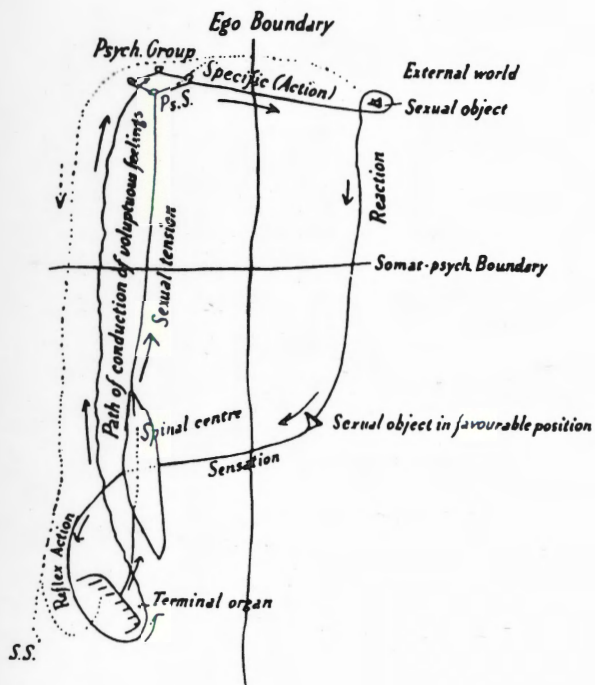




scrounge







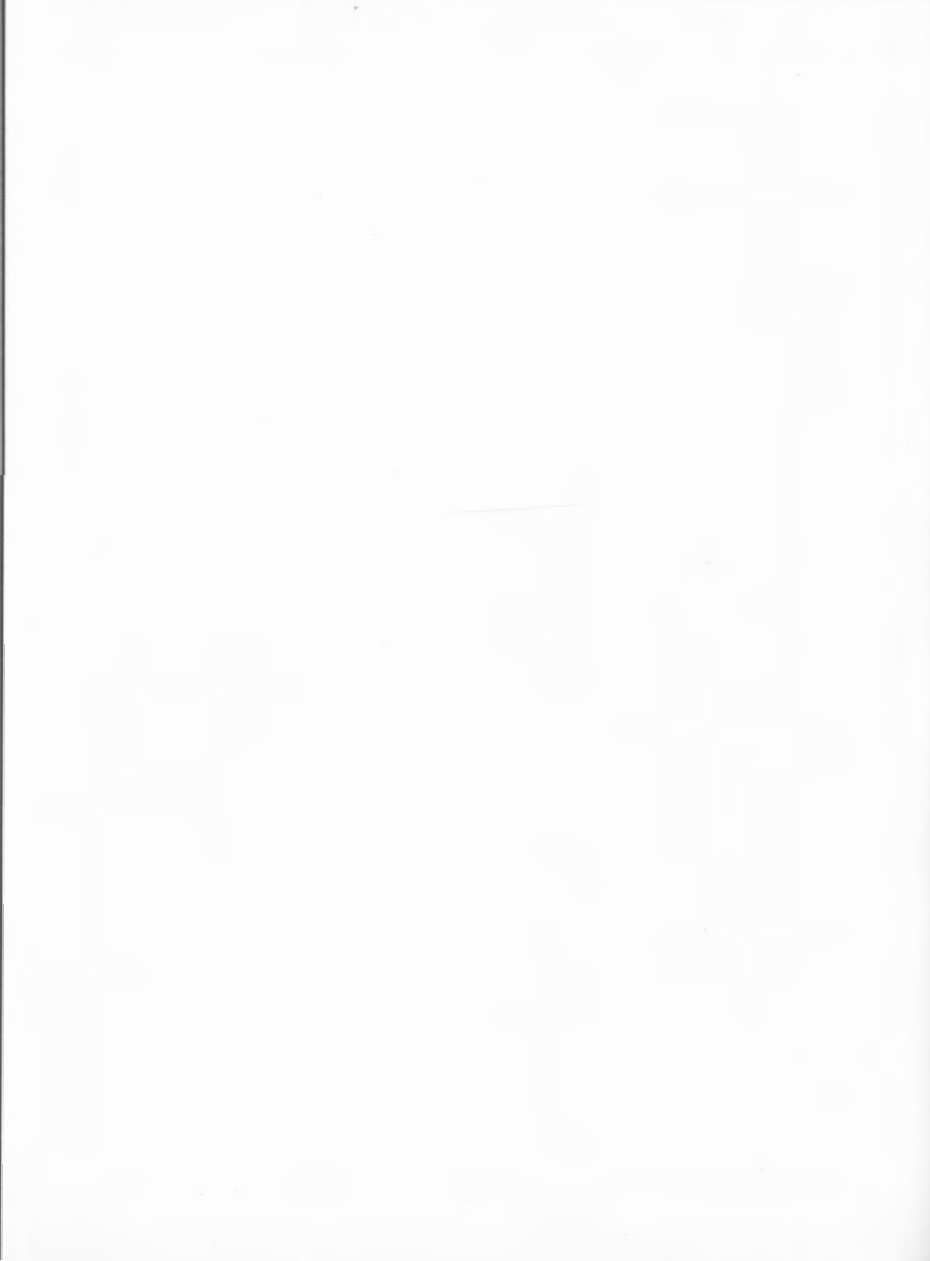
scrounge time

*incorporeal 4:*  
**scrounge time**

**A PRAYER BOOK**

*incorporeal 4:*  
**scrounge time**

**A P R A Y E R   B O O K**





F ONLY A

MAN COULD

BREATH

UNDERWATER



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## FOREWORD



*SCROUNGE TIME* IS THE LAST IN A TRILOGY OF PROJECTS WHICH INCLUDED *LUST* IN 1991 AND *PSYCHOSOMA* IN 1992. IT IS ALSO THE FOURTH IN AN ONGOING SERIES OF 'SCENOGRAPHIES' BEGUN IN 1993 CALLED THE INCORPOREALS. WE REGARD 'SCENOGRAPHY' TO BE AN EXPRESSIVE MODE FOR THE PRESENTATION OF VISUAL ART WHICH IS INSPIRED MORE BY THEATRE AND CINEMA THAN BY THE EXAMPLE OF INSTALLATION ART. 'SCENOGRAPHY' SHIFTS EMPHASIS FROM THE PHYSICAL FEATURES OF THE 'SITE' TO THE AFFECTIVE POSSIBILITIES OF THE 'SCENE'. IT IS REALISED MORE BY DIRECTORIAL STRATEGIES THAN BY SCULPTURAL ONES. AN INSTALLATION IS A KIND OF 'SET', A TACTICAL INTERVENTION IN A SPECIFIC SITE. BUT A 'SCENE' IS A TACTLESS IMPOSITION UPON A VIEWER THAT CAN OCCUR ANYWHERE; IT IS EXORBITANT, OR AN OUTBURST THAT HAS NO RESPECT FOR THE SITUATION IN WHICH IT TAKES PLACE. WHEN ONE CREATES A SCENE IT IS TO GAIN UNREASONABLE ADVANTAGE BY UNEXPECTED DRAMA; WHAT IS DISTURBING ABOUT WITNESSING A SCENE IS ONE'S INABILITY TO ACCOUNT FOR ITS EXCESS AND TO INTERVENE IN ORDER TO DELIMIT IT. *SCROUNGE TIME* IS A CONFIGURATION OF SUCH 'SCENES'. THE WORKS BY PARTICIPATING ARTISTS ARE NOT INSTALLED WITH RESPECT FOR CONVENTIONAL EXHIBITION PROCEDURES, RATHER ACCORDING TO HOW THEY LEND THEMSELVES TO THE SCENOGRAPHIC PLAN. SCENOGRAPHY ASPIRES TO RENEW ONE'S EXPERIENCE OF THE WORLD, ITS UNACCOUNTABLE POWER TO FASCINATE AND DISTURB; AND ASPIRES TO IMAGINE THE MENACE OF IMMATERIAL FORCES OPERATING BETWEEN US AND THINGS IN THE WORLD.

EDWARD COLLESS / DAVID MCDOWELL

Ego

Psych. Group

Speci

Ps.S.

ion of voluptuous feelings

sexual tension



the scheme of things

M. LAM



THE  
SCHEME  
OF  
THINGS

I'm a librarian. If I was a quantity surveyor, or a teacher, or a clerk I might not account for myself in terms of my occupation. But for me to say I am a librarian is to tell for the most part who I am.

I chose my job carefully after deciding that I would curate knowledge rather than struggle to produce it myself. Cataloguing and classification are my specialities. In navigating the labyrinthine possibilities of these immense systems, these maps of all human endeavour, the cataloguer must be at once omniscient and subtle. Poise and circumspection are demanded. I have these qualities.

In my capacity as manager (Print Material) of cataloguing

in a large public library, it is my job to classify texts of ambiguous subject matter. One work that crossed my desk nearly a year ago troubled me greatly. Out of all proportion to its significance in the scheme of things, this little book continues to trouble me now.

It began when two of my assistants, both competent cataloguers, fell into dispute about the classification of a reproduction monograph of the work of a contemporary artist who photographed a pair of dogs dressed in various costumes: dresses, suits, shoes, wigs, jewellery and even, in some instances, make-up. One cataloguer, who found the images hilarious, wanted to classify the work as 'Humour - American'. The other, who was not amused, insisted the appropriate designation was 'Photography, Contemporary'. When they approached me, I experienced the momentary nausea I associate with classification anxiety and put the book aside for further consideration.

A week later it lay on my desk still uncatalogued. I too found the pictures amusing, but the mute patient gaze of those brown-eyed dogs right into the lens of the camera was also both pathetic and disconcerting. The classifica-



tion 'Photography, Contemporary' is one that I have never liked, since its imprecision might swallow up a quarter of the books in any library. If we had been able to determine that the dogs belonged to the photographer, the book might arguably have been consigned to 'Pets'. But we could not.

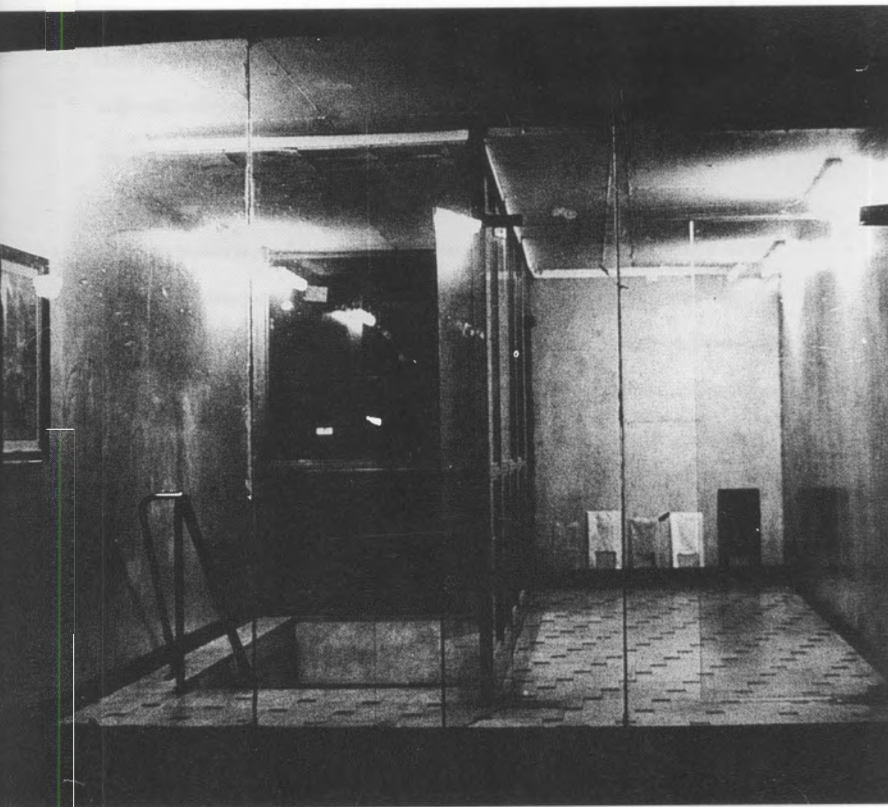
In the end I took the only course of action available to me. I stole the book. A wave of new acquisitions eventually distracted my assistants from their quarrel, and it was forgotten. Besides, I grew curiously fond of my little problem, this niggling reminder of the limits of my professional skill. I stamped 'Cancelled' in the space provided on the accessions register, added 'Lost' to be sure, and adjusted the data base.

In my fifteen years as a librarian I had not cared to own books. I believed that books should be public property, circulating endlessly to the benefit of all, and indeed, occasionally I had made speeches at our annual general meetings to just that effect. But I was nervously exhilarated to discover after that first incident a remarkable propensity for appropriating books. By this means I accumulated a

series of works whose exquisite ambiguity inspired in me both fear and fascination. Possession was my revenge upon – and homage to – the unclassifiable.

I did not regard myself as a collector until one day I filled in a form that included a multiple choice question about my interests. To my chagrin, I realised I had few pastimes outside work. Collecting was my principal passion. For this I had begun to risk a great deal, having advanced from occasional, casual appropriations to urgent requests to the acquisitions librarian for obscure texts from fictional library users whose records I fabricated. I became an insomniac, but my waking time was spent calculating strategy and gloating over my shameful treasures. Who else had in his possession a pictorial record of every surface upon which man has been known to walk? a catalogue of the musical notation of equatorial bird calls? the cultural history of laughter? Because I did not want to be considered dull, and for lack of other information, I ticked





HANY ARMANIOUS - PARIS

'Collecting' and wrote in the space provided: Books.

My interviewer at the introduction agency was a sensible woman and we respected each other. Since it was her job to ascertain my disposition, tastes and habits for the purpose of introducing me to suitable women of approximately my age, I appreciated filling out the form. This struck me as both efficient and precise. Classifying people must be one of the most difficult arts to exercise, and it seemed to me that age, occupation, appearance, and interests were reasonable categories of information from which to proceed to an introduction.

I had been to an introduction agency once before but found the cost prohibitive. This agency was making a Valentine's Day special offer of membership to men, whom I understood were being actively recruited due to a shortage, in my age range in particular. The embarrassment I might have felt about registering with an introduction agency was ameliorated by the fact that I was doing it at the urging of one of my work colleagues, a motherly woman who remarked on my drawn appearance and liked to imagine that my life was unsociable and possibly

unhealthy. As it happened, I did not at that stage know any women who interested me. I needed company, it was not too expensive, and in any case, the idea of some pre-selection appealed to me.

At the end of the interview we had identified a few possibilities that met my requirements in terms of occupation, education and tastes. Of these I was particularly willing to meet two, one fair, one dark, whose photographs appealed to me. Both candidates were attractive, pretty but without the fussiness of appearance that makes women look cheap. I do not like plain women. I had my own photograph taken and wrote the agency a cheque.

My first call came only three days later. The agency had given her my number, she said laughing, perhaps with embarrassment. Did I want to meet for a drink? Not wanting her to imagine I was too eager, I suggested after an exchange of pleasantries a time a few days later. She sounded nervous. This was a good sign. It is reasonable for a woman to be registered with an introduction agency, but she should not be too professional.

I spent the intervening time musing pleasantly. Which

one was she? The fair one or the dark? The agency advised us both to first meet only briefly – prudent advice, but in an impetuous moment I rang my lady friend (for that she had become already) and suggested dinner. We could meet at a table booked under my name, I argued, and this would spare us any awkward moments of uncertainty in identifying each other. I did not flatter myself into imagining that she would remember me from my photograph. But I would know her.

In fact, when she arrived, I did not know her. I was unprepared to meet neither of the two women of the photographs but someone else altogether. This woman did not endear herself to me by being slightly late and not a little plain. She made a protracted apology, unwrapped herself from a streaming shawl of indeterminate colour, and, apparently having run out of things to say, fixed her brown, strangely opaque eyes upon me in silent appeal while I poured a glass of wine to hide my irritation. I would not have chosen this one.

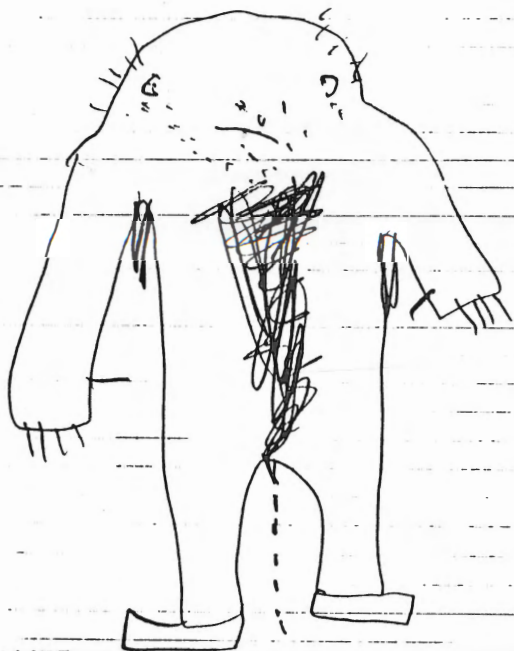
‘So,’ she said eventually, when I handed her the glass. ‘You are the librarian.’

'I am the librarian,' I agreed, saluting her with my glass. 'And you are...?'

Her eyes fell. 'I'm not anything now,' she confided to the tablecloth. 'I'm kind of in between jobs. I want to be a veterinary nurse.'

She seemed unwilling to elaborate. I did not want her to perceive my disappointment, and so, uncharacteristically, I began to talk at length: first about the menu, then about the weather, then about what I had read in that day's newspapers. I even told her about the basic principles of the Dewey Decimal system. I do not flatter myself in imagining I am a skilled conversationalist, but after mentally making a note to call the agency and complain, I found that in making the best of a bad situation I was surprisingly relaxed and expansive. With this woman I had nothing to lose.

Like many of her sex who do not have the advantages of beauty, she proved to be an attentive and appreciative listener. As we talked – or rather, I must admit, I talked and she listened – she arranged and rearranged the silver salt and pepper shakers on the tablecloth like chess pieces



MARY AND TED - THIS IS THE  
 CRITICAL GIVE AWAY. I THINK OF  
 A FEW WEEKS AGO. I WAS GETTING  
 MY NOTES BUT THE WILLIAMSON  
 IS ALSO BECAUSE OF THE  
 WORK. I WAS ENLIGHTENED. I  
 DIDN'T WANT TO GO TO THE  
 USUALLY DON'T LIKE THE

on a board. Occasionally she interrupted me with a gentle, humorous remark, usually in a self-deprecating vein. She had fine unmarked hands, and as her fingers traced the lines on the shakers and I finished the bottle of wine, I felt a faint delinquent stirring of desire.

Even so, I did not intend to sleep with this woman. But when we left the restaurant, something curious happened. I got up to pay. As I waited for the bill, I noticed in the large mirror behind the desk that the whole restaurant could be seen laid out in reverse. There was the table I had just left and there, my dinner companion. Was she pleasing to look at from this distance? No, I had to admit, she was not. She fiddled with her appalling wrap, and seemed to look for something in her purse. She seemed agitated. Perhaps she hoped I would make love to her, I thought, and began to rehearse a gentle rebuff. But then I watched amazed as she looked quickly right and left before putting the salt and pepper shakers in her purse. The waiter, who had noticed nothing, beamed with hospitable blandness as he handed me a pen to sign.

I was piqued. She had not wanted me all evening, but

those rather ordinary salt and pepper shakers. Of course I had to sleep with her.

When she came to my house the first time and I opened my mail and watered my plants and attended to the tea, she circled the room, gazing at its contents with fixed concentration as if she had found herself in a museum. She was particularly drawn to the books and selected a small pile to browse from my precious collection. After a while she remarked on their one common feature: all of them lacked a title page. These I had removed after some painful deliberation because they bore the stamp of the library. Their scars had made me protective of my books; usually I did not encourage my guests to look at them.

I said nothing, but this did not seem to matter. After an interval, she exclaimed indignantly, 'This is cruel. Look at this.' She showed me the book of dogs, seeming unaware that since it was *my* book of course I knew what it contained. The dogs looked so sad, she said. Why would any-



one want to dress them up in people's clothing and take pictures and laugh at them? I tried to explain the view that these images might be read as a comment about human embodiment, a kind of anthropomorphism in reverse, but she was not won over. Perhaps that little argument brought her to my bed.

This is not a love story. Although we developed a kind of routine, meeting once during the week and once on weekends, I knew not much more about her than that she wanted to be a veterinary nurse. She remained plain to look at, although sometimes while reading her face took on a contemplative softness just before she went to sleep. She never finished reading anything, although she borrowed a great many of my books. For this I fell into the habit of calling her, with only a little mockery, 'dear reader'.

Sometimes I wondered, but not much, about those other women whose photographs were perhaps still on the files at the agency. Not much, that is, until after the night of our annual general meeting. On that night I gave unwillingly – for the last time and due to the sudden illness of the chief librarian – my standard oration about

public libraries and book circulation as a precondition for the health and cultivation of the entire social body. After a little hesitation and a lot of tedious good-natured banter from my colleagues, I had brought along my 'friend'. Before we proceeded to the ritual dinner, various photographs were taken of the assembled library staff and our partners.

When the photographs were pinned to the staff noticeboard, and I saw my partner looking flatly out of them, appealing and yet resigned, I remembered the uneasiness I had felt the first time she looked at me. She wore a short floral dress in the fashion of that season, but its flippant gaiety was disturbingly at odds with her pained but patient endurance of the camera. Although she was the one in the photograph I felt as if *she* was looking at *me*. After sitting through two morning teas and one lunchtime under her dogged scrutiny I removed all her photographs from the noticeboard.

When I went back to the introduction agency the discount offer had ended. I could think of nothing to write on the form I had to fill out called 'Unsatisfactory

Introduction' so I attached the photographs from the noticeboard which I had begun to carry about with me. I had another interview. I was not surprised to find that the women of the other photographs were no longer registered. I wrote a cheque anyway and waited.

I waited also for the girl who wanted to be a veterinary nurse to return the many books she had borrowed from my collection. When we parted she seemed peculiarly undemanding, but although we promised to be friends my books were never returned. Not to me, anyway.

Recently a book came to me for classification. It was a reproduction monograph, donated by 'A Friend of the Library: Anonymous' of the work of a contemporary artist who photographed a pair of dogs dressed in various costumes: dresses, suits, shoes, wigs, jewellery and even, in some instances, make-up. I took the book, stamped 'Cancelled' in the space provided on the accessions register, and added 'Lost' to be sure.

Boundary



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scrounge time

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EDWARD COLLESS / DAVID MCDOWELL



## SCROUNGE

## TIME

She is in the other room. You can hear her, the slow forced exhalation of each breath. You catch sight of yourself in the mirror as you pass by the door. You don't know what to expect. There may be mountains above and a town below. In the darkness you no longer know. This is *Scrounge Time*.

The title of this scenography is taken from *The Ultimate Good Luck* by Richard Ford. A Vietnam veteran is living in a remote Mexican town that is caught up in random civil disturbance. Adrift, well after the war, he has gone to Mexico to try to get a different perspective on things, to work out what's possible, and to get some fix on the odds. He tries to maintain an edge, to stay clear of the strife until he can fulfil the one obligation he has in the town. But his attempts to remain

detached from immediate circumstances implicate him in a menacing uncertainty. It leaves him prey to the intrigues of others. Aware of his unsure position, and unprepared to accept liability for it, he is suspended indefinitely in a dangerous, stagnant gulf between past and future. Everything he does is clouded by misgivings, but he has to gamble with the circumstances before the stakes get too high, before he runs out of luck and risks blowing his slim advantage.

Killing time, sitting at a cafe table in the afternoon's dead heat, a young backpacker moves in on you. She says she's Italian, but there is no reason to believe her; she's been hanging around the town too long to be a tourist. She's been mulling qualudes across the border but the source has dried up. She doesn't seem to want anything except to share her bad luck, and maybe score some diversion for the night. At three in the morning, after she has passed out drunk and drugged on your bed, you wander out onto the balcony of the house you've rented above the town. In the darkness you are struck by the realisation that in the war this lull was scrounge time.

In the war this was the time when he was outside the



secure zone, trying to gain momentary advantage over an unseen hostile force he'd been sent to flush out or make draw back. It was the time when a stray bullet from either side could take him out. Remaining still offered no protection: when everything else was hidden there was no point in lying low. There was no procedure for this kind of patrol, no strategy or safety measure. Whether he was hit or whether he walked out in one piece, it was just the stupid way of things, just dumb luck.

There is no rented bedroom, or cement balcony overlooking a Mexican town. There is no mined paddy field, no Mekong delta. But there is scrounge time. It's all that remains. It's all there is between doing what you can to stay on top of the situation and losing your edge, between gaining a momentary advantage and when the situation gets out of hand. You've satisfied the girl, at least enough to let her slip into her self-induced coma, without it getting nasty. But you know when she comes to she'll be looking for somebody to blame. And you know later you're going to have to get her out.

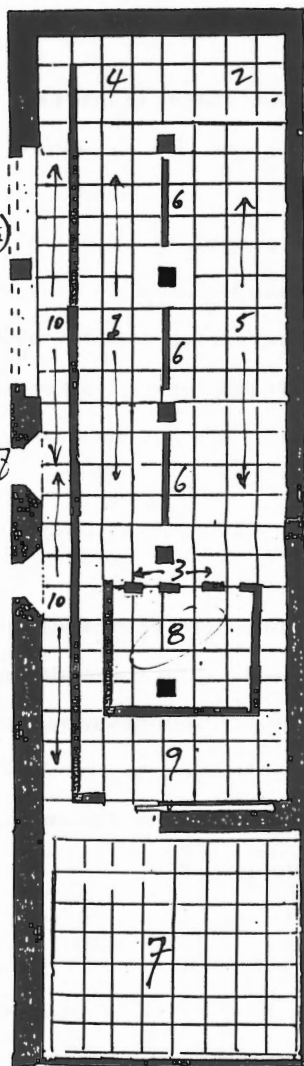
In the meantime, you watch the odds mount, turning your back on her while you can. You know it's scrounge time when you figure you can no longer rely on the likelihood that things, at least some things, will turn out in your favour. It's not that the situation is bad — it may be unpleasant, but you can't imagine it another way. There is no other preferable situation. It was inevitable; no, it was just the way circumstances were set.

Scrounge time is the meantime, between acts. The set is empty of action but you're still stuck in the scene. You have nothing else to do for now but look at the idle details, the unremarkable appearance of things. She is still lying back there, breathing lazily, unconscious; but for you, this image is suspended between sensation and memory.

You have found yourself in a scene composed of the physical residue of what has happened, an indifferent arrangement of objects which already spell the outcome. There are no reasons to believe anything; not that things are false, but just that nothing can be counted upon. One can only re-invent a conviction in fate, but based entirely and unmistakably on chance. On risk.

# Scenes:

1. Channel of recrimination (or escape route)
2. Domain of organs
3. Latitude of objects - formulation of the wish
4. Locality of things
5. Path of conduction of sexual tension



6. Plane of polarisation  
(R: face of illum.  
near  
L: plenum face)
7. Plenum System
8. The Ventilator  
(R: Italian girl)
9. Vertible -  
zone of mingled  
breath -  
icon-material
10. Wind Tunnel.

SCENOGRAPHERS' NOTES

The scenography is reconfigured with each passage through it. It is not possible to return to the same scene. A scene is all more treacherous when it appears to resemble one already encountered. It is only a double. It is like finding oneself a ghost in one's own past, finding a ghost within oneself.

LIST OF SCENES AS FIRST ENCOUNTERED

**1. Channel of recrimination, or escape route**

Three lights placed on the floor along this passage, switched on and off by motion sensor triggers. They will illuminate three panels hanging from the ceiling, facing downwards. Somewhere here the sexual object in the favourable position.

*Libera me de sanguinibus.*

**2. Domain of organs**

The pole of the 'terminal organ': a tumescent but impotent

organ, the volume of which is formed by obscene 'stuffing'. The organ is the corporeal source from which sexual tension is generated.

### **3. Latitude of objects**

Extremity of the mortified gaze: the 'grey matter' of representation (perceptual and cognitive configuration). The object of sexual tension rigidified as an image (formulation of the wish).

*Labia mea aperies.*

### **4. Locality of things**

Position of first and last things. The before and after of the object. Realm of indefinite objects. This place may not exist.

### **5. Path of conduction of sexual tension**

Three lights mounted at eye level along one wall illuminating three large panels which define the opposite side of the passage. Each panel hung between existing concrete columns which run along the centre of the gallery. Shadows interrupt the formation of the image of the sexual

object. Arousal may still occur.

## **6. Plane of polarisation**

This plane has two faces. The face of illuminated sexuality: representing mutual contours of the skin and the world; it mirrors the conduction of sexual tension. The penumbral face: the eclipse of the libido. One could call it 'backstage' of the sexual image; it reflects blame, and offers the only escape.

## **7. Plenum System**

A large dark chamber occupied by a life-size sex-doll, suspended about a metre above the floor, spot-lit from above. Inflated mechanically. A full length mirror hangs away before one of the walls. Her reflection is seen from the eastern end of the Wind Tunnel.

*Suspiria.*

## **8. The Ventilator**

A rectangular enclosure. One wall formed by a thick, porous membrane. Exhaling breath audible from the

Vestibule. The Ventilator cannot be entered. Rear projection onto membrane: Italian girl slowly and interminably painting her lips. Alternating anamorphosis of the image.

#### 9. Vestibule

A small, rectangular area with corridors leading off either side. Display cases containing Icon-material. Zone of mingled breaths. Instance of consubstantiality: flesh, energy, image.

*Oculum pro dente.*

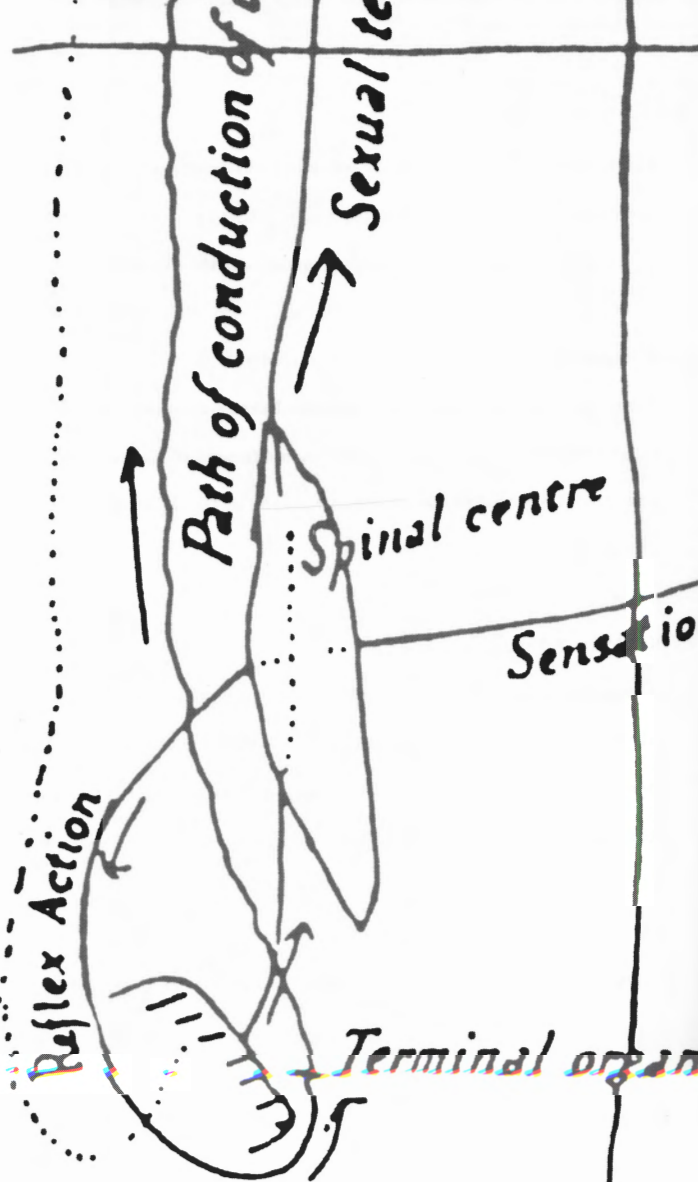
#### 10. Wind Tunnel

A long corridor is entered via centrally located doors. Hot air is forced down over the entrances; winds are generated by fans mounted from the ceiling at each end of the tunnel. Turn either east or west.

#### References:

*A Dirty Shame* NORMALSCHEMA *The Ultimate Good Luck*

S.S.





1993 - writing'

FERGUS ARMSTRONG

1 0 0 3

W R I T I N G

**1993**

Here is the University (the latest culmination of earth, the axis and only version of one benighted planet). The course I'm doing is called 'Information Management'. Hustled across wintry desolation, down in the inhospitable troughs formed between grey, thankless buildings, the listener glimpses youthful faces, irretrievable, intelligence to burn.

**Artist**

For some time I had been living in the country, at Bill Franklin's place, caretaking his house while he was in Greece. I had a dream in which I was outdoors, in the sun, picnic-lunching with my parents. A telephone was ringing. I lifted the receiver and said 'Hello, Bill speaking.' A



female voice replied 'Sure it is, you insect.' I said 'Who are you calling an insect?' I heard a room full of polite applause through the telephone and realised that the call was part of some public performance, perhaps in an art gallery in the city. After a few more seconds the caller hung up. I awoke then, just now.

#### Descartes (1)

'I don't think you are unintelligent, but this is *not* a clever, or very satisfactory, essay. It is simultaneously laborious and facile. It is also tediously verbose: cut the waffle. You have obviously read the *Meditation* well, but not wisely. Effective philosophical thinking does *not* consist of complex conditional propositions and elaborate pleonasms. Use simpler sentence constructions. Don't confuse obscurity with profundity. Language should *reveal* thought rather than obscure it.' (1978)

#### Descartes (2)

'This seems a much more serious attempt to come to grips with Descartes' argument than your previous essay. It is a

reasonable account of the *application* of the method, though you leave things somewhat hanging in mid air: there is not much indication of the *success* of the argument. (It's more an *outline* than an *evaluation*.)' (1978)

### Exist

He drives through Freemans Waterhole just before sunset and arrives in the main street of Cessnock a while later. He is sure-footedness itself in the last flicker of twilight – he will not slip, alone, down into the murky, abjected cloaca of some dead and buried day. He is – if he prevails like me in Cessnock that evening – forever hollowed out by a numb, bright shadow, like a wide harbour drawn dry. It is the windswept ghost of happiness – the fine, nervous constellation of our Christian-names aloft in the zodiacal outline of events. In his ears there pass the voices of certain acquaintances (helpless, wakeful) who are surely, at that moment, breathing this same aerial reticence above their houses, above the streetlights of average towns other than Cessnock.

In the main street I found a cafe where I ate a dinner of

cooked chicken (slightly stale) and flavourless vegetables. I decided to drive no further that night and to complete my journey – to my parents' place in Narrabri, N.S.W. – the next day.

### Greek

Alpha is pronounced like the 'a' in 'father' or 'artistic'. I remember vaguely: my father said that certain rivers in New South Wales had been choked in places by a plague of water-hyacinth and that, consequently, cultivation or possession of the flower had been made punishable by law. On the same day – or in the same place, by our house – he said that a man named Democritus had described a kind of atom more than two thousand years ago.

Omega is pronounced like the 'o' in 'corporal'. 'In sublime passages,' says the author of *On the Sublime*, 'we ought not to resort to sordid and contemptible terms unless constrained by some extreme necessity. We should use words that suit the dignity of the subject, and imitate nature, the artist who has fashioned man, for she has not placed in full view our private parts or the means by

which our whole frame is purged, but **as far as possible** has concealed them, and, **as** Xenophon says, **has put their** passages into the farthest background **so as not to sully the** beauty of the whole figure.'

### **International Business Machines**

Here is Moruya College of TAFE. The six-week **course** is designed to introduce unemployed people to computing. We learn keyboarding, word processing, **data** processing, information management and personal development. **We** take breaks from class and hang around outside. **The sun** is low to the north. High clouds **move** fast.

### **Morning**

The room, open behind me, indicates my back. The household items – too numerous to last – **are all** cast by question. Those lengths of wattle – thick **as a leg** – which I divided with a bow-saw on Wednesday: each is **now a** black letter, in a blowing sleeve of flame, being **read by the** air above the house. I cut then, for this day, **so as to clean** out dead nerves and **so as to burn dry at least the dumb**

names accumulated against a man's face, sticky against will. The drumming in the fireplace is no clock. It says that objects tried and failed to cross out the past, to stop it coming.

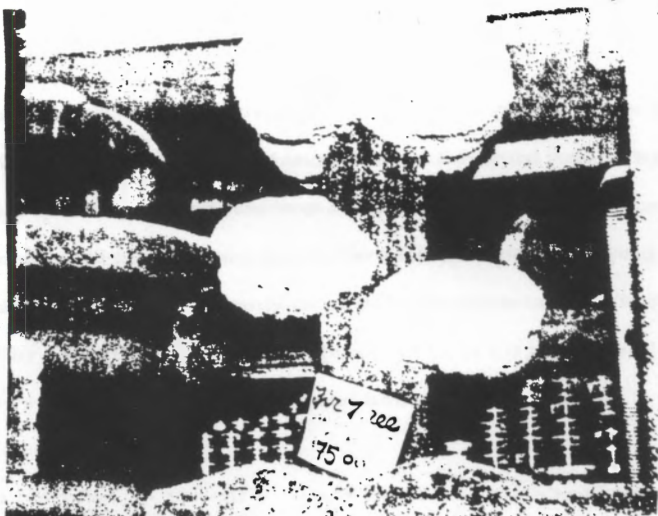
I tried, for this breathlessly short time, to weave a spell of the bird-knotted morning. It says that a fast is not broken with a mouthful of threads of either sleep or day pulled from the body's frayed edge.

### Nightmare

I wrote a letter to my father in which I mentioned a nightmare I'd had in which I was being strapped to the electric chair. He wrote me a reply in which he affirmed that dreams are not of essentially mysterious origin – remote, outside of ourselves. He described neural networks and the scientific detection of chemicals corresponding to mental images in the brains of sea snails.

He noted that a book called *An Experiment with Time*, which, years ago, popularised the idea that dreamers travel in time, is no longer heard of. (The book was written by J.W. Dunne, one of the pioneers of flight – he designed, built and flew a successful tail-less aeroplane.)





David and Ted,  
 There is room for this image to be  
 edited - a bit to be taken off but from the  
 left hand side of it, as well as from the  
 bottom of it.

My father wrote: '... I think that a dream is a succession of images triggered by, and pertaining to, one or more stimuli ... and that these images are *already in the mind*, and may get garbled through lack of waking control.' He listed types of 'internal stimuli' relating to dreams. The list includes 'impending (or past) personally important events.'

The inconjugative and lethal bolt of lightning steers all.

### Not Sent

... you've prompted me to send you some of my writing — done over the last year. It takes the form of 'episodes' (I suppose you'd call them).

I hope that it shows (rather than hides) a kind of 'damaged' facility with words. My powers of thought and expression are limited, 'physically', and the limitation itself (encountered in everything confusing, repetitious, lack-lustre...) will forever require to be divulged and explicated. It is the most pressing subject for discussion — something one knows intimately but dumbly, something which is troublesome and which compounds itself. The impairment is not troublesome for *me*, 'personally'. It is

just *there*. And one would like, some day, to have rendered it justly, put its case, as it were (without having construed it only as ill-formedness and collapse). In that case, some kind of displacement would have to have been effected; the writing, no longer being *symptomatic*, would at last relay *signs*.

### Telescope

In Narrabri, in the early '70s, when I was about 13 years old, we went fishing in the Namoi for yellow-belly, bream and catfish. We rolled our own cigarettes. We found gelignite and detonators. We stashed a rifle — stolen, barrel sawn off — up in the roof-space of some old shed, along with a handful of bullets.

We listened to records of heavy metal music. We saw pornographic pictures (serpentine, demotic appropriation of light). Kids got drunk, smoked dope and took other drugs. Once, at midnight, a kid went up the main street with a .22, shooting at shops.

One day a kid ate magic mushrooms then sat in an old car — rusted in a paddock — and blew his head off with a

shotgun.

The school library got burned down.

**Tennyson, Tennyson, ...**

I have never had any revelations through anaesthetics, but a kind of waking **trance** — this for lack of a better word — I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has come upon me through repeating my own name to myself silently, **till** all at once, **as** it were out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, individuality **itself** seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this is not a confused state but the clearest, the surest of the surest, utterly beyond words — where death was an almost laughable impossibility — the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming **no** extinction, but the only true life. I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words?

**Too Late**

There are all the things which it is possible to write; but I will soon come to grief if I attempt to compete with those

who write legitimately and successfully. It is, and was always, too late for me to cultivate a craftsmanship and artistry of writing. Perhaps the trick will be to pre-empt judgement, discredit and reproach, by inhabiting an idiom which elaborates a conceit upon the prescription of *failure*. Thus to write would be to pay a small premium against the untimely, bankrupted future — to anticipate correctly the passage of time and deprive fate of an opportunity to exact its penalty. Were this deception to be carried off just once then it would have marked — absolutely, but 'incidentally', thanks to the guile of mere circumstance — an attainment beyond the squalor of the motives described.

Such improbable success is comparable to the 'proof' represented by suicide. A trivial power of prediction at once sublimates itself. Privacy and privation are demonstrated conclusively. The event occurs at some crucial time and place beneath the sign of a mad or monstrous capability.

But it is too late to murder oneself, since life has begun.

## Writing

The house where I am living (for the time being) is in a



Australia Post

INTELPOST MESSAGE

INTEL708

TO EDITOR COLLESS AND DAVID HEDDOWE

FAX (002) 384 308

'... COULD THERE BE A NON-OBJECTIVE  
TROMPE L'OEIL?'

TAKE A PLAIN PAPER TONER  
GENTLY CRUMPLE  
WITH SIMILAR CARE UNCRUMPLE  
AND SHINE A LIGHT ONTO IT  
FROM ONE SIDE.

THEN, USING SOME KIND OF  
ENLARGING LENS, TAKE A  
PHOTOGRAPH OF A PART OF IT  
AND PRINT THIS IMAGE IN SUCH  
A WAY AS TO ALLOW THE  
LIGHTEST PART TO COINCIDE  
WITH THE PAGE AS PRINTED  
ON.

FINALLY ADD AN IMAGE OF  
THESE WORDS THUS





green valley, remote from towns. I live, you would think, this much closer to the so-called **Elements** than I have hitherto (in cities).

I own this portable computer upon which it is possible to compose and edit a lengthy letter to a friend. From the computer's LCD screen I **handwrite** the final version of the letter – the version to be posted.

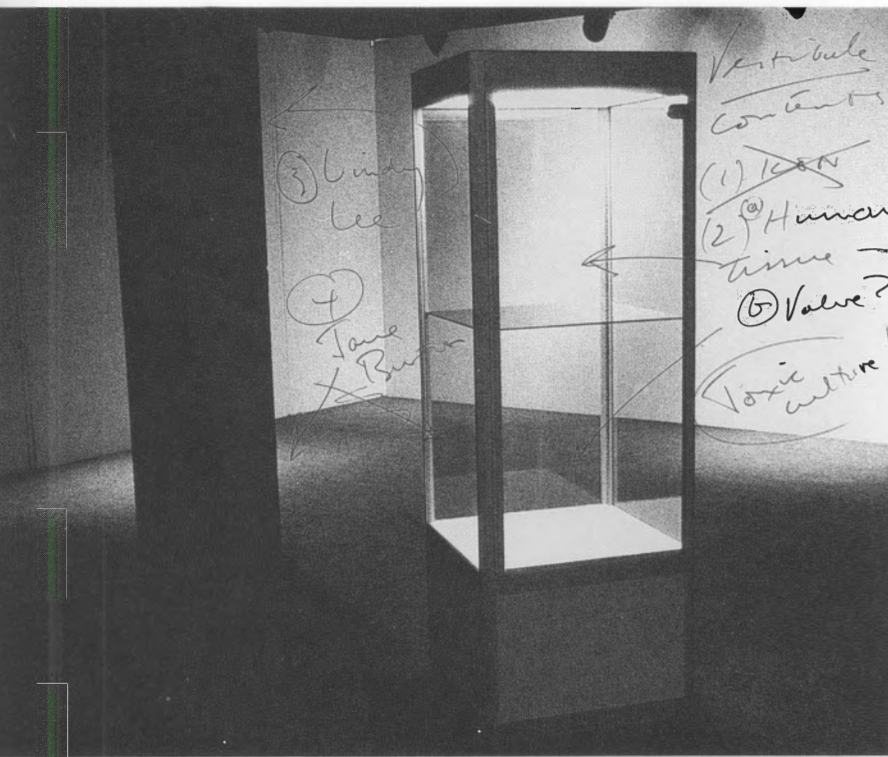
One day, while reading a translation of Pascal's *Pensées*, I find myself in an hospitable paragraph, a familial accommodation of sentences: 'The only thing which consoles us for our miseries is diversion, and yet this is the greatest of our miseries. For it is this which principally hinders us from reflecting upon ourselves and which makes us insensibly ruin ourselves. Without this we should be in a state of weariness, and this weariness would spur us to seek a more solid means of escaping from it. But diversion amuses us, and leads unconsciously to death.' I copy the passage into a folder of quotations which I began keeping a year ago (when I was still living in the city of Melbourne).

Sometimes I will have been sitting in the sun, on the

bank of the Deua River. Cicadas will have been chirping incessantly; certain birds making their own peculiar calls.

Water splashes audibly over stones a short way downstream. Once or twice per minute I must flick away, with my fingers, the marchflies which are biting my bare legs and feet. It is physically difficult to support the writing-paper, to handle this pen. (Today it is difficult and necessary to correct, by means of the restrictive, oily intermitence of this ballpoint pen, the Pre-Cambrian annihilation of Fergus Armstrong.)







ry

position

artists & writers

## ARTISTS AND WRITERS

**Hany Armanious** was the Australian artist selected for the *Aperto* section at this year's Venice Biennale. Originally working in Sydney, he is now resident in the Australia Council studio at Santa Monica, Los Angeles.

**Fergus Armstrong** lives in Marrickville, a suburb of Sydney. This year he is a student at the University of New South Wales.

**Jane Burton** is a photographic artist who lives in Hobart. She has recently returned from a residency in the University of Tasmania's McCulloch Studio at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris.

**Edward Colless** writes fiction and art criticism; he is also a filmmaker and has worked as a theatre director.

**Adam Cullen** studied at City Art Institute in Sydney. His work has been exhibited in Sydney, Melbourne and in Paris. This year he is included in Australian Perspecta.

**M. Lam** was once a librarian.

**Lindy Lee** is a painter living in Sydney. As well as exhibiting widely within Australia, she is also frequently represented in international exhibitions.

**David McDowell** practises art.

**Kathy Temin** was born in Sydney, and is now a Melbourne based artist. She has been involved in artist-run spaces and publications. She is included in the 1993 Australian Perspecta. She is represented by Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery in Sydney and Sutton Gallery in Melbourne.

**Philip Watkins** studied Fine Arts at the University of Tasmania and at the Victorian College of the Arts, completing a Master of Arts in 1991. He currently lives in Melbourne, and works as a professional orchestral musician as well as a visual artist.



PRAY FOR US

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*incorporeal 4:*

### Scrounge Time

Presented in the Plimsoll Gallery, Centre for the Arts, Hobart,  
from 15 October to 12 November 1993  
Curatorship and scenography by Edward Colless/David McDowell

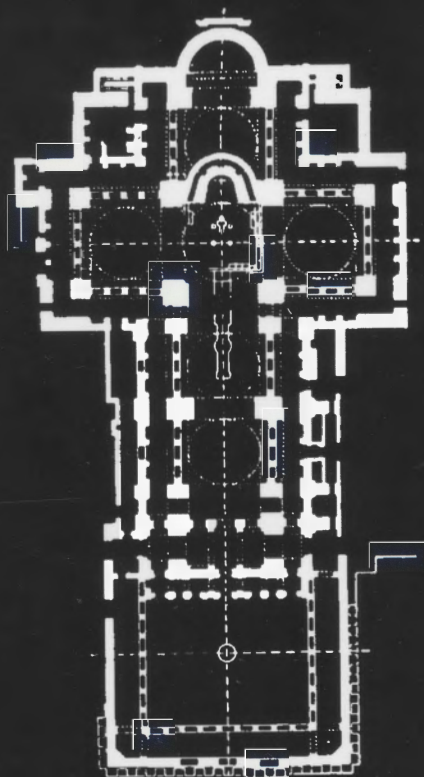
Technical consultant: Leigh Hobba  
Thanks to Clifford Davy for his criticism and advice

Scrounge Time: a prayer book  
Edited by Edward Colless/David McDowell  
Designed by Stephen Goddard  
Printed by Monotone Art Printers



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

The Plimsoll Gallery Committee, University of Tasmania at Hobart  
acknowledges generous assistance towards its annual  
exhibitions programme from the Minister for Education and  
the Arts through Arts Tasmania.



time