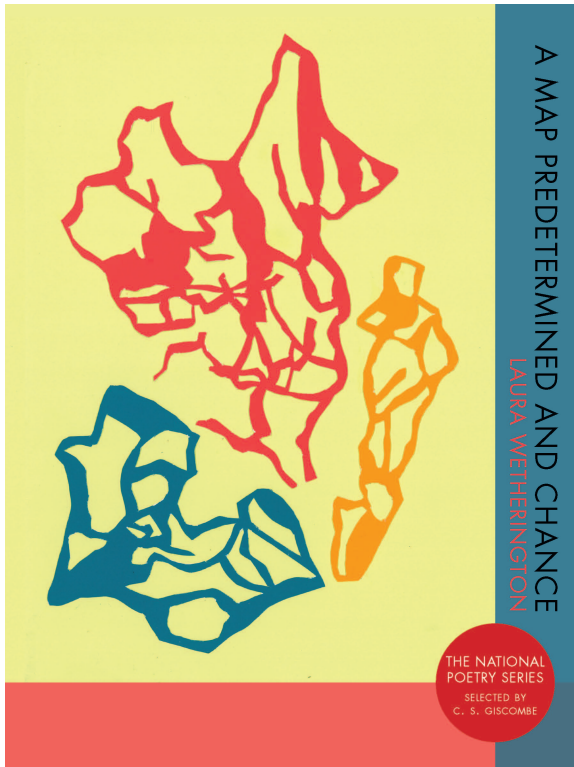


**HOW I ARRIVED AT WRITING
AND WHAT WRITING
ARRIVED**

LAURA WETHERINGTON, POET

MY POEMS ARE WEIRD

Nature a map predetermined and chance



We cannot get away from the way our minds solidify:

wood becomes lightning which turns back into wood

while the lightning peels past gravity

far far past the human eye against lines of force this is our eyelight.

Movement is a cliff always falling when we are at sea.

The wave comes through our feet, the duende,

then shoots out eyelightning like thunder we are quiet.

We choose into what we cannot get out of:

the way we hold our bodies.

We hold a boat of lightning in our hands.

Therefore, we are light into wood in the sea,

which is a shorthand for misunderstanding

or a shorthand for anything out of reach.

In whichever way we meander backwards from falling

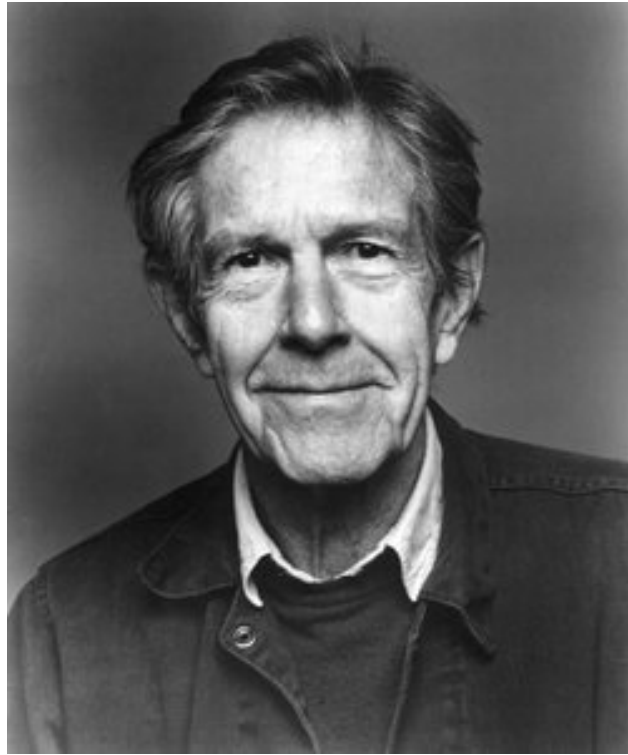
everyone is hello and everyone a wave

then a sea change.

LAKE SABAGO, MAINE



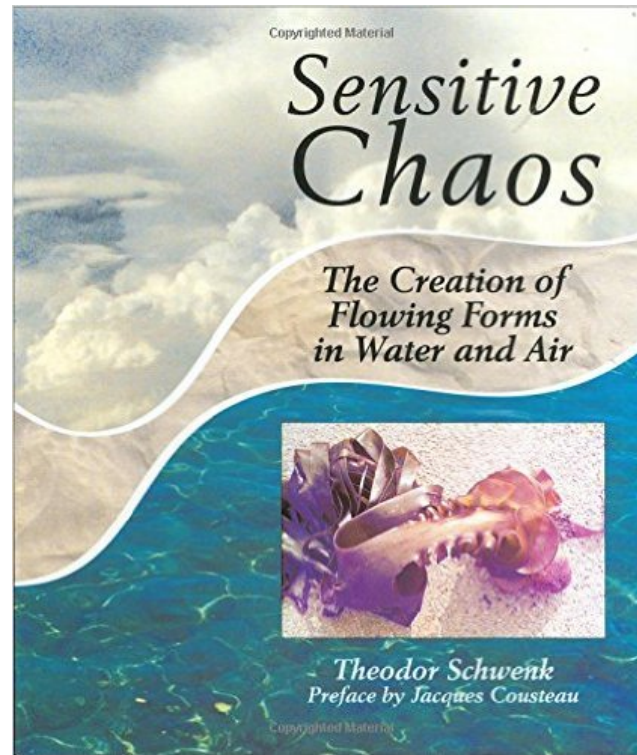
JOHN CAGE



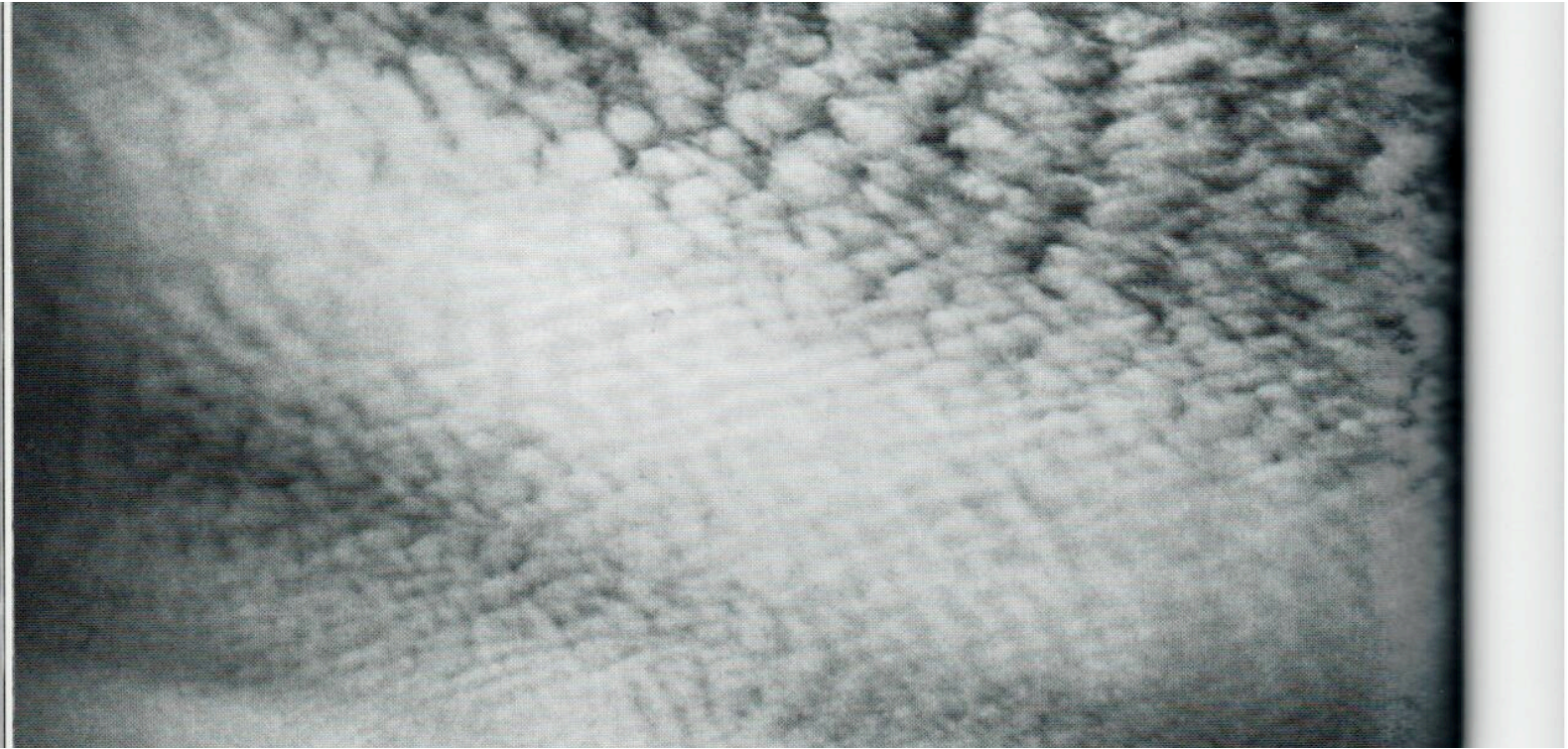
NOT A SHOWER WALL



THEODOR SCHWENK



CLOUD WAVES



Nature a map predetermined and chance



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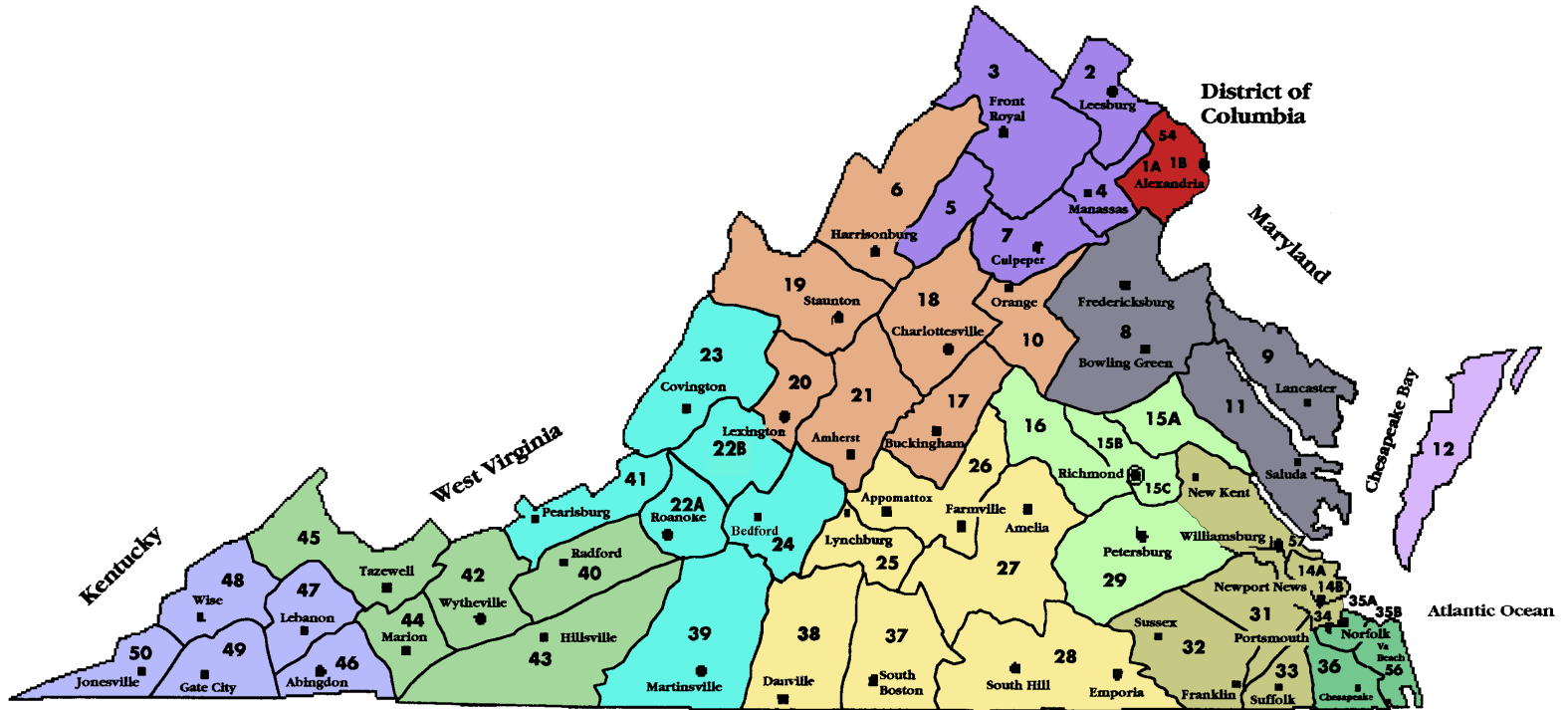
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In whichever way we meander backwards from falling

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VIRGINIA!



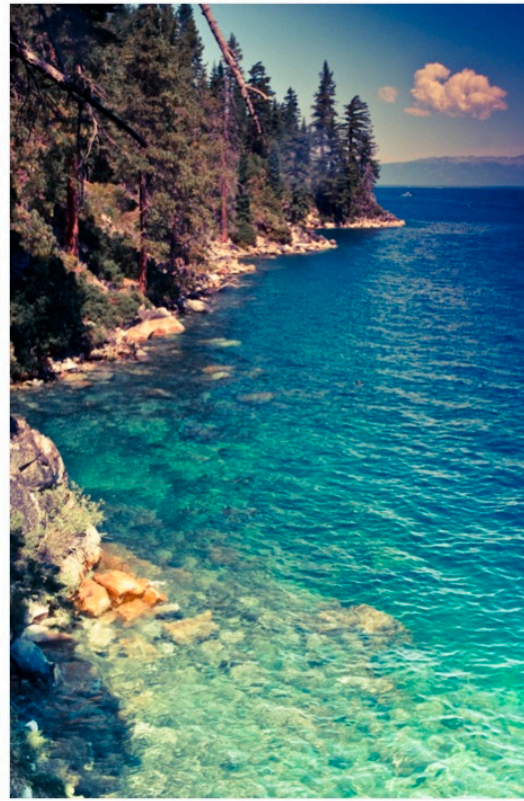
FLOYD COUNTY, VIRGINIA



WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA



MMM, PRETTY...



BONANZA!



FIRST PIECE OF ADVICE:
EMBRACE THE UNFAMILIAR /
MARRY THE ABYSS

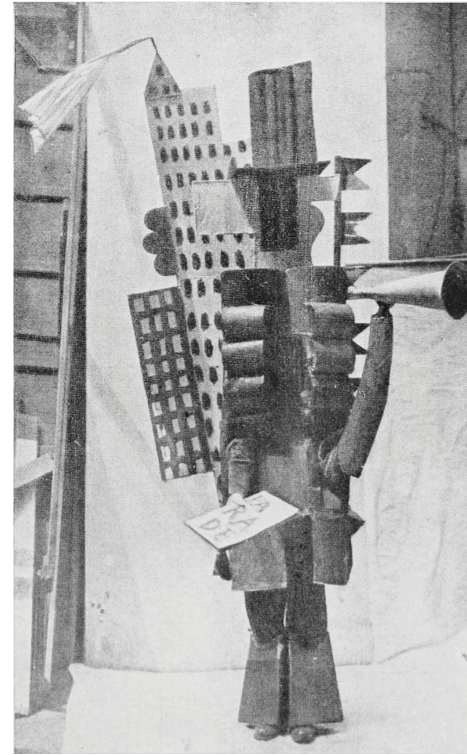
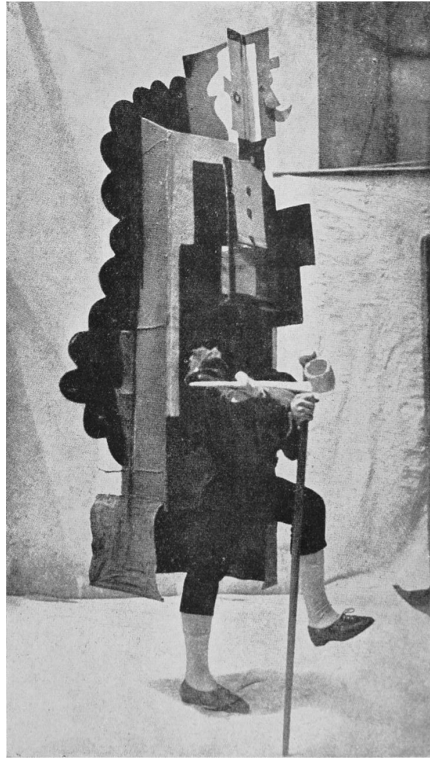
EXPERIMENT #1: AUTOMATIC WRITING

Autopilot

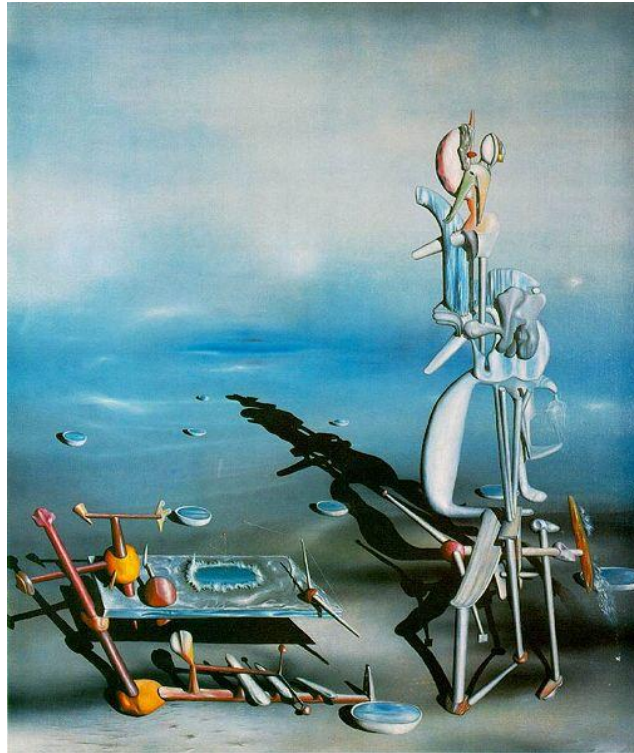
If...then...

Question & answer

SURREALISM



SURREALISM



“Indefinite Divisibility”

By Yves Tanguy

SURREALISM



“The mind which plunges into Surrealism relives with glowing excitement the best part of its childhood. For such a mind, it is similar to the certainty with which a person who is drowning reviews once more, in the space of less than a second, all the insurmountable moments of his life. Some may say to me that the parallel is not very encouraging. But I have no intention of encouraging those who tell me that.”

-André Breton

**SECOND PIECE OF ADVICE:
PAY ATTENTION TO THE
OTHER ARTS**

MUSIC, VISUAL ARTS, THEATER, DANCE

**THIRD PIECE OF ADVICE:
READ OLD STUFF**
I MEAN, LIKE, REALLY OLD

DO THIS FOR THREE REASONS

REASON ONE: YOUR LITERARY PARENTAGE



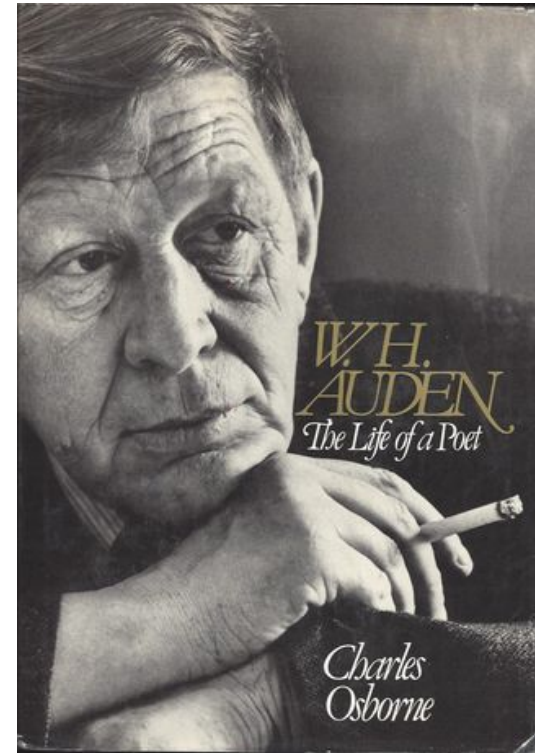
Antonin Artaud



REASON TWO: EXPAND YOUR TECHNIQUES

MALIN thought:

Untalkative and tense, we took off
Anxious into air; our instruments glowed,
Dials in darkness, for dawn was not yet;
Pulses pounded; we approached our target,
Conscious in common of our closed Here
And of Them out There, thinking of Us
In a different dream, for we die in theirs
Who kill in ours and become fathers,
Not twisting tracks their trigger hands are
Given goals by; we began our run;
Death and damage darted at our will,
Bullets were about, blazing anger
Lunged from below, but we laid our eggs...



-“The Age of Anxiety”

REASON THREE: BECAUSE WRITING IS A CONVERSATION WITH FOLKS YOU WOULDN'T OTHERWISE GET TO TALK TO

This Is Just To Say

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

William Carlos Williams

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

KENNETH KOCH, "VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS"

1

I chopped down the house that you had been saving to live in next summer.
I am sorry, but it was morning, and I had nothing to do
and its wooden beams were so inviting.

2

We laughed at the hollyhocks together
and then I sprayed them with lye.
Forgive me. I simply do not know what I am doing.

3

I gave away the money that you had been saving to live on for the next ten years.
The man who asked for it was shabby
and the firm March wind on the porch was so juicy and cold.

4

Last evening we went dancing and I broke your leg.
Forgive me. I was clumsy and
I wanted you here in the wards, where I am the doctor!

FOURTH PIECE OF ADVICE: EXPERIMENT

WITH FORM, WITH CONTENT, WITH STRUCTURE

RHETORICAL APPROACHES

Diazeugma

One subject with many verbs:

He bites his lip and starts;
Stops on a sudden, looks upon the ground,
Then lays his finger on his temple; straight
Springs out into fast gait, then stops again,
Strikes his breast hard... (Henry VIII, III, ii)

RHETORICAL APPROACHES

Metanoia

Qualification of a statement by recalling it and expressing it in a better way, often by using a negative.

Gentlemen, my part is done; yours is about to commence...Oh, how awful is your responsibility!...I do conjure you, not as fathers, but as husbands;—not as husbands, but as citizens;—not as citizens, but as men;—not as men, but as Christians....

(Charles Phillips, *Speeches* [1817])

RHETORICAL APPROACHES

Aposiopesis

Becoming silent. Stopping suddenly in midcourse, leaving a statement unfinished; sometimes from genuine passion, sometimes for effect. Hotspur's dying breath provides an authentic instance of inability to continue:

Hotspur. O, I could prophesy,
But that the earthy and cold hand of death
Lies on my tongue. No, Percy, thou art dust,
And food for—

Prince. For worms, brave Percy.


(Henry IV, V, iv)

EXPERIMENT #2: RHETORICAL POEM


Write a poem that has:

1. **Diazeugma:** One subject with many verbs.
2. **Metanoia:** Qualification of a statement by recalling it and expressing it in a better way, often by using a negative.
3. **Aposiopesis:** Becoming silent.

(A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms, 2nd ed., Richard A. Lanham)



MORE ADVICE

- Cultivate curiosity
 - Practice the art of the empty mind
 - Read the newspaper
 - Read writer biographies
 - Read everything you can: literature, popular science, philosophy, history
 - Start a journal or zine
 - Start a study group for your genre
 - Send letters to writers you admire
 - Keep a journal
 - Dabble in other arts/other genres
 - Spend time thinking about our cultural moment and your generation.
- 

RICHARD HUGO, “TRIGGERING TOWN”

“If you are a private poet, then your vocabulary is limited by your obsessions. It doesn’t bother me that the word ‘stone’ appears more than thirty times in my third book, or that ‘wind’ and ‘gray’ appear over and over in my poems to the disdain of some reviewers. If I didn’t use them that often I’d be lying about my feelings, and I consider that unforgiveable. In fact, most poets write the same poem over and over. Wallace Stevens was honest enough not to try to hide it. Frost’s statement that he tried to make every poem as different as possible from the last one is a way of saying that he knew it couldn’t be.”

