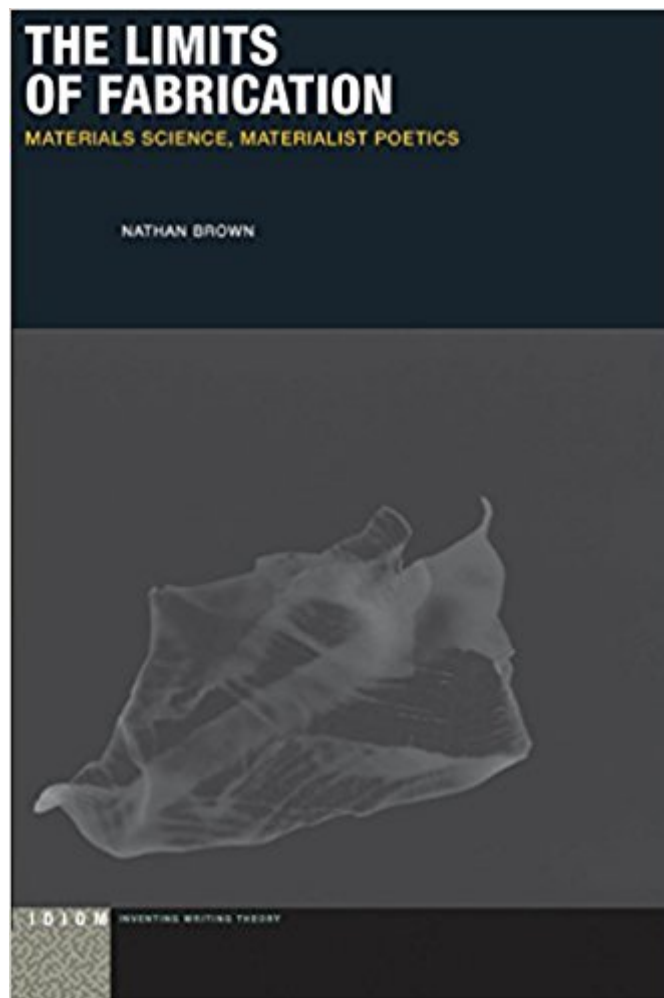




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# The Limits Of Fabrication: Materials Science, Materialist Poetics (Idiom: Inventing Writing Theory)



## Synopsis

Poetry, or poesis, has long been understood as a practice of making. But how are experiments in the making of poetic forms related to formal making in science and engineering? *The Limits of Fabrication* takes up this question in the context of recent developments in nanoscale materials science, investigating concepts and ideologies of form at stake in new approaches to material construction. Tracing the direct pertinence of fields crucial to the new materials science (nanotechnology, biotechnology, crystallography, and geodesic design) in the work of Shanxing Wang, Caroline Bergvall, Christian Bök, and Ronald Johnson back to the midcentury development of Charles Olson's "objectist" poetics, Nathan Brown carves out a tradition of constructivist, nonorganic poetics that has developed in conversation with science and engineering. While proposing a new approach to the relation of techné (craft, skill) and poesis (making, forming), this book also intervenes in philosophical debates concerning the concept of the object, the distinction between organic and inorganic matter, theories of self-organization, and the relation between "design" and "nature." Engaging with Heidegger, Agamben, Whitehead, Stiegler, and Nancy, Brown shows that materials science and materialist poetics offer crucial resources for thinking through the direction of contemporary materialist philosophy.

## Book Information

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Poems are material things. From that simple observation, Nathan Brown teases out startling

sequellae: experimental poetry is materials research, and materials science – in its concern with form and organization – is a branch of poetics. In the language of materials science, Brown’s synthesis of poetry, philosophy, and nanotechnology – is imaginative, while his characterizations are rigorous and enlightening. (Cyrus Mody Rice University) *The Limits of Fabrication* brings an essential argument to discussions concerning the end of art. Where Hegel affirms that poetry accomplishes the dematerialization of aesthetic expression by reducing it to linguistic transparency, Brown on the contrary demonstrates that a poem is always a factory, where meaning is fashioned, even if invisibly, through the crystals, quanta, or nanotubes of language. No metaphorical abstraction in this, but the revelation of the elementary technology at work in words. A strikingly singular, beautiful, and important book. (Catherine Malabou author of *The New Wounded*) In this ambitious and exciting book, Nathan Brown aligns two practices that occur at the limits of fabrication: one, at play in scenes of reading and writing, involves the poet’s ability to structure language mark by mark; the other, at play in materials research and manufacture, involves the nanoscientist’s ability to manipulate matter atom by atom. These forms of making open an understanding of the methods, techniques, and procedures that structure the world we now inhabit. Unfolding across five carefully sequenced chapters, the book concludes with a brilliant reading of *Mad Science in Imperial City*, a volume of poems by the engineer and poet who provides Brown’s epigraph and sets the scale for his important expansion of materialist poetics. ‘Work nano,’ Shanxing Wang urges, ‘think cosmologic.’ *The Limits of Fabrication* shows us how such a feat might be accomplished. (Adelaide Morris The University of Iowa)

Nathan Brown is Canada Research Chair in Poetics and Director of the Centre for Expanded Poetics in the Department of English at Concordia University, Montreal.

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