

Rich Murphy

The Entanglements of *Ropes*

<http://deletepress.org/delet-e/w-scott-howard-ginger-knowlton/>

By poet W. Scott Howard and artist Ginger Knowlton

Poet W. Scott Howard and artist Ginger Knowlton collaborate to bring together lines of poetry and drawn line to make ropes in their chapbook, *Ropes*, published by Delete Press (e-book number 3). *Ropes* gathers works from Howard and Knowlton that previously appeared in *Diagram*, *Ekleksographia*, *word for / word*, and in a broadside with image from Éditions Moiré.

We have lyricists and song writers collaborating. Seldom do we have artist and poet collaborating, truly. Even Claude Debussy's treatment of Stéphane Mallarmé's "L'après-midi d'un faune" was interpretation, not a joint venture. In *Ropes*, we do. In a time when the arts and humanities have been devalued, these artists join forces to make tangent threads of connotations tangle, knot, intertwine, braid, or loop into ropes strong enough to hold the line taut or with slack. I imagine a rope tied to a bell for keeping time.

Ropes isn't your typical illustration for a book of poems. With the drawn "lines" that become shaded and sometimes shaded in color, the book contains a conversation between two artists that brings the reader back

to the importance of lines in humanity, whether as a deliberate reflection of vines, grasses, and hair or as a deft invention that seeks to communicate. The book communicates, reminding musers of the power in a line.

Both artists play with connotation and shadow, symbols and color until the drawn lines hold the words together and the words hold the drawn lines together. The book begins with three pages of drawings—or perhaps sketches is a better word. While some of them are recognizable, tendrils with blossoms along it and a woman with ribbons in her hair, others are not. Fragments or outlines of sticks, blossoms, or particles join the tendrils, and a heavy sensual shadowing and line broken with right angles foreshadow the book on the first pages.

The collaboration encourages the viewer to muse (and not to read only) on “The Tangent Mind,” “In Loops,” “Braided So,” and “At Work;” with their use of line (black and blue) and shadow (except for the poem “Where Shadows”) one is left with “For Everyone.” This poem recognizes the particularity of each person sitting and perhaps focused on the page wherever that person is.

The poetry will remind the reader of Apollinaire’s *Calligrammes*. However, other threads seem to run through the poems. One thread seems to be an homage to W. C. Williams’ attempts at the particular, and the second would be Gilles Deleuze’s idea of singularity and emergence. Bergson’s *élan vital* seems to appear in these pages in Howard’s focus of experience. Page four (I had to count; the book wants to be fluid) includes a tendril with blossoms and a grey butterfly to the left of a poem titled “After.” The poem calls the reader’s attention to the evanescence in the embrace that is an imagined signature or naming of the particular. The

book closes with a poem titled “Before,” calling humans “whatnot lovers,” who, using our imaginations to scatter silence in our naming, leave only silence darkening here, the symbols for universal experience, conciliations. The sketches and shadows in blue rectangles, one stretching to include an apparently naked woman embracing herself lying down, echo the poem or the poem echoes the sketches.

The inclusion of all musers in the closing poem is a reward for the various entanglements the collaboration asks of its environmentalist audience viewing the work. The poem tips a hat to the reader. The bookend poems, “After” and “Before,” are curious pieces that suggest we come to these drawings and poems for what holds us together. Everything else is individual experience. With care (or not until one looks through the magnifying glass that is this collaboration) does one see the threads and fibers that make up the lines that bind into *Ropes*.