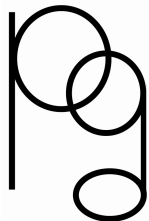


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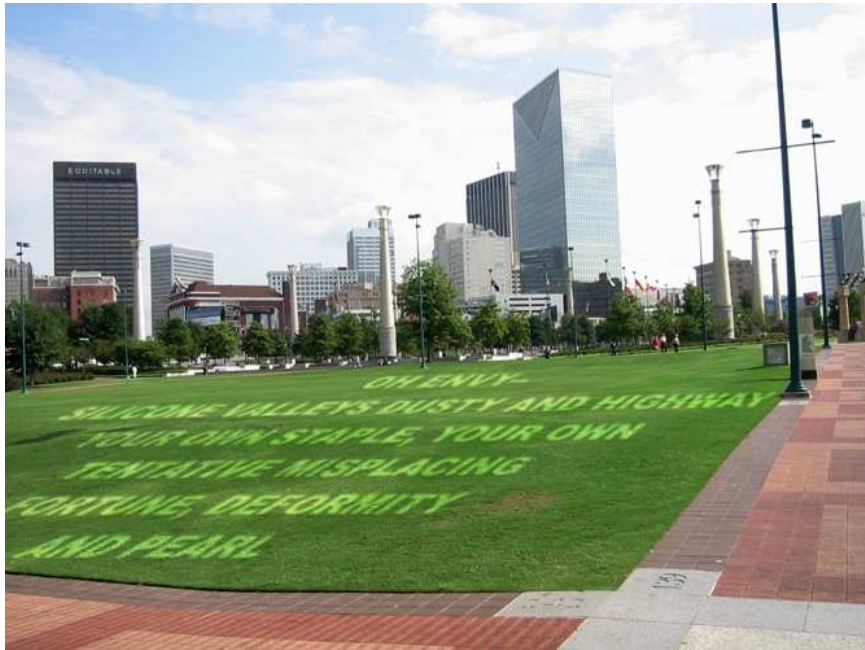


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I do not want to be so bold as to say that I will be imparting upon your lawn the evolutionary yeast of language, that indispensable starter gun so lauded and revered. I have never believed the reasons offered for Raskolnikov's murder, I say "his" because he held it longer than she; that is obvious. Not the rubbish about Napoleon, not the money, the ends, the means—none of that, though I understand perfectly his motive, though this "motive"—the shape of this word and its reverberations—bear no resemblance to Raskolnikov's thoughts on the matter. I spent a long time in a very old city where I didn't speak the language. There in that oppressive hotness, that hazy quietness of a town even "compulsion" seemed a weak, operable word. One must be ever vigilant. That hot quiet town possessed a tremendous history in its land and I watched the inhabitants break each other's hearts, murder, steal—inoperable. How stupid one would be to believe that a land would share its knowledge with those who ravish it. It is the land which is so effortlessly vigilant. It is the land which seems wary of amusement, which becomes so quickly complex.

Thank you.



FOR A LAWN POEM STEPHANIE BARBER

with images constructed by mali anderson

awards all over the world; he had invented a language for the film which was entirely understandable to all people regardless of their original language—this breakthrough language, which was both spoken and implied facially and gesturally—was obviously one of the reasons the film was such a success worldwide, but the film itself would, regardless, have been well-received as Dean had invented a filmic process whereby each viewer would be projected back to themselves as an appropriate character with which they would identify and thus feel heroic or gratified. A complex series of mirrors and mutable emulsions was devised. This film inspired worldwide peace treaties and worldwide cooperation. Dean was given the noble peace prize as well as the Oscar for best film. By the time we were on the bus, Dean and his rotting teeth told me he spent the last few years flying around and having sex. He said, “I guess even in dreams people give up their dreams.” I thought it was a cheap thing to say. Is love a space people built in dreams? Is this space concerned with the same issues which hang around urban planners like bar flies on a spring evening? Functionality/beauty/pleasure and, like the Situationist idea of contractable or expandable homes, mutability?

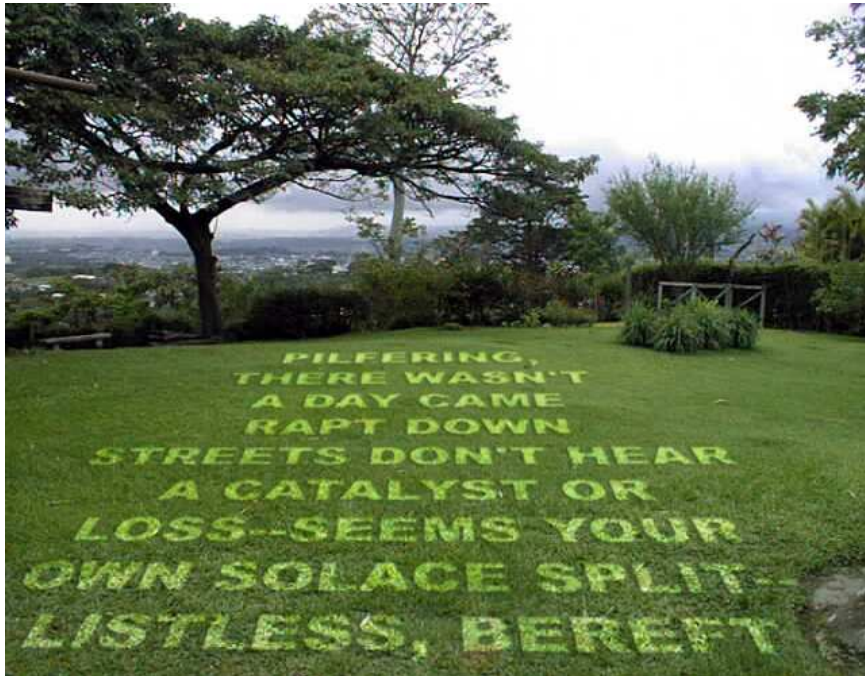
such as vampires, werewolves and zombies; monsters that humans or gods create like robots or the automatons; those who become possessed; those who dabble in the black arts and necromancy; those which make themselves like witches and wizards; Anton Levay. Orlan, the French conceptual artist had, at one point in her ongoing reconstruction of her face, her chin on her forehead. She at one time had horns, at another, large bulbous implants on her cheeks. Is she a monster? Is it her awareness of godlike stature which safeguards her work? If we consider Orlan a monster, we must address the Micky Rourkes and Joan Rivers, the George Hamiltons of the world. Are these latter in the category of monsters which are created, say, by media embracing the image over the actual, the two-dimensional over the three-dimensional, and Orlan given the benefit of self-knowledge and control and placed in the category of monsters which create themselves? Is my friend Dean Amalfy a monster? A benign monster, a somnambulist? By the time I became friends with Dean Amalfy, he had been an accomplished lucid dreamer for ten years. He was also a diagnosed narcoleptic on SSI. His teeth were falling out. We took a long bus ride together and he told me, all the while practically asleep, about his dreaming. At this point in his life most of his life was dreaming. He said he had for many years been quite ambitious, he would dream great adventures or impossible machines that he would invent and create. He had cured diseases and written books. He made, over the course of a year, an epic film which won fabulous

As you know, my agenda is to convince you of the dynamic possibilities of owning your own lawn poem. Yes, imagine the joy you will feel when you step into your yard and look onto the grassy glory that is your green, healthy, manicured poem. You will never cease to read the lines differently each time you gaze—a short, sharp midday thunderstorm will spark those words alive. A placid sunset will infuse your lawn with bravery and a calm confident sense of linguistic obeisance.

To know a poem, one must live with it. One must dig their toes into its very L's and O's. One must watch their children and city constituents grow and raise children of their own on it. One must recognize the organic modularity of any such piece of art and see their own ability to edit and re-edit the pieces in response to the placement of their body upon the poem.

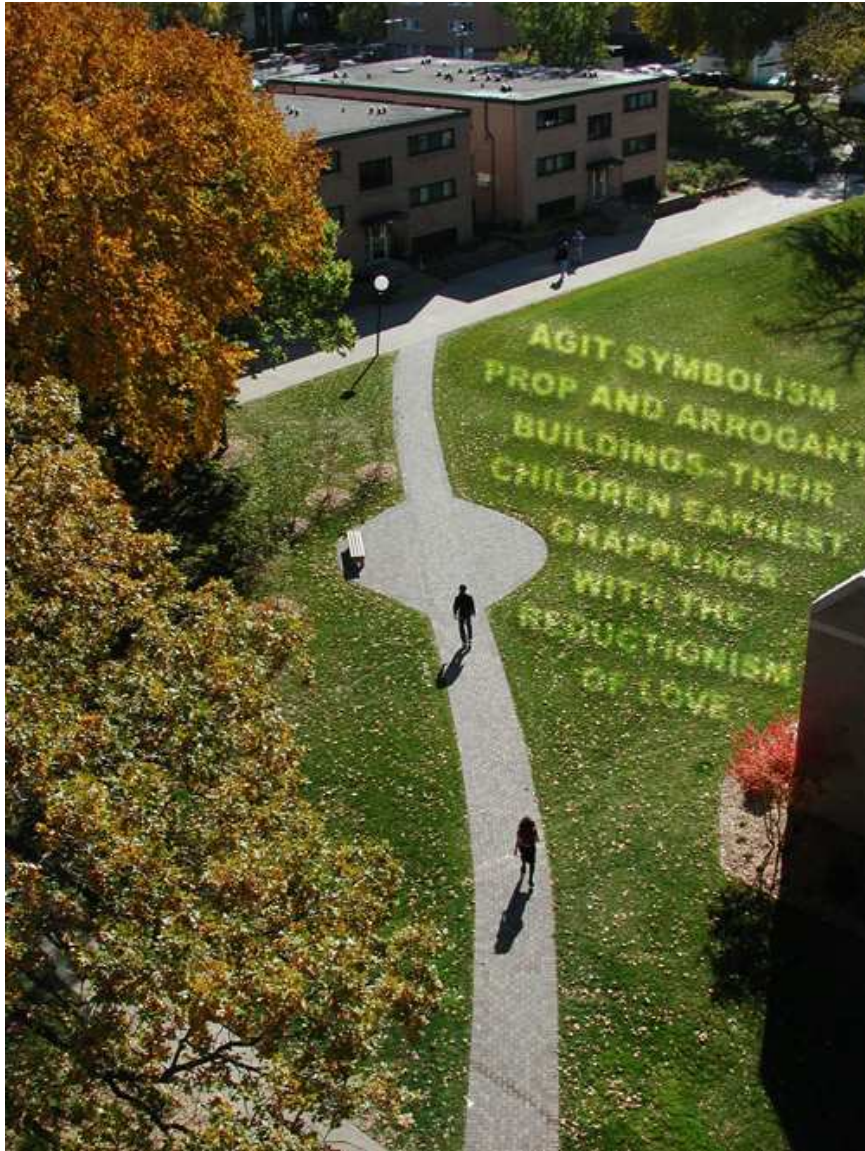
It is this gift of poetic transience—as all words float away and reconvene with new and unexpected meanings—and stasis—as the graphics of root and soil create an anchor—which I would like to give to your lawn.

Having completed my first prototype of a lawn poem in Astroturf I am ready to begin creating lawn poems in sod and soil. I would like to do this project on your lawn—be you City Hall or lawn-owning poetry or art lover. I have composed a few samples for you to peruse—the first example I will show you was the composition upon which I based my first prototype.



If it's raining out, I dress appropriately.

We've peopled our landscape with architectural reflections of ourselves. Debord and his Situationist pals graffitied Paris in the late sixties with revolutionary propaganda—one wheat pasted, marker-drawn, spray-painted piece read, “Down with those who do not know why love is revolutionary.” Debord, too, is a reductionist—reducing the increasing deadening of human desire, imagination, and specificity to Marx's ideas of the dehumanizing production of capitalism. Are Debord and his ilk correct in their accusations of the media—the hyper-reflexive spectacle—as the purveyor of Zombiedom? Are architects the Dr. Franksteins to the organism of earth, or, as Manuel Delanda asserts, that which is specifically not an organism—as that word, he feels, implies a homogeneity not altogether accurate—but is instead a hybrid of an organism and a system of pressures. Hephaestus, the Greek smith god shaped monster/human/animal forms from metal, and through his divine power gave them life. These creatures were called *automatons* or *automatoi*. These, perhaps, bear more resemblance to our creation of cities, our conception of hearts. And then, like love or soil, is this monsterdom inured gracefully? There are monsters which are born as such like ogres or unicorns; there are monsters which make each other and spread disease-like to creation



Ah yes—bereft. Here I have made the streets unknowing—they do not recognize beginnings or departures; they lay as flats for others to dream on. But they have been starring in pop songs and movies and poems for far too long. I say it is time the empty lots and suburban yards are able to express the halting pauses of human existence. They too will now translate space into an emotional, intellectual landscape, create a nostalgia for what one has never had, what has never before been missed—heed words obfuscated and suggested—merely echoes of emotional greenery or launching pads to too much weight, the awareness of a life, the harrowing implications of such a thing. For how many hours could one lie and dream on the word “insouciant”?

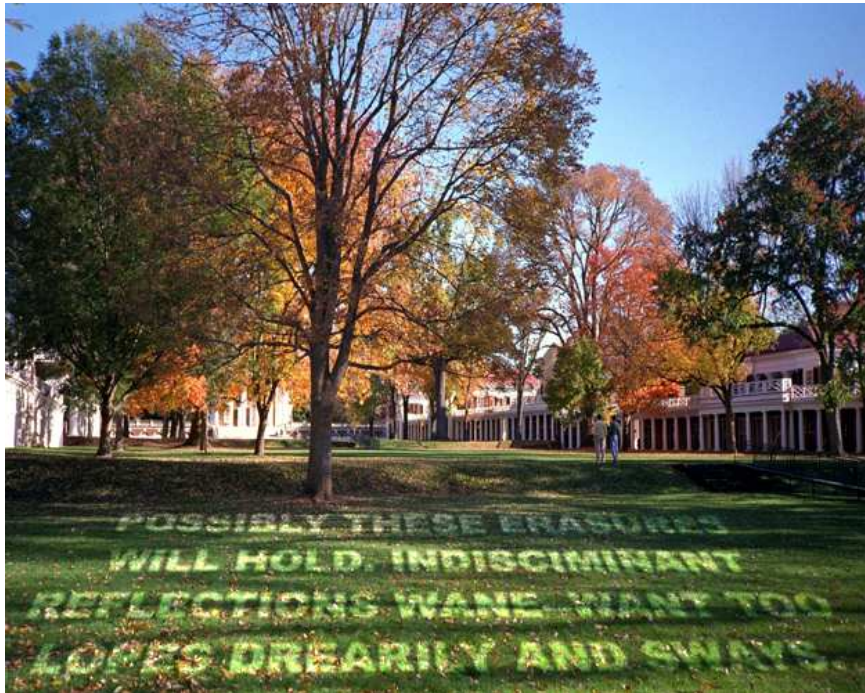
Let’s look at another piece—



If I were to say that I had been a child, would you all groan—disgusted that I should be so insensitive as to forget that you had also endured those years of foggy memorial servitude? The word “hold”—a structural fulcrum in this piece—acts as two words: to stay and to contain. The erasures are those of memory. The reflections are the constructions of these memories and the want is a house of given mirrors. Adoption of desires. My own were given to me primarily by songs—“Oh What a Night”: St. Patrick’s day in Southampton—“Brandy” in a car outside a liquor store in Florida—“Salt Peanuts” with my grandfather in a Volkswagon Van-a-Gon.

The winner brings the competitor to tears when my sister and I play “What is the saddest song ever written?” on a sailboat, crossing the North Sea. Is it the words or the music which holds the memories, which do not wane so rigidly?

Will the collaborative efforts of millions of blades of grass—singing visibly and rustling audibly become such a memorial alembic? Am I saying that with the installment of a lawn poem I am giving, also, a memory enhancer? Will someone say, “Don’t you remember? We were standing on ‘indiscriminant’ . Louis was over by the ‘lopes’ . . . don’t you remember?” Ten years ago my grandmother’s favorite joke was that she could not remember to take her memory pills—today she can not remember me, though I lived with her for many, many years.



When I first moved to Wisconsin, I had tagged this all over my neighborhood with stencils and spray paint under cover of the night. I had begun to think of all action as dedication and begun to think of motion as something cruel and cunning. And roses so sustained.

There is a famous tale about Ōta Dōkan—an early founder of Edo, ancient Tokyo, in the mid 15th century. One day, as he was on a hunting expedition, he was caught in a downpour, soaked; he knocked on the door of a peasant's forest hut and requested from the woman who lived there, a raincoat. To Dōkan's request, the woman responded by handing him a single, yellow rose. Puzzled, he returned to the advisors at his castle and told them the story. Dōkan's advisors informed him that the peasant woman was referencing a well-known poem of Prince Kemmei's from a Heian Period anthology:

Sad indeed am I that I have not one straw rain mat to give to you
Like the seven petaled, eight petaled blossom of a yellow rose

Now Dōkan had considered himself a man of learning, sensitivity, and intellect, and was dismayed by his grievous ignorance. He vowed to place the support for, and teaching of poetry and the arts as the highest priority of his imperial reign, and indeed

the time of his rule is marked by a Renaissance-like flourishing of the arts.

I have loved this poem for many years. The story, for obvious reasons of beauty and heroism—and the poem for its absolute oddness and modernity. The line “seven petaled, eight petaled” is both perplexing and unsettling. While there is nothing, to most, so clearly lovely about the listing of possible petal numbers, its pivotal space in the poem and seeming superfluous-ness evoke such humour and pathos. The indiscriminate exactness of description seems so apt a metaphor for existence. Motion too has this same indiscriminate exactitude. A rustling hopefulness of just barely endurable stasis.

of general relativity which Einstein had worked out only conceptually. The thing about the story which really stung was the writer’s appraisal of Gödel’s equation: she said it was a graceful equation. Lovely and delicate. Another article, written by David Berlinski and sent to me by the Austrian mathematician Torkel Franzén says “a sense of superb taste prevails throughout” the equation. It strikes me as both tragic and hopeful that I will probably never see the grace which some are able to recognize in what is, to me, a cacophonous numerical din. Tragic for my exclusion, and hopeful for the promise of secret inclusions or infusions of beauty and wonder in places I had never guessed would hold these.

Another—

How does space know when we are ready? How does it know we will divulge such secrets from our early summers as to shame our unborn kin? So—we've got a lot of time, in order to assure the most blue, very densest monastery heart-turn (that's like if you know you're supposed to be calling out to a certain parallel, a certain dancing line, but your eyes get caught up on a distant—I don't know—a sailboat—sounds unlikely, too gushy—but your eyes get caught up and your heart sort of misses what you never had; things like this happen), so in order to have this home of god's known around, we draw lines like those we trip on from sidewalk to sidewalk, not falling right off into the street but somehow the fall supporting the mid-fall turbulence so that each careening gesture is supported and caused by each falling, see? I have these moments pickled in a dreamy serum. They call this a temperature drop, like if you are scalded, if you are held above a diamond teller. If you are a cat and rely on tremble to enunciate the times you would appreciate a rub up. My, my, my—what a cozy mitten has been pressed into the pencil linings. Space, you are a rogue, a dirty good for nothing, a menial perpetrator. We have a prison if you decide to call off a holiday—like a lion, like a dribbling holster. I read an article about a gift the mathematician Gödel gave to Einstein. The gift was a mathematical equation for one part of Einstein's theory



One week I decided to extract every line from every poem of Emily Dickinson's in which she uses words such as wait, hesitate, still, frozen, pause or stay. There are approximately 144 references to such stillness in Dickinson's 1775 published poems. Certainly, there are a myriad ways these words reverberate in the context of the poems. I took them regardless of their original intentions. Dickinson spends her life waiting. Mostly she is waiting for a reunion with the Lord, for which she waits like a lovesick schoolgirl in a park. She waits so humanly for so un-human a reunion. While her poems are as static as her belief, they beg a readers action. One must learn to mispronounce words in order to create a rhyme, or re-syllable for meter. The owner of such a lawn would, I think, benefit from the lyrical enunciation of the necessity for both peace and action in one's life.

Let's look at another.

