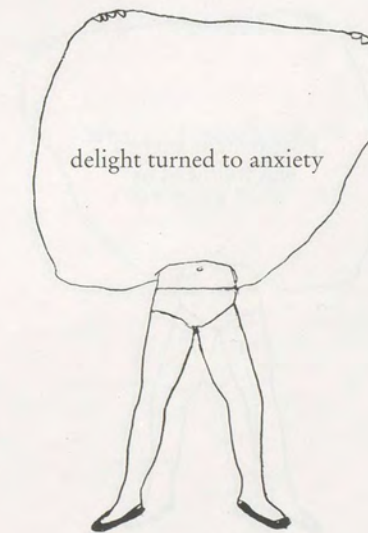
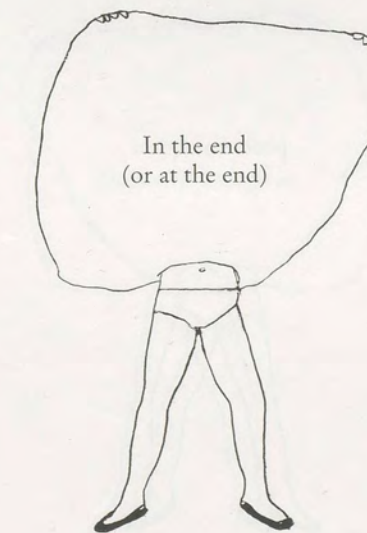
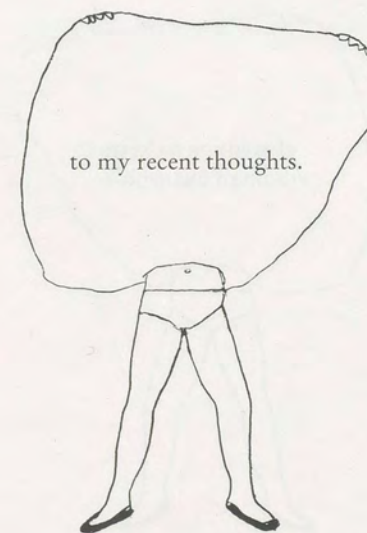


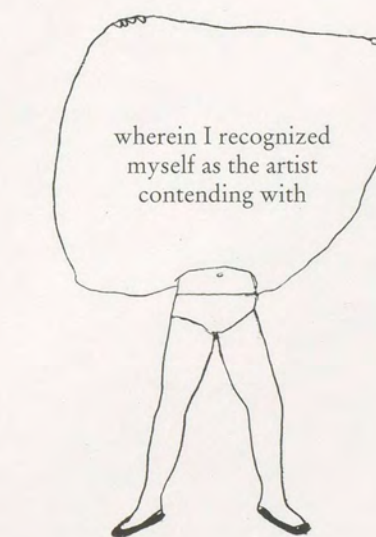
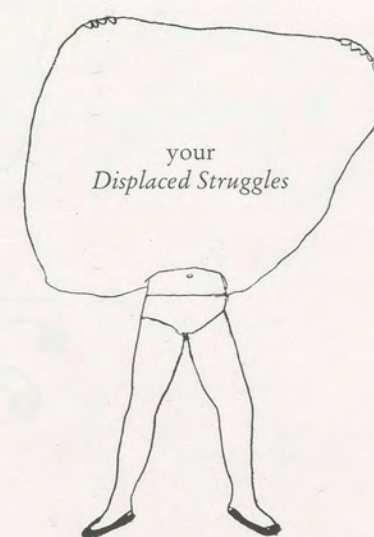
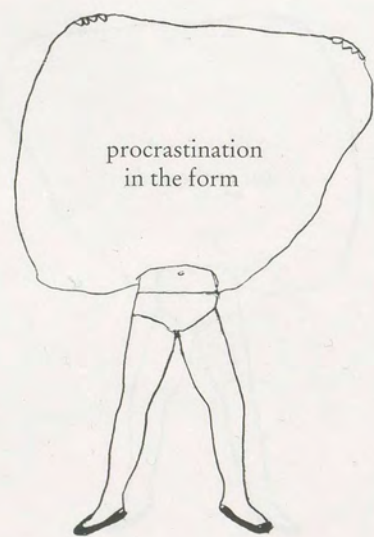
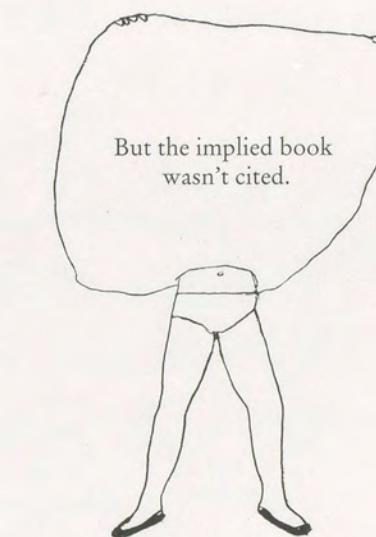
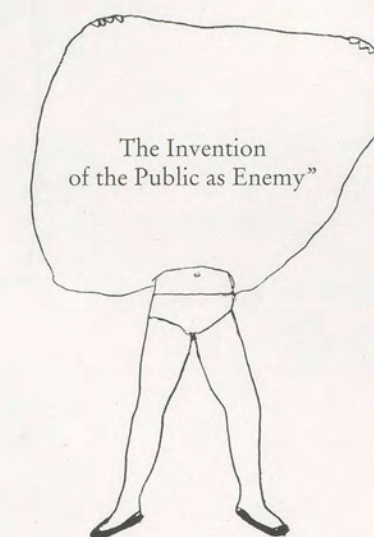
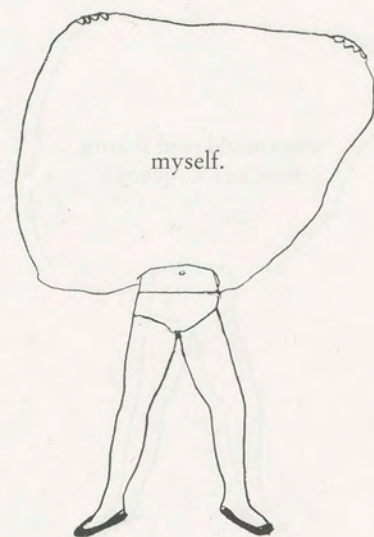
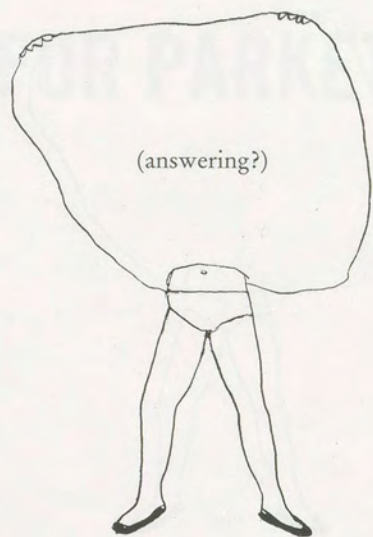
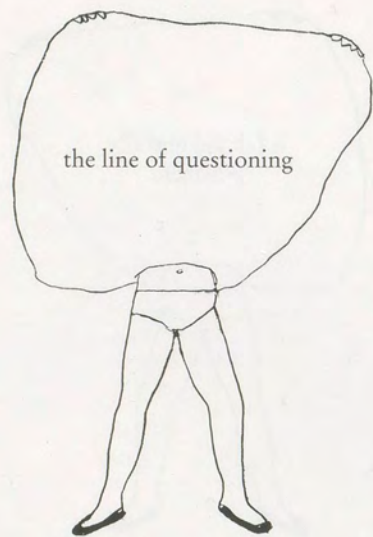
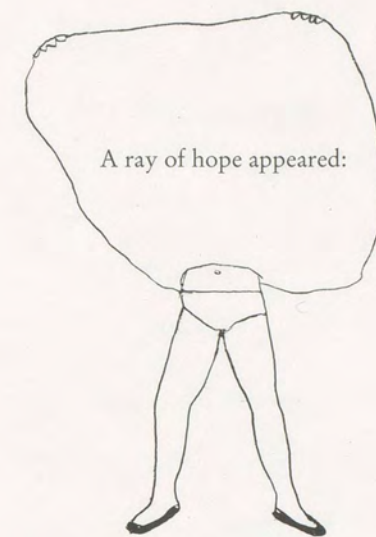
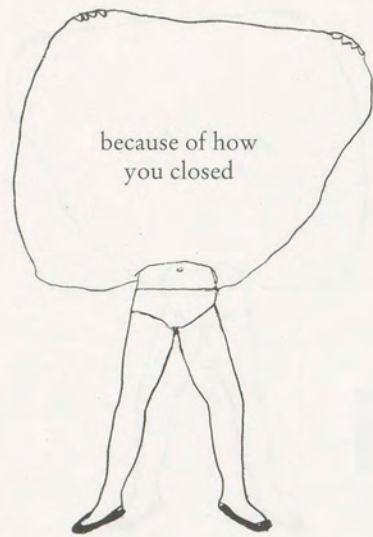
# FRANCES STARK INSERT FOR PARKETT

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2009

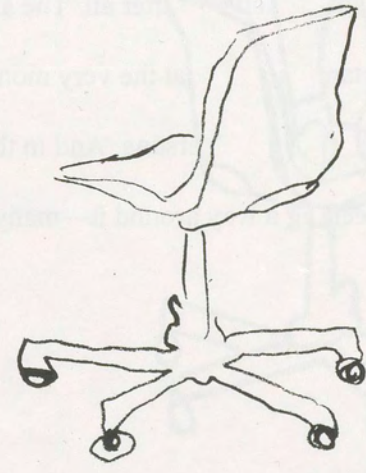








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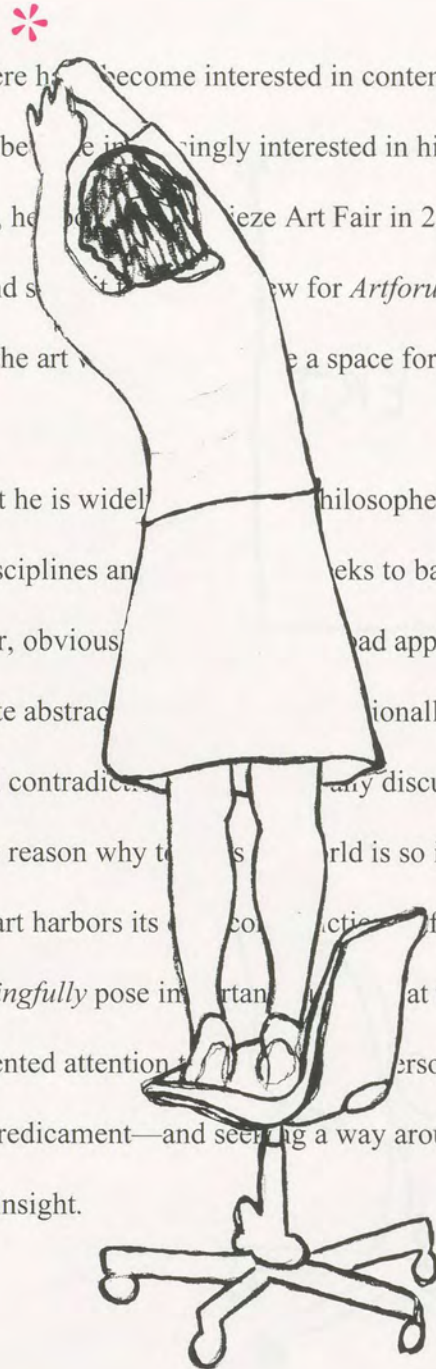


## Displaced Struggles

Bettina Funcke

Why might philosopher Jacques Rancière have become interested in contemporary art, even as the art world, in neat symmetry, has become increasingly interested in him? He has apparently followed art for many years, he has been at the Frieze Art Fair in 2005, and recently chose to publish an essay in and serve as the guest editor for *Artforum's* March 2007 issue—all signs of his confidence that the art world has made a space for his multilayered discourse.

Rancière is not an easy read, yet he is widely read (as a philosopher), largely because he situates himself between disciplines and seeks to banish the division between specialist and amateur, obvious and hidden appeal. At the same time his philosophical work can be quite abstract and occasionally lodged at its core. Although this embrace of internal contradiction is a central part of any discussion of his thoughts on art, might it not also be the reason why the art world is so interested in his voice? The hothouse of contemporary art harbors its own contradictions after all. The artist today finds it harder than ever to *meaningfully* pose important questions at the very moment that the culture has accorded unprecedented attention to the artist as a persona. And in the difficult task of thinking through this predicament—and seeing a way around it—many have turned to Rancière's writings for insight.



One of the more intriguing ideas that Rancière has contributed to art discourse is an insistence that art and politics are simply two forms of what he calls “the distribution of the sensible”. The sensible is a sphere on which both art and politics act through processes of structuring, framing, identifying, and contextualising (that is, distribution). It is a kind of unstructured matter that precedes all else. The distribution of the sensible, then, is synonymous with aesthetics, a term Rancière employs in the sense of *aisthesis*: a science concerned not simply with beauty and art but also with appearance and perception, all general terms that evoke Schiller’s aesthetic education of man or Kant’s description of aesthetic experience. Indeed, Rancière’s own notion of aesthetic experience presupposes the equality that underwrote Kant’s formulation of the judgment of taste as a judgment freed from hierarchies of knowledge and social status.



plus-one as well as a division: a paradox at his very heart.

Such strategies were perhaps a response to an increasingly mediatized society. The artist needs new tools in order to be heard. Beuys and Warhol are in this respect outstanding in post-World War II Western art. Like Warhol, whom Beuys called "brother," Beuys operated under the assumption that the most affirmative artist enjoys the greatest success with the broadest audience because they affirm the public's latent suspicions of art as well as the public's hopes for it, thus meeting all expectations, which artists may then use to their own ends. A crucial difference separates them, however, and perhaps leaves Beuys as the last of a line: he made demands, while Warhol did not. In this sense, as an artist who both garners widespread influence and uses that influence to make concrete demands, was his the last urgent artistic position? Certainly one can point to other art with a sense of political urgency, for example, Act-Up, the Guerilla Girls, and other positions associated

with the "identity politics" of the 1980s and 1990s. That era, however, is different, in that it put an end to mystical naïveté, sincere or otherwise. The worldness of their political activism was no longer countered by any mystical dimension, which might bring it back into the realm of art or imagination. Urgent art had become – or had to become – pragmatic, and such strategies, in hindsight, may fail to capture the public's imagination.

**"I prefer being attacked to being ignored."**  
—Maurizio Cattelan

Maurizio Cattelan counts as one of the more successful recent examples of the charlatan or trickster artist. He might play with mystical clichés, but he makes no demands. Over the last several years he has managed to create work that embodies a tension between lasting culture and mass marketing. His personal debt to Beuys appears in *La rivoluzione siamo Noi* (*We Are the Revolution*), 2000, in which the spacious exhibition hall of Zürich's Migros Museum was left virtually empty and only in the last corner did the viewer encounter a puppet representing the artist, clothed in a felt suit, suspended from a hanger on a clothing rack, flaunting a mischievous smile yet ultimately lonely and helpless in the merciless and demanding space of art.

Cattelan's most successful work to date might be the felled Pope of *La Nona Ora* (*The Ninth*

*Hour*), 1999, a work that directly addresses the meaning behind the image. Tellingly, the life-size replica of Pope John Paul II was modeled after a Hiroshi Sugimoto photograph of a wax-work figure of the pope, that is, a representation of a representation of the spiritual leader. This absurd scenario, in which a meteorite had apparently hurtled through the Kunsthalle's skylight and struck down this puppet pope, caused such a sensation that it later led to the dismissal of a museum director who refused to remove the work after protests by parliamentary members of the Catholic national party. *La Nona Ora* wrenched Cattelan's oeuvre to another level within the art world: the market confirmed, or instigated, his success when one of the two pope editions was in 2001 auctioned for a record amount of \$886,000, which three years later was tripled.

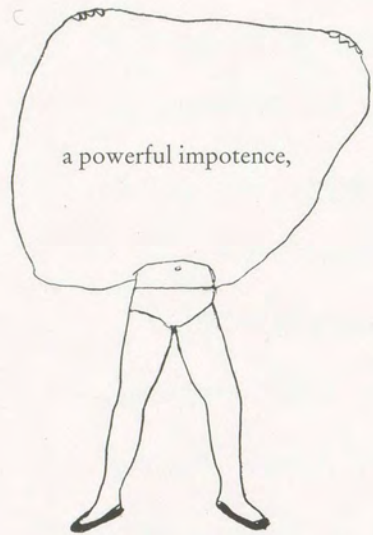
In the heated atmosphere around contemporary art, within the context of a culture that ultimately does not take artists seriously at all, it seems harder than ever for an artist to pose important questions or demands while also somehow making use of the unprecedented level of widespread yet disengaged and trivial attention that is paid to the artist persona.



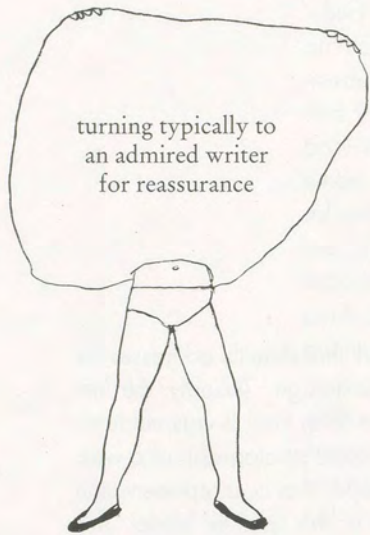
How to create a sense of urgency today?



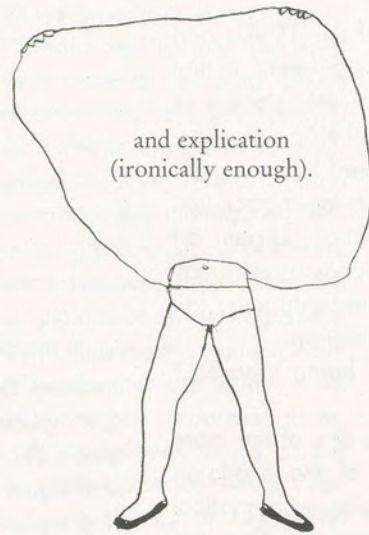




a powerful impotence,



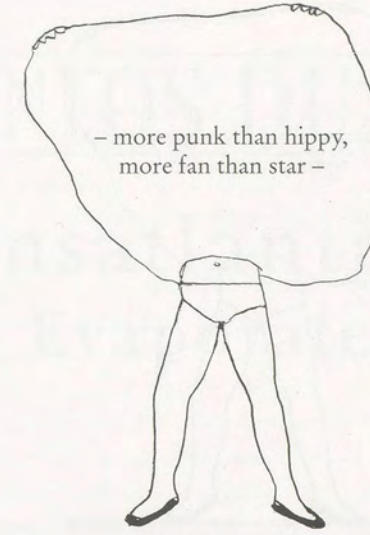
turning typically to  
an admired writer  
for reassurance



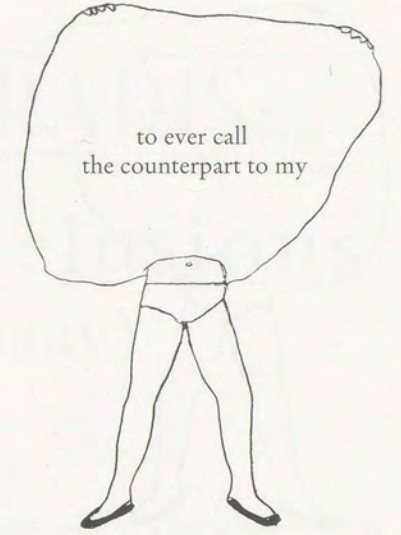
and explication  
(ironically enough).



but am perhaps too  
full of doubt



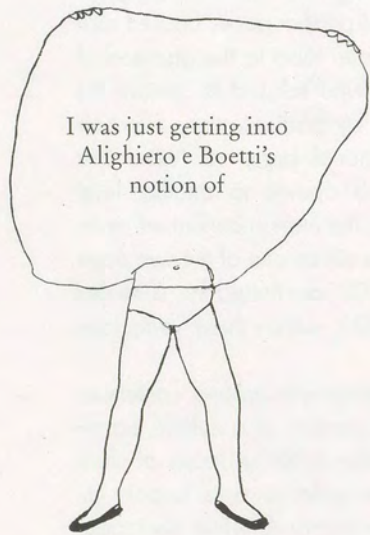
- more punk than hippy,  
more fan than star -



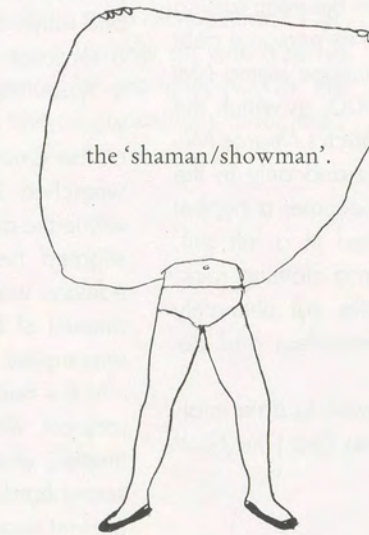
to ever call  
the counterpart to my



When you first  
contacted me



I was just getting into  
Alighiero e Boetti's  
notion of



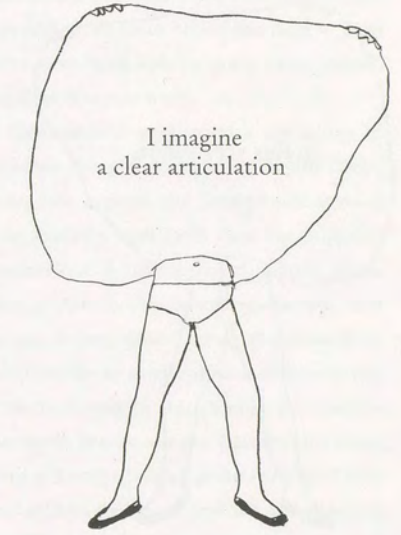
the 'shaman/showman'.



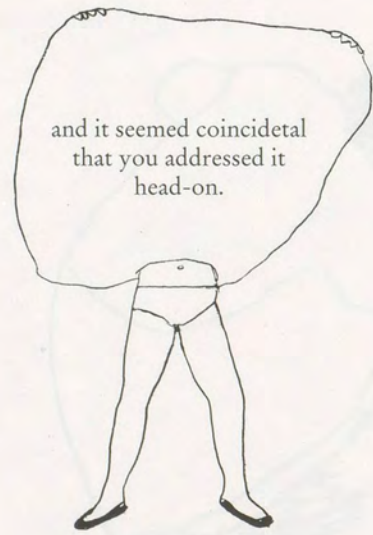
exhibitionist a shaman.



Tiring of my  
two-faced attitude,



I imagine  
a clear articulation



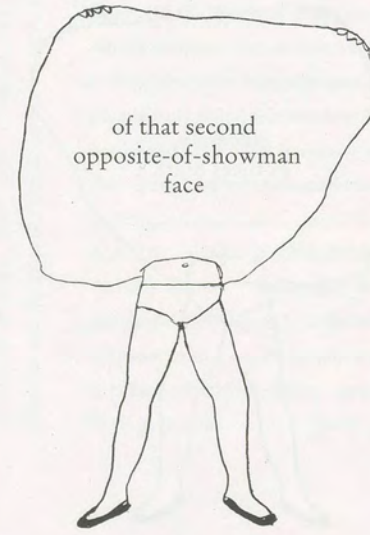
and it seemed coincidental  
that you addressed it  
head-on.



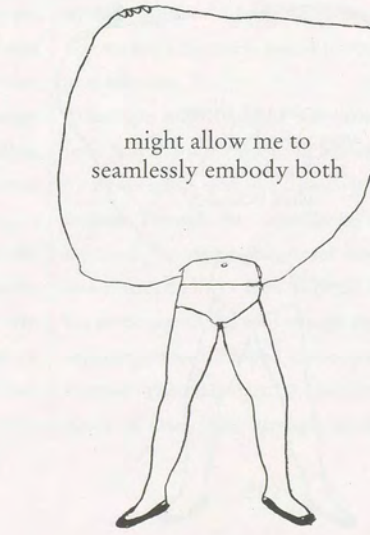
I have been preoccupied  
with the predicament of



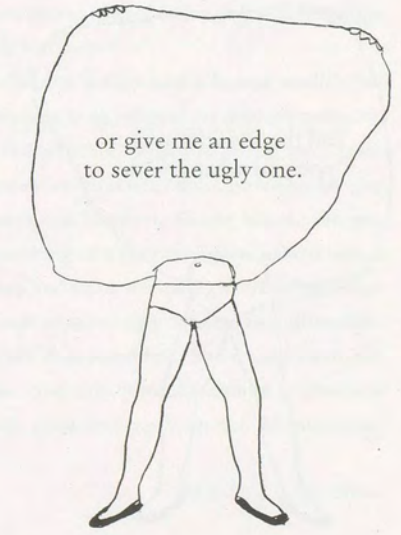
having become  
an exhibitionist



of that second  
opposite-of-showman  
face



might allow me to  
seamlessly embody both



or give me an edge  
to sever the ugly one.



