CAST MEMORY

The source of this illusion (for empty space, unenclosed, has actually no visible parts or shape) is the fundamental principle of sculptural volume: the semblance of organism.
— Susanne K. Langer

In this book, figures keep disappearing—as if at the edge of the sea, the same sea where we started: terminus, the place of orientation, on the edge of the wild as well as the more structured wilderness, the forested city. Even topographies become objects via certain perspectives, a mind or root system glancing back toward the horizon. Emptied of affect, we begin to see this backward look as molds subtly incorporated into the objects they halo, a type of history. A spatialized conceptual practice can be theorized on the basis of phenomenal apparition, objects that retain a temporal quality at the intersection of absence and event, sticking to the object: a wooden guide.

Sculpture acts similarly. Let’s take the physical process of lost wax casting as an allegory for spatial memory, the place where contours still hold along the texture of made objects, their place in space recognized, reverberant, continually active in the passivity of an object’s nature. This proactive passivity transmits information via the space around, the spatial memory of that
which made the object, the mold, the wax that existed at a prior moment in order to make the thing itself, in all its textural resonant energy.

As the cast falls away, it is retained in the texture, the shape, the contour of the object itself. Can we consider this a type of memory? Throughout this writing, the axial figure obsesses over other figures, these objects, hoping to remember how to remember by watching these objects enact memory at all times: simultaneous, in the present, bodily.

But if time accumulates and memory molds, where is the body?

Jean Genet knew this. In *Funeral Rites*, the body, now gone, in fact inflects the objects around the one that desires, the one who resists, so to speak, the beloved. Out of his mind, and thus out of his sight, the two are synonymous at this critical juncture of obsession:

> My hand was in his, but mine was four inches away from the hand of the image. Although it was impossible for me to dare live such a scene (for nobody — including him — would have understood what my respect meant) I had a right to want to. And whenever I was near an object that he had touched, my hand would move toward it but stay four inches away, so that things, being outlined by my gestures, seemed to be extraordinarily inflated, bristling with invisible rays, or enlarged by their metaphysical double, which I could at last feel with my fingers.²

An emergence that begins within the body becomes myriad, countlessly courting the line between conscious thought and unconscious desire, but, even more, cognitive knowledge and pre-cognitive sensation. A reverberative power expands the beloved body and its reach. Here, knowledge is immanent, a radiation whose origin is nothing more than the body and its sculptural position.
And yet, the body is a type of language, and, in writing, the body reflects its visceral confluences as we have seen in clay and accumulations of words, concepts, and syntaxes on the page. As the text becomes texture, and technē and technique arise through the poetics of the sentence, the spatial surround of writing emerges as an intrinsic aspect of its organismic semblance. Susanne K. Langer wrote of this surround in *Feeling and Form*. Sculptural volume, she says,

is not a cubic measure, like the space in a box. It is more than the bulk of the figure; it is a space made visible, and is more than the area which the figure actually occupies. The tangible form as a complement of empty space that it absolutely commands, that is given with it and only with it, and is, in fact, part of the sculptural volume. The figure itself seems to have a sort of continuity with the emptiness around it, however much its solid masses may assert themselves as such. The void enfolds it, and the enfolding space has vital form as a continuation of the figure.³

This spatial command houses the metaphysical double that transfixes Genet, the emanation that he can *at last feel with [his] fingers*. Just as his text issues forth intensities of a textural drive, an interstitial longing.

This longing might have an anti-capitalist valence, albeit subtly, in the wings. The metaphysical doubling in virtual space may leave the object faceless — in effect, evoking a type of mis- or un-recognition, potentially leading to an inability to create exchange-value in the object whose visage is effaced in its own halo, its own memory. Like the loitering body which enacts a sort of wastefulness in its actions, the gesture of waiting, back against a chain link fence surrounding an abandoned plot of urban land — this can be seen as a slap in the face, or, more passively, a silent disavowal of capital hyper-productivity. Emanation, as spatial residue, recurs inadvertently, evinced via Spain's notions of *memory trace* and *a-signifying expression*.⁴
The turn from figuration to *technē* presents another interrogative landscape. Are these emanations, this spatial surround of the text, trackable as excess, or does this space, that which gives the *semblance of organism*, remain inherently manifest outside of epistemic analysis (i.e., a somatic or mystical remainder)? We may limit ourselves by thinking of memory as singly a cognitive act, when, in fact, the sensation of *enfolding space*, its *vital form as a continuation of the figure*, retains within itself accessible and inaccessible expressive features or elements.

So what, then, are these elements? What is the spatial command of a text?

One theory can be found in enunciation studies, which, in the 21st century, have shown how nonverbal elements in speaking reveal a sense of somatic identity that links to body memory, ancestral trauma, and pre-cognitive attributes. As social anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake points out in her investigations into “Prelinguistic and Preliterate Substrates of Poetic Narrative”:

Mother–infant interaction itself reminds us that linguistic theory, the philosophies of mind and language, and modern literary study […] may forget that language as spoken also has crucial “oral” and paralinguistic properties. These are the “expressive” (sometimes called “prosodic”) aspects of language — intonation, vocal contour, stress, volume, and other dynamic and expressive features that add emotional coloration and meaning to an utterance, allowing the hearer to infer and respond to a speaker’s feelings, motives, and other states that may not be verbally expressed.5

Let us go further. Let us attempt to locate these *expressive features* of the utterance in written language as well, these visceral residues and somatic events. In a way that echoes Langer, these *extramaterial, extradiscursive* linguistic elements seem to have some sort of relationship with notions of sculptural qualities. Can we view these *aspects of language* in relation to object-di-
mensionality, textural qualities, a type of halo that surrounds as a layer of memory around matter?

The space of affect and pre-cognitive knowing: made possible by the resonant distance between your body and this —
Endnotes