



Writers' habits

by David Mollin and Salomé Voegelin

David Mollin's work is concerned with ideas of contingency within the professionalized contemporary art world, and in particular with the effect of power consolidation and commodification and those elements of the work that disappear as a result of such a process. This has led to an increasing interest in the use of writing as a process of materialization of an artwork that fails to materialize. Mollin has co-founded with Matthew Arnatt the project 100 Reviews (Alberta Press and Greengrassi Gallery) and, with John Reardon, he co-edited *ch-ch-ch-changes: Artists talk about teaching* (Ridinghouse, 2009). Mollin works collaboratively on text-based sound work with Salomé Voegelin. www.davidmollin.net

Salomé Voegelin is an artist and writer engaged in listening and hearing as a socio-political practice. She is the author of *Sonic Possible Worlds: Hearing the Continuum of Sound*, Bloomsbury, NY, 2014 and *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art*, Continuum, NY, 2010. While her solo work focuses on the small and slight, unseen performances and moments that almost fail to happen, her collaborative work, with David Mollin, has a more conceptual basis, establishing through words and sounds conversations and reconfigurations of relationships and realities. www.salomevoegelin.net and <http://www.soundwords.tumblr.com>

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Preface

This text is a transcript of a talk, loosely based on the idea of an artist's talk, given by David Mollin and Salomé Voegelin as part of a recent exhibition entitled *Nietzsche Cyclists and Mushrooms* curated by Heidi Brunnschweiler at the [Kunst Raum Riehen, Switzerland](#). It comprises of a text based on writers' written anecdotes, taken from the internet, on how they write, Hindu numerology and the particular numerological time structure of the virtual environment of the computer game interjected by other concerns about words and texts.

The stage for the talk was provided by the physical space of one of the artists' installations shown in the exhibition into whose soundtrack the talk was embedded, borrowing its pace and circularity.

Writer's habits

My passions
drive me to
the typewriter every
day of my
life, touch
the floor
nine
times
I touch the typewriter every
day of my
life,
and they have driven me there
since I was... twelve. I touch
the floor and make sure it is there
every day of my life the words emanate from the floor that I touch
nine times

I never have to worry
about schedules.
Some new thing
is always
e x p l o d i n g
in me,
and it schedules
me, schedules schedule me by ocean and silver horizon the
schedules fly
I don't
schedule it.
It says:
Get to the typewriter right now and finish this!!! !!!

I can work anywhere.

I wrote in bedrooms and living rooms and kitchens
when I was growing
up
with my parents
and my brother
in a small
house in Barry/Los Angeles.

I worked on my typewriter in the living room,
with the radio and my mother and dad and my brother
when I was growing up
all *talking* at the same time.
Have you seen the Ipad get your homework done why is the virgin
bill so high you should go and do it now where are my glasses, can
I have some gems dad? It is Friday...
Later
on
(when I wanted to write my book)
I went up to UCLA and found a basement
typing room where, *if you inserted ten cents into the typewriter,*
you could buy thirty minutes of typing time. **1**

I need an hour
alone before dinner
with a drink to go over what I've done
what I've done that day.
I can't do it late in the afternoon because I'm too close to it.
Also, the drink helps. They do say though ...

But it removes me from
the pages.
So I spend this hour
taking things out and
putting other things in. Then
I start the next day by
Re-doing all of what I
did the day before, foll
-owing these evening notes.
Really working nine times
When I'm really
working I don't like
to go out or have
anybody to dinner,
because the mother goddess wages war against
satanic forces and then I lose
the hour. If I don't
have the hour, and
start the next day with
just some bad...
pages and nowhere to
go, I'm in low spirits. The potent *rakshasas* is upon me

Another thing I need to
do, when I'm near
the end of the book, I

1

*Sie schreibt am Morgen, schnell, vor
dem Frühstück, eine halbe Stunde, alles
erledigt. Warum zögern in gezwungener
Zurückhaltung und verschwiegener
Sorgfalt, es sind alles Worte*

sleep in the same
room with it. The drumming I call it.

That's
one reason I go
home
to Sacramento to
finish things.
Somehow the book
doesn't leave you when you're asleep
right next to it.
It talks to you in your sleep, it grows
In Sacramento nobody cares and the Psycopomp Whippoorwills
are silent

I can just get up and start typing.

I never listen
to music

The music brings its own nine varied aspects
when I'm working
I haven't that
kind of attentiveness, and I
wouldn't like it at all. Its aim is to constantly divert me from the
path of realization On the
other hand, I'm able to

work fairly well among ordinary
distractions.

There's a lot of traffic.
But it's a bright, cheerful traffic
My house
has a living room that is
at the core of *everything*
it is a
passageway to the cellar

Some new thing



is always
 in the kitchen,
 and leads also to the closet (where the phone lives)
 and I often use it as a
 room
 to write in, despite the
 carnival that is
 going
 on
 all around me. A
 girl pushing a carpet sweeper under my typewriter
 has
 never annoyed me particularly, nor has she taken
 my mind off my work, not even when it is late. I touch the floor
 nine times and she is gone
 My wife,
 thank God,
 has never been protective of
 me, not even when the girl is pushing a carpet sweeper under my
 typewriter not even on those days.

I am told,
 the wives and husbands
 of some writers are. They gather.

They sing
 In consequence, the members

of my household never
 pay the slightest attention to my being
 there
 ignoring the **nine varied aspects of my own
 negative nature**
 they make all the noise and fuss they
 want to.
 If I get sick of it, I have places I can
 go

A writer who waits for ideal conditions under
 which to work will die

never pay the slightest attention to my being
 a writer
 for ideal conditions under
 which to work will die
 and will die without putting
 a
 word
 on
 paper
 the silence of the whippoorwills **2**

I had a ritual once to help these things
 A ritual of lighting a candle
 and writing by its light

2
*Er hingegen besinnt sich auf die
 Form - die Form und das Formen
 von Buchstaben, Kommas, Punkten,
 Ausrufe und Fragezeichen, während
 er den Stift über das leere Blatt
 bewegt: Sinn Formen vom Innern des
 Alphabetes und der Grammatik.*

and blowing it out
 when I was done
 for the night
 ... also kneeling and praying
 before starting
 I got the idea from a French movie about George Frideric Handel

now I simply hate to write

I'm beginning to suspect
 the full moon

I'm beginning to suspect
 a Piscean like myself
 should stick to number seven;
 but I try to do nine
 touchdowns a day, that is,
 I stand on my head
 in the bathroom,
 and
 touch
 the floor **3**
 nine
 times when I am not near my typewriter
 I touch the floor with my toe tips, while balanced.
 This is incidentally more than yoga, it's an athletic feat
 Frankly I do feel that my mind is

going.
 So
 another 'ritual' as you call it,
 nine reps at 7.5
 and to pray to Jesus on a slipper
 I do feel that
 while balanced
 on my head I
 preserve my sanity and my
 energy
 so I can help my family: touch
 the floor
 nine
 times
 my paralyzed mother, and my wife, and the ever-present
 kitties. Okay?
 The desk in the room is
 near the bed,
 with a good light, w
 the whippoorwills ever present
 midnight till dawn,
 a drink when I get
 tired, preferably at home,
 but if I have no home,
 make a home out of my hotel room or motel room or lpad:
 peace. Starting tomorrow — if not today why put off today
 I will get up

3

"Das Leere Blatt"

*Das, was du jetzt in der Hand hältst, ist beinah weiss,
 Aber nicht ganz; etwas ganz Weisses gibt es nicht;
 Es ist glatt, hart, zäh, dünn, und für gewöhnlich
 knistert es, fließt, knirscht, reisst, beinah geruchlos;
 und so wie es ist, bleibt es nicht; es bedeckt sich
 mit Lügen, saugt alle Schrecken auf, alle Widersprüche,
 Träume, Ängste, Künste, Tränen, Begierden;
 (Hans Magnus Enzensberger)*

every morning
no later than eight.
I will write in the Notebook every day
I will tell people
It is meant
Hence a light green colour

I will tell people
not to call in the morning,
or not answer the phone
let it ring
I will try to confine
my reading to the evening

I write with a felt-tip pen,
or sometimes a pencil,
on yellow or white legal pads
light blue denotes them
by light
the slowness of writing by hand.
Slow and white in colour
then type it up and scrawl

And keep on retyping it,
Retyping nine times
each time making corrections



both by hand and directly
 on the typewriter, until I can't see
 anymore
 despite the
 carnival that is
 going
 on
 all around me.

Up to five years ago, that was it.

Revise by hand
 a computer in my life
 until I can't see anymore **4**
 McCarthy-esque opaque white eyes like McCarthy-esque
 spiders nests
 hard-copy drafts from the computer.
 Foretelling and forestalling in equal measure
 it goes into the computer,
 each time making corrections
 Retyping nine times
 And keep on retyping,
 midnight till dawn
hence the pale green colour
glow-in-the-dark green
 And keep on retyping
 until I can't see anymore

I write in spurts
 I write when I have to because the pressure builds up
 And then spurts
 something has matured
 in my head
 I am nervous about that
 Losing sensation
 Until I can't see anymore
 I can't
 write it down
 once something is really
 under way,
 I don't want to do anything
 else.

I forget to eat
 I watch
nine openings appear thru
the emotion of fear
 something has matured
 in my head
 I'm beginning to suspect
 a Piscean like myself
 should stick to number seven

I don't go out, much of the time
 I forget to eat,
 I sleep very little.

4

*Bis sie getrocknet sind, vergilbt, stockig, grau;
 Bis es aufweicht, im Regen, zerfällt, im Müll,
 Immer weniger wird; nur das beste vielleicht
 an dem vielleicht das, was keiner geschrieben hat,
 das Beste ist: ein Fisch, ein Salzfass, ein Stern,
 ein Einhorn, ein Elefant oder ein Ochsenkopf,
 Zeichen des Heiligen Lukas; das, was erscheint,
 wenn du es gegen das Licht hältst – hält,
 vielleicht, tausend Jahre, oder noch eine Minute.
 (Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Das Leere Blatt")*

It's a very undisciplined way of working
 I am not prolific
 I am not prolific
 I'm too interested in many other things
 Distracted
 A growing distraction
 My living room that is
 at the core of *everything*
 it is a
 passageway to the cellar
 I forget to eat,
 Remember
 MORNINGS: 3 and a half minutes.
 If groggy, type notes
 and allocate,
 as stimulus.
 If in fine fettle,
 write.
 AFTERNOONS: 3 and a half minutes
The 9th hour of the day
3pm
 Work of section in hand,
 following plan of section
 scrupulously.
 No intrusions,
 no diversions.
 No growing distractions

Write to finish one section at a time,
 for good and all
 no thought
 nothing maturing in my head
 EVENINGS: one and a half minutes
 See friends.
 Read in cafés.
 Explore unfamiliar sections
 on foot if wet,
 in socks
 on bicycle if dry.
 Hi-vis 2 lights white and red
 Write, if in mood, but only on Minor program
 Paint if empty or tired
 Kitchen
 hall
 Make Notes.
 Make Charts
 Plans
 Locate myself
 Make corrections
 To myself
 Remove the distraction
 with the knife if necessary
Note: Allow sufficient time
 during daylight



to make an occasional visit to museums
 see stuff
 divided
 seven major divisions
 an occasional sketch,
 a chart
 or an occasional bike ride.
 Library for references once a week. **5**

I'm always in a hurry to get going
 To leave
 though in general
 I dislike starting the day
 I first have tea and then,
 at ten o'clock, I get under way
 work until one
 look up
 see my friends
 at five o'clock
 I
 work and continue until nine.
 Seven major divisions,
 1 tenth is dusk
 the hardest time
 hard to see
 despite lights
 red and white
 I have no difficulty in picking up the thread

in the afternoon.

No, afternoon is fine

The 9th hour of the day

3pm

I have no difficulty in picking up the thread
 work and continue until nine.
 Its dusk one and a half minutes
 Seven major divisions,
 One seventh is dusk
 One and a half minutes
 I'll read the paper
 go shopping.
 Most often it's a pleasure to work
 Smiling while working
 If the work is going well, I spend one seventh of daylight
 reading
 what I wrote the day before,
 I make a few corrections.
 continue from there.
 In order to pick up the thread I have to read what I've done.
 I have no difficulty in picking up the thread
 I see well at this time

When I am working
 When I am writing
 When I am at my desk
 I write every morning
 as soon after first light as possible

5

*Sie hasst den Anblick von Worten.
 Ihre Handschrift ist ein unleserlicher
 Angriff auf die Kommunikation. Sie hat
 höheren Sinn im Auge welcher nicht
 von der Grafik kommt sondern durch
 die Aussprache.*



gunmetal
 Dawn is one seventh of the day
 There is no one to disturb me
 No one disturbs me
 and it is cool
 or cold
 pale yellow
 legal in colour
 and I come to my work
 and warm as I write
 embodied
 coiled
 still
 I read what I have written
 I always stop when I know what is going to happen next

I foretell
 I go on from there
 To forestall
 I write until I come to a place
 A small wooden room
 where I still have my juice **6**
 and know what will happen next
 I just know it
 I try to forestall
 I stop and try to live
 through the next day
 I'm beginning to suspect
 a Piscean like myself
 should stick to number seven;
 but I still try to do nine
 touchdowns a day, that is,
 I stand on my head
 in the bathroom,
 and
 touch
 the floor
 nine
 times when I am not near my typewriter
 I touch the floor with my toe tips, while
 balanced.
 This is incidentally more than yoga, it's an
 athletic feat,
 7.5 reps
 Frankly I do feel that my mind is

6

*Die Andere die mag Farbstifte.
 Jeden Buchstaben in einer anderen
 Farbe nachdrucken, um den Sinn
 des Wortes in Synästhetischen
 Wortfarben zu ersticken.*

going.
 So
 another 'ritual' as you call it,
 is to pray to Jesus in my slippers
 I do feel that while balanced
 on my head I
 preserve my sanity
 when I hit it again.
 I have started at six in the morning,
 One seventh of the day
 and may go on until noon
 or be through before that.
 Maybe on to the ninth hour
 When I stop I am empty,
 I hate writing
 and at the same time never empty but filling
 a pale blue
bhava evoked in these nine rasa
 Nothing can hurt me,
 nothing can happen,
 nothing means anything
 until the next day when I do it again.
 It is the wait until the next day
 that is hard to get through.
 Twenty minutes
 I get up at 4:00 am
 work for five to six hours.

Touchdowns
 Nine
 Preserve my sanity

In the afternoon,
 I run for 10km
 or swim for 1500m
 (or do both),
 120 minutes
 then I read a bit
 listen to some music
 64 bit
 no less
 I go to bed at 9:00 pm.
 Soon after dusk
 I don't hang around
 I keep to this routine every day
 without variation.
 The repetition itself becomes the important thing
 a form of mesmerism.
 I mesmerize myself to reach a deeper state of mind
 where
 Words are the pith of humankind **7**
 I get up at seven.
 I check my e-mail
 do Internet ablutions
 I have a cup of coffee.

7
*Er schreibt an einem offenen Fenster um die Welt
 in seinen Vokabeln zu empfangen.
 Das Singen der Vögel, das eintönige Brummen
 des Strassenverkehrs, das Gerüst am Haus,
 der Schleudergang der Waschmaschine, tönen
 zusammen mit seinen Händen auf der Tastatur
 und dem Geräusch seines Baumwoll Pullovers
 das was er schreibt.*

Three days a week,
 I go to Pilates
 back by eleven.
 120 minutes
 I sit down and write.
 If nothing is happening
 I mow the lawn
 I break for lunch
 come back
 do it some more
 And then, usually, a nap
 Naps are essential to my process.
 Not dreams, but that state adjacent to sleep, the
 mind on waking
 The dreamless sleep
 A dark place
 If nothing is happening
 I mow the lawn
 The mind on mowing
 When dreamless
 At the beginning, I have a five-day workweek
 Each day 10 minutes
 each day is roughly ten to five,
 possibly 8 minutes
 with a break for lunch
 and a nap.
 Naps are essential to my process.

Not dreams, but that state adjacent to sleep, the mind on waking
 Dreamless
 dark
 At the very end, it's a seven-day week,
 That's 70 minutes
 Possibly 56
 and it could be a twelve-hour day.
 Ten minutes
 Till dusk
 One and a half minutes
 Toward the end
 the state of composition
 is a complex,
 chemically altered state
 that will go away if I don't continue to give it what it needs. **8**
 What it needs is simply to write all the time
 Or sleep without dreams
 Downtime other than simply dreamless sleeping becomes
 problematic.
 Farming
 I'm always glad to see the back of that.

I write in the morning
 go home about midday
 take a shower,
 because writing, as you know

8

*Text wird von Worten geformt - von
 in Bewegung gesetzten Linien:
 Bewegungen des Körpers, Bewegungen
 des Computers, - und von dem Drang
 und dem Gegenseitigem Willen Sinn
 zu machen.*

is very hard work,
so I have to do a double ablution.
Then I go out and shop
I'm a cook
and pretend to be normal.
I play sane — Good morning! Fine, thank you. And you?
And I go home
and a nap.
Naps are essential to my process.
Not dreams, but that state adjacent to sleep, the mind
on waking.
At the very end, it's a seven-day week,
That's 70 minutes
Possibly 56
and it could be a twelve-hour day.
Ten minutes
Till dusk
One and a half minutes
Toward the end
I see the kitchen
That leads also to the closet (where the phone lives)
and I often use it as a
room
to write in, despite the
carnival that is
going
on



all around me. A
 girl pushing a carpet sweeper under my typewriter
 has
 never annoyed me particularly, nor has she taken
 my mind off my work, not even when it is late. I
 touch the floor nine times and she is gone
 I prepare dinner for myself
 I have houseguests,
 I do the candles
 and the pretty music
 and all that.
 Then after all the dishes are moved away
 I read what I wrote that morning.
 And more often than not if I've done nine pages
 I may be able to save two and a half or three.
 Dusk
 That's the cruelest time you know,
 Dusk one and a half minutes
 to really admit that it doesn't work.
 And to pale blue pencil it.
 Yellow legal tinge
 The pith of humankind
 I will never speak to you again. Forever. Goodbye. That is it. Thank
 you very much. And I leave.
 When I finish maybe fifty pages and read them
 it's not too bad
 will never speak to you again

Forever. **9**
 Goodbye.
 That is it.
 Thank you very much.
 And I leave
 slip off to dreamless sleep
 do pushups and sit-ups all the time
 feel as though I am getting lean and sinewy
 but maybe not
 7.5 reps
 9 times
 with 50 acceptable pages
 white
 light blue denotes them
 I write every day
 ... I do my best work in the morning.
 My passions
 drive me to
 the typewriter every
day of my
 life, touch
 the floor
 nine
 times

9

*Sie mag die Scheinbare
 Unvergänglichkeit des
 Geschriebenen und presst
 daher unverzüglich die delete
 Taste, again und again und again
 und again.*

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