

Mayer Experiments

May 2019

a zine inspired by Bernadette Mayer's 82 Writing Experiments

Experiment 78.

Attempt to write about jobs and how they affect the writing of poetry.

A Declaration of Rights

The right to be left in peace
but maintain an active social life
Headlines read
Loneliness is more harmful than cigarettes
Looking for a job is a full time job
most of us are on an intern's salary
The right to work is constantly being defended
but what about the right to not have to
The right to be free from responsibility
to not worry for five minutes of every day
The right to say I looked after my mother
while she was dying
instead of forging a career
now I just want someone to look after me
The right to not be in other people's business
to not ever hear
You have no right to spend that on shoes
While the real Imeldas march on
The right to be able to skip a meal
And not have a stomach bleat incessantly
an idea was more important than sustenance
in that moment
The right to actually lay in bed all day
with a new lover who, for the first time,
keeps you calm
The right to write something without worrying
If people will like it
If anyone will even care
The right to ignore people who say
Do what you love and eventually you'll be paid for it
The right to find your own way out of this mess

Ruby Brunton

Experiment 3.

Systematically derange the language: write a work consisting only of prepositional phrases, or, add a gerund to every line of an already existing work.

finding yourself

beneath the crooked teeth
over the spirit and
below the soul fire
laying in the weeds
upwards of a smile, I move
towards a prickle bush
although my skin is soft
into my arms I gather the reeds
upon my skin a blush
into my arms I gather you
and draw it out again
as one would draw the desperate blood
from wounds within the skin
the body's made for bellowing
the face, mirrors constant echoing
you are standing in the silent window
waving to yourself
across the field

Valerie Massie

Question Poem.

Answer a question or a series of questions in a poem. You could include the questions in the poem or not.

<MOM>

I did not listen to my mother. And now as I bite down on a green candy-coated maltball, my tooth cracks and so does the sound of my mother's laugh. When she texts me, I see MOM light up on my phone. It is always alarming. I think something is wrong. Then I see she asks me about my teeth and I lie to her about making appointments. When she asks me if I am getting a crown, she types "you have my teeth". When she asks me if I am getting a bridge, she types "a bridge, at your age". My teeth are soft, she says it runs in our family: they are yellowing and sometimes I think it might be easier to remove all of them and get permanent dentures. Apparently you only have to go every 8 years to get them glued. Or cemented. When you pull a tooth you pull a root, that looks like a road splitting two ways. Or a wishbone. I used to like to watch my mother put on makeup: her lips always red in the morning. By the time she got home from work, the red outline only remained. Art. Sometimes her toothbrush would have a little lipstick on the head of it, because she had forgotten. When the dentist needs to pull a tooth, they say: this tooth cannot be saved. As if I've failed it. As my mother gets smaller with age, I want to protect her. When I didn't have a dentist, because I couldn't pay for an appointment or any work, she told me to go anyways and put it on my credit card. She knows something I don't yet. That I will need them. I should listen to my mother, when she tells me how to bite down to spill the blood. To tell someone to fuck off (the F sounds really need that exaggerated lip flicking on the front teeth). She tells me: take care of your teeth. I say: ok.

Andrea Grassi

Experiment 18.

Explore the possibilities of lists, puzzles, riddles, dictionaries, almanacs, etc.
Consult the thesaurus where categories for the word "word" include: word as news, word as message, word as information, word as story, word as order or command, word as vocalable, word as instruction, promise, vow, contract.

What people have said to me since I had a child

Do you work?

I don't know how you do it.

I would die of boredom.

Do you want to work?

I don't want to make you feel bad, but *we* have no money because *we're* saving a grand a month for retirement.

What do you do?

I couldn't stand to be with my child all day.

It's *so* boring.

Does he want something?

Why don't you work?

Don't you want to work?

What did you do before you had your son?

Do you write children's books?

Why don't you write children's books?

Don't you want to write children's books?

Do you illustrate your writing?

Doesn't it get boring?

What do you do all day?

I could never do that

How do you do it?

Why do you do it?

I could never do that

I could never

I could never

I would never

do that

Raquel Vogl

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Consult the thesaurus where categories for the word "word" include: word as news, word as message, word as information, word as story, word as order or command, word as vocalable, word as instruction, promise, vow, contract.

Dear H,

You have used language that curses my nerves.
Write these few words down.

Heroin n. **1** a highly addictive illegal drug.

Heroine n. **1** a woman admired for her courage. **2** the chief female character in a story.

Hers possess, pron. belonging to her.

H is to sin, to take away from.

So highly, hallucinating, in hibernation, to hoolahoop, within.

I look forward to finding answers in my dreaming fevers. Over there, there is a woman who has to rescue her long legged wading bird who got hurt by the herring because he ate too much.

[How can this be? How are you still hesitant? How can it be that he will never learn?]

As the heroine spills her guts. As those words give up, like heterosexual gulping sounds to the throat or some could just call this all a bunch of v. (hiccuping.)

Sincerely,

How bad it hurts.

Jenna Kennedy

Experiment 29.

Dream work: record dreams daily, experiment with translation or transcription of dream thought, attempt to approach the tense and incongruity appropriate to the dream, work with the dream until a poem or song emerges from it, use the dream as an alert form of the mind's activity or consciousness, consider the dream a problem-solving device, change dream characters into fictional characters, accept dream's language as a gift.

Dream Home

when i wake up and am still dreaming
i am left with two hands walking
legs weren't enough for the king of cats
who lured me out of a dreamscape nap
my scarred and scary lioness escaped
my stomach kennel ache untamed
and ate your stomach out instead
she found a whole new home in death
in depth within a terror filled moan
and grinned ringed teeth of towered bone
children waving out the windows
clotheslined linens billow westwards
these are just a frame of reference
guiding her back home

Valerie Massie

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Dream work: record dreams daily, experiment with translation or transcription of dream thought, attempt to approach the tense and incongruity appropriate to the dream, work with the dream until a poem or song emerges from it, use the dream as an alert form of the mind's activity or consciousness, consider the dream a problem-solving device, change dream characters into fictional characters, accept dream's language as a gift.

Chauv, short for Chauvinist

No one was surprised when I finally met Chauv. The young Chauv had again climbed up from the edge of the pier, out of the turquoise water, and had run dripping through the cobblestone streets of the fishing town. He raced along the roads that have, for so long, peacefully traced themselves on the steep hillsides, past the olive trees, past the bleached stucco walls of houses and the terracotta roofs. Everyone who saw him looked the other way or disappeared as quickly as possible into houses. I turned around from hanging out my laundry, and I knew exactly who he was when I saw him.

Chav had been stalking our village for months now. He ran around terrorizing us all wearing a real shark's head. He'd killed a shark, chopped it in two, gutted it, and placed the head on top of his own. I could see his small face peeking out from behind the bloody mouth and teeth of the shark, his tiny body. He couldn't have been older than five. He began to chase me, screaming *Chauv* repeatedly. I know that Chauv is short for chauvinist and that I am related to Chauv. I am his mother. My long white dress trips me up and he is upon me, I see the blood dripping down his small body, the sandpaper skin of the shark, the dark eyes, the teeth, the teeth. He's gone as quick as he came and blood stains my dress.

Raquel Vogl

Experiment 15.

Make a pattern of repetitions.

Sorry

His hair takes new shape, he is now dark prince exiting shower with only smiles on
I'm sorry.
His teeth are big and chalky and only slightly stained
I'm really sorry to you.
His voice vibrates back centuries I do not understand
I'm really sorry im sorry my phone was dead i couldn't text u.
His taste in music makes my hips breathe in and out
I feel sick i'm sorry i couldn't answer u.
His hands make fire and food and warmth and everything tastes so good
I'm sorry but I decided to stay at home I'm already drunk.
His cigarette rests in the middle, burning more and more
I'm really sorry to say so late but tomorrow for sure we can meet.
His brown eyes are muddy and delicate and I want to kiss them over and over
I'm sorry but it was a bad day for me and I wanna stay in here,pls dont misunderstood me.
His promises shift with the moon, under me over me and on top of me
I'm sorry, it was over, I'm sorry if I couldn't be clear.
His mind will change again and he will love me again
I'm really sorry.
I'm sorry.
Sorry.

Jenna Kennedy

Experiment 8.

Write as you think, as close as you can come to this, that is, put pen to paper and don't stop. Experiment writing fast and writing slow.

Slow it Down

My activities no longer feel futile
yet some days feet still drag
Heels ache but boots bang
school cuts time to sun salute in two
Someone make an app
that lets you do asanas in your sleep
voices blare over loudspeakers
We won't leave
till the police do
till the army do
Fuego a la carcel
More fun to leave on read than be left
Young man, do not ask to read my latest
intrepidation into woman using BDSM
as a form of self investigation
or I may just have to investigate myself
in you
Imagining richnesses pouring down,
alleviating tristeza
Gold ransom paid for Atahualpa
filled a church twice over
and still they slit him in the square
Sadistic bastards - we won't leave
till you do
There's never enough when there are still
continents left to plunder
Tick tock tick tock
Wrist shot
Heels ache but boots bang
In the future I'll be able to complete my asanas
in my sleep

Ruby Brunton

Experiment 39.

Write a work gazing into a mirror without using the pronoun I.

How to know

Two forks above brows,
can you blend into,
separate into
another?
Once in the shower
and seeing a reflection,
wondering if it is a portal
and maybe once broken
do you slide into,
into the dimension or universe
of your essence or past life or longing?

Little hinges make the time
feel real when things in the picture settle,
feel like they have been carved that way in space for lifetimes.
Lines in the pictures like tree rings are
depth as proof of experience,
or like a parking space,
lines as proof of existence.
“Which light results in the best mood?”
Geneshagoddess123 says: pink,
Picesmoon1111111 says: green,
BigloveintuititveBOSS says: white.

Flip hair to the left side,
Flip hair to the right.
Do you think you are beautiful when you cry?
Think back:
the disappointed look on their face --
is it clear?
Becoming a fish,
moving through honey,
but fare warning:
bubbles as points of focus
are never a very good idea
(Mother?
School?
Manager?)
If they only think of one tower
you must have made a little mistake.
If they can't think of just one tower,

because so many crumbled,
text them again, but then again, how to know.

Andrea Grassi

Experiment 39.

Write a work gazing into a mirror without using the pronoun I.

Becoming the Body

Looking in the mirror
the body fits into my eyes so frantically
as though my pupils have been carved to its shape
So ungracefully
Unlike the river lapping tenderly at the shore
tickling the sands
No, here it is a ripping tumultuous affair
Spreading me open
Raw and dumb
It tears at the edges of my retina
Pulls and tugs at the dark blue coloured part of the eye
Where the mirror gets in
Inside
When you look at it directly
Where eye reflects eye and sees
the self eternal
flesh impermanent
The lucid reminder of chemicals
An oil spill turning rainbow
A dull stone and a shiny one under water
Like hot breath in cold air
The gaze extends
Until it's big enough that the body slips right in
Like a snake to a hole
Not a window to the soul
She slinks in like a predator stealing the home of another
winds herself deep inside and coils tight
As though looping into a hypnotists swirl
Saying "Thisssss issss my home now"

Valerie Massie

Experiment 61.

Write occasional poems for weddings, for rivers, for birthdays, for other poets' beauty, for movie stars maybe, for the anniversaries of all kinds of loving meetings, for births, for moments of knowledge, for deaths. Writing for the "occasion" is part of our purpose as poets in being-this is our work in the community wherein we belong and work as speakers for others.

New Year, Same Hoe

Strangers want me to dredge up old memories
Here with a shovel trying to bury
deep down in the mud
People I don't know won't let me close the coffin
Want me to pull open the lid take a big old peek

It's not that we're all getting more fucked up
My therapist assures
It's that life gets more and more complicated

My body can no longer handle anything
anymore
Not booze, not exercise
Contaminated air havoc wrecks my skin
I am an aging teenager

Once I had a dream my ex boyfriend was narrating my inner thoughts
to a large audience
He called it a performance

I tell Anna even when I had a boyfriend I never
kissed him in public

She laughs, really thinks I'm joking

I don't like doing anything in public
Unless I'm in character

I hate to even answer my phone

Ruby Brunton

Experiment 20.

The possibilities of synesthesia in relation to language and words: the word and the letter as sensations, colors evoked by letters, sensations caused by the sound of a word as apart from its meaning, etc. And the effect of this phenomenon on you; for example, write in the water, on a moving vehicle.

Re-memory in the Valley

In the valley everyone had a pool,
the bottom of ours was razor sharp.

Single mom let the water go green,
minerals overwhelmed
the balance of water and chlorine.

Daggers of calcium lined the floor
underneath the murky water.

The Brownies came over for a dip,
we cut up our feet in the shallow end
and tracked wet bloody footprints through the house.

I turned the boombox on with one wet finger:

Para bailar La Bamba
Para bailar La Bamba

Six-year-olds dance on the shiny hardwood, feet still bleeding.

Pruned hands grip popsicles, drip on drip down bare arms,
shivering starts, and all the girls scurry home.

Se necessita una poca de gracia
Una poca de gracia

La bamba has been stuck in my head for thirty-five years.

I can still smell the searing California sun,
the dry air sucked deep into lungs.

Palms don't give any shade,
so I throw up a hand to keep the rays from my eyes
and then cannonball back into the pool.

Remember the closing scene of *La Bamba*,
Ritchie Valens buried in the San Fernando Mission.
Hearse glides along a long row of palms.
I watch it on repeat because I know you are buried there.

How can I be close to you?

Your figures inhabit the walls of the cedar caskets,
the sweetness of the magnolia and gardenia verge on rot,
fleshy flowers are proxies for your lives.

Por ti sere, por ti sere, por ti sere.

The song starts up again
and I trot along.

Raquel Vogl

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The possibilities of synesthesia in relation to language and words: the word and the letter as sensations, colors evoked by letters, sensations caused by the sound of a word as apart from its meaning, etc. And the effect of this phenomenon on you; for example, write in the water, on a moving vehicle.

That Thing That “God” Made For Us

I used to beg to that “God” thing that made “Us” for someone like “You” to fall from the sky and into my lap so that “I” could hold “You” and “You” could hold me and “We” could share all of “Our” experiences that that “God” thing made for “Us”.

Now I like to measure my love by distances, like the long ones I used to run when I was little. I don’t know for certain if I can travel as far as I can keep my hand dry in this tub before my cigarette gets wet or worse, burns me. I’d like to say I’m chasing things I know I can never catch up to.

I heard somewhere people used to clean themselves with burnt up ashes. I put my father’s ashes in his grave and I didn’t like it. I wouldn’t have chosen that spot but everyone else was doing it. Like my brother and my sister and my step mother and they were crying, so it made it harder to say anything, like that it really mattered to me and that I knew he would have much rather been thrown into the lake, without any question about it.

I think that smell is love gone rotten. I only know this because that is all that is left to linger after all those “God” things give up on you and you're decomposing faster than love’s little laughs. It’s too quick to count the ways I’m going to miss you, so instead I’ll look forward to all the smells of the dead things after.

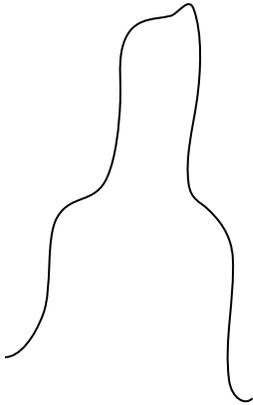
Jenna Kennedy

Experiment 1.

Pick a word or phrase at random, let your mind play freely around it until a few ideas have come up, then seize on one and begin to write. Try this with a non-connotative word, like "so" etc.

Berming

The ember falling into the tick grasses
feeling better already, because we have
pressed the blades down
while climbing the berm.



The highway is behind you. Looking out onto water, and moon, orange-
thin
like a gold ring, once spotted, making you descend from a height
unmeasured
just felt.

A berm from both
sides, but also a
head and
shoulders.

No ticks - no
Only
alone
on that

Perhaps a tick in the tall grass or the lines on
his face.

fires - no falling.
worrying about being
forever
ridge at the edge of the
this perch was called a

park;
I thought
"burn"
but then was
by the person

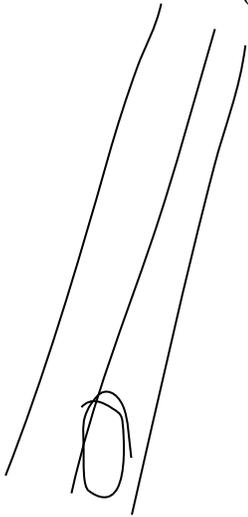
corrected
who designed it.

Looking at the families
pets flipping over,
soft-bellies not knowing the difference
between loyalty and love.
Press your skin and check
for the tiny black flecks

playing frisbee and

that can sit and burrow,
and years later give you lyme disease.
Press the grasses
to look for the tiny orange glow.
Maybe we can just spit on the whole area
(to be safe).
Look behind you, but don't go that way.
Just breathe into your belly and rotate, keeping your limbs facing forward.
Move down slowly,
or slide quickly
(whatever your style).
Try and look out, then up (as to not strain your neck).

Andrea Grassi



One knee or one eye.