

**Carolee
Schneemann**

**Uncollected
Texts**

**Edited by
Branden W. Joseph**

Primary Information

Introduction: Voyages in Cloudland

Branden W. Joseph

Throughout her early career, Carolee Schneemann contributed to a wide variety of publications. Although some were as prominent as the *New York Times*, the *Village Voice*, and *Performing Arts Journal*, the majority were limited-run, independent periodicals such as *Matter*, *Film Culture*, *Some/Thing*, *I-kon*, *Caterpillar*, *The Fox*, *Sixpack*, *Unmuzzled Ox*, and the *Cinemanews*. Even within our current era of seemingly ubiquitous digitization and electronic distribution, many of these titles prove exceedingly scarce, often consultable only within select institutional archives and rare book collections. While certain of Schneemann's early writings were incorporated into her invaluable career-spanning compendiums, *More Than Meat Joy* and *Imaging Her Erotics*, the majority were not, and those that were often appeared in abridged or streamlined versions, tailored for their new contexts. Further complicating matters is the fact that several of Schneemann's early texts were inadvertently omitted from even the most comprehensive of her bibliographies, while others, even though cited or referenced, ultimately failed to appear in print. Thus, despite the availability of a great deal of Schneemann's writing, her early publications still constitute a relatively unknown facet of, and resource for understanding, her remarkable and still not fully assimilated oeuvre.

Uncollected Texts gathers a substantial number of Schneemann's early writings, including several pieces published here for the first time. Its contents range across a variety of genres, from letters to the editor to diary entries, dream journals, film criticism, satirical poems and essays, detailed discussions of Schneemann's work and career, records of drug trips, memorials for friends and colleagues, and pointed feminist critiques. In its marked heterogeneity of styles, genres, and subject matter, *Uncollected Texts* resembles Schneemann's first two books: *Parts of a Body House Book*, printed at Beau Geste Press in Devon County, England, in 1972, and *Cezanne, She Was a Great Painter*, distributed from her home in New Paltz, New York, in 1975. In both of these nearly handmade volumes, Schneemann explicitly

sought to foreground the range and diversity of her textual output, aiming, as she explained in a statement to Colin Naylor and Genesis P-Orridge collected here, “to tumble together samples of all my writing.”¹

With one exception, *Uncollected Texts* does not reproduce the contents of either *Body House* or *Cezanne*. Instead, it gathers the “remains” (to use a term deployed by Schneemann) that eluded those two projects.² *Uncollected Texts* thus figures alongside them as something like the third volume of a virtual trilogy, one that sheds a distinct but complementary light on Schneemann’s art, life, and thinking. Of the writings anthologized here, only the fantastic allegorical fable “Parts of a Body House,” which appeared in a slightly different version in *Parts of a Body House Book*, duplicates material found in either of Schneemann’s earliest compendiums. (By contrast, five texts are common to both *Body House* and *Cezanne*.) Its reprinting may be justified not only because it represents one of Schneemann’s most substantive early essays, but also because its most widely circulated version, in Dick Higgins and Wolf Vostell’s *Fantastic Architecture*, was subtly but significantly altered. In addition to deleting the annotations that date different sections (thus obscuring their roots within Schneemann’s journals), Higgins and Vostell altered the order of the final three “rooms.”

In *Fantastic Architecture*, Schneemann’s tour of the Body House ends in the postcoital languor of the “Hair and Fingers Room,” to which visitors retire after the carnal and romantic pleasures of “The Genitals Play-Erotica Meat Room.” As originally published in *Caterpillar* (as well as in *Parts of a Body House Book*), however, these two sections were followed, rather than preceded by, the “Kidney Room,” where “people come together to discuss revolution—that is, changing or transforming political forms which are repressive, exploitative, divisive, and life-negative.”³ Higgins and Vostell’s reordering effectively depoliticized Schneemann’s parable, casting sexual liberation as her ultimate goal rather than a step, however important, on the path toward wider social and political transformations. The original sequence not only conforms more closely with the revolutionary program of dissident psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich (a consistent reference for Schneemann, cited in “Hormones Circling,” “Kenneth Anger’s *Scorpio Rising*,” “*Meat Joy* and the Kinetic Theater,” “*Snows*,” and the statement to Naylor and P-Orridge), but also finds confirmation in other pronouncements, such as that in “Notations (1958–1966),” which posited the transformation of “sex...into natural, intense,

organic energy flow exchange” as preliminary to the “liberation of old white-spirit energy and the clarification of sick white autocratic ambivalence towards woman.”⁴

Restoring Schneemann’s texts to their original versions not only helps recover such important semantic details, it also foregrounds consequential stylistic qualities and intertextual resonances. Schneemann frequently quoted from the same letters or journals in multiple publications. Upon reading, such repetitions or near repetitions, often deleted in reprints, take on an almost musical character, recurring from text to text (or, in the case of “*Meat Joy Notes as Prologue*,” within the same text) like a refrain or a theme and variations. Ultimately, repetition gives way to development, as the meaning of each passage is nuanced by context or subtle alterations in wording or punctuation—as when “voluptuous mad wild desire” from “*Divisions and Rubble Notes*” reappears in “Notations” as “voluptuous mad will organic desire.”⁵ Such intertextual connections resemble the way Schneemann weaves artworks into one another, incorporating, as explained in essays gathered here, the film *Viet-Flakes* (1965) into the performance *Snows* (1967) or slide projections of the performances *Meat Joy* (1964), *Snows*, and *Water Light/Water Needle* (1966) into the installation *Divisions and Rubble* (1967).

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The inclusion of such textual refrains marks only one of the ways that Schneemann’s writing often differs significantly from that of her peers of the 1960s and ’70s. The most celebrated artist-writers of those decades, such as Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Robert Smithson, Dan Graham, and Yvonne Rainer, commonly assumed, even as they sometimes détourned, the voice and role of the art critic. Arguably, the esteem they hold in art historical circles derives, in part, from the fact that they addressed the discipline in its own language, on its own terms, and within such familiar venues as *Arts Magazine* and *Artforum*. While Schneemann adopts a similarly analytic tone in pieces like “*Meat Joy Notes*,” “The Pronoun Tyranny,” “The Loaves and the Fishes,” and “American Experimental Theater: Then and Now” (as well as in a number of more recent publications that fall outside the scope of this book), much of her early prose comes across as more subjective, expressive, and impressionistic. As art historian Kristine Stiles observes about Schneemann’s correspondence, in terms that apply equally to her other writings, her “thoughts ebb and

flow...emphasizing aesthetic associations of language over precise meaning, all the while delivering information, insight, and reasoned argument.”⁶

Those qualities of Schneemann’s writing that Stiles brands “poetic” should not be attributed solely to a distaste for “the brittle academic voice of masculine authorities” (that Schneemann credits to Virginia Woolf), but also to the fact that many of her earliest publications appeared in journals devoted chiefly to poetry.⁷ *Matter, I-kon, Caterpillar*, and *Some/Thing* were founded and edited by the poets Robert Kelly, Susan Sherman, Clayton Eshleman, and David Antin and Jerome Rothenberg, respectively. In them, Schneemann’s submissions appeared alongside poems by, among others, Rochelle Owens, Ted Berrigan, David Franks, Jackson Mac Low, Michael McClure, Diane Wakoski, Charles Bukowski, David Meltzer, Robert Duncan, and Paul Celan. “It was the poets who really responded, gave me confirmation, made sense of my work as I had hoped it could be,” Schneemann explained. “It was those poets who saw, spoke with me, cared and whenever possible helped the work and my intentions into the world.”⁸ While including relatively few actual poems—“His,” a piece of near doggerel for *Wipe* (a magazine meant to be read in the bathroom); a small section of “Rain Stops after Seven Days”; the opening of “In, On, and About My Premises”; and “A Lovely Daylife Is Only How E We Are Dying,” a stanza written on LSD—much of *Uncollected Texts* may be classed as what Eshleman termed “prose that participates in the spirit of poetry.”⁹

The poet with whom Schneemann’s career has been most closely associated is Charles Olson, whom she visited in Gloucester, Massachusetts, in 1960 with her partner, the musician and composer James Tenney. Among other topics, Schneemann and Tenney hoped to discuss Olson’s idea of “projective verse.”¹⁰ In the essay of that title, Olson argued that poetry should capture and convey the individual’s sense of oral reception and delivery: “I take it that PROJECTIVE VERSE,” he proclaimed, “teaches, is, this lesson, that that verse will only do in which a poet manages to register both the acquisitions of his ear *and* the pressures of his breath.”¹¹ To produce the distinctive rhythm of a poetic line, Olson advocated expressive punctuation, violating conventional syntax and grammar, and dynamically spacing words across the page. Rooting poetic form in speech and breath, Olson’s *Maximus Poems* reaffirmed for Schneemann “the sense of the body as the instrument of investigation and the instrument of available sensation.”¹²

Although Olson notoriously discounted Schneemann’s *own* body as a legitimate instrument of creative insight (sardonically quipping, “Remember, when the cunt began to speak, it was the beginning of the end of Greek theater”), her writing nevertheless employs many aspects of projective verse.¹³ Frequently challenging conventional punctuation, grammar, and syntax, Schneemann’s lines often attain their full expressive and analytical force only when voiced aloud, as in “Notations,” where she characterized her performances as “erotic trust touch trust giving over to mutual awareness developed non-verbally; learning each other’s musculature weight response energy capacity; every bend fold, tactile smell expression as language with which each other on the development of the situation we unfold.”¹⁴ Schneemann also habitually spaces words irregularly to indicate pauses, most notably in “*Meat Joy Notes as Prologue*” (where the interweaving of bold and italic fonts additionally recalls the typographic experiments of Olson’s Black Mountain College associate John Cage), but also in passages of “Notations,” such as:

THE SNOWING OF SNOWS before and stopped and after

the garbage wonderland through the streets

white mush

snowing my brain snowing from my arms legs mouth eyes ears snowing down.¹⁵

“Schneemann,” writes Stiles, “enacts her artistry in dots, dashes, delays, and long blank spaces between words that permit a letter (or text) to breathe as if spoken, communicating the temporality of thought.”¹⁶

Closer to Schneemann than Olson were the poets associated with the idea of the “deep image,” including Kelly, Owens, Rothenberg, and, eventually, Eshleman.¹⁷ In “Notes on the Poetry of Deep Image,” Kelly drew upon, but also sought to surpass, the tenets of projective verse, arguing for the centrality of the perceived image over that of the poetic line. “Poetry,” he proclaimed, “is not the act of relating word to word, but the ACT of relating word to percept, image to image until the continuum is achieved.”¹⁸ Without attentiveness to the imagery conveyed, he maintained, “the verbal gesture is quickly emptied,” and the poetic line lies lifeless and flat.¹⁹ Asserting that “nothing can be known unless it is known in situ, in the context of its world,” Kelly contended that poetry represented “the continuum of all perceptions.

[...] Poetry establishes the mutual relevance of every percept to every other percept.”²⁰ By interrelating subjective sensations and context, internal and external perceptions become indissociable. Seeing “through the self,” as Rothenberg explained in “Why *Deep Image*?” meant that the “emotional contours of objects” would be so aligned with their physical attributes, like “shadows,” as to be nearly indistinguishable.²¹ As expressed in the essay “*Snows*,” Schneemann’s understanding of both thought and writing allies closely with the deep image poets. The “idea,” she explains, relates inextricably to both “its passage within memory, [and] its shuttling within the immediate sensory environment which may have fed its passage originally (those bird sounds, the silvery green of black locust leaves...that cloud formation[]).”²²

Dreams formed an important resource for accessing and communicating deep imagery. According to Kelly, not only was “poetry, like dream reality [...] the juncture of the experienced with the never-experienced,” but “only the superior rationality of the dream” could provide a structure and “effective impetus for the movements of the deep image.”²³ Schneemann’s early text “Hormones Circling” speaks directly to such concerns. Published in Kelly’s journal *Matter*, it examined the production of hypnagogic illusions, lucid dreams that arise during the interstitial moments between sleep and waking. Drawing, in part, from medical literature (Arthur W. Epstein’s psychoanalytically informed studies of epilepsy), Schneemann portrays the imagery as emerging from a combination of distinct but interrelated stimuli: the dawning impressions of her surroundings, the physical sensations of her limbs (atop, for instance, a twisted sheet), the influence of her internal chemistry, and the recollections of earlier environments and “sensory and motor experiences.”²⁴

Schneemann was an avid reader of Marcel Proust, and her account recalls the celebrated opening pages of *Remembrance of Things Past* (a.k.a. *In Search of Lost Time*), where the narrator reflects upon the influence that his surroundings, memories, and physical positions have upon his waking perceptions. Rooting mnemonic processes deeply within the somatic realm, Proust recounts how his “body, still too heavy with sleep to move, would make an effort to construe the form which its tiredness took as an orientation of its various members, so as [...] to piece together and to give a name to the house in which it must be living. Its memory, the composite memory of its ribs, knees, and shoulder-blades offered it a whole series of rooms in which it had at one time or another slept.”²⁵ In “Hormones Circling,” Schneemann’s

awakening recollections similarly take her to former domestic interiors, including her childhood bedroom and even the wicker cradle of her infancy. To Proust’s sensation of an oneiric “woman [who] would come into existence while I was sleeping, conceived from some strain in the position of my limbs,” Schneemann juxtaposes the effect of the weight of her actual lover’s leg upon her own.²⁶ Schneemann, however, emphasizes the impact that estrogen, progesterone, adrenaline, and other hormones associated with menstruation have upon her visions, drawing attention to aspects of the female experience that neither Proust nor the deep image poets had sufficiently taken into account. As she explained about the “dream sensation images” that underlay certain of *Meat Joy*’s performance motifs, “I was becoming increasingly aware of the possibility of capturing certain interactions between physical, metabolic changes and their effect on dream content, as well as on my sensory orientation upon and after waking; in capturing their releasing of random memory fragments (as well-defined sound, light, weather, and environment kernels from the past) in the immediate present.”²⁷

According to Paul Christensen, the deep image poets turned to Jungian archetypes and a perceived “kinship [with] primitive society, ancient nature religions, perhaps even the primordial beginnings of human life itself.”²⁸ Although Schneemann would investigate archaic symbols in pursuit of a positive feminist iconography (as with the Cretan bull leaper cited in “Dreams from Now and Again”), the pieces collected here make surprisingly little recourse to such concerns.²⁹ Rather than seeking archetypal symbolism or seeing the body as a site of “primary knowledge” or “atavistic modes of experiencing,” Schneemann pursues something closer to what Julia Kristeva has termed the “lyric” aspect of Proust’s literary program, “the exploration of the memory in which the *I* unfolds ideas and images, flavors, smells and tactile impressions, reverberations and sensations.”³⁰ “The language that results from this,” she continues, “consists of a *conjunction* between object and subject, inside and outside, the objectivity of what is perceived and the subjectivity of what is felt.”³¹ Nowhere, however, are these elements subsumed into one another. On the contrary, explains Kristeva, “Every page and every sentence of *In Search of Lost Time* includes a panoply of sensations forming a singular space in which there is a gap between perception and memory, between memory and perception. [...] Time regained would thus be the time of language as an imaginary experience. What is perceived and what is said [however] are separated by a distance, an incompatibility, an inadequacy that somehow brings them together.”³²

From “Hormones Circling” onward, the writings collected here address Schneemann’s body less as a singular entity than as a complex locus or switching point amid an array of perceptual sensations that prove distinct, fragmentary, combinatory, temporally transforming, and riven between interior and exterior, present and past. As Schneemann explains in “*Snows*,” “I am after the interpenetrations and displacements which occur between various sense stimuli; the interaction and exchange between the body and the environment outside it; the body as environment...for the mind...where images evolve...that total fabric wherein sensation shapes image, taste, touch, tactile impulse; various chemical changes and exchanges within the body and their effect on the immediate present, on memories [*sic*] action in the present.”³³

In place of an essentialized body, Schneemann’s writings foreground a complex and multifaceted semiology, where the artistic sign enfolds environmental, corporeal, and mnemonic components within itself. This perspective underlies the review “Kenneth Anger’s *Scorpio Rising*,” in which Schneemann approaches Anger’s hallucinatory, homoerotic biker film as “a lucid dream” born from “insights out of his own body.”³⁴ Anger’s “vision,” she argues, “is not ‘symbolic’; it is fleshed, concrete, drawing the metaphoric life-line from every visual unit in tight, dense webs.”³⁵ Reversing the processes by which physical stimuli produce dream visions, watching *Scorpio Rising* induces “conjunctions of all-sense response,” including kinesthetic reactions “remembered in the movement of our own musculature.”³⁶

Throughout “*Meat Joy* and the Kinetic Theater,” “*Meat Joy* Notes,” and “*Snows*,” Schneemann elucidates the semiotic operation of her multisensory and multimedia kinetic theater. Whether based on dreams, like *Meat Joy*, or the nightmare of the Vietnam War, like *Snows*, the “sensations received visually” by the audience were to “take hold in the total organism.”³⁷ “These interior processes which have become visions—which have become enacted imagery—assume a receptivity, a viewing response which is also fluid, engaged, open, enlarging; an unlimited possibility for perceptual continuities and juxtapositions in the viewer.”³⁸ Schneemann’s performance aesthetic thus aligns itself with the films of her friend Stan Brakhage and the compositions of her partner, Tenney, both of which, in Tenney’s words, “involve a kinesthetic response, a neuromuscular reaction, ‘imitating,’ in some abbreviated, attenuated, perhaps ‘symbolic’ way, the perceived process.”³⁹ Turning from the purity of eyesight to the multisensuality of “a mobile, tactile event into which the eye leads the body,”

Schneemann sought to surpass the limiting two-dimensionality of the modernist picture plane for “a picture plain as dimensional as dream is, or landscape [...] an image as a habitation.”⁴⁰ (Brakhage would later reference Schneemann’s punning substitution of “picture plain” for “picture plane” when comparing the “darkling planes” of the movie screen with the movie theater’s “darkling plain.”)⁴¹

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In “Projective Verse,” Olson lauded the typewriter as the poet’s greatest ally, since it could notate oral cadence with exactitude: “It is the advantage of the typewriter that, due to its rigidity and its space precisions, it can, for a poet, indicate exactly the breath, the pauses, the suspensions even of syllables, the juxtapositions even of parts of phrases, which he intends.”⁴² When reflecting on her own writing, Schneemann, by contrast, found the typewriter an impediment to conveying the multisensory and contextual dimensions of her thoughts and perceptions. Typing, as she notes in “*Snows*,” captures the “free motion” of thought “in a net of mechanical restraint.” “My mind may be streaming images that lead directly to drawing,” she explains. “But if I try to order them on the typewriter...well, look...I’m seated, hands on the keys, arms at my sides, eyes straight ahead...repeated jumpy little rhythms utterly contrary to rhythm of thought process.”⁴³ “Thoughts,” she continues, “are in clusters of words and words poor words hit out on the typewriter letter by letter...it makes me sweat, my knees get stiff, fingers twitchy.” Shorn of the sort of perceptual and mnemonic context sought by the deep image poets, “the idea is there and barely recognizable [...] written, laying flat on white paper there’s the old brown bottle and the violet one with a cracked neck—not an explicit idea in them...just light, shadow, finger marks, reflections, colors from a landscape beyond the windowsill where they are placed.”⁴⁴

The situation Schneemann laments is not simply the typewriter’s disciplining function, an effect she highlighted in a collage from 1970 featuring physiologist Donald Laird’s experiments with female typists.⁴⁵ Instead, her dissatisfaction points to nothing less than the fate of writing in the age of technological media. According to media theorist Friedrich Kittler, before the invention of the typewriter, the gramophone, and the film camera, reading alone could engender a complete sensory experience, words eliciting the impression of sights and sounds. “As long as the book was responsible for all serial data flows,” he notes, “words quivered with sensuality and memory. It was

the passion of all reading to hallucinate meaning between lines and letters: the visible and audible world of Romantic poets.”⁴⁶ Despite Olson’s attempt to restore aural and the deep image poets’ to reinstate vision, the typewriter severed printed language from conveying such an integral effect. “The historical synchronicity of cinema, phonography, and typewriting separated optical, acoustic, and written data flows, thereby rendering them autonomous,” Kittler argues. “In standardized texts, paper and body, writing and soul fall apart. [...] Everything that has been taken over by technological media since Edison’s inventions disappears from typescripts. The dream of a real visible or audible world arising from words has come to an end.”⁴⁷

Nearly two decades before Kittler, Schneemann articulated much the same division among media, turning, as she explained in “*Snows*,” from the typewriter to the tape recorder, and then to the camera.⁴⁸ Both of the latter technologies, as she implied, necessitated accommodations (“adjustment, another coordination”) potentially as disciplinary as typing.⁴⁹ Yet each allowed the capture of distinct perceptual material. Although employed to record the spoken word, magnetic tape proved most effective for capturing Schneemann’s “orgasm song,” the a-signifying moans and cries issued at the moment of sexual climax.⁵⁰ Film, whether still or moving, challenges Schneemann’s imaginary self-conception with her technically reproduced image, leading her to complain in “Dreams from Now and Again” that “I know I am not young and beautiful because I see that in the film footage and then dream that I am!”⁵¹

According to Kittler, once the auditory, the visual, and the symbolic are separated by technological media into discrete “data flows,” art faces two trajectories: either the self-reflexive hypostatization of each media into an autonomous modernist medium, or the pursuit of a new order of “media links.”⁵² The second path would be Schneemann’s. “I floated back downstairs,” she wrote in 1972 in “A Wake for Ken Dewey,” “with the intention of linking our speaking machines through space with this book with my energy streams.”⁵³ The following year, Schneemann would more explicitly link herself up to a media-technological circuit in *Up to and Including Her Limits* (1973–1976), where, suspended from a harness, she became a drawing instrument oscillating amid the light of a film projector and two stacks of video monitors. “These technological extensions of herself (both ‘live’ and pretaped),” Julia Ballerini observes about the performance, “accumulated in jagged time tension with her actual physical extensions, bewildering and eventually undermining her literal presence.”⁵⁴ When filmmaker and

critic Jonas Mekas reductively attributed the emotional tenor of the piece to Schneemann’s own emotional state, her response, published in his *Movie Journal* column, corrected him with a ten-point list of factors separating her from her cinematic image. A performance recounted in “Rain Stops after Seven Days” mediated Schneemann’s recent romantic entanglements through diaries, letters, transcribed tape recordings, projected slides or film footage, and soundtracks on cassette tapes. Schneemann, as art historian Pamela M. Lee has remarked, “share[s] little with the essentialized *corpus* of a particular feminist aesthetic”: “For the body organized by media—and in turn the body wrested from technology—is far from the flesh and blood, ‘organic’ thing.”⁵⁵

As recorded in “Aspects of E.A.T. in the Making of *Snows*,” Schneemann’s involvement with media technologies dates back to her kinetic theater performances. In “Parts of a Body House,” she allegorized this engagement in “The Nerve Ends Room,” where a wide variety of tools, chemicals, and media technologies—from ropes, swings, hammers, and saws; to LSD, DMT, marijuana, and mushrooms; to machines for music, noise, lights, “photocell activations, circuit cut-offs, slides, film, [and] laser beams”—take visitors through experiences ranging from sensory deprivation to sensory bombardment.⁵⁶ Looking back to the corporeal and environmental interplay of “Hormones Circling,” Schneemann explains, “The Nerve Ends Room will be situated in a transparent bubble in a woods to facilitate exchange of inside and outside, actual landscape and fantastic landscape.”⁵⁷ Her reference to a “memory bank” in that section of “Parts of a Body House” similarly draws upon “Hormones Circling,” where she first contemplated the “possibility of total recall.”⁵⁸ “I once had the notion that brain held memory like a reel of film,” she elaborates in “Notations,” “and that certain stimuli in the present would send notice to buried sections of past remembrance created by like stimuli.”⁵⁹ The past was to be conserved on what Schneemann punningly calls “a dimensional reel,” capable of fully reproducing the multisensory multidimensionality of the real.⁶⁰ While impossible, the hope for such a technological conquest of “time regained” proves to be nothing other, once again, than the romantic ideal of reading. “A fantasy I still cherish,” Schneemann confesses, “is that one could open the brain-memory like a book; to see and feel the welter of events in a particular day long past.” She continues, “Let’s go to the brain-memory library and see Mme. Stael the day Constant came back from Russia! [...] I want to know as exactly as possible in my own senses what they

meant; what was the light in that room, was the tree oak or chestnut.....”⁶¹ If Schneemann never gives up the aspirations of romantic poetry, her technological engagements render her the most contemporary of poets, whose fate, according to Kittler, is “to become a media technician among media technicians.”⁶²

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The essay “*Kitch’s Last Meal*,” which concludes this collection, encompasses a great many of the themes encountered throughout the book. Like “Instrumentality/Invisibility” and “Response: Movie Journal,” it is dedicated to the film *Kitch’s Last Meal* (1973–78), a project that entailed documenting her cat Kitch’s meals each week from the time the cat was sixteen years old until it passed away. The work’s connection to the genre of the diary film, encompassing all manner of quotidian aspects of Schneemann’s life with her partner at the time, the artist and filmmaker Anthony McCall, relates it closely to the diaristic format of the contemporary essays “In, On, and About My Premises,” “Dreams from Now and Again,” and “Rain Stops after Seven Days.” The sense of impending mortality that pervades the film can be traced all the way back to “Labyrinth,” where Schneemann, having started experimenting with assemblage and performance, came to address painting as “a beloved corpse.”⁶³ In the writings of the 1970s, however, Schneemann’s memorializing became more personal. “Uber Sexu Alles,” “A Wake for Ken Dewey,” and “In, On, and About My Premises” commemorate the deaths of friends Eva Hesse, Ken Dewey, and Paul Blackburn. Like Kitch’s eventual demise, the news of their passing interrupts the diaristic accounts, each time with an indication of the media that bears the message. Hesse’s obituary appears in the newspaper; Dewey’s death is communicated by phone; Blackburn’s spirit appears in a vision resembling an old photograph. (Even the dead, it seems, can only communicate through the discrete data streams of print, audio technologies, or film.)

In “*Kitch’s Last Meal*,” Schneemann proposes that her cat’s attention to “the details of life which traditional male culture isolates, denigrates, or despises” informs a decidedly feminist project.⁶⁴ The film’s emulation of such attentiveness thus exemplifies the goal, more polemically pronounced in Schneemann’s “Introduction to ‘Erotic Films by Women,’” of communicating “concrete experience, the *lived-life*, not an invented, fantasized sexuality.”⁶⁵ (Even Kitch, it seems, could succumb to such inventions, as when, encountering *Moby Dick*

at an Illinois drive-in theater, “her discrimination fell to the lure of macho screen drama and violence.”)⁶⁶ A similar critique of male mythification, ultimately drawn from Schneemann’s study of Simone de Beauvoir, informs Schneemann’s feminist linguistic analysis “The Pronoun Tyranny” (which quotes from *Kitch’s Last Meal*), where she notes how “primary female gender is assigned to forces or elements guided, controlled by men: the ship-She; our country-She, etc..... de-personalized, mythicized.”⁶⁷

Kitch’s Last Meal consists of eight reels of edited super-8 film, projected in pairs, one image above the other, with sound. The complex interactions of sound and image afforded by this media assemblage enabled Schneemann to re-create the “rhythms of fragmentary gesture, nominative focus, [and] networks of simple domestic objects and events in which the ‘image’ clusters of a life take shape.”⁶⁸ (Recall the “clusters of words” from “*Snows*” that comprise thoughts.) As M.M. Serra and Kathryn Ramey have noted, *Kitch’s Last Meal* “is about the fragility of life, the tenderness of intimacy, and the sorrow of loss. As such, it fell outside of and protested against the aesthetic and conceptual categories of the canon of experimental film at that time.”⁶⁹ Yet, as Schneemann explained in *Parts of a Body House Book*, the “greater information simultaneities & contrasts” that she pursued via cinema were conceived in relation to a different aesthetic than the autonomous formalism of the era’s experimental cinema. “I wasn’t thinking about film as film,” she declared. “I was reading poetry.”⁷⁰

Fittingly, “*Kitch’s Last Meal*” concludes with an extended meditation on dreaming. Schneemann mentions, once again, how her kinetic theater drew upon the “tenuous plateau between dream and waking.”⁷¹ Like *Scorpio Rising*, however, her films operate by inverting the processes of dream work, “us[ing] certain continuums/rhythms/interferences of imaged daily life/work as dream processes inside out.”⁷² In an especially poetic passage that appears near the end of the text, Schneemann makes reference to the “dreams coiled” within the “erotic bonding in sensuous body.”⁷³ Harkening back, one last time, to the scene of awakening from “Hormones Circling,” the conclusion to “*Kitch’s Last Meal*” demonstrates the manner in which Schneemann’s writing continually coils back upon itself (like “a lived-dream containing me containing it”) to reveal the depths and continuities that underlie and nourish Schneemann’s continuously unfurling oeuvre.⁷⁴

- 1 Carolee Schneemann, "Statement," in *Contemporary Artists*, ed. Colin Naylor and Genesis P-Orridge (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 858; in this volume, 140.
- 2 Carolee Schneemann titled a 2007 exhibition *Remains to Be Seen: New and Restored Films and Videos*.
- 3 Carolee Schneemann, "Parts of a Body House," *Caterpillar* 3/4 (April–July 1968): 194; in this volume, 75.
- 4 Carolee Schneemann, "Notations (1958–1966)," *Caterpillar* 8/9 (October 1969): 40–41; in this volume, 88. Cf. Carolee Schneemann, "Divisions and Rubble Notes," in *Manipulations*, ed. John [Jon] Hendricks (New York: The Judson Gallery, 1967), 7; in this volume, 60.
- 5 Schneemann, "Divisions and Rubble Notes," 5; in this volume, 60; and Schneemann, "Notations," 40; in this volume, 88.
- 6 Kristine Stiles, "Introduction," in Carolee Schneemann, *Correspondence Course: An Epistolary History of Carolee Schneemann and Her Circle*, ed. Kristine Stiles (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), xxv.
- 7 Stiles, "Introduction," in *Correspondence Course*, xxv; and Carolee Schneemann, *Cezanne, She Was a Great Painter* (New Paltz, NY: Tresspass Press, 1975), 29.
- 8 Schneemann, *Cezanne*, 15.
- 9 Clayton Eshleman, "Introduction," in *Caterpillar Anthology: A Selection of Poetry and Prose from Caterpillar Magazine* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971), xi.
- 10 Schneemann, *Correspondence Course*, 47.
- 11 Charles Olson, "Projective Verse" (1950), in *Collected Prose*, ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 241.
- 12 Carolee Schneemann, *Imaging Her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 52.
- 13 Olson, quoted in Schneemann, *Imaging Her Erotics*, 53.
- 14 Schneemann, "Notations," 42; in this volume, 91.
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- 16 Stiles, "Introduction," in *Correspondence Course*, xxx.
- 17 Schneemann wrote in *Parts of a Body House Book*: "dear: poets who u[n]derstood best first what I made who said saw yes Paul Blackburn Jerry Rothenberg David Antin Rochelle Owens Robert Kelly Carol Bergé Clayton Eshleman giving warmth welcome confirmation"; Carolee Schneemann, *Parts of a Body House Book* (Cullompton, England: Beau Geste Press, 1972), n.p. On the deep image poets, see Daniel Kane, *All Poets Welcome: The Lower East Side Poetry Scene in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 90–99.
- 18 Robert Kelly, "Notes on the Poetry of Deep Image," *Trobar* 2 (1961): 14.
- 19 Kelly, "Notes on the Poetry of Deep Image," 15.
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- 22 Carolee Schneemann, "Snows," *I-kon* 1, no. 5 (March 1968): 25; in this volume, 63–64.
- 23 Kelly, "Notes on the Poetry of Deep Image," 14, 16.
- 24 Carolee Schneemann, "Hormones Circling," *Matter* 1 (1963): 4; in this volume, 28.
- 25 Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff, vol. 1: *Swann's Way, Within a Budding Grove, The Guermandes Way* (New York: Random House, 1934), 5.
- 26 Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, 4; Schneemann, "Hormones Circling," 4; in this volume, 28.
- 27 Carolee Schneemann, "Meat Joy: Notes," in *Theatre Experiment: An Anthology of American Plays*, ed. Michael Benedikt (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 357; in this volume as "Meat Joy Notes," 45.
- 28 Paul Christensen, *Minding the Underworld: Clayton Eshleman and Late Postmodernism* (Santa Rosa, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1991), 35. Jerome Rothenberg would annex Schneemann's work to this project explicitly, including a segment of *Meat Joy's* performance score as a contemporary counterpart to the sacred rituals of various native peoples; Jerome Rothenberg, ed., *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia and Oceania* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 452.
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- 32 Kristeva, *Time and Sense*, 203–204.
- 33 Schneemann, "Snows," 25; in this volume, 62.
- 34 Carolee Schneemann, "Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising*," *Film Culture* 32 (Spring 1964): 10; in this volume, 30–31.
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- 36 Schneemann, "Kenneth Anger," 10; in this volume, 32, 30.
- 37 Carolee Schneemann, "Further Notes: *Meat Joy* and the Kinetic Theatre," *Some/Thing* 1, no. 2 (1965): 43; in this volume as "*Meat Joy* and the Kinetic Theater," 42.
- 38 Schneemann, "Meat Joy Notes," 365; in this volume, 52.
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