

CONCEPTUALISMS DIARY

LAURA MORIARTY

March 13, 2009

Dear Diary,

At AWP in Chicago. Poets everywhere. Haven't been outside the building once since I arrived. They say it's cold.

The SPD bad poem contest is going pretty well, though having "the worst Flarf poem" as a contest category has caused me to have to explain Flarf over and over again. Yes, Diary, it is ironic.

People are wearing shirts with "Subject" on them. Nice.

Christian Bök and Alana Wilcox stop by the booth a few times. Egged on by Alana, Christian submits a highly competitive piece in the "poem intended to lead to sex" category. "Hello, my name is Christian Bök."

I think we should have a joke contest. Jokes were my first poems. My father could tell jokes all night without stopping.

April 1, 2009

A guy walks into a bar. It's a conceptualist bar but he's a conceptualist guy. He knows he can't get what he wants here with his good looks. He knows not to mention Mineola Prep, though he went there. He appropriates the drink of the guy next to him who knows better than to complain, but then spits it out. It's not a joke but a trick. A schtick. He is aware that the bar is an allegory of his art practice but he is really thirsty. That's when he sees the giraffe.

May 8 2009

An email solicitation arrives from Vanessa Place and Laynie Brown to submit to an anthology of conceptual writing by women. I am surprised because I wouldn't have thought of my writing as conceptual. I mention the email to Brent, somewhat perplexed, and he tells me about the new conceptualism. Laynie and Vanessa encourage a response and submission even if one does not consider oneself a conceptual writer.

The openness of this invitation recommends the project. I decide that I actually do know what conceptualist writing is but then I wonder if I really do. I wonder also if I am one and if not what I am but, of course, I already know what I am.

This brings me to *A Tonalist*. At this point, it is a while since I have thought of *A Tonalist* but now the book will be published by Nightboat and Kazim Ali has asked me to write an afterword. When I first started writing the poem *A Tonalist*, there was a lot of explaining and I always seemed to explain it differently each time.

A Tonalist refers to work that has existed for a few decades such as my own and that of Norma Cole, along with newer work by Jocelyn Saldenbergh, Taylor Brady, Brent Cunningham, Standard Schaefer and others I read and see. I began to write a long essay poem called *A Tonalist* in 2002 and started an eponymous group blog in 2005. There were somewhat heated exchanges between Flarfists and *A Tonalists* on the blog. At the time I don't think Kasey Mohammad, Gary Sullivan, Nada Gordon or others who think of their work as Flarf exactly identified as conceptualist but I might be wrong.

In writing about *A Tonalist* I have used the word "lyric" but then fellow *A Tonalist* Brent Cunningham warned me that the word has implications that don't really relate to the sort of anti-lyric-lyric that I am interested in. Eventually I realize he is right. I start using the phrase "highly prosodized syntactic unit" but then I forget to use it, though these units are what I continue to write and to find in work by other *A Tonalists*.

May 26, 2009

Notes on Conceptualisms mysteriously appears on my desk. It is a nicely designed bright blue book and I am not surprised to find that it was published by Ugly Duckling. As I glance through it I begin to get the first traces of the headache one might get when encountering a new poetry movement that one isn't in. I tell myself not to jump to conclusions. The sense that the kind of writing I do might not be allowed within a context that claims to be post-creative or post-lyric is familiar to me from the publication of my third first book in 1980. I chide myself not to succumb to a kind of poetic PTSD by assuming a belief on the part of others that what I do is "so over." I come to the index in the back, not to look for my name, but to wonder through who is there. I find a few people I have written about or consider *A Tonalists* like Renee Gladman and Yedda Morrison.

It occurs to me that *Notes on Conceptualisms* might be, in part, doing something similar to what I've done in *A Tonalist*—defining a kind of writing and then extending it out to include other kinds of writing. Place and Fitterman define conceptualism as loosely as I do *A Tonalist* or more accurately they don't define but contextualize it. Conceptualism seems more real or at least to involve writers who are happy to identify as Conceptualists, whereas I have found few *A Tonalists* willing to so identify. Of course *A Tonalists* don't have conferences, but maybe we should.

In retrospect I remember the various conceptualist writing conferences and realize that there are quite a few poets—I can think of some younger ones around here—who I think are conceptualists. I was vaguely aware of all of this but don't usually go to conferences or pay them much mind. I also notice that I know many of the people involved and their work. Looking back I realize that I didn't connect Rob Fitterman's *War, The Musical* with Kenny Goldsmith's books or later to those of Vanessa Place or

to her press Les Figues when they started at SPD in 2006. My head was certainly in the clouds.

June 1, 2009

Suzanne Stein and I begin a discussion of a manuscript of hers of talk performances that partly revolves around what I think I can accurately identify as a conceptualist sense that appropriating an essay is a useful and in fact essential part of the project. The talks themselves, or they are more like poems, seem entirely conceptualist and it occurs to me that performance isn't really discussed in the *Notes*. Rather, a level of performance seems to be assumed. I am crazy about Suzanne's manuscript but resist the use of the essay. We go round and round about it. I think about what might constitute an effective conceptualist gesture. Reading the manuscript and aware of her other work, I realize that Suzanne is A Tonalist and conceptualist at the same time. I wonder if this is allowed or even possible. I suspect it is, though I perceive that it will sow discontent in the breast of the person so burdened—if that is not a mixed allegory.

June 4, 2009

Brandon Brown writes about *Notes on Conceptualisms* on his blog, "HI." He focuses on the idea in the book of "failure." He resists "failure" in relation to translation, seeing it as evoking the betrayal that occurs with bad translations. As per the song, "Sometimes bad is bad." But he does appreciate "the assassination of mastery" which is another phrase in and idea from the *Notes*.

I connect "failure" with my sense of "doubt" in A Tonalist. I remember everything about A Tonalist now because I have written the afterword to the manuscript called "A Tonalist Coda."

June 6, 2009 D-Day

Am I in the last generation that will remember this as D-Day and recall uncles being injured or losing their lives on the beach?

June 18, 2009

Friday Harbor, San Juan Island, WA

Felled by a vacation cold in, however, a lovely hotel, I finally have time to read and take notes on the *Notes*.

I am interested in how the use of definitions, quotations, examples, directives, aphorisms and, well, notes allows the *Notes* to propose multiple narratives for the making of the literary object. Sometimes I think I see everything as a novel.

Notes on Conceptualisms could also be the commonplace book of the conceptualist writer, as she is writing or, it is a case, the notes for a case, a legal brief with aspects, details, precedents all laid out, prioritized and numbered. Like a brief, the *Notes* have a side.

Visual art is the precedent or, at least, a precedent. Identifying with the protagonists, we appropriate, reproduce and copy—not only phrases but whole categories of intellection. We philosophize. We identify and prove, quoting experts. There are many of those. We eliminate the subject replacing it with a multivalent “subjectivity.” But, wait, haven’t we been down this road before?

At this point, thinking through my reading of the *Notes*, I literally become dizzy with déjà vu and a kind of dread. Didn’t we already get rid of subjectivity? All around me in the 80s subjectivity was being ditched by Language poets and experimentalists who weren’t exactly Language poets and Jackson Mac Low and, really, so many people. I agreed to everything back then only to argue that the subjectivity was not removed when certain surfaces of writing were obviously characteristic of certain people and reflected their ideas, personality and agenda—so who were we kidding? And to this day it really is both ways for me.

I also have déjà vu—admittedly A Tonalists are prone to this—about the allegory conceptualist connection. It is a long story but I can’t quite remember it now. Much in the book seems a restatement of thinking about the word and the sign and the image that feels like part of one’s experimental patrimony.

July 1, 2009

Today was the deadline to submit something to the conceptualist anthology being edited by Vanessa Place and Laynie Brown and published by Les Figues. Realizing that I had already written an essay I decide to send them “A Tonalist Coda.” I do and suggest that I could write a conceptualist introduction. Vanessa replies saying yes send it.

July 6, 2009

I have been very busy this week, thinking about writing movements, not to mention working at SPD every minute, trying to catch up after being on vacation. I sent “A Tonalist Coda with a Conceptualist Prelude” to Laynie and Vanessa. I don’t think I fully explored the allegory aspect of the *Notes*, to which I am much drawn.

Okay—as a basic definition—allegory can mean “moral tale” as in Aesop or simply “image that stands for a concept,” as in, well, let’s say Reubens, though we could say Goya, Delacroix, Duchamp or many other artists. For a long time, allegory becomes “disreputable,” as it is called by Marcia Tucker, Director of The New Museum of Contemporary Art, when she wrote the preface for a 1987 book called *Blasted Allegories*. In the introduction to this book, editor Brian Wallis explains that he has assembled the narratives in it to find the stories of artists silenced by the modernist idea that the work of art is enough. He cites Deleuze and Guattari’s assertion of Kafka’s sense of “minor literature.” Wallis notes that “the role of the ‘minor,’ is one in which a specialized, local language serves to challenge or disrupt the structures and confidences of a dominant language... Thus, one important question for the artists included here is not how to gain access to accepted forms of literature, but how to recognize language which is relevant to the issues of their particular community.” I wonder if this 80s use of allegory to include narrative of communities is related to the *Notes On Conceptualisms*? To some degree the emphasis on community makes it seem similar but the search for stories and the presentation of specific stories of the communities as opposed to any other kind of reference to their issues makes it seem different.

A decade or so ago—after *Blasted Allegories* came out and with the book in my head—I wrote an essay called “The Last Allegory” for a symposium on allegory at Cranbrook Academy in Detroit with Mary Lucier and Richard Tuttle. The plan was to focus on my own work and that of Carla Harryman, Norma Cole and Jerry Estrin. After pouring through endless texts about allegory, I had wised myself up to the symbol/allegory thing, investigated the metaphor/allegory connection and had discovered a few interesting and artful discussions and examples, as in *Blasted Allegories*. Many were negative because folks seemed to love to hate allegory. There were also a few allegory nuts, like chaos theory obsessives, who tended to see allegory everywhere, surely leaving them with a tough row to hoe in their universities. Of course it was everywhere and I began to see it too.

“The Last Allegory” became rather tangled and was never published. Possibly, it was a glorious failure. At the time, I was unused to writing discursively and made the rookie mistake of trying to include too much, but it wasn’t completely my fault. Maybe it wasn’t even a mistake. The nature of allegory—how it is like language in that the distances between allegorical levels evoke language’s function of referring—was the problem. It was both a problem and an opportunity, as they say. I didn’t comprehend allegory so much in writing the essay as I was seduced by its ubiquity. Things could be something and something else at the same time. It was exactly how I saw the world.

I began to look in contemporary writing and elsewhere for what I thought of as central allegories. My new allegorical perspective chimed nicely with my longtime interest in art history. As a young woman, I had been in several “happenings” where the participants had brought allegorical painting to life—all day, naked, under the influence of various substances, in an idyllic setting in the Sierra foothills. The impact on my young self of being one of the Seven Deadly Sins or a fierce representative of West Coast Art in these events was great. Because of that experience, I tended and continue to tend to see writing practice, art movements, literary groups and other phenomena as allegorical. John FitzGibbon, my teacher at Sac State and the artist who put on these events, had worked with Joseph Kosuth in, I think, the sixties—note conceptual artist allegory connection.

I return to *Blasted Allegories* and find another joke. This one by Richard Prince:

I went to see a psychiatrist. He said, “Tell me everything.” I did, and now he’s doing my act.

July 17, 2009

Alli Warren and David Buuck read at Books and Bookshelves. I enjoy Alli’s new speechiness. I like David’s reading which consists of jokes in an initial performance and then a long piece about war. Later I find it online in *Narrativity* but then, checking with David find that the piece which was called “Despite,” is now called “Bearings For Grid Work.” This is the last paragraph of the new version:

One narrative theory is that one never dies in writing. The writing cannot in actuality provide safety. It is a machine desiring its own apocalypse. In actuality it is its own social being, desiring its own narrative theory. Here it is now, stretching out into the distance, held up by its social bearings. Agent A disappears into the rabbit hole, bottoming-out into dream-work. Agent B transcribes the grid-work into underground histories. Agent C is writing itself onto the imaginary plane. The script has yet to be finished. It’s already happening. Action.

July 19, 2009

Vanessa Place and Peter Culley read at The New Series at 21 Grand. All day I have been looking at the *Notes*, a book of Vanessa's called *Lies*, and online at multiple items, thinking through and making notes on the *Notes*. I write a page or so of what I think will be the essay I have promised Michael Cross for *ON*.

At the reading, I chat with Vanessa about the reception of challenging work. ("Conceptual writing is annoying." *Notes*) She mentions a recent conceptualism conference in Europe where it was refreshing that the issue of conceptual writing not being writing at all didn't come up. This connects with my belief that one reason to use the word "conceptual" is to ask for the same attention and patience that is given to conceptual artists. I agree that the writing world tends to be very conservative.

I realize Vanessa makes her living as a lawyer. This doesn't surprise me. She reads from (I think) testimony from a case. She says later that what she has read is a matter of public record. It is about child molestation or, alternatively it could be about being falsely accused of child molestation. She reads numbers referring to other pages with the text. It is effective.

Peter Culley and I talk about growing up in the military. His experience seems to have been more exalted than mine as his father was an elite submariner. His work seems like highly prosodized syntactic units and I think it is probably A Tonalist, but don't bring it up.

I don't go to the bar afterwards but hear there was some ranting about the *Notes*. I feel a strong sense of compassion for writers who react very strongly to the book. It seems to be a reaction you would expect more to a straight out manifesto than I think the *Notes* is. I really value the passion of such a response and would bet that Vanessa and Rob share my value for it—though of course it is not fun to be ranted at.

As I am friends with Erika Staiti, who seems to have been the chief interlocutor in this exchange, I ask her about the *Notes* in an email. I think of her as a conceptualist and figure that her closeness to the issues is the reason she has such strong feelings about the whole thing. Erika replies in a generously long email, objecting to what she identifies as "hype" around conceptualism but with some surprisingly positive observations about the *Notes* themselves:

the book i think is fine in some ways and in other ways i think it's dangerous. i liked the aphoristic quality. i liked that it was called "notes." that it came out of a conversation. there are nice little gems in here that have got me thinking in new directions. i like that. it's fine. . . . it's hard for me also because i like it for the same reasons that i don't like it. i like the notes, aphorisms, the fact that it's a starting point. but i am a little disappointed because it feels lazy. it doesn't feel rigorous enough. so i know that's a contradiction because you can't be all "note-y" and also be rigorous. i feel like they assume that their readers already have some idea what they're talking about. i don't understand that because the list in the back gives me the impression that this is a book that might introduce someone to the term but the whole rest of it gives me the impression that they presume you already know.

I love her use of the word "danger," because it makes the stakes seem as high as they are—let's say "the future of poetry" or, to go back to that old gesture of combining the genres and eliminating that prissy word "poetry," we could say "the future of writ-

ing.” Erika’s point about the lack of history and explanation of conceptualism which, being so jaded and all, I hadn’t caught, is interesting. Rereading the *Notes* to look for this lack of explanation, I find I like it because it gives you a field to work in rather than a set of instructions. It doesn’t define but suggests. I know from writing *A Tonalist*, that leaving things out is a strategic way of not going over all that old territory with all those same people in it yet again. You choose some influences and celebrate them, failing to mention others, and it creates a particular frame for the work and ideas you are presenting. It’s not scholarship, it’s persuasion.

July 23, 2009

Andrew Joron, active participant in both the Surrealist and A Tonalist communities, drops by SPD. I ask him if he has heard of the *Notes On Conceptualisms* and he hasn’t. Frowning, Andrew seems to picture conceptualist writing in his mind and asks why it would be of interest to me. I say that it is of interest because it is an act of group formation and that the book casts a wide net, attempting to implicate many who might not have thought of themselves as conceptualist writers. He looks doubtful.

July 24, 2009

Suzanne asks Brandon for his opinion on the appropriation issue in her manuscript and Brandon comes back with a very strong yes on including the appropriated material. I have been completely vanquished by these conceptualist ways. The obvious fact that writers, people, don’t easily fall into these categories occurs to me. I have made A Tonalist somewhat inexplicable as a category and, aware of the madness it can cause, I did not make a list of A Tonalists, though I am curating a group for a magazine.

July 25, 2009

I watch a doc on TV called “The Spartans” and muse that, by its nature, conceptualism seems like a new Spartanism, just as Language Writing did in its day. No more indulgent sentimentalism, forget the now, forget craft—of course one does hate craft—and get with the program. Here are the techniques. But I know I don’t quite believe that. I sense that Fitterman and Place aim to include a lot of variation and contradiction in these *Notes*. I use many of the techniques myself, though I suspect I fall into the use-the-techniques-but-isn’t-conceptualist category in which they place John Ashbery though I don’t exactly write like him.

Is the creation of an imaginary lyric “I” really the deal breaker here?

July 26, 2009

Nick and I run into Rob Halpern and Lee Azus walking on the Albany Bulb near our house. We discuss the *Notes*. Rob and I rant for a moment about emotion, lyric, allegory, narrative, theory and self—all of which we are yes/no about. Rob is passionate with a scholar’s take on the use of allegory. He has an A Tonalist and post New Narrativist’s take on the need for emotion and for what he calls “affect” with loving emphasis. He mentions *Blasted Allegories* and I feel happy that I have used the book in developing a take on the *Notes*. I think of it as a somewhat obscure volume which I have only because Jerry Estrin worked at the Berkeley Museum in the 80s when it

came out. I agree with Rob that there is in *Blasted Allegories* a possibly opposite use of the term or phenomenon or whatever allegory is though I secretly know I could be convinced otherwise.

July 27, 2009

I have lunch with Jasper Bernes. He seems pretty much in tune with much of what is in the *Notes* and is very positive about many of the books in the index. He doesn't really find what Fitterman and Place are saying new but we agree it doesn't claim to be new. He is not crazy about the whole allegory thing. It occurs to me that the *Notes* are written more for the common reader or maybe the uncommon reader than for the doctoral candidate who might long for the argument actually to be made. But then I wonder what I mean by this. I think I mean that the *Notes* are directed to the young unaffiliated writer, to the conceptualist herself. However, and perhaps this is a contradiction, I think they are also directed to the academy to provide the raw materials for a critique of a critique of a critique.

August 2, 2009

Brent and Melissa's wedding yesterday. Poets everywhere.

There is live music by Lindsey Boldt and David Buuck at the wedding, romantic oldies and then music for dancing which seems to become more contemporary as the night goes on. It occurs to me that we are surrounded by music. There are many kinds of music. It would be difficult for me to want to play this conceptualist music because my alacrity is elsewhere, though I have played a conceptualist tune or two in my time. I too like to be annoying but in a different way. But who gets it when I do this in my work? (Okay, I can picture the ones who get it completely and occasionally am surprised by savvy new readers. Thank god for being my age.) Still, I like the way conceptualists are doing the work of framing themselves, of creating arguments, threats, assertions and challenges to other writers and writing. I like that *Notes on Conceptualisms* is upsetting.

August 2, 2009

Recovering from my post wedding migraine, I find I must think rather than write, so I think of John Cage. Place and Fitterman seem to be a bit tired of him. His books are foundational for me but I can see being tired of what could be thought of as a sort of chance triumphalism. I use chance in my work a lot in the form of incessant self-interruption and by proceeding with the sound or letters in words rather than with the meaning. I wonder if this counts? Maybe chance is passé. I appropriate, but these days I often write the "appropriated" material myself rather than finding it. This clearly won't count. I remember being at a dinner near the end of Jackson Mac Low's life where he seemed to reject his many chance manipulations in favor of just writing. It was a wonderful moment. There is no better way to have it than both ways.

Then there is the question of readers. Is it not the duty of the writer to find her readership? Traditionally we say no to that question, valuing stories of the obliviousness of poets to their potential audience, but these legends are disingenuous. It is entirely appropriate and a fuck of a lot of work to focus attention on your own writing and that of writers you read. Objecting to a successful attempt to seek an engaged readership

is not useful. The success of exacting that attention doesn't produce value in the work, other than economic value—as I know as a bookseller—but it also doesn't negate its worth. But what is this value anyway and how can it be measured? How to establish value is one of the issues of the literary world and not likely to be solved. It's more like a practice than an issue, involving daily decisions. Personally I appreciate compromise and I really like contradiction. So if you claim to be against capitalism and then clamor for sales or other capitalist fruits, I won't mind.

A positive review of *Notes on Conceptualisms* comes out on-line in *Octopus Magazine* #11 and I sense it is written by a young writer who hasn't been endlessly down this road before. The reviewer is Karla Kelsey and a little googling reveals that she is in fact this imagined youthful enthusiast. She provides the history of conceptualist writing that the *Notes* don't and then worries that:

in pluralizing conceptual writing to include elements such as interest in subjectivity and investment in improving the resulting written object, Place and Fitterman water down the ultimate value of conceptual writing practices. Rather than shrinking away from this worry, Place and Fitterman ask themselves: "Do these broken promises point to a failure in a conceptual writing text?" The answer that they give is: "Failure is the goal of conceptual writing." So, in virtue of the fact that they fail to achieve the goals of "pure" conceptualism, "impure" conceptualisms gain a place within the movement.

Kelsey's concern might be another way of stating my feeling that when Place and Fitterman focus on the particular conceptualist writing that is like their own work, I am most interested in and impressed by the *Notes*. Conceptual writing in that narrow sense seems to be happening in a way that makes a lot possible right now. It even has the power to annoy people who are pretty used to Language writing. And yet, I continue to appreciate the impulse to be inclusive, not always present in every "movement."

Ron Silliman reviews the book very positively in his blog, saying it is an "imposing" project whose "impact will be profound and lasting." He also says it's not new—I think this is about "reference" in Place's essay—and points out connections to the Language School. It makes sense to me that he would respond in a positive way, respecting the assertion and the work of putting it out there. There is a part of his post about the book being small, fitting in his pocket and taking on the shape of his butt. Allegory or symbolism?

August 4, 2009

I have to admit that Fitterman and Place's use of visual art terms such as allegory, baroque and conceptual to refer to aspects of writing resonates for me. In a book of mine from the 80s, *Rondeaux*, there is a set of what I call "Baroque Poems." I did a lot of reading in relation to that idea back in the day. Tonalism, of course, was an old kind of misty landscape painting from the turn of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, though my use of this forgotten and discredited term seems almost opposite to the application of conceptual to writing. Atonalism in music has its own history though I think it is not well known among writers. Still, it seems completely appropriate for conceptualists to appropriate the term "conceptual" as it seems entirely to apply to the techniques used and frames the work nicely, possibly even making it more legible to a fickle public. I am less enthusiastic about the extension of conceptualism to apply to writing that uses few of the conceptualist moves described in the book, having

spent some time counting the angels on the head of that particular pin, but what the hell.

I am caught up on the very end of the "Notes" part of the *Notes* and what they call "a crisis in interiority." I notice there the brief ascendancy of Joseph Kosuth as a sort of straw man or king for a day who is deposed and then rises again. Kosuth's role as an early figure in my own artistic cosmology causes this both climactic and anti-climactic end to work well for me. When I studied with John FitzGibbon at Sac State he taught that life was art in the sense that I, naked on the deck of his houseboat, was as much a nude as I was a lover, student or poet.

We, in what used to be called the avant-garde, are not all conceptualists, or are we?

This brings us back to meaning, and the possibility of possibility.

This is allegorical.

In Vanessa Place's essay, "Ventouses," we are brought back to allegory and to the possibility that we are all conceptualists, if only on an allegorical level. An affinity for allegory is just one of many enthusiasms I find I share with Place in this engaging essay. As I read it and enthuse, I experience a last attack of déjà vu. I can't believe she is mentioning Lessing's *The Laocöon* which, along with Blake's *Laocöon*, has been of particular interest to me forever. I am also surprised but delighted to find W.G. Sebald here. Place thinks through the nexes of narrative, visual art and poetry in a way that feels revelatory but familiar. I feel excessively implicated by the points. I am so close to it I find I can't quite make out the argument. Actually, full disclosure, I rarely make out the arguments, treating philosophy and criticism either like poems, for the language, or like novels, for the suspense of the big point at the end. Like Sebald's discursive fiction, Place's essay has a circuitous quality of thought as she relates visual and written art.

Place concludes "The art in language is formed content and contented form. For the fact remains that a thing is nothing imagined of itself, and a word is worth a thousand pictures. Use them all."

Okay, good. I can do that.

August 5, 2009

Diary,

Finally finished with the "Conceptualisms Diary" and found the time to read David Buuck's *The Shunt*. It includes jokes! He calls them "jhokes." Perhaps the "h" is for "hesitation." They are part of a series of performances David has been doing lately. The book uses a lot of the puns and self-similarity, close to puns, that many contemporary writers, including me, use to go forward in a poem. He does it really well. The book is mostly about war and the challenge of writing about it. I wonder how to think of Buuck in relation to conceptualism and other isms, deciding to bring up the subject the next time we are at a reading or, perhaps, in a bar.

A...man...walks into...a bar...says I'm...a...writer as...you can see...I have a...writing table...tablet...and...I...am...able to...provide...my own...support net...work...by...self dash...punish...publishing...I come to...the bar...in

order...to...think myself...under...the table...the bar...tender...pours a...gin
and...tonic...and...says...

August 6, 2009

Hiroshima Day

The anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb on people makes me remember that Place and Fitterman mention the Final Solution in one of the last notes in the *Notes*. At first I wondered at this brief allusion to a mind-numbingly vast evil, but another way to look at it is that it is there in the background of any contemporary poetic speech act framed quoting Adorno, Benjamin and others in the book. Certainly it is not enough, but I am not sure what would be enough. Does their sense of failure mean that language, allegorically, is guilty? Does mine?

12a. transcript is a work of failure: the prosody used refers to a failed system (politics) of a failed humanity. A failure on all fronts; one that cannot exist save in its constant manifestation of constant absence—the citation without content, with partial content, with mutilated content. Language was the first strike of the Final Solution. Language was its eyewitness, and will be its shadow substitute, as supplementary texts/narratives (the play and work of words) begin to memorialize and supplant memory. This is the postcard-placard effective of history.

We are caught at the end with history and real life. It is no joke, Diary.