r-ah

As in now she sat with her back to the wall  
and whatever wood was still left of the false veneer  
took over her spine and enraged her fully  
How not at all fit for an angel was this marvelous plunge of the  
beating heart,  
where clipped in half it bounced against a stone, a hard but  
rightful place to rest.

As of the leaves she fell, swept into perpetual fright  
and the water overboard  
then the clocks, fell back  
the trees timbered down the sky to hell

what enormous topple  
did fall that night

ai-o-tim-bur o-ma-ai-obr

The rhythm, once embodied, finds in language a malleable medium. Many years later, I incorporated this sense of prosody and poetic rhythm into a radical re-hearing of T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. My book *Everywhere Here and in Brooklyn*, published by the Belladonna Collaborative, is a rhythmic translation of Eliot's canonical poem in which I gently, like a fish's bones, lifted the rhythm of his lines from the flesh his words and lay them back down in an approximate rhythm, but with new contexts and meanings (Prevallet, 2012b). For example, for Eliot's famous section from East Coker, "The wounded surgeon plies the steel / that questions the distempered part," (1943, p. 56) I recompose as:

The doctor, wounded, tries with shaking hands to thread the vein but Blood pours out from the incision point.  
(Isn't there some law that declares the healer be alive before operating?)  
The disease becomes the body that consults the dying nurse,  
Suffering, suffering, we poison our blood with chemicals  
Get sicker, and before we are restored, get worse.

And the earth—suffering, suffering.  
Hedge fund billionaires betting on the failure of her resources. Opening powerful veins that spew oil,  
Then pour chemicals to disperse the surge  
Only to poison the entire ocean.

Like ice in the blood stream  
Freezing of joints pings like a high frequency weapon  
Bury me in the snow where frost is warm

And brittle roses break.

Drink this blood (he said)  
Tear this flesh for food:  
Strange logic to eat from the body  
As it's dying.

I call this process the work of creating a “shadow poem:” writing in the penumbra of the original poem so that the formal and rhythmic compulsions of it are retained, but with a slightly tinted shift in the meaning. The shadow reveals the unconscious periphery, what is silenced and peripheral, as language surfaces to reveal hither fore unsurfaced associations.

ELEGY (2001-2010)

In the years preceding the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, I had been furiously clipping news articles and composing poems derived from the language of the news. As if I had been riding the energy waves of this language to confront the catastrophic end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the collapse of the towers meant that the news then became a 24-hour cycle. One year later, the palimpsest surfaced like an earthquake: the towers fell unraveling a War on Terror which unleashed unspeakable suffering—both physical and economic—on the world. A few years later, my father committed suicide and I was both pregnant and getting a divorce. In other words, an upheaval on many levels.



In 2007, I was invited by the Catherine Taylor and Stephen Cope, editors of Essay Press, to submit a manuscript for publication. I used this opportunity to go back through my own archive of writing that I had composed after my father's death, and found in that writing a form that blended fragments of poetry, prose, and ephemera into memoir. I took poems that had appeared in several literary magazines (2002d, 2005b, 2007e, 2001c) and edited them into the frame of a book (Prevallet, 2007b). In *I, Afterlife*, I synthesized all that I had been thinking about for the past twenty years. The deep investigations into form connected me with poetry as a vehicle through which my grieving body could find language. My concern in this book is how mourning becomes poetically real once the object being mourned (i.e. the body of my father) has disappeared from physical form. The writing of this book pivoted all that I had known and all that I was working on into a new direction: this book brought identity into the fold of the deep syntax of avant-garde language experiments. The book is layered with the strata of multiple genres: it moves from personal narrative to aphorisms, from visual art to poetry. The book was warmly received and elicited several positive reviews. It is now in its fourth printing, and has been translated into French (2006f, 2007f) and Spanish (2021d).

Always with a mind towards the larger social realm, I followed this practice into the work of other artists and composed the essay, "We Sit Like Hot Stones: Performance of Mourning" (2010). In turning towards a politics of mourning, I researched ways that acts of mourning could be read into the performance art /work of artists such as Akilah Oliver, Carolee Schneemann, Karen Finlay, and Valie Export. These were artists who quite literally absorbed (through their bodies) the passion of those theories. In homage, I began putting my own body on the line through expressions of performance art (2008f, 2008d, 2009a). For example, to express solidarity with the bodies of land and water, fish and humans, direly effected by BP's Deepwater Horizon oil spill in April, 2010, I stood for four hours in mourning with an oil drenched sunflower at the corner of BP Gasoline station in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Based on this work, I collaborated with several poets (Marcella Durand, Brenda Coultas, Atticus Finch, Rich O'Russa, and Laura Elrick) to stage a mourning action along the twin rivers that merge New York City (the East River and the Hudson), which connect with the Gulf stream, thus joining our bodies with the suffering waters.

Subsequently at Naropa University, I staged a mourning action in which I performed a July 4<sup>th</sup> Day screaming ritual for the dead in Iraq (soldiers and civilians) which concluded with my burying of the American Flag under a sycamore tree. (Needless to say, this gesture was not appreciated by the school and I was expunged.) Still, the poet Jen Marie McDonald interviewed me for her magazine *FactSimile* (2009a), and here is one relevant exchange in which I talk about the strata of influences that allow mourning to find expression through language:

FS: How do you feel that the form of the essay served as a container for the material of mourning?

KP: Because for me, poetry moves very quickly into idea. Not all the time. Sometimes I can find ideas in things (as they say). But what I realized about my poetry is that it doesn't do anything unless the language can be brought into me, and then put back out, into some sort of clarity. So, *I, Afterlife*, essentially, is a collage Maybe a shrine to all the theory, philosophy, and poetry that I have read. I mean there's nothing directly quoted, but there's Jameson, Derrida, Notely, Howe (both of them); there's Sontag, Retallack. There's some self-help stuff in there with Rosmarie Waldrop, Reznikoff, Waldman, Alcaly. It's just that the idea of being able to – it's as if the essay allows for – my attempt to link ideas and language through my body.

It would take a full ten years for me to synchronize all of these ideas, embodiments, influences, performances, and literary outputs into a formal “essay.” It is called “Blood on the Illusion: The Violent Side Effects of Capitalism” and it was published in the literary magazine *Fourth Genre* (2012a). The essay draws parallels between my father's suicide, the abject performance art of Paul McCarthy, the movie *Fight Club*, and the American obsession with Pro Wrestling. It synthesizes an understanding of the devastating side effects of a media culture which perpetuates illusions of prosperity while effectively erasing the body in pain. The essay synthesizes my deep inquiries into mourning as both a ritual and an unearthing of repressed emotional and somatic states; states which rupture, through their fury of sadness, anger, and suffering, the spell of the Capitalist illusion machine. This is the strata, revealed through historical events, that exposes the trauma and cements the grief, experienced in a myriad of ways, through a myriad of beings.

The traumatized body's arriving towards speech and articulation is a journey of depth and constant examination. In the beginning, it seems easy to mold oneself into the image of what everyone else is doing. Raised by an alcoholic, I can employ tricks of emulation and can shapeshift into different personas; I can pose as an interloper in conversations, mimic the right words at the right time and in the right tone, and I can have an elastic approach to useful knowledge. But eventually, the fault line of my fragmented core cracks. As a writer, I found precedence in literary traditions where the blurring of genres led to deeper and deeper excavations of psyche and body. This felt right. The genre "essay" is one that has historically been malleable and open to this kind of play. It is a genre which allows for an investigation into the precursive wounds of one's past while at the same time discovering insights into the larger world. To bring narrative into the perspective of story and context is to imagine that I could have ideas that mattered, a body that had stories to tell, and a way of thinking that could be revealed as an essay if only because often, coming into articulation is a long journey to overcome fundamental insecurities.

As if a projection of the traumas of my childhood onto the muse of poetry, for the first 15 years of my publishing output, my writing was essentially non-syntactic, rhythmic, and stuttering between images and ideas with elasticity. Like my own wobbly self, I moved quickly from one idea to the next, cutting and pasting language into new forms. My work slipped into layers of the palimpsest; it effectively allowed me to evade the fact that I was struggling to find my own form whilst swimming in the open sea of language. I resided in the realm of shifting shapes and genres, collaborations and translations, within a language that refused to be pinned down. My poetry effectively allowed the part of me that was deeply traumatized to remain safely hidden under my bed, in my closet or on the top branch of a tree. It would be the gradual emergence from these places, through the practices of observing myself thinking, that my contribution to the field of Ecosomatic poetics would be grounded.

One key source that helped me to manifest this practice is Julia Kristeva, who understands the work of psychoanalysis to be "a means of allowing the nonverbal to speak"

(1989). In the preface to her seminal book, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, she writes:

“For those who are racked by melancholia, writing about it would have meaning only if writing sprang out of that very melancholia. I am trying to address an abyss of sorrow, a noncommunicable grief that at times, and often on a long-term basis, lays claim upon us to the extent of having us lose all interest in words, actions, and even life itself” (3).

The consequences for not finding expression are physically real: when not expressed, language collapses and what surfaces is depression, or, the absence of articulation. Later on in this thesis, it will become clearer how Kristeva’s work helped me to locate my poetic practice and research as a modality of healing. It would take many years for my preverbal trauma to surface and tell the story; Kristeva’s understanding is of the inability to form language, to speak, as being a key to one’s withdrawal into a deep depression, that downward energetic spiral that takes the body into a literal psychic cave where language does not exist.

The metaphor of the cave is important. Both symbolically and experientially, it is where bodies must retreat in order to heal. For poets, the cave is formed through language and allows a suffering body to form a relationship to one’s physical, psychic, spiritual, and intellectual self. The cave of language is where healing happens at the level of the *soma*, what Antonin Artaud calls “the body without organs”(1976):

When you will have made him a body without organs,  
then you will have delivered him from all his automatic  
reactions  
and restored him to his true freedom (571)

This being without organs means being in relation with the body the same way that language is in relation to an object: the word “stone” is not the thing itself. In the same way, “I” am a primal goo, forming and dissolving, filtering and clogging, moving into something nebulous. I am aware of my body when I feel sensations of physical pain, but otherwise, I float around it. Through an interplay of philosophical inquiry, psychoanalytic processes, and deep bodywork, eventually I was able to express, outwardly, not the “story” or narrative of

the trauma, but rather the language that, as Kristeva writes, “sprang out of that very melancholia” (1989, p. 56).

This is evidenced in my published work in many poems, but I will cite two that appear in a 2002 chapbook published by Richard Deming and Nancy Kuhl’s Phylum Press (2002c). “*Rises: after Robert Creeley and Francesco Clemente*” is a very short and thin poem, but like a fold in an accordion, every line expands to reveal the stories that are hidden in the cave of syntax:

Emptiness  
what rises up  
to become starlight  
or spot  
or tree limb pointing  
towards home.  
Pineapple birthday cake  
as a child I was  
two-fold,  
stacking crates  
against the yellow wall  
to hold objects,  
plastic and charmed  
direct sunlight  
now faded—  
What is between  
empty spaces  
is between  
being filled  
or accumulating  
dust, my mother  
dead, carried  
out of the house wrapped  
in a sheet,  
stacked mountains  
on top of campfire  
smoke pointing always straight  
towards the Milky Way.  
Strings down  
the side of the  
house through the  
yard the worms  
dropped from  
branches on thin  
webs, an echo

from tree to grass,  
as a child I  
had two heads, one  
was afraid and the other  
liquid, I wondered where  
do they go all the  
falling stars? (p.6)

The particular memories that are being revealed in this poem are not as important as the overall melancholic effect of the poem, in which every line makes a subtle emotional shift without commenting on exactly what is happening.

In this same chapbook is the poem, "Variation for Winds: after Samuel Beckett (2002c)" which has always been one of my favorite poems that I have written. Taking a cue from Beckett's one-act play, "Act Without Words," it captures both the melancholia at the core of my disposition and the optimistic movements of mind that are at the heart of my research; this unique combination forms the foundation for my contribution to Ecosomatic poetics. It is a long poem but here is an excerpt:

A woman stands at the window.

The sky is above.

A man comes behind her.

The sky is above.

She bends, picks a thread from her hem and begins pulling it tightly around her fingers.

The sky is still above.

He bends, picks up a twig, and breaks it in three.

A bird in the tree.

The man and the woman look at the bird in the tree. They pause to think what they are doing. The bird has no special significance. It is just an ordinary bird.

The sky is above.

The man looks away from the bird and turns to face the

woman. She is looking at the garden. He sees the garden through his peripheral vision. It is overgrown with sunflowers.

She is overgrown with sunflowers.

The man enters the garden. The sunflower enters the man.

She is looking beyond the sunflower and into the seed. The seed has a message that speaks to him.

The sky is still above.

He picks up a seed, twists it, breaks it, flings it all around. He takes a cup and tears out its base. He puts the seed in the cup.

The sky. (p.5)

This poem, as well as all of the essays and performances that I was creating during this decade, is central to my Ecosomatic research. There is a subtle but profound synthesis that I am creating, one that would effectively allow me to emerge from the cave and into the body where I discovered the imperative towards transformation and healing. I would then develop this understanding into a healing modality and practice oriented towards helping others who are struggling themselves to articulate unspoken truths.

In “Revolution in Poetic Language,” an difficult essay that I spent many years attempting to unlock, Kristeva writes about “chora,” a term she borrows from Plato’s *Timaeus* (1984b), referring to Khôra, the periphery—the territory marked as “outside” the city proper of the polis. Like H.D.’s metaphor of Karnak, and Freud’s Rome, Chora (Khôra) is a metaphor for the psyche. A landscape that opens at the edge of a city where the categorical rules and definitions do not apply; a wilderness where once there, you are in the realm of the unintelligible, the yet-to-be articulated. In somatic practice this may be the place of breath that clears the muck of rumination; where the body grounds thinking so that perspective can be surmised from a more spacious place. Grammatical thinking has limited options for mental movement; limited options for the body to escape the enclosures that thinking is perpetually constructing. Chora, as Kristeva writes, is a state of embodied being in which thinking is in a perpetual state of movement. Is this not the same Wheel of Life in Buddhist practice that moves thought through meditation, allowing an observation of how

thinking and the body are cycling at every moment through birth, life, and death? Kristeva defines chora as:

...to denote an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by (bioenergetic) movements and their ephemeral stases...The chora, as rupture and articulations (rhythm), precedes evidence, verisimilitude, spatiality, and temporality” (79).

Into the density of this quote comes, for me, a distinct clarity which has been seminal to my published works as they have contributed to the field of Ecosomatic poetics: that this “provisional articulation,” this “chora,” is the poem when aligned to the bioenergetics of breath, blood, compulsion, spontaneity, and impulsion. Chora is, in other words, a movement towards poetry.

In his helpful analysis, “Kristeva and Poetry as Shattered Signification,” Calvin Bedient links Kristeva’s understanding of chora with another key Kristevian term, “jouissance,” which Bedient defines as “the bliss of the nerve ends as they undergo their destructive splitting beyond the level of the pleasure principle” (Bedient, 813). If you can imagine nerve endings firing at will, an escalation of losing control, orgasmic as a mental experience, then you can imagine that jouissance can also flow “into language” (809). When this flow of language happens as a biochemical surge and a somatic event, nerve endings link synapses into new webs of association and deep learning happens. What results is a kind of surfing of the tips of language on the waves of rhythm and form, and herein lies the meaning.<sup>3</sup> The poem does not in of itself contain meaning, or truth; it does not declare itself

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<sup>3</sup> Another way of understanding this has been articulated by a team of cross-curricular researchers from the University of Liverpool who found that reading Shakespeare has a dramatic effect on the human brain (2016, McCrum). One of Shakespeare’s stylistic feats is his ability to create sentences in which parts of speech are scrambled or used in ways that defy the rules of grammar. For example, “he chided as I fathered” — a line from *King Lear* in which nouns “child, father” act like verbs. What the researchers realized is that when people read, nouns and verbs are processed in different parts of their brain. So when a person reads sentences that messes with this order, the brain has to fire extra neurons to measure and process the confusion. Those extra neurons result in what they call a “P600 surge” — meaning that when our brains encounter difficulty or confusion it has to work a little harder to fit what is difficult into what we already know. Think of this like a jazz quartet — you’ve got the bass player keeping the background beat going, while the pianist pushes the melody towards ever more complex vibrations and syncopations. This movement of mind (and its subsequent re-kindling into new learnings) involves experiencing change in a way that re-configures our deeply held beliefs about self and world.



to be signifying anything. Rather, it moves thought, and in so doing, it moves the body. This understanding is key to my research into the connection between language, play, and hypnosis.

For example, my long poem, “Humeros: after Cesaire Vallejo,” was published in its entirety in a special issue of the journal *Janus Head* edited by Robert D. Romanyshyn and dedicated to the work of J.H. van den Berg. Van den Berg was a Dutch psychoanalyst who developed what he called “metabolic studies” to study what Romanyshyn summarizes as “the changing nature of humanity’s psychological life” (376). In an interview, Van den Berg hoped to inspire a new generation of psychologists and historians to embrace the phenomenological dimension of psychotherapy: “how a human person is there in the world; how he is there with the things of daily life (382). He concludes by saying: “We need something else, a new grammar. In our modern era of successful science and technology—successful only for a certain range of problems—we lack the words to grasp and to understand the wonder of nature” (383). My contribution to this special volume attempts to articulate this “new grammar” as I surface the pain and anger of my husband’s betrayal:

It’s September  
And the airplanes are making words in the sky.

If I believed all you said about me,  
I’d be dead.

I’m trying to turn arrows  
into roses  
but I’m no Buddha—  
they’re

a

r

ro s(e)

w

In the playground  
the children  
climb and slide and disappear behind trees.

We can’t help make meaning out of random gestures.

We can’t help abstracting, transcending, producing, and  
destroying.

But words are unsteady  
and we pass through each other  
like a moth, a mot,  
a month  
and it's over –  
what seemed so evil was nothing more  
than an oyster mistaking  
the entirety of the earth  
and all the conflicting systems therein  
to be  
his  
bed (599-601).

Contemporary eco-linguistic and ecopoetic philosophers begin to compose this “new grammar” by removing any categorical separations between the human person and “nature.” There is no separation. And language is not at the service of an anthropomorphic imagination that seeks to escape human suffering by inflicting a free-reign spill of mental projections and anxieties all over nature. In his pointed essay, “Among Imaginations,” the poet Tyrone Williams writes:

“Behind the self-regarding glass of clarity and representation, the very flora and fauna under assault by the transformative powers of technocratic rationalism find their premature afterlives as they persist as living entities. Of course, these transparent enclosures of language, understood historically as various iterations of realism, also serve to give readers the illusions of physical contact with the objects under scrutiny while reifying the human eye (2016, 33)”.

Dissipating the “transparent enclosures of language” is at the core of my Ecosomatic poetic practice; it puts my work into the nexus and constellation of poets working towards Tyrone Williams’ call for “nuanced thinking, nuanced policies, even those at odd with both, for example, the Sierra Club and BP Petroleum (33).” I believe that the politics and performance of mourning is one way of using grammar in a way that holds the space for

nuanced thinking; thus, the poem carries embodied understandings of how poetry opens a movement towards *Chora* that both expands peripheral vision, and embodies language.

Another example is my poem “*Pretaland*” (In the Buddhist pantheon, *Preta* refers to the realm of the Hungry Ghosts) which was first published in the literary journal *Zen Monster*, and was then subsequently published as a Center for Bookarts Broadside to correspond to my 2014 performance at the Center’s gallery in New York City. The poem moves language as soma-inquiry to provoke in the reader a subtle anxiety which then releases language as a balloon that has lost its string, but then lands in the body. Written during the aftermath of my father’s death and subsequent bitter divorce, this poem illustrates the somatic effects of language through nuanced thinking; it also moves *chora* as an energetic frequency of sound and breath:

(spilling out)

a fish u n t h r e a d s

her scales

and is left bare

but begins

to make

an inside through

her own

bones

and exhales as if to say

[silence]

taking

part in something bigger

(beyond language)

what is linguistically

true

(the separation between  
a word and a thing)

does not mean

that words have no

value

(here)

I am chasing

meaning and know

that the meaning

is in the chase —

beyond language

does not mean

beyond

(here)

the word ( )

is nowhere more

brilliantly

manifest than

by the fish

flickering by I

dive in to

catch it but

grasping makes

it swim  
even further—  
a hundred bulls-eyes  
shot a hundred  
arrows lost.

The fish image in this poem is a portal to the slipperiness of symbolisms and the way that language works to move, fishlike, between ideas and things. This poem is not “about” nature, but the language moves rhythmically in relation to my body’s synced surround-sound of a water-creature’s slow movement. In my published outputs, I have written many essays, poems, and performances which attempt to reveal language in its fluid state (2004c, 2007c, 2007d, 2011a, 2012d) in order to process and confront suffering in my own life. This synthesis of autobiography as it surfaces into a fragmented narrative form is central to my contribution to an Ecosomatic poetic practice.

Another example is “Past Time Based” (2004c) which was published in the literary magazine *Conjunctions*. In this poem, I create a catalogue of active verbs which convey scenes from films in which characters are, in a singular moment and in a particular landscape, caught in a flash between two colliding moments. The poem zooms out to comment on these moments. The square drawings that are inserted into the poem are important: they are impressionistic drawings of the parking lot where my father killed himself, and they appear prominently in my book *I, Afterlife* as well. Aside from a philosophical inquiry into how language shapes emotion and reality, this poem is also working through the quicksilver moment of my father’s death (the pull of the trigger) and the violence that surrounded the sudden moment when a living body was no longer breathing.



As she was walking down the hall, he jumped out of the room.  
He crashed through the sliding glass door while she was reading a newspaper.

He is sleeping either because he passed out, or because she killed him.  
She darts across the burning room to avoid the beams collapsing all around her.  
An airplane flies low over a city.  
She has on a dress that matches the sunflowers.  
He picks up a feather and is blown away.  
He is crushed.  
She is shattered.  
He is plummeted.  
He is flatlined.  
She is in smithereens, reduced to shards, smaller than a crumb.  
He is dusted, flattened, squashed, reduced to rubble.



This is what happened.  
Scenes, and then a fade to black.  
Before, and after, in a sequence.  
In the clearing, a man and a woman are suddenly present.  
Conflict and then the desire for resolution.  
Before the resolution, there is a fade to black.  
After the fade to black, another sequence.  
There is never closure.  
But before the conflict (which happens later) a woman is plummeted, squashed, plundered, blown away.  
There is also a man who is flatlined, stomped, interrogated, crumpled.  
Then, right in the middle of the conflict (before the fade to black) there is another woman whose dress is the exact color of sunflowers.  
She is reading a newspaper when suddenly he comes bursting through the sliding glass door.  
They struggle, fall, roll, and punch. Finally, he sleeps.  
Simultaneously, the beams are falling.  
It's hard to say what happens after that.

In another poem called "Shadow Evidence," I move the grammar of cinema into the metaphors at the heart of scientific "truth" (Prevallet, 2004a). In this poem, I am trying to convey how scientific *knowing* begins not with only observing reality and determining the

truth about it, but also the casting of a line of inquiry, and imagining a question that does not yet have any proof. In the poem, the sentences may be grammatically correct and therefore asserting a hypothesis that seems plausible. But really, it's the slippages of images and metaphors, the embodiment of change as it is happening, that are revealed. Although subjects and verbs fit together convincingly to form a grammatically correct sentence, the reader will have a hard time constructing a hypothesis to prove anything but the slipperiness of metaphors:

There are crows the size of crows and people running on a track that circles a cornfield.

Oblong, the track shows the slowness of a wave at the cusp of motion.

A square iron box in the middle of a cornfield defines the parameters of the cornfield.

People stand in different places and see the same thing, but at different speeds.

Because the length of time at the center is not equal to the speed of light at the periphery.

There are the birds and the way that they are talked about as if they were alien.

Equal to that which is whole is being.

Infinity equals cause minus motion. A husk is not a photon, and a sextant cannot tell the direction of haze.

Absolutely integral means that a bird by any other name would not fit into the equation, even if it flies in the shape of infinity.

Flying, it hears the hum of sonic booms in space and responds in turn with a "ping" sound.

So low that anyone travelling slower than the speed of light could easily mistake it for a song.

The bird flies without hybrid technology and it is covered in a thin layer of micro-skin that is constructed from the opposite of matter.

My poetic contributions are sometimes serious, often playful, and always nuanced with a hopeful clarity within a muddy field where categories between body, nature, mind, and grammar are blurred.

ECPHRASIS, 2001-2010

This was a difficult decade. Trying to process so much grief and loss with a young child in tow, I began to seek out collaborations with visual artists whose work was conceptually balancing correspondences of language and form. I also began translating contemporary French poets including Sandra Moussempes, Anne Portugal, and Joyce Mansour along with Francophone poets Jean Metéllus, and Sony Labou Tansi (2009c, 2007h, 2007i, 2004f, 2003c). During this time, which overlaps with work I was doing in other areas of my research, I collaborated with a wide variety of visual artists including John Sims (2011a), Mark Lombardi (2004d, 2006c), and Annemae Maes (2002b, 2006c)—all young artists who were showing in Williamsburg, Brooklyn and the Lower East Side during this time. I found in these collaborations an *ecphrasis* of conceptual forms: this resulted in a productive period of art, collage, translation, performance, poem making, teaching, and publishing. Simultaneously, I began performing these works in a variety of galleries and museums, including The Whitney, PS1, Pierogi Gallery, and the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art. With poet Tonya Foster, I co-edited an anthology of essays on ecphrasis called *Third Mind: Creative Writing Through Visual Art* for Teachers and Writer's Collaborative (2006b).

My creative work during this time cumulated in two books of poetry, each one driven by a collaborative formal poetics that sought to find forms within the fluid field of language and to revel language's *facia*, that connective tissue through which bodies expand: *Scratch Sides: Poetry, Documentation, and Image-Text Projects* and *Shadow, Evidence, Intelligence* (2004d, 2006c). Each poem that appears in these two collections of collaborative translation and ekphrasis is inspired by visual art.

One poem, "Pop Prop Agit" (published in *Shadow Evidence Intelligence* and the journal *Damn the Caesars*, edited by Richard Owens (2005a; 2006b) works well to illustrate how psychoanalysis, and in particular H.D.'s manifestation of the palimpsest into poetic form, is a golden thread that I have followed through many strata: the palimpsest now finds visual art. "Pop Prop Agit" is in conversation with artist Debra Jenks' palimpsestic drawings over a subway advertisement for Britney Spears' winter 2001 tour; the ads Jenks' re-



performs are posted before the collapse of the Twin Towers and remained in stark contrast to the mood of the city that attempted to “get back to normal” in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. Seeing her images in the subway, I imagined a post-apocalyptic world, hundreds of years in the future, in which the only traces of the present consciousness had been written in code on subway walls, and subsequently collected and placed into files. The poem reveals the content of the files with the collecting agent’s attempt to decipher the code:

### POP-PROP-AGIT FILE #1: M1

PsychProfile= central ego intact. Mind for complexity, nuance. Suspect for FAD (Future Acts of Defiance).

War is the pursuit (f/s) of an ideal world imagined (f/s) by (f/s) who has the biggest weapons

w/s=The first directive is to impose an image of the imagined world onto the population

w/s=Propaganda is an advertisement that sells war and in turn sells the image of an ideal world

o/n=*in 2010, this famous slogan became an advertisement for Volkswagen*

f/g=Live in Los Vegas

Simultaneously on the TV (f/s) the constant replay of falling

f/g=Simultaneously along the "G" and "L" lines

f/g=PRONOUNCE

w/s=Is “she” elvis? o/n=*reference to possible sighting?*

f/g= Not just that

This photograph is (f/s) inhuman war

This poem is one of many from my published works that embodies not only the palimpsest as a formal conceit that shapes the poem on the page, but also the unfolding of another layer of the poem as a spoken word performance (Prevallet, 2006c). Within the unfolding comes intra-textual references to the visual artists I was in collaboration with at the time. The strata unfolds into a life of the mind and I found myself thrust into a constellation of visual performance artists, sculptors, poets, activists and publishers.

INVESTIGATIVE POETICS: 2001-2010

Simultaneously with translating and collaborating visual artists, I was committed to conversations happening in the poetry community, specifically, around the question: is poetry political? I was well prepared to engage with these debates; from Surrealism I learned how to juxtapose opposing ideas, images, and forms in order to shape reality; I then

began to realize that conversations were happening among communities of artists and writers who were embodying these alchemical practices. My deep dive into the archive of Helen Adam and the ballad tradition introduced me to the immediate and urgent role that poets serve in society to shape not only language, but the measurable past. These considerations of the role of the poet in the larger society were integral to my Ecosomatic practice, ultimately bringing me to realize the role of the poet as healer. And yes, this is political.

During this decade I was researching theories and practices around the idea of “Investigative Poetics.” Coined by the poet Ed Sanders in 1968, I wrote and published three peer reviewed essays attempting to bring Sanders’ theory and practice of Investigative Poetics into the larger conversations happening in poetry (2001b, 2003a, 2009b). For Sanders, Investigative Poetics includes poetry that incorporates history (as in *Paterson*, *The Maximus Poems*, and *The Cantos*); my interpretation of it includes the interplay of history, inherited traumas, emotional transmigration, the body’s ecology, language’s ecosystem, and the way in which we document our conscious participation within this vast pantheon.

In “Writing is Never by Itself Alone: Six Mini Essays on Investigative Poetics” (2003a) I integrate Eduard Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation* into conversation with the frustrations of being an activist poet, protesting the War in Iraq with nothing but pithy slogans and signs (1997). I want poetry itself, the writing, publishing and performing of it, to be a site of discursive transformation that moves towards social justice. I wrote,

“Instead of buying gas masks and digging underground shelters (or moving to Canada), I turn my rage and confusion towards poetry, the unacknowledged legislation of words unacknowledged, to reveal both systems of knowing (content) and structures of ideology (form). Poetry, the work of radical linguistic, contextual, and metrical articulations, is a way to structure my sometimes perpendicular thought processes, transforming confusion and anger into form and meaning” (2003, p. 19).

The essay’s conclusion synthesizes the originality of my particular focus and the way that I, during this time, was coming into a theory of Ecosomatic poetics that would, as the decade evolved, become a meaningful and frequently cited contribution to the art:

So, when poetry intersects with the flow of geography, but also with the flow of plants, people, economies, vocabularies, and histories, it serves as a slowing down of language, fostering attention to memories, documents, language, and myths, encouraging a spiraling examination of – and thus a taking responsibility for – knowledge and history. In this way, poetry is not made simply form and content working in closed proximity to themselves. Often regarded as a discipline separate from the concerns of other art forms – much less those of 'the real world' – and of concern only to inbred cliques, poetics under the rubric of Relational Investigation signifies the de-homogenization, the fertile contamination, of poetry. Through these practices, poetry is infused with the flow of a larger reality, a space occupied with objects in constant motion, and with people – us – who exist in relation to both our personal histories, our political context, and the strata of the land upon which we are standing.

All of my published works in some way connect back to practices of language that are “infused with the flow... of personal histories, political context, and the strata of the land upon which we are standing” (2003, 31). During this time I composed three additional essays: “Investigating the Procedure: Poetry and the Source” attempts to zoom in on the exact moment that Investigative Poetics changed the landscape of poetics as it was being published in small magazines in the year 1976 (Prevallet, 2001b). “Among the Rubble” is an essay I composed for a volume of essays celebrating the poet George Oppen (2009b). I went deep into archival research at the Carlisle Army Base in Pennsylvania to unearth the story of Oppen’s role in the Battle of the Bulge during World War II. My goal in publishing these essays was not to define the field, but rather to see what productive syn(theses) might emerge. And although these particular essays are not personal, their motivating purpose is clearly a committed attempt to unearth a theory of language that allows for me to probe deeper investigative drives towards the political efficacy of the poetic arts.

Driven by deep understandings of the power of poetry to effect psychosomatic changes, it was clear from my research into Investigative Poetics that the social sphere was a central site where poetry might be able to infiltrate. If the role of the poet was to dwell in the space between incomprehensibility and form, it made sense that poets needed to abruptly intervene into social contexts where poems did not reside. And so, after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, I, along with members of the Belladonna Collaborative, developed a project called *PIPA: Poetry is Public Art*; the manifesto was published by Jena Osman in *Chain* (2004e) and the artist Kaia Sand included a chapter on PIPA in her book *Landscapes of Dissent: Guerrilla Poetry & Public Space* (Sand,

2008). Beginning as a simple wheat-pasting campaign, posting broadsides of poems all around the city which had been wounded to its core, the project evolved to include all acts of poetry that effectively interrupted the language used to describe traumatic historical events. Following this energy, in 2006, I along with a group of other poets including Anne Waldman and Magdalena Zurawski, made poems into signs to protest the presidential inauguration of George Bush. We traveled to Washington DC and joined the massive protest happening on the streets.

Feeling the energies, I composed the poem *OilOilOil*, a procedural poem published in *Shadow Evidence Intelligence* and subsequently in *The Brooklyn Rail*, that following Oulipo's N+7 procedure, inserts the word "Oil" into a stanza from Bush's speech to the United Nations, announcing the war on Iraq (2006g, 2003d). Here is the fifth stanza; by the time the poem gets to the seventh, the entirety of his speech is consumed by the word OIL:

IV. 5 The United States oil no oil oil the oil people; they've oil too oil in silent captivity. Oil oil the oil people is oil great moral cause, oil oil oil strategic goal. The oil oil oil deserve it; oil security of oil nations oil it. Free societies oil oil intimidate through cruelty and oil, and oil societies do oil oil the world oil oil murder. Oil United States oil oil and oil liberty oil a unified oil.

This poem then layered itself into an intervention of performance art at Naropa University, where I was performing alongside the performance artist Karen Finley (Prevallet, 2006d). After reciting the poem, I disrobed to reveal a red, white and blue bathing suit. I then assumed a version of the peaceful warrior pose, and proceeded to swallow a gas can filled with molasses. This performance was documented in Kathleen Fraser's online magazine, *How2* (Prevallet, 2008d) and later as a video documentary I assembled for BoogCity's tribute to Anne Waldman (2020c). What is central to the evolution of this work is my research into the somatic effects of language: the transmigration of the word from speech act to bodily performance, and from there, the poem's reflection of discourse in the larger social realm.

As the strata of my research got more and more layered, I would gradually come into an awareness that it would be through the transmission of energies between bodies, and

not the transmission of energy projected into the larger social realm, that would be the most efficacious way for me to contribute to both my field, and to the “political” realm. This is where my contribution to the field of Ecosomatic poetics pivots towards a more direct practice of healing.

*POIESIS*, 2006-2012

My creative output is not the result of planning, or knowing what I am going to do in advance. Rather, my contribution to the field of Ecosomatic poetics is the result of stuttering steps into the unformed space of *Poiesis*, where articulation *hasn't happened yet*. The etymology of *Poiesis* takes into account the movement towards form and action; the word itself integrates intellect and body (OED):

In philosophy, *poiesis* (from Ancient Greek: ποιήσις) is "the activity in which a person brings something into being that did not exist before." *Poiesis* is etymologically derived from the ancient Greek term ποιεῖν, which means "to make". The word is also used as a suffix, as in the biological term hematopoiesis, the formation of blood cells.

This one word envelops both the body and the mind as they co-create “something into being.” It also conveys one of the most creative acts of the human body: the formation of blood cells. Language—central to how humans live in and among worlds—and the body come into tangible relationship through the enactment of the poem itself. The poem is relevant to an active and committed existence amidst—and often in spite of—languages generated by whirlwinds of mass media and their competing discourses. The poem, a force of continual change, connects language to bodies in an observable way.

It is in this way that my poetics gradually moved towards a healing practice even as the work expanded into multiple genres: the poem moves between visual art, translation, and performance; it is itself an essay meandering off course into the uncertain terrain of formless ideas; it makes propositions from nebulous logics; it makes a shape-in-language come into being that did not exist before. The poem is *chora*: peripheral movements of mind that circulate a wandering in thought. Sometimes these meanderings remain

abstractly in the world of ideas, but other times, they open a knowledge that leads to self-examination and an ethical consciousness, leads to social and political action.

Rather than being surfed, absorbed, or otherwise received through mediated channels, poetic knowing comes through a form of action, namely the act of writing and the ultimate distillation of that writing into publication and performance. Somewhere in this process is the suspension of willpower—what Glissant, who I cite in my essays on Investigative Poetics, calls “errancy.” Poetry is an arrow that has no clear trajectory; it leads from periphery to periphery, and makes every periphery a center while simultaneously “abolishing the very notion of center and periphery (29)” And yet, something is brought into being that did not exist before, and that something has resonance, even if it cannot be easily understood.

My flirty poem “Red” illustrates an understanding of how poetic language, refusing to easily tell a story that has yet to be spoken, activates a rhythm (2001d, 2005c, 2006h). The story reveals itself through prosody. This is a love poem in which the object of love is language itself. It flickers, it dances, it alludes: a crime of passion has occurred, and the body is language:

1. RED

Windy, no retreat.  
Snowfall after the tease of sunshine.  
Now sun again, here in the room.  
And the blow, escalating around.  
This was waking up this morning.  
Foggy headed, the dreams took over.  
Now that I am an adult, I said.  
But it hardly mattered.

The light fell through the glass and broke my heart gently.  
I was not aware of any divergence from the original plan.

Only that the entering should be smooth.  
And we would steal away.  
Now the aftermath of thoughts which are ceaseless.  
A bullet through the main artery and he had me swooning.  
Was this the unthinkable five?

Red, in dictionary terms, is merely a word to be looked up.  
Not spread all over the floor.  
Otherwise, the words are too convoluted to ever make a story.  
It didn't seem likely that it would ever change.  
Perhaps we could find a far away retreat.  
Or a put-it-back-together-again.

We met at the statute of The Virgin Mary stomping on snakes.  
There is a fountain in the middle of the square.  
I was the one wearing red.  
The sequence to this story is mystical: hard to follow.  
We found that there was actually nothing that could be said.  
Between the two of us, it was always Sunday.

Errancy drives the movement and the energy of the language: not pre-scripted sense. In this poem and so many others, the story begins with subtle, sliding of states of mind and language that act to disrupt ideas, and emerge in a new place and time. The poem comes not out of the blue, but through the act of writing in the midst of deep somatic states of suffering: grief, loneliness, silence, chaos, fatigue, anxiety. Like the mind tuning into the still point of the turning wheel, adjusting itself into the present moment (and all of the pain that is surfacing there), an idea often shutters before it becomes a sentence. Here, the poem settles into its final form as mud filters down to the bottom of the glass, like mind settling down into a breath.

My research begins from the instability of my position and from all that I do not know; I start from chaos, proceed by the energy of sentences and emerge, possibly, into brief moments of epiphany that speak to larger momentums in consciousness. This investigative journey understands that there is no such a thing as a stable self to be uncovered, to find, or to manifest as truth. If there is an epiphany, it comes accidentally through the form the poem takes on the page, the music of disjointed syntax, or the persistence of following a thesis into a terrain far removed from its initial position. The difficulty is in the process and it mirrors life itself.

PEDAGOGY (2003-2012)

My father's suicide marked a pivot in the way that I framed my relationship to what I am describing here as "suffering"—the confusion and unintelligibility that reveals a purpose to my writing life. During this decade I became less sure that the techniques I had been implementing were efficacious; it was clear that in the political and social realms, there were stories that needed to be told; stories that marked an individual's karmic path that could be articulated through story.

This became reinforced by the fact that during this time I was teaching writing full time at St John's University to a student population that was predominantly a trade school (actuary sciences, pharmacy, criminal justice, and social work). Most of the students were not overly interested in my somatic theoretical approach. They wanted to know: how do I make money? I struggled to remain true to "what I know," knowing that my orientation as a poet, living precariously from gig to gig, seemed contrapuntal to my students' pursuits to find wealth, home, health, and family. This was exasperated by the fact that the institutions where I could find work had such steadfast ideas about the necessity of teaching grammar and composition as isolated, core classes. I found myself thrust about in the perilous adjunct winds between a wide range of institutions, ranging from prisons, homeless shelters, community colleges, quaint liberal arts colleges, and the Ivy League.

As the years waned, I slowly lost interest in teaching writing as craft or skill. This is partly because the university as an institution is built upon disembodied practices of teaching subjects as if one's own personal struggles and life history does not matter. The



Humanities are supposed to be a haven within the academy where intellectual inquiry can flourish through the expansion of questions into speculative forms; but it became very clear to me that the borderline of speculation stops at the therapeutic. Even as a teacher of writing, I was not able to comment on any of the clearly traumatic and disorienting personal issues going on in my students' lives. I just couldn't keep on contributing to the anxiety over "measurable results" that I was seeing universities emphasize, at the sacrifice of any genuine investigative practices or pursuits of knowledge, experience, and bodymind healing. The act of poesis prepares and compels me to understand suffering—my own and that of those whom I come into contact with.

The moment that the body and mind—that complex symmetry—has needs that transcend the limitations of questions and lines of inquiry, the academy, like a giant dragon, retorts: those of us straddling the inquiries of the body are cast out, much like the mind does when conveniently forgetting in order to maintain its hold on sanity. In spite of all my publications and the depths that I probed through poetic inquiry, I found myself unable to survive in the academy. The renouncing of the body in favor of language as free-floating signifiers, creating its own realities of textuality, *jouissance*, play, and linguistic feats that replicate into the printed page gradually struck me as hollow and meaningless.

Richard Shusterman, mentioned earlier in this document, has admirably attempted to heal the severed academy of its body in his articulation of "somaesthetics"—a movement to save not only the academy but the psyche of its inhabitants, and all those who have followed in its wake.

"Not only is the body wrongly neglected because it more fully expresses our true humanity by displaying both human power and human vulnerability, but also its indispensable instrumentality ironically relegates it to the devalued realm of service (associated with servants and women and the mere mechanics of material means), while the humanities are instead identified with the pursuit of the highest and purest of spiritual ends—venerated forms of knowledge concerning classics, philosophy, literature, and the arts. Why, then (goes the argument), should we humanists busy ourselves with studying the body (as the means) when we can concentrate directly on enjoying the ends—on studiously appreciating our spiritual and artistic achievements (10).

The pursuit of art-for-arts sake, or metaphysics as a philosophical exercise became impossible for me to participate in, either as a teacher or as a writer myself. The academy was hostile and unsustainable; I wanted to work with people individually, to help them with their anxieties and blocks. And so, in 2010 I left my poetry career and my academic ambitions behind: I became certified in hypnotherapy and reiki and would spend the next ten years researching the therapeutic modalities of language as a healing entity. My attempts to bridge the therapeutic with the academic resulted in several essays published in the journal for the International Association of Counselors and Therapists (2105, 2016a, 2016b). I integrated all of this into two books (2012c, 2014), a series of workshops, and a therapeutic practice I called *Trance Poetics*. I was able to integrate this work into numerous poems and essays published in literary magazines, somatic writing journals, and anthologies (2019a, 2020a, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c). My continued efforts are to publish and integrate my deep research into poetic language with my work as a hypnotherapist; there is no separation between the work I am doing to heal bodies—both my own and others—and the work I am doing to bring poems and other creative works into form. This shift towards the therapeutic also marked a distinct change in my poetic output. I no longer wanted to hide behind language; I wanted it to surface into full lyric epiphanic beauty. It was during this time that I “shadowed” T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets* into a book I called *Everywhere Here and in Brooklyn* (2012d). This book marks the synthesis of all my years blurring genres, coming into the political sphere, and thinking about language as a healing modality.

#### Conclusion: Ecosomatic Poetics as Practice (2012-2022)

As I studied complementary therapies (reiki, hypnosis) and became a practitioner, I recognized that an understanding of metaphoric categories is key to the bridge I am forming between poetic language, my creative work, and the therapy I was practicing. Metaphors are more than literary devices for communicating and layering meaning. When a word or phrase is, for example, applied to an object or action to which it is not “literally applicable” (velvet to describe cat; ceiling to describe sexism), neurons and synapses converge to process a state of bewilderment. To recognize, for example, that the phrase “pins and needles” is not literally the sensation of pain, or that a rose is not actually the feeling of love

is to come into an existential awareness that *words can never describe how I really feel*. In other words, as Merleau-Ponty reveals, language is inextricably bound to any experience a person is having, because simultaneous to feeling, for example, love, we are gesturing towards language to describe it. But words, no matter how poetically arranged, are not themselves the object of our love; just as saying “it feels like ice running through my blood” is not the pain itself. As Merleau-Ponty writes,

“No one will deny that here the process of expression brings meaning into being or makes it effective and does not merely translate it...Thought is no ‘internal’ thing, and does not exist independently of the world and of words (195).

The process of expression unfolds over a lifetime just as, in my case, the inarticulability of preverbal trauma was expressed through fragments of poetic language and imperfect gestures of performance over many years. In this way, my research spirals around an understanding that language communicates what lies beyond language; as a field of potential, language seeds a wider peripheral senseachingbody in pain, or in love, to express what is emerging, what is *coming through*. Always emerging, trying (*essayer*), and stuttering towards articulation. Again, Merleau-Ponty:

The process of expression, when it is successful, does not merely leave for the reader and the writer himself a kind of reminder, it brings the meaning into existence as a thing at the very heart of the text, it brings it to life in an organism of words, establishing it in the writer or the reader, as a new sense organ, opening a new field or a new dimension to our experience (194-195).

Through the poem, language creates its own body, its own heart and its own organs; it opens fields and dimensions of being alive, in joy and in suffering. It is in this way that through poetic language, “sentences that are alive with words” (1964, p. 195) also opens the biochemistry of healing. In trying to find, for example, language to express the grieving at the heart of me after my father’s suicide, I came to the realization that “If the body of the text has suffering at its root, then language will take a fragmented, torn- apart form, as if it too is suffering” (2007b). Here is a passage from *I, Afterlife*, for example, where the attempt to articulate the somatic experience of grief must break down before synthesizing into an articulation:

Language is itself broken by the realization that it can do nothing more than fill in the division between silence and pain with arbitrary, black-and-white letters. Certainly, it can valiantly attempt to be lofty and articulate, and although this may comfort readers who are expecting comfort, it does nothing to mend language's own feeling of inadequacy. If the body of the text has suffering at its root, then language will take a fragmented, torn- apart form, as if it too is suffering. Poetry that seeks this kind of engagement with language is positioned to absorb the brokenness of grief making elegy a malleable tradition whose significance lies precisely in its mutability. And as the century's end and the century's beginning point towards the swift co-opting of humanity by a global economy that could care less for human needs outside the need to spend money, the elegiac tradition as it evolves is perhaps no longer concerned with articulating the unspeakable...

.....  
.....  
.....  
:::

...but rather with pushing meaning into form and form into the matrix of systems that own us. And as language works through form to push at oppressive power structures, it becomes necessarily damaged. The elegy comes out of the over-saturation of meaning in the world and through being burdened with signification explodes into form. So, the fragments that Mallarmé wrote in 1871 after the death of his 8-year-old son Anatole, point towards a new form of elegy, one in which inarticulation and fragment step in to represent the embodied suffering of grief—there is no closure.

cruel

etc.

trappings

Oh! allow—no

you still want...

Stéphane Mallarmé, *A Tomb for Anatole* (p. 89)

I have come to understand that poetry holds space for the articulation of the unspeakable; it is what bubbles forth from the periphery of subtle felt sensation, into

consciousness, and into form. My concern became how to embody and *live* this understanding of language as a practice. I studied many meditative practices and paid attention to how language was used to induce meditative states. Through this work, it became important to my process of expression that I lean closer and closer to the therapeutic applicability of poetic language. I wanted to create specific techniques to induce an embodied theory of Ecosomatic awareness (2021c, 2014).

#### A PRACTICE

I do not have the leeway in this thesis to explain my entire hermeneutic of healing practices and case studies. But to conclude, I would like to offer an example of how I have braided together theory and practice. My poem, “I live in a borrowed multiplicity: Word sculpting Coolidge” (2015b) illustrates how I work with poetic language in a therapeutic context. Like a mushroom which replicates its structure even as it spreads, this poem synthesizes an Ecosomatic language practice of morphing and shaping through many forms. It originates both a language process (sculpting an original poem into a consolidated shadow poem) and a therapeutic method (of inducing a state of peripheral vision). The origin of this poem, Clark Coolidge’s “Ten Poems,” opens like the ray florets of a dandelion flower, creating a logic within language’s trans-metaphoric core (Coolidge, 2001). Here is a brief excerpt of Coolidge’s original poem:

Floyd Atmosphere had his cups repossessed  
they were amethyst and the buckweed falls  
I think it's arbitrary the poem  
shaped by idiots rising like a sun  
thinking the universe doesn't get it  
Gogo Flam arrived home goose step by back stoop  
I'll give the wall everything even blood it's higher  
Spodumene Bob presiding draws mouth on glass  
a highway to the moon the only bout they'll join  
ugh said the centipede it's a classic!

Centering into the flow of errancy and association that Coolidge’s poem invites, as well as the rhythmic incantation of words that flicker into and around each other, I sculpted

the poem, "I live in a Borrowed and Often Tender Multiplicity" from the tender clay of the original (2012d, 2015b):

A gust, cups, clouds,  
amethyst, buckweed  
burns like sun nervous  
& ready for the beach,  
till the ceiling falls  
in bed maybe the smoke  
oven, clear light  
walls cave in  
comets to blame  
deep suffering  
mundane shock  
make it right,  
come on,  
correct things,  
sob story  
tattered tape  
try not to slobber  
rice crackers and cakes  
helmet? hornet's nest?  
boats snap braincase loose  
s-e-e p-i-e m-e-l-t-i-n-g  
lineaments of fire  
head closing in  
due to silence  
we stayed together  
though quite worn  
through and bundled  
blow things up  
like wacky adhesive  
dried in drive-through shakes,  
silence brings unwanted guests,  
someone blow it up  
or bring on brewskies  
in a hunch the streets outside  
burst & slim down to a point  
golden source  
your cusp a corpse,  
I will tell you what to do:  
pull surface moisture from skin,

your grotesque sweating soul,  
nothing but strong daylight  
fist on the centipede  
latent death  
black gleam salt slug  
rosy featured  
grass as a pointer  
all from one hand  
limited desk  
before the metal starts flying  
dull, cowards  
no way I know to survive  
blood in the vortex  
fixed on futurity  
see the bone twist before it falls  
eyes growing darker  
hard lived lessons  
voice gone scratchy  
browbeaten  
blizzard coming  
bullets whiz  
brightness bombs  
whittles sympathy.

“I live in a Borrowed and Often Tender Multiplicity” is a poem that, like a kombucha, grows organically into more poems. Originally published in the *Boston Review* (chosen by Tyrone Williams as second place winner of the magazine’s annual contest), it then seeded itself into my book *Everywhere Here and in Brooklyn* to converge with T.S. Eliot’s rich rhythmic layering of mystical lyric in the *Four Quartets*. It then appears again to form the texture of the poem, “I was so tired this morning and now here I am awake,” which I wrote in collaboration with Edwin Torres for a Center for Book Arts Broadside, which was subsequently published in *ETC: The Journal of Applied Somatics* (2018b). Most recently, the poem forms a central seed of my most recent manuscript, *This Language Needs a Body to Fill It*, which I recently performed as a language and sound performance immersion for Station Hill Press’s Intermedia Lab, at Greenkill Gallery in Kingston, NY (2022).

This poem’s spore-like evolution and spawning of multiple poems, each with a slightly different focus and intent, helps to illustrate how my theoretical and creative work have synthesized into a signature pattern that I utilize in my unique Trance Poetics practice:

the practice of moving the language of thought into a wider peripheral field so that the body can recalibrate into the present moment of breath, circulation, movement, and thoughtful ease. If when I “turn inward” I ignore the environment—the ecosystem that allows me to breathe, and the gravitational force that allows my body to sink down, even deeper, as the space that surrounds me expands—then I am effectively prioritizing my individuality—my unique experience—as if I am part and parcel, separate and looking for some relief “within myself.” This rarely works as a medicine.

In therapeutic practices, peripheral vision opens an evolving somatic language experience “beyond” metaphors, stories, and categories. This state of being alive in a wider field even while being aware of the complex muddle of the present moment is an effective way to help a person “out” of uncomfortable biochemical states such as anxiety, panic, overwhelm, and grief. Peripheral vision is a meditation practice of staring at a fixed spot on the wall, or in the distance, taking deep breaths to soften your gaze, and then coming into an awareness of the space that surrounds you. It is a practice that quickly brings a person to trance because when focused on the space that surrounds you, thoughts begin to dissipate into that space; breathing slows down, and you are receptive to an awareness of your body connecting to “everything else” that is not your complexity, your suffering. I have come to understand that peripheral vision is a central practice for any therapy; like Ecosomatic poetics, it necessitates a collapsing of metaphoric categories that work to keep the mind separate from the body (“inside” vs. “outside”), and from the wider eco-systems of which we find ourselves in relation with other people, animals, birds, plants, colors, smells, etc.

In my practice, poetic language induces peripheral vision. To illustrate this, I’ll briefly recount a performance I enacted to demonstrate this for the International Association of Counselors and Therapists’ annual conference in 2018. I began with a guided visualization to induce a state of peripheral vision; from there, I read the poem, “I live in a varied and complex multiplicity,” very slowly (IACT, 2018.) To be in the space of listening to language that rejects metaphor and meaning, while at the same time holding peripheral vision, is not immediately soothing— to hear language without any gesture towards “making sense” is profoundly confusing, even anxiety-producing. But after few minutes of sitting with discomfort in this way, the mind quits trying to make sense, and settles into a different



relationship to not just the language of the poem, but the syntax of inner dialogue: it too is frequency, tone, rhythm, and association. In the space that surrounds, language quite literally dissipates into the background of thought and feeling. In this moment, a listener can become aware of the dissolutions of categories of the mind, even as they are happening.

These poems and performances synthesize my poetic practices, my theoretical practices, and my therapeutic practices into an Ecosomatic happening that induces peripheral vision and collaborative composition. Like the ever-shifting contours of the mind and body moving in relation to the strata of being alive, poems change depending on the context in which they appear. In this way, through the amplification of images that cannot be pinned down, poetry expresses the nuance of being in a languaging body. The now swiftly replicating field of Ecosomatic poetics moves language as thought moves, into and around constantly changing biological and ecological systems. In the end, neither theory nor practice can wholly explain language's pneuma; its creative life force is poetry, and it is poems which both hold and disseminate the knowledge.

tuning  
forks drop pitch  
down into mind  
at play

digitally remaster sandbox  
to fit only one way

look out while wondering  
as dog barks *let me in*

warm tea wandering  
hem skirts sweep kale crumbs

avoid another's outside  
while holding anchor to self

drop tantrums into heart center  
dissipate wandering eardrums

make love to candlelight  
avoid wax

when in mind of winter  
embody evergreen

tune again, stretch into listening  
as distractable God-sounds  
scatter light

## Impact Statements

Kristin Prevallet is a technician of the marvelous, working at the intersection of individual and collective experience. A spirit of fearless inquiry runs through her work, whether it is situated in the realm of poetry or prose, practice or performance. Working from a deeply engaged curiosity toward the unbounded relation between art, consciousness, and somatic experience, Prevallet enacts a unique vision of the transformative possibilities of embodied knowledge. Her ability to address the nature of the human condition within the larger categorical systems of family, state, and ecosystem, gives her work a profound urgency and reach.

Elizabeth Willis, PhD  
Author of *Alive: New and Selected Poems*  
Permanent faculty of the Iowa Writer's Workshop

Among my earliest memories of interacting with Kristin Prevallet would be around 2000 when I filmed her for my video art project *art is/poetry is/music is (Speaking Portraits)* in which I ask practitioners of those arts to say what *it* (art, poetry, music) *is* in their view. She began with: “Poetry is a direct engagement with the world, and by the world I guess I mean the inner connectedness of plant life, animal life, people life, language, and all sorts of things, and poetry sort of taps into that in different ways....” Among the rest of her sharply articulated comments is the notion that this engagement “shapes our minds.” (*poetry is*, Vol. I is online at [art-is-international.org](http://art-is-international.org).) Having read a lot of her always powerful work, including her extensive writing on “trance poetics” and more recently *Ecosomatics*, I’m struck by how clear her core position was already twenty years ago. Few poets have reflected so extensively on their gradual development and creative process in the richly detailed way she has, which she lays out in periods of focus in poetic, artistic, performative, political, and scholarly work; and yet what stands out is the consistency and coherence of her underlying stance.

I say this prominently here to suggest that, while she articulates the biographical, psychological, political, and linguistic aspects of her extraordinary development and productive achievement, the main point would be that she has all along been realizing an actual intrinsic vision that her life as a whole variously embodies. In all of the wide range of activities that make up her life story and its remarkable nuancing of intention, there’s a passionate motivation to inhabit the active nexus of public-personal enaction; it aims at personal transformation that is also world changing. It constitutes a visionary *linguality*—a performative matrix of reality-altering languaging. It is also as selfless and compassionate as it is self-revelatory in its personally relentless process.

Kristin’s work embodies a root poietic principle: *language made whole makes living being whole*. It heals by awakening being to its interactive wholeness with life in its necessary diversity. Her work is rare in that it knows that it’s doing such healing, and it thrives on that awareness; it constitutes an (eco)politics of enactive self-true language. Her

story of self-healing is what Keats called, and Robert Duncan echoed, the allegory of a poet's life. Her intricate reflections on that self-aware life process become a kind of template of initiating and sustaining a poietic Ecosomatics. In this way she has already for many years been an influential part of a new kind of creative ecological thinking rooted in the conscious body and mind. I see that thinking as having been clearly set forth by Gregory Bateson in the 1960s notion of an "ecology of mind." This is the new thinking that our planet now needs—beyond category or isolated discipline, a thinking in open creative bodymind process that draws from any and all disciplines and is focused within a living ecology. Kristin Prevallet is, and has long been, a key participant in this vitally transformative assemblage of human energies, a planet-healing coalition of creative enactivism. Maybe that's what used to be called a "movement"; I hope so, and that it's a vast one.

Like many others I learn from and am enriched by any work of hers that I encounter.

George Quasha

poet, artist, publisher of Station Hill Press

author of *Poetry in Principle* and *Waking from Myself*

It gives me great pleasure to write this “impact statement” in relation to the writings of Kristin Prevallet. While I will have something brief to say about her profession as a hypnotherapist and ecosomatic practitioner, these fields are largely beyond my expertise and knowledge even as the latter is akin to a more general eco-poetics which I, as she notes, have written about. I will thus begin with my first “contact” with Kristin, which happened via language (quite appropriate to her Ph. D. thesis). Specifically, it was through the poetics journal *Apex of the M* (1994-1997) that I first encountered Kristin as an editor (if only as a co-editor), which then set me seeking out her own creative writings in a variety of language-centered journals, including Kathleen Fraser’s *HOW(ever)* (1983-1991) and Jena Osman’s and Juliana’s Spahr’s *Chain* (1994-2005). This was a crucial time for me as a poet as I was slowly setting aside (but not discarding) the lyric tradition in which I’d been trained. Language writing proved to be, for me, an exciting, if intimidating, exit from traditional lyricism and narrative poetry. What excited me about *Apex of the M* was that this was the first post Language writing journal I came across that built on—not snubbed or ignored—the important ludic and “irrational” insights of the widespread poetic investigations that proceeded under the rubric of Language writing. And Kristin, it seemed to me, was at the forefront of that second generation of Language writers.

Around the same time (late 1990s and early 2000s), I was being drawn into the debates around eco-poetics and its departures and differences from “environmental” and “nature” poetry. It was through my good friend, the poet Brenda Iijima, that I was first informed about the latest “turn” in Kristin’s writing, Ecosomatics. I was already familiar with the somatic work of CA Conrad and others but what Kristin was doing seemed to be something much deeper than the aestheticization of the body detectable in some of Conrad’s writings. It was in this context that I returned to her deeply felt, deeply executed, memoir, *I: Afterlife*, about the death and life of her father. Of course, that slim book is much more: a harrowing, even disturbing, meditation on language and its limits, on human

memory and its precarity, etc. Although I was not conscious of it, I am certain that what I read of Kristin in those 1990s journals had a profound effect on the poems in my first two books of poetry, *c.c.* (2002) and *On Spec* (2008), the latter especially since it ends with a long poem that looks beyond that specific book to what would become, in future writings (prose and poetry), my interest in ecopoetics.

While it is true that I cannot speak with authority about Kristin's practice as a Reiki hypnotherapist, I continue to be interested in the way this practice informs her Ecosomatics writings. More important, Ecosomatics has become a significant sector of ecopoetics as climate change, to say nothing of the waves of pandemics (Ebola, SARS, Covid, etc.), continues to destabilize our sense of the "normative." Along with the work of Ecosomatics poets like Petra Kuppers and CA Conrad, Kristin's writings are at the forefront of current social, cultural and political movements driven by an understanding that the very notion of the human "body," and perhaps the human itself, must be rethought, reconceptualized, beyond and above Cartesian dualisms.

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I have been reading, listening to, and deriving aesthetic and intellectual pleasure and spiritual sustenance from the diverse work of Kristin Prevallet for well over twenty years now, dating all the way back to her editorial work on *Apex of the M* and coming all the way up through the 2013 *Trance Poetics*. I'll say immediately of *Trance Poetics* that a recently graduated PhD student of mine used it to excellent effect in his creative / critical dissertation on queer magical poetics (and the role of the somatic in such a poetics). That's only one measure of the reach and influence of Prevallet's work. I have taught *I, Afterlife* in a number of graduate and undergraduate classes on the hybrid text and students have not only loved it but sometimes honored it with imitations. Prevallet has visited a number of those classes and been memorably generous with her time and energy.

I've heard Prevallet read, perform, and give critical talks at numerous conferences over the years, most notably at the University of Maine biennial "Decades" conferences and at my own Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900. She combines a poet's ear and imagination with critical and editorial rigor, not least in the labor of love (literally, for a valued predecessor, an important figure for the relationship of musical and verbal rhythms to bodily rhythms) that is her *Helen Adam Reader*—one of the first texts to complicate and counter male-dominated narratives of the New American tradition. My own critical and teaching interests combine documentary poetics, procedural poetics, hybrid genres, and work with the visual page. That means that the author of *Scratch Sides*, *Shadow Evidence Intelligence*, *I, Afterlife*, and her rewriting of *Four Quartets*, *Everywhere Here and In Brooklyn*, is an ongoing part of my thinking about poetry. (On the procedural, I also think of her wonderful post-9/11 rewriting of Whitman's "Apostroph," which along with parts of *Everywhere* I've used in a "Contemporary American Poetry and Early American Texts" course.) *I, Afterlife* is a particularly embodied book, I always feel, including in its ability to embody loss and absence, and in that sense it anticipates Prevallet's move into an explicitly Ecosomatic poetics—as does, somewhat differently, her powerful 2010 essay "We Sit Like Hot Stones," which I always teach along with *I, Afterlife*. To locate that piece in terms of "affect theory" would only trivialize it—but it does foreshadow how Prevallet's work comes

more and more to investigate how human beings can combine deep personal work, a spiritual practice, and language use rooted in avant-garde traditions.

In sum, Kristin Prevallet's work deserves both acknowledgment and celebration for its range, its depth, its persistent investigative quality (artistic, intellectual, and emotional), its expansion (or perhaps explosion) of genre limits that provides multiple models for further practice, and its ongoing exploration of poetry's relationship to a redefined "human." She may rather self-effacingly describe herself as living between the cracks of the mid-1990s Buffalo Poetics Program, but she's done as much as anyone of that time and place to preserve, deepen, enrich, and enliven all that we might mean by "poetry."

Dr. Alan Golding  
Professor of English  
Director, Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900, 2013-2020



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I first met Kristin Prevallet in the late 1990s when a fellow poet recommended that I send work to the literary magazine she was editing at the University of Buffalo, *Apex of the M*. I grew interested in the power and excitement of what she was publishing and began to follow who would turn out to be one of the most nourishing and exhilarating poets along my writing path for the next 20 years. We grew closer when we worked together on a project to research French poetry, delighting in each other's opinions and philosophies, discovering a similar sense of the ridiculous, which went along with our sense of questioning anything presented to us as *fait accompli*. I found that Kristin has the ability to see through the smoke screens and the feints, the illusions, and that, in addition, she has the courage to walk through those smoke screens, with bold curiosity to discover what lay behind them, and from there, to make beautiful change for the better. Everything she does has her full passion and commitment to it—she does not compromise, but she brings her heart to it.

I always look forward to Kristin's readings and books, knowing that I will come away from them looking at some aspect of the world in a different way, more eager to go back to my own work and figure out where I went down a fake path, or took a lazy way out. She does not adhere to the usual canons and hierarchies, instead looking with always-fresh eyes at possibilities overlooked or discarded by the powers-that-be. Even more importantly, she takes her work and thinking beyond the restricted spheres of academia—finding ways to innovate within day jobs, parenting, partnerships: with Kristin, poetry is a full-spectrum experience that does not end on the page, but instead extends into an entire way of existing. While, like other innovators, she has certainly paid her prices for leaving the safety of academia, she has stayed true to her path, lending essential inspiration to me and many other poets who hope to change the word (world) in both definable and indefinable ways.

Marcella Durand  
author of *The Prospect* and recipient of the 2021 C.D. Wright Award in Poetry

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Kristin Prevallet is known and admired as an archivist scholar scientist teacher publisher therapist philosopher environmentalist economist critic activist essayist performer poet. Through her many deeds these seemingly discrete fields reveal themselves to be one immense wide-open field, in which we have seen, are seeing, will see, the long sinuous, continuous arc of her thought, her art.

I deliberately omit the commas that would conventionally divide Prevallet's various professions and vocations to acknowledge her insistence on, and embodiment of, the at-oneness of those personae, her dissolving of the delusion of their separateness so that she and they—and we—may move forward as one infinitely complex ecosystem. It has become clear that we will *only* be able to move forward by cultivating an awareness of that diverse, coherent reality.

Even as we witness the worldwide catastrophic harm that the delusion of separateness has fostered, Kristin shows us the radical healing potential of being who and what we really are—a breathing-thinking-feeling-willing mindbody—capable of saying what must be said and, most importantly, capable of growth and change.

Kristin Prevallet's contribution to the field of Ecosomatic Poetics is immensely important, the detailed map of an explorer heading right into the heart of it.

Billie Chernicoff  
Poet and editor of *Salt Magazine*  
Author of *Minor Secrets*

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It is a delight to write an impact statement for Kristin Prevallet. Years ago, she appeared on my radar at an AWP conference (Association of Writers and Writing Programs). A mutual colleague thought her work overlapped mine. I have since attended her readings and talks and read her published work.

What strikes me about her poetry is its investigative, somatic, evocative, and dreamlike qualities. Her poetry plays with form and puts into words what evades immediate capture. The body is silent, its experiences embedded in the flesh, until one teases them onto the line. This tease, or drawing forth, is what takes place in her poetry. In *Trance Poetics*, a primary work of hers that mixes poetry, discussion, and instruction, she addresses how poetic language and healing combine, that poetry has the ability “to take us out of minds.” Every exit from the mind is also an entry and hers takes us into the body, particularly the unconscious as it makes its way into a poem. She uses poetry to illuminate the flesh and reach embodied knowing. The body’s silence finds poetic form. She applies trance poetics to herself and clients, turning traumas that lead to pain and dissociation into language that reassembles sense.

Her poetry, much of it experimental, draws from surrealist, collage, ecopoetic and investigative traditions. She has been active in the experimental poetry “scene” and is an informative voice in its conversation as seen in her contributions in poetry and essays about poetry. Her essay "Investigating the Procedure: Poetry and the Source" in the collection *Telling It Slant: avant-garde poetics of the 1990's*, (editors Mark Wallace and Steven Marks), questions the validity of various poetry forms and puts forth that poems themselves are acts of inquiry, a verbal space to unmake and remake meaning

I’m glad to know that she is pursuing her PhD through University of Gloucestershire where I happily completed a PhD in 2021. Her trance driven restoration of meaning and sense awareness through poetry distinguishes her work. Her contributions to poetry and its

impact on consciousness and healing are a welcome addition to the emerging field of somatic writing.

Cheryl Pallant, PhD  
author of *Writing and the Body in Motion: Awakening Voice Through Somatic Practice*.

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The field of Eco-Somatic Poetics—the study of poetic practices based on the mind-body connection to the environment aimed for restoring the human and non-human world—seems new, but is decades old. As 2010 seems a watershed moment for American poetry and its critics to “loosened up,” along with the power of making connections through the internet, this emerging field is growing. As the number of practitioners are appearing at the national level, there are two names who have traveled with me since I learned of Eco-Somatic Poetics fifteen years ago: CA Conrad and Kristin Prevallet.

In this impact statement, I can’t express enough how Kristin Prevallet continues contributing to the American poetic landscape through published poetry, essays and books on poetics, social media, online workshops, and appearances. *Shadow Evidence Intelligence* (2006) and *I, Afterlife* (2007) were instrumental in reshaping how I saw poetry—what poetry can “do” for others. The first book exemplified how to create a concept for writing, then complete it through eco-somatic writing. *I, Afterlife* showed me how one can compile different sources through a nuanced work, a poetry which has no answers but only representation.

When my colleague Dr. Jericho Hockett (Psychology) and I taught a course named *The Psychology of Poetics*, two of the sections we taught included Prevallet’s work. We used *Trance Poetics* (2013) as a required text and included ourselves with our students in-class writing to take the steps laid out in the book to place ourselves in a trance for writing out of “unconscious” thought. The students affirmed what Jericho and I knew out of our use of the book—that somatic poetics creates not only fresh poetry, but the ritual for writing that raises students from being novices to poets. We were surprised by this, but we were not surprised by the quality of writing.

Getting down to brass tacks, we are all in need of healing, as we all experienced the trauma of being placed in sheltering due to COVID-19. This is why I am excited about Eco-Somatic Poetics and the work—the hybrid of writing and research—Kristin Prevallet is creating, adding to the dialogue to help find a way to writing poetry that is truly life-saving. I

perused a sneak-peak at her thesis and am so excited to see how it will materialize into her further collective works, our collective reading pleasure and need.

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## Publications by Kristin Prevallet (presented by genre)

For selected links, contact information, and to keep up with current work see

<https://www.trancepoetics.com/>] and Prevallet's PennSound audio author home page:

<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Prevallet.html>

## Poetry

### Books

#### ***Perturbation, My Sister.* Lawrence, KS: First Intensity Press, 1997.**

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Translations:

*D'un Devenir Fantôme: Formes poétiques en temps de deuil.* Translated by Emmanuel Hocquard, Juliette Valéry, Sarah Riggs, Omar Berrada, and David Lespiau, Pascal Poyet. Marseilles, France: Un bureau sur l'Atlantique at cipM, 2006.

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- "The Voice Variouslly Heard," Brooklyn, NY: *Insurance*, Fall 2002. 13-18.  
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***Everywhere Here and in Brooklyn (A Four Quartets).* Brooklyn, NY: Belladonna, 2012.**

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"Trespass," New South Wales, AU: *Boxkite: A Journal of Poetry & Poetics* (Issue 2), Fall 1998, 264-265.  
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"Dark Thinking Through Daylight," Denver, CO: *Copper Nickel* (Issue 8), 2007, 17-31.  
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"Another Century" and "Still Life," Boulder, Co: *Colorado Review*, (Issue 37.3), 2010, 136-137.  
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## Essay

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- "An Extraordinary Enchantment: Helen Adam, Robert Duncan, and The San Francisco Renaissance," Edinburgh, Scotland: *The Edinburgh Review*, Fall 1997, 115-129.
- "The Reluctant Pixie-Pool: A Recovery of Helen Adam in Honor of Robin Blaser," *The Recovery of the Public World* edited by Charles Watts and Edward Byrne, Burnaby, B.C., 1999, 114-124.
- "PIPA (Poetry Is Public Art)," Philadelphia, PA: Chain (No. 11), 216-217.
- "Cities and Finality," (*the invisible city*) edited by Marcella Durand, New Orleans, LA: Erato Press, 2001, np.
- "The Worm Queen Emerges: Helen Adam and the Forgotten Ballad Tradition" in *Girls Who Wore Black: Women Writing the Beat Generation*, edited by Ronna Johnson and Nancy Grace. Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002, 25-44.
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- "Particular Particular Field Poetics," in *The Body In Language* edited by Edwin Torres, Denver, Co: Counterpath Press, 2019, 124-130.
- "Poetics of Gramarye: Alchemy of the Word," in *A Poetics of Criticism*, co-edited Juliana Spahr, Pam Rehm, and Mark Wallace. Buffalo, NY: Leave Books, 1995.
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### *Performance*

- "*The Last Tape*." The Movement Research Festival, The Center at West Park, May 2012.
- "*Seasons (Quartets). Winter*." Performed with Colette Alexander, Dixon Place, October 2010.
- "*Seasons (Quartets). Fall: Orange*." The Living Theater, February 2010.
- "*The Square Root of Love*," performed with Colette Alexander in The Rhythm of Structure series curated by Karen Finley and John Sims, The Bowery Poetry Club, February 2010.
- "*Clutter*" staged by Verse Theater Manhattan at the Bleeker Street Theater for the Howl! Festival, September 2009.
- "*I, Afterlife*." Solo performance at Naropa University, July 2008.
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“Past Time Based,” Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: *Conjunctions*, (No. 42) Spring 2004, 371-374.

“Metaphors Out Of This World,” Lacyville, PA: Unlimited Human: Journal of the International Association for Counselors and Therapists (Issue 126, Vol. 2: Spring 2015).

“Revisiting the Six Step-Reframe,” Lacyville, PA: Unlimited Human: Journal of the International Association for Counselors and Therapists. (Issue 132, Vol. 2: Spring 2018).

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Excerpts from *Visualize Comfort* appeared in:

“You, Resourceful”: Performance for the Poetry Project at St. Mark’s Church. Fall 2006.

*Everywhere Here and in Brooklyn: A Four Quartets.* Brooklyn, NY: Belladonna Collaborative, 2012.

“One for the Spirits: Automatic Writing,” Lacyville, PA: Unlimited Human: Journal of the International Association for Counselors and Therapists. (Issue 128, Vol. 2: Spring 2016.)

### *Journals and anthologies*

“To Dance is to Preposition, As to Language is to Writing.” Somatic Writing Collective Series, Vol. 1, No. 1 edited by Kate Morgan, 2021, 41-43.

“The Enclosure: A Preposition.” *Currents: Journal of The BodyMind Centering Association*, Spring 2021, 51-52.

“Syntactical Drip: Freedom, Hypnosis, and Medicines of Language.” *Forecast: Analogue Predictions*, Issue 10, Spring 2023.