

Deliberate Poetics

Erasure, Materiality, and the Politics of the Page

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In recent decades, erasure has been met with renewed fascination by practitioners of experimental, conceptual poetics, re-emerging as a powerful *and* empowering aesthetic strategy across anglophone literature and its neighboring media. Indeed, from Isobel O'Hare's erasure poems crafted from public #MeToo "apologies" and Tom Phillips' decades-long palimpsestic transformation of W. H. Mallock's novel *A Human Document* in *A Humument* to the typographic absences and textual voids of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* and Philip Metres's experimentation with extreme forms of erasure, as in *Sand Opera*, where poetry takes shape as little more than punctuated fields of silence, erasure has become central to the cultural imagination. As erasure techniques proliferate across poetry, fiction, book art, conceptual visual culture, and digital platforms, their significance—and their entanglements with material as well as political struggle—demands further and more fine-tuned critical attention.

Deliberate Poetics responds to the urgencies of the present. Contemporary culture is defined by archival failure, archival violence, and archival resistance, by struggles over historical visibility, by concerns over the formal and material modalities of the social worlds in and around works of literature, and by contestations of memory across colonial, racial, and gendered lines. State redaction, algorithmic disappearance, platform censorship, and the ephemerality of digital media reveal erasure as a political technology of power with a long history of its own—but also as a technique of response, refusal, and survival. Writers and artists mobilize erasure in ways that both expose and subvert systems of domination: from black studies' engagements with the archive to indigenous critiques of settler-colonial record- and world-making, from feminist strategies of redaction to queer poetics of opacity. By placing focus on erasure's materiality, formal concerns, and political affordances, ***Deliberate Poetics*** seeks to examine erasure as a site where aesthetics and politics meet beyond a mere binary of making and unmaking.

In this light, the envisioned collection of critical essays investigates how acts of erasure emerge through spectral entanglements with degrees of loss and recovery. It attends to the textual experimentation that it both results from and constructs as a "deliberate poetics": a method of composition, critique, materiality, and world-making that turns reading, writing, and re-reading into deliberate acts on and off the page. We invite essays that explore erasure as a formal, historical, and political practice across anglophone literary cultures: How does removal become meaning-making? How do blankness, redaction, or textual subtraction produce new narrative or aesthetic possibilities? What kinds of knowledge, histories, or subjectivities are made visible—or strategically withheld—through acts of erasure?

Thematic Foci

We welcome proposals grounded in literary studies, but we also encourage chapters that explore the intermedial reach of erasure across poetry, prose, artists' books, visual texts, concrete poetry, artistic (re-)mediation, archival scrapping, and digital writing—so long as literature remains central to the analysis.

Possible topics include (but are not limited to, nor mutually exclusive):

1. Poetics and Form

- erasure as poetic and narrative method: pacing, omission, subtraction-extraction, and the politics of storytelling
- erasure and the question of form (on and off the page): de-formance and re-formance
- erasure, the “original,” and the political labor of editions, drafts, series
- silence, blankness, opacity, and unreadability as political-aesthetic strategies

2. Authorship and Reading

- authorship and ethics in erasure: collaboration, confrontation, translation, appropriation, attribution
- erasure and reading as multi-sensory, partial, recursive, and conjectural

3. Politics, History, and Power

- redaction, censorship, classification/de-classification, and state power
- coloniality, silencing, and historical disappearance
- erasure, archives, and counter-archives: the documental politics of disappearance
- erasure at the crossover between literature and history

4. Genealogies, Media, and Performance

- genealogies of erasure: modernism, conceptual writing, avant-gardes, postcolonial writing and thought, protest art, etc.
- materialities of erasure: page, screen, type, annotation
- intermedial practices: erasure between text and image
- soundscapes and performative dimensions of erasure off the page

Submission

Please submit abstracts of 500 words and a short bio (no more than 100 words) to erasurepoetryproject@gmail.com by February 15, 2026.

Depending on the coherence and number of submissions, we will pursue publication as an edited volume with a leading academic press or, alternatively, a special issue with a peer-reviewed journal.

Working Timeline

- abstract deadline: February 15, 2026
- notification of acceptance/rejection: March 1, 2026
- essay drafts (6000-8000 words including bibliography): August 1, 2026
- feedback: September 15, 2026
- revised chapters: December 15, 2026