

Preface: Taking Revelatory Turns

Words can be such inflexible vessels for ferrying meanings back and forth, especially in Western linguistic systems, which rely so heavily on polar binaries, often arranged in temporal sequences that imply causality. This book seeks to liminalize two such binary pairs—reading/writing and teaching/learning—until they are no longer categorically separable, one from the others. In the most conventional ways of understanding those binaries, the former precedes the latter and, if not exactly causing it, at least makes it possible. Anyone who has learned to write and read in order to teach others how to write and read understands that this sequencing is at best clunky if not nonsensical. In “live action” there are countless permutations not only for each of these singular activities but also for the complex ways they intersect with one another. The cliché that Eskaleut languages have seven or fifty or a hundred distinct names for the snow was debunked long ago. But they do have considerably more root words+suffixes than most European languages do for naming the many varieties of frozen water. It would certainly be easier to think in more complex ways about the four concepts I name above if we had a similar inventory for distinguishing both their individual varieties and their many modes of interaction. In the absence of that, one is left with demonstration, showing instead of telling, as precisely as possible, what such interactions look, act and feel like in practice. That’s exactly what this book does.

The reading/writing aspect of the equation is self-evident at the level of method: Whenever I have more than one book on my bedside table, books I've aggregated coincidentally rather than intentionally, I prefer now to read them simultaneously instead of sequentially. And I start to write about those books while (not after) I read them. Then I reread and rearrange in a recursive way what I happen to be writing, turning it back on itself until it yields a new and unexpected layer of meaning, what I call a revelatory turn, the ultimate "point" of the essay revealing itself in the final act. This process violates many of the stereotypical ways of sequencing these activities temporally, with quite salutary results, at least for me. Each of the essays in this book enacts one of these events.

The "outside the lines" part is also self-evident at the level of method. Engaging with multiple texts simultaneously may not be the most conventional approach to reading, but it is by no means uniquely eccentric. Anyone who has done systematic or in-depth research spends at least some of their time with an array of related texts "open" (either physically or electronically) and in front of them at roughly the same time. The various protocols that organize that reading toward some synthetic purpose are tacit preconditions in almost every classroom (syllabi and disciplines e.g.), workplace (professional discourses and standards), and publishing marketplace (the genres and formats that regulate what makes it into print and what will not.) Those "lines"—the key words being related and purpose—are normally both invisible and non-negotiable within their contexts, which very rarely simply say "let's throw an assortment of *unrelated* things together just to see what happens." Which is what I'm doing here. A reading strategy like this cannot be guided by a preconceived "purpose" (that bellwether of all capitalistic enterprises.) It simply

assumes that one will emerge, via an equally unregulated mode of writing in this case, from the innately figurative tendencies of the human mind, which seeks meaning in coincidental multiplicity, not by overriding that multiplicity with analysis but by plumbing its possibilities with discernment.

The one professional arena where something vaguely like this happens is in “basic science” labs, where researchers sometimes bring an assortment of previously unrelated compounds into some mode of consonance, either simultaneously or in sequence. They, though, are usually trying to solve a specific problem, therefore have a putative purpose. They just have no idea how exactly to achieve it. And the fruits of their experiments are sometimes unexpected and surprising to them, solving an entirely different problem, one that beforehand may not even have been recognized as one. Teflon is one quite famous example of such a successful “fail.” The obvious difference with my method of reading here is that it is not trying to solve any preconceived problem. I simply perform the experiment and wait to see what happens. That’s at least part of what I mean by “outside the lines.” The other part of it is ensconced in the term “quantum” that I deploy quite frequently along the way, what may seem at first like an out-of-place, even impertinent intrusion from an alien universe of discourse. It is in fact key to my argument in ways I will try to bring into focus later in this preface and to conceptualize in more detail in the first essay. In brief: the multiple probability states that define quantum wave functions, and their collapse into one of those states at the moment of observation, provides a very elegant analogy for the sort of reading/writing I enact in this book.

Most students and professionals cannot, of course, indulge in this sort of open-ended experimentation routinely. The penalties are too severe. But there is a big difference between “not routinely” and “never.” Everyone has “free” time to engage in their own thinking. This book argues—via demonstration—for the value of using at least some of that time to practice a mode of reading/writing that is free from externally imposed preconditions. Just to see what happens. And, ideally, to take a bit of that experimental serendipity back into their more regimented educational or professional settings.

The teaching/learning binary I mention above becomes clear as the essays evolve, though it is more difficult to describe. In *Writing/Teaching: Essays Toward a Rhetoric of Pedagogy*, I wrote in some detail about the dynamics of the Platonic dialogues, where the writer (Plato) never says anything in his own voice; where the teacher (Socrates) never writes down one of the words he voices; where the immediate audience, Socrates’ various interlocutors, serve as what I call “student-functions” whom Socrates is trying vigorously, often unsuccessfully, to teach; in whose stead we, Plato’s readers, can stand to learn the quite different lesson Plato is trying to teach; and where, if we do that work attentively, we can teach ourselves something quite distinct and different from what is being proffered to or by any of the other players in the game. In other words, teacher and student, writer and reader are so intertwined it is impossible to separate them formally or functionally. That is exactly the dynamic that animates this book, where I am simultaneously writer and reader, trying mightily to teach myself something I need to learn in the hopes that a generous reader will learn how to write about their own reading in similarly revelatory ways, teaching themselves something entirely different in the process.

As I explain in “Quantum Reading vs. the Rabbit Hole,” here’s how simply it all started:

All of a sudden, in late October [2023], I went from having no books on my docket to five, each of which looked really interesting to me. . . . I figured I’d read a bit of each to decide which to focus on first, then stage the others going forward. They were all so captivating to me, though, each in its own way, I just couldn’t pick one. So I ended up reading them all simultaneously, ten or fifteen pages of one, maybe a chapter of the next and so forth, night after night for a couple of weeks. . . .

Very shortly a wonderful thing began to happen: I’d be in the midst of one and would think I was still somehow in the midst of one of the others. Or, occasionally, all of the others! It was as if I was not reading five separate books about widely divergent subjects set in vastly different contexts, but one book with five different facets. I began to wonder how that could possibly be. (26)

This book documents my responses to successive iterations of that wonderment and to the various revelatory turns they invited me to take along the way. There is obviously no way to pre-script an experience of this sort. It is less like engaging intentionally with a single interlocutor, the typical readerly experience, and more like attending a party crowded with interesting people and ending up in a long conversation with a few of them who happen to join you out on the veranda. Liminality, serendipity, mystery, negative capability, these are some of the terms I use to describe how such a conversation moves and feels. Who you are

when you enter conversations of that sort is not who you are when you leave them, having been transformed by the strange alchemical process of genuine, participatory dialogue, which favors revelation over information, memorable insights over memorizable “results.”

As the passage above suggests, what follows here is less a commentary on the many worthy and provocative books my essays focus on than an argument on behalf of an alternative way of approaching them, what I call systems-level or quantum reading, a method (not a theory) of reading that uses the interactive conversation that emerges among multiple books to inspire a revelatory turn toward an end that could not even have been imagined let alone predicted beforehand. Which is often what happens when physicists attempt to “read” the material universe at the quantum level. As I further explain in that opening essay:

Last night I finished a complete first draft of this essay. Its working title was “Off the Rails,” which I knew was not quite right. This morning I woke up with the term “quantum reading” flashing in my head. Based on long and considered experience, I trust my dreams implicitly to help me solve my most intractable problems. That term struck me at once as both perfectly on point and pretty preposterous, and I couldn’t decide which to go with: pitch it or ditch it.

One of the primary features of quantum phenomena, in the material world at least, is a simultaneity of seemingly contrary, even contradictory, conditions or states. The particle-wave duality that photons and electrons express is the Ur-example of this: What in a “natural” state is always-both

becomes, at the moment of measurement, one or the other, depending on what question the experiment is asking. I could see that I had already laid out a number of such anomalous concepts along the way: systems-level thinking, stacked reading, mystery, negative capability, creative irresolution, and non-contradiction, among others. What I needed was an overarching metaphor to unify them. Quantum reading seemed just the ticket for that. So there it is now, leading my charge in a title that sounds more like an MMA cage match than an academic essay. I know enough about quantum mechanics to know that quantum reading is a stretch. By the same token, the term quantum has entered the popular lexicon in ways that broaden its application considerably. I'm taking advantage of that definitional flexibility to deploy the term in this new way. (24-25)

In "Quantum Reading vs. the Rabbit Hole," my holiday-season extravaganza, the five books I ended up reading simultaneously could not have been more different: one highlighted a 20th century indigenous/settlers land-rights conflict in New Mexico; one the shift from hunting-gathering to agriculture many millennia ago; one a 4th century institutional crisis in the formation of the Catholic Church; one a 19th century argument between a Russian anarchist and the Marxist orthodoxy he had disavowed; one an 8th century Chinese poet struggling to find a balance between worldly fame and spiritual renown.

The thread that ended up weaving them together was the concept of a "primal matrix" I borrowed from one of the books and applied to all of them. The revelatory turn I

took was toward an event happening right then, one quite disturbing to me given my professional history: the calamitous spectacle of those three university presidents flailing away at the Congressional hearing focused on antisemitism on college campuses, which laid bare “the dire state of the ‘idea of the university’ in the American culture right now” (72), cultures at war with one another in the most helter-skelter ways, a critique I’ve had simmering in the back of my head for years.

In “The Medium Is the Hyperobject,” two intellectual titans—Marshall McLuhan and Timothy Morton—one on each side of the two-generation interim that spanned my professorial career, end up threaded together not on the basis of any obvious set of common interests but via “a sort of Einsteinian wormhole” that opened between them, “making weirdly palpable what we now call, most generally, the postmodernist epoch, the former book facing toward it just before it arrived, the latter gazing back at it just after it passed, ancestor and descendent suddenly ‘seeing’ one another, at least in the alternate universe of my imagination” (105-6), eye to eye for the first time.

The revelatory turn I took was toward the “medium” (McLuhan’s keyword) to which they both instinctively defaulted: “the book,” quotation marks meant to emphasize its role not as a material artifact but as a cultural icon, a “hyperobject” (Morton’s keyword), that “generic tabernacle within which the ideology of Western patriarchy, power, and privilege has been ensconced serially for more than a millennium—at least since the codification of the orthodox Christian Bible in the 4th and 5th centuries CE” (107), including in the contemporary academy—one that impacted my own professional progress in the ways I document in the narrative that concludes the essay.

Each of these essays has a second layer that adds dimension to the argument, documentation of some ancillary revelatory turns I experienced in the process of composition (for “Quantum Reading vs. the Rabbit Hole”) or reception (for “The Medium is the Hyperobject”), the behind-the-scenes thinking that every creative enterprise involves, active for the writer, largely hidden from the reader, a kind of quantum superposition in that both layers coexist synthetically until the apparatus that measures them, in this case the traditional essay, forces them into one or the other of their possible states.

In the case of “Quantum Reading vs. the Rabbit Hole” it is a series of 21 serendipitous “asides”—some of them personal, some of them scholarly, some of them simply whimsical—that arose as I wrote the essay, the sort of background noise I assume all authors experience as they write. The given forms for sharing intellectual work, which pre-script both writers’ and readers’ expectations, tend to exile material like that to either silence (excision) or the sidelines (traditional endnotes) in order to make the main argument more legible. I decided to retain them in their original, more casual form to conserve their improvisational character, sometimes matter-of-fact, sometimes edgy, sometimes playful, the way they arose in the moment as I was composing,

In the case of “The Medium Is the Hyperobject” that second layer is another full essay, “So this is what I was thinking when I wrote ‘that sentence,’” which evolved after the fact from a long conversation with a friend about a densely-packed sentence in the original essay, in the course of which I tried to explain in detail why I chose the seemingly abstruse discourse I used to set up the overall paradigm for my argument. I planned initially simply to write a long, more traditional, endnote to explain and justify the arcane terms that end

up so tightly compressed there. But it turned into an essay in its own right, the final essay in the book now, one that does exactly what its title says: It unpacks “that sentence” at a granular level, demonstrating that what appears on the page is often merely the tip of a very large and mostly submerged iceberg, and accessing that deeper level requires ongoingly dialogical curiosity and engagement from both reader and writer. In certain respects this essay might serve better as a preface than a postscript to the one it comments on, which my most trusted readers felt was a particularly “difficult” one. But all the ways I’ve been imagining to do that so far seem awkward and wonky. Kind of like that sentence itself, before I wrote this backup essay to make the case for why it’s not.

The revelatory turn I took was toward a futural imagining of what kind of poet the next epoch might require—a future deeply vexed by the political dysfunction “Quantum Reading vs. the Rabbit Hole” indexes, and the even more imperiling technological (AI, e.g.) and natural (global warming, e.g.) threats that loom gravely just up ahead, the kind that haunt the “The Medium Is the Hyperobject.” As I argue, the postmodernist moment has played itself out. Whatever is coming next has not yet fully fledged. What that turns out to be will emerge during the coming years. The stakes are particularly high at transitional moments like this. I am full of hope about our future, both in the academy and in the culture at large. And I’m hopeful that what I proffer here will contribute in some small way toward new ways of thinking about how we might promote innovative reading and writing strategies as agents for personal and cultural change. And in order for me to be a party to that change, I need to change myself radically, to the core, taking every revelatory turn that presents itself on my path further and further outside the lines.

Though “quantum reading” is new for me, I’ve been reading/writing outside the lines for most of my life. It all started when I fell in love with poetry in the seventh grade. There was nothing whatsoever in my personal, family or local cultural experience to account for or reward that. It just happened, right in the midst of the post-Sputnik crisis in American confidence. I had extraordinary gifts in science and math and was, I can now see, being not-so-subtly groomed for a career as a space scientist. I wanted to hide my poetic inclination, so when I went to the school library I would take a large science book off the shelf along with a smaller poetry book. I’d sit with the big book open and visible to the librarian, the smaller book open and visible only to me. I kept up this charade until the middle of my junior year in college, when I changed my major from physics to English, a decision that stunned the faculty, my family (all of whom had every reason to assume a career in science was in the cards for me), and basically everyone I knew or who knew me. The physics professor I had to speak with to approve the change told me I was “wasting my gifts.” My father said pretty much the same thing. But it was the late-60s and I would not be deterred.

Instead of applying to elite graduate schools I became enamored with a new and radically different program for envisioning a professorial career in English, the Doctor of Arts—one of those lovely innovations in higher education that emerged briefly, like spring wildflowers on the tundra, from the chaos of the late-1960s—which expressly encouraged reading/writing outside the established disciplinary lines, fusing critical with creative discourses and teaching with scholarship. During these “formation” years, I crafted my professional identity hybridically at the intersections among composition studies, literary

theory, pedagogy, and poetics—and I ended up teaching all of them—at a time when siloing in specialisms was the order of the day.

In the early 80s I coordinated the implementation of the first WAC program at the University of Pittsburgh, writing the guidelines and chairing the College Writing Board that administered the program. Throughout the 80s and 90s I directed most of the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project's Summer Institutes for K-12 teachers, fostering across-the-curriculum collaborations in the local public schools. All that while, my scholarly work promoted cross-disciplinary ways for connecting writing and reading, with a specific focus on the scholarship of teaching. Concurrently I published at a normal professorial rate: two scholarly books; the equivalent of a couple of others in articles, and of another in poems published separately. So I have a long history of writing/teaching about what crossing lines can do for reading/learning (to remix my initial binaries) at all educational levels. I enjoyed all of that work immensely.

Then, on the verge of my retirement, my wife passed away suddenly and tragically, a trauma that sent me into a tailspin. The retirement years I had envisioned would be like rowing a boat across a calm lake on a sunny afternoon, enjoying the company of my wife, have turned out to be more like riding down a raging river in a thunderstorm, trying to avoid catastrophe as each boulder or set of rapids appears as if out of nowhere. My way of coping has been to read voraciously about all manner of things, from ancient wisdom texts to contemporary quantum mechanics, from the not-so-secret life of plants to how the human brain works, always multiple books by my bedside, all in the service of the full identity

reboot my life required. And I wrote about all of them, fiercely, at a two-book a year pace, an astounding schedule of production for me.

The first book I wrote in the aftermath of this loss—*This Fall: essays on loss and recovery*—was founded on the walks in the woods I was then taking alone every morning, after many years having taken them together with my wife. It is a wonderful book, my best I think. When I finished it, I had to decide what to do with it, publication-wise, and I knew immediately and instinctively that I could not run a book that intimate through the gauntlet of the extant publishing marketplace, which I had some familiarity with. So, I decided instead, with only the vaguest premonition about the implications, to publish it on my own. I knew, of course (and was later reminded by my colleagues) that self-publication crossed a very hard line in the academic marketplace, delegitimizing the work forever. But I did it anyway, as much an act of defiance as a gesture of love.

First, I created a personal website and uploaded my manuscript, in PDF format, free to anyone who wanted to read it. A few months later, I created a paperback version of *This Fall* and made it available online at cost of production. I was stunned by how simple it was to create a book that looked exactly like any other book on a bookstore shelf. And how fast it could happen, in minutes instead of years. For someone deeply afflicted by the sort of chronophobia that often follows a traumatic loss—for me the practical effect was an inability to imagine a future any further ahead than a week or so—this was a wonderful gift. *This Fall* went on to win an Indie-best-book award and received other plaudits as well, all outside the academic marketplace, of course. Having thus perfected this new (for me) method of publication, that is what I then did with the ten books of essays and six collections of poems

I've written in the meanwhile. It has been a stunning journey for me, one I never could have experienced had I stopped to seek a publisher for *This Fall*, a process that, I knew from experience, takes years not minutes.

Which begs the question of course: Why now am I seeking to return to a more traditional marketplace with this particular book? Well, first of all, I can now (thankfully) imagine a futural timeline that extends for months, so I can wait patiently for a normal review process to unfold. And I am much more settled in myself, which means I feel confident I can endure the rejections that are inevitable along the way. But most of all, because I believe this book enacts a powerful reading/writing method that almost anyone with the time and interest can easily adapt to suit their own reading/writing rhythms.

Readers read for a variety of different reasons, of course. This method favors deep insight on behalf of personal growth rather than knowledge formation for professional purposes, though the latter is not out of the question. And while the ultimate effect may be therapeutic, it works much more like taking a Rorschach test than buying into a self-help program, in that it reveals how one sees things right now, and then explores that figurative response in unexpected ways to reveal more. As I say at the end of "Quantum Reading vs. the Rabbit Hole:"

Reading provocative, well-written books, whether five or five thousand, trying to decipher some true things they might share in common, is among the ways we are still fortunate to have for doing that—despite the many book-burnings, -buryings and -bannings our civilization has endured—truth and beauty pulsing in quantum superposition across human history, then and

now, there and here, separate and the same, one with many, many into one, waiting patiently for us to find our own personal moments of synchronicity. That may not be all we know on earth, or all we need to know, but it's one of the best ways I know of to exercise my personal agency and, if I'm lucky, to learn some new ways to fight back. I highly recommend it. (77)

. . .

One final set of observations about what may seem at first glance like a new-agey abuse of the term "quantum" to modify what I'm doing with reading/writing in these essays:

I am not a physicist, of course, and a text is not a subatomic particle. So why, you might fairly ask, resort to the exotic discourse of particle physics to conceptualize such routine macro-world activities as writing and reading? Well, for one thing, as I say above, if you engage in those activities seriously or professionally you realize very quickly how limited and cumbersome are our conventional ways for describing and explaining how they work interactively. It's kind of like trying to apply Newtonian mechanics to the quantum universe. Pretty soon it just doesn't compute.

This mismatch has riven Western philosophy from the outset. Take for example Plato's *Phaedrus*, where Socrates intones his famous critique of writing, which, he argues, is profoundly limited as a rhetorical medium (vis-à-vis oral dialogue) because "written words . . . seem to talk to you as though they were intelligent, but if you ask them anything about what they say . . . they go on telling you the same thing forever" (521). Superficially, that may appear to be true, in that the actual words and sentences in a printed text have a

spatial fixity that sonic waves do not. But Plato, a consummate *writer*, obviously thinks otherwise. For one thing, he has Socrates perform multiple readings of the cynical “speech” Lysias *wrote* to recruit Phaedrus into a pederastic relationship. Three separate times Socrates counters that text with responses that are not just variants but are profoundly different in every respect. The same sort of multiplicity of readings insinuates itself into Socrates’ long disquisition on the rhetorical texts popular at that moment, a portion of the dialogue that seems dismissably tedious, aside from the point I’m making with it here. In other words, Plato is demonstrating expressly, in *writing*, the exact opposite of the “point” about writing he has Socrates make authoritatively as the dialogue closes. Plato is way too smart to have *written* those *words* naively. So what, as attentive readers, are we supposed to do with this contradiction, one that philosophers and critical theorists have been wrestling with for over two millennia now, a line of thinking that reached an apogee during the postmodernist era, which obsessed over this problem?

Last Sunday afternoon I stopped by a local park to see a puppet show. There were maybe three hundred of us sitting on a shaded hillside lawn, mostly multigenerational families with very young children among them. I had no idea what to expect, so I was both surprised and delighted that the “plot” of the show was designed to illustrate, for children, some of the fundamental principles of quantum mechanics. Would a particle physicist have approved of every aspect of the script in strictly scientific terms? Probably not; but the foundational assumption that quantum mechanics can be child’s play was brilliant and persuasive. In fact, a child’s perspective, which has what Edith Cobb called, in *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood*, an “open-systems attitude,” may be more amenable to the

counterintuitive aspects of quantum mechanics because it has not yet been indoctrinated into “classical” Western ways for organizing causality and temporality. Try to imagine creating a puppet show with postmodernist critical theory—ultra-adult thinking—as the “plot.” I rest my case.

Let me give a few basic examples of how elements of the discourse foundational to quantum mechanics can be applied analogically to clarify not just the sort of reading/writing I enact in these essays, as if it’s unique, but what reading/writing almost always is, once it’s liberated from the stereotypical constraints that pre-script it in many school- or work-based settings. In other words, once it moves outside the lines.

Take the concept of “superposition,” the capacity of quantum wave functions to exist in multiple probability states—both wave and particle, say—prior to observation, akin to what a text is before it is read or written. At the moment of measurement—from that first printed word one’s eyes scan or the first typed word that flashes up on a screen—the wave function begins to collapse into one of those probability states. Ask that wave function a different question, via another measurement device—by rereading or rewriting, say—and it will collapse into a different one of its probability states. That is exactly what I do in “Quantum Reading vs. the Rabbit Hole:” read and reread multiple texts simultaneously, using them to ask different questions of one another, revealing, via my writing, which also interrogates itself, at least a few of their probability states in the process. None of them “go on telling you the same thing forever.” They “go on telling” things they could never have otherwise imagined, collectivity surpassing individuality in the service of a larger purpose, that revelatory turn.

Or take the concept of “entanglement,” the ability of two distinct quantum systems to become so intimately linked that any perturbation of one will be immediately expressed in the other, what Einstein called “spooky action at a distance.” The backslashed-concept at the center of this book’s title—reading/writing—is a good example of such an entanglement, two activities conventionally conceived as separate acting in tandem, in that the writing *produces* a reading that could never have come into being without it; and the reading *engenders* a written text that could never have come into being without it. Socrates privileges oral discourse because it is intrinsically dialogical, evolving serendipitously via unscripted mutual responses. But even he can’t escape from the scribal aspect of such discourse when he praises dialogue for its capacity to leave truth “*written* in the soul of the listener” (523). Plato, as I said, uses his *written dialogues* to simulate the very same effect. The inherent multivocality of that medium invites, even compels, the reader to add her own “voice,” via writing that is either express (on the page) or tacit (on the soul), as an active party to the ongoing conversation.

The sort of compositions I create here are different from Plato’s, of course. What they share with his is a fundamentally dialogical spirit, simulating the same sort of multivocality that invites the same sort of active engagement, all of which amplifies exponentially the complexity of the wave function of every text in the conversation, including mine. At a more granular level, the two books I read and write about simultaneously in “The Medium Is the Hyperobject” behave in a similarly entangled way: What I write about one of them takes on its meaning only as it reverberates with the other, and vice-versa. Move one, moves both. And as is often the case with entangled systems, it

is the missing-middle-between—in this case the historical epoch that separates them—more so than the wave function at either end of the dipole that becomes the primary locus of the experiment, the scene for my revelatory turn.

Or take Heisenberg’s “uncertainty principle,” which regulates the accuracy with which complementary aspects of quantum systems (like velocity and position, or energy and temporality) can be measured. What it states is that the more precisely one tries to measure one side of those binary pairs, the less precisely one can know the other. This “margin of error” [Planck’s constant] is not a function of the mechanical limitations of measurement devices but is built into the fabric of the universe. In “So this is what I was thinking when I wrote ‘that sentence’” I move to one extreme to measure assiduously the “energy” of a single sentence from the previous essay, in the process of which that essay’s “temporalization” is fully obfuscated. It is like excising a still image from a video reel, blowing it up until every single pixel is visible as a distinct entity, then examining one of those pixels. You can learn a great deal of consequence about the composition of the whole by that means, but it must be extrapolated by returning to the whole for another look. Which is why I had a hard time deciding whether to place this essay before or after the one it comments on. If a book could behave like a quantum system, it would be in both states at the same time! Until I made the decision to close with that essay, that is exactly the state this book was in, at least in my imagination. And the fact that I call attention to its potential dual function leaves open the possibility that you might at some point have the same sort of superpositional experience, before and after somehow simultaneous, and use it to take your own revelatory turn.