Our Strange Attractors: On Poetics, or World-Building

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Propositions to immediately put into action:

1. My capacity for doing good is directly related to my capacity for wonder. If I’m not awed, how can I care? Why should I? In place of oppressively dogmatic religions, ethically void politics, soul-bankrupt infotainments, and atheist-humanist solipsisms: a mature, proactive and extremely bold enchantment with this world, engendering versatile ethics, perpetuating labyrinthine engagements, promoting a “tough” romanticism that is neither naïve, simplistic, selfish or vulgar. Emotions are not commentaries; sensations are not positions. But both are ways, fluid and shifting into manifold Others.

2. In place of the language of advertisement, connivance, debate, minutiae fatigue, compulsive salesmanship, nefarious abridgement, convenient reductionism, addictive meme-ing and kneejerk oneupmanship: a subtle, nuanced, lyrical foray in many clashing voices that insists on defamiliarizing what is taken for granted, of taking the strange for
the ground that we work with, then working/playing with the intimacies hidden in our own estrangements. We want to reawaken the clashing songs inside of every word, so our bodies will have things radiant to throw forth as gifts and lures.

3. “You have to be enamored of the world,” Jane Bennett explains, in order to contribute your “scarce mortal services” to others (Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*). We are not afraid of affection, romance, devotion, cathexis, entanglement, charity, fixation, expenditure and obsession, for we know they are but processes among processes, fleeting yet vivifying passages we explore with the heartiest possible torches; in turn they bring us into newer, more elaborate passages, or even, newer, duller passages.

4. The inherent ordeal is how to preserve enchantment in spite of the pricks and snares and shit-falls of what’s Real. It’s what you do with Disappointment and Derailment, through language, through telling, through activity, through sound, through movement that demarcates the bounds of your integrity. Were there a war of the Soul it would consist in inflicting transformation on states of being that seem insupportable and intransigent; of making, through cultivated artistry and visionary ritual, becoming, while also, paradoxically knowing that such becoming must be experienced by a real, fully-fleshed someone.

5. Realism, when it is enriched and edified by meticulous poetic language, becomes ennobling and visionary, and not just caustic and hard-boiled and cynical (in the latter-day definition of the word.) We must hone an uncanny ear for things that “speak for themselves,” which is matter matter-
ing’, and not relinquishing singularity to ideas and ideals. Ideas work insofar as they tend to induce energies.

6. Realism is perceptual vertigo, the arch poetic struggle, in which our limited sensual apparatuses must allow and encourage passage for extra-sensual, extra-human vectors. We must become radios, terminals, nexuses, way-stations, transmitters and portals for forces and agents we hardly have words for. If we make maps of these presences, we might be able to inhabit the moments with a fuller sense of companionship.

7. To not let “things speak for themselves” is the betrayal endemic to bad poetics, bad ethics, bad writing, and bad speech and becomes more generally the foreclosure of anything political or ethical. However, a single voice, as we shall see, is always choral.

8. We are never giving our voices to things, but letting things overlay our own voices with theirs. In the process—which is all we are anyway—a choral mosaic is woven and maintained: something kosmic is kept at a high pitch.

9. No despair but clarity, even when shipwrecked in a blood gutter. This clarity is a political commitment to things thinging. We will hear what is said, we will let the voices interfere with us, even from the mutest, the dingiest and the most gutterized. We will be attentive to the paltriest stammerings, for they are integral to the structure, which, itself, is structureless when scrutinized.

1 We borrow this lovely and evocative term from a kindred art group called the INS, or the International Necronautical Society. The Mattering of Matter is their own collection of bulletins and manifestos, which we passionately recommend.
10. We think warmly of Michael McClure’s “structureless structure”; we know that chaos is not disorder but a dazzling complexity that requires the playful labors of finely-tuned, subtle, empathetic and voracious perceptions; we hearken to the roots of the word subtlety: “finely-woven.” We aspire for an intimacy with things that straddles both chaos and order and the subtle in-mixings of both.

11. We only speak (and thus, be) through intricate relationality: William James beautifully asserts: “Every definite image in the mind is steeped and dyed in the free water that flows round it. With it goes the sense of its relations, near and remote.”

12. Words mean things and should be honored, not cheapened, not monumentalized; but also their honor is dependent on the river they are in. We are cultivators of the river, which is to say, of what the river is, which is many and one, swift yet sluggish, veering yet dead-on.

13. When Lyn Hejinian writes about Gertrude Stein, she makes a critical distinction between “entity” and “identity” in the compositional work that Stein pursues (Hejinian, “Three Lives”). Entity is the astonishment of being anything at all it hardly matters what and identity is the shock of composing oneself in time and seeing revisions accumulate on you as you.

14. Both entity and identity are modes of attention that overlap and feed into and with each other in creativity. They allow for survival as well as adventure; keeping these in relative harmonies is perpetuated by the fineness and subtlety of our visionary ear, our ability to hearken to ourselves and others.
15. We grow accustomed to the non-human and welcome its incursions. We know that the human as hub of creation is, at best, a false alarm. But as humans, and more specifically as artists, we must attempt to render these non-human invasions that beset us with the language available, no matter how paltry and insufficient it seems. If this means changing the language to better hear the salvos from the Unknown, we must be prepared. If it means importing or deriving new symbols from archaic vocabularies, we must lend the generous ear.

16. Thus we depart from Mina Loy’s own gorgeous *ars poetica*: “I must live in my lantern/Trimming subliminal flicker/Virginal to the bellows/Of Experience” (Loy, 53).

17. From Derrida, we learn that writing’s detours, deflections and displacements are but alternate messengers crying out to us in clashing voices. Having no choice but to hear, we have no choice but to be changed—and to embrace these rigorous transmutations.

18. We believe in *being* that cries out to be altered, *identity* that begs to be divested of its jewels, and *life* that is hungry for other lives to overtake it.


20. Seers of *otherances* naturally have more intriguing things to say.

21. Surprise, the secret.

22. “To think is not to get out of the cave; it is not to replace the uncertainty of shadows by the clear-cut outlines of
things themselves, the flame’s flickering glow by the light of the true sun. To think is to enter the Labyrinth; more exactly, it is to make be and appear a Labyrinth when we might have stayed ‘lying among the flowers, facing the sky.’ It is to lose oneself amidst galleries which exist only because we never tire of digging them; to turn round and round at the end of a cul-de-sac whose entrance has been shut off behind us—until, inexplicably, this spinning round opens up in the surrounding walls cracks which offer passage”

—Cornelius Castoriadis

23. The cultivation of the labyrinth, however is not caffeinated haphazardry, businessman’s chicanery, nihilistic chaos, burning man self-indulgence; but a deliberation (in the Thoreauvian sense) in which improvisation and venture, derailment and determination, failure and flailing—the very strata of our characters—all work together as long as we are sincerely absorbed by the work so much so that it becomes play.

Often the most meaningless of templates, i.e. existence offers the most potentials for rapturous tapestries.

24. The work is the secret. It is open for us to live through, a passage of passages.

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