In 1987, I met Avital Ronell, who would change my life, and that same year I worked with Slavoj Zizek and Judith Lacan. This was decades before the Title IX complaint filed against Ronell led to a firestorm of articles and spilled ink defending her, denouncing her, or bemoaning the state of affairs confronting academia and our nation.

A few years later, I wrote an article eventually published in a special issue of Lusitania, the art and culture journal, about Fatty Arbuckle and Jacques Lacan. The issue was edited by Catherine Liu, who later went on to co-author an essay, in the Los Angeles Review of Books in 2018, denouncing Ronell, and telescoping that particular case into a larger discussion of precarity among teachers and those training to become professors as well as the entire austerity oppression being forced on a new...
searched for the things that pleased myself, things, some of them, which afterwards also pleased other people, so much so that they have since left me tired.

Craig Dworkin, in his book Reading the Illegible, describes how the found (and then processed) "gems" demonstrate censorship's ability to create the circumstance for obscenity rather than obscenity creating a need for censorship. The anthology of gems makes visible, by covering like the censor's graphic design. The n n hav appeared elsewhere where for different aesthetic purposes in, for example, Marcel Broodthaers' brilliant 1969 translation of Stéphane Mallarmé's 1887 proto-modernist (and precursor to concrete and visual poetry) work Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard (A throw of the dice will never abolish chance). Broodthaers appropriates the found poem and replaces every single word with a n. The thicket of the n was determined by the font size that Mallarmé famously varied, and the new version alternates pages with the n printed on translucent paper with the original poem under the n on alternate pages. Without the semantic value of the words distracting the reader, the position, size, and each page's design changes the reading of the found poem from literature to art; and the result is almost a lesson on modernist page design. Broodthaer's changes only one word, "Poéme," that appears on the title page, to "Image" in order to graphically argue that Mallarmé invents modern space. Joseph Kosuth's Zero & Not (1986) begins with a found text from Sigmund Freud's work on repression and the unconscious.
Kosuth crosses out each and every line of text, but unlike Brown's redactions, you can almost read the only partially hidden text under the black lines in this allegorical comment on the unconscious generation of graduate students and those trying to enter the profession.

Course, this early interest in processing texts led me to... and his Gems, in which he redacted classic children's poems. And, it was during my poet-in-residence that I started working on my essay for this issue. It is when I looked at the work of Laurence Sterne, and when Patrick Wildgust showed by the projects that have grown from Sterne's black page. Alas, Poor Yorick!

There are more contemporary losses that we use the black bars... It should come as no surprise that they literary trope of the black space is now the dominant and most widely practised writing in the world, and it has the greatest popularity. Abra Ancliffe in her study of this page shows how the blah blah of the page and...
One would have to think about editions and editions of editions. To read the differences in the editions according to the printing of those pages. This was also decades before I read with great interest the work of Simon Morris and others working in the area of redacted texts. I would soon meet Dworkin in the late 1990s—it was in 1997 at Yale University for a conference on Concrete and Visual Poetry, who is the best scholar of redaction, and had already studied Tom Phillips and his work on using redaction. Of Morris explains, "Well I think it's writing by not writing, which is why my favorite book of all time is Bartleby & Company, because that's all about artists and writers who refused to write, the literature of no, and I think you can write by not writing, by using the existing words of others." Now, if we applied this same logic to a different realm—the realm where the public reads important documents, then we can see redaction or perhaps not saying anything but still saying much. So, I found this document from the investigation of the governor of New Jersey's involvement in the closing of lanes and his response to the hurricane damage. Governor Chris Christie, widely regarded as one of the most criminally corrupt people, shut down lanes to fuck with his political opponents. Here is the redacted copy of the documents dealing with the hurricane response.
In late August, the Obama Administration released a trove of documents detailing the government's collection of information under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, including a heavily redacted, fifty-two-page report on the National Security Agency's FISA compliance for part of 2012. "These documents were properly classified," James Clapper, the Director of National Intelligence, noted in a letter accompanying their release, "and their declassification is not done lightly."

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**NJ TRANSIT Rail Operations Hurricane Plan**

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certainly true, by the look of it: black bars appear on all but seven of the pages in the compliance report. When the government utters the release of such heavily redacted documents as an act of transparency, leaving us to guess what we might be missing, the question inevitably comes up: Are there ways we can peer behind the black bars? According to a number of researchers, there often are. It’s well known that the U.S. government has a tendency toward over-classification. A 2012 report by the Public Interest Declassification Board, a government-funded advisory group, found that a “culture of caution” among executive-branch agencies had lead to chronic over-classification, and, in turn, has “compromised” the entire classification system. Government officials frequently perpetuate this culture by invoking national security, but Marc Trachtenberg, a Cold War historian at U.C.L.A., told me that “the function of declassification is much broader than keeping information from the enemy.” Often documents remain classified simply to save face. (Think of the cables released by WikiLeaks in 2010, some of which didn’t reveal sensitive information but were merely unflattering.) What is striking is the similarity between the infamous NJ Transit Rail Operation Hurricane Plan and the famous Black Page by Sterne. It suggests that there is a literary element of the censors’ bars, a trope, a poetics. Most government agencies that handle classified information have dedicated sanitizers. For an act so often associated with the anonymous, passionless churning of the government machine, redaction betrays a striking individualism in the choices about what to leave visible and what to obscure, and in the shapes of the black bars themselves. The black marker pen is the sanitizer’s most basic tool. But it can be sloppy, and the sheen of a photocopy sometimes reveals the letters beneath the ink. Sanitizers also employ opaque tape and razor knives, cutting out the sensitive...
You can usually identify the tool by the marks it leaves behind: the pen—redacted page is filled with heavy, imperfect lines, while the razor knife and opaque tape both leave sharp edges (though the photocopier gives a knifed-out block a mottled, grayish hue).

Occasionally, a sanitizer simply covers text with another "Bin Ladin Determined to Strike in U.S." brief that George Bush received on August 6, 2001.

The first Indra's Nets were acrostic. Indra's Net: I is a sampler of this early work and the terminology used to describe it. I should say at the outset that when I first developed this work, I was ignorant of the earlier or coincidental experiments of Emmett Williams and Jackson Mac Low. John Cage's mesostics were also then unknown to me. Mac Low's "Asymmetries," and, later, his "diastic" techniques are very similar to what I first termed "head- or internal-acrostic holography. However, there are non-trivial differences between all this work and my own which arise from its method of publication, or more precisely the digital instantiation of my work, which allows such generative procedures to be experienced by the reader in real-time, as the text is generated, and not after the author has produced.

Actually existing (P)LOs, so designated, have not been created by myself or other practitioners—to my knowledge—although these speculations seem remarkably prescient of certain work that is contemporary in the early twenty-first century, David Jhave Johnston, John Cayley, John Baldessari.


Emmett Williams Jackson Mac Low. John Cage Mac Low. Mac Low.
literary, unambiguously computational, digital language art. Recently the authors have, moreover, produced a discussion of "creative code in comments," as an online journal article.

On the other hand—as for Raymond Queneau’s Cent mille milliards de poèmes—it would be literally impossible for anyone to read all of the possible verses. If we can only bring some minuscule portion of a huge virtual linguistic artifact into actual existence for our critical consideration, for our reading, does or should the work exist at all? What is it beyond its "executable" description and any "authorized" literary qualities—cited here from the highly regarded work of canonical authors—that are inscribed in its data? It is distinctly separable from other phenomena of the perceptible world, made and marked by what Jacques Derrida indicated as différance. Virtual linguistic forms establish a break with the perceptible matter of which they are formed precisely in that catastrophic, no-turning-back moment when they are grasped as language by both the language animal who makes the traces and a language animal who reads them. I call this process grammalepsis and I consider it to be generative of language, ontologically. Reading brings language into substantive being as instances of interhuman potentialities. Paul de Man and Jonathan Culler’s critics complain of his lack of distinction between literature and the institution of writing in general. John R. Searle has described Culler__________Jacques Derrida and _______Jacques Derrida look both better and worse than he really is; better in glossing over some of the more intellectually murky aspects of deconstruction and worse in largely ignoring the major philosophical progenitors of Derrida’s thought, namely Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Judith Butler, Avital Ronell.
Roman Jakobson, who,

This Poetics of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry, explains that "No nook or corner, no activity, no thought stands outside the pale of poetic subject matter. In other words, the issue of poetic subject matter has no validity today. " The borderline dividing what is a work of poetry from what is not is less stable than the frontiers of the Chinese empire's territories. Novalis and Mallarmé regarded the alphabet as the greatest work of art. Russian poets have admired the poetic qualities of a wine list, Vjazemskij, an inventory of the tsar's clothes, Gogol, a timetable, Pasternak, and even a laundry bill, Kručenyx. How many poets now claim that reportage is a more artistic genre than the novel or short story? And, crucial for our discussion today, Jakobson asks, "Is it then possible to limit the range of poetic devices? Not in the least," Jakobson answers. "The history of art is their constant mutability, and does the intent of a device burden art with any structure."

We have only to recall how often the Dadaists and Surrealists let happenstance write their poetry. We have only to realize what pleasure the great Russian poet Xlebnikov [Khlebnikov] derived from typographical errors: the typographical error, he once said, is often a "first-rate artist." (p. 741). As William Carlos Williams wrote, "A poem can be made of anything," even typos in newspaper clippings. That is the challenge today, here -- to announce a poetry of reading. The most important Russian Futurist poet, Valmir Khlebnikov, developed what his group called "trans-sense or transrational language (known as zaum)" -- And, zaum sought to liberate sound from meaning. (Inadvertently perhaps, they also established the lineage for a type-o-poetry that liberates visuality from meaning.)
It points somewhere besides a window on the world or what the linguistics call a referent -- and in doing so it functions as poetry "..."," Rosmarie Waldrop. Khlebnikov: Marjorie Perloff..."
The links between stagnation and sleep or between truth and a divine wandering are precisely the links that intrigue poets.

Or put another way, the stray mark on the page, drifting away from the writer’s control offers a poetic opportunity.

Perloff’s placement of concrete poetry in a lineage seems uncannily to apply quite well to the emerging type of typo poetry I’m announcing today:

“…as the ‘destruction of syntax’ as in Marinetti and the ‘word set free’ Khlebnikov.”

Khlebnikov’s poem translated as ‘Incantation by Laughter’) performs its title by agglutinating the one-word stem, smekh or smeiat’sia (Russian for laughter/to laugh) to which prefixes and suffixes are added to generate new words without any external references or associations, so the poem becomes just the sound and visual shape of laughter. Look at the O shape repeated much like, in English, we might say Ho, Ho, Ho.-- one needs to literally laugh through the poem as a sound that leaves literacy behind. If there are Russian readers here today, you might here then recite a bit from the audience? Or anyone willing to read this transliteration. Or, perhaps we can together do a reading of this very imperfect and mistaken translation:

The reading of our incantation of laughter reminds us of the innovative British visual and sound poet Bob Cobbing who was also the publisher of Writers Forum, which was an essential part of the London avant-garde poetry scene in the 1960s, when he managed Better Books, and staged many experimental literary and artistic happenings. In Cobbing’s “Some Statements on Sound Poetry,” he explained that “Gone is the word as word, though the word may still be used as sound or shape. Poetry now resides in other elements.”-- even as we’ve seen laughing.

The X and O, in particular, often used as indicators of redaction or editorial interventions,
have played a role in poetry since Edgar Allen Poe, and I edited an issue of Visible Language, many decades ago, that included an Alphabet of visual poetry with an entry on the letter X: Marks the Spot." That begins by explaining that "The structure of writing is the structure of crime and its detection. A deed is committed, followed by a delay: a reader appears to decode the mysterious marks left behind: *memento mori*. Hence the inevitable association of the letter X with the mystery story. As the simplest letter to make, the mark of the child or the illiterate, it stands for all the others. More importantly, as the universal mark of cancellation, it represents alphabetic culture's murder of the author, and the resulting liberation of his words. One of Poe's strangest stories, "X-ing a Paragrap," implies a literal version of death-by-the-letter-X. Engaged in a competitive newspaper war, an editor is accused by his rival of excessive reliance on the letter X. He takes the bait and composes a long editorial using as many Os as possible. ("So be it, John! Told you so, you know..... Go home to your woods, old man. - go! You won't? Oh, pol, pol, John, don't do so! You've got to go, you know!") Running out of Os, the typesetter makes the customary substitution for missing letters: "Sx hx nxw! txw txw! Txd yxu sx, yxu knxw." The next morning, the town erupts in a furor, but the editorial's author, without explanation, has vanished, never to be seen again.

And Poe's short story about "X-ing a Richard Burt Paragrap" leads me to the typos in the NYT. And I chose to read the Times for typos because in the states it is called "the paper of record," because it is the most trusted newspaper by historians and the general public -- or was until the recent tweet-storms by self-described Great Leader. Also, the Times takes great care to catch and correct typos and mistakes: the issue corrections, retractions, and write self-deprecating essays about the mistakes that their proof-readers and editors missed.
1 There is a long tradition in the twentieth century of redacted texts among governmental, corporate, and, surprisingly, artists and experimental writers from the 18th century through the 20th century's historical avant-garde to contemporary 21st century conceptual writers. At risk of explaining, and perhaps explaining away the joke-like logic of my conceptualization, this essay originally titled, before redaction, "Scandalography Reprise: Confidential Dossier & The Redacted Essay With Everything Except Personal and Place Names Redacted," this single un-redacted endnote will allow one to have one way to read this essay—one possible entrance. The first term in my now redacted essay's title alludes to my earlier essay on scandalography that talked about the logic and machinations of writing of and with scandal from Fatty Arbuckle's demise to Jacques Lacan's rise. And, in general this essay has a related hypothesis that involves the visual structure of redaction as determining meaning, especially surrounding scandals, but the censor's work offers a textual marker that signals rather than signifies. The redacted text signifies nothing; instead the not-redacted names and the censors' bars signal a whole chain of (sometimes imagined) meanings. One can choose to write with these visual aspects of essay writing or be written by them since redaction has occurred just invisibly for the reader. Of course, the un-redacted text in this essay with the examples would have offered, before redaction, the most meticulously complete historical description and theoretical explanation available to explain the ways in which redaction presents a graphic mark of an engaged reading -- usually effaced -- of essays and other types of texts; in that case, one would have little sense of the visceral signaling involved in reading redaction—little sense of what this essay says about the names mentioned that has nothing to do with this endnotes' guidance. Scandalous perhaps, but marking the heightened engagement with the essay. Obviously, this essay appears to hoist the sanitizers by their own petard, which mimics tactics used by the avant-garde and a lineage of similar sociopoetic experiments, but it also places that relevant parody for censorial times, next to an examination of what it means to read, in general, and read essays specifically. In terms of the lineage of this work, I look at many examples in this essay, and just mention Bob Brown's GEMS (Roving Eye Press, 1931; republished and introduced by Craig Saper, 2015). Brown's avant-garde books all visually challenged normative reading practices. This essay also challenges normative reading practices dependent on the notion that texts only convey meaning through signification and not signaling. Brown's book appeared in the modernist context, and after he had worked with Nancy Cunard's Hours Press, that was also publishing Havelock Ellis' extremely influential and important work on obscenity as a creation of censors for politically motivated reasons. GEMS specifically alluded to the poems in Victorian literature (the "gems" often taught to students in anthologies). Again, in my essay here—now redacted—I go into much greater depth about Ellis, Brown, Klebnikov, and many other examples including from the historical avant-garde. I also discuss at length Craig Dworkin's discussion in his Reading the Illegible about how censorship creates the circumstance for obscenity rather than covering the obscene itself, and, after the fact, creating a need for censorship. So, what I attempt to do in this essay, which is written, under redaction, in an eloquent and clear prose style without sacrificing the nuanced complexity of the phenomena this essay seeks to unpack, is to offer a hypothesis about reading practices. On the one hand, those practices are usually effaced in academic texts of importance by hiding the peer-reviewer's heightened and engaged reading behind the un-redacted text. On the other hand, often the public reads important texts, that
demand heightened and engaged readings and readers, after a "reader" or "reviewer" censors it. So, by not including the censored text in academic essays we miss a key component of reading in the public. And, one assumes that no peer-reviewer, certainly not me when I play that role, would feel qualified to make a judgement on a redacted text, even if they argued that their call for specific redactions were necessary before publication. Censors and peer-reviewers are often "double blind" meaning the names are censored--although this process itself is entirely invisible to the readers. I reverse that process here--redacting everything except the (perhaps innocent) names. Although I use different techniques to censor my essay--sometimes redacting entire lines or individual words, I do so to test the readers' response to different types of censor bars. I reference works like Marcel Broodthaers’ brilliant 1969 translation of Stéphane Mallarmé’s 1887 proto-modernist (and precursor to concrete and visual poetry) work *Un Coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard* (A throw of the dice will never abolish chance), but always next to a discussion of government documents that were redacted completely like New Jersey’s redacted discussion to hurricane response and mismanagement. While Broodthaers appropriates the found poem and replaces every single word with a censor's bar, he does so with a different intention than the government or bureaucratic censor; nevertheless, intention aside, the reading experience works at the level of signaling in both cases. Without the semantic signifying value of the words distracting the reader, the position, size, and each page’s design changes the reading of the essay; and the result is somewhere between a lesson on modernist page design and a Rorschach test of our fantasies of obscene descriptions, state secrets, sensitive personal information about, for example, a sex scandal, harassment, murder, or criminal behavior. Some, but not all, of the citations to similar signaling marks include Laurence Sterne including an entire block of ink on one page to graphically mark the ineffability of a death and mourning, Broodthaers graphically arguing that Mallarmé invents modern space of the page, Joseph Kosuth's *Zero & Not* (1986) starting with a found text from Sigmund Freud’s work on repression and the unconscious to graphically highlight the conceptualization of repression, Abra Ancliffe looks at the differences in a completely inked over page in different editions to brilliantly examine the reading of editions that do not change the meaning of the words, and Simon Morris publishing a series of excised or erased texts, by himself and others, to conceptualize aspects of the art of reading. My essay here uncovers, by covering, the machinations of censored essays, and by doing so seeks to reveal a non-normative reading practice, both visually and sonically, if non-phonetically, that involves an essential aspect, if usually paradoxically effaced by un-redacted texts, of reading an essay: signaling signs signifying [redacted].