

## Convincing

At the Poetry Center in 1971, B.F. Skinner, founder of radical behaviorism, responded to a poem called “Verbal Behavior,” named after his book that says we should remember how we learn language: it’s social. It’s made. The words don’t truly exist until we use them. Using them gives them life. We learn how to speak with people in an environment, in a place that’s changing. So we can “compare having a poem with having a baby,” Skinner said on stage, inspired by Samuel Butler’s claim, “a hen is only an egg’s way of making another egg.” We evolve to create. Our making is shaped. Does journalism work that way? A reporter reveals, making something known, but struggles with an open secret. What do we do when everyone already sees it? It’s not new, still dangerous. Urgent, but obvious. Not a corpse: a toy. A cartoon. A mouth sewn on a doll, a voice at the push of a button. Wait, isn’t that fiction: familiar characters, familiar plot, & everything is known, as upside-down as the pyramid we are taught, a live fish under ice while the world swirls, not frozen, not caught.