

# HOW TO BUILD A LIE

CITY PARK JAZZ SERIES 2016

# HOW TO BUILD A LIE

Jamie Allen

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is primarily the text of a lecture delivered at the Dateline gallery in Denver, Colorado, on May 16th, 2016, as part of Jamie's Allen's exhibition "How to Build a Lie" (curated by Isaac Linder). The Media Archaeology Lab (MAL) at the University of Colorado, Boulder, was honored to host Jamie Allen for the month of May 2016 as part of its ongoing artist residency program; the MAL provided Allen with three of the lie detectors that are now in its holdings, along with several Scientology E-meters Allen donated to the MAL.

Special thanks to the Dateline hosts of the exhibition and this lecture, Jeromie, Christian, Isaac, Lauren; the Telecommunications History Group in Denver, Lori and Jim; and the Mile High Dowzers, Greg and Jack.





## INTRODUCTION: THE ART OF RESEARCH

*How to Build a Lie* is constitutive of a kind of 'artistic research practice', and one that as much as possible tries to escape the boundaries of disciplines, and look to as many aspects of a single technology, media or topic as it can. It is "extra-disciplinary" practice, as Brian Holmes and others have intimated, and its intersections with media and technology have the potential to direct artistic work toward something like an *institutional critique without aesthetic distance*. *How to Build a Lie* might be thought of also as a *gonzo media studies* that engages directly, physically and operationally with the technological structures that frame our lives. What would it be to do research, but include the material engagements and framings of media, as a kind of hands-on technical inquiry?

The 'lie detector,' perhaps quintessentially as a presupposed device for the measurement of veracity, is an *objet philosophique*, or perhaps what French philosopher Hubert Damisch called a "theoretical object." Damisch wrote of a thing that gives us at least three relations toward thinking and contemplation: (1) it obliges one to think (for example, about what it might mean to have such an object in the world); (2) it furnishes us with the means of thinking (for example, the use of such a device gives us

a new mediation of the world, and hence new conditions for thinking itself); and (3) it also forces us to ask "what is thinking?," exactly, and if classically transcendental concepts like thought, truth and knowledge could exist at all without such *things*.

This last point links to Alan Kaprow's injunction about the two kinds of artists he thought existed in the world—those that wake up every day and do art, and those who ask "what could this thing called 'art' be?," reinventing it each day, with each new project, with each new area of interest. In our current moment, this is an essentially important, strategic thought for both research and contemporary art, because there are far too many sensitive people being used up by the logics of exchange and capital, be they artists used up by markets, or researchers used up by nationalist and/or progressivist agendas. Instead, now perhaps more than ever, we need more people inventing new discourses, sensitivities, lines of inquiry, and problematics with machines and language and hands and minds. This could very well help us conceive of art practices—of lives—that are aware of being inextricably bound to the environments and networks of power in which everyone, everywhere, all the time operates.



The Lie Machine. Suitcase, computer, speaker, Voice Stress Analysis software, autobiographical read-by-the author audiobooks (Palin, Obama, Clinton, Blair, Bush), installed at DATELINE Contemporary, Denver.

# Love TESTER



1. ● DEPOSIT COIN
2. ● POSITION HAND BELOW
3. ● NOW TESTING
4. ● YOUR LOVE LEVEL

### Love Level Chart

0 - 1.....	COLD AND CLAMMY	6 - 7.....	SENSUOUS
2 - 3.....	MOSTLY HOT AIR	8 - 9.....	HOT STUFF
4 - 5.....	WARMING UP	10.....	OUT OF CONTROL

25¢

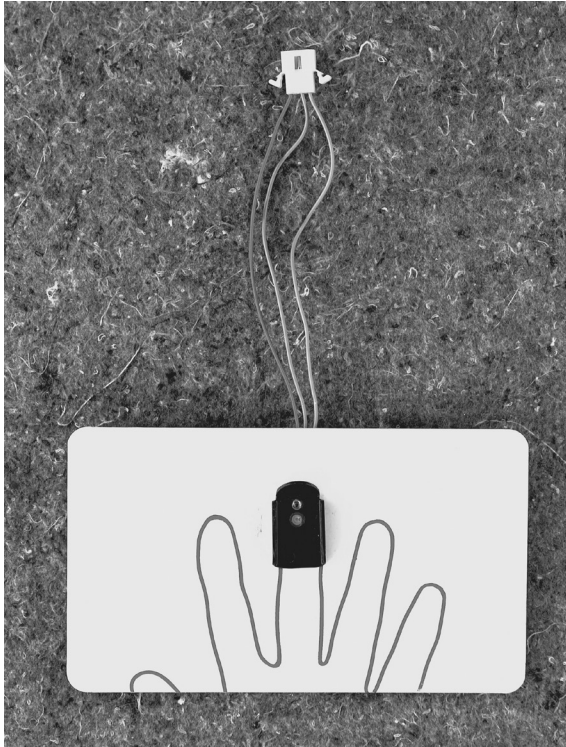
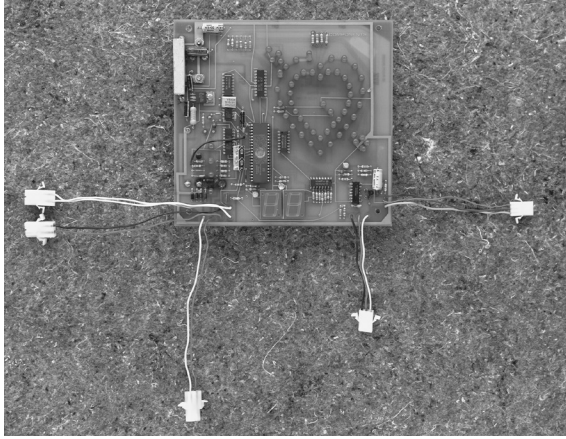
COMPU√END

## MAYONI ENTERPRISES LOVE METER

Mayoni Enterprises was started in 1982, originally as a for-hire metal fabrication company. In 1984 its owners decided to begin developing what are known as “bilk” or “impulse” vending machines, with local partners and employing temporary labour in Glenoaks, California. They are purported to have developed the first condom dispensers in the early 1980s, and in the wake of the AIDS scare later that decade did very well. This machine I believe dates from 1986, although I’ve not been able to get a response from Mayoni about the serial number.

The love meter works by very loosely measuring your heart rate—it senses the change in blood volume in a finger artery while the heart is pumping the blood. It consists of an infrared LED that transmits an IR signal, a part of which is reflected by the blood cells, through the fingertip of the subject. The reflected signal is detected by a photodiode sensor. The changing blood volume with heartbeat results in a train of pulses at the output of the photodiode, which can then be smoothed with a signal filter or counter in order to get an estimate of blood BPM. This BMP is then mapped to a value between 0 and 10, which is displayed on a seven-segment display.







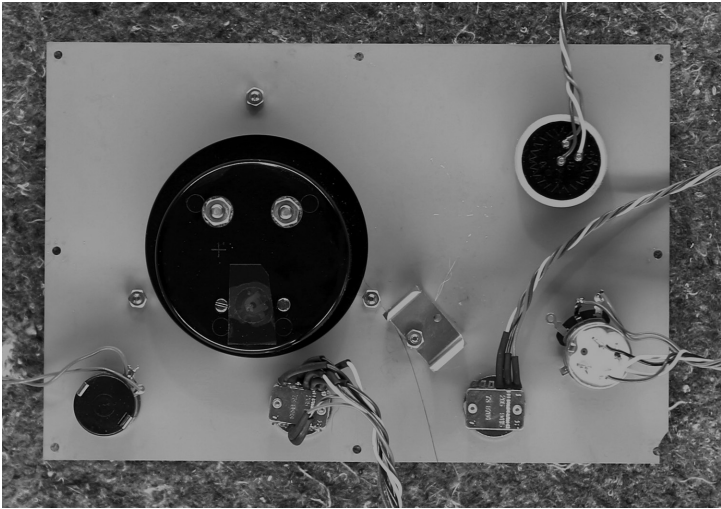


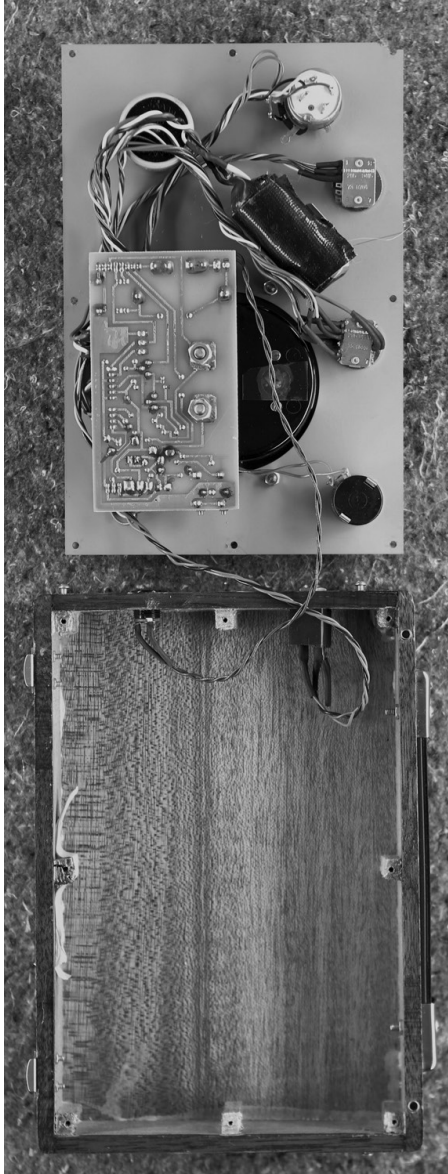
## THE SCIENTOLOGY EMETER

The EMeter, or the "Hubbard electro-psychometer (E-meter)," is based on a galvanometric circuit, or a "Wheatstone bridge" circuit that measures the "galvanic skin response" of a person's body. Specifically, the dial outputs a measurement of changes in this resistance (basically caused by surface moisture on the skin) in comparison to a coarsely and finely tuned potentiometer (with variable resistance) that is "tuned" before questioning by a Scientology Auditor.

Historically, electrodermal activity (EDA) has also been known as skin conductance, galvanic skin response (GSR), electrodermal response (EDR), psychogalvanic reflex (PGR), skin conductance response (SCR), and skin conductance level (SCL). The long history of research into the active and passive electrical properties of the skin by a variety of disciplines has resulted in this excess of names, now standardized to electrodermal activity.

The principle of EMeter use, as we find with a number of devices, is always to try to remove variation from the output signal. Variation, erratic or otherwise, is thought to signify the presence of negative, unwanted "mental image pictures," which are injected into the brain by THETANs. In Scientology all human bodies are said by Hubbard to be infested





by and covered in clusters of thetans, and one of the primary goals of EMeter use is to "clear" ourselves of these. Scientologists claim that the E-meter allows them to "see a thought," and in the hands of a trained auditor, they believe it can uncover "hidden crimes" of past lives, making the device a lie detector for reincarnated souls.



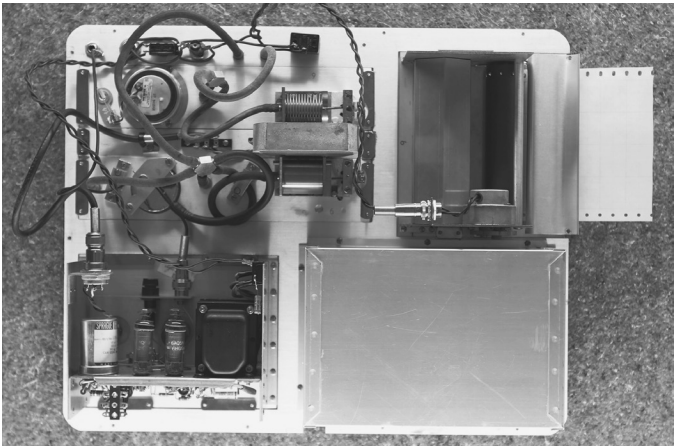
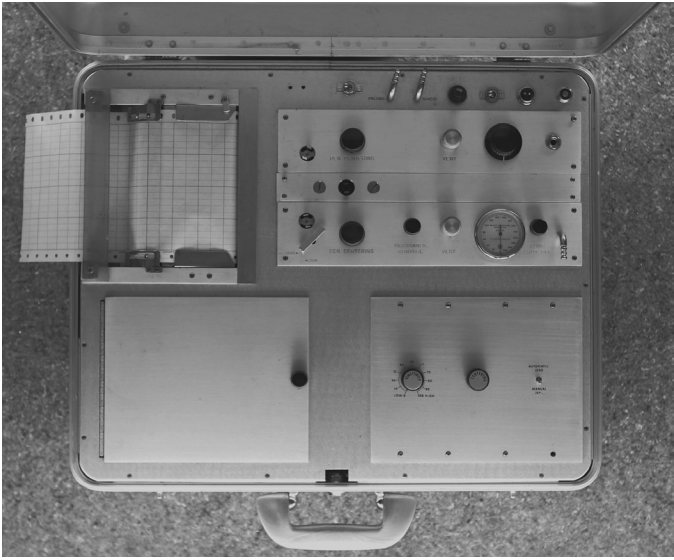


## STOELTING LIE DETECTOR

Stoelting is a company that makes, and still makes, a rather standard combination of sensing systems. They are based out of Wood Dale, Illinois, and also sell a panoply of psychometric, physiological, and animal testing products and devices, including animal shockers and pain threshold cages, which are used, for example, for the heating of mice feet to determine drug dose and overdose levels.

This particular device, manufactured in 1931 and purportedly originally for CIA use, contains a systolic and diastolic blood pressure meter (which is a pneumatic differential measurement developed using arm bands), a pneumatic breathing rate sensor, as well as a galvanic skin resistance measurement. The chart gives a recording of breathing rate, blood pressure, and GSR, which are recorded during numerous types of question sequences.

There are "probable lie control question tests" that are intended to force a lie from the person being investigated. For example, in a burglary investigation, one comparison question might be "Have you ever stolen anything?" This should register a "differential" or marginal change in the polygraph parameters and can validate that the test is in fact working.







## THE DEKTOR PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS EVALUATOR

This device provides an advanced form of lie detection as it does not need to contact the human body in order to "work." It was invented by Alan Bell and Colonel Charles McQuiston, two ex-army polygraphers, and is marketed to this day by Dektor Counterintelligence and Security, Inc. of Springfield, Virginia. It is based on the premise that psychological stress is detectable through identification and measurement of physiological changes in the human voice, specifically deviations in the low frequency, base components of the voice, a component of the voice they term "micro tremors."

The lack of invasiveness of the Psychological Stress Evaluator, and its focus on the audible aspects of the human speech act, allows it to be marketed and distributed much more broadly than polygraph lie machines. As a corollary to this, Dektor has stated in its literature that a test could be administered over the telephone, and if this is the case, it is quite possible that stress level determinations could be made of voices originating on either television or radio. It also supposes that this device could be used to verify the content of all known recorded audio, into the distant past and into our future sonic archives.

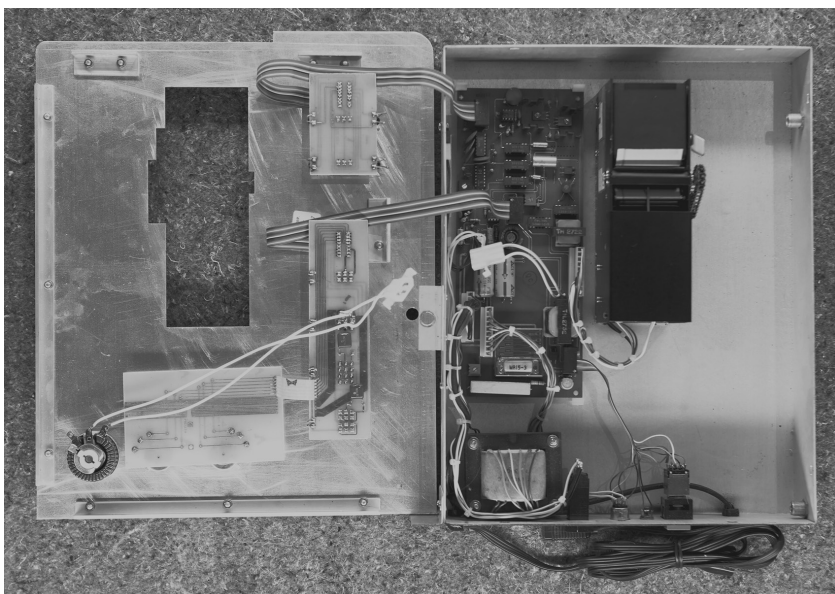


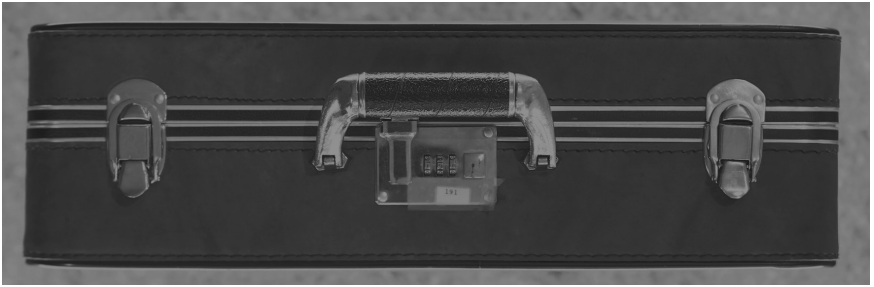
If you have any questions or if a problem  
develops, please feel free to call me at  
Dektor. Telephone: 912/238-0075.

Sincerely,

*Timothy P. Goss*

Timothy P. Goss  
Electronics Technician  
Dektor C.I./S., Inc.







## A SHORT HISTORY OF LIE DETECTION

God knew that Adam and Eve were guilty of stealing the fruit because, had they not eaten it, they would not have known that they were naked. This is one early instance of lie detecting, on record. God's method was wholly scientific. He observed the suspects' physical behavior and reasoned logically that this behavior was an outward, visible expression of hidden emotions and ideas of guilt that the man and woman were attempting to conceal. This is the true principle of lie detection, to detect what is human by detecting how we betray ourselves, how our bodies betray us.

In 1,000 B.C., the Chinese would force suspected liars to chew rice powder and spit it out. If the powder was dry—betraying a dry mouth—the suspect was believed to be lying.

In the middle ages, in various “trial by ordeal” practices God was supposed to intervene on behalf of the innocent (not unlike witch trials). If the ordeal was passed—if the accused survived or was uninjured, for instance if you walked across hot stones and your feet did not burn—then they were pronounced innocent.

Medieval practices of guilt determination also included having suspects touch a dead body, which, if it bled when touched, indicated that the suspect

was guilty. Part of this idea comes from the observation that blushing, becoming angry or embarrassed and flush, as well as sexual arousal, were all accompanied by flows of blood—these remain directly associated with Christian guilt, embarrassment, and, generally speaking, sin. Included in these techniques as well were blood letting and the "starving" of bodily demons via the removal of blood. Of course, women, resultingly, have forever been presumed a much more guilty "species" than men. "Woman" remains the puzzle that the lie detector (and art, for that matter) promises to solve.

In a collection of Latin anecdotes and tales compiled at the dawn of the fourteenth century, it is related that a nobleman suspected his wife of infidelity, and told his suspicions to one of his advisers, who agreed to make a test to determine the facts. At a dinner he sat next to the nobleman's wife, and casually laid his hand upon her wrist and conversed with her. During a brief conversation he mentioned the name of the man suspected by the nobleman, whereupon the lady's pulse immediately quickened; he later brought up the name of the husband but perceived no similar response. It is said a confession was later elicited.

And so, our bodies, mostly our female bodies, are the truth revealers before God, and they are deceptive, self-deceptive and to be spied on in all kinds of ways—through bio-signals, through media, and yes, through art. (It is interesting to note that most branches of Western human to human knowledge—ethnography, anthropology, psychology—rely somehow on this assumption of self-decept.)





Frederick Peterson, an American neurologist and poet who was at the forefront of psychoanalysis in the United States, publishes out of the Psychiatric Clinic of the University of Zürich in 1907, with none other than Carl Jung, the article "Psycho-physical Investigations with the Galvanometer and Pneumograph in Normal and Insane Individuals." Peterson was then clinical professor of psychiatry, Columbia University, New York, and Jung a young dozent in psychiatry, and the book contained vast amounts of patients' galvanic reactions to various terms.

In 1915, while studying under his mentor and applied psychology pioneer and German national Hugo Munsterberg at the Harvard Psychological Laboratory, a young psychology scholar by the name of William Moulton Marston developed a systolic blood pressure test, suggesting that it be

used to connect emotion and blood pressure scientifically. Marston set out to commercialize the invention of the polygraph, when his life took a turn toward entertainment and, perhaps strangely, comic book writing. Marston would author the first series of Wonder Woman comics, giving her a Lasso of Truth as one of her major super-powers: A lasso that gave foes, when captured in it, no choice but to tell the truth under Wonder Woman's questioning.

Two prominent Berkeley, California, police practices reformers, August Vollmer and John Larson, after reading an early paper by Marston, decide to develop their own polygraph, to which they added continuous recording and the idea of breath-integrated measurement to the "apparatus" (pneumatograph or spiograph).

Larson, not much later, enlisted Leonarde Keeler, who had been frequenting the Berkeley police department since the age of 17, in order to help photograph polygraph readouts. Keeler, while enrolled at UCLA during his twenties, conducted hundreds of lie detection tests for Vollmer and several neighboring police departments. In 1928 Keeler obtained a patent for an improved polygraph instrument and had twelve of them manufactured for sale at \$300 a piece.

For the next twenty years, the collusion of promotional materials, a scientific American narrative of lie detection, and the calculated, cultivated ambiguity of these machines developed a historic precedent, just as the classic film noir, science fiction (paging burgeoning fantasy writer L



Ron Hubbard and his friend, a young physiologist named Volney G. Mathison who in 1951 patented something called the electrodermal activity (EDA) meter, and detective series comes to prominence in an age of prohibition, organised crime, and seductive, succulent, sensationalist lying.

## TRUTH STRANGER THAN FICTION

On January 30, 1995, not long after O.J. Simpson had released *I Want to Tell You*, the book he hoped would clear his name, the tabloid television show *Hard Copy* revealed that it had subjected the double murder suspect to a lie detector test. The former football star had recorded himself on tape, reading aloud various passages from his book, phrases such as "I want to state unequivocally that I did not commit these horrible crimes."

The show hired lie detector "expert" Ernie Rizzo to use a "Psychological Stress Evaluator" to subject Simpson's voice to stress analysis. According to the show's "Hollywood Reporter," Diane Dimond, the test could separate "fact from fiction." Used by the police, the military, and big business, the instrument had been shown to be "95 percent accurate."

The *Globe*, also a tabloid publication, hired another lie detection "expert" named Jack Hardwood, who used another system, called "Verimetrics." He analysed the same tape of Simpson's reading and concluded from his analysis that Simpson did not commit the murders.

On February 26, 2012, George Zimmerman fatally shot 17-year-old African American high school student Trayvon Martin in The Retreat at Twin Lakes community in Sanford, Florida. Later in 2012 Zimmerman was



given a voice stress analysis test by the police department of Sanford and it is widely disseminated that he passed the test (a videotape of the test that was publicly released in June of that year). Zimmerman's trial began a year later, again in Sanford. On July 13, a jury acquitted Zimmerman of the charges of second degree murder and manslaughter. Many on the jury would have seen the voice stress analysis tape online.

In 2013 Jamie Allen created a re-make of the original voice stress analysis model made by Dektor, and used it to continuously analyse book-on-tape recordings of U.S. and British politicians reading their own autobiographies. The work, titled "The Lie Machine," is taken from a 1973 *Playboy Magazine* article by Craig Vetter, on the subject of the first commercially available VSA-based instrument and its \$15,000 training program.

## BODIES OF TRUTH

We are all a bunch of liars. Or at least our bodies are.

But is what I just said true? Does my body betray me? Look closely please. Am I sweating? Breathing too quickly? Can you see my heart, palpitating?

Whose bodies, feminine or masculine, do we presume are always under scrutiny, whose bodies seem always to need testing, by our arts of technologies, and technologies of art?

You listen now, to words, these atoms of language, and in order to determine their validity, their defensibility, where do we look? Our answer reinforces a modern collusion between individual and speaker, between the voice and its source, between words and their enunciator. Where do we look for my authority, my own authenticity as speaker, now, as neurons connected to nerves attached to muscles pushing air through the baritone tubes of this white, male body. Who am I, what am I—and on what authority do I speak these words, in this space, to you, here, now, today. Thank you, at least, for your suspension of distrust, as we surely are undertaking this test together. Is it working for you?

Isn't it strange that we often look behind things to establish their truth? We graph veracity as a panoply of other printed and spoken words, via other documents of provenance. It is wrought pieces of paper,



tucked inside frames and wallets that stand in formation, in defense of that which is spoken, of who it is that speaks, sometimes in rooms like this, usually by a body like mine. Credence through credentials. "What gives you the right to speak to me like that?" "Can I see your ID?"

Isn't it strange that in listening to words we often look beside them, to the left of them, to establish their truth. Beside the word spoken is its s-s-s-s-stammer, the moisture on my brow and the rhythm of my speech. It is this performed confidence with which people have learned to lie to one another that we call "culture." It is indeed an art—an artistic ability we must cultivate and learn—to speak, convincingly, confidently, to groups of other liars. "I just don't find him very convincing." "I find that hard to believe."



The word "polygraph" refers, rather openly, to the "many" kinds of "inscriptions" a body can make and trace down on bits of paper, it is a machine that produces, from a physical body, an endless stream of data, looking at us from all angles, angling us from all viewpoints. And so, under the hot lights of interrogation, how shall we judge these, our very own machines? As true, or as false?