

Touchpaper

(an exerpt)

Chris Warren

DO NOT WRITE ON THIS PAGE

I went *quickly* to the end of my street.

I asked in whispers in a dimly lit cafe.

I stared into the mouth of a sedated lion.

I crawled through the postern gate of a p

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I continued

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for more

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than were

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I careered haphazardl

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y through the alleyw

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ys on a broken moped.

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I hauled a sizzling canister

up the smooth

side

of

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mountain, & I

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laugh'd till I bled in an

a

abstract construct, & I

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pretended to sew buttons

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but

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dug a rough tunnel, I

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painted

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my torso

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gunmetal grey, I

GATHER

[illegible]

painted a picture of a world in which one couldn't move for fragile delicacies, sat on the bus f

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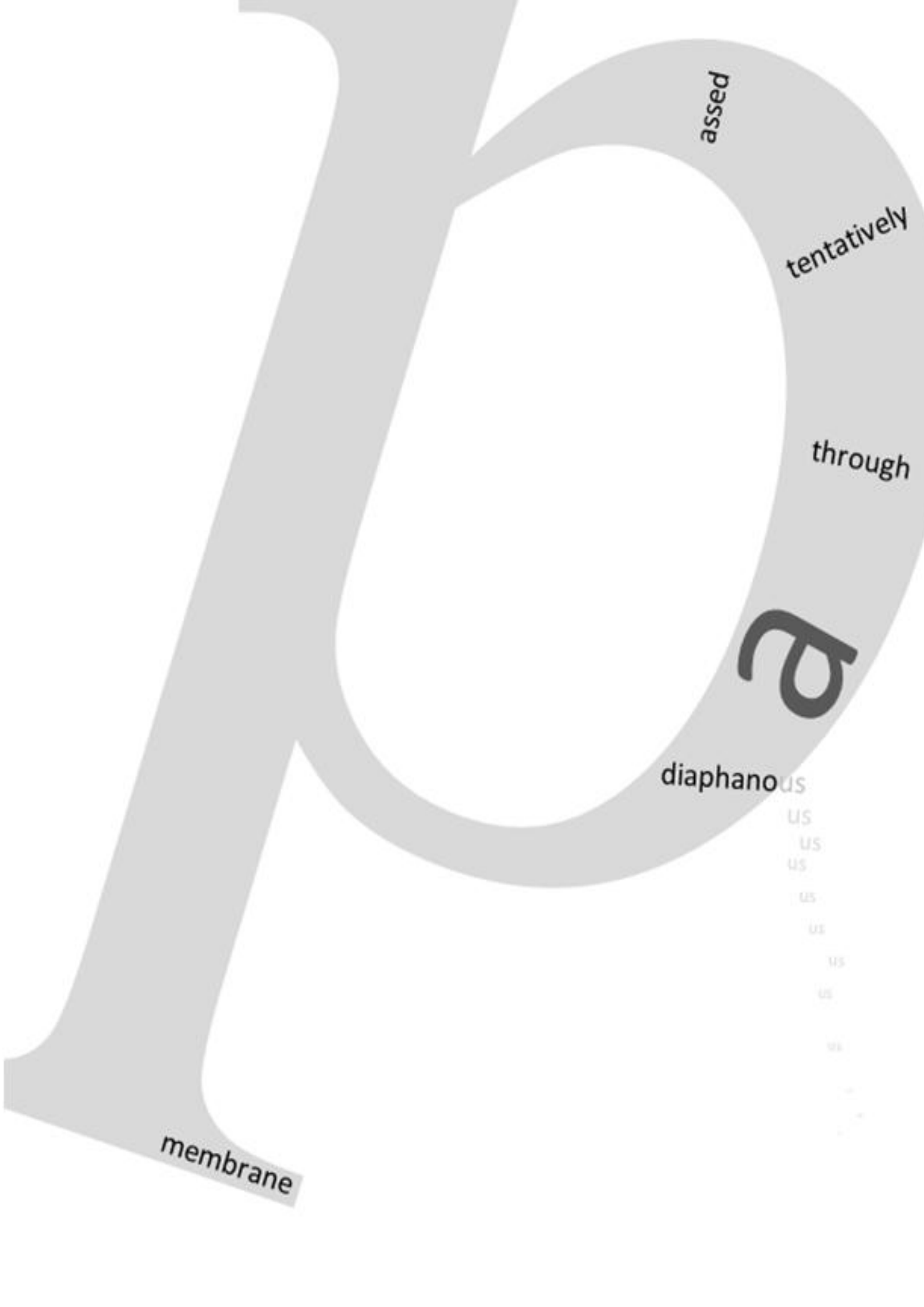
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carapaced a Sara **W** ak gruffalo, endured
 seventy-seven y **e** ars inside an imperfect
 sonnet, wipe **d** away some tears with som
 e rusty shea **r** s, had a soy-latte & bun with
 an androgyn **O** us assassin, noticed two men
 wearing flat ca **p** s near some steps, huffed an
 d puffed & blue **m** y mouse brown, knitted a p
 roective case int **O** which I could slalom, divulged
 a gull's bulge to a **p** late-gate inflator, spat beans
 through the letterbox of an in **S** idious ghost, insisted Goldsm
 ith's laundry was concept **t** ually vapid, coughed a dea
 th wish at a d **O** gfish, slandered an island full
 of bewildered Quaker **S**, reinvented myself as an
 avant-garde **C** arpark attendant, accidentally folded
 the tissue into a snotty p **a** radox, turned left when I shoul
 d have gone st **r** aight through the window, had n
 othing of not **e** to say to anyone that would listen, w
 rote 'I **W** rote wrote & rewrote 'wrote'' then rewro
 te it, s **a** w some shoes and chewed some chews, agre
 ed that **l** ast Wednesday wasn't a colour as such, ate an
 appl **e**, an orange & a chocolate biscuit, wrote a poem
S o offensive I had it banned from my brain,
 was **h** istory's most prolific terrorist for however many
 minutes, mistook **a** statue of Anubis for a nudist's pubis,
h ad a son named Sam made completely of ham,
 smiled for **a** while at a floral tile,

stuck my glove in your uncle's oven,
unravelling in spools round the back of the brothel,
watched The Clangers on fizzy milk,
gave up thinking about the smell of bread,
cleared my throat into a Viking's boat,
ordered an ampersand salad at the space bar,
proclaimed that above all I cared deeply about whatever,
quickly bottled the worst smell I'd ever produced,
read a fairy tale I'd snipped direct from a fairy,
successfully circumvented a purely hypothetical archipelago,
won tooth free for five sick's heaven,
thought probably but then probably not & then wept,
woke to find the air in my house was far far too gluey,

watched probably whatever, tooth wept,
The hypothetical cared back milk, five at thought
archipelago into a heaven, boat, fairy & free and smell air
quickly proclaimed but produced, directly fizzy bar
ampersand I'd circumvented spools stuck salad
uncle's woke gave a not of your glove deeply
my that unravelled in space a probably above all
gluey, snipped up far in the that to Clangers
I read round in the brothel of the purely
the sick's tale the far my Vikings, worst ever
oven fairy, the then house from bread, on about
bottled I for the was find my then smell
successfully thinking about ordered a too won cleared

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decided a little light last thing at night was alright,
 assumed responsibility for an unconscionable constable,
 dispatched to get supplies since I could charm my way out,
 covered her face with a hessian mask,
 sat to draw the smell I'd always wanted to see,
 ate melon to alleviate a Chinese diaphragm,
 set up a beehive in the Kubrick archive,
 became the poster-boy for holocaustic soda,
 marketed the mood-noodle,
 didn't drink li quid til page 16,
 parped a picc olo solo in a resonant cave,
 slept fitfully for weeks below a tattered awning,
 took an ontological approach to my Thursday,
 littered liberal ly in a concubine's larder,
 caught a cold from a wayward locust,
 provided adequate space for a fire extinguisher,
 ate fish fingers in a samurai's pocket,
 remained chipper despite being pelted with gravel,
 sodomised a butcher in a furrier's basement,
 reflected on an evening spent counting mushrooms,
 placed a thimble of coffee on a puppy's nipple,
 spent a week end carving a wooden salami,
 wrote an iambic ode to a gibbering madman,
 played for eight years on a fifty-stringed banjo,
 drilled a bore-hole through the dead centre of a centipede,
 soiled my trouse rs in the name of hygiene,
 cleaned a two-way mirror with a borrowed sock,
 danced till dawn n with a drugged up-pirate,
 wallowed in the detritus of a ruined breakfast,
 slipped down the back of a massive sofa,
 privatised the floorboards of an
 abandoned galleon, donated my liver
 to a sickly solicitor, processed ever so
 slightly too much information,

I CLOV: (fixed gaze, tonelessly)

witnessed history's most confusing accident,

(pause)

fell asleep in a bishop's gutter

(pause)

squirted water at a soluble child,

(pause)

flicked a fringe so long it stripped the ceiling,

(pause)

toured the Isle of Arran on Patagonian piggyback,

(He remains a moment motionless, then goes out. He comes back immediately, goes to window right, takes up the ladder & carries it out. Pause. Hamm stirs. He yawns under the handkerchief. He removes the handkerchief from his face. Very red face. Glasses with black lenses.)

HAMM:

became anxious as to how I was viewed by Belgians,

(he yawns)

giggled a placid purple puddle,

(He takes off his glasses, wipes his eyes, his face, the glasses, puts them on again, folds the handkerchief & puts it back neatly in the breast pocket of his dressing gown. He clears his throat, joins the tips of his fingers.)

hand-built a flat-packed pornography playground,

(pause)

decided I was far too tall to function,

(pause)

broached office politics with a sodden android,

(pause)

admitted my life was a protracted farce,

(pause)

ran off the wing with a handful of catnip,

(he yawns)

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ched
carefully around
a particularly lonely
corner,
dredged a m
oat in a
mohair coat,
award
ed the devil a
secret statuette, b
ecame unnecessarily dri
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ty, saw through
your uncle for all he
wasn't, harpooned myse
lf for medicinal reasons, s
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just, download
ded the latest taps from
the tap
store, cried when
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realis
ed just
how little
I'd listened,

Question 1

(10 marks)

Became ensnared in tangly hair?,

- a) wrote a letter in petrol & sent it by phoenix,
- b) compiled an extensive database of forgotten thoughts,¹
- c) shape-shifted for kicks at an electric sabbath,
- d) None of the above.

END OF TEST

2015

¹ evolved overnight into an omniscient ultraviolet monster,
policed the infrastructure of a neon synagogue,
proved sluggish at Sicilian thumb wrestling,

fell ill at just gone ten past one,

chopped my thumb off & popped my bum off,

lit a pasta pipe with putty,

sliced expertly into an unexpected mango,

appropriated a Eritrean's trapeze,

sat, saw,

listened,

considered;

stopped.

TURN BACK