



**"AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH"**

A Performance in Five Chapters  
by  
Tony Allard

### *Introduction*

Over the last two and a half years, I have been creating a series of performances dealing with language and other forms of communication as they affect the human body and consciousness. *And the Word Was Made Flesh* is the fifth and most recent performance in this series.

This performance has a definite, linear structure, but has no linear narrative. There are five chapters, or short performance pieces, which are woven together by poetic associations and thematic elaborations. Additional chapters are being added as I develop them.

The structure and action of this performance is analogous to the act of reading a book: actions move from left to right, top to bottom. The performance moves in and out of the flat, abstract, and mental space of the text and the concrete, oral and physical space of my actions. Figures of speech are manifested in both word and action.

### *A Note on the Live Performance*

Before the beginning of the performance of each chapter, a video synopsis of that chapter is played, serving as an abstract prelude to the live performance. The video synopsis of each chapter consists of a static camera shot looking down on a cutting board at my hands engaged in cutting up a fruit or a vegetable. There are five chapters, each represented by a different fruit or vegetable. The space and the action in the video are made analogous to the act of writing on a sheet of paper: moving left to right, and top to bottom. As I cut up the particular fruit or vegetable for each chapter, I animate the pieces by "acting out" the contents of the live performance to follow.

The video synopsis is intended to emphasize the dichotomy between all forms of mediated reality and the actual experience they attempt to represent.

### *Setup*

Two slide projectors project rectangular images, side by side, giving the impression of an open book. At various times during the performance, a video projection comes on in the place of the slide projection at the right. Both taped and live video are seen on the video projection. All live action takes place in a left to right manner, analogous to the action of reading left to right.

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Chapter 1



"The Messiah Complex"

*Chapter 1: The Messiah Complex*

*Video:* Synopsis of chapter 1

*Action:* After video is finished, I come out with the apple stuffed in my mouth, mimicking as if I can't speak or hear. I make hand gestures to get two people from the audience to hold up a set of quotation marks. Once the quotes are in place, I begin to speak and pace back and forth inside the quotation marks. Two slide projections side by side give the appearance of an open book behind me.

*Spoken Text:* Before the word,  
there was this large expanse of pure,  
undifferentiated nothingness.  
Before the word  
there was this large expanse of pure, lucid indifference.  
Before the word  
there was nothing, no thing, zero, white noise.  
Before the word,  
there was no epistemology, no cosmology, no philosophy,  
no phone sex, no newspapers no problems.  
Before the word,  
there was no history, no pencils, no paper  
no love letters, no holy wars, no cold wars  
no honkies, no Niggers, no Olly North.  
Before the word  
it was cold and dark  
and very very quiet.

AND THEN CAME THE WORD  
AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH.  
And the flesh said,  
"I am the word and the word is my flesh.  
And my flesh says, 'Hey! I'm talking to you.  
I'm the first person  
I'm the second person  
I'm the third person

I am the voice in your head  
and I am in complete control because I have learned  
my ABC's, I have learned how to put  
one word in front of the other and walk  
right into your minds."

And the flesh went walking in the world and up and down in it, naming everything that came into contact with his senses.

And then the word said,  
"But what does all this mean?  
Why does everything in this world  
turn out to be a metaphor  
Why have we all come here to talk like this?  
Why are my thoughts invisible?  
Why do these words fail me when I  
want to tell you what is in my heart?  
Oh why is the torment always invisible?"

And the invisible torments continued to roam his body as the flesh walked out into the world and up and down in it, still wondering what is all this noise about?

*Action:* At this point, I place the microphone on a speaker which has a vagina drawn on it and is strapped to my crotch. A tape player plays through the speaker/vagina a voice announcing rumors of the arrival of a messiah.

*Taped Voice:* And then a voice came down from the psyche of the flesh and said, "Do you have a messiah complex? Are you waiting? Are you waiting for someone to arrive?" And the voice said, "There is rumor going round that a messiah will arrive, soon, in the Midwest. It is also rumored that this messiah will bring with him a new alphabet, a gift to the human race. This new alphabet will be capable of constructing a language that is infinitely more real, more true-to-life than the one we are presently struggling with. This new language will be infinitely more valuable because it will completely eliminate all the ambiguity, all the unreliability, all the pain and heartache of misinformation. This new language will create words which are as real as reality itself. This is only a rumor," the voice said. "Are you waiting for someone? Are you waiting? waiting? waiting? waiting?"

*Action:* After the tape is finished I again stuff the apple back in my mouth and mimic as if I am speechless and cannot hear when the quotation marks are taken down.

Chapter 2



"Post Virginal Ear"

*Chapter 2: Post Virginal Ear*

*Video:* Synopsis of chapter 2

*Action:* A boombox plays a rock 'n' roll song, "Who Do You Love?" As it plays, I dance on top of the boombox and draw lungs on my chest and a vagina on my crotch. I return to the rear wall and begin to speak, moving left to right and advancing towards the audience.

*Spoken Text:* (Spoken in a voice mimicking Laurie Anderson)  
 Now contrary to what some people think,  
 Language is not a virus from outer space.  
 Language is VOODOO and VOODOO is language.

Case-in-point number 1:

"Fuck you!" said the thirteen-year-old shaman  
 down at the mall.

"De-regulate," said the president.

"De-regulate. De-regulate."

"I love you," said the newlyweds to each other  
 beneath the cool bed sheets of the Holiday Inn.

"The sky is falling," said Henny Penny.

"Bombs away!" said Mr. Oppenheimer.

Language is VOODOO and VOODOO is language

Case-in-point number 2:

"Oh yeah, lover doll, stick your tongue down  
 my throat, down there where the memories are,  
 down there where the rich pathologies obey carnal demands."

Language is VOODOO and VOODOO is language

Case-in-point number 3:

Now I would like to put something in your e a r.

My name is T o n y.

I am inside your m i n d s.

You are filled with m e.

My mouth is what your ears are now drinking.

I am coming to you VIA my father's j i s m,

and my mother's w o r d, circa a cold night

in january, 1957 beneath the  
 cool bedsheets.

You have made your bed Mr. and Mrs. Allard,

now I must speak in it.

*Action:* As I tell the story of virgin birth, I bend over and place a funnel in my left ear.

*Spoken Text:* I want to give you something for  
your e a r s.

Now the story goes something like this:

The virgin Mary was supposedly impregnated by  
the word of God.

This means that Jesus was conceived through the  
e a r of the Virgin M a r y, VIA the voice  
of the annunciation angel, whispering the flesh of Jesus through her ear and  
into the virgin Mary's womb.

Which all goes to prove,  
that you better be careful where you put your  
words because they just might come true.

*Action:* As I speak I demonstrate the use of contraceptive foam.

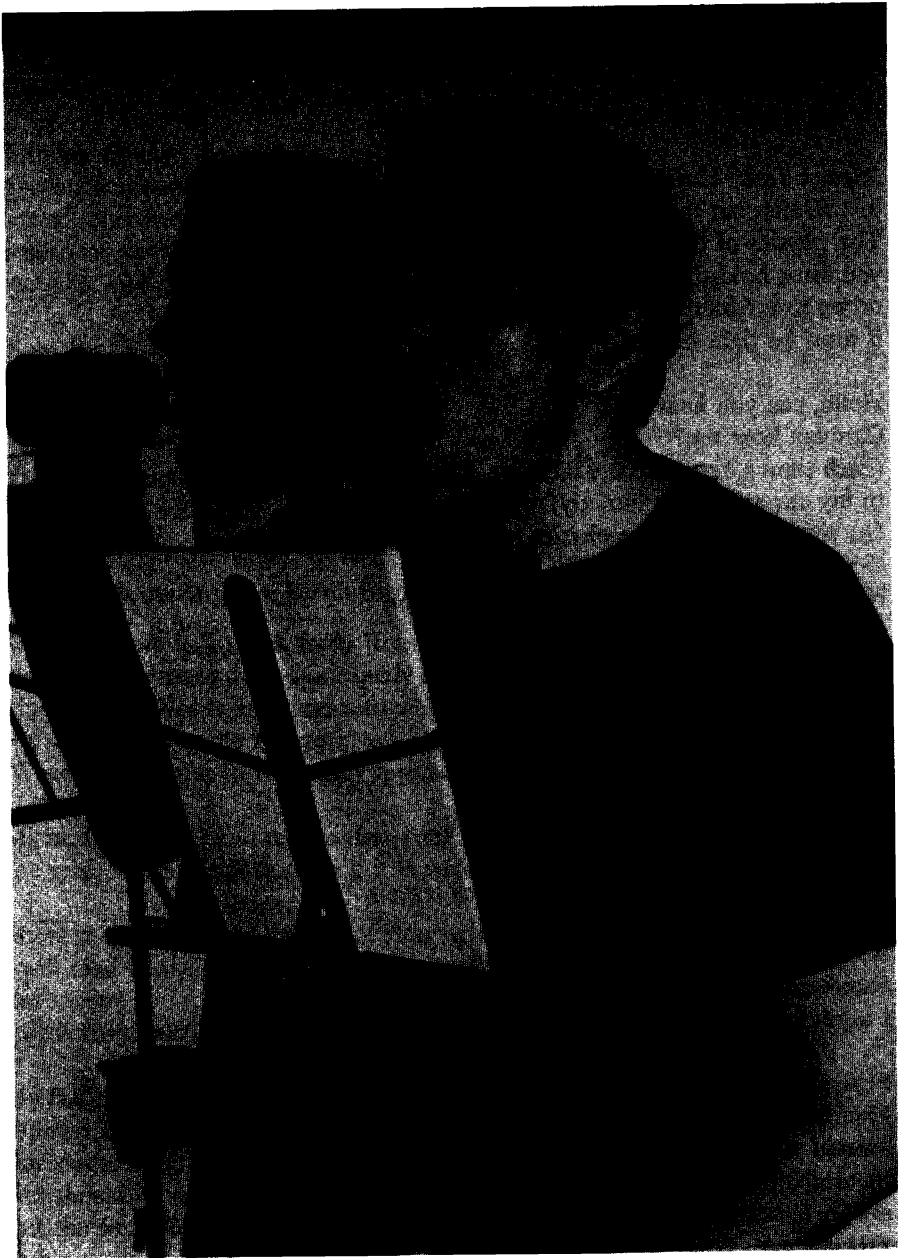
*Spoken Text:* Language is VOODOO and VOODOO is language.

Case-in-point number 4:

This is contraception. This is the applicator, plunger. The directions are simple: first, you place the plunger over the nozzle of the contraceptive can, then you push down, forcing the contraceptive foam out of the can and into the applicator plunger. Next, place the applicator plunger into the birth canal, push on the plunger handle, filling the canal with contraceptive foam. Once this is done, you have safely, effectively, and efficiently protected yourself from any thoughts, words, or phrases that may now enter the birth canal during sexual intercourse.



Chapter 3



"Phone Sex"

Chapter 3: *Phone Sex*

*Video:* Video synopsis of chapter 3

*Action:* I come out with a set of tin can telephones, giving a member of the audience one end of the phones while I stretch the string tight. I then begin to talk through the tin cans to the audience.

*Spoken Text:* I think you might understand the physics of this . . .  
just stretch out this string, pull it tight, CONTACT!  
The physics of this apparatus is that  
you must hold the string tight  
or we lose contact with each other . . .  
it must be tight or the connection will be broken.

Hello, can you hear me?  
Can you hear me?  
(each time a response is asked for, I put the can  
to my ear and listen intently)  
Do you understand the physics of this?  
Good!  
Now I am going to lift these words right off  
this sheet of paper and send them across  
the string to you, ok?  
Can you still hear me?  
Good!

Let's talk figuratively for a while, ok?  
Figuratively speaking, you might say that  
this string strung between us is the  
syntactical highway on which my voice travels  
from me to you.  
It's a little crude, but isn't all human  
communication just a bit crude?  
I agree!

Figuratively speaking, I am now inside you.  
Figuratively speaking, I am a ghost roaming  
around your mind and body.  
Figuratively speaking, your ear is now  
my performance space.  
TRUST me.  
TRUST me . . . it's what's written on this page!

Now I have always thought of language as an erotic  
need to undress reality, you know, kind of  
take off its physical clothes to reveal  
its metaphysical secrets underneath.  
Can you hear me, still?  
Can you?

Another thought I would like to send to you is that  
quoting someone else's words is like  
sexual reproduction. Quoting is like making  
your own, personalized copy of someone else's  
thoughts and giving them a new home inside your vagina mind.

Now, I want to give you some quotes in exchange  
for some you might have in your head and can  
send them across the line to me, ok?

The first quote I have is from Jesus Christ.  
He said, "He who drinks from my mouth will  
become as I am and I shall be as he."

(After each quote given, I wait for one in return from the audience.)

My next quote is, I think, from Robert Pinsky, but don't quote  
me on this because I am not exactly sure Pinsky said it.  
Pinsky said, "Words are elegies to what they represent."  
It's such a nice quote I'll say it again.  
"Words are elegies to what they represent."

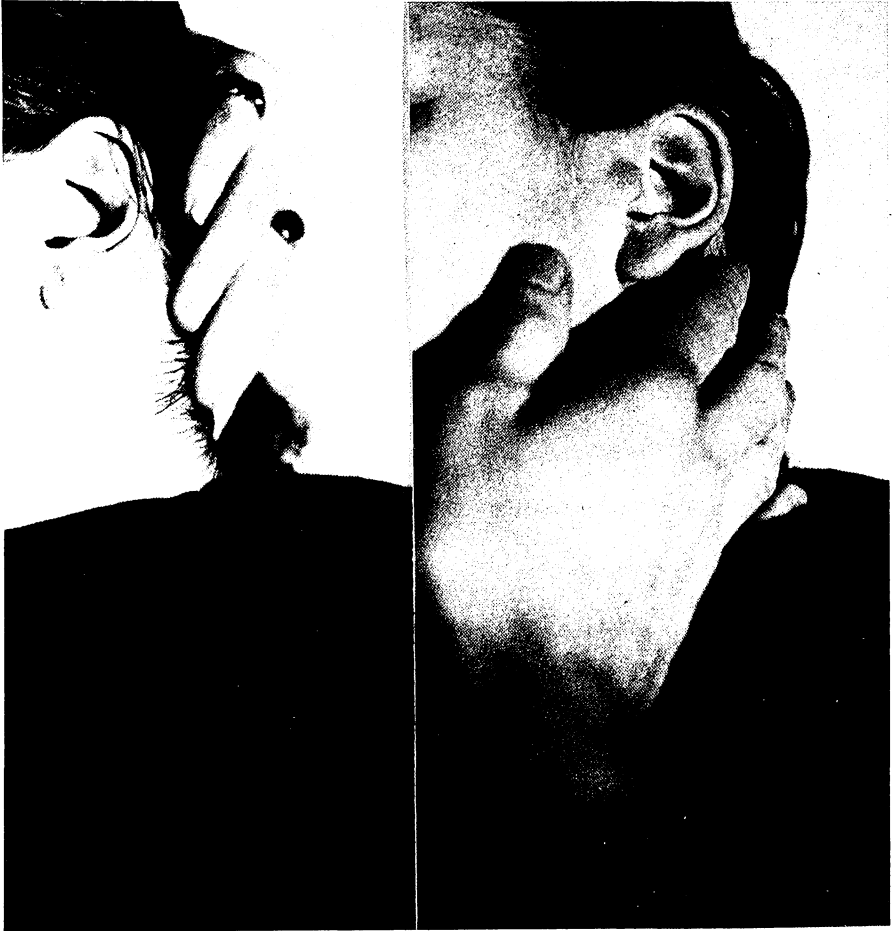
My next quote is from my brother Joe.  
Joe said, "Do *something*, even if it is wrong."

My next quote is from a book of Zen Koans.  
I will read it straight from the book, straight from  
the source.  
(reads from book)

My last three quotes are my favorite quotes from  
William Burroughs.  
Burroughs said, "Rational thought is a failed experiment  
and should be phased out.  
Cut the word lines.  
Rub out the word."

*Action:* A voice calls my name telling me my time is up and I must go. I then  
abruptly cut the string with a pair of scissors and leave quickly.

Chapter 4



"Some Theory; The Pleasure of the Text"

*Chapter 4: Some Theory; The Pleasure of the Text*

*Video:* Video synopsis of chapter 4

*Action:* I come from the left side, rubbing a book on my head, hollering, chanting, and wildly shaking my whole body. I sit down, all the shaking stops, except in my left leg.

*Spoken Text:* Now I would like to read from a GEM of a book I found in the bookstore. It is a GOLDMINE of a book, a real JEWEL. It is a book by Walter J. Ong. The title of the book is *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. The O in Ong tells me to place it to the right in the O section of my library.

Now, I don't know how to sing and have never been formally trained, but I have figured out a way to create vibrato in my voice without my vocal cords doing all the work. (Left leg is shaking still.) This is a GEM of a book. Now, if you will notice, my left leg has vibrato in it right now. The secret to getting the vibrato in my left leg and up into my throat is through my upper arm, like this. (Places elbow in shaking knee, causing shoulder and thus the voice to shake like vibrato.)

If my left leg gets tired, I will just switch to my right.

This is a GOLDMINE of a book.

(Now reads passages from the Ong book dealing with the onslaught of literacy into oral cultures. My voice shakes with vibrato from shaking knee.)

*Action:* a video comes on at right, plays three sections depicting the pleasures of the text: singing quotes from Hanna Arendt, writing love letters, and inserting contraceptive foam into a mail box. As the video plays, I burn old love letters inside a mail box and then destroy the mail box.

*Video Action #1:* A blues singer sings Arendt quotes with mirror image of myself cutting into the picture lip-syncing the blues singer.

IN

"And the question is, whether thinking and other invisible and soundless mental activities are meant to appear, or whether, in fact, they can never find an adequate home in the world."

--Arendt

OUT

"Art, therefore, which transforms sense objects into thought things, tears them, first of all, out of their context in order to derealize them and thus prepare them for their new and different function."

--Arendt

*Video Action #2:* Video camera follows mailman on his rounds, intercut with shots of two lovers coming closer and closer together in a doorway, and finally kissing. The blues singer continues to sing the quotes. My voice is heard in a voice over discussing how I have fallen in love three times by mail.

*Video Action #3:* A mailbox is first seen on a bed. I then pick it up, place it between my legs and proceed to instruct the viewers on how to put contraceptive foam into the mail box.

Chapter 5



"Freeze Tag"

*Chapter 5: Freeze Tag*

*Video:* Video synopsis of chapter 5

*Action:* I take video camera, which has statically been monitoring the performance, off the tripod and proceed with the camera to do these actions:

Fog up the lens of the video camera, making breath visible;

Trace vowels in the air with camera, facing audience;

Chant I, Thou, It, while pointing camera to what the words represent;

Tell the story of playing freeze tag as a kid. As I tell the story, I move the camera as if I am playing freeze tag with the audience.

*Spoken Text:* I can see it all now,  
 I can see it with my two vagina eyes.  
 I can see myself playing freeze tag  
 in the side yard of my mother's house.  
 I can see it with my two vagina verbs.  
 I can see it with my two verbal eyes.  
 There I am, playing with my brother  
 Joe and all the neighborhood kids  
 I can see it all with my eyes, now.  
 We are playing the version where  
 the one who is it must try and freeze  
 as many of us as he can by touching them,  
 freezing them into statues.  
 As he is trying to freeze everyone,  
 the ones who have not been frozen,  
 try to unfreeze the ones who have been frozen.  
 I can see it all, with my two vagina eyes.  
 Well, I got to thinking about our little game  
 of freeze tag and realized that this game is  
 a lot like the game the adult world  
 plays with words.  
 I realized the adult world is  
 obsessed with trying to freeze everything  
 into NOUNS, turn everything into a frozen name.  
 By trying to freeze everything into nouns,  
 they are denying their own verbal nature.

*Action:* I go into the audience with the camera and shake hands with members of the audience, introducing myself as Nature.



I then go back on stage and quote Jackson Pollack, saying, "I am Nature, I am in my paintings, I am Nature," etc., doing camera movements which mimic Pollack dripping paint on a canvas on the floor.

I then write with my toes, with camera between my legs.

Taped video comes on of a rabbit hopping around graveyard. This video is intended to emphasize the content of the words I wrote on the wall with mud.

White slide at left, I write on the walls with mud: "These words, little black coffins filled with fruit."

END



Los Angeles Poverty Dept. in "Jupiter 35" at Hwys 1989 and 1990 (John Malpede to right of skull).  
Photo copyright 1989 by Lukas Felzmann.