

# PROJECT PAPERS

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CARTER RATCLIFF

## MAGENTA HAIR

(on "The Death of Chatterton" by Henry Wallis)

This is where explanation fails,  
like a drug,  
signing the body over to physiology.

Explanation fails as a song might do,  
failing to attract the memory  
that begged,  
begged on the knees of its heart,  
for explanation.

You see how it goes.  
It is like rain, a nuisance one day,  
a prism the next; rather,  
it's like sunshine  
beaten to its knees by the rain, and then,  
on a day like today, tricking it  
shamelessly. For what is a rainbow  
but physics confessing?—: all is not lost;  
rather, what was lost  
is not all.

This is to be explained by the death of Chatterton.  
You see what I mean. That magenta hair.

It represents Mr. Wallis' rights,  
not as an artist; rather,  
as one who has chosen to live,  
physics and physiology reduced to mystery,  
the rainbow to pretext,  
poesie to theater,  
and observable fact to its knees.

One's indulgence is begged: nature claims no rights,  
yet nature is loathe to accept the explanatory use  
to which one puts this fact.

One invents nature's rights:  
magenta may have hair. Why not?  
And likewise Chatterton's hair  
may have its magenta awfulness.

One lives with such freedom.  
To grown-ups, it's a drug.  
The range of visible colors becomes an addiction,  
a rhythm of craving and indulgence  
which is song-like in the feelings it evokes,  
soaking life with desires  
so enslaved by the freedoms they nurture that,  
finally, no explanation is pretended:  
one simply lives.

At the precipice of one's rights,  
the light of explanation shatters;  
hence the spectrum of possibility:  
one could jump.  
One could die.  
That would be no loss.

Yet loss  
is the guiding hand,  
even though, like a drug or a sunny day,  
it can only beckon:  
one simply lives.

Chatterton is not the exception;  
rather, he is not the exception that proves the rule,  
faintly remembered, that sanctioned his death:  
As it happens,  
his magenta hair is what one remembers,  
as one's rights are remembered,  
the right of memory to fail,  
to fall out of bed,  
to scrape its knees,  
to cry out, absent-mindedly  
or in pain—in pain

or absent-mindedly, come sunshine or gloom,  
or the need, to which the living are addicted,  
to explain.

Hence  
magenta hair, the inexplicable,  
"The Death of Chatterton," the painting,  
sheer nonsense,  
relinquishing life to memory  
and memory to loss, rolling the possible  
into one with the physiological,  
the local physics one chooses  
to live out in the freedom of totally  
song-drenched ignorance.

BARRETT WATTEN

from **THE WORD**

A lecture on scalar waves zero vector waves created from the overlap of two waves  $180^\circ$  out of phase like squeezing a sponge in and out in space-time take zero vector waves and intersect at the zone of interference ordinary energy will occur the interference patterns will occur as ordinary electromagnetic waves this is how energy can be transmitted with no loss in transmission this kind of wave could influence global weather patterns clouds were dividing into even rows over Huntsville Alabama these patterns have been adjusted in since shortly after the death of Brezhnev low-level booms make continuous popping sounds we saw this grid pattern over Huntsville Alabama being adjusted and I can reach up and move the jet stream up and down it's as if the Russians were permitted to come in and build transmitters in each of the grid zones you're looking at a bunch of cone-shaped mountains all over North America around the cone of energy clouds will form in a circle with rays running directly out in all directions like a giant radial this is not a natural formation

A typical house  
with porch, steps, etc.  
will seem to decay into parts with age  
if not carefully (extravagantly) kept up.

## THEORY

1. Continents were built up as a quality space.
2. Continents were built by drifting, colliding mini-continents. The only part of California that is "original" is somewhere near Death Valley.

The soap is really a sphere.  
The child is really a fat one.

...for the opera fan who knows his syntax.

Few things are funnier than auto mechanics; it lays bare the inherent defects of all engines, which pivot on the "virtual" presence of parts we can no longer get.

I have a nervous collapse, which is disappointing—it obscures my view of semiotics.

That pleasure is a kind of time left over from counting.

## SEQUENCE

The spectacle that inverts the real must begin on time.

OR

"Welcome to Nevada."

BUT

It is necessary to put pieces on the board in order to have a game.

IF

Nothing is permitted, it rains.

AND

The world ends.

AND

A succession of authors make their way into print.

OR

A sequence of car-sized holes through a series of billboards leads to a vanishing point.

AND

A ritual necklace of negatives set off against white skin.

BUT

People are coming soon.

AND

Snow-removal teams in white suits disappear into overheated buildings.

IF

A continuous feedback loop is an integral part of the delivery.

IF

Water runs out.

IF

We do not want blindness to be inculcated in others.

IF

Rhythm occurs in the structure of a tree, but the sky is overhead.

AND

Fashion models twist and turn in front of the camera as the shutter clicks.

BUT

The public reads Sartre on busses.

OR

We made something out of nothing by giving up ourselves.

IF

E.g., nothing, zero, minus,  $\sqrt{-1}$ , a winged horse, a square circle, etc.

OR

Such are the limits of art.