



//////////PRINT // DOCUMENT SERIES 3 :: OF SYSTEMS OF

schema

anurak saelaow



the trouble with bartleby
in collaboration with
the operating system





THE OPERATING SYSTEM PRINT//DOCUMENT

schema

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THE OPERATING SYSTEM//PRESS

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advance praise for SCHEMA//

Schema is a book that gravitates toward the shimmering heat of the historical moment. This book accentuates the nerve center of pathos, the hardwiring of passion. Anurak Saelaow refocuses the pace and pulse on what is happening in the now, with dramatic results. This is a dynamite work that doesn't rest. The jolt will recalibrate you.

- brenda iijima -





///GRATITUDE///

are
there
people
you'd
like
to thank?





schema







I. FORGING THE LOCK

HEPHAESTUS

What I now know is this:
I never meant to be the trawl.
Your legacy traced in wayward scraps spit haphazard across
the shore. Tell me: Is this not a cargo cult? Tell me things
are working the way they should be. You figure it out:
Here is the wire. Here is the code. Here are the pieces that never
quite fit, bulging awkward inside their cases. Make me something
that rolls on and never stops,
a perpetual motion machine cast
from light. A formula that dings the bells, asks the right questions,
sings out across the hallway in great plumes of steam. Something
vaster than myself. I need you the way a forge needs steel.
This is the glowing mouth. The coal- black throat. The leaping spark
of my ringing eyes. The inner hearth that churns with every coming
thought of you, held fast and hammered until it glows.

/// I. FORGING THE LOCK | 7 ///





ISLAND GIGANTISM

Hear Justin singing something wrong like you're the bitch that never ends,
the resonance stretched out indefinitely, fractal and writhing.
You remind me of a different breed removed from the stream,
growing large the way birds do on their own islands,
swelling in a cavernous skull - which is a dish, which is a room-
full of people, repeating desire, picking threads inside the drift
which may or may not actually be stochastic - the Chinese room
works, more or less: the puzzle excavated, the knot unbound
even if you trample about a little too often, too loudly.





SIDELONG, WITH MECHANISM

It wasn't long before we realised that need, too, was a sort of fear.
That all we could do was spread our arms and encircle it, erecting
the cage along its length. We bury that we cannot face in a landscape
painted over with sand, this debris of un-wayward youth. The seed
laying dormant, the pin wound and suspended, swallowed into
the giant's gut. Darkness shifting within its bounds. But even with
the mitts on, this sidelong cresting, the lion paws slowly at the bars.
Meaning like this has a half-life of lifetimes, the constant need
boiling over, shining through terribly between the gears.





ALLEGORY

That any of this bears more than a passing resemblance
to what we term the real is purely coincidence:
each moment supplies
the myth, the growing canon
shot in a thousand still frames to be dissected with shaking
hands. The reel of us looping faintly in a shimmering heat,
sunlight piled in turning circles. You standing at the centre
of every one. All stories trace the same trajectories, the same
schemes, the same hurtling into the known. What I do is just
re-framing: the light wound backwards into the shape of what
once was, the same, timeless scenes we revolve around.





SMASH CUT

Swing the camera away, switch the focus: you, on the track.
In the shower. Laughing somewhere that isn't here. There's a context
to this that I don't grasp yet,
the storyboard blank, the narrative
rolling on long after we leave. After we've folded the chairs,
cleared the plates, taken down the tinsel and the streamers.
The camera persists, lingering just a little too long after
you step out. I wait for a cut that doesn't happen.
The screen is stubborn and doesn't fade to black.

/// I. FORGING THE LOCK | 11 ///





II. LOTUS-EATER

DESIRE LIKE

Desire like a telescope trained from a darkened room.
Like a rover curving across another planet. Like tapping
on one-way glass, a silent shout itching behind the teeth.

Desire like a primed radar, a hefted missile, a satellite
that orbits but never lands. Desire an asymptote path,
a sweeping tangent, a trajectory gone awry. Desire like
a constant klaxon between the ears, a cartoon panic
where steam rolls from nostrils and eyes are transfigured
into pulsating hearts. Desire like the slow-motion wind-up
to a punch to the gut.

Desire like speaking through
a gag. Desire like a fever, like a bout of blindness,
like a man aflame, stumbling through a world of ghosts.





THE PEOPLE STAYED PEOPLE

Let me tell you about the dream last night where I opened my eyes
and it was dawn. Where it was filtered with strange logic
in linear paths, not warped in orbits about your frame.
The people stayed people, the dogs howling without words or song.
The sky uncracked. The mirrors in-focus. The semantics of desire
unarticulated. Unmade and nursing. The protagonist missing his cue
and slipping out of it,
into the clamour. His hands
hung awkwardly, no longer doves. No longer clasping. The wound
flowering only inside, tender as the ache of being.





CODEC

Blink once and the words
jar into focus, the growing need
as certain as light admitted into the machine. Each coming
image of you ordered and transcribed, grooves re-traced,
the trajectory smoothed out and made coherent: the greasy
table, the glinting fork,
my grasping hands perched
mutely in my lap. We have not yet spoken of desire, that old,
familiar thing. Can you blame me if my mind settles
into this kaleidoscope sprawl, these sharp-edged gems
arrayed at random, refracted about a jagged outline of you?
Somewhere in this box lies a key to the logic, an order
to the cypher, something to reconstitute the light.





RAIN LOGIC

In the same way that thinking that the weather is anything more than the weather is trite there is nothing else to say about you except haltingly, stutter-stepped, the logic rolling through the curve of a foreign bed, obscured in silt, looping around its various eddies. The day still reeks of ozone but the rain has yet to break. I rarely heed my own advice. I sit in a singlet and wait for coming wisdom to strike. I worry when it doesn't. I ride the high of another piece to focus the lens; I hold my breath before I pull. I'd rather be running in rain and gasping, shrugging off the sting - at least there the thread of you grows thin, the image fainter, the shadow unheeded beneath my feet. Only then does the flow rise: the logic sings like rain unloaded.

/// II. LOTUS-EATER | 15 ///





FILM STUDIES

Record with the lens cap on. The blur is present all the time. Stay still and try to train the focus inwards, red light straining against the grey. Try to glean something useful, something that suggests more than static, an insinuation of growing doubt.

Fast-forward through the eerie scene of hunched figures, wordless mumbling lips. We all strive for an existence beyond ghostliness: something more than this grainy texture, the pixels that suggest a self. What else is lost beyond the framing?

Play the footage again
like an endless loop of light.



III. ECHO CHAMBER

HOLOGRAM

Install another mirror and there are a million angles for the laser.
A constant stream of images inside the stretch, these yawning
bounds, the strobe-light above making still-frames of us all.
The eye perceives a greater depth than what is there -
which is to say Zeno was right, these angled hands
infinite, the decimal point receding into distance.
The moments curled and occupied like hermit-crab
shells in sediment. I spliced the tape but the spool
keeps rolling - there is no end to the machine.

/// III. ECHO CHAMBER | 17 ///





HERMIT KINGDOM

Zoom into the cocooned world, the hermit kingdom, the Chinese room sprawling on without an end. This, the airtight domain fitted for two, the recurring place, the unmarked palace filled with trinkets of another age. The void deck setting where you put your arms around mine, unrehearsed. Daylight salted across the fields,
on the ground, underground,
the cavern echoing my shout. Tell me this is where you need to be. That the batteries won't falter, there's enough air, that the sun will last for as long as it's needed.
That there's nothing we need in any world beyond this.





SPREADSHEETS

Today it's spreadsheets, pecking things inconsequential
into Excel, hoping to churn
an explanation. Today the words
can't march into formation, antsy and writhing within
these diode forms. Their loosed-wired configurations
humming of desire. I am still hunting for that code,
the constant solder that binds gesture and meaning, want
and need, the frayed cable spitting sparks of some larger, semantic
conveyance. Long and short buzzes spelling something
I cannot yet decrypt. Far from coming loose, the jolt remains,
looping the circuit, scorched across the casing like a brand
pressed tenderly to the folds. Today the words can't seem
to form an answer, cannot fit themselves into the lock.





LAST NIGHT

Stay up late and try to beg
a shape from this, the slippery
thing without edge, one quiet, flitting beast after another.
The clay collapsing within
your hands - I haven't watched
Ghost, you say. Neither have I. Last night the earth rose
without a word. Last night was not yet the brink -
I think too much about my fists, how the parts fit
into each other, knuckles jutting like ridgelines,
the ribbon of my thin wrists. You cannot beat the dream
into submission, you say - this is not its corpse on paper.
It has to come unbidden,
a flash-eyed doe moseying
up to the camera, dissolving
into the grain of a grey-green tint.



AFTER THAT TALK

That we stretch onward without end
is no fault - but to intercede is to plunge
without caution, the river swollen all around. History a froth left somewhere
upstream, an afterthought. History a darkened cabin, a staying hand
without resistance, the subtle tongue drawing you into the tug. Water lapping
through every crack. Drown quick before I put a rose between my teeth
and dive. Glimpses of roiling caught in an endless slant of sudden light -
to be is to be indefinite. We change but never transcend the banks,
the cabin unmoored and unresolved. The river goes on and never drowns.





IV. APOCALYPSE DREAMS

ONTOLOGY

Blame the texture of reality:
the patchy substance, the gaps
that punctuate the periods of your absence. Our lives
criss-crossed and spliced into intersections, these brief
moments of true existence. The protagonist rendered
in rain, backlit and radiant, framed and re-framed
by the lens that whips
and trains itself with the plot.
What else is there but this flickering image to proclaim
the reality of us? There is no canon and no constancy
where the light does not fall. The shadow cannot exist
in itself, comes only as a reminder of void.





ESCHATOLOGICAL THEORY

We can't just Rashomon the whole damn thing and pretend that's how it unfolded. The vision descended in HD tones across the Macc where we were seated, stirring our ice cream gingerly, failing to acknowledge that the evening was finite. Or was it later - flicking through shelves, reading the prices, finding some means to keep these end-times at bay? We all have our guesses, our theories on how this all should go. The sky still dark. The automatic doors closed. The street tensed up into a knot. You can try rewinding the tapes, segmenting the splices, tinting the base shade of deep desire. It doesn't work. My meaning overlaid against your meaning, the whole left swollen, unresolved. A blister, aching for relief.





LABYRINTH

Soured, the palace transfigured into a maze, the world a constant labyrinth. I keep my fingers against the walls, navigating the folds, these curtained membranes branching all around. Tell me there wasn't a flaw in the logic. A bug in the code, a constant loop traced within the circuit. The edges of the thing, once safe, so tightly shut, now pointed inwards. There's a conundrum that rolls on whether or not you notice: the recurring question, the echoing chamber, the amorphous shape of things as they are. Desire, an addict, a captor, raising the walls.



AZTEC WORLD

The first world was consumed by jaguars. We live in the fifth
and build castles in rust, trail circles through the looping curves
of our endings. Don't think
I don't know the signs of decay:

The bauble tarnished, hanging loosely. The static world cast
in fluorescence, moss dusted over every surface. This isn't
the end that we envisioned: not disaster, the sweeping shift
of fire or deluge. Just the vision aching in its prism, losing focus,
dispersing into pigment. Even the past like a loosened scaffold
or kicked ladder, the future clinging tightly on its fingertips.

Deny the spool and the rest slots neatly, the flood of now
receding into its mouth. I want good fantasies, a better metaphor
for loss. I want another myth where the world doesn't choke
on itself, these wayward hands with somewhere to go under
the fluorescent lights, no longer trapped within the bauble.
Something not woven from vision, that doesn't unravel with every tug.





PROJECTIONIST

Doors shut, light thrown sharply into the cavern. The afterglow in oil and craggy sheen across their faces. The scene unfolds, a creeping vision spilled garish against the wall. All things come through the eye inverted. I look at my hands as if through the wrong end of the binoculars: these foreign contours, sharp-edged relief, the tributary veins circled about the self. The cavern hermetic, the tunnel stretching beyond possibility. Someone's in the booth, amongst the levers, reviewing the reels as they come unspooled. How else can I explain this waking dream? The spoiler's out, the outcome known, the future clicked neatly into place. That's it. We're done. Roll credits.





V. UNLOCKING

THE SPINNING STATE OF THINGS

Most days the writing recedes.
I try to distract myself. Trim my nails
and stand against the window. Think of something clever
I can say about this. This, the spinning state of things -
the afternoons another span bridging sensations of being
somewhat alive, an ego condensed about the shape
of you. Even this absence
is marked by limits. The nails
grow but the words still circle
in their rut, waiting for the scent.
I recline inside a constant backwash of heat. Dry my hair
and wonder how the eye can capture as much as is
humanly possible, how big
the silo goes. How soft the light
that fades as it outlines your face, the corner of every coming page.





TEDIUM

The capstone becomes another rock tied about the waist, dragging us into a deeper drowning. The finale didn't dawn in tones of brilliant gold and roses, the orchestra swollen to fever pitch. Instead a drowsy nothingness, this awkward spin-off foretelling seasons of humming, down-tempo desire. Flies writhing, drunk on syrup, awash in time and time alone.

It's not like a switch you flip to turn off the neurons or drain the blood, leashing the baying, fitful mind. It's closer to the slow creep of flooding that wears down dikes, unseen, filling fractions of lung, weighing down the land and the body with the tedium of every mounting, drowning day.





STANDING AMONGST

- the giftshop crap of seashell owls and fake pearl earrings, dull milk-sheened windchimes hung along the aisle. With the sting of peeling, sun-worn skin fresh against a ridge of neck, I stoop to wonder if any of this could mean anything to anyone:
the carved spoon a metaphor for need, or hunger,
the plush elephant trumpeting the fact of your absence,
the kitsch veneer of everything folded open. A conch emptied and drying, a post-card unwritten. That we find ourselves amongst the real is no real blessing - but to fill the yawn is to lade with truth, the need to carry everything else home.





OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE

Coming low and sharply, the city diminished, ironed into vague cartography.
Before us: the kingdom, ours to inherit. These aching spires, steel and silver,
glass beyond glass. Steeped and glittering, the snowglobe left
untouched upon the desk. Only now can we grasp the whole, the looping
plot, the relief receding into shadow. We know the curve of the Earth
as it comes. The mirrored room,
the mirrored city, the story spilling on
between the covers. An infinity trapped within these bounds.
From beyond the gates, the world we knew mapped and defined.
Inner workings laid out finely. These coming turns no longer a mystery.





UNWOUND

Never thought the tongue could rasp these pins so snug and draw them loose again, a spirit disgorged from the unclenched jaw. Slow bass and the solder unspooled, the lens drawn out and set aside. This is what goes beyond the script - a machine afterlife where the fans stay on, everything rattling softly within their cases. I never spoke to you of need. The desire casting spotlights from behind my eyes with no one to tell me the look didn't fit. This is the drawn key, the spent gas, the final click. The lingering frame whipped away, trailing after nothing at all. The door is open. Come on out.

/// V. UNLOCKING | 31 ///







/// NOTES AND COMMENTARY





ABOUT SERIES 3 :: OF SYSTEMS OF \\\

Since its inception with two handmade books under *The Trouble With Bartleby* imprint in 2012, this chapbook series has sought to not only encourage and empower its participants via a collaborative, instructive process -- highlighting and involving all its poets in the design and conception of each series, as well as engaging in dialogue about book form and production -- but also to draw visual artists into that dialogue, creating covers in direct conversation with the poets and their texts. This year features Emma Steinkraus, who talks about the process below.

- lynne desilva-johnson, editor

I came to this project through Davy Knittle. I've been reading his poems for a year now. I've got two taped up on my studio wall. I think about poetry often and its relationship to painting; they seem to share a strange logic, full of slippages and juxtapositions, expert in uncanny, intuitive truths. So when Lynne contacted me about creating some art for these chapbook covers I was excited. I read through each manuscript and kept a short list of images that struck me or intersected with my own obsessions. I related to Anurak Saelaow's use of mirrors, mediation, and refracted, glinting light. I was taken with Anton Yakovlev's sophisticate handling of nostalgia and noted the appearance of sunsets and collections of animals (both recur in my own work). I kept thinking about Joseph Cuillier's line "We're on the other side of the American flag." At moments his writing is so blunt, but also subtle and subversive; I tried to maintain some of that balance. For Davy, I wanted something that made visual the amazing way he smashes together the personal and the urban. He writes domestic life with the velocity of a highway, and vice versa.

Reading and thinking alongside these poems was pure pleasure. As was scurrying around setting up still lives, transferring photos to pleather (that happened), sourcing textures, painting and collaging. If there were moments when I found this project stressful, it was out of a fear of disappointing good people and good books. My hope, though, is that in some small way these covers collaborate with their insides and lead you, dear reader, in.

- emma steinkraus

Emma Steinkraus is a visual artist living in Iowa City. Her current obsessions include imagined apocalypses, witches and mushrooming; her recurrent obsession is with depictions of romantic love. Before moving to Iowa as an Iowa Arts Fellow in the Painting program, she studied at the Maryland Institute College of Art and at Williams College. She has received a Hubbard Hutchinson Fellowship, a Frederick M. Peysner Prize, worked as a Steamboat Scholar in Contemporary Curation at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, and completed residencies at the Henry Luce III Center for Arts and Religion and at Pyramid Atlantic Art Center.





//// ABOUT SCHEMA

Schema is a chapbook about desire. It revolves around the idea of the human brain as a mechanism, a processor, parsing the dreck of our everyday lives. In some sense it's solipsistic, very lonely - I see this as a natural extension of the lyrical mode of thought, which is always focused on the self.

Each piece is constructed in two-line stanzas, an attempt to convey a sort of hesitance and stuttering, the recurring anxieties of the mind. The idea of false couplins - unexpected (but not unnatural) enjambments - and the notion of binary code also played a part in their formation.

-anurak saelaow



Anurak Saelaow is a Singaporean undergraduate at Columbia University. Previously, his work has appeared in print and online, in journals such as the Quarterly Literary Review Singapore and Ceriph Magazine. He is currently a staff editor at Quarto Magazine.





THE OPERATING SYSTEM IS A QUESTION, NOT AN ANSWER.\\ \\ \\

THIS is not a fixed entity.

The OS is an ongoing experiment in resilient creative practice which necessarily morphs as its conditions and collaborators change. It is not a magazine, a website, or a press, but rather an ongoing dialogue ABOUT the act of publishing on and offline: it is an exercise in the use and design of both of these things and their role in our shifting cultural landscape, explored THROUGH these things.

I see publication as documentation: an act of resistance, an essential community process, and a challenge to the official story / archive, and I founded the OS to exemplify my belief that people everywhere can train themselves to use self or community documentation as the lifeblood of a resilient, independent, successful creative practice.

The name “THE OPERATING SYSTEM” is meant to speak to an understanding of the self as a constantly evolving organism, which just like any other system needs to learn to adapt if it is to survive. Just like your computer, you need to be “updating your software” frequently, as your patterns and habits no longer serve you.

Our intentions above all are empowerment and unsilencing, encouraging creators of all ages and colors and genders and backgrounds and disciplines to reclaim the rights to cultural storytelling, and in so doing to the historical record of our times and lives.

Bob Holman once told me I was “scene agnostic” and I took this as the highest compliment: indeed, I seek work and seek to make and promote work that will endure and transcend tastes and trends, making important and asserting value rather than being told was has and has not.

The OS has evolved in quite a short time from an idea to a growing force for change and possibility: in a span of 5 years, from 2013-2017, we will have published more than 40 volumes from a hugely diverse group of contributors, and solicited and curated thousands of pieces online, collaborating with artists, composers, choreographers, scientists, futurists, and so many more. Online, you’ll also find partnerships with cultural organizations modelling the value of archival process documentation.

Beginning in 2016, our new series :: “Glossarium: Unsilenced Texts and Modern Translations”, will bring on Ariel Resnikoff, Stephen Ross, and Mona Kareem as contributing editors, and have as its first volume a dual language translation of Palestinian poet and artist Ashraf Fayadh’s “Instructions Within,” translated by Mona Kareem, which will be published later this year, with all proceeds going to support Fayadh’s ongoing case and imprisonment in Saudi Arabia.

There is ample room here for you to expand and grow your practice ...and your possibility. Join us.

*- Lynne DeSilva-Johnson,
Founder and Managing Editor*





TITLES IN THE PRINT: DOCUMENT COLLECTION

In Corpore Sano : Creative Practice and the Challenged Body
[Anthology, 2016] Lynne DeSilva-Johnson and Jay Besemer, co-editors

Instructions Within [2016] - Ashraf Fayadh
Arabic-English dual language edition; Mona Kareem, translator

Let it Die Hungry [2016] - Caitis Meissner

Everything is Necessary [2016] - Keisha-Gaye Anderson

agon [2016] - Judith Goldman

Everybody's Automat [2016] - Mark Gurarie

How to Survive the Coming Collapse of Civilization [2016] - Sparrow

There Might Be Others [2016] - Rebecca Lazier and Dan Trueman

CHAPBOOK SERIES 2016: OF SOUND MIND

**featuring the quilt drawings of Daphne Taylor*

Improper Maps - Alex Crowley; While Listening - Alaina Ferris;
Chords - Peter Longofono; Any Seam or Needlework - Stanford Cheung

TEN FOUR - Poems, Translations, Variations [2015]

Jerome Rothenberg, Ariel Resnikoff, Mikhl Likht

MARILYN [2015] - Amanda Ngoho Reavey

CHAPBOOK SERIES 2015: OF SYSTEMS OF

**featuring original cover art by Emma Steinkraus*

Cyclorama - Davy Knittle; The Sensitive Boy Slumber Party Manifesto -
Joseph Cuillier; Neptune Court - Anton Yakovlev; Schema - Anurak Saelow

SAY/MIRROR [2015; 2nd edition 2016] - JP HOWARD

Moons Of Jupiter/Tales From The Schminke Tub [plays] - Steve Danziger

CHAPBOOK SERIES 2014: BY HAND

Pull, A Ballad - Maryam Parhizkar; Executive Producer Chris Carter -
Peter Milne Grenier; Spooky Action at a Distance - Gregory Crosby;

Can You See that Sound - Jeff Musillo

CHAPBOOK SERIES 2013: WOODBLOCK

**featuring original prints from Kevin William Reed*

Strange Coherence - Bill Considine; The Sword of Things - Tony Hoffman;
Talk About Man Proof - Lancelot Runge / John Kropa; An Admission as a

Warning Against the Value of Our Conclusions - Alexis Quinlan





DOC U MENT

/däkyə mə nt/

First meant “instruction” or “evidence,” whether written or not.

noun - a piece of written, printed, or electronic matter that provides information or evidence or that serves as an official record
verb - record (something) in written, photographic, or other form
synonyms - paper - deed - record - writing - act - instrument

[Middle English, *precept*, from Old French, from Latin *documentum*, example, proof, from *docere*, to teach; see *dek-* in Indo-European roots.]

Who is responsible for the manufacture of value?

Based on what supercilious ontology have we landed in a space where we vie against other creative people in vain pursuit of the fleeting credibilities of the scarcity economy, rather than freely collaborating and sharing openly with each other in ecstatic celebration of MAKING?

While we understand and acknowledge the economic pressures and fear-mongering that threatens to dominate and crush the creative impulse, we also believe that now more than ever we have the tools to relinquish agency via cooperative means, fueled by the fires of the Open Source Movement.

Looking out across the invisible vistas of that rhizomatic parallel country
we can begin to see our community beyond constraints,
in the place where intention meets resilient, proactive, collaborative organization.

Here is a document born of that belief, sown purely of imagination and will.
When we document we assert. We print to make real, to reify our being there.

When we do so with mindful intention to address our process,
to open our work to others, to create beauty in words in space, to respect and acknowledge the strength of the page we now hold physical, a thing in our hand...
we remind ourselves that, like Dorothy: *we had the power all along, my dears.*

the PRINT! DOCUMENT SERIES

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