

org is an online platform, collecting, describing, presenting and generating documents of all sorts. It documents documents.

Your path through the collection lead along Ulcer, Roofing (3) – Simon, tu me manques, Debatably graded, It's Pouring, Consolations, Thunder Afar, Neptune in opposition [7/20] – Leather, Neptune in opposition [4/20] – Dispersion, Iguanodon, Passing Time Near a Particle Accelerator, From Asturias, Into Cantabria, Neptune in opposition [13/20] – A foraging fox, Shelter, 12M m3 [1/8] Rapid Snowmelt, It's Pouring, Debatably graded, Roofing (3) – Simon, tu me manques

What constitutes a 'document' and how does it function?

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the etymological origin is the Latin 'documentum', meaning 'lesson, proof, instance, specimen'. As a verb, it is 'to prove or support (something) by documentary evidence', and 'to provide with documents'. The online version of the *OED* includes a draft addition, whereby a document (as a noun) is 'a collection of data in digital form that is considered a single item and typically has a unique filename by which it can be stored, retrieved, or transmitted (as a file, a spreadsheet, or a graphic)'. The current use of the noun 'document' is defined as '*something* written, inscribed, etc., which furnishes evidence or information upon any subject, as a manuscript, title-deed, tomb-stone, coin, picture, etc.' (emphasis added).

Both 'something' and that first 'etc.' leave ample room for discussion. A document doubts whether it functions as something unique, or as something reproducible. A passport is a document, but a flyer equally so. Moreover, there is a circular reasoning: to document is 'to provide with documents'. Defining (the functioning of) a document most likely involves ideas of communication, information, evidence, inscriptions, and implies notions of objectivity and neutrality – but the document is neither reducible to one of them, nor is it equal to their sum. It is hard to pinpoint it, as it disperses into and is affected by other fields: it is intrinsically tied to the history of media and to important currents in literature, photography and art; it is linked to epistemic and power structures. However ubiquitous it is, as an often tangible thing in our environment, and as a concept, a document *deranges*.

the-documents.org continuously gathers documents and provides them with a short textual description, explanation, or digression, written by multiple authors. In *Paper Knowledge*, Lisa Gitelman paraphrases ‘documentalist’ Suzanne Briet, stating that ‘an antelope running wild would not be a document, but an antelope taken into a zoo would be one, presumably because it would then be framed – or reframed – as an example, specimen, or instance’. The gathered files are all documents – if they weren’t before publication, they now are. That is what the-documents.org, irreversibly, *does*. It is a zoo turning an antelope into an ‘antelope’.

As you made your way through the collection, the-documents.org tracked the entries you viewed. It documented your path through the website. As such, the time spent on the-documents.org turned into this – a new document.

This document was compiled by _____ on 23.07.2026 21:06, printed on _____ and contains 17 documents on 39 pages. (<https://the-documents.org/log/23-07-2026-6835/>)

the-documents.org is a project created and edited by De Cleene De Cleene; design & development by atelier Haegeman Temmerman.

the-documents.org has been online since 23.05.2021.

Notes

- De Cleene De Cleene is Michiel De Cleene and Arnout De Cleene. Together they form a research group that focusses on novel ways of approaching the everyday, by artistic means and from a cultural and critical perspective.
www.decleenedecline.be / info@decleenedecline.be
- This project was made possible with the support of the Flemish Government and KASK & Conservatorium, the school of arts of HOGENT and Howest. It is part of the research project *Documenting Objects*, financed by the HOGENT Arts Research Fund.

Sources

- Briet, S. *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?* Paris: Edit, 1951.
- Gitelman, L. *Paper Knowledge. Toward a Media History of Documents*. Durham/ London: Duke University Press, 2014.
- *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Accessed on 13.05.2021.



Flanders
State of the Art



In Zaffelare, young men who were called for military service but could not be missed at home were advised by the local doctor to swallow a small ball of aluminium foil an hour before the examination. In the X-ray, a gastric ulcer appeared. They were rejected for service. It is uncertain whether the increased incidence of gastric ulcers among young men in Zaffelare was a cause for concern.



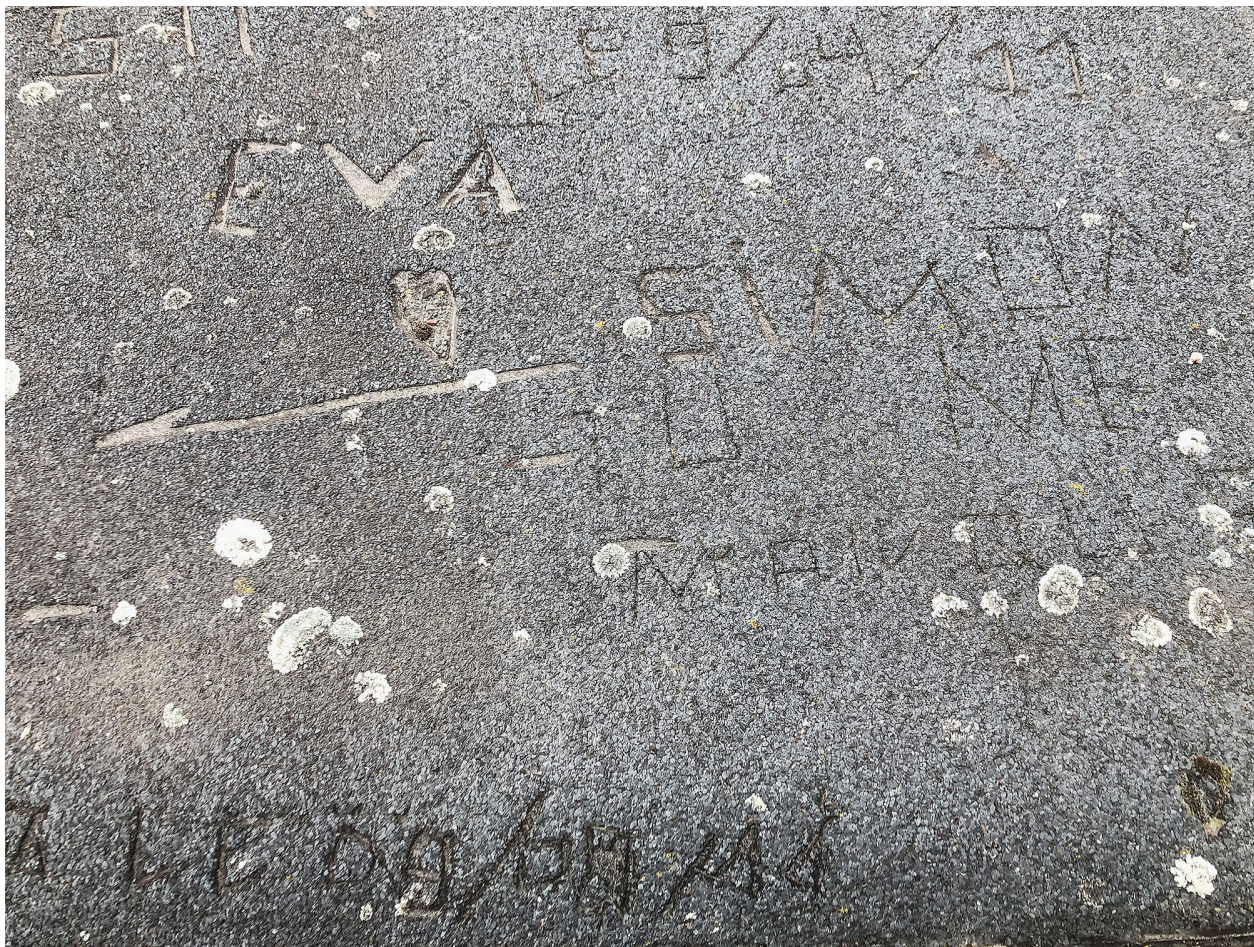
type	date	filename	size	author
scan	26.02.2026	20240402-SC17.tif	43,47 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
conflict, government, medicine, rural area

10:45:28

In what order and by whom the various texts and drawings were carved into the soft roofing is unclear. To the right of 'EVA', a heart symbol and an arrow (pointing to the left), the roofing reads 'SIMON TU ME MANQUES'.

The short sentence usually – yet hastily – translates to 'Simon, I miss you'. However, in French the 'you' (*tu*) is the subject and has an active role, whereas the 'I' (*me*) is the direct object. In short: by his not being there, Simon actively effectuates hurt to the one who carved this text.



type
photograph

date
14.04.2021

filename
IMG_6512.jpeg

size
4,50MB

author
Michiel De Cleene

category
automobile, decoration, fissure, parking, roofing, sign

12:10:25

The two photographs arrived in Belgium inside a used hardback¹ in spring 2016, though it is unclear how long before that time they were actually taken.²

Photograph #1 measures 151 x 100 mm and shows

Notes

- 1 The book is a first edition, first printing hardback copy of *Word Virus: the William S. Burroughs reader*, edited by James Grauerholz and Ira Silverberg, with an introduction by Ann Douglas, published by Grove Press (New York) in 1998 (160mm x 235mm, 532pp.). On the used book aggregator webstore, the book was graded 'Very Good' (or, VG),* which proved a realistic assessment as it appeared (in fact, still does) largely unread with a dust jacket in equally good condition and no markings inside whatsoever. In fact, the book's condition might well have warranted a 'Fine' (F) grading were it not for the only notable (yet not noted) defect, which was that the 'Spoken Word CD' that was originally included — as indicated by a 32mm diameter round sticker in the top right corner of the front of the dust jacket, and the glued-in envelope in the back of the book — was no longer present. This defect may well have accounted for the apparent disparity between the state and grading of the book and the low price of \$4.53 (shipping not included) it was sold at, although the fact remains that this incomplete state ought to have been mentioned in the listing. Since the time of purchase, however, markings were added to the book, presumably with an additional adverse effect on its market value: appearing on the half-title page, they are in dark green crayon and of an abstract nature and were made by the current owner's infant son.
* According to the terminology of the grading scale proposed in 1949 by *AB Bookman's Weekly* and still widely, if not universally, in use in the online used book market today, albeit with some additions or modifications by individual platforms. See [Wikipedia](#) for a brief overview.
- 2 Elements of style and physical nature of the artifacts may be taken to indicate an origin roughly contemporaneous with the book.
- 3 '[In the United States of America, the] twelfth grade is the twelfth school year after kindergarten. It is also the last year of compulsory secondary education, or high school. Students are often 17–19 years old. Twelfth graders are referred to as Seniors.' (Wikipedia)
- 4 A 7-digit phone number, without country or area code, redacted here.
- 5 Located in the state of Nevada, no further identification of the particular shop was provided on the aggregator webstore, and it must be noted that the book was subsequently shipped from 'Auburn', presumably Auburn, CA.
- 6 Indeed in accordance with its 'Very Good' grading, which is generally understood to explicitly list any defects such as markings (including dedications) but also any missing materials.
- 7 Quality hardbacks being notably easier to read without damaging the book.
- 8 Speculations on this, and any potential subsequent extrapolations are, fortunately perhaps, further inhibited by the fact that the book presents a rather generous cross-section of writings spanning the entirety of William S. Burroughs' famously prolific career. The inclusions span the period between 1929 and 1994. Although undertakings of this kind will inevitably meet with criticism, the consensus indeed seems to be that the editors have done an excellent job in selecting and presenting the material. Was 'Clay' mainly drawn by the hard-boiled straightforward prose style of the early novels; the highly experimental and provocative writings of the 'middle period' (traditionally labeled as rather 'hermetic' and 'cold', though they are quite often not without a haunting, perhaps even 'poetic' quality); or the later, one might say 'integrated' style which saw the earlier experiments wedded to a certain 'return to narrative' and, in old age, traces of a much more 'humane' author than ever before (if a point of critique may yet be formulated, one might indeed say that the writings from this later period (roughly 1978–1997) are somewhat favoured (quantitatively) in the *Word Virus* volume; as these have a (still: relatively) greater 'readability' than much of the older material that may indicate a decision of a commercial nature, yet there is also the fact that these texts were written in collaboration with one of the editors of *Word Virus*)?
- 9 Being in fact a promo sampler for the 4CD *Giorno Poetry Systems* compilation of William S. Burroughs material also released (by Mouth Almighty Records and Mercury Records) in 1998. See [Discogs](#).
- 10 Nevada has three area codes (702, 725, and 775), yet quick Google searches of the 7-digit number combined with any one of those yield no easy identification. Considering the overall scarcity of information, however, it seems clear that anyone seeking to reconstruct the biographies of 'Clay' and/or the note-writer should take up this line of investigation.
- David Depestel hesitates in trying to make something of himself; a character, a profession, a fixed mode of being, are for him concepts that already shadow forth the outlines of the skeleton, which is all that will be left of him in the end.

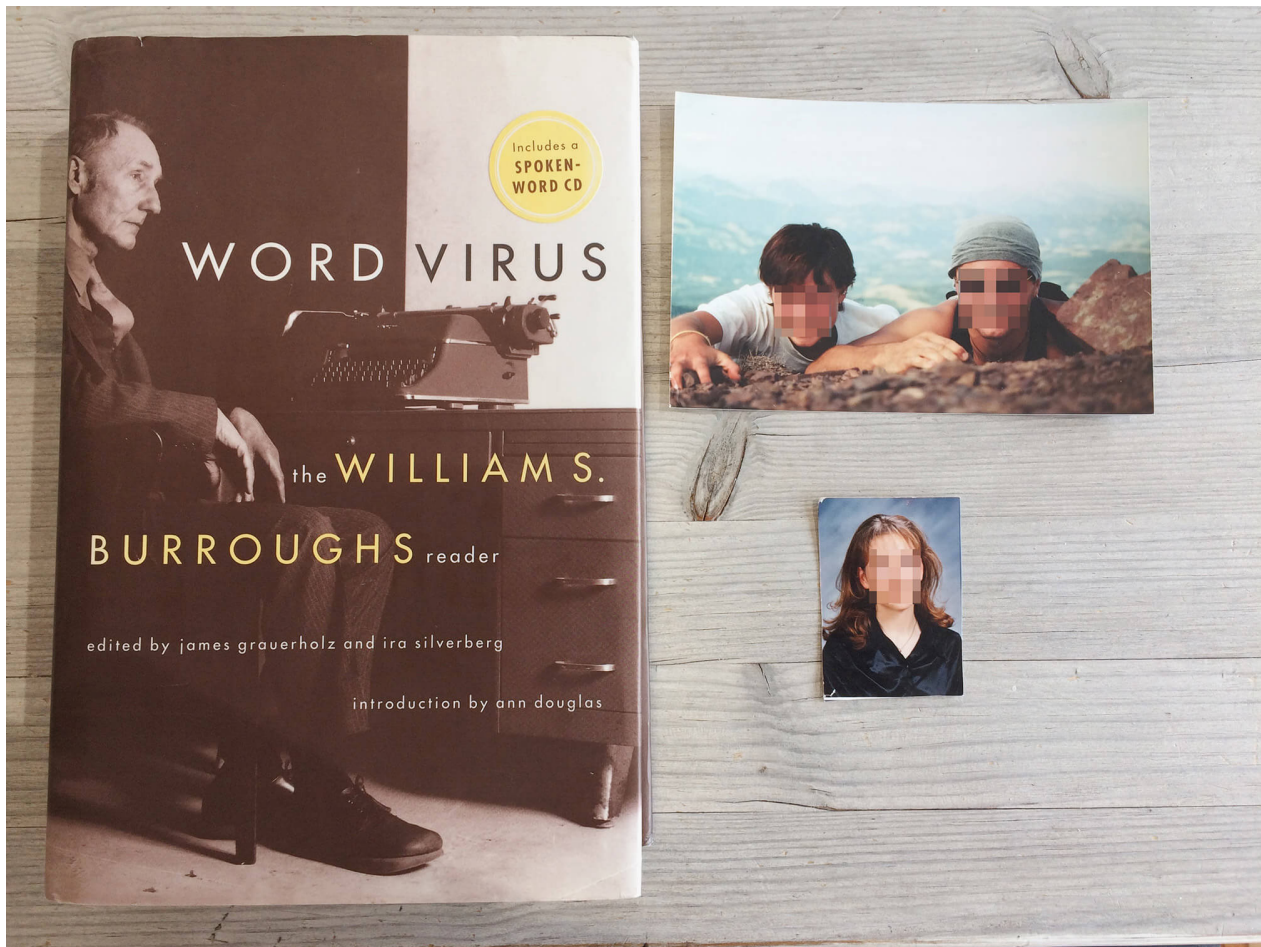
two young people who appear to be mountain climbing and captured while clearing a ridge. Behind the two subjects a bluish mountainous landscape is vaguely visible, suggesting a vantage point of some considerable elevation. The person on the left is wearing a white T-shirt and a bracelet, and has several earrings. The person on the right is carrying a backpack. What appears to be a black tank-top may in fact also be the straps of the pack. On their head they wear what appears to be a grey T-shirt or other garment, presumably to protect the subject from the sun; this person also has earrings and is wearing a necklace and sunglasses. The weather appears nice, both subjects are smiling and appear relaxed. The effort may well have been staged.

Photograph #2 measures (approximately) 43 x 62 mm with the left, bottom and right sides appearing to be cut, rather unevenly, with scissors. It has the typical appearance of an American high school yearbook photo and shows a young person wearing a shiny black blouse and a necklace. They have blue eyes and below-shoulder length auburn hair. The red lips appear painted. On the back of this photograph is written in a clearly legible hand:

*Clay, I can't
wait until next
year when we're
in grade 12!³
Have a great
Summer and
call me [XXX XXXX]⁴
by the way, I haven't
forgot about how big UR*

The only assumptions to be made somewhat safely from these two items are that (a) the book has once belonged to 'Clay', and, (b) a relationship of a close, friendly, perhaps even intimate, nature has at one time existed between 'Clay' and the person in the second photograph (assuming also that (c) the note on the back of the second photograph was indeed written by the person in that photograph). The circumstances surrounding, and/or motivations ('Clay''s or any third parties') behind the book's ending up in a used-book shop⁵ must necessarily remain a matter of speculation. There are no reasons to assume that the book was gifted to 'Clay' by the note-writer (or by anyone else) as no dedication appears in it.⁶ It must also remain inconclusive whether there are either two or three different

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_used_book_conditions
² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12_twelfth_grade#United_States
³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12_twelfth_grade#United_States
⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12_twelfth_grade#United_States
⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12_twelfth_grade#United_States
⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12_twelfth_grade#United_States



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	18.10.2022	IMG_0059.JPG, IMG_058.JPG	2,11 MB, 1,55 MB	David Depestel
category				
book, collecting, encounter, landscape, literature				

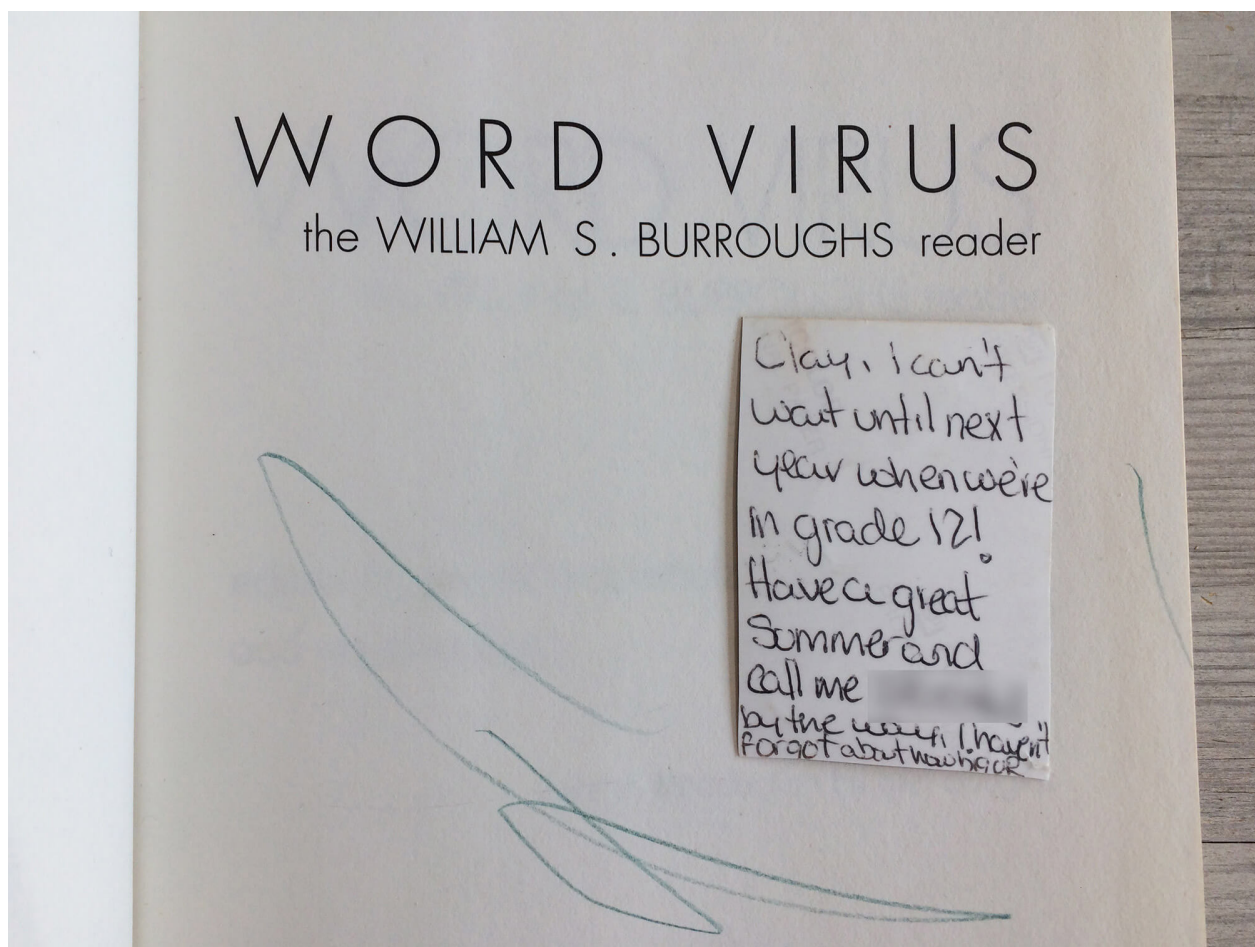
12:11:33

persons appearing across the two photographs, and whether any of these is in fact ‘Clay’.

the-documents.c

Indeed, the number of questions raised by these items far exceeds the number of answers they provide. Even leaving aside the nature of the writings in the book, one cannot help but speculate as to:

- how much, if any, of the book ‘Clay’ ever read;^{7,8}
- what happened to the CD originally included with the book;⁹
- why the unrelated inserted materials were not removed from the book before sale (as opposed to the CD);
- whether ‘Clay’ did in fact ring up the writer of the note over that summer;¹⁰ indeed whether the two ever did meet again, remain close during their ‘senior’ year, perhaps even stay in contact after graduating;
- the meaning of the rather cryptic final line of the note.



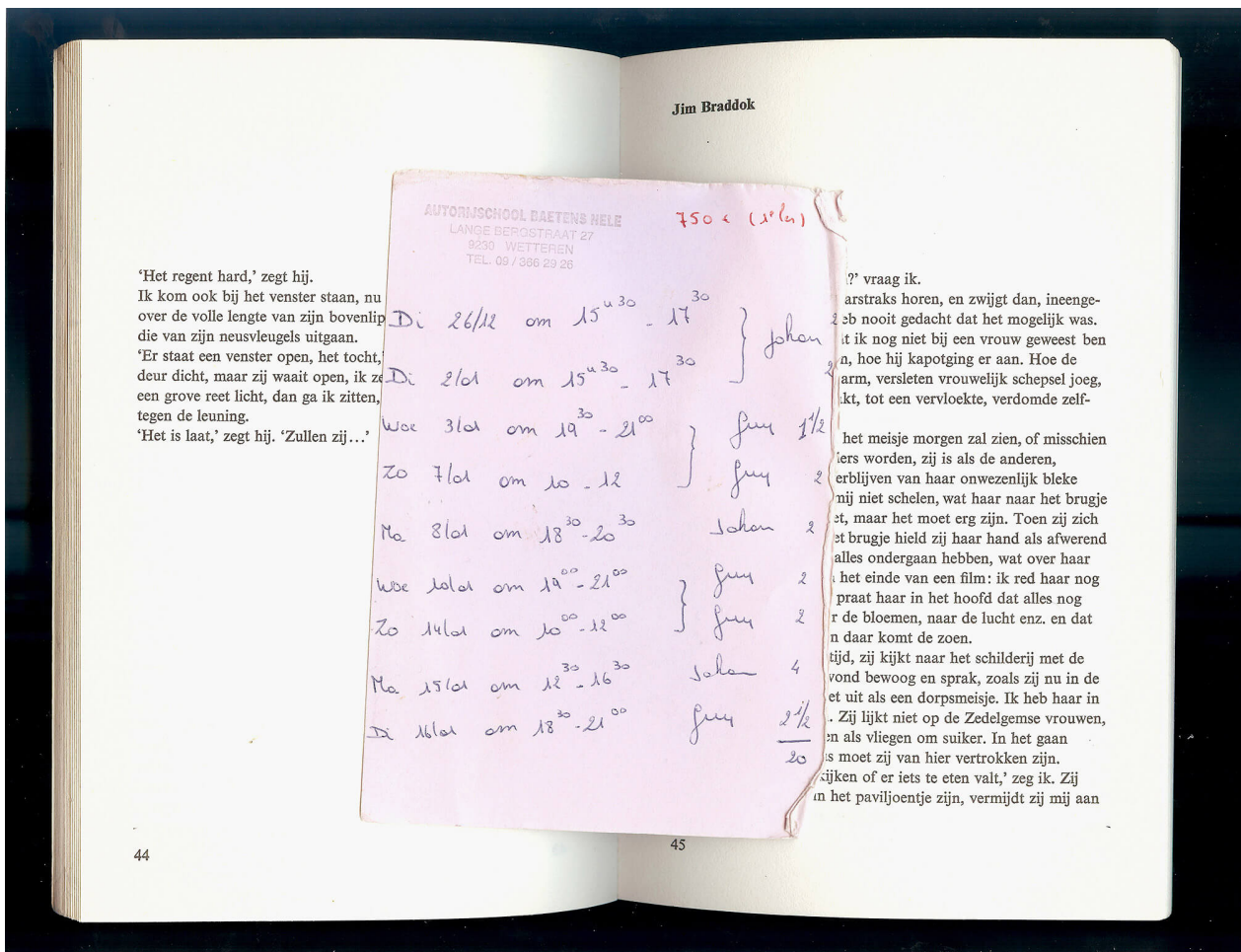
In his debut novel 'De Metsiers' Hugo Claus employs a multiple narrative perspective. In the copy I picked up in a thrift store, there's a bookmarker between pages 44 and 45 where the perspective shifts from Ana to Jim Braddok. It's pouring. The pink piece of paper lists 9 sessions at a driving school. There's a total of 20 hours, taught alternately by Johan and Guy.

Notes

In 2000, 2006 and 2017 the twenty-sixth of December was a Tuesday. (Earlier years are improbable, since the Euro was not introduced yet.)

Sources

Claus, H. *De Metsiers*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Bezige Bij, 1978.



In the philosophy aisle of the largest used and remaindered book shop in the city — which is a regular stop on my lunchbreak walks to escape the dreariness of my office job — that particular day a set of books caught my eye. They were four copies of the same edition of a title I had never had any inclination to read. It was the near-uniformity of the four books that made them stand out. Upon closer inspection, there were two more copies of two other editions of the book on the shelf.

It was immediately apparent to me that only three minor moves were required to bring the six copies together on the shelf, and to arrange the four copies of the same edition so that the level of sun fading of their spines would make their lettering form a white to dark pink gradient. I could think of no shade of the letters that would tastefully match the very light blue of the rest of the spine, which had remained relatively uniform across the four copies.

After having moved the books, I took a photograph of them with the camera in my smartphone.

It occurred to me only afterwards that while handling the books I had not leafed through them.

Some days later, going through my photo folder, I came across the picture I had taken to document my somewhat neurotic but oddly satisfying action and noticed that the camera had been in square mode and that the photo was blurry. I have not yet gone back to take a better picture.

Notes

- David Depestel hesitates in trying to make something of himself; a character, a profession, a fixed mode of being, are for him concepts that already shadow forth the outlines of the skeleton, which is all that will be left of him in the end.



type
image

date
14.10.2022

filename
Comfort 1.HEIC

size
777 KB

author
David Depestel

category
book, interference, literature, mistake, replica/copy, technology

12:21:00

It's 21:49 on Tuesday May 4th 2021. I'm sifting through the folders of a back-up drive. When I reach Archief2A/2017/wigny donder, the subfolder contains 103 items (97 DNG-files, 1 JPEG-file and 5 PSD-files). The photographs are all very similar. They show the silhouette of the same tree and hills, the red light of the telecommunications mast on the left and the orange glow of the street's sodium lights. The thunderstorm moves from right to left. _44A3920 is the only exposure (10 seconds) that recorded lightning bolts.

I looked up *heat lightning*, also known as *silent lightning*, *summer lightning*, or *dry lightning*, which is simply cloud-to-ground lightning that occurs very far away, with thunder that dissipates before it reaches the observer. On YouTube I watched: *Top 10 Dangerous Lightning Strikes Thunder recorded on Camera (HIGH VOLTAGE!!)* followed by *Lightning Strikes at the 2019 U.S. Women's Open*. It's 22:07, I am doubtful at first but become convinced I can hear thunder afar.



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	04.05.2021	_44A3920.psd	449,09MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
archive, astronomy, data storage, landscape, precipitation, technology

12:27:29

A seminar on spectroscopy: how, by splitting light into different, separate rays, it becomes possible to deduct the chemical composition of stars and planets far beyond our reach, as those elements have an effect on the light that reaches the spectroscope. Beautiful graphs presenting colour in schemes of black and white. From the moment the course gets into the physics of light, my mind wanders off. What approaches the observer turns blue, what elongates itself becomes red. The teacher's leather shoes squeak as he goes back and forth between his self-made spectroscope and the desk. Redshift. Blueshift.

We meet him a couple of weeks later on the rooftop of a university building. He opens one of the half-domes. The sound of the mechanics is as obtuse as the shape it alters. A command on the computer based on coordinates: above our heads, the telescope slews slowly, only to halt at an apparently indistinct black region. From within the dome, we send ourselves an email with the photographs that we took of Neptune.

University classes will start in a couple of weeks. The city air is crisp. The roundabout below is strangely calm. On the horizon, the canopy of a southern forest delineates the sodium-lit sky.



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	22.09.2022	_44A5904.dng	57,76 MB	De Cleene De Cleene

category
architecture, astronomy, data storage, dusk, encounter, landscape, Neptune, physics, roofing, technology

12:47:17

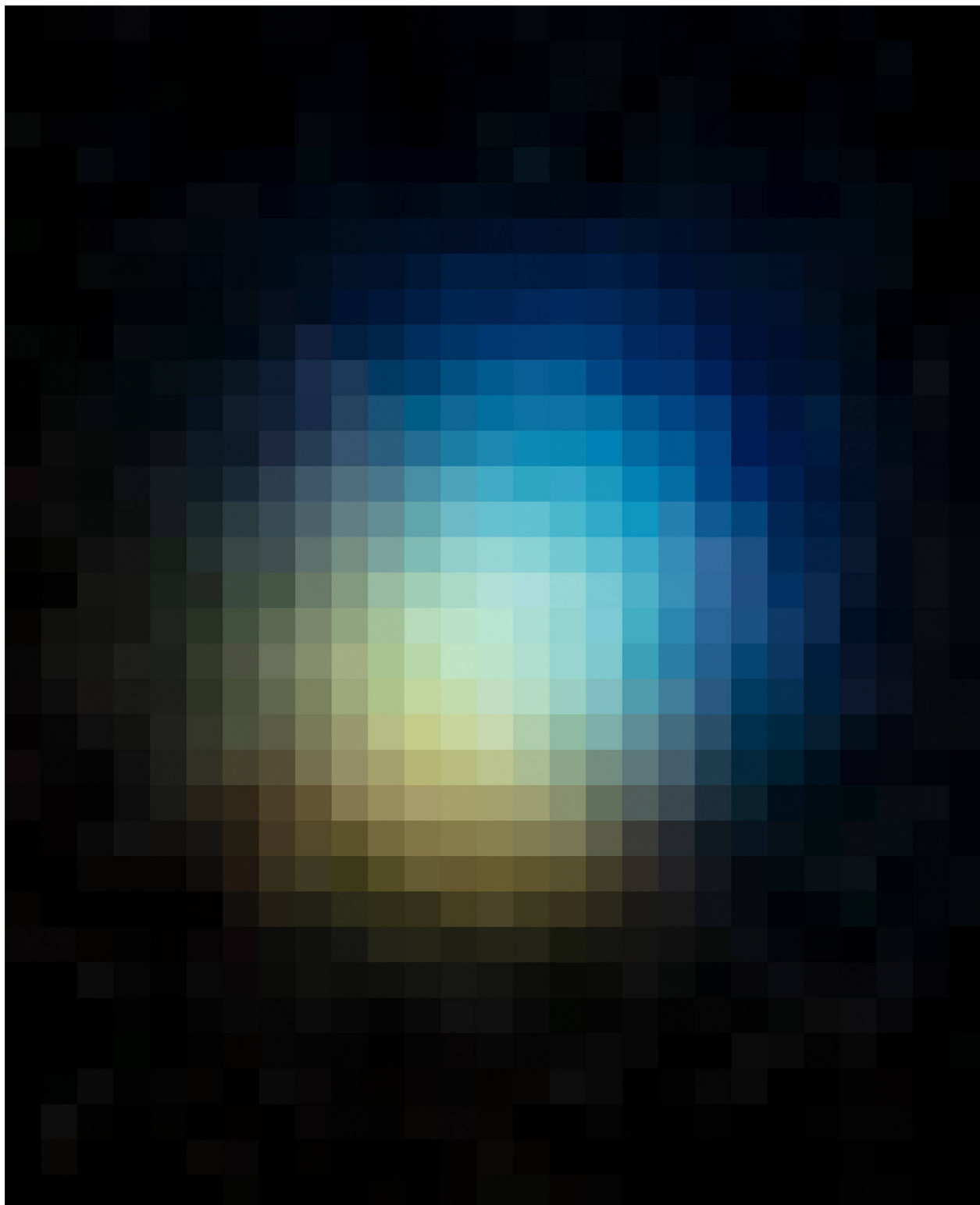
As the light of celestial objects travels through the Earth's atmosphere, the various wavelengths that make up this light are refracted differently. This effect is called 'dispersion' and results in colour fringing on the edges of planetary discs: images with a sliver of blue at the top and a red one at the bottom appear.

When celestial objects are positioned close to the horizon (like Neptune when observed from Luxembourg) the images are severely affected: the path of the light through the atmosphere is longer, leading to greater dispersion.

For the same reason sunsets are red, Neptune turns from a monochromatic blue disc into a misaligned, multicoloured oval.



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	19.09.2022	_44A5790.dng	37,43 MB	De Cleene De Cleene
category				
astronomy, mistake, Neptune, technology				



I recognized it in a flash, the late Jurassic-early Cretaceous herbivore looming dangerously over the road I was cycling on. I thought of *Some Windy Trees*.¹

A utility pole (425638, 07/99, 07/2002, COBRA), electrical wires, a hawthorn (*Crataegus*) and an old man's beard (*Clematis vitalba*). A symbiosis.

Notes

1 Delbrouck, V. *Some Windy Trees*. Loupaigne: Wilderness, 2013.



type
photograph

date
17.10.2021

filename
IMG_2711.jpg

size
4,66 MB

author
Michiel De Cleene

category
angst, animal, book, botany, dusk, mistake, tree, trompe l'oeil, wind

12:58:18

On the second to last day of a research visit at CERN, there was some spare time in the schedule. I took a long walk towards building 282 in search of some excavation samples: cylindrical pieces of rock that were preserved when the tunnel was dug, glued to a block of wood and frequently exhibited in museums over the last three decades as material evidence of the earthwork and as a witness to the depth. The route led me along the back of building 363 where the wind caused young trees – now gone – to scuff the facade over time.

Notes

First published in: De Cleene, M. *Reference Guide*. Amsterdam: Roma Publications, 2019, as W.569.EXC CERN, Towards Building 282, in search of excavation samples



type
photograph

date
11.07.2021

filename
cern_011.tif

size
57,57 MB

author
Michiel De Cleene

category
archaeology, architecture, archive, landscape, physics, Reference Guide, technology, tree, wind

12:59:21

A half a day's walk from the Fuente Dé *teleférico*, there are less and less traces of passers-by. The path to Sotres suddenly runs through a lush green. The fence between two pastures keeps the sheep from crossing and coincides with the border between two regions. A hole in the fence would change the landscape's hue.



type
photograph

date
15.05.2021

filename
_MG_9795.jpg

size
4,6MB

author
Arnout De Cleene

category
animal, landscape, government

13:00:54

A first try at using the instrument for making a recording: excitement as we succeed in pointing the telescope at the brownish dot afar we just noticed on the other side of the valley. As it continues scavenging, we wait for night to set in.

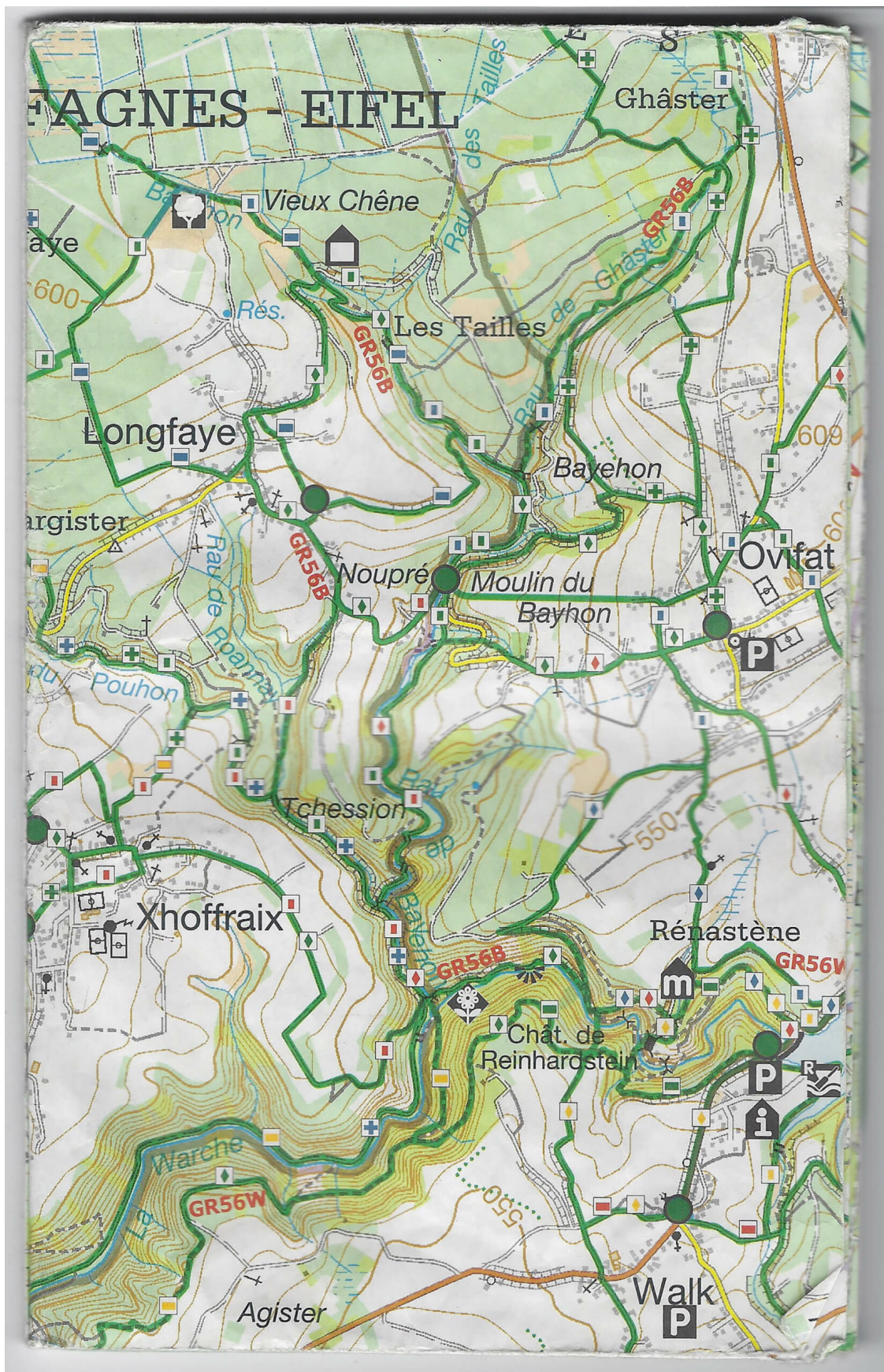


type	date	filename	size	author
video	27.09.2022	2020-05-30-1755_8-CapObj	105,04 MB	De Cleene De Cleene

category
animal, astronomy, encounter, food, landscape, Neptune, technology

13:02:12

The paths in the valley of the Bayehon are covered with ice. We are making our way down towards the valley of the Ghâster. The temperature is minus 15 degrees Celsius. The water in our drinking bottles is frozen. We are betting on the shelter indicated on the map (*Au Pied des Fagnes, Carte De Promenades*, 1:25.000, Institut Geographique National) to pitch our tent. There is almost no wind, but every breath of air feels like we're being hit with a thousand needles. What the map indicates as a shelter appears to be a picnic table.



type
scan

date
14.02.2021

filename
Handgeschreven_2021-02-
14_142153.jpg

size
2,1MB

author
Arnout De Cleene

category
map/plan, mistake, scale, sign, wind, precipitation

13:03:14

December, 1947. Rapid snowmelt coincides with torrential precipitation. At the bottom of the Thur valley, in Wildenstein, the water gathers.



type
photograph

date
29.11.2021

filename
IMG_0504b.jpg

size
8,68 MB

author
Michiel De Cleene

category
landscape, precipitation

13:04:26

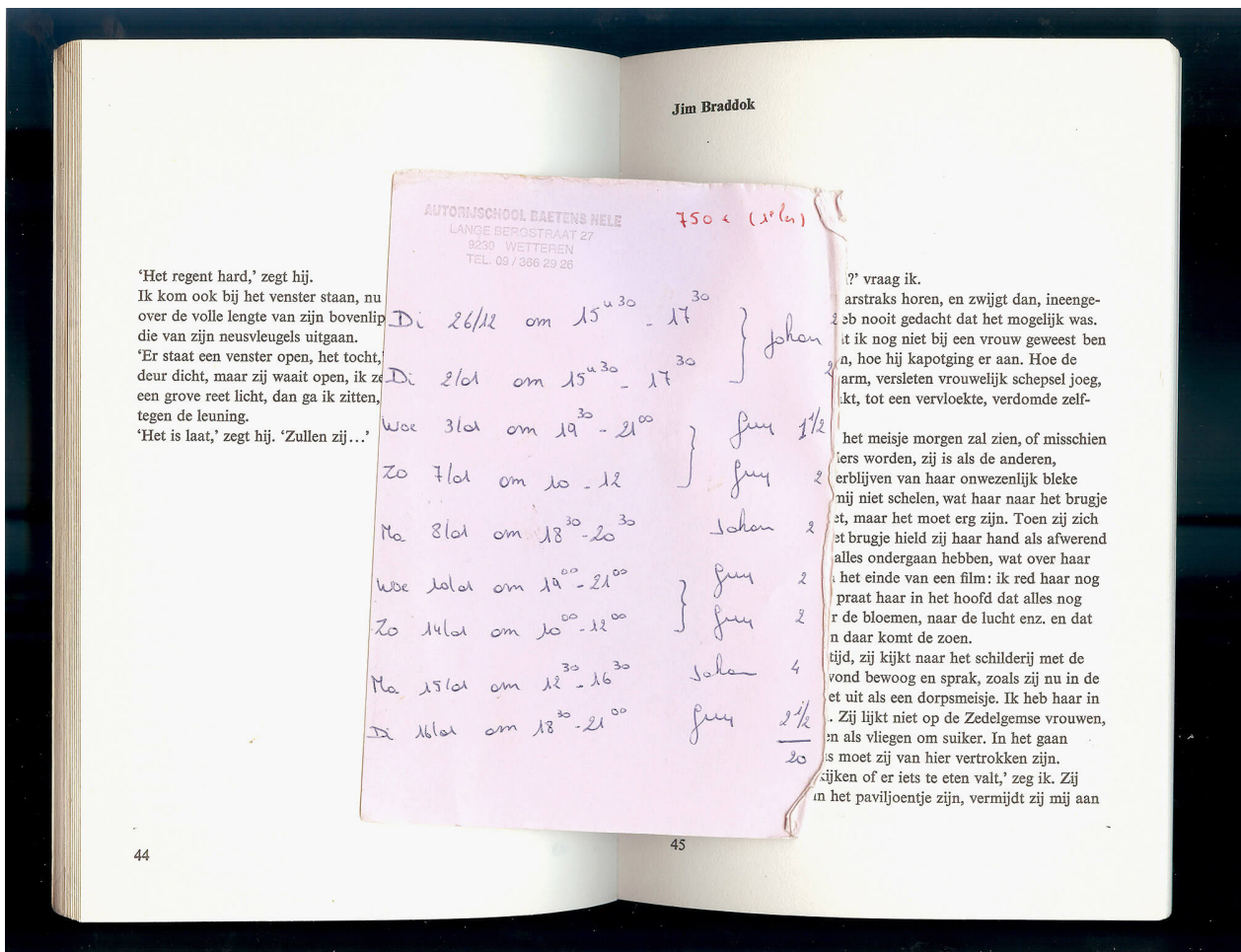
In his debut novel 'De Metsiers' Hugo Claus employs a multiple narrative perspective. In the copy I picked up in a thrift store, there's a bookmark between pages 44 and 45 where the perspective shifts from Ana to Jim Braddok. It's pouring. The pink piece of paper lists 9 sessions at a driving school. There's a total of 20 hours, taught alternately by Johan and Guy.

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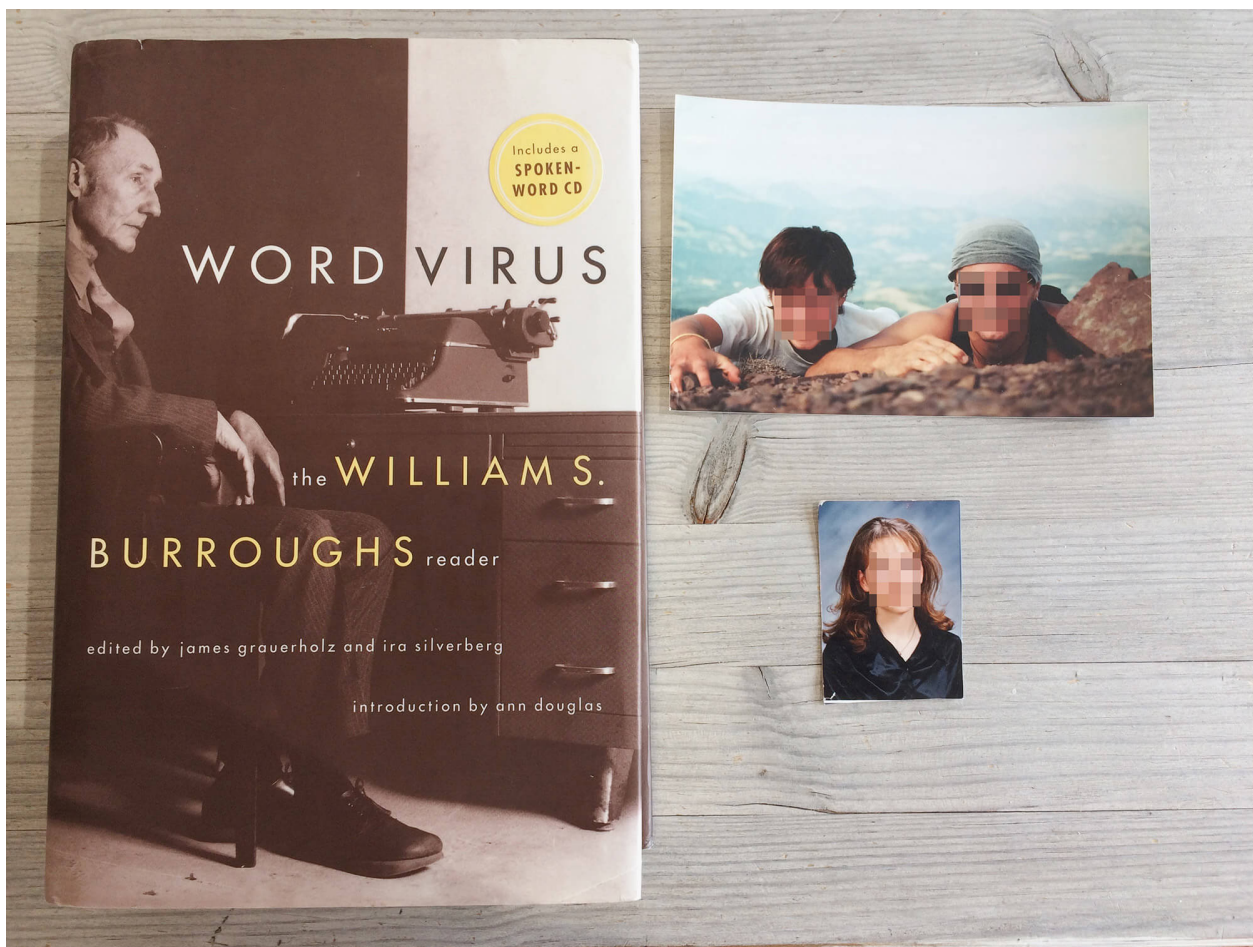
two young people who appear to be mountain climbing and captured while clearing a ridge. Behind the two subjects a bluish mountainous landscape is vaguely visible, suggesting a vantage point of some considerable elevation. The person on the left is wearing a white T-shirt and a bracelet, and has several earrings. The person on the right is carrying a backpack. What appears to be a black tank-top may in fact also be the straps of the pack. On their head they wear what appears to be a grey T-shirt or other garment, presumably to protect the subject from the sun; this person also has earrings and is wearing a necklace and sunglasses. The weather appears nice, both subjects are smiling and appear relaxed. The effort may well have been staged.

Photograph #2 measures (approximately) 43 x 62 mm with the left, bottom and right sides appearing to be cut, rather unevenly, with scissors. It has the typical appearance of an American high school yearbook photo and shows a young person wearing a shiny black blouse and a necklace. They have blue eyes and below-shoulder length auburn hair. The red lips appear painted. On the back of this photograph is written in a clearly legible hand:

*Clay, I can't
wait until next
year when we're
in grade 12!³
Have a great
Summer and
call me [XXX XXXX]⁴
by the way, I haven't
forgot about how big UR*

The only assumptions to be made somewhat safely from these two items are that (a) the book has once belonged to 'Clay', and, (b) a relationship of a close, friendly, perhaps even intimate, nature has at one time existed between 'Clay' and the person in the second photograph (assuming also that (c) the note on the back of the second photograph was indeed written by the person in that photograph). The circumstances surrounding, and/or motivations ('Clay''s or any third parties') behind the book's ending up in a used-book shop⁵ must necessarily remain a matter of speculation. There are no reasons to assume that the book was gifted to 'Clay' by the note-writer (or by anyone else) as no dedication appears in it.⁶ It must also remain inconclusive whether there are either two or three different

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_used_book_conditions
² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12_twelfth_grade#United_States
³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12_twelfth_grade#United_States
⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12_twelfth_grade#United_States
⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12_twelfth_grade#United_States
⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12_twelfth_grade#United_States



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	18.10.2022	IMG_0059.JPG, IMG_058.JPG	2,11 MB, 1,55 MB	David Depestel
category				
book, collecting, encounter, landscape, literature				

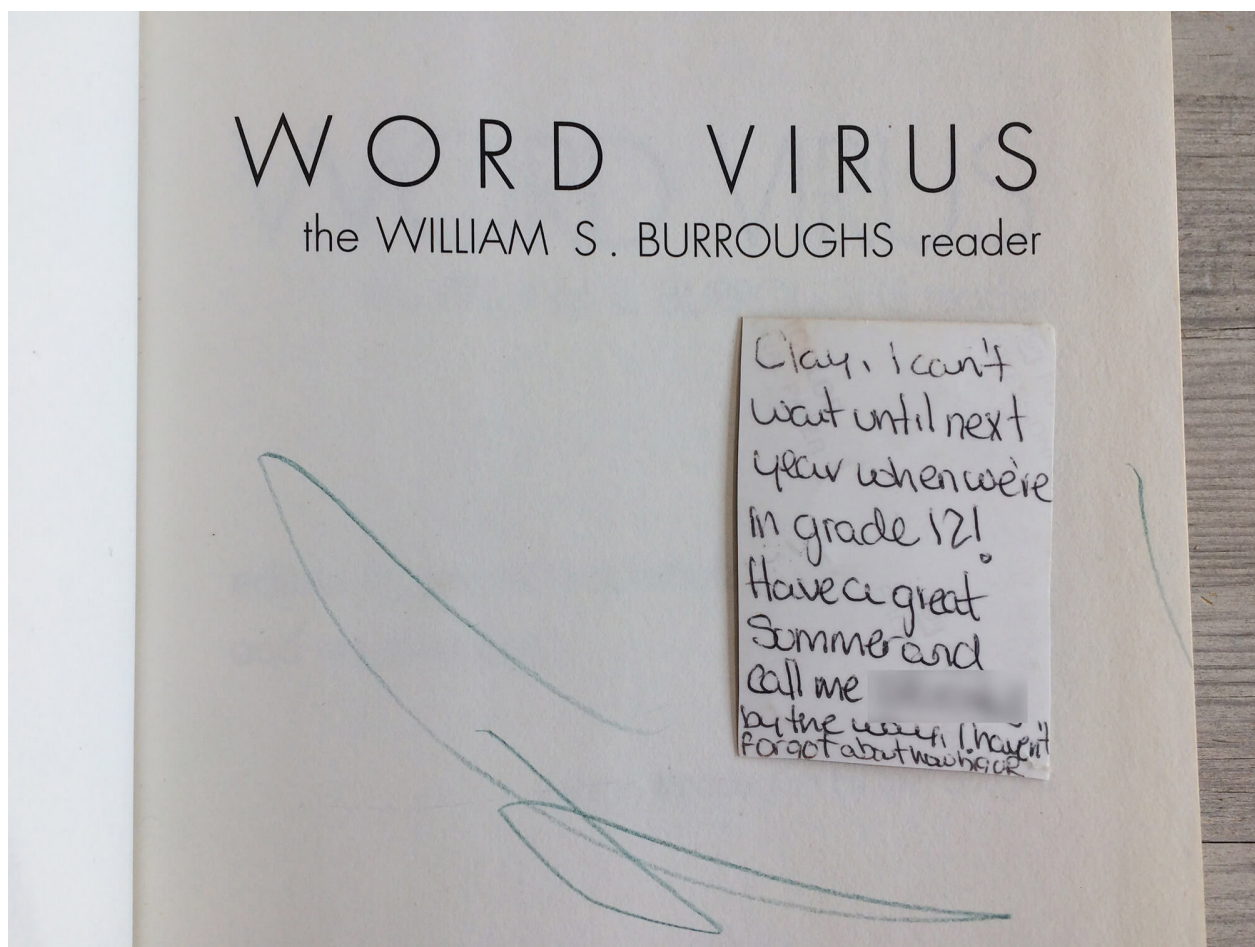
13:05:57

persons appearing across the two photographs, and whether any of these is in fact ‘Clay’.

the-documents.c

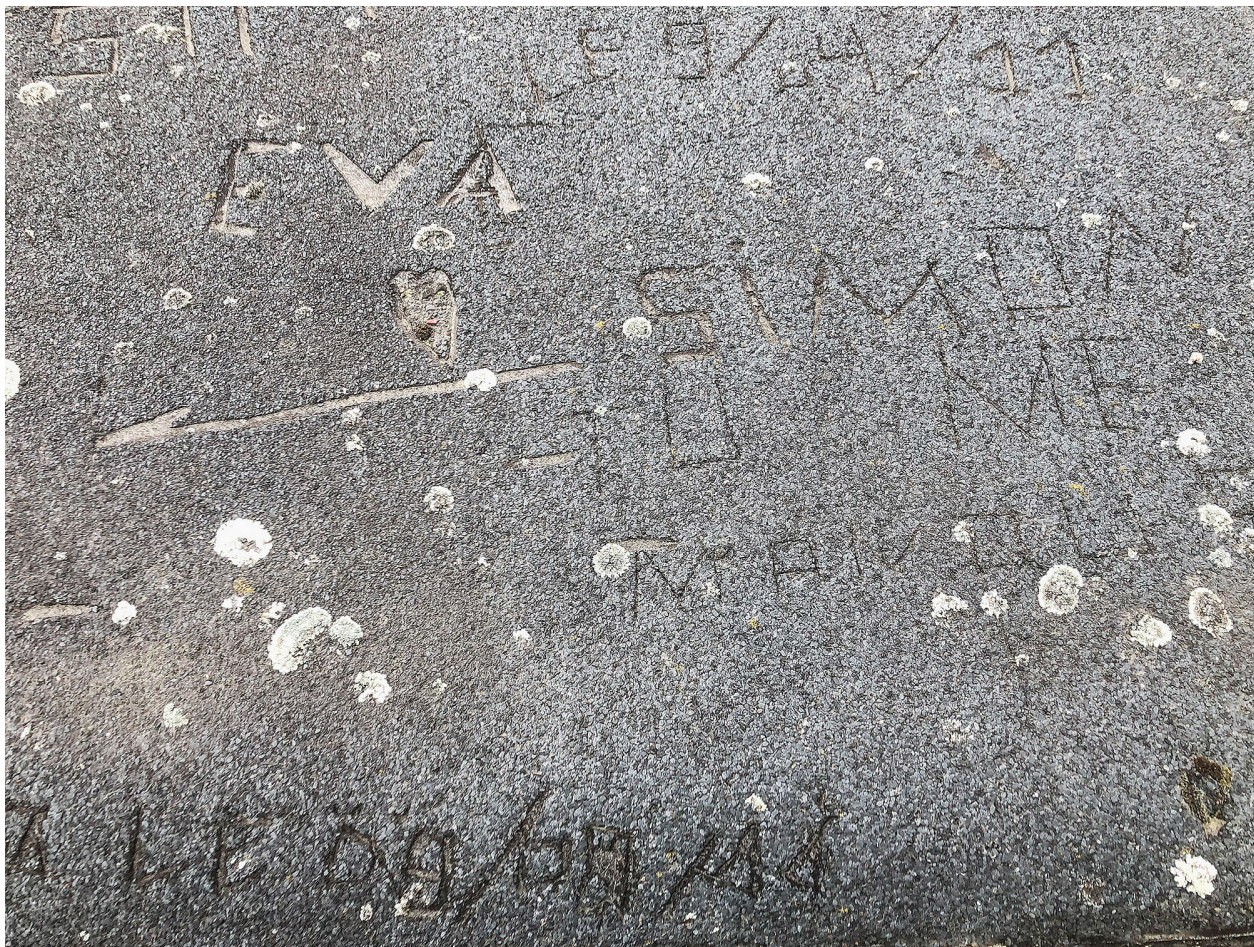
Indeed, the number of questions raised by these items far exceeds the number of answers they provide. Even leaving aside the nature of the writings in the book, one cannot help but speculate as to:

- how much, if any, of the book ‘Clay’ ever read;^{7,8}
- what happened to the CD originally included with the book;⁹
- why the unrelated inserted materials were not removed from the book before sale (as opposed to the CD);
- whether ‘Clay’ did in fact ring up the writer of the note over that summer;¹⁰ indeed whether the two ever did meet again, remain close during their ‘senior’ year, perhaps even stay in contact after graduating;
- the meaning of the rather cryptic final line of the note.



In what order and by whom the various texts and drawings were carved into the soft roofing is unclear. To the right of 'EVA', a heart symbol and an arrow (pointing to the left), the roofing reads 'SIMON TU ME MANQUES'.

The short sentence usually – yet hastily – translates to 'Simon, I miss you'. However, in French the 'you' (*tu*) is the subject and has an active role, whereas the 'I' (*me*) is the direct object. In short: by his not being there, Simon actively effectuates hurt to the one who carved this text.



type
photograph

date
14.04.2021

filename
IMG_6512.jpeg

size
4,50MB

author
Michiel De Cleene

category
automobile, decoration, fissure, parking, roofing, sign

13:06:04

