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Christy Sheffield Sanford: THE LINEAR CONSTELLATION
Raisin Bread (With Lecture Notes and Shadows)

“Raisin Bread (With Lecture Notes and Shadows),” *Central Park*,
Number 16, Fall, 1989, New York.

“Raisin Bread (With Lecture Notes and Shadows),” *Five Fingers Review*
11, After the Postmodern, San Francisco, 1992.

“Meeting of Image and Text,” Essay, *Ylem Newsletter*, Ted Warnell
Editor, Vol.19 No.6 May/June 1999.

This image-text essay-poem is a precursor to later work that became more insistent on the presence and importance of each discipline. I took grocery store raisin bread to Target copy shop and put slices atop a transparency on the printer-bed. Voilà!

The term intertextuality was much bandied about and likely this piece could be zipped into that category. While I like the idea of inter-penetration of different text impulses and sources, which has a type of erotic fizz, I don’t think that is necessarily happening here. And I don’t think it’s a braided story anyone would want to wear!

Way earlier, Ruthann Robson and Herbert Scott asked questions informal teaching should pose. I was trying to force conceptually linked but disparate stanzas to intertwine. Scott question: Do you want to do that? Ans. No. Robson question: Do you want stanzas to have a kind of identity? Ans. Yes. Suggestion: Try different fonts.* They freed me!

I might use the oxymoron *Linear Constellation* for “Raisin Bread.” I often employ the term constellation (derived from Mallarmé’s *Un Coup de dés Jamais N’Abolira le Hasard*). I look at the sky and say there are other satisfying literary forms. I believe that’s true.

*Loosely quoted from memory

Raisin Bread

(With Lecture Notes and Shadows)

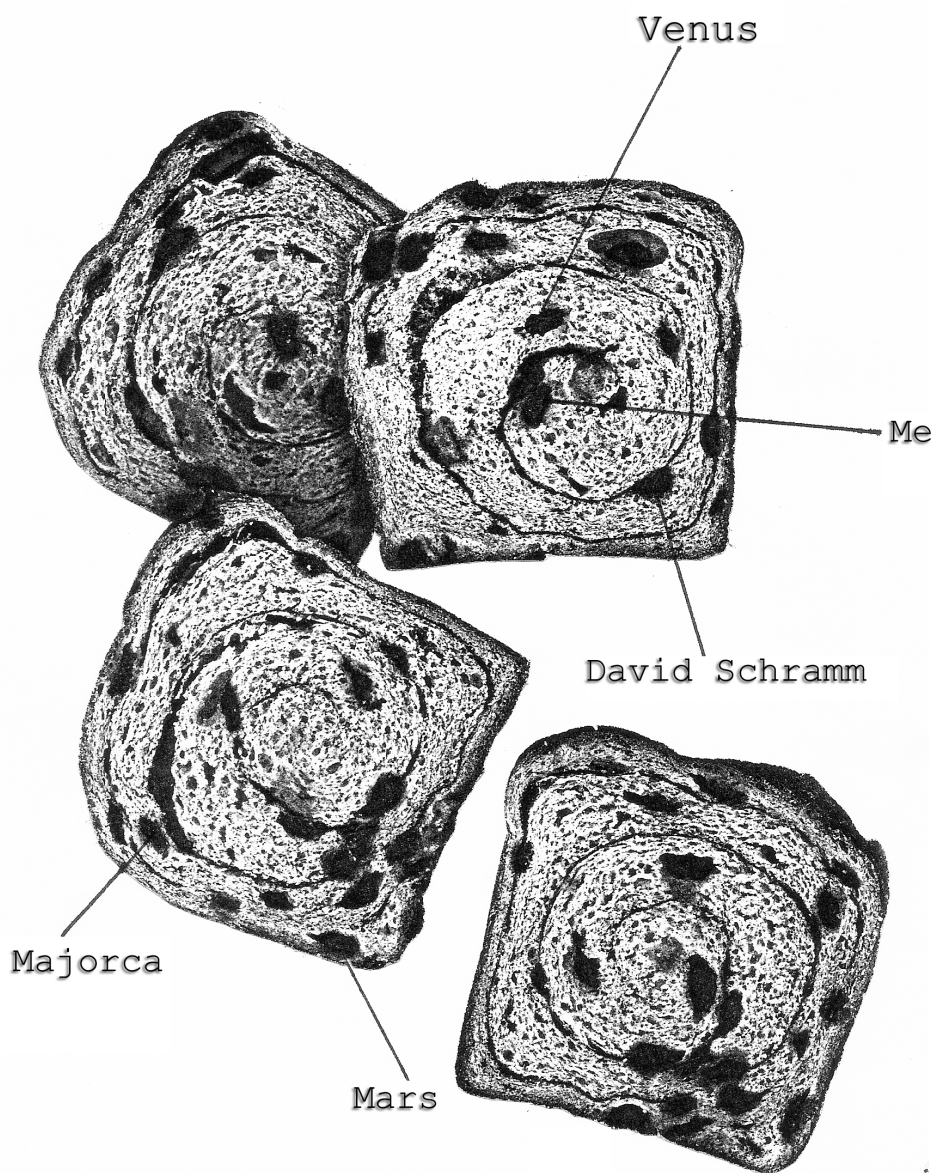
a Valentine for David Schramm

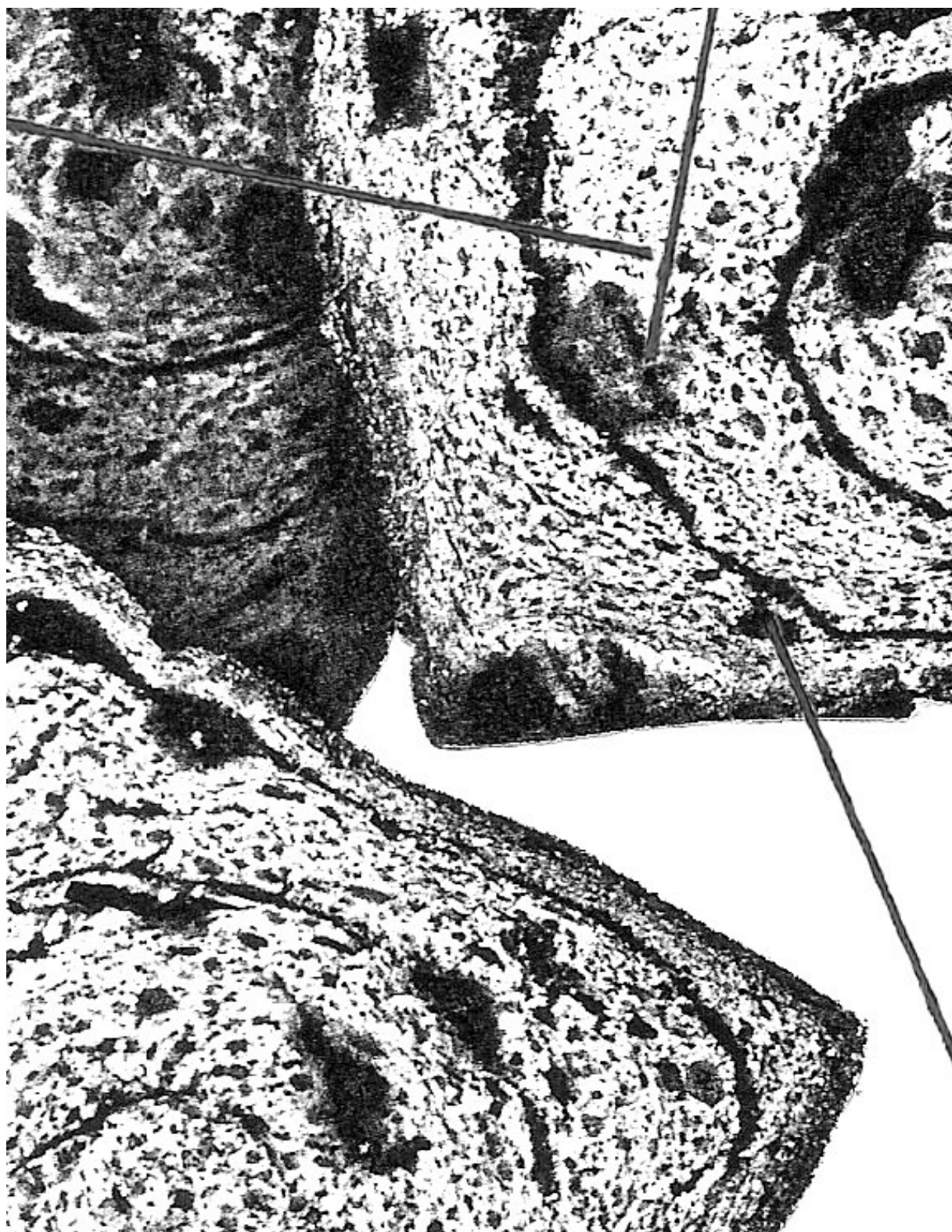
This making love with lecturers, scientists especially, has to stop. My father taught my mother. Is that the genesis? What is it I want? A disrobing of power? Don't talk, just strip off your clothes and let me feel your skin, thicknesses. Stop pounding my ears with raisins, dough, stars, galaxies. Could you give this talk nude? If not, get off the stage. I like to see you pacing with your pointer.

Creative person prototype: at once more masculine and more feminine than the general population. David Schramm, burly, a bit paunchy, former Olympic wrestler. Age? Fortyish. Tough. Commanding. Could pilot a bomber, test jets. Could operate on your brain without flinching. Demands awe, no bullshit. Pass me that scalpel. Speaks with a lisp. Is disarming, apologetic.

Did I insult philosophy, botany? Well, I'm sorry. It's just that applied and theoretical physics are coming together in an exciting way. Uses food images. Model of the universe: raisin bread rising. Early on the universe was very, very smooth, like whipped cream. Makes childlike drawings – sweet, understandable. Wavy, blond hair. Eye color?

I am attracted over time. Time which has existed only since the Big Bang.





ho·ri·zon (hə-rī'z'n), *n.* [ME. *orizont*; OFr. *orizonte*; L. *horizon*; Gr. *horizōn* (*kyklos*), the bounding (circle), horizon, properly ppr. of *horizein*, to bound, limit < *horos*, boundary, limit], 1. the line where the sky seems to meet the earth: called *visible* or *apparent horizon*. 2. the limit of one's mental outlook, experience, interest, knowledge, etc. 3. in *astronomy*, a) the plane extending at right angles to the direction of gravity from the eye of the observer to the celestial sphere: called *sensible horizon*. b) the plane parallel to this plane, passing through the center of the earth; also, the great circle of the celestial sphere whose plane this is: called *astronomical*, *celestial*, or *true horizon*. 4. in *geology*, a deposit of rock characterized by specific fossils and hence known to have been formed in some particular period. Abbreviated *hor.*

Covering my living room floor are white oval stones. Blood is splattered over them in long Pollack-like steaks. The two men in leather jackets have disappeared. David Schramm kisses my fingertips. He lightly touches my hair, then turns to go. He bids me "Goodnight." I toss and turn in the shadows surrounding my bed. David Schramm, David Schramm.

I'm waiting in my two-story house next door to the used-car lot, half a block from the expressway. David Schramm brings me white carnivorous flowers. He stands in the foyer. I lean against the living room entry. He rests his hand on the jamb. Close. I hear him breathe. Warmth radiates between us. Physics. Chemistry.

The dark matter will lead to the Theory of Everything (TOE). Early on, the universe was hot and dense. When the Big Bang occurred, it was as if many hydrogen bombs were exploding simultaneously. Our current microwave background and residue of gases support this thesis. We are the result of an experiment done at 10^{19}GeV .

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Something moves near the ceiling. A long, fat snake coils around a fan. "Look!" David Schramm wheels around. I saw, "It's an indigo isn't it?" A closer look. Copperhead. David Schramm knocks it down with a broom. "Get out now!" he demands. I fade through a wall in my house, find myself beside a pyracantha bush. I fear the snake may ascend the stairs. David Schramm sweeps the snake out the front door. It slithers across the street. I notice a lot of dirt on my stoop.

Once the universe was as smooth as whipped cream. Now it is like a loaf of rising raisin bread. Questions arise: (1) How did the universe get so smooth in the beginning? and (2) How did it become so lumpy? Galaxies, super-clusters, stars, people, you and I, we are the raisins, the lumps. Stars are correlated, not randomly distributed. *We exist like stars in patterns? As in a Matisse?* Space expands between the lumps, but the raisins don't expand. *The walls of the pan move out to infinity like hot desire.*

pro·fane (prə-fān', prō-fān'), *adj.* [Fr.; L. *profanus* < *pro-*, before + *fanum*, a temple; lit., before the temple, hence not sacred, common, profane], 1. not concerned with religion or religious matters; secular: as, *profane* art. 2. not initiated into the inner mysteries of something: as, the *profane* herd. 3. not hallowed or consecrated.

sec·u·lar (sek'yoo-lēr), *adj.* [ME. *seculer*, *seculere*; OFr. *seculer*; LL. *saecularis* (L., belonging to an age) < L. *saeculum*, generation, age], 1. of or belonging to the world and worldly things as distinguished from the church and religious affairs; not sacred or religious; temporal; worldly: as, *secular* music, *secular* schools. 2. living in the outside world; not bound by a monastic rule.

world·ly (wŭrld'li), *adj.* [WORLDLY (li-ēr), WORLDLIEST (-li-ist)], 1. of this world; temporal or secular: opposed to *heavenly*, *spiritual*, *ecclesiastical*, etc. 2. devoted to or concerned with the affairs, pleasures, etc. of this world. 3. worldly-wise. —*SYN.* see *earthly*.

SYN.—*earthly* is applied to that which belongs to the earth or to the present life and is chiefly contrasted with *heavenly* (*earthly* pleasures); *terrestrial*, having as its opposite *celestial* (both Latin-derived parallels of the preceding terms), has special application in formal and scientific usage (*terrestrial*

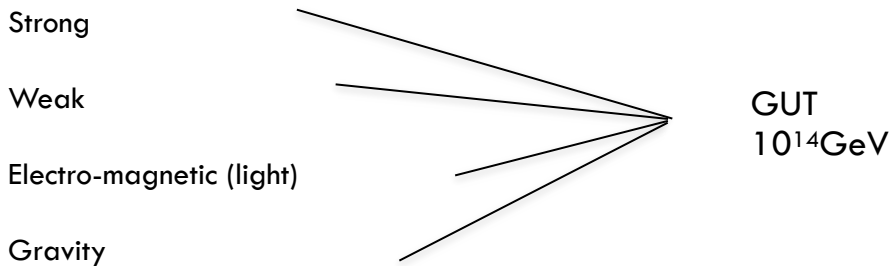
Matisse: Are color and design aptitude, which often appear together, located in the same brain area/along the same gene? Matisse's "Blue Window," "Odalisque in Red Trousers," and "Creole Dancer," years apart, yet all display a strong sense of color and pattern. In later life, he cut out sheets of colored paper as though he were sculpting slabs of stone. Art teachers always point out that forms only work together if the spaces between them are interesting.

When I was a child, once or twice a week the Highland Bakery sent a delivery man to our Westchester apartment. He knocked on our door to ask if we wanted bread that had been baked during the night. We did. From his wire basket, we took cinnamon buns and raisin bread for sandwiches. Those visits were important. But I didn't think, "He's bringing me a model of the universe." The cooked bread like a photo, capturing one moment in time.

Take a color still-life by Matisse, add a person in black and white, shades of gray. A Xerox works well. Glue it down. The background advances, the figure recedes. A metaphor. A masquerade in which a person pretends to be negative space? The drainage of color, fading, is like death, a limited idea. The object is not to become invisible but to become integrated, ingratiated into space. Not that space cares. Pictures of maze – little dead-end signs.

David Schramm wears brown cowboy boots. There are a lot of cattle in Chicago. And David Schramm eats meat. Gourmet. Otherwise, how could he have known about raisin bread and whipped cream, bread pudding with brandy? He ties on an apron and begins to broil steak in a pit. Everyone is drunk on scorch. Scotch, I mean. My tongue is thick. I remove his boots, rub his feet. I slip off his socks and kiss his toes. Pink. With blondish-red hairs. It is good to have hair on your toes. Big toes. You know what they say. David Schramm, David Schramm.

Einstein from 1916 to 1955 tried to develop a unified field theory.



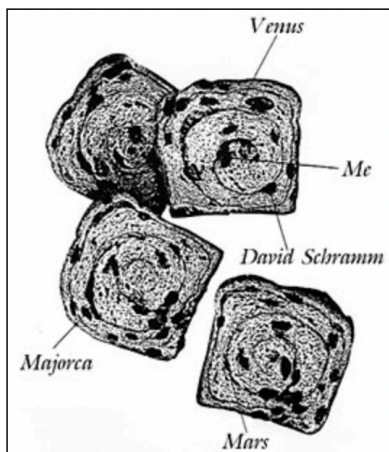
In the beginning, the universe was foamy with black holes, and the forces were unified.

Perhaps we are the product of an accelerator experiment. *A little joke?*
This we may know by 2150. Everybody is looking for the dark matter. You must look at many objects, not just one or two. Accelerators probe for dark matter. Some search underground. All must try to find the dark matter, the shadows. *I once read crazy people don't see shadows. We are shining examples, but the bulk of matter doesn't shine. People are not the dominant matter of the universe. A relief. Consciousness is not the center of the universe. I am only the center of my own horizon.*

The Meeting of Image and Text

Christy Sheffield Sanford

For the most part, I create my experimental Web work, as probably many others do, in a state of divine naiveté. I don't think of threatening the future of literature or of usurping the cognitive role of text. Only recently when visited by a literary pundit, who reported back, "I prefer more text," did I realize the piece he had viewed contained little text. Yet, it was, to my mind, a visual poem.



I received early exposure and training in fine arts and graphics from my parents who were painters and commercial artists. My minor in college was art. When I began to seriously write, I gave up visual art, except for mail art to friends. Over time, visual art crept into my fiction and poetry. "Raisin Bread" was a turning point. This fictional work features Xeroxed pieces of raisin bread and manipulated images containing text. I have always regarded text as graphically interesting and language as something to be visually enjoyed. Typography and spatial interplay with figure ground seem fundamental. I see both language and imagery as rooted in efforts to communicate.

In his essay, "Disturbing History: New Technologies in Context," Karl Young states: "The main course of writing in western civilization has been towards ease of assimilation. ... The largest transition was from signs with intrinsic pictorial and symbolic value to characters that recorded speech. There are expressive potentials in the graphic and etymological components of written Chinese that simply don't exist in the Roman alphabet." Some of the loss in pictorial quality has perhaps been re-registered in colorful sayings, slang and oral mnemonics.

In my Web work, I take pride in not illustrating; yet a recent meditation in my Light-Water series features a photo of a palm frond referred to in the text. The frond image is as much a statement on calligraphy as it is on the metaphoric association described in the text. For example, I mention hair and the image looks hair-like. I love images that proclaim multiple lines of connection with the text – subordinate from one perspective but from another, superior. The frond image forces attention into the realm of hidden messages, the writing on the wall, or in this case, the writing on the sidewalk. The cursive quality of the blades is like someone writing an overwrought and passionate love letter.

Young notes, "The pre-Columbian writing systems of central Mexico. ... (as distinct from the Mayan systems to the south) were iconographic – that is, they were based on common icons instead of spoken languages, so that people who spoke different languages could read them." Just as with film, in which we developed a cinematic shorthand – close up, quick cut and fade – now on the Web, we are accumulating a common set of icons. The icon blankets every desktop, every piece of software. Much of that sense of the iconic, I find, permeates my Web work.

Richard Lanham wrote that "electronic writing brings with it a complete renegotiation of the alphabet/icon ratio upon which print-based thought is built." Pictures and sounds are resuming a higher importance in cognition. In *ekphrasis*, one describes in writing the characteristics of something visual. Some argue, that increasingly in the computer medium, images explain text. Thus the logic goes that this causes a crisis in rhetoric, because traditionally words have been the locus of control.

Visual poetry has been kept out of mainstream education and the canon. The rigid compartmentalization of genres is a relatively recent 20th century phenomenon. Visual poetry has largely been treated as a novelty, a charming aberration. Apollinaire's visual experiments might inspire an exercise but not a career. For one intimate with this form, combining image and text is not shocking.

Some visual poets dive into the Web, others find it lacking. Joel Lipman has a riveting performance. He reads one of his poems that has been stamped onto a page from a very old book. Then he crumbles it before the audience's eyes. This dramatizes the fragility of the book and the temporal experience of seeing-hearing a poem. The ephemeral nature of a poem's reading, its essence, has crumbled to dust before your eyes. If you don't remember it, too bad. On the Web, something can vanish, be erased, but it can't have that tactile quality of paper in hand.

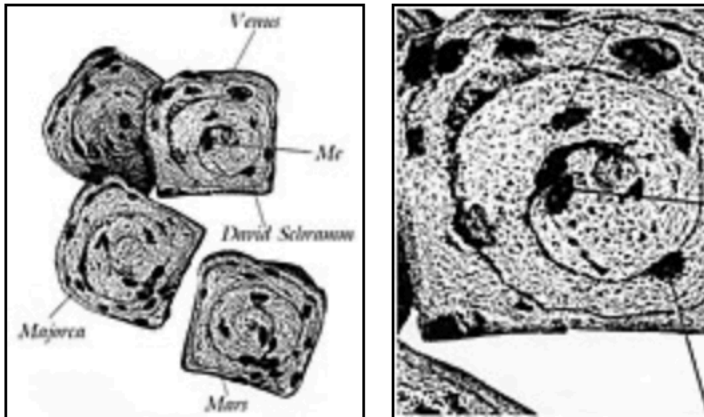
Recently in creating a piece called "Gender and the Web: Couches in Ideas," I used hidden layers. In this dynamic HTML work, the viewer touches an image and an enormous rollover appears. This is a flamingo pink, clearly worded paragraph. I consider this text as image. By the same token, I think an image can be quite literary. Here I do not refer to illustration but rather to calligraphic markings, iconic scratches, messages left in a pre-literate society. This is not to say primitive. I think vision can be quite sophisticated and certainly less hampered by intermediary sensors.

The appearance of the hidden layer has another characteristic that is at once maddening and fascinating. This type of rollover oscillates. It reminds me of Katherine Hayles' discussion of fluctuating reality: "Information technologies create what I will call flickering signifiers, characterized by their tendency toward unexpected metamorphoses, attenuations, and dispersions. Flickering signifiers signal an important shift in the plate tectonics of language." And in this seismic event, one can, with DHTML, see subconscious revelations, alternative viewpoints and glossed realities.

With dynamic HTML, page choreography does not depend on linking. I am interested in expressing the deeper emotions and also in creating mood and setting. How these can succeed on the Web is one of my problems. The link has, I believe, been over-emphasized. I feel "Red Mona," my first Web piece, which has no links, was more conceptually hypertextual than many heavily linked pieces. Nothing I have read suggests a link should lead to another HTML page or be accompanied by a sense of jumping. Unfortunately, this is how hypertext has been reduced. Ideally hypertext points out lines of connection, options, inclusions that enlarge the work at hand.

In Olia Lialina's highly witty "Agatha Appears," cut out figures converse with strips of dialogue that appear as the viewer approaches the characters with the cursor. The bodies and clothes are splashed with text – digital lingo discourse. This use of image and text turns the whole notion of visual ascendancy upside down. How could that be, one might ask, if the imprint of the medium is so deep. The image has been penetrated, mind is all over the body. The excitement, the energy, is indeed in the hands of those combining image and text. This is the mountain to climb.

In working on a series of Light-Water meditations, I have again perused one of my favorite books, *Mira Calligraphiae Monumenta*, a 16th century illuminated manuscript. In an introductory essay, Lee Hendrix describes a pitched battle for supremacy between two disciplines. Hoefnagel, the illuminator, refused to imitate the narrative passages so eloquently laid out some fifteen years earlier by Bockskay. Indeed, Hoefnagel invaded the calligraphy and imitated the words with his plant and animal imagery. Something I like much better is Hendrix's description of a "response" by the illuminator. It is that interplay, that sense of responsiveness of one art form to another, that I find essential, aesthetically satisfying, and advanced.



"Raisin Bread"

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- is a Web-specific artist and writer. In 1998, her work "NoPink" was awarded The Well's prize for the Best Hyperlinked Work on the Web. Christy was recently selected as Trent-Nottingham University's trAce Virtual Writer-in-Residence.

Ylem, Exploring the intersection of the Arts & Sciences

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