

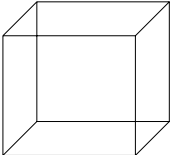
FOREWORD: On the Origin of These Pages

Evolocution was written in response to Ric Royer's short book, runes/ruins, which was released in April 2001 along with the chapbooks and works of five other "metapoets" (Christopher Fritton, John Patrick Long, Kevin Thurston, Matthew Chambers, and myself). Of the issues that r/r addresses, I have been most intrigued by Royer's presentation of three ideas, and have modified them in Evolocution.

First, there is the issue of the physical permanence of the typewritten page. Where the computer offers the options of editing, repositioning, and copy-making, the typewriter stamps words resolutely on the page. One requires a copy machine to make multiple copies of a typewritten page that contains anything more than the most tepid, ordinary formatting. The copy machine makes inexact copies, as well: the original page may seem entirely different once copies of copies have reached a dozen generations. Similarly, working with a typewriter to make hand-typed copies produces (from my hands, anyway) horribly disfigured reproductions. Typing out copies is much like reproducing DNA to make new cells (and eventually entirely new beings—this issue exists at the cellular and corporeal levels and even bridges generations). Making typewritten copies, rife with errata and displacement, is much like making new cells, new bodies, new generations of the original poems.

A second but inextricably related issue is that of change over Time. This issue is an imposition of theories articulated by Liz Grosz (in conversation) upon Royer's work, although Royer himself addresses issues of Time's identity and connotations (a dim, mystical Past precedes a grim nuclear winter Future in r/r). Grosz describes the fragility of the metaphysical concept "A=A" and the resulting brittleness of Western philosophy and religion. To imagine that A=A, we must at the most basic level believe that A does not change—that a repositioning or reconstruction of A leaves A in an identical spatiotemporal location (that A=a=A). We must believe that things have "essences" and unchangeable characteristics. This faith in the endurance of traits over time is tightly attached to our sense of individuality and human identity: my sense of self depends on my belief that I am essentially the same person now as I was at seven years of age. Our faith in "essences" and durability is rocked, however, when we look at species other than ourselves. As Darwin taught us in the nineteenth century, Time distorts Being. The idea of Being, for so long tied to a metaphysics that named God as the infallible creator of unique, preplanned, nameable, invariable species, was overturned by the notion that species change over long periods of time, and that even when species are "identifiable," the identification is complicated and inexact. Time—as the force of Age, Evolution, Self-Awareness, and even Stability—allows Being, and unstable, changeable, rarely identifiable, unnameable material, to exist as the dynamic and exciting matter we sometimes call "mountain" or "person" or "atom." The unstable nature of Being over Time comes into play in Evolocution in the production of copies and within the issues of placement and reading.

The issues of placement and reading are subtitles of a larger heading, the third area of discussion, "plasticity." For the past five years I have investigated this topic, and the treatment of "flat" space as three-dimensional is often a vital force in metalpoetry. This treatment is not merely the mapping of three dimensions onto a two-dimensional space, as occurs in drawings of cube like this:



spaces as instantaneously as one sculpture or abstract tapestry without performance, this cognitive space, is but a kind of internal performative reading that involves seeing understands the meanings of words, as one would "read" a words or meaningful pictures inscribed on them. This internal what separates the works of Cecilia Vicuña and Amelia Etlinger from the works of Ian Hamilton Findlay and Guillaume Apollinaire; it is what makes "metalpoetry" not only a revolution in the "outer" performance space (the concert-reading) but also a revolution in the "inner" performance space—the silent reading of the poem *involving* and *necessitating* a multidimensional sensation of the text, a journey *through* it physically, not just a skipping or scanning *over* it unfeelingly.