

“Yet ours over and over until the end that is past truth,
The being of our sentences, in the climate that fostered them,
Not ours to own, like a book, but to be with, and sometimes
To be without, alone and desperate.
But the fantasy makes it ours, a kind of fence-sitting
Raised to the level of an esthetic ideal. These were moments, years,
Solid with reality, faces, namable events, kisses, heroic acts,
But like the friendly beginning of a geometrical progression
Not too reassuring, as though meaning could be cast aside some day
When it had been outgrown.”

JOHN ASHBERRY FROM “SOONEST MENDED,” *THE DOUBLE DREAM OF SPRING*.

Rebecca Wolff

TRANSPARENCY*, OR: BEFORE WE OPEN MY MOUTH

I've really taken a beating for certain transparencies to which I have succumbed or subscribed. I see the point of discretion (it's not all about me); I see the porn of cum-spattered articles. We are all so sick of I, and yet we die miserably every day for lack of what is found there. Now we're trending toward transparency again, but before we open my mouth we want to refer to a few things.

Transparent Lover link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FQFzPXTWSg>

Non-governmental organizations [\[edit\]](#)

Accountability and transparency are of high relevance for [non-governmental organisations](#) (NGOs). In view of their responsibilities to stakeholders, including donors, sponsors, programme beneficiaries, staff, states and the public, they are considered to be of even greater importance to them than to commercial undertakings.^[a] Yet these same values are often found to be lacking in NGOs.^[a]

Technology [\[edit\]](#)

In the computer software world, [open source software](#) concerns the creation of software, to which access to the underlying [source code](#) is freely available. This permits use, study, and modification without restriction. In computer security, the debate is ongoing as to the relative merits of the [full disclosure](#) of security vulnerabilities, versus a [security-by-obscurity](#) approach.

Politics [\[edit\]](#)

The right and the means to examine the process of decision making is known as transparency. In politics, transparency is used as a means of holding [public officials accountable](#) and fighting [corruption](#). When a [government's](#) meetings are open to the press and the public, its [budgets](#) may be reviewed by anyone, and its laws and decisions are open to discussion, it is seen as transparent, and there is less opportunity for the authorities to abuse the system for their own interests.^{[1][2]}

Criticism [\[edit\]](#)

[Sigmund Freud](#) following [Friedrich Nietzsche](#) ("On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense") regularly argues that transparency is impossible because of the occluding function of the unconscious.

Among philosophical and literary works that have examined the idea of transparency are [Michel Foucault's](#) [Discipline and Punish](#) or David Brin's [The Transparent Society](#). The German philosopher and media theorist [Byung-Chul Han](#) in his 2012 work *Transparenzgesellschaft* sees transparency as a cultural norm created by neoliberal market forces, which he understands as the insatiable drive toward voluntary disclosure bordering on the pornographic. According to Han, the dictates of transparency enforce a totalitarian system of openness at the expense of other social values such as shame, secrecy, and trust. He was criticized for his concepts, as they would suggest corrupt politics and for referring to the anti-democratic Carl Schmitt.^[a] [Clare Birchall](#), Christina Gaarsten, Mikkel Flyverbom, and Mark Fenster among others, write in the vein of 'Critical Transparency Studies' which attempts to challenge particular orthodoxies concerning transparency. Birchall assessed in an article "[...] whether the ascendance of transparency as an ideal limits political thinking, particularly for western socialists and radicals struggling to seize opportunities for change [...]". She is concerned that the dominant model of governmental data-driven transparency produces neoliberal subjectivities that reduce the possibility of politics as an arena of dissent between real alternatives. She suggests that the radical Left might want to work with and reinvent secrecy as an alternative to neoliberal transparency.^[a]

* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transparency_%28behavior%29

If secrecy = coterie publishing: productive exclusivity, motivational trust, morally activating shame,

Transparency = broadcast publishing: the farflung, extramoral inclusivity Fence has functioned by/for/with. It originates in incohesion—socially, editorially, and operationally, Fence is not a group of friends who agree with one another. Not even kindred. Fence is a pole or two around which a constellation of particles spin and dance, lap-dance. Visible at times to the naked eye, these particles cohere around nothing but energetic functionality, and that's what keeps us apart and moving forward without fail. It's like a sparky engine of capitalism.

Fence has published 30 issues (some of them double) since the spring of 1998. Fence has published seventy-four books—poetry, mostly; four works of fiction—since the fall of 2001. Fence has “launched the careers.” Fence collaborates with Cole Swensen on *La Presse*, contemporary French poetry in translation, and with Harmony Holiday on the *Astrosonics* podcast. Fence publishes the *Constant Critic*, edited by Karla Kelsey. Fence has a new digital imprint, *BODY*, edited by James Belflower and Rebecca Wolff, to start publishing online this summer. Fence has published the winning titles of the Alberta Prize . . . the Motherwell Prize . . . now the Ottoline Prize—for women. Fence has participated in the National Poetry Series since 2008—no more. Fence has launched the Fence Modern Poets Prize, and now the Fence Modern Prize in Prose. Fence has always published a lot of writing by queer writers, women, writers of color, and writers outside of the vast net of MFA credibility.

Fence has two paid staff members, one full- and one part-time, earning a total of \$66,000, and thirteen volunteer genre editors, who consider submissions to the magazine, only. In 2014 Fence had an income of \$179,791. In 2014 Fence spent a total of \$162,857.

How did Fence begin, and how will it end?

“Optimistic individuals play a disproportionate role in shaping our lives. Their decisions make a difference; they are the inventors, the entrepreneurs, the political and military leaders—not average people. They got to where they are by seeking challenges and taking risks. They are talented and they have been lucky, almost certainly luckier than they acknowledge. They are probably optimistic by temperament; a survey of founders of small businesses concluded that entrepreneurs are more sanguine than midlevel managers about life in general. Their experiences of success have confirmed their faith in their judgment and in their ability to control events. Their self-confidence is reinforced by the admiration of others. This reasoning leads to a hypothesis: the people who have the greatest influence on the lives of others are likely to be optimistic and overconfident, and to take more risks than they realize. . . .”

—*Thinking, Fast and Slow*, by Daniel Kahneman

This story I told about Fence on the internet in 2000 has followed me all the intervening days and will to my grave, now that I have resurrected it: <http://jacketmagazine.com/12/wolff-fence.html>

When I began Fence I did not feel any sense of urgency to structurally or mimetically challenge the for-profit publishing structure, and in fact I conceived of Fence as very much a means for me to work within that system to achieve better ends, but I did have the good sense to make Fence a non-profit organization, which makes it possible for Fence to refresh itself in resistance to the dominant paradigm, i.e., the relentless pursuit of growth. Fence has never wanted to grow, Fence has wanted to change. Fence has consistently been important to some people. Fence is great and does great things. Fence is unlimited in its potential to be useful to writers. Fence is a grand structure. Fence is too buggin' to fail. Fence is a thriving organism that touches so many lives. Fence changes lives. Fence has the power to change lives. Fence has changed my life.

What should Fence be doing that it isn't doing? And: would you like to make Fence do that.

The few things that can never change about Fence:

1. We publish primarily from our unsolicited submissions and anonymous contest entries.
2. We do not use "screeners" to make final decisions; we edit our own slush piles and contest entries.
3. We neither represent nor exclude any single aesthetic or ideological position.
4. We are a not-for-profit organization and therefore free to make our choices of what to publish without occlusive consideration for what will sell or have a large audience.
5. We are free in fact to operate outside the paradigm of quantitative evaluative metrics so pervasive in business culture, educational culture, arts funding culture, lots of other cultures.

This is a call for proposals. How do you want to work with Fence?

I am open to suggestions and proposals from individuals and institutions and organizations.

Reach me at rebeccafence@gmail.com with your ideas and questions.