

“At any rake,” angles of “linguistic condensation” and shock in Percival Everett’s *The Water Cure*:

“All this while we play and pain with a language that is private.”

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I am a performative utterance. I carry the illocutionary ax. But imagine anyway that it is as simple as this: I lay dying.

Percival Everett, *Percival Everett by Virgil Russell*.¹

“You’re game, right? Oh, I made a punny.”² This question that the character addresses his prey, is also intended for the reader. To read *The Water Cure* (2007), you need to be “game, right?” In other words, you need simultaneously to be ready to play with language and conventions, and to accept being propelled in a world where children’s drawings (*WC*, pp.19, 75, 110) and “Play-Doh” (*WC*, 192) collide with stories of abduction, murder and torture.

The Water Cure is told from a place of death and shock, by a narrator whose eleven-year-old daughter was abducted, raped and killed. The character is, in his own words, molded by the unexpected death of his daughter:

I come back to the question, as I always come back to the question, how is it that I am I, or me, the I or me depending on whether the first I is really *I* and not merely some word “I” designating another “not I”? [...] So, there are two things that mark me as distinct, as the individual *thing* I am: the death of my daughter and the particular location of space. The notion, the claim, even the reality of my daughter’s death is vapor, cannot be touched, and so the only real identity I have is spatial orientation to the rest of the world.

Everett, *The Water Cure*, 51.

The wound left by the daughter’s death is a performative narrative act, it establishes the character-as-object in/of the narrative as a *distinct thing*; “as the individual *thing* I am.” It marks “it” as distinct, which, “according to its etymology,” as French philosopher Jean–Luc Nancy puts it, “is separated by marks (the word refers back to *stigma*, a branding mark, a pinprick or puncture, an incision, a tattoo): what is withdrawn and set apart by a line or trait, by being marked also as withdrawn [*retrait*].”³ The character-as-thing that the narrative voice unveils is not just branded by trauma it is sketched by it; it is literally traced, as becomes manifest in the opening pages, where the narrative gesture is first uncovered as a sketched trace. What comes first as we open the book is a short thick black line drawn on the right, towards the middle of a grey square, which, itself, is printed in the middle of the first page, with the following caption: “...so we induce” (*WC*, 4, Fig 1). The narrative voice is, first and foremost, then, a mark, twice framed and twice staged, first by the grayish square and then by the page itself.

¹Percival Everett. *Percival Everett by Virgil Russell* Minneapolis, Graywolf Press, 2010, p. 216. Subsequent references to *Percival Everett by Virgil Russell* will appear as *PEVR*.

²Percival Everett. *The Water Cure*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2007, p.78. Subsequent references to *The Water Cure* will appear as *WC*.

³Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Ground of the Image* Perspectives in Continental Philosophy Series, No. 51 (*Au fond des images* Translated by Jeff Fort., Paris, Galilée 2003). New York, Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 2.

This framed line leads us, one page and one word at a time (there is only word per page on pages five and six) to the following statements:

the arduous nowhere

These pages are my undertaking.
The Water Cure, 7.

In other words, the first pictorial and narrative line leads “to a particular location of space” (*WC*, 51) described as a non-space or rather as an “arduous nowhere.” Read retrospectively, the *I* that is marked as distinct, is withdrawn from the page and located in an “arduous nowhere.”

The framing of the narrative does not end here, it is merely beginning. Three asterisks set a new text apart which reads “These pages are my undertaking,” that is, it alludes both to the narrative gesture and to a burial with undertaking reeking of “undertaker.” As another narrator states in *Percival Everett by Virgil Russell*, “I am a performative utterance. I carry the illocutionary ax. But imagine anyway that it is as simple as this: I lay dying.”⁴ (*PEVR*, 216).

As the narrator lures us to “Follow the pains” (*WC*, 21)—the formulation is both the character’s as he addresses his victim and the narrator enticing the reader to follow the white rabbit of pain— and puts us in contact with the “vapor” of death (“my daughter’s death is a vapor” *WC*, 51), it becomes clear that Everett plays with an “illocutionary ax” to destabilize the text and disrupt all categories, thus allowing his reader/player to touch upon something that “cannot be touched” (*WC*, 51), something that is mere “vapor.” In Everett’s narrative world, “pain” and playing with language are inextricably linked, and the reader has to become a player in this sinister linguistic game —“All this while we play and pain with a language that is private.”⁵

The aim of this paper, then, is to show that, as the vaporous dead girl absorbs both the narrative and the reader’s gaze (“a dead face absorbs one’s gaze” *WC*, 8), Everett’s “illocutionary” and playful linguistic ax turns language into a “performative utterance” materializing trauma on the page.

“A fog of clarity”

“That much was clear,” or so says the narrative voice, immediately qualifying it by stating: “Well, a lot more and a lot less than that was clear, but clarity is what you make of it.” (*WC*, 166). So what should we make of Everett’s “clarities”? Reading *The Water Cure* requires a movement “away from the center of clarity”/gravity and into the unexpected plural “clarities,” where “clarities” collide with one another and expend “indefinitely away.” In other words, the novel blurs our traditional modes of representation with an excess of clarity, or, to put in Everett beautifully paradoxical

⁴Echoing behind the narrator’s formulation is William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying* and Addie Bundren’s corpse lying in a box—“Addie Bundren cold not want a better box to lie” (*As I Lay Dying* p. 8)—manufactured “clock-shaped” wooden box, which frames Addie in a topsy-turvy way (“they had laid her head to foot” *As I Lay Dying* p. 70) and houses her body as it decomposes. Through the inter-textual reading, Everett’s “illocutionary ax” points to framed deaths and decomposing linguistic structures.

⁵In a conference “On the Possibility of the Experimental Novel” given in Paris during the AFEA 2014 Conference (23 May 2014), Everett compared experimental fiction writing to a children’s game called AGWAR, the Amazing Game with Any Rules.

phrasing, “Clearly too much clarity.” The only thing that is clear then (“that much was clear”), is that clarity, as it is multiplied and pluralized, plunges the reader in “a fog of clarity”:

The room is cluttered with clarity. I’m tripping over it, slipping on it, losing it behind the refrigerator. There is more clarity than I can shake a stick at. Too much clarity for one room. Too much clarity for one person. [...] Clearly too much clarity. Clarity out the ass. A snowstorm of clarity. A fog of clarity settling on the hillside of clarity. Clarities colliding. Clarities expanding infinitely away from the center of clarity. Clarities smushing together and making more clarity. Clarity pressing at the seams, popping rivets, bubbling over.

And yet ...

The Water Cure, 166.

In doing so, the text mirrors the effect of traumatic events, which are all at once “too” clear and impossible to assimilate, thus placing the traumatized person in a “fog of clarity” where the focus on traumatic images takes the place the possibility of real knowing. As Cathy Caruth states, following Freud, the “literal return of the event” prevents its assimilation and points to the “collapse of its understanding.”⁶ This gap in knowledge is central to all analyses of trauma⁷ and presents a first swing of the performative linguistic ax chopping away at the text.

The reader is stuck with “snowstorm of clarities” where the metaphorical tempest sets the stage for the narrator’s cognitive collapse and the concomitant destabilization of our clarities. The undermining of the reader’s clarities occurs, as I will show, by displacing inter-textual references and rewriting them, as well as by making language quaver. The references, be they to *Moby Dick*, to *Alice in Wonderland*, or to nursery rhymes “[expand] indefinitely away from the center of clarity.” As abstractions collide with “the dirt of the real,” we lose (“losing”) the clarity of nursery rhymes and limericks behind “the refrigerator.” To take but one example, the “old woman who lived in a shoe” (*there was an old woman who lived in a shoe*) gets lost as a “cold wolfman” and the while the rhythm of the rhyme is kept, the sounds slip from “there was” to “fear was”—“Fear was a cold wofman too jived in a stew” (*WC*, 169) (*there was an old woman who lived in a shoe*). The second aspect concerns language itself: letters “smushing together,” words “popping rivets” and “bubbling over.”

A Twinkling Cheshire Cat I.

Let me start with a fleeting shape, the one that beckons on the first page: a *simple* streak. “Every word is a symptom/ Every line holds the entire picture.” (*WC*, 113) we are told elsewhere. A single line, then, from which we induce a shape.

⁶ Cathy Caruth “Trauma and Experience,” (*Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) p. 7.

⁷ See for instance analyses of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) or Dori Laub’s analysis of the Holocaust and the “collapse of witnessing” it entailed (“Truth and Testimony” *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Cathy Caruth (ed.) Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995)

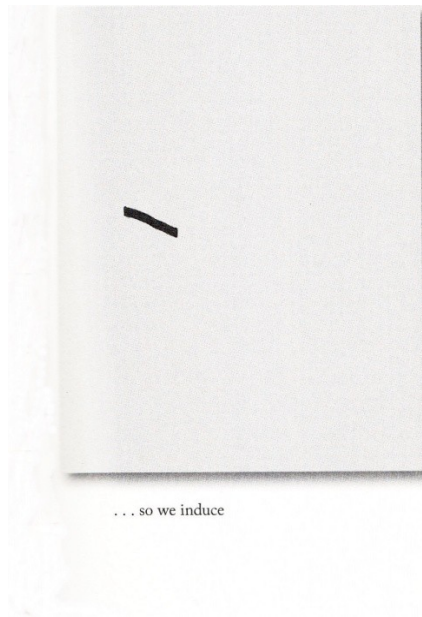


Fig 1 : *The Water Cure*, 4.

“So we induce,” and the line progressively comes into view, first as two strokes (*WC*, 21), then as a partial sketching (*WC*, pp. 28, 48, 68, 84, 98, 112, 129, 146, 201) and ultimately as a Chestsire Cat [Fig 2]. If we chose to flip through the pages, and uncover the picture in the making, then, the first page bears “the entire picture,” it is its symptom fading in and out of focus. It is a streak, a line and a trace. *Every line holds the entire picture.*



Fig2: *The Water Cure*, 213

The first sketched stroke of ink thus links the narrative voice to a fleeting Cheshire Cat figure, and hence traces the *I* and the narrative voice as vaporous Cheshire Cat-like gestures defined by their quavering disappearance/appearance. In his analysis of

Mallarmé’s *Un Coup de Dés*, Quentin Meillassoux ponders on what a quavering might entail. For him, Mallarmé’s poem holds “a quavering number,”⁸ which he defines as a “Number that would contain the possibility both of existing and not existing [...] of having and having not been the result of a throw,” or, of a result that “*would retrocede its own undecidable structure to the act that had engendered it.*” In other words, the “throw would produce a Number that presents the hesitation, the intimate ‘quavering,’” which characterizes the gesture of shaking the dice while keeping them in his hand. (Meillassoux 2011, p. 139). I believe a similar quavering gesture occurs here, but one that Everett links to a more traditionally twinkling figure, Lewis Carroll’s Cheshire Cat.

The cat tells me I may take this road or that one and that either will get me to a place to which I will be going. The March Hare is that way. The Hatter, the other. My direction matters little. They’re both mad. And the cat? He fades back in.
The Water Cure, 44

This Cat—fading back in not out—bears the trace of something that stands on the verge of clarity, something ready to come to view, ready to fade back *in*. Several aspects are essential here, first the fact that the fading trace of the cat is linked to a hesitation with regards to direction and localization; and second, the catlike figure containing the pronoun “I” on the page reproduced above.

To put it differently, if “these pages” are the narrative’s voice “undertaking,” they lead us down “this road or that one,” “direction matters little,” to an “arduous nowhere” localized in a quavering I-Cheshire Cat figure. The death of the narrator’s daughter traps the narrative voice in a trembling, i.e., in the grueling non-space of shock.

In *Erasure*, Percival Everett experimented with a self-reflexive pathological author identity (Everett writing as Thelonious Ellison/Monk writing *My Pafology* under the pseudonym Stagg R. Leigh), distorting traditional writing frames and playing with the pathological nature of the narrator’s condition⁹. Here, it is the frame that quavers, as the Cheshire Cat it keeps fading in and out.

The narrator’s unstable identity is the first “symptom” that each word on the page presents us with: “Every word is a symptom” Though words are not symptoms clinically speaking, here they perform the symptoms of a traumatized mind.

Let me focus on the dis-(re)-location of the narrative voice.

“Blah, blah, blah. Call me Ishmael” (*WC*, 15). The sentence brings to mind with a “snowstorm of clarity” the opening line of *Moby Dick*, and yet, the “center of clarity” evaporates at once, when, on the same page, the next section concludes “My name is in fact Ishmael.” (*WC*, 15). What could have been intended as a self-reflexive loop on writing, is thus unexpectedly re-qualified in reverse as a “real” name. Or is it? The full statement is more playful: “My name is in fact Ishmael. Ishmael Kidder” (15). The narrator is a fraud artist, his name rings of hoax—“Kidder,” the one who is kidding—and the prank is on the reader. In a more sinister turn, the Kidder rings of Killer. As the name Ishmael expands away from the center of clarity, it starts “bubbling over,” and dissolving further: we learn that the narrator is also a “woman” writer, a “romance

⁸ Quentin Meillassoux *The Number and the Siren: A Decipherment of Mallarmé’s Coup de Dés*. (Translated by Robin Mackay [Le Nombre et la sirène. Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2011] Urbanomic 2012), p. 138.

⁹ Marc Amfreville provides an enlightening analysis of Monk’s pathological depressive characterization, by reading *Erasure* with Freud’s *Mourning and Melancholia*. (“*Erasure and The Water Cure: A possible Suture?*” *Canadian Review of American Studies/Revue canadienne d’études américaines* 43, no. 2, 2013)

novelist” called Estelle Gilliam (*WC*, 25). Ultimately, the reader *trips over* questionings about identities and self-reflexivity.

Something of the same order occurs in *Percival Everett by Virgil Russell*, when the narrative “self-conscious attention to” the pronoun I (*PEVR*, 157) collides with an algebraic *i*, “the letter representing an imaginary unit in math,” thus smashing together two conceptual clarities—identity and mathematics. In the conceptual collision, the “pronoun denoting the self” acquires mathematical properties and can thus be negated as it is multiplied. Indeed, in the realm of complex numbers, *i* multiplied by itself, or *I* squared (i^2) is equal to minus one¹⁰. Multiplying one’s Is is thus akin to negating them.

The collision in *The Water Cure* is not with mathematics, it is with a dictionary, yet it is of the same nature. According to what appears to be a dictionary entry, Ishmael (*WC*, 159) is no longer a character/narrator, it is a Hebrew part of speech, a name then, which can drift into being a noun— “Names are always just substitutes for nouns” (*WC*, 91)— and whose pronunciation is, quite unforeseeably, \bas-terd\.

Ishmael \bas-terd\ *n* [Heb] **1.** Someone that is spurious, irregular, inferior, or of questionable origin. **2. a :** an offensive or disagreeable person—used generally as a term of warning **b:** a non-feeling, despicable creature who leaves with no good reason and wrings your heart in his fist while pretending to be compassionate and understanding—**Ishmael-ly** *adj*

The Water Cure, 159.

As states elsewhere, “It is always a matter of framing, of framing matter” (*WC*, p. 13). What is framed here is also an adverb, “Ishmael-ly”, defined as an adjective. Would that mean that what *Percival Everett by Virgil Russell* calls an “unwanted, and largely, unnoticed supply of *ly’s*” (*PEVR* 144) is being re-categorized as adjectives, and that this adjective/adverb is to be pronounced \bas-terd-ly\?

In this fictive dictionary entry, the asterisks contribute to the re-framing, setting the definition apart and seaming it into the novel at the same time.

Is the frame a work of art apart from the framed, and if so, is it a frame at all, and what does it mean to consider that they, the frame and the framed, work together or against each other?
The Water Cure, 13

This dual capacity of the frame to labor with and against the work it encloses, is also what Jacques Derrida underlines in his analysis of framing. He defines framing in terms of exertion, and sees the frame as a “place of labor.”

The frame labors [*travaille*] indeed. Place of labor, structurally bordered origin of surplus value, i.e., overflowed [*débordée*] on these two borders by what it overflows, it gives [*travaille*], indeed. Like wood. It creaks and cracks, breaks down and dislocates even as it cooperates in the

¹⁰For a more mathematically oriented analysis of this passage see Le Cor (2014) « Les « fleurs mathématiques » de la poésie et la fiction américaine contemporaine.»

production of the product, overflows it and is deduc(t)ed from it. It never lets itself be simply exposed.¹¹

The paradoxical quality of frames, as underlined by Derrida, to dislocate and cooperate “in the production of the product” seems particularly relevant for Everett’s fiction. In *The Water Cure*, framing participates in meaning making while at the same time playing “(it) (against) itself.”¹² My reading of enclosing structures differs in that sense from Sylvie Bauer’s enlightening analysis of *The Water Cure*. Framing in her view is “linked with familiarity,” the main role of frames being to “establish limits between outside and inside” and “keep at bay all that does not fit in.”¹³ On the contrary, it seems to me that frames *creak, crack* and *break down* even as they separate the text and meaning from their contours.

“a matter of framing,” but does “framing matter”?

“... so we induce,” or, so we are told on the first page of the novel, starting from an ellipsis and a framed line. But “there is more to it than that, there of course always is” (*WC*, 44) in *The Water Cure*. Another reading might take the sentence to be the title of a minimalist painting. In that reading, the narration proper—by which I mean the text, at that stage— would be a mere caption or legend for a sketched line. In other words, the printed text of the novel would act as title for a framed gesture—a single streak of black ink. But clarities being what we make of them, and being meaning constantly in the making, or perhaps in the dissolving, what the novel points to is not “what meaning you will make when reading the words on these pages,” but rather “the limits of what meaning you can make.” (*WC*, 49). Framing, then, contributes to taking meaning to the “limits,” which are perhaps those of the encasing—those of the structure of language and of our frames of reference: “sentences beg for structure or do we, sounding almost the same but far from the same.” (*WC*, 22)

“... so we induce”: the first page does not present a painting, it dis-locates our expectations and, with it, the narration. From the start, the narrative gesture speaks from a disjointed space, where “Art” can be re-qualified as “the bad silence”

The bad silence, the bad silence—the bad silence. There is no romance in bad silences, and there is certainly no sound, nothing sound. In that absence may I suggest that there resides that essence of art, the movement from sound, from language, to the ineffable, trying to make clear the obscurity of what is basic to all understanding. Art is the bad silence

The Water Cure, 29

Art is the bad silence. This resonates with a peculiar intensity in a novel where the protagonist who calls himself Ishmael, traps, adducts and frames a man, contriving evidence so as to have an excuse to start *working on* his “masterpiece”, whom he incidentally renames “Art” (“I have renamed you Art, and now you are Art” *WC*, 91).

¹¹ Jacques Derrida. *The Truth in Painting* Translated by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod. Chicago : The University of Chicago Press 1987, p. 75.

¹² I am transposition and applying to *The Water Cure*, Derrida’s more general statement : , “A certain practice of theoretical fiction can work (against) the frame, (make it or let it) play (it) (against) itself.” *Idem*, p. 81.

¹³ Sylvie Bauer “ “Nouns, Names, Verbs” in *The Water Cure* by Percival Everett, or, “Can a Scream be Articulate?” ” *Revue française d’études américaines* 2011/2 - n° 128, p. 102

Silence and displacement is also what is at stake in the use of asterisks which work with and against the text, framing it while relocating it in fragments. Everett takes the self-reflexive framing one step further by printing the word “ASTERISK” in capital letters, along with a series of asterisk signs, which both echo and frame it.

ASTERISK, ASTERISK, ASTERISK

The Water Cure, 49.

Are the “*” sign and the “ASTERISK” word working together or against each other? The self-reflexive asterisk blurs the borders between words and signs, and collides clarities (words and signs) to make us consider the “limits of what meaning you can make.” (*WC*, 49). The asterisks thus become a twinkling where meaning both dissolves and appears, where, in other words, it “fades back in.”

Let me focus on another doubly framed utterance:

“Give me your evidence,” said the king.
“Shan’t,” said the cook.

The Water Cure, 63

This reference to the “trial” (if it can be called a trial) in *Alice in Wonderland* punctuates Ishmael’s story. It appears either as a single word encased in asterisks (“Shan’t”, 119), as a sentence (“Shan’t,” said the cook. pp. 36 and 191) also enclosed in asterisks, or as the above passage (pp. 63 and 146). Everett thus repeatedly frames the “evidence,” striking a note whose self-reflective echo institutes framing as a form of set up and takes us from Alice’s Red Queen to Guantanamo (“the authorities of my homeland notwithstanding” (*WC*, 49). The act of torture the narrator presents us with does not require evidence (“Shan’t”), it is a “masterpiece” in its own right: “I will continue to work on you every day, nudging clay here, tempering hue there, chipping at a corner, changing tense, altering key.” (*WC*, 117). Yet, what is even more interesting than the political stance, is the linguistic framing at work here, it is, then, its framework. With torture defined in grammatical terms— it involves changing tense—we enter a world where writing entails wrecking violence on language. What Avital Ronell calls a “grammar of shock absorption and loss.”¹⁴

According to his unsettling self-definition the game the narrator plays (“Today, my friend, we play a new game” *WC*, 44) is that of therapist:

¹⁴ Avital Ronell. *The Telephone Book: Technology-Schizophrenia-Electric Speech*. Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska Press, 1989, p. 89

That’s simple enough. Today I will be your therapist. I know, the old joke jumps right out at us, doesn’t it? I’m going to be therapist to the rapist. Aren’t words marvelous? Anyway, I’m your doctor, your head-shrinker. That’s the game.
The Water Cure, 44

The narrator’s twisted logic aside, the passage links word play (“That’s the game”) and therapy. *The Water Cure* does just that, it performs the narrator’s trauma in language, and lets the reader act as therapist if she/he so desires, or at least it points to a *techné* of shock absorption through language. Everett’s grammar is the ultimate head-shrinker, that is, it is both the therapist and the tribal man who will temper with the reader’s head, by “cutting off” the reader’s linguistic apparatus, shrinking it, and keeping it as trophy.

“What is that dripping? Dripping in this cave. Linguistic condensation?” (5)

So which *illocutionary ax* does Everett swing at us?

She screamed mores. I hung up. She called back and screamed more and then in-mid-sen-tense-scream the phoneme vent blink or dread, but dead was suck a scary word and is.

The Water Cure, 165-166

Several layers are compacted. From “dread” to “dead”, what the reader hears is the narrator’s alarm as the phone or “phoneme” goes blank (or “vent blink”). As Avital Ronell reminds us “[t]he telephone connection houses the improper. Hitting the streets, it welcomes linguistic pollutants and reminds you to ask, “Have I been understood?” (Ronell 1989, p. 9) Here, in the midst of word breaks, misspellings and added letters, “[the phone line] creates” what Avital Ronell designates as “a space of asignifying breaks.” (Ronell 1989, p. 10). The space of the improper originates in the capacity of phone lines “to hold together what it separates” ((Ronell 1989, p. 10). Her analysis could also apply to Everett’s writing, and more particularly to this passage. The language Everett bends, both separates and holds meaning together, i.e., it makes it quaver. The play on “phone”/“phoneme” which went blank/ “vent blink” presents words whose *blinking* letters (vent blink) bear the trace of new configurations whose presence can be felt just beneath the surface of the sentence, and which remain accessible at a blink. Likewise, the turn of phrase “In-mid-sen-tense-scream” is representative of this quavering language. By opting for an “s” instead of a “c” (sentence), what is conveyed is both the tension of the scream (“tense”), and the tension which forces language into new meaning.

As a character named “Reasonable and Nervous Person” complains “Listen, you’re twisting my words all around” (*WC*, 86). The twisting is both visual and oral—“Listen.” The reader has to listen to the distortion being produced by a reading in performance. In that passage, the exchange on the existence of witches and the devil ends with a distorted nursery rhyme—“*Pope goes the weasel!*” In the replacing “Pop! Goes the Weasel” by “*Pope goes the weasel!*” Everett makes language pop, almost literally performing the monkey’s jump (“the monkey chased the weasel”) as the reader is caught unawares by the unexpected sound play.

In effect, *The Water Cure* is using a rib-spreader on language:

Pass the rib-spreader, if you please, and make the little child tell me, please, her name, please, why with a name like that you could be any shape, almost, and tell me again that she, and therefore I, can’t be put back together again.

The Water Cure, 149

Language *under trauma* is language ripped apart, until as Humpty Dumpty it “can’t be put back together again.” Or rather, it is a form of language that is not meant to be put back together, and that is intended to remain in the form of disconnected fragments.

Fragments. Frag-ments. Frags. Fr. m ents. This work is not fragmented;
it is fragments

The Water Cure, 16

The “rib-spreader” allows Everett to detach letters from words and leads to verbal/visual/sound collisions that explore the words’ capacity for meaning making, and hence reconfigures language into “more clarity” (“Clarities smushing together and making more clarity”).

Language under trauma, also leads to “Wonderful mis-or missed readings” (*WC*, 23). As our reading is constantly being re-framed one cannot but wonder whether ultimately the reader is not the one being framed, lured in by the musicality, to jump from meaning making to dead meat: “as if the music meant something, means something, meats something, yes, meats, meets something, meets someone at the bottom of the glass we raise to toast the dumb-dare-dial number of the nearest kin” (*WC*, 17). And if the reader is “the framed”, should she work with or against the “frame”?

The narrator provides a partial answer by stating “The proof is in the pudding” (*WC*, 117). So too, perhaps, for the reader, *the proof of the pudding is in the eating/reading it*.

I would like to conclude, then, with a piece of pudding, and attempt several “mis-or missed” eatings, or, “at any rake”/ at any rate, project the following piece along different angles:

Jerkgin Habermas rejlected Fraud or soak the storky glows. [...] At any rake, his saduction by Piggyjay and Kohldberg retempting to deconfinger Fraudian theirway to despict and remarkate a deafnight, if knot expressieve, scents of hisstory and hystorical prattkiss incongrewus wit henying omniveralistick and trainsidental in the cystame of Habermas.
The Water Cure, 94-95

“At any rake”, the degrees of inclination of the sentence blend rejected and elected in the shape of a “glowing” new word, “rejlected.” By distorting words, Everett makes them *glow*. Deconstruction reconfigured as de-con-fingering makes “con” echo with Fraud (Fraudian), and “theories” are consequently distorted to fit “theirway,” or as the narrator, a.k.a the con-artist, would contend: “I am not a Freudian” (*WC*, p. 45). Well neither is he, if one is to believe this passage, a disciple of Jerk-in/ jerking/ Jurgen Habermas or of a pig-bird chimera, Piggyjay/Piaget¹⁵.

Using a new angle of distortion, making and marketing seem to blend in a strange “remarkate.” The result being that depiction leans toward the despicable (*despict*), and what is left on the page are the “knots” in the theoretical “sieve” (“if knot expressieve”), whose doubled “s” foregrounds the “hiss” of “history.” Likewise, practice is slanted into a pratt-brat- kiss.

The auditory distortion is coupled to “misspellings” which bear the trace of a “missed reading”. Adjectives can hesitates between “historical” and “hysterical,” while

¹⁵ Lawrence Kohlberg presented as Kohldberg (cold-berg) adapted Jean Piaget’s work.

seduction is repackaged as a collision of sadness and abduction (“saduction”). Meanwhile, all things transcendental reverberate as “sin” and “dental” (trainsidental”). Ultimately, what seemed to be certain, definite or definitive is now doubly obscured —“deafnight,” — no sound (deaf) left to hear, no picture to see (night)

The blinking language of passages such as this one, perform what cannot be voiced or depicted. They capture an effraction—that of our representational system and of language.

But it might also just be another mis-reading through an expressive. So let me rather finish with a quote: “Mirrors and metaphors, that’s where our answers lies. Answers Lie. Isn’t language beautiful?” (*WC*, 46)

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