



To the UChicago Arts Student Summer Fellowship Committee,

My proposal for an UChicago Arts Student Summer Fellowship is a book length erasure poem focusing on cultural production and the role of the celebrity. I want to map Ayn Rand's concept of the Atlas to the cultural realm: just as a super-productive individual holds up the economic world, celebrities dictate the form and substance of popular imagination. There is a historical lineage to this concept that has fallen out of artistic and critical attention—Louis XIV's role as trendsetter for the European court strikes me as very similar to Kanye West's claim to be the “voice of our generation”, to name just one example. I'm fascinated by the historical development of this role as well: under feudalism the nobleman was both the economic and cultural leader of his society, but now, under capitalism and its more pronounced division of labor, the cultural producers are by necessity unproductive members of society. I want to understand how this split developed, and begin to grasp its implications.

Erasure poetry is the perfect medium for this task, given its ability to reveal what is hidden, underlying, and pervasive, and also in the way the poet of erasure turns a narrative text into an image with an entirely new text. In fact, the process of producing an image out of a text mirrors the effect of celebrity status on the individual; he becomes an ideal, an image, with no room for a public human life, or in other words a text. As a new medium, erasure's rules and conventions are evolving, and my approach is innovative, developed over nearly two years of poetry workshops, including a summer at the Iowa Writers' Workshop and a class this current quarter specifically on erasure poetry, taught by Chicu Reddy. Something I've noticed is that every long erasure poem existing in print has a single text as its source, in other words, it has a basic textual unity. My technique for this project is to splice parts of a few texts together—along the lines of a Girl Talk mash-up, for example—to create unity instead with my images, voice, and theme.

Once the project is complete, I plan to stage a full reading of the piece. I say staged because I often play with dual or triple simultaneous lines of reading in my erasure work, and I am very interested to hear how this plays out in an oral presentation. In my first year I participated in a staging of Carla Harryman's Memory Play, a piece written for performance by a poets' theatre; I am familiar, through this experience and others as an audience member, with the conventions of the genre, and would be able to direct a performance. In fact, I'm organizing and managing a reading this spring, in which students can submit work for a chance to read their erasures with Chicu Reddy. In addition to holding a reading, I hope to submit the final piece to Sliced Bread or another campus publication, as well as self-publishing the work in chapbook form.

My experience last summer at the graduate-level Iowa Writers' Workshop makes me an ideal candidate for the Summer Fellowship. Given the looseness of independent creative work, self-discipline is a major requirement. In a similar situation—we had only three hours of class per week, and I had no other time commitments—I produced more than enough material for a forty-page chapbook, and self-published this collection. In total, I have self-published four collections of work, and I have included in this document links to selected work. My dedication, motivation, and discipline ensure I will make the absolute most of this opportunity.

I plan to attend a Master's in Fine Arts program when I graduate, the next step toward becoming a professional writer—as scary as that sounds in this economy. While I have enough material for a solid manuscript now, developing a truly outstanding collection requires time and energy that

I simply cannot dedicate fully to writing during the academic year, or were I instead to work full-time to cover my living expenses. I plan to use this erasure project as the manuscript for my MFA applications, and also to submit sections to poetry journals for possible publication. With the UChicago Arts Student Summer Fellowship, I will be able to dedicate my full time and attention to this project with all the tools I need, and my ability and experience writing in a self-regulated atmosphere, coupled with the benefit such an opportunity will open to me, make me an ideal candidate.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you need any more information from me, please feel free to contact me either by email [REDACTED] or by phone [REDACTED]. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

References

[REDACTED]

Timeline for completion

June 13th: Begin collecting sources, reading biographies, etc

July 15th: Finalize source materials, map out form of work, start collecting phrases and pages from sources

August 30th: Complete work of selection and erasure, begin piecing fragments together into one single, coherent whole

September 15th: Finish the text, begin thinking about performance, submission and publication

November 1: Tentative date for performance

Note on attached samples of work

I've attached three samples of work: my erasure of Paradise Lost, of WH Mallock's A Human Document, and a selection of my smaller erasure works from various sources. Of these three, only the last should be printed; the first two are meant to be read as single canvases dispensing with the unit of the page. I realize that, if printed, they would collectively reach longer than five total pages, but it's the same problem as putting a page limit on a collection of paintings; in a work without pages, "5" is a meaningless and arbitrary upper bound. Also, when thinking about the reading I wish to stage of this work, my erasure of Paradise Lost is the paradigm I'm aiming for, and there perhaps the multiple voices following a linear, performative text is the most prominent.



Education

The University of Chicago

- Expected AB, June 2011; Dean's List 2008-present, 3.72/4.00 GPA
- Fundamentals: Issues & Texts, Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations

Marion High School

- Class of '07, 4.02/4.00 GPA
- AP Scholar with Distinction, Presidential Scholar Candidate, National Merit Scholarship Finalist, National Honor Society

Experience

The Renaissance Society (contemporary art gallery)

Web Marketing Intern; 01/08 to present

- Developing new marketing strategies to increase gallery traffic and build arts community
- Advertising with Web 2.0 and social networking to build online outreach; creating and maintaining profiles on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and gallery website
- Planning events in conjunction with exhibitions; editing and archiving event recordings

University of Chicago Department of Creative Writing

Web Editing Intern 02/09 to present; Site Development Volunteer, 09/08- 02/09

- Writing press releases and advertising materials for events, marketing readings, lectures, classes and student contests using social media and networking sites
- Helped draft the grant for website funding, which resulted in an award of \$6,500
- Creating and maintaining departmental website, satellite sites, and social media profiles

University of Chicago Department of Music

Hall Manager; 09/07 to 06/08

- Set up and ran concerts, managed receptions following events
- Introduced performing artists and looked after their needs

Activities

- Art Should: Group building an arts community in Hyde Park, involved in arts education
- Private Tutor: Teaching critical reading/writing skills to University Lab School student
- Teaching Assistant: Maintaining internet components of class, helping run discussion for Theaster Gates' class, Intervention and Public Practice (ARTV 26200)

Skills and Interests

- Proficient in Microsoft Office Suite and Adobe Creative Suite
- Editing, publishing & layout experience: self-published 4 chapbooks
- Poetry, form & words: units of meaning, their relations and responsibilities
- Digital communities, or, the internet as anti-spectacle and interventionist practice