



PROJECT MUSE®

Susan Howe's Facsimile Aesthetic

Chelsea Jennings

Contemporary Literature, Volume 56, Number 4, Winter 2015, pp. 660-694
(Article)

Published by University of Wisconsin Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/611150>

CHELSEA JENNINGS

Susan Howe's Facsimile Aesthetic

The final segment of Susan Howe's *Souls of the Labadie Tract* (2007), "Fragment of the Wedding Dress of Sarah Pierpont Edwards," opens with a grainy black-and-white facsimile of the eponymous piece of fabric (fig. 1). The actual fragment is Prussian blue, but what comes through in reproduction is a sense of size and shape, the fabric's frayed edges, and texture rendered through densities of gray. The image serves as

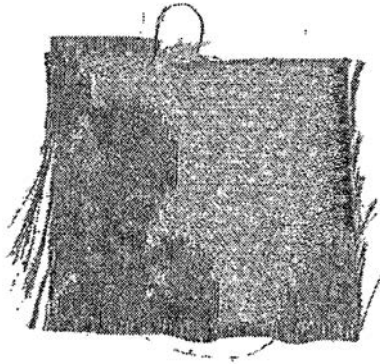


Figure 1. Facsimile of the fragment of Sarah Edwards's wedding dress featured in *Souls of the Labadie Tract*, by Susan Howe, copyright ©2007 by Susan Howe. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

a parable for the perils and potential of facsimile reproduction: in translating a singular and highly tactile fabric swatch into a multiplied, two-dimensional representation, this page stages the facsimile's simultaneous proximity to and distance from the original, its sleight of hand in replacing an object with an image. At the same time, the image of the fabric swatch takes on resonances that the swatch itself does not: it invokes, for instance, the etymological derivation of *text* from *textile* and the production of paper from rags. Within the framework of *Souls of the Labadie Tract*, the swatch recalls the pieces of paper, each standing for an idea to remember, that Jonathan Edwards pinned to his clothing while riding between parishes on horseback, as well as the "envelopes and old laundry bills cut into two-by-four-inch scraps" that Wallace Stevens carried in his pocket for recording ideas during daily walks (73). As John Harkey observes, the fragment is also "an almost exact nonverbal shadow-form" (185) of the "small, squarish, page-centered" texts that appear regularly in Howe's work (160). In the context of Howe's career-spanning practice of quoting from archival source documents, the fragment becomes a visual corollary for textual strategies of copying.

The image of the fabric fragment therefore offers a compact and evocative instance of the poetic capacities of facsimile reproduction. Poised at the beginning of "Fragment of the Wedding Dress of Sarah Pierpont Edwards," the image also announces a new visual mode in Howe's work, since the subsequent poem features her first use of type-collages—multi-typeface compositions that include broken letters and illegible marks. This essay argues that Howe's type-collages are crucially informed by the conceptual, technological, and aesthetic possibilities of facsimile reproduction. As such, they offer a counterpart to her previous strategies of incorporating manuscript pages in *Pierce-Arrow* (1999) and photographs of open books in *The Midnight* (2003). In Howe's work, facsimile reproduction becomes the basis for a poetics that takes her concerns with bibliography and the visuality of language into new terrain—what I term a *facsimile aesthetic*. Howe's facsimile aesthetic in turn reflects back to textual criticism certain key but underexamined aspects of facsimile reproduction: its investments in the ontological status of the copy qua copy, the mediation of reproduction technologies, the coincidence

of intention and accident in textual artifacts, and the continuity between literature and visual art.

Howe's writing has been visual from the start. A graduate of the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts, she began her career as a painter and installation artist. In a 1995 interview with Lynn Keller, Howe gives a detailed account of her transition from the visual arts to literature, noting several angles of connection: she describes her painting as relying on visual repetition akin to the quotation in her poetry; acknowledges a debt to the work of minimalist painters such as Ad Reinhardt, Agnes Martin, and Robert Ryman; reports that she has "never really lost the sense that words, even single letters, are images" (6); and explains how her first book, *Hinge Picture* (1974), developed directly out of an art installation. Over the course of her career, Howe's poetry has remained deeply invested in visuality, and she has continued to expand the range of visual strategies at play in her texts.

Howe's poetry has received particular attention for the ways that it pushes the boundaries of typographic layout by breaking the grid of the page and overprinting lines of text. Critics such as Michael Davidson, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Craig Dworkin, and Alan Golding have rightly read these jarring disruptions of typographic convention as participating in the political work of Howe's texts—their "critique of centers, hierarchies, authorities" and "suspicion of dominant meaning" (DuPlessis 133), as well as their "tasks of archival recovery, interpretation, and revision" (Davidson 86). Such strategies are represented in the extreme by a page spread from "A Bibliography of the King's Book or, Eikon Basilike" (fig. 2). Howe's text explores the authorship controversy surrounding the *Eikon Basilike*, a volume of "essays, explanations, prayers, debates, emblems and justifications of the Royalist cause" printed on the day of Charles I's execution and allegedly authored by the king during his imprisonment (*Nonconformist's Memorial* 47). On these pages, the book's moment of maximum violence, the execution itself, is represented in its most unruly typographic layout.

In describing her method for creating such pages, Howe reports:

First I would type some lines. Then cut them apart. Paste one on top of another, move them around until they looked right. Then I'd xerox that

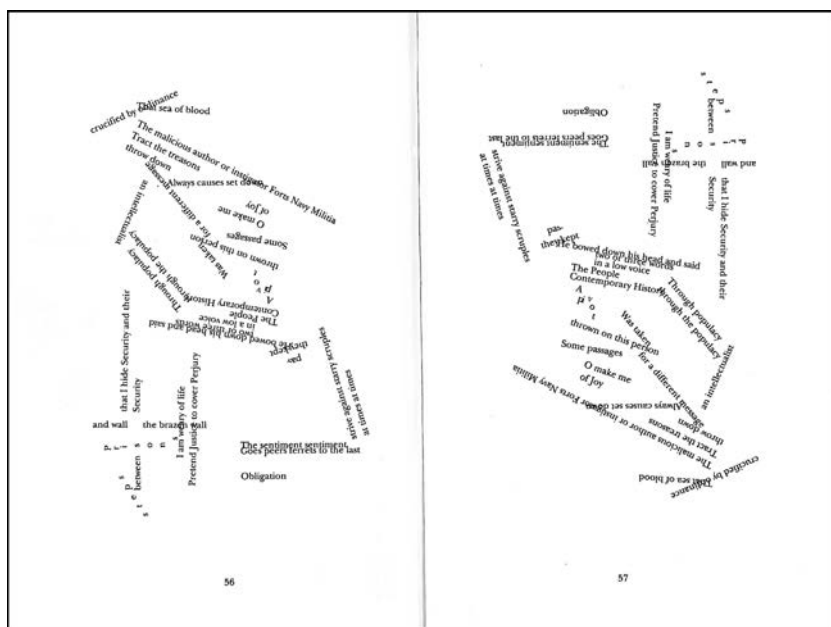


Figure 2. Page spread from "Eikon Basilike," by Susan Howe, from *The Nonconformist's Memorial*, copyright © 1993 by Susan Howe. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

version, getting several copies, and then cut and paste again until I had it right.

("Interview" 8)

When Mandy Bloomfield claims that this "radically disrupted page partakes of Milton's iconoclastic violence by means of a cut-and-paste collaging that literally carves up the King's book and scatters its fragments," she captures the vivid sense of textual cutting and dispersal that the page produces, as well as the mode of its composition (422). Howe's strategy of "carv[ing] up the King's book and scatter[ing] its fragments" is not entirely literal, however: the visual effects of the page are a typeset translation of a product of iterative reproduction. In fact, although most readers encounter "Eikon Basilike" as a section of *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (1993), this text was first printed by Paradigm Press in 1989 with a slightly different typeface and layout (fig. 3). This work may push the conventional

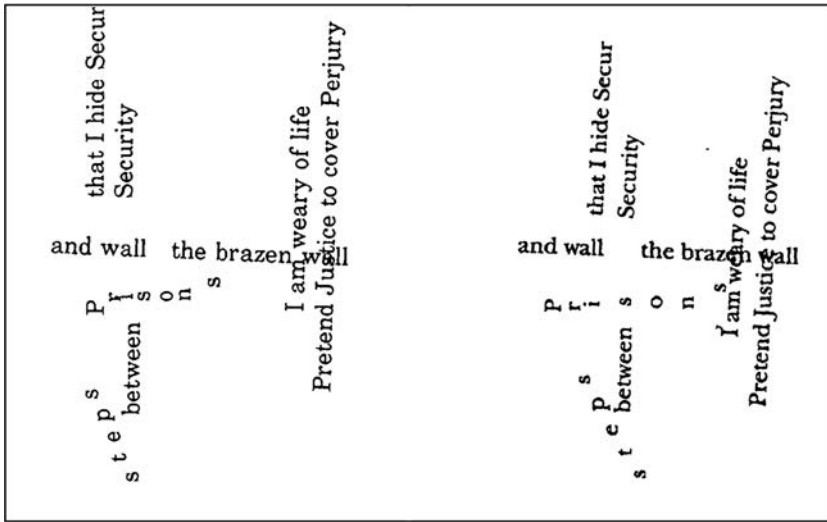


Figure 3. Close-ups from *Eikon Basilike*, Paradigm Press (1989) (left), and "Eikon Basilike," New Directions (1993) (right), from *The Nonconformist's Memorial*. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

boundaries of poetry and try the patience of the typesetter, but it still complies with a commonsense understanding of textuality that allows linguistic code to be reinscribed and reprinted.

There are multiple possible itineraries whereby a visual-artist-turned-poet could arrive at a visual poetics that refuses the conventions of typesetting in favor of textual images, and technological advances have no doubt played a major role in Howe's transition from simulating a cut-and-paste aesthetic using typographic layout to directly reproducing cut-and-pasted text. Although Howe's earliest collage texts relied as a matter of course on photocopying, physical cutting and pasting, and eventual typesetting by a printer, the intervening decades have made high-quality textual reproductions far more feasible and affordable. Still, the type-collages are not merely the result of technology catching up to Howe's aesthetic practice: in its mode of production as well as its thematic concerns, her work has remained resolutely committed to paper-based media. Although the early part of her career coincided with the rise of desktop publishing, Howe has eschewed digital textual production and

instead continued to create print-based collages. She may have replaced the typewriter and photocopier with computer and printer, but she has kept the paper and scissors. Howe's type-collages exploit the publishing possibilities afforded by digital technologies, but they ultimately point away from the digital and toward the visual and material conditions of the archive.

Emily Dickinson's manuscripts provide a crucial model for Howe's swerve toward reproduction. Howe's first use of facsimile as a poetic mode follows her critical-creative work *The Birth-mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History* (1993). In addition to taking up the notebooks of Puritan minister Thomas Shepard and the captivity narrative of Mary Rowlandson, this book extends the engagements of Howe's *My Emily Dickinson* (1985), focusing on the representations of Dickinson's manuscripts in print. Connections between Howe and Dickinson are well established: Howe's writing on Dickinson is often cited in scholarship on each author, and the kinship of their poetry has been the subject of articles by Cynthia Hogue and Albert Gelpi. This essay proposes another vector of connection between Howe's writing and Dickinson's by considering how editorial questions concerning the visual features of Dickinson's manuscripts have influenced the particular visual forms of Howe's recent writing.

Howe begins *The Birth-mark* by asserting that "[t]hese essays . . . are the direct and indirect results of my encounter with *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*"—R. W. Franklin's 1981 facsimile edition that enabled many readers to see for the first time Dickinson's dramatic handwriting and spacing and to encounter the variants that she included in even her bound fair-copy poems (1). Although Howe lauds Franklin for making the first facsimiles of Dickinson's manuscripts available, she is troubled by his assurance that certain visual features are not meaningful and his resultant choice to follow "[s]tandard typesetting conventions . . . in regard to spacing and punctuation" and to ignore "[s]tray marks" in his transcriptions (qtd. in *Birth-mark* 132). For Howe, Franklin's refusal to imagine any significance for Dickinson's visual pages is representative of a masculinist system of editorial intervention that has "domesticated and occluded" the more radical components of these manuscripts (131).

Arguing that print editions of Dickinson's poetry obscure certain forms of meaning conveyed through calligraphy, spacing, and the recording of variants, Howe claims that Dickinson's manuscripts "should be understood as visual productions" (*Birth-mark* 141). She acknowledges that Dickinson's poems "need to be transcribed into type" (in part because of the expense of the facsimiles), but "increasingly . . . wonder[s] if this is possible" (153). Despite her criticisms of Franklin's edition, Howe maintains that "[i]n the long run, the best way to read Dickinson is to read the facsimiles, because her calligraphy influences her meaning." Such sentiments have been echoed by scholars including Marta Werner, Martha Nell Smith, and Jerome McGann. Like Howe, these scholars propose a radical Dickinson whose visual-material practices stand at the core of her poetics; as such, they, too, favor diplomatic transcriptions and facsimiles over the standard print editions of her texts in order to give readers greater access to the visual aspects of her work.

Although facsimile is a common editorial tool, the facsimile edition has received scant attention in textual criticism. Walter Benn Michaels's reaction to *The Birth-mark* in the opening of *The Shape of the Signifier: 1967 to the End of History* (2004) therefore offers a useful point of entry for considering the theoretical underpinnings of the facsimile edition and the role of facsimile reproduction in Howe's arguments about Dickinson. Michaels construes Howe's investment in Dickinson's manuscripts as making "the text . . . identical to the 'material object'" (3). This conflation poses a problem because "the very idea of textuality depends upon the discrepancy between the text and its materiality." For Michaels, when the text is equated with the material object, "it ceases to be something that can be edited and thus ceases to be a text at all." The only option for reinscribing the text then becomes a facsimile, which Michaels idiosyncratically considers "a reproduction instead of an edition" (4). He points out that "even a facsimile of Dickinson's poems will reproduce only the shapes of the marks she made; it won't duplicate the ink she made them with." He concludes: "[T]he facsimile is no more committed to the material object than is the Johnson edition; it just has a different set of criteria for determining which aspects of that object count as the work of art. To be truly committed to the materiality of the object would be to suspend all such criteria" (5).

In Michaels's rendering, the linguistic text must be totally dissociable from the material object or else equivalent to it; however, in reducing textuality to this binary, Michaels neglects visuality—the facsimile's privileged terrain. The facsimile calls attention to the complex relationship between text, visuality, and materiality: text is necessarily visual, and visual features are necessarily material, but the material exceeds the visual, just as the visual exceeds the textual. In other words, a text's material features include visual as well as tactile aspects, and its visual features include linguistic and nonlinguistic elements. The facsimile puts a striking amount of emphasis on visuality by refusing to distinguish between marks that are linguistic or nonlinguistic, legible or illegible, deliberate or incidental. It also subordinates materiality to visuality by reproducing tactile features visually, if at all. In the end, Michaels's attempt to pin Howe down as a thoroughgoing materialist works to highlight her commitment to the visual page—precisely that which can be dissociated from the material document and rendered through facsimile.

This is not to say that for Howe the material dimensions of texts do not matter at all. The facsimile's capacity to make materiality present is perhaps nowhere more evident than in Marta Werner and Jen Bervin's luxurious facsimile edition *The Gorgeous Nothings*, a volume for which Howe has written the preface. The edition presents in full color a series of Emily Dickinson's late fragments written on the irregularly shaped surfaces of unglued and flattened envelopes. The high-quality images capture folds, glue, puckering, and discoloration in addition to differences between pencil and pen, a variety of paper colors, and stamps. The texts are reproduced to scale with the recto and verso of each envelope printed on the recto and verso of a page, so the edition simulates the experience of handling the documents themselves. At the same time, many of the texts float in the edition's generous page dimensions, giving the book the air of a gallery. When Howe claims in her preface, "This edition itself is a work of art," she pays the book a much-deserved compliment at the same time that she lays the conceptual foundation for a facsimile aesthetic (7). That is, she makes clear that the facsimile is a site not only of authority and authenticity but also of artistry. The facsimile does not remake the original; it creates something of a different order that both refers to the original and comes to mean differently

than the original does. In this way, facsimile reproduction resembles, and enters a dialogue with, the forms of quotation that are foundational to Howe's work—a connection that becomes especially evident through her use of facsimiles in *Pierce-Arrow* and *The Midnight*.

Illustrative Pages: *Pierce-Arrow* and *The Midnight*

In *Pierce-Arrow*, the volume that directly followed *The Birth-mark*, Howe shifts her focus from Dickinson's manuscripts to those of the American logician and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Facsimile manuscript pages in Peirce's hand, as well as several in the hand of Algernon Charles Swinburne, punctuate the book's poetic sequences. *Pierce-Arrow* inaugurates Howe's use of facsimile for aesthetic purposes by transferring reproduced pages of these manuscripts from the realm of bibliography into that of poetry. As this essay argues, Howe's move in *Pierce-Arrow* toward facsimile reproduction—repeated on alternate terms in *The Midnight*—enables her later type-collages, even though the textual and visual strategies of these two modes are crucially different: the facsimiles in *Pierce-Arrow* and *The Midnight* function as illustrations for the text proper, whereas in the type-collages, the facsimiles *are* the poetry.

Pierce-Arrow's facsimiles register a confluence of logic, poetry, and drawing that is both central to the work and closely linked to Howe's perspective on Dickinson's manuscripts. Howe makes this connection explicit in a 2005 conversation published in *How2*:

I reached Peirce's existential graphs through my interest in Emily Dickinson's late manuscripts. I felt that his logical graphs were poetry and drawing at the same time they were logic, and that they need to be seen in facsimile rather than transcription.

(Jonas, Howe, and Heuving)

Pierce-Arrow bears out her belief in the visual significance of Peirce's manuscripts, but Howe goes beyond the standard editorial practice of the facsimile edition by putting these manuscripts to poetic use.

In *Pierce-Arrow's* prefatory statement, Howe writes that Peirce's "graphs, charts, prayers, and tables are free to be drawings, even poems," and "[p]erhaps the Word, giving rise to all pictures and

graphs, is at the center of Peirce's philosophy" (ix). The links Howe asserts between "the Word" and "pictures and graphs" is apparent in the book's first set of facsimiles, from Peirce's "Existential Graphs: A System of Logical Expression" (fig. 4). These facsimiles feature a page of notations for expressions that are listed on the facing page. Peirce's system—of which Howe presents only figures 99–122—offers an exhaustive method for visually conveying logical expressions that can be built from the verb *praises*: the page begins, "Somebody praises somebody to his face," and by the end has morphed into the strange assertion, "There is nobody whom all men praise within themselves" (xiii). The combination of language and visual symbol in Peirce's notations demonstrates the visual quality of his thought and harks back to Dickinson's use of lineation and dashes. As *Pierce-Arrow* progresses, the textual components of Peirce's manuscripts give way to drawings. The introductory image for the



Figure 4. Manuscripts in the hand of Charles Sanders Peirce shown as facing pages in *Pierce-Arrow*, by Susan Howe, copyright ©1999 by Susan Howe. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

book's second section, "The Leisure of the Theory Class," signals the section's lighter tone through a Peirce drawing of figures with ludicrously distended noses and feet (31). A later spread (14–15) shows what Howe calls "assorted pages of calculations" (viii), followed on the next spread by "doodles" (viii) that include an anchor, a key, a teapot, a chair, several vases, fish, birds, and human figures (117).

As with Dickinson's, Howe sees Peirce's manuscripts as integral to his intellectual work and impossible to fully represent except in facsimile. Or as Howe puts it, "all his / handwriting to me shows / logic of this poetic tradition" (102). Howe's choice of the verb "shows" is telling, as is her use of the label "illustrations" to describe the manuscripts in the front matter of her book (viii). Both words span literal meanings related to vision and figurative meanings related to thought. *To show* is "To cause or allow to be seen or looked at," but it is also "To present to (physical or mental) view" and can include the display of qualities or feelings that cannot be seen directly with the eye ("Show"). Likewise, *illustration* can refer to a pictorial representation that accompanies a text—a visual image—as well as "[t]hat which serves to illustrate or make clear, evident, etc.; an elucidation, explanation; an example, instance" ("Illustration"). Peirce's manuscripts present illustrations of his thought in both senses; they "show logic" in ways that print cannot. In *Pierce-Arrow* these manuscripts serve as examples, and perhaps elucidations, of the process whereby thought becomes text. In Howe's use, these illustrations are never far from the word's obsolete sense of "illumination" or "enlightenment" ("Illustration").

Will Montgomery rightly notes that in this volume Howe forgoes the typographic experiments of earlier works in favor of "a visual aesthetic that depends on actual reproductions of the books and papers of others" (132). The effect is that "prose and poetry of relatively even texture is counterpointed by the visual dynamism of the manuscript facsimiles" (131), as in the example above. The unruly calligraphy of Peirce and Swinburne stands in marked contrast to "the 'exploded' pages" (Reed par. 10) and "unsettl[ed] . . . grid[s]" (Dworkin 39) of Howe's earlier poetry. Even the most radical uses of typography enforce certain regularities of letterforms and limits to spacing, but the manuscripts Howe includes are free to range

over the page-surface. Montgomery understands Howe's inclusion of manuscript pages in *Pierce-Arrow* as "a new form of visual citation that is distinct in important ways from the modernist tradition of textual citation" and "an original form of collage in which printed word, handwriting, and drawing are imbricated" (132). Although he doesn't elaborate on the "important ways" Howe's citation method differs from those of modernism, in terming Howe's citation strategy "visual" he suggests that the key distinction lies in the look of the borrowed text. Textual citations can be woven into a writer's own language with varying degrees of coherence and rupture, but the facsimiles Howe reproduces have clear boundaries. The manuscript pages differ in color from Howe's pages, and they appear with a black border that emphatically delimits their edges.

To treat the inclusion of manuscript facsimile pages as a form of collage runs the risk of ignoring the extent to which these facsimiles function as discrete images. Howe's decision to segregate the manuscripts from the typeset text by placing the facsimiles on their own pages further prevents continuity between the linguistic codes of the two modes. Even while sharing with collage an impetus toward direct reference, *Pierce-Arrow's* illustrative manuscript pages are better understood in the context of textual criticism's conventions for presenting facsimile manuscripts. In other words, rather than inventing a new mode of collage, Howe invents a poetic use for the trappings of the facsimile edition—a distinction that is important to the type-collages, which as we will see combine collage with facsimile reproduction.

Howe's next volume, *The Midnight*, extends her examination of the facsimile's poetic potential, but in ways that query and often undermine the facsimile's usual claims to authority. *The Midnight* incorporates photographs of books that serve as illustrations, as in *Pierce-Arrow*, but whereas *Pierce-Arrow* is concerned with inscription and the visual qualities of manuscripts, *The Midnight's* use of photographs centers on printed books as objects of affective significance. *The Midnight* is in part an elegy for Howe's mother, Mary Manning, but it ranges over an array of private and public source material. The volume's five sections—"Bed Hangings I," "Scare Quotes I," "Bed Hangings II," "Scare Quotes II," and "Kidnapped"—put Howe's meditations on her Anglo-Irish heritage and

her mother's theatrical career into dialogue with material drawn from Abbott Lowell Cummings's compilation *Bed Hangings: A Treatise on Fabrics and Styles in the Curtaining of Beds, 1650–1850* and John Todd's captivity narrative *The Lost Sister of Wyoming: An Authentic Tale*. As Susan Barbour maintains, Howe's elegy is inextricable from its engagements with the books inherited from her mother's family: *The Midnight* is crucially invested in "the elegiac potential of the book as object" (134). After all, Howe asserts in an interview, "the material—the fragment, the piece of paper—is all we have to connect with the dead" ("Susan Howe" n. pag.).

The Midnight leaves the realm of authorial manuscripts for the printed books of Howe's family library, but it persists in examining the relationship between word and image by using reproductions of texts as illustrations. The volume begins with a facsimile—a grayed-out, ghostly image of the title page of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae* (ix; fig. 5). The verso of this leaf offers a mirror image of the recto (x). In the brief prose piece that follows, Howe explains, "There was a time when bookbinders placed a tissue interleaf between frontispiece and title page in order to prevent illustration and text from rubbing together" (xi), but "[a]fter 1914, advances in printing technology rendered an interleaf obsolete" (xii). The faint, blurry quality of the recto image captures the layering of the interleaf over the title page. Still, the verso remains enigmatic. It's possible to interpret the second interleaf image, as Barbour does, as "the back of the interleaf onto which the reversed image of the title-page appears to have transferred" (137). A closer examination, however, unsettles this conclusion. The text of Stevenson's title page appears equally dark on both sides of the interleaf, whereas set-off ink should appear darker on the inked side. A photograph of the same copy of *The Master of Ballantrae* that occurs later in the volume shows no evidence of set-off on the interleaf, and toward the end of *The Midnight*, Howe writes, "When I grasp the interleaf in Uncle John's copy of *Ballantrae* between my thumb and forefinger, in one position the filmy fabric takes on the properties of the title page, in another the properties of the frontispiece" (144). Howe's "interleaf" does not depict the frontispiece at all. The facsimile turns out to be impossible; in Sam Rowe's phrasing, it "adopts a perspective that doesn't exist within the

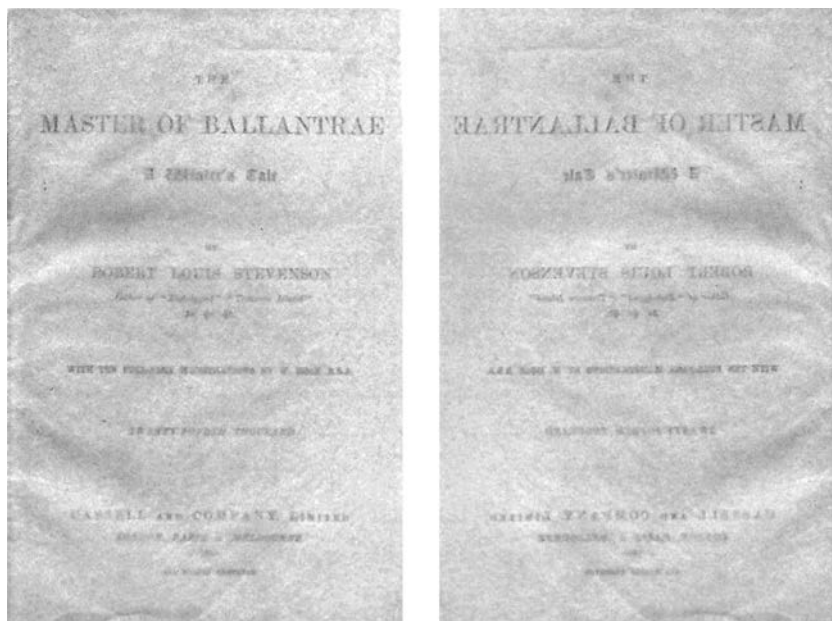


Figure 5. Recto (left) and verso (right) images of the title page of *The Master of Ballantrae* featured in *The Midnight*, by Susan Howe, copyright ©2003 by Susan Howe. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

physical architecture of the book" (n. pag.). The pair of facsimile title pages therefore serves as a warning about the distortions introduced, accidentally or deliberately, in the attempt to visually convey a three-dimensional book.

These distortions become the subject of many of *The Midnight's* photographs. Certain books are featured several times in the volume, among them *The Lost Sister of Wyoming*. The book is first represented by its frontispiece, with the interleaf obscuring the bottom half of the image (48; fig. 6). The book is turned so that the spine is the bottom edge of the image and the landscape portrayed is right side up. The next time the book appears, the entire opening is shown, and the interleaf is arranged so that it covers the title page without blocking the frontispiece (62). A brass magnifying glass in the shape of a turtle sits on the left side of the book, roughly centered on the gutter. A light source from the right causes the magnifying



Figure 6. Three photographs of the frontispiece for *The Lost Sister of Wyoming* included in *The Midnight*, by Susan Howe. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

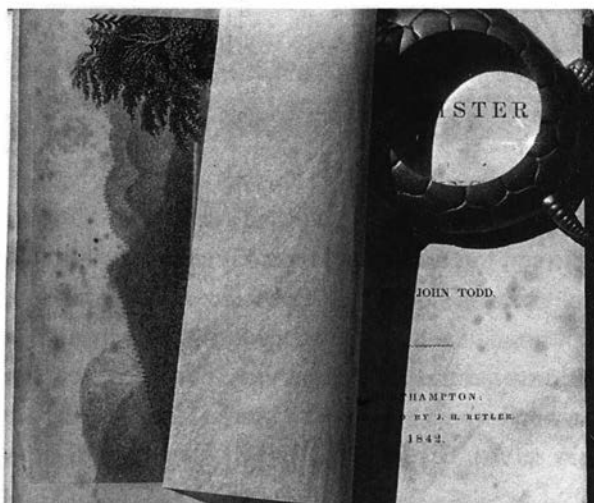


Figure 6. *continued*

glass to cast shadows across the book, and the portion of the inside of the glass that isn't covered in shadow shows a small figure in the landscape. The next image of the book shows the page spread of frontispiece and title page with the interleaf again obscuring the frontispiece, which is now turned so that the book is right-reading and the image is on its side (68). The magnifying glass has been moved and now sits on the top of the title page; it seems as though the magnifying glass could be propping up the interleaf. These three images underscore the interleaf's liminal position, since they dramatize the difficulty of photographing the title page and frontispiece at the same time. Through their sequencing, the images also point to an act of reading, and while the reader, presumably Howe, is physically absent from the images, she is present through the movement of objects and the perspectives of the photographs.

Still, even if *The Midnight's* photographs of books suggest a kinetic reading process, they are obdurately two-dimensional and can only hint at the whole book through images of individual page spreads. As book historians Peter Stoicheff and Andrew Taylor note: "The book itself is never fully encountered except as an expectation or

recollection or closed volume. The page, by contrast, is seen in its entirety, simultaneously" (3). This distinction goes a long way toward articulating the differences between the images incorporated into *Pierce-Arrow* and those in *The Midnight*. The manuscript facsimiles included in *Pierce-Arrow*, even when copied from a bound notebook, emphasize the two-dimensional page surface. They approach the text head-on and crop the image at or near the page-edge, giving the effect of one page transposed on another. The photographs in *The Midnight* are often taken at raked angles, in extreme close-up, and/or with objects (a magnifying glass, paper bookmarks) layered on top. These images allude to unseen parts of the book—those parts of the page that exist outside the frame, or those pages that are stacked beneath the one in view—but we are always turned to the page of Howe's choosing, permitted to see only what she uncovers. The result is that the illustrations in *The Midnight* foreground the gap between the sculptural book-object and the flatness of photographic reproduction. In doing so, they affirm the facsimile's ability to convey meaning in excess of the linguistic, even as they construct the palpable absence of the original object.

By integrating manuscript pages in *Pierce-Arrow* and experimenting with conventions for photographing books in *The Midnight*, Howe simultaneously creates a poetic function for facsimile reproduction and shows the facsimile to have been deeply invested in the aesthetic all along. Relocated into the context of poetry, the facsimile is freed from its usual documentary functions and can be read for its artistic dimensions. These volumes not only foreground the role of visibility and materiality in acts of inscription and reading, they also insist on drawing attention to the forms of mediation inherent to textuality: to reproduce texts, whether through transcription or facsimile, requires that they be remade and therefore altered. In this way, *Pierce-Arrow* and *The Midnight* lay crucial groundwork for a new visual mode in which poems anticipate—and necessitate—their own facsimile reproduction.

Scraps and Fragments: *Souls of the Labadie Tract* and *That This*

In *Souls of the Labadie Tract*, Howe returns to typographic layout as her central visual mode, but several of the pages in *Souls* add mul-

tiple fonts to the strategies of quotation, overprinting, and breaking the grid that are hallmarks of Howe's earlier experiments. As Craig Dworkin observes, in earlier texts such as "Eikon Basilike" and "Melville's Marginalia," Howe is invested in "the printer's art" (398). These works query conventions for presenting text on a page and make frequent references to mechanisms of book production and their material evidence. By contrast, the type-collages of *Souls of the Labadie Tract* and *That This* (2010), even though they feature printed rather than handwritten text, pick up concerns that are central to *Pierce-Arrow* and *The Midnight*, namely the ways that manuscripts register the transfer of thought to the page and books register the evidence of their use. Rather than "the printer's art," these texts invoke the arts of the writer and the reader, respectively. *Souls of the Labadie Tract* offers two pairs of terms that signal this shift in emphasis: scrap and fragment, trace and stain.

The dress fragment—presented at the start of the poem in facsimile—is represented textually on several pages of the brief sequence "Fragment of the Wedding Dress of Sarah Pierpont Edwards." One such page reads:

[and confined beauty. the little indication that discrete . . .]
 is a small gift card size envelope.
 [not just our planet is so finite and infinite Pallid distance our]
 "A Piece of the Wedding Dress of A Piece of the Wedding Dress of Sarah
Pierrepont.Sarah
 that. slipping the fragile fragment from its first folder.

(116)¹

Here the title framing the dress fragment blends with phrases like "is a small gift card size envelope" and "slipping the fragile fragment from its first folder," which describe interacting with the fragment in the space of the archive, so the poem conjures a scene in which the text "A Piece of the Wedding Dress of Sarah Pierrepont" is being read from a catalogue or label. The phrases "confined beauty" and "so finite and infinite" easily operate as commentary on the fragment itself, as do words like "discrete" and "distance":

1. In transcriptions of Howe's type-collages, I use brackets to indicate that a letter is incomplete but identifiable; marks not identifiable as specific letters are omitted.

the fragment is confined in an envelope, a folder, and an archive, and its finite and singular existence has been shown to resonate in ways that transcend the material. As it has been archived, the object is separate and speaks to the distance between the present and the past. The words that seem to describe the fabric swatch, which may be quoted from an unannounced source text, appear poorly printed or partially erased.

Other pages resemble earlier texts such as “Eikon Basilike” in their diagonally oriented and upside-down text and their over-printed lines, but they also include broken and illegible letters—forms of textual noise that did not appear in the earlier typographic experiments. The final page of “Fragment” likewise pushes the boundaries of legibility: it features a vertical sliver of text whose tapered edges suggest a slit in the paper (fig. 7). The text is so thin that the most complete letters are less than half visible. The interpretable portion of the text reads, “leaves a trace of a stain of the,” a self-referential phrase that points to the sliver of text’s status as an incomplete trace and a “stain” on the otherwise blank page (125). The “trace of a stain” suggests a deliberate or accidental act of erasure that nevertheless leaves evidence behind. The fabric fragment is itself a trace of the complete dress, the wedding ceremony, and the marriage it represents. Through the facsimile, it leaves a trace of its material presence. “Trace” and “stain” are similar to but distinct from two of *Souls’* other key words, “scrap” and “fragment”: the former pair describes marks left on a surface, and the latter describes leftover pieces of an object. These pairs therefore serve as a framework for understanding Howe’s collages, in which material manipulations of textual objects leave visual evidence on the page. In addition to reflecting on the thematic constellation of the work itself, this final page foreshadows some of the ways in which Howe’s next volume, *That This*, will extend and complicate the visual strategies explored in “Fragment.”

That This announces its connection to *Souls of the Labadie Tract* by displaying on its cover a blue version of the facsimile wedding dress fragment against a bright white background. The volume continues *Souls’* exploration of the Edwards family archive, as well as its visual experiments, with the bulk of the volume devoted to a visually dense sequence of collage poems drawn from the diary of Hannah

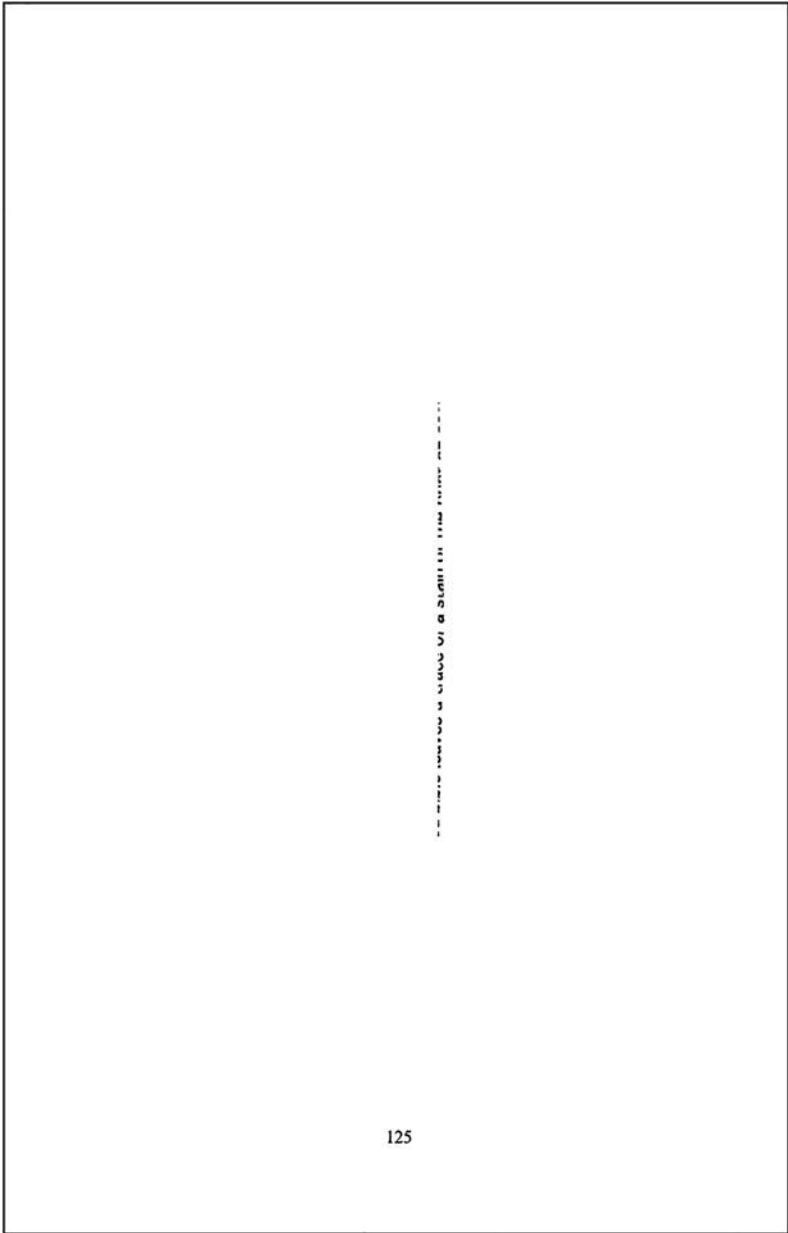


Figure 7. Final page of "Fragment of the Wedding Dress of Sarah Pierpont Edwards" from *Souls of the Labadie Tract*, by Susan Howe. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

Edwards Wetmore. The publisher's description on the back cover of *That This* advertises that "Frolic Architecture" "presents haunting, oblique type-collages of Hannah Edwards Wetmore's diary entries that Howe (with scissors, 'invisible' Scotch Tape, and a Canon copier) has twisted, flattened, and snipped into inscapes of force." Howe's own account of the work's composition in the book's introductory section is more philosophical: "Even the 'invisible' scotch tape I recently used when composing 'Frolic Architecture' leaves traces on paper when I run each original sheet through the Canon copier" (31).

Howe's version frames the material production of her text in terms of the traces left by the process of reproduction, but the "original sheet" that she runs through the copier is only "original" in relation to the resultant copies. To produce this sheet of taped-together fragments, Howe viewed copies of Wetmore's diary (sometimes in the hand of Wetmore's daughter), had these photographically reproduced, created her own transcriptions or used those by Edwards scholar Kenneth Minkema, rendered the transcriptions in different typefaces, printed them out, and cut and taped the printed text into collages. Even after the "original sheets" were copied, to become a book they needed to be digitally scanned and, in the case of an earlier fine-press edition by Grenfell Press, turned into photopolymer plates and hand printed; for the New Directions version, these files became the basis for printing.

The book's first section, "The Disappearance Approach," underscores the layers of copying involved in the text's production when it details a process of digital photographic reproduction in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library's "windowless room downstairs":

Here objects to be copied according to the state-of-the-art North Light HID Copy Light system are prepared for reproduction. Each light is packed with 900 watts of ceramic discharge lamps and requires a typical 15-ampere, 120-volt outlet. The lamps are doubly fan-cooled, with one chamber for the hot (lamp) side and one fan for the electronic side. A diffusion screen spreads light evenly onto the copyboard while protecting the art object or manuscript from heat. . . . Black curtains surrounding the copy table protect the photographer's vision and at the same time prevent light intensity from bleeding. One or two stuffed oblong cloth containers,

known in the trade as snakes, hold the volume open. Facing pages are held down flat with transparent plastic strips.

(*That This* 30)

After this prolonged explanation of the technological procedures, Howe goes on to cite a brief passage of Hannah Edwards Wetmore's diary in which "Hannah Edwards [is] remembering her delirium during an illness in 1736" (31). "Under the fan-cooled copy lights" of the photographic apparatus, "she speaks to herself of the loneliness of being Narcissus." Howe's passage ends here, with Edwards's diary facing its own reflected image through the camera lens in the fashion of Narcissus. Narcissus becomes relevant not for his self-fixation but because he is in thrall to a copy, unable to distinguish between the image and the reality to which it refers. In a text composed of many-layered reproductions, the figure of Narcissus warns against the error of mistaking the reproduction for the original.

The explorations of copying and legibility in "Frolic Architecture" also surface in the full-page black and white photograms by James Welling that punctuate the text. Some images have an out-of-focus quality and seem as though they could be capturing water or clouds; others have well-defined patterns and appear to register folds and the accumulation of dust. The photograms are, like Howe's type-collages, evocative but evasive. What they might represent or how they might have been created is all but impossible to determine by studying them. Grenfell Press explains in promotional materials that Welling created these works by "paint[ing] on a thin-enough-to-fold sheet of clear mylar" and setting the painted mylar sheet on eight-by-ten-inch photographic paper (Grenfell n. pag.). Once he had processed the image, Welling "added paint to the mylar to make additional unique photograms," using a total of three mylar sheets for all of the images in *Frolic Architecture*. Welling's process mirrors Howe's in that it involves layering and recopying; the prints represent stages of an ongoing process. Just as Howe's collages repeat fragments of text in new contexts, Welling's photograms revise and add to earlier photograms.

Welling's use of photograms is itself significant, since this process results from direct contact between the object and photographic paper. The camera works at a distance, but the photogram produces

a ghostly negative image that registers an encounter with an object. The result is that the main subject of these photograms is the photographic process in its etymological sense of writing with light. Furthermore, unlike film negatives, from which multiple prints, potentially quite different from one another, can be made, photograms are unique in that each print must be individually exposed to light in the presence of the object. The images that appear in Howe's book are, of course, only copies of the original prints; Wellington's process resembles Howe's in combining physical immediacy with the distance and possibility for distortion introduced through reproduction.

Copying pervades the text of "Frolic Architecture," as nearly all of these poems are visual reproductions. The work begins, however, by taking up copying conceptually through an initial typeset poem that doubles and redoubles at every turn:

That this book is a history of
a shadow that is a shadow of

me mystically one in another
Another another to subserve

(That This 39)

The first two words of this poem provide the title for the volume, and isolated as the title, they read as a pair of deictic pronouns whose referents are wholly dependent on context. The title *That This* emphasizes proximity and distance, since the words diverge in their expression of relative nearness. Modifying "book," "That this" may be a correction (that—no, this—book) that moves the book a step closer. Perhaps it is a way of indicating that there are two "this books," *that* this book and *this* this book, a reminder that an edition creates many versions of any given book. The ample leading used here (and in much of Howe's poetry) allows lines to float independently on the page, but each pair of lines is firmly linked by repetition of the construction "a [noun] of" in the first stanza and the word "another" in the second. Read as a self-contained unit, the first stanza points to a book that may be the source text or the current volume. The book "is a history of / a shadow that is a shadow of" an unstated noun, suggesting recursion that can go on indefi-

nately. These lines perform the iterative process of copying and in so doing emphasize the distance created from the original.

More likely, though, “that” is a conjunction beginning an unfinished grammatical construction. If the two stanzas are read as a continuous but incomplete statement, the book in question becomes “a history of / a shadow that is a shadow of // me.” The “original” is then not a text but an originating consciousness refracted in the book. “Me” can refer equally to Howe, whose autobiographical prose begins the book, or Hannah Edwards Wetmore, who is a likely referent for the first-person statements in the material that follows. In either case, the “me” is in turn “mystically one in another” in a relationship of subservience, perhaps with the added sense of “furthering or assisting” (“Subserve”). By leaving ambiguous the referent of “me” and repeating “another / Another another,” these lines leave open who “subserves” whom—an important but perhaps unanswerable question in the relationship between poet and source text, since the poet is bound by the specifics of the text at the same time that the text is made to serve a purpose beyond its author’s original intent. This relationship is crucially circular but also crucially “mystical,” a word that recalls Howe’s claim that “copying is a mysterious sensuous expression” (*Birth-mark* 141). In Howe’s formulations, copying is not merely a mechanical method; it is an embodied process that has potential to generate spiritual experience.

The type-collages of “Frolic Architecture” convey this complex dynamic between the material and the spiritual by presenting text that emphasizes the body, death, imagination, and religious experience alongside and overlapping with text that refers to the documents themselves. Some fragments of text clearly come from cataloguing data and emphasize the status of Wetmore’s “private writings” as archival objects. One collage includes “han[d] of Lucy Wetmore Whittelsey” (49), and another “[in small hand on p],” “aper band/n.d. Folder 13[76],” and [s]“tray pencil commonplace” (54). Interwoven in other collages are “Box 24 Folder 1377” (49), “1208 EF G 3 of 3 folders” (51), the years 1713–1773 (65), and “comm[e]n[tary/n.d.]” (67). The fragment “lac[un]”—presumably “lacuna” or “lacunae”—appears along with the word “[elip]ses,” a standard way of registering lacunae in transcription (44). Further

language referring to material features of texts appears but is more ambiguous in origin. In one fragment, an unstated action or object “over the surface would / erase the lett[ers],” an observation that could come from Wetmore’s writings or be a description of these documents’ fragility (78). The phrase “[c]hi[ng] for the pieces of / paper,” with “[c]lot[h]” and “[p]lattern” nearby in different type-faces (48), might once again be from within Wetmore’s writings or be Howe commenting on the experience of searching through the archive for traces of Wetmore.

These descriptions of textual objects blend in turn with references to processes of reading that cannot but comment on the process of reading required to interact with the collages themselves. One collage presents the fragment “[v]ler parch-,” which might be “cover parchment,” since “[c]love” appears elsewhere in the collage (51; fig. 8). Another strip running diagonally through the same composition contains the phrases “little Fol[d] / ink has,” beneath which a right-reading strip reads “thin fan / paper in- / side.” Below appear the phrases “[o]ut one out the last word on th[e]” and “but one word Hark! I cant m[a].” Recomposed in reverse order, these last two lines seem to read, “but one word Hark! I cant make out one out the last word on the.” Many of Howe’s cut-off words can be deciphered, or at least guessed at, with careful reading, but others remain just out of reach, typographic marks too partial or ambiguous to function as language. These marks are linguistic even if they are not legible, so they still ask to be read rather than only seen.

Another scene of deciphering appears on the following page, but here the attempt to read becomes an occasion of psychic intensity, perhaps a visionary experience. In a collage composed of four rectangular swatches of text whose intersections are marked with additional thin strips of text layered on top, the bottom-right rectangle reads:

[one chain of thought, I saw]
an image of i[t] on my mind as
but I attem[p]ted to read, but
intercepting [an]d covering the
[s]ible, and did not seem to be
abruptly and [s]o strong that it

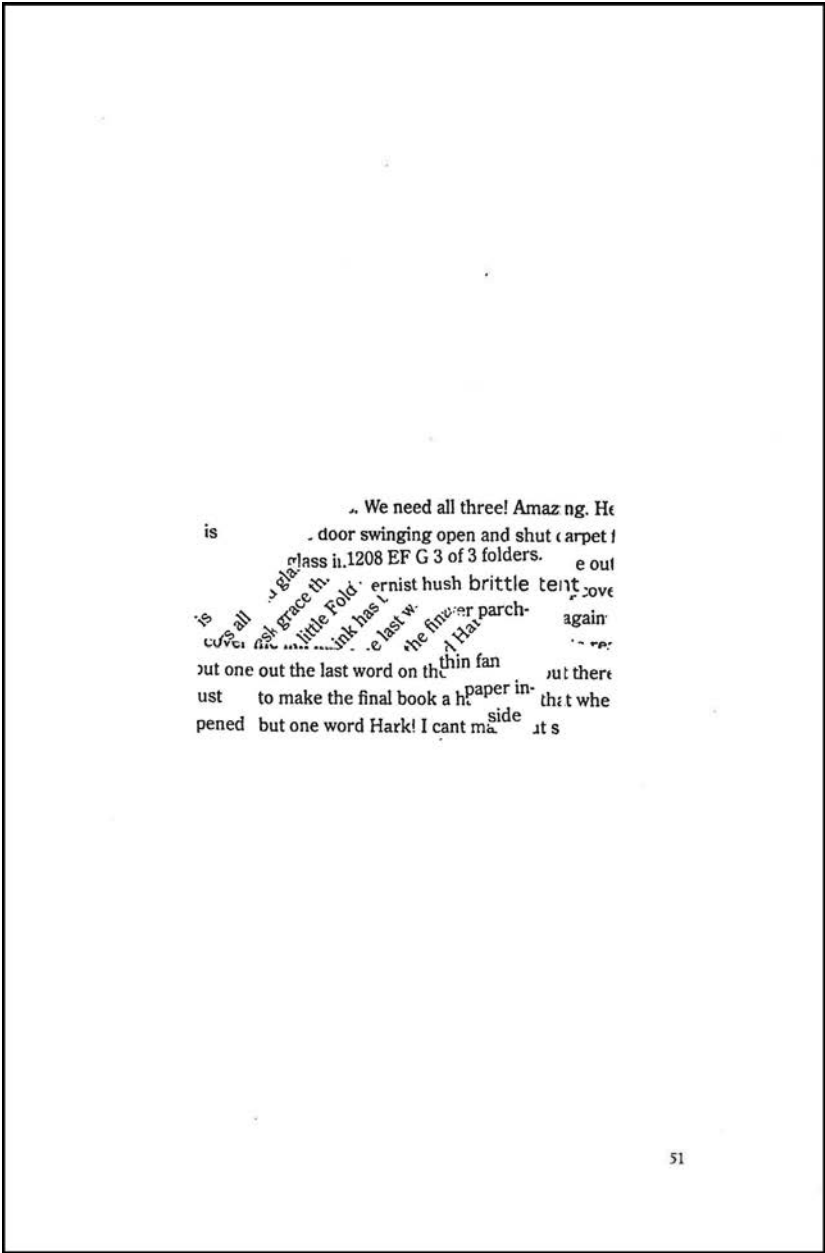


Figure 8. Page (above) and close-up of type-collage (below), from *That This*, by Susan Howe, copyright ©2010 by Susan Howe. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

is . . . We need all three! Amazing. He
 door swinging open and shut carpet f
 class ii.1208 EF G 3 of 3 folders. e out
 is all → gla. → grace th. ernist hush brittle tent love
 covers all → grace th. → little Fold. → ink has l. → the final → parch- again
 out one out the last word on the thin fan out there
 ust to make the final book a h paper in- that whe
 pened but one word Hark! I cant ma side at s

Figure 8. *continued*

to look upo[n] it as supernat-
 ower of imagination, and that
 (53)²

This passage confounds the distinction between reading tangible pages—a later collage completes the phrase “intercepting and covering the” with “pages” (81)—and “reading” mental images conjured through imagination. The event described is “abrupt,” “strong,” almost supernatural in its power, even though its legibility is thwarted. The illegibility encountered by the speaker is compounded by the repetition of “it” without a referent. Howe’s reader is left with the forceful psychological consequences of attempted reading without a clear sense of what is being read and whether it originated on the page or in the mind. Such passages dramatize the process of making meaning from incomplete or illegible text, and they suggest that the payoff for engaging in this difficult activity may be nothing short of transcendence.

Howe’s type-collages—with their ragged edges, radically incomplete texts, broken-off words, and snipped letterforms—gesture toward documents and historical circumstances that remain inaccessible but contain a density of information that will reward the careful reader. They demonstrate just how much meaning a frag-

2. Words from this rectangle are repeated in the rectangle to the left, opening the possibility that these are two copies of the same transcribed language of which we are shown different parts.

ment can generate. Howe's iterative acts of copying, cutting, and reassembling also expedite the processes of textual transmission that her earlier works recount; these collages therefore represent a kind of future of their sources, subject to repeated permutation and, consequently, loss. They stand as an acknowledgment that the law of textuality is change.

In their emphasis on textual fragmentation, noise, and loss, the type-collages return us to the archive as a site of revelation. Howe's most recent book, *Spontaneous Particulars: The Telepathy of Archives* (2014), condenses her engagements with the aesthetics of facsimile reproduction in the form of a prose meditation on archives interspersed with facsimiles from the archives of Emily Dickinson, William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane, Charles Sanders Peirce, Noah Webster, the Edwards family, and Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas. *Spontaneous Particulars* revisits Howe's strategy of incorporating facsimile images into her own writing, as in *Pierce-Arrow* and *The Midnight*, except this time in full color. At the book's outset, Howe states:

[E]lectronic technologies are radically transforming the way we read, write, and remember. The nature of archival research is in flux; we need to see and touch objects and documents; now we often merely view the same material on a computer screen—digitally, virtually, etc.

(9)

Howe calls *Spontaneous Particulars* "a collaged swan song to the old ways." Here she suggests that her use of facsimile, while enabled by electronic technologies, also mounts a resistance to the ways that digitization dematerializes the document. The printed facsimile offers a middle ground, sacrificing touch but preserving sight, making archival documents present and visible for a wider audience.

Spontaneous Particulars also offers a subtle glimpse into the creation of the type-collages when it positions a facsimile of a source document from the Edwards archive directly above a poem from *That This* (fig. 9). Both texts begin "I remember the summer before my sister Jerusha's death." Howe's text intersperses a strip of textual noise—an upside-down phrase and an array of sideways letters—before briefly picking the source text back up at a later point (44). By placing a type-collage in such close proximity to the image

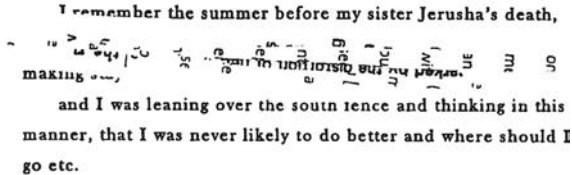
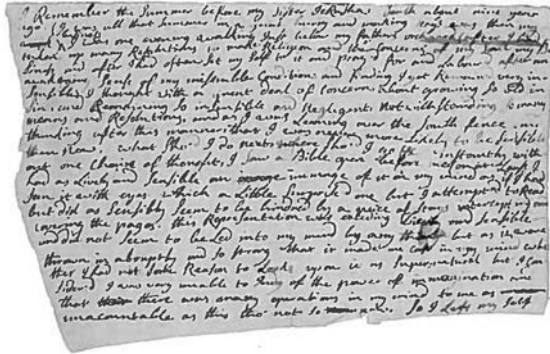


Figure 9. Page showing both a manuscript facsimile and a type-collage, from *Spontaneous Particulars*, by Susan Howe, copyright ©2014 by Susan Howe. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

of its source text, Howe makes a striking connection between her most recent visual poems and facsimile reproductions. Facsimile may bring us closer to a document, but it is still fraught with absence, standing in for an original whose materiality exceeds the reproduction. Set below the facsimile of its source, the type-collage likewise registers multiple losses. Much of the text of the original document is missing; the handwriting has been translated into type; and the shape and yellowish color of the paper has been replaced by a generic white page.

The type-collages are not simply elegies to the documents they cite, however. In addition to generating new literary meaning by reworking the linguistic components of these texts, the type-collages become in effect the quintessential object imagined by facsimile

reproduction: a textual image that can be easily lifted from its material support. In the type-collages, Howe follows “her” Emily Dickinson in crafting a form of poetry in which the act of composition is materially and visually present as well as crucial to the work’s meaning. Unlike Dickinson’s, Howe’s poems are made for facsimile reproduction and can therefore escape the confines of the archive without sacrificing their materiality, evading the tension between original and copy that is so central to the facsimile.

Tom Tit Tot

The upper floor of the Yale Union—a converted laundry in Portland, Oregon, with high ceilings and sizable windows—is mostly empty. In the northwest corner are long white tables, about a meter high, arranged in the outline of a square. Letter-sized sheets of paper letterpress printed in black ink with a deep impression are embedded in the tables and covered with glass. When afternoon light cuts at a certain angle, the glass rectangles seem to disappear entirely into the smooth surface of the tables; at other angles, the sun highlights the glass. On each sheet of paper, a type-collage takes up a negligible amount of space, so that the blank space of the page seems to extend into the surrounding table and then further into the empty space of the gallery.

Susan Howe’s first solo exhibition, *Tom Tit Tot*, thus goes a long way toward enacting the poem-as-blank-canvas that Howe described in an interview conducted in 1986. When asked, “If you had to paint your writing, if you had one canvas on which to paint your writing, what might it look like?,” Howe replied, “Blank. It would be blank. It would be a white canvas. White” (“Speaking” 42). *Tom Tit Tot* also echoes Howe’s early installation art as described by Brian Reed: “From any distance greater than arm’s length, one would have experienced these installations as fields of whiteness, interrupted by images too small to identify and short pieces of writing too distant to read” (par. 27).

Visually, these type-collages resemble those in *That This*, but the reading experience is transformed by the spatial arrangement. The table nearest the entrance, at the far end of one side of the square, has a blank section, suggesting a beginning that could lead in either

direction. It might make sense to move in the reading direction of English, to go left to right down the first table and proceed counterclockwise. However, the page that borders the blank space in the other direction is the only one without a pair, a layout that resembles the convention of starting a work on the recto and leaving the facing page blank. An order is clearly established by the arrangement, but with apparent indifference to forward and backward. Under glass, Howe's type-collages appear as valuable, fragile documents, akin to the archival texts and rare books from which they regularly borrow. The experience of viewing these texts thus resonates with the descriptions in Howe's work of visits to various archives to view the preserved and well-guarded manuscripts of writers such as Dickinson. In their size and manner of occupying the page, these type-collages resemble Dickinson's envelope drafts as presented in *The Gorgeous Nothings*.

Even as these works ask to be viewed as visual art, the specter of the printed book hovers over the exhibition. Sheets from the Grenfell Press edition of *Frolic Architecture* hang on a nearby partition, suspended in a state just prior to binding. More importantly, the type-collages are displayed in pairs that imply page spreads. The placement of the work on tables requires a body position more akin to the norms for reading than for viewing drawings or paintings. The printed exhibition pamphlet that accompanies *Tom Tit Tot* presents the exhibition as "a hesitation toward the imminent fact of publishing," since this work "was commissioned for our little way station, but with the foregone conclusion that it would later be paginated, printed, and published in quantity." The curatorial statement also declares, "This is not a moment for making analogies—Howe's poems are like drawings are like notations are like collages. No. They are poems" (Andersson and Snowden n. pag.).

Howe's pages announce their intent to be read as poetry in part through their repeated references to canonical poets, acts of writing, and the material conditions of documents. "Tom Tit Tot" is an English variant of the German folktale "Rumpelstiltskin," and the work's gathering of sources includes, according to the exhibition pamphlet, "Coleridge then Browning then Yeats. . . . Then a slice of Spinoza, a folk tale, some children's babble, Paul Thek, a definition, a gap, some eccentric punctuation" (n. pag.). *Tom Tit Tot* does more

visually with unreadable textual marks than *That This*. It also includes crossed-out text and insertions marked with carets and makes many direct references to documents, sources, pages, and text. These become moments of self-reflection:

ff words from images tw[i]
 om their original source
 history scattered to the fou
 a page it was *you* playi[n]

The phrase “words from images” reverses the operation of Howe’s type-collages, which is to create images out of words. There is an “original source” and “history scattered,” as in Howe’s textual borrowings and dispersals, which is in turn conveyed as a form of play on the page. Another moment of *ars poetica* in *Tom Tit Tot* reads:

A document. the parasiti[c]
 nvolve a structure of layer
 age placed on top of anoth
 [o]m its other, as if to infinit

PORTAB[LE OCEAN]

Here we find key elements of Howe’s composition methods that come to the fore in her type-collages: the “parasitic” use of documents as source material, the palimpsestic layering of pages, and the gestures toward the “infinite.”

In *Tom Tit Tot*, as in the type-collages generally, writing is simultaneously “a physical event of immediate revelation” and a product of iterative copying and conspicuous mediation (*Birth-mark* 1). The model of the facsimile edition, which manages a tension between proximity to the original and the distance imposed by reproduction, offers a way for Howe to navigate the complex desire for a poetic immediacy that can be widely shared. The facsimile, too, provides a model for poetry that is designed to be read *and* looked at. The space of the page in Howe’s work is not just a substitute for the canvas or gallery wall, and it is not just a way for textual-visual art to enjoy the democratizing effects of mechanical reproduction. Howe’s poems are invested in forms of visibility that owe as much to the “[d]riest facts / of bibliography” as they do to art history or

art theory (*Nonconformist's Memorial* 64). Howe's facsimile aesthetic produces visual poetry of a very specific kind—poetry that uses visuality to attend to the complexities of textual production, transmission, and reproduction.

As this essay argues, the visual strategies of Howe's type-collages depend on the facsimile, both technologically and conceptually, and are routed through Howe's approach to Dickinson's manuscripts. Facsimile reproduction allows Howe to create what she claims Dickinson to have created—writing that can “balance between poetry and visual art,” equally able to exist as a book of poems or an art exhibition (Preface 6). The difference between the typographic representation of collage in works such as “Eikon Basilike” and the reproduction of collaged text in *Souls of the Labadie Tract, That This*, and *Tom Tit Tot* is the difference the facsimile makes to visual poetry.

Howe's uses of the facsimile point to larger stakes for the facsimile's underacknowledged aesthetic dimensions. “[T]he facsimile cannot pretend to be the original,” writes George Bornstein; “rather, it proclaims itself as an imperfect copy, perhaps an imitation or homage” (101). James L. W. West III concedes that all facsimiles, “to one degree or another, are misleading simulacra” (104). Meg Roland proposes cartographic projection as an analogy: “Just as maps are a spatial and mythological picture of the world, facsimiles propose a spatial and mythological map of a literary text” (57). Imitation, simulacrum, map—these ways of understanding the facsimile all emphasize not only the ontological difference between original and reproduction but the interpretive layer that intervenes between them. Howe takes us a step further: she shows us that for all its emphasis on authority, authenticity, and fact, the facsimile is also a powerful aesthetic framework that transforms evidentiary documents into literary-visual art. In *The Gorgeous Nothings*, Howe's former student Marta Werner and co-editor Jen Bervin point the way forward for scholarly editing that does not evade this aspect of the facsimile but instead is unabashedly committed to the beauty of documents and the facsimile's consequent ability to serve as—in Howe's words—“an exhibit in book form” (Preface 6).

University of Washington

WORKS CITED

- Andersson, Andrea, and Robert Snowden. Exhibition pamphlet for *Tom Tit Tot*. Portland, OR: Yale Union, 2013.
- Barbour, Susan. "'Spiritual Hyphen': Bibliography and Elegy in Susan Howe's *The Midnight*." *Textual Practice* 25.1 (2011): 133–55.
- Bloomfield, Mandy. "'Aftershocks of Iconoclasm': Ambivalence of the Visual Page in Susan Howe's *Eikon Basilike*." *Textual Practice* 23.3 (2009): 417–37.
- Bornstein, George. "Facsimiles and Their Limits: The New Edition of Yeats's *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*." *Textual Cultures* 6.2 (2011): 92–102.
- Davidson, Michael. *Ghostlier Demarcations: Modern Poetry and the Material Word*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1997.
- Dickinson, Emily. *The Gorgeous Nothings*. Ed. Marta Werner and Jen Bervin. New York: Christine Burgin/New Directions, 2013.
- . *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*. Ed. R. W. Franklin. 2 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981.
- DuPlessis, Rachel Blau. *The Pink Guitar: Writing as Feminist Practice*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2006.
- Dworkin, Craig. "'Waging Political Babble': Susan Howe's Visual Prosody and the Politics of Noise." *Word and Image* 12.4 (1996): 389–405.
- Gelpi, Albert. "Emily Dickinson's Long Shadow: Susan Howe and Fanny Howe." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 17.2 (2008): 100–112.
- Golding, Alan. "'Drawings with Words': Susan Howe's Visual Poetics." *We Who Love to Be Astonished: Experimental Women's Writing and Performance Poetics*. Ed. Laura Hinton and Cynthia Hogue. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2002. 152–64.
- Grenfell Press. "Susan Howe/James Welling, *Frolic Architecture*." *The Grenfell Press*. Grenfell, n.d. Web. 30 Dec. 2015.
- Harkey, John. "Lattice-Glyphs: The Intensive 'Small Poetry' of Susan Howe's Recent Work." *Arizona Quarterly* 69.4 (2013): 159–200.
- Howe, Susan. *A Bibliography of the King's Book, or, Eikon Basilike*. Providence, RI: Paradigm, 1989.
- . *The Birth-mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan UP, 1993.
- . *Frolic Architecture*. Illus. James Welling. New York: Grenfell, 2010.
- . "An Interview with Susan Howe." Conducted by Lynn Keller. *Contemporary Literature* 36.1 (1995): 1–34.
- . *The Midnight*. New York: New Directions, 2003.
- . *My Emily Dickinson*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic, 1985.
- . *The Nonconformist's Memorial*. New York: New Directions, 1993.
- . *Pierce-Arrow*. New York: New Directions, 1999.
- . Preface. Dickinson, *The Gorgeous Nothings* 6–7.
- . *Souls of the Labadie Tract*. New York: New Directions, 2007.
- . "Speaking with Susan Howe." Interview. Conducted by Janet Ruth Fallon. *The Difficulties* 3.2 (1989): 28–42.

- . *Spontaneous Particulars: The Telepathy of Archives*. New York: New Directions, 2014.
- . "Susan Howe, The Art of Poetry No. 97." Interview. Conducted by Maureen N. McLane. *Paris Review* 203 (2012). Web. 30 Dec. 2015.
- . *That This*. New York: New Directions, 2010.
- . *Tom Tit Tot*. Yale Union, Portland, OR. 23 Nov. 2013. Exhibition.
- Hogue, Cynthia. "How(e) to Read Dickinson (W)riting Nature." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 14.2 (2005): 60–69.
- "Illustration." Def. 3. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. 2nd ed. Oxford UP, 1989. Web. 30 Dec. 2015.
- Jonas, Joan, Susan Howe, and Jeanne Heuving. "An Exchange between Joan Jonas, Susan Howe, and Jeanne Heuving." *How2* 2.3 (2005): n. pag. Web. 30 Dec. 2015.
- McGann, Jerome. "Emily Dickinson's Visible Language." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 2.2 (1993): 40–57.
- Michaels, Walter Benn. *The Shape of the Signifier: 1967 to the End of History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2004.
- Montgomery, Will. *The Poetry of Susan Howe: History, Theology, Authority*. New York: Palgrave, 2010.
- Reed, Brian. "'Eden or Ebb of the Sea': Susan Howe's Word Squares and Post-linear Poetics." *Postmodern Culture* 14.2 (2004).
- Roland, Meg. "Facsimile Editions: Gesture and Projection." *Textual Cultures* 6.2 (2011): 48–59.
- Rowe, Sam. "Fantasies of Contact: Erica Baum, Susan Howe, and the Poetics of Paper." *Full Stop*. Full Stop, 27 Jun. 2012. Web. 30 Dec. 2015.
- "Show." Entry 3, def. II. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. 2nd ed. Oxford UP, 1989. Web. 30 Dec. 2015.
- Smith, Martha Nell. *Rowing in Eden: Rereading Emily Dickinson*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1992.
- Stoicheff, Peter, and Andrew Taylor. "Introduction: Architectures, Ideologies, and Materials of the Page." *The Future of the Page*. Ed. Stoicheff and Taylor. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004. 3–25.
- "Subserve." Def. 3a. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. 3rd ed. Oxford UP, 2012. Web. 30 Dec. 2015.
- West, James L. W., III. "Are Manuscript Facsimiles Still Viable?" *Textual Cultures* 6.2 (2011): 103–8.