

TEMBLOR

C O N T E M P O R A R Y P O E T S

ISSUE NUMBER 2

\$7.50

Clayton Eshleman: *Ariadne's Reunion* complete
John Taggart: *The Rothko Chapel Poem* complete
Charles Bernstein: *Surface Reflectance* complete
Minoru Yoshioka: *Kusudama* excerpts
Susan Howe: *The Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary
Rowlandson*

poetry, prose, translations:

Michael Palmer · Karin Lessing · Michel Deguy · Andrew
Schelling · Rae Armantrout · Bob Perelman · Jed Rasula · Stephen
Rodefer · Gerald Burns · Michael Davidson · Dennis Phillips ·
Phillip Foss · Joseph Donahue · Harry E. Northup · George
Butterick · Paul Vangelisti

EDITED BY LELAND HICKMAN

TEMBLOR

CONTEMPORARY POETS

Issue Number Two · 1985

Edited by Leland Hickman

North Hollywood, California

A reading edition

Contents

Clayton Eshleman	<i>Ariadne's Reunion</i>	3
John Taggart	<i>The Rothko Chapel Poem</i>	16
Michael Palmer	<i>5 poems from the Baudelaire series</i>	51
Karin Lessing	<i>A Winter's Dream Journal</i>	56
Minoru Yoshioka	<i>5 poems from Kusudama</i> Translation: Eric Selland	60
Michel Deguy	<i>Three Poems</i> Translation: Bernard Bador	68
Andrew Schelling	<i>Of Maps, Castelli, Warplanes, & divers other things that come "Before the War"</i>	70
Charles Bernstein	<i>Surface Reflectance</i>	74
Rae Armantrout	<i>Four Poems</i>	83
Bob Perelman	<i>Three Poems</i>	87
Jed Rasula	<i>History Lessons in Verse</i>	90
Stephen Rodefer	<i>4 poems from Passing Duration</i>	92
Gerald Burns	<i>The Prose Object</i>	96
Michael Davidson	<i>Three Poems</i>	100
Dennis Phillips	<i>13 pieces from A World</i>	104
Phillip Foss	<i>6 poems from Virga. / Icy Gate.</i>	110
Susan Howe	<i>The Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson</i>	113
Joseph Donahue	<i>Two Poems</i>	122
Harry E. Northup	<i>from Enough the Great Running Chapel</i>	124
George Butterick	<i>from Repartee with the Mummy</i>	132
Paul Vangelisti	<i>Two Poems</i>	133

About this Edition

Temblor ran to ten issues between 1985 and 1989, edited by Leland Hickman from an apartment on Cahuenga Boulevard in North Hollywood. This is the second, published later in 1985 and dedicated to the memory of the novelist Coleman Dowell, who had died that August. It is the issue on which the magazine's character settles: Clayton Eshleman, John Taggart, Michael Palmer, Charles Bernstein, Rae Armantrout, Bob Perelman, Michael Davidson, Susan Howe, and translations from the French and the Japanese.

This edition is set from the scans of a single copy. Every page has been read and transcribed by eye against the page image; the text is not machine-read output. The magazine is a small portrait book, roughly 5¾ by 8¼ inches, and this edition enlarges it to 8½ by 11 with a single wide measure, so that long lines do not have to wrap. Each contributor opens on a fresh page.

Two long works dominate the issue. John Taggart's *The Rothko Chapel Poem* runs thirty-five pages, one unbroken flush-left block to a page, and Clayton Eshleman's *Ariadne's Reunion* thirteen. Susan Howe's *The Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* is set as a two-column prose essay rather than the spatial work her name may lead a reader to expect; it is given here as prose, in reading order.

The scan of this copy is clipped in the gutter. On several right-hand pages — printed pages 91, 97, 99, and the run of Susan Howe pages — between one and six characters are lost from the start of every line of the left-hand column, where the paper curves into the binding. Most of it has been recovered: the sliver of a right-hand page that shows at the outer edge of the facing scan supplies the missing openings. Where recovery was not honest, the edition prints [?]. There are 120 such marks, and they are the only editorial matter in the text.

Page numbers stop. *Temblor* prints no folio at all on the Susan Howe pages — her two-column setting runs text into the slot where the number would go. The running heads in this edition carry those pages' numbers as they would have been, counted forward from the last printed folio.

Printed typos and eccentric spellings are kept as they were set — *fedundant*, *Restauration*, *happyness*, *newclear*, *philospher's*. Set in TeX Gyre Pagella, with display type in Termes after the magazine's own masthead; the colour is the cover stock, sampled from the scan.

Clayton Eshleman

Ariadne's Reunion

Scarlet Experiment

The challenge of wholeness, to offer the lower
body imaginative status, so that the "negatives" of excrement,
menses, urine and semen, become intelligibles.
The tawny rocks panting like sponges, the whitened
violet dirt out of which asters are rocketing,
are as much a part of the Persian landscape in the vision of the Shah-nameh
as the prince, the maiden, and the necessary demon—
necessary because in this horned grotesca
the gods are more present than they are in us.

The apple dangling from the lovely fingers of a branch is red
all the way through, its seeds
tiny beings carousing in Eve's rich heart.
The earth, as well as woman, menstruates—
the evidence is flowers, especially roses.
Against green or brown, they take on a rusty,
delicious tenor, scarlet experiment
in league with liquid blackness, or that imperfect
circle of pebbles a male octopus arranges on the ocean floor,
to invite one in heat inside such a circle
to mate motionlessly changing colors for hours.

Forget the dragon. Think of George and maiden
lounged against an oak. He touches her vagina
and touches blood. The abyss moves forward, widens,
revealing a corridor in which red Ariadne is climbing forth,
8-legged menarche power returning from its winter sojourn with the nether
Dionysus,
bleeding pinkly on its underworld path
which now unzips and rezips with the fervor of awakened dirt.

Placements

AN EPEIRA CENTERED IN HER WEB, afloat yet anchored between ground and sky. The natural mind of the earth always spinning. Her one "decision," where to start the web. A small male enters, testing, sounding, the thread. At the center of the web, the penetrator is killed.

*

A Japanese Epeira, under whose green, red, and yellow abdomen I spider-sat, daily, for a month. One day, finding the web torn, I lamented a death, one that has never ceased to disturb me. The death of anything can contact the anythingness of our own death.

*

After Epeira disappeared, I had a vision during which, at the northwest corner of Nijo Castle, I saw a bright-red human-sized spider working a web up in the night air. The vision was too much for me. I did not have the language, the psychology, to report my own seeing of what I saw. Without Ariadne's thread, the veins, spittoons, claws, colorations and emanations of the goddess's body are opaque, not an image, a grueling picture.

*

At 85,000 BC, a foetally-tied corpse is carried on a pine-bough "raft" to a red ochre-packed pit in the German Neander Valley. Once deposited, the "corpse-raft" is covered with stone slabs. A few slabs have been discovered with cup-shaped indentations gouged in the side facing the corpse. The red-gated pit accepts the bound one — "then closes the Valves of her attention — like Stone." With the power of her red interior, she will wombify the entombed. A belief has persisted in primitive peoples that the soul, or the new-born itself, is a result of the coagulation of menstrual blood. In my spider vision, the green and yellow of Epeira's abdomen disappeared: the visionary spider was all red.

*

At 27,000 BC, 60 cup-shaped indentations were gouged in the form of a spiral in a large stone discovered at La Ferrassie. Red disks indicating vulva-like passage openings in the caves of Chufin and Pech-Merle, and the red vulva symbols in La Pasiega and El Castillo, indicate that at the very beginning of image-making creation magic was related to menstruation. For the Arnhem Land Wawilak Sisters, the Rainbow Serpent is their synchronized menstrual power and its connections to coiling dragons, flood-tides and storms.

*

The Wawilak Sisters' story has undergone a structural inversion and is now told in such a way as to help the men justify their having transferred women's mysteries into their own hands. They imitate menstruation and birth in artificial collective

bleeding, gashing their arms and genitals, drawing subincisioned boys up between their legs. The women, humbled, go off into the bush to menstruate or give birth, alone. The men have torn apart the Sister web.

*

Let's erase the "Venus of" from the "Venus of Laussel." Let's restore Laussel, figurehead on the prow of the ship Earth, to her place-name identity. Originally colored red, she holds up a 13-notched bison horn, perhaps to link her desire with the animal's force as well as to synchronize her flow with his appearance. There is no bison body — only this horn which she tilts toward her turned head, a Scarlet Woman regarding the bison vortex.

*

Arachne is not Ariadne, although the figures are intertwined: the natural mind of the earth always spinning anticipates the mistress of the labyrinth that the initiate is to traverse. In the labyrinth of the

creative life, "the bitter contest of the two natures" can be sublimated from a generational life/death struggle to an orgasmic union with a priestess whose lunar energies are at flood-tide.

*

Every artist everywhere participates in Ariadne. The transformation of the "given" life to a "creative" one not only involves entering a dark or "inner" life, but generating as well a resistance substantial enough to test oneself against and to shape the focus of one's work — and, having experienced the bestowal of soul (which is the reality of Ariadne), one must liberate the experience in a creative product, must emerge with more than the claim that something "happened" while "inside."

*

The earliest "pit" or earth-wombs were probably caves in which one to be initiated slept "in magical imitation of the incubatory sleep in the womb." We know that shamanic initiation involved long periods of incubation, pantomimed destruction, burial and rebirth. The incubus was not a perverse Christianized fiend, but an angel brooding on the initiate's body, perhaps in psychic imitation of the digger wasp/caterpillar conjunction.

*

The signs, grotesques, and animals in Upper Paleolithic caves may have been painted there as dream allies, left as records of the dream/initiation, or both. The fact that this art is often found in remote and "tight" parts of a cave not only stresses the underground journey, but the crib-like congruence between the cave's body and the initiate's body.

*

The Minotaur of the early Cretan myth was named Asterior, synonymous with *aster*, "star." He was "bull and star at the same time," and the ultimate elevation of Dionysus and Ariadne, as a divine couple appearing in unmaimed, fully born, human form in the night sky, suggests that the universe is the labyrinth and in imagination it is possible to be fully human in it.

*

On the isle of Naxos, commemorating Ariadne's transformation, Theseus and his 14 companions danced a Le Tuc d'Audoubert-like swirling dance around a horned altar which recalls the actual bull's horns through which Cretan bull-dancers flipped in a sacred marriage of the sun-king and the moon-goddess. The "horned altar" also evokes the womb's birth cone (and the labyrinth itself is prefigured by the cervix, lined with a branching called the "arbor vitae," or tree of life, where devouring white cells may be imagined to hide and wait like monsters for the Odyssean sperm over whose turbulent voyage the Athenic aspects of woman preside).

*

The horned altar is also the Double Axe, or labrys: bound together by a haft, the crescent-moon blades are a glyph of the labyrinth itself. Think of entering the lower tip of the left-hand crescent and following its curve to the haft, or center, where a change of materials signals an adaptation, through which one must penetrate, and readapt in order to follow out the curve of the upper right-hand crescent. The motion through is serpentine, and in respect to the material, the central confrontation is the movement from iron to wood to iron, organic vs. inorganic materials, which Wilhelm Reich layered to build his Orgone Accumulator, a small enclosure into which he invited patients, or initiates, to his vision of a journey, on the peristaltic accordion of the body, from sexual insufficiency to orgasmic potency.

A brush drawing of a double axe, or labrys, its two crescent blades threaded by the coiled body of a serpent whose head rests at the left end of the long hatched haft.

*

As in Arnhem land, where men took over women's menstrual mysteries and converted them into an attack on the body, there appears to be a take-over signified in the Cretan-Greek complex of myths relating to Ariadne. As Ariadne, the "utterly pure," a spinning hag or sorceress, she enjoyed intercourse with the labyrinth and its grotesque inhabitant. When patriarchal consciousness overwhelmed matriarchal centering, Ariadne became a "maiden to be rescued," who, "falling in love" with the hero Theseus, gave him the "clew" or thread that

would enable him to get in and out and, while in, to slaughter the sleeping Minotaur. The labyrinth, without its central being, was thus emptied.

*

In the 20th century, the burden of the vacated labyrinth involves hairline connections with the myriad cul-de-sacs of the deep past. The myth of Ariadne seems to capture much of Charles Olson's vision of "life turning on a SINGLE CENTER" until a mysterious "contrary will" manifested itself around 1200 BC, and the heroic attempt to "overthrow and dominate external reality" resulted in the migrational waves, or tentacles, that spread out around the planet. Do we in North America live in the bulb of a tentacle end that has, at the point it connects to a body, a slaughtered animal/hominid, whose corpse still fulgurates in our lethal dominational obsessions? Garcia Lorca's great and mysterious essay on the "duende" identifies this imp of the blood which provokes some of the world's great art as the struggle with a wound that never closes. Is Lorca therefore caught, whether he knows it or not, in Ariadne's turnstile, responding to a dark power of the blood that thousands of years ago mesmerized and enraged men as it appeared in rhythm with the moon and the tides and, without violence, ceased only to reappear again and again?

*

In Tantrik sexual magic, the two ingredients of the Great Rite can be *sukra* (semen) and *rakta* (menstrual blood). The sulphurous red ingredient in alchemical goldmaking may have been, in certain instances, this female essence (the *rubedo*, or precious red stone that sweats blood and turns the world to gold, is a conjunction of a whitened queen and a reddened king). Such a blending could be seen as a PINKENING. Many images of the labyrinth have not a minotaur but a rose at its center, a sign that a transformation has taken place. Seven days, across her period, the Old King is dissolved, rinsed of himself, his selves, lost in her "bath," her anabasis. The Dionysian initiate who is assimilated into this rose appears with a beard of roses to complement, below, Ariadne's rose-wreath crown.

*

The natural spinning mind of the earth weaves itself in personifications through our humanity. Biological peril is always central, the center, and sublimated by image-making into "scorpion hopscotch," or the imaginative gambling called poetry. It is possible to formulate a perspective that offers a life continuity, from lower life forms, through human biology and sexuality, to the earliest imagings of our situation, which now seems to be bio-tragically connected with our having separated ourselves out of the animal-hominid world in order to pursue that catastrophic miracle called consciousness. If the labyrinth is a Double Axe, one might see it as humanity's anguished attempt to center an unending doubleness

that is conjured by the fact that each step "forward" seems to be, at the same moment, a step "backward." And the haft? Phallogentricity that fuses the menstrual/ovulatory cycles into an instrument of inner and outer ceremony that injures but does not restore.

1985

In A Grove of Hanged Savors

Wawilak Sisters, inside-out-women,
the rainbow's scarlet band within
the Rock Python's venom. You were spewed
into the night sky while the patriarchal sword
short-circuited the serpent's energy.
In your exile, Ariadne's thread is present as
the spider's issue. The orb is the maze
from which black Theseus is to be expelled,
a husk. At the center of herself,
in a grove of hanged saviors, she reddens,
rounds out, exploding into ripples of albino babies,
each with a red, black, and silver balloon
setting off along the rainbow bridge,
a menstrual traveler, for the yellow body of the moon.

The Crone

I had tried to keep her balled up
in the bed sheets, not wanting to look at
the cancer, her terminal body, brown,
monkey-wizened, but she slipped out, unusually active,
her skin mahogany, more Indian
than I had thought my mother could be—
then I recalled the stories I had just heard about her,
how I was not my father's child, how I had
a brother, also not my father's—this news
excited me, and when she reappeared, capering
about the hospital room, she noticed I was erect

and laughed, Where did you get that? Oh I was joking
with some of my friends, I lied, still too young
to confront her black
ruby-rimmed eyes that twinkled in
flesh that had been used and used, as if I might
now put her on, a body glove. This is your true skin,
one voice said, and another: if you wear it
you will stave off the end of the world
for another cycle. I was so made of her by now
I had no place to go, and so began husking
to become her cob, her broomstick, her true husband.

I was called out into the forest to box
with a man I had been told represented
my other. I wore big blue gloves
and a nose mask; my other had only his hands,
and his unmasked face was more obscure
than any mask. We squared off in a clearing
and remained in that position forever,
for as soon as we recognized the extent to which
we mirrored one another, we both slipped out our backs,
he to quest with lantern for a younger man,
not that burlesque of virility I had put on.
As for me, I became a woman
lost in the image crowd pressing toward the arena,
that deep, tiered pit in the depths of which, lit
by flowing tapers, Ariadne, it was said, might appear
with her bull-headed partner. I took my place between two
who had jeered at Jesus as he struggled under
the immense onion onto which he was to be tied.
Gaunt jeerers, whose eyes brimmed with hail
as if the fools in the moon were emptying all their jugs.
Here, at the bottom of the world, one must move cautiously
between the thrust of narrative and
the associations the story sends out like feelers to test the air
for prey or rockface and if they do attach, a perpetual
give and take begins, for the older story wants to go on
and resists letting the new pull it apart as the new
revises the identity of the old. It is in the moment when
both have equal strength that Ariadne's face

is said to appear in this webbing—
at the moment the webbing tears, her bull-headed partner
bounds through. No one has actually
seen them couple—rather,
they have been memorialized as dancers,
thrusting in and out of gibbous circles
while the surrounding image crowd
receives the energy swarming out like tendrils unconcerned
with the crowd, tendrils that pass through
as if angling for something in the night sky
that would explode and cathect them on.

Look—she has appeared,
this evening in a spider mask to reveal why
no coupling, in living memory, has taken place.
In the blacker recesses of the pit,
to enter her is to be taken apart while one is inside.
The saying "no one has lifted her veil"
means that at the moment it is lifted
the lifter is no longer alive. Thus, her portal
is an active tomb, transforming the lifter into the goal
all desire: to carouse forever in her barque that floats above,
through white, red, and black weather, unphased
by the tiny spectacle below. Yet the story itself
seeks to destruct and to go on, and for this twist
both Dionysus and Theseus are required. One, it is said,
is her true husband, the other
a mistake. For ages it has been argued,
during intromission, why she gave Theseus
the clew to her animal heart. Theseus,
it is argued, had no intention of passing between
the horns, of losing himself in her arms to be
reclothed as a star. Theseus so resented her power
that he wanted to live forever in his own form,
and that is why he refused to tumble
and instead stabbed the sleeping Minotaur.
Why she allowed this to happen has never,
at least during intromission, been solved.
Some say her story follows natural evolution,
that one night her sacred victim recoiled

at the sight of her hideous threshold
or demanded to imitate, in his own way, her monthly flow.
Or that another host broke from the image crowd
and, with the victim, vied for her heart.
Leviathan and Behemoth, they churn in her gateway.
As the sun's hair is sheared, one fleshes out into a bull.
When the sun goes unpruned, the winning force is serpentine.
Then she is happiest, then she is most round.
But never as happy, many insist, as when pregnant by her true husband,
she gave birth before all assembled here.

That was *the* night, one of my Jesus
jeerers whispered, that draws us back again and again to
Ariadne's Reunion. Frankly, to see her dance
with the bull-headed partner only makes us yearn more
for that night of nights. No one knew what was to happen,
yet as soon as she appeared, haggard, unmasked,
with a senile grin—and pregnant—we were all involved.
We sensed she had come so far that night,
much further than when she performed as a spider in the veiled
recesses of the pit. That night she was most used,
most virgin, and so entranced were we
that when, on her back, by herself, she pulled out
a glistening ear of corn, we fainted, for a moment
totally present, pregnant with the world in mind,
nourished into a vision that each thing
is a soul returned to mother
inspiration. It was then that cauldrons were brought forth,
and she beckoned all of us to enter. We sat,
naked, to our waists in warm fluid gently cooking
the tiny beings swimming around. They were dark red,
ringed, but peculiarly human. They nibbled
at our penises until, in alarm, we stood up
to discover we had no heads. Then we released
fans of blood-speckled milky substance and heard Ariadne call,
as if from the stars, NOW YOU MUST GET THE REST!
We reached up into our headless shafts
pulling out long knotted strings of octopuses and squids.
In joy we offered them to her, and as we did so,
we saw another dimension of what we were offering:

our own entrails, and that we were dead,
intensely alive and dead, and that one of her was squatting
over each of us, gazing madly into
the divinational cat's cradles she was making of our entrails
as she bobbed up and down on our headless shafts.
O we were so happy to be anointed ones, christened
with her own oils so as to not injure her while she grooved!

I Blended Rose

The man who constellates Dionysus has entered
the arbor vitae where white cells cluster
to devour. He has stained his face cochineal
to blend—should he meet the Rainbow Serpent—
with its central stripe. He is the one
the Wawilak Sisters have chosen, the one they've summoned
to their water hole, to swim and to crawl while the water
over 7 days turns crimson. This man,
the water, and the Serpent, become one
force, the Sisters' thread or
twisty perception in the maze of otherwise
unintelligible nature. On the 3rd day
the man to become the vine is allowed
his first sip of cervix blood. On the 5th
he is slaughtered to imitate the flow. On the 7th
he kneels before the Sisters' horned altar
beholding the old moon in the new moon's arms.
For most men their own heart is the most
precious food. The man to become the wine
places his heart in the damp nest
of the Sisters' knotted towel. Faced with blood,
he mixes his sperm with the serpentine
bodies of the Sisters, he engages them at the haft
of the double labrys where
the waning and waxing moons are hinged,
where energy reverses and the River of Life
becomes the River of Death. Dionysus is the force
that turns left to discover the Sisters' secret
child, the one who is to remain within,
neither totally animal nor totally human,

the one never to be delivered, who can only be accepted
as the reservation toward being, or who if not accepted,
must be killed. Dragged from the labyrinth,
this being is the Minotaur stabbed by the man
who refused transformation, who could only
imitate the Sisters' flow by gashing his own arms.
The man who constellates Dionysus discovers
at the central twist, instead of a beast,
an extraordinary rose, pink and blooming, illuminating
the recesses of meaning, the progeny of his white
and the Sisters' red. As they strum on his entrails,
he is blended, the harp of their reciprocal pit.

Deeds Done And Suffered By Light

One can glimpse Apollo in the door of each thing,
as if each thing now contains his oven—
in vision I open an olive tree and see his earlier animal
shapes fleeing at the speed of light, the python,
mouse, and lion Apollo, fleeing so that human forms
may walk unharmed by the invasion of the supernatural.
Light increased incredibly after the end of animal
deity, at the point verticality was instituted,
and the corpse of one's mother buried far, far from the place
on which one slept one's head. But the supernatural
in the guise of the natural is turning us over
in its fog a half mile from this ledge. Burnished
muscleless fist of a grey cloud. Sound of rain
from water still falling from the olives. I have no desire
to live in a world of nature conditioned by patriarchy.
I kick off my head and live in the light
bounding in from my mother. It is her great
ambivalence toward her own navel that conditions
the decreasing dripping. The hills now
writhe with green meat and something should follow.
Something should be explaining the tuft of salmon bull shape
abandoned by the other stilled clouds. Something
should be done with the swatted fly. Something is
this abyss of unusableness that remainders me
and pays no royalty. There are hosts of thrones

directly above. A witch hammer. A cleated enclosure.
The way a church has of making you puke your soul
upon entering and then, as the dryness of birth is rehashed
by nun and candle, of worshipping what has just left you,
the bride of your chest, the stuff inside you that a moment before
twinkled with the sadness and poverty of the street's
malicious laughter. How I wish that this poem
would birth another, and that the other had something to do
with unpacking the olive meat of this mountain. No
apocalypse. An enlargement, rather, of the so-called Whore
on her severely underfed Dragon. And more wine. More plumes
of silver azure evening coursing over
the thatch of the mountainside. More space to suffer,
more farewell to the flesh, more carnival in the face of everyman,
less perfection, more coherence. Meaning: more imagination,
more wigs for glowworms, more cribs for the restless dead
who wake us right before dawn with their bell leper
reminding us that fresh rain air is a clear indication
that here is not entirely here. The processions of graffiti-
scarred bison are, like us, clouds imprisoned to be viewed.
And then my mother began to speak: "You've put on a lot of weight!
Look at your father and me, some shape we're in! We've suffered
a lot for you these 14 years. You should've seen my left side
when it turned into a purple sponge and stained what
you buried me in to the point it rotted. I'm glad
John Ashbery appeared to you last night reading new
incomprehensible poems that made perfectly good sense. You are
much more organized, much more chaotic, than you behave here.
When I think of you, I see you at 12, stuck in the laundry chute,
your legs wiggling in the basement air, while the top part talked
with me as we waited for the renter to pull you out.
We had a nice chat that afternoon, and I almost like you best
that way, just what stuck out of the chute. If I could only have
that part on a roller skate and let what was wiggling below go—
it's that part that's gone off gallivanting,
that's carried you goodness knows where while I
and your father lie here a few feet away from each other
waiting for our coffin lids to cave in. Then, even
the little space you left us to play with memories of you

on our chest bones will be gone. My buttons are mouldy
and my hands have no flesh left but I still manage
to squeak my buttons a little and get into your dreams.
I'm sorry if I appear both dead and alive to you,
but you should know by now you can't have it your way all the time.
I'm as real in this way as I ever was, sick more often than not
when I appear, but you're never here, you're worrying
how to take care of me, and then you wake to a jolt
every time there's nothing to take care of.
Now your father wants to say a word." "Clayton,
why don't you come home? We were such a nice little family.
Now it is like when you went off to that university.
Your mother and I would sit up and talk about you
until our fathers came in from the night and motioned us
into our bed. You were such a nice little fellow
when we could hold you up high and look at each other
through you. Ten little fingers ten little toes
Two bright eyes a funny little nose
A little bunch of sweetness that's mighty like a rose
Your mother, through you, looked so much like
your grandmother I could never get over it.
Why I bet you don't even remember your birth gifts
A savings bank and one dollar from granddad and grandmother
Two kimonos from aunt Georgia and uncle Bob
Supporters from Faye's dollie Patricia Ann
A Romper Suit from Mrs. Warren Bigler
A Dress from Mr. & Mrs. SR Shambaugh
Silk Booties & Anklets, Knit Soaker & Safety Pins
Hug-me-tight, a Floating Soap Dish with Soap, Rubber Doggie
I don't see why you don't come home. Your mother and I
have everything you need here. Why sure,
let's see, maybe you could pick up some things,
Gladys—no, she's not listening—*Gladys what do you want?*"
"Well, I know we need some scouring powder and light bulbs"
"GLADYS WHAT DO YOU WANT?" "And Clayton, we want
Clayton to come back, we don't like Clayton Jr. out so late at night"
"GLADYS WHAT DO YOU WANT?" "You never know what will happen, why
just last week Eunice Wilson, over in Plot #52451, told me"
"GLADYS WHAT DO YOU WANT?" "—are you listening, Daddy?"

Eunice said while Jack was getting out of his car parked in his own driveway at 2 AM"

"GRADDISROTDUYURUNT!" "—after his date with Kay Fisbeck, this man came up to him and said something I will not"

"GRADDISROTDUYURUNT" "—I will not repeat it was that vulgar—this man said: if you don't come with me, I'll crush your cows.

Doesn't that take the cake? Why Clayton you can't blame Jack for going off with him, and you would not believe where this man took Jack Wilson and what he wanted him to do.

Now that your father's lid has caved in, I'll tell you:

he made him drive north to the Deaf School parking lot, and when he was sure nobody else was around, he said:

Persephone's a doll

steeper than Marilyn,

miracles lick her,

dreams invader,

over the cobweb orchestra

there's an ice

conductor,

forget the orchestra,

conduct the pit!

Hanged

Ariadne

giving birth in Hades

is the rich, black music in mother's tit."

The Man With A Beard of Roses

A constructed indwelling, an antiphonal swing.

These were the things that mattered

to the man for whom the goddess wreath

was truer to the earth he knew than a barbwired heart.

Because he had loved and been loved by

the person he most desired to be with and to talk to

he could die at any time. He would not

have missed the central frosty drop

every mother's cuddling proclaims will fall.

But he did not desire nonbeing. He desired to throw
back the curtains of every day and enter
the cave of flowers where mature transformations
intermingled with the immature. He desired,
therefore, he depended. No matter that his appetite
was infantile, that he never really rested,
that his beard was also barbed. He knew he would never
assimilate his points. That he had many,
not merely one, was a multitude and kept him aloft
on a road whose wavy grain he went against
as he journeyed through it, or simply went
with a sideward wash to find once again he'd been
deadended, or had he descended—or blended?
Words were walls worth boring through, worth
turning into combs, words were livable
hives whose centers, or voids,
sounded the honey of emptiness dense
with the greyish yellow light nature becomes
to the soul for whom every thing is a cave
or hollow in the top of a water demon's
head, a green being plunging into green, sound
eating color, a sentence rolling closure
away from its opening. Inside this man the brutal
world had died. He felt its rot in every pore,
its disappearance in the sinew of his petals.
He had lived its life, but even more his own,
against the bio-underpinning to simply flex like worms.

*Les Eyzies, France — San Damiano
di Stellanello, Italy
July—August, 1984*

John Taggart

The Rothko Chapel Poem

Red deepened by black red made deep by black
prolation of deep red like stairs of lava
deep red like stairs of lava to gather us in
gather us before the movements are to be made
red stairs lead us lead us to three red rooms
rooms of deep red light red deepened by black
in this first room there is to be a wedding
we are the guests the welcome wedding guests
the groom welcomes us the bride welcomes us
rooms full of deep red light room upon room
in this second room there is to be a wedding
we are the guests the welcome wedding guests
the groom welcomes us the bride welcomes us
the bride and groom take our hands in welcome
room on room third room full of deep red light
in this third room there is to be a wedding
we are the guests the welcome wedding guests
the groom welcomes us the bride welcomes us
bride and groom take our hands in their hands.

Deepened by black red made deep by black
prolation of deep red like cooled lava
the stairs in a cooler prolation of red
there are still the movements to be made
stairs led us led us to three red rooms
rooms of cooled light red cooled by black
in the first room there was a wedding
we were guests we were the wedding guests
groom welcomed us and bride welcomed us
rooms full of cooled light room upon room
in the second room there was a wedding
we were guests we were the wedding guests
groom welcomed us and bride welcomed us
bride and groom took our hands in welcome

room upon room full of cooled red light
in the third room there was a wedding
we were guests we were the wedding guests
groom welcomed us and bride welcomed us
bride and groom took our hands in theirs.

Bride and groom took our hands in theirs
groom welcomed us and bride welcomed us
we were guests we were the wedding guests
in the third room there was a wedding
room upon room full of cooled red light
bride and groom took our hands in welcome
groom welcomed us and bride welcomed us
we were guests we were the wedding guests
in the second room there was a wedding
rooms full of cooled light room upon room
groom welcomed us and bride welcomed us
we were guests we were the wedding guests
in the first room there was a wedding
rooms of cooled light red cooled by black
stairs led us led us to three red rooms
there are still the movements to be made
the stairs in a cooler prolotion of red
prolation of deep red like cooled lava
deepened by black red made deep by black.

Time for some passion in this language it's time to move
it's time to move to make a move ma-mah-moo-euve-veh
move out of deep red light move out of this purple light
the first movement is the movement of infinite resignation
did you think we would move together move as a gathering
did you think it'd be let's waltz come let's waltz time
it's time to make a move that ma-mah-moo-euve-veh time
move out of this purple light make the move by yourself
first movement of infinite resignation by yourself alone
did you think we'd move as a gathering of wedding guests
did you think it'd be let's waltz like wedding guests time
time for some passion in this language time to move alone
it's time to ma-mah-moo-euve-veh move alone move away
away by yourself away from deep red from this purple light
movement of resignation alone and away from the weddings

did you think we'd move as wedding guests hand in hand
did you think we'd waltz hand in hand with bride and groom
it's that ma-mah-moo-euve-veh time no other move time
always time for that time alone and away from warm welcome
resignation move away from warm welcome of bride and groom
did you think bride and groom wouldn't blacken their hands
did you think their hands wouldn't be as blackened to us
time for some passion time to move into black black rooms.

Time for some passion time to move into black black rooms
did you think their hands wouldn't be as blackened to us
did you think bride and groom wouldn't blacken their hands
resignation move away from warm welcome of bride and groom
always time for that time alone and away from warm welcome
it's that ma-mah-moo-euve-veh time no other move time
did you think we'd waltz hand in hand with bride and groom
did you think we'd move as wedding guests hand in hand
movement of resignation alone and away from the weddings
away by yourself away from deep red from this purple light
it's time to ma-mah-moo-euve-veh move alone move away
time for some passion in this language time to move alone
did you think it'd be let's waltz like wedding guests time
did you think we'd move as a gathering of wedding guests
first movement of infinite resignation by yourself alone
move out of this purple light make the move by yourself
it's time to make a move that ma-mah-moo-euve-veh time
did you think it'd be let's waltz come let's waltz time
did you think we would move together move as a gathering
the first movement is the movement of infinite resignation
move out of deep red light move out of this purple light
it's time to move to make a move ma-mah-moo-euve-veh
time for some passion in this language it's time to move.

Doorway without a door
shadow-crossed doorway
the doorway always open
one at a time inside
inside one hears screams
begins to hear screaming
screams within screams
screams in collision

turbulence of collision
turbulence in the rooms
screams in black rooms.

It is really only one scream
echoes of only one scream in
of one scream within itself
screams within the one scream
within one passionate scream
one scream has been sustained
one scream is being sustained
sustained in one black room
echoes of only one scream in
of one scream within itself
screams within the one scream
the one scream will not decay
not decay in one black room.

Not decay in one black room
the one scream will not decay
screams within the one scream
of one scream within itself
echoes of only one scream in
sustained in one black room
one scream is being sustained
one scream has been sustained
within one passionate scream
screams within the one scream
of one scream within itself
echoes of only one scream in
it is really only one scream.

One scream the motive for movement
movement from one room to another
from one black room into another
into this red room red after black
no red deeper than red after black
one scream the motive for movement
through black through empty rooms
feels like we're wandering through
through a seething and writhing sea

through black through black to red
one scream the motive for movement
movement from one room to another
from one black room into another
into this red room red after black
no red deeper than red after black.

Doorway without a door
shadow-crossed doorway
the doorway always open
one at a time inside
inside one hears screams
begins to hear screaming
screams within screams
screams in collision
turbulence of collision
turbulence in the rooms
screams in black rooms.

Only one scream really it is
only one scream within echoes
itself within the one scream
the one scream within screams
one passionate scream within
been sustained one scream has
being sustained one scream is
in one black room sustained
only one scream within echoes
itself within the one scream
the one scream within screams
will not decay in one scream
in one black room it will not.

In one black room it will not
will not decay in one scream
the one scream within screams
itself within the one scream
only one scream within echoes
in one black room sustained
being sustained one scream is
been sustained one scream has

one passionate scream within
the one scream within screams
itself within the one scream
only one scream within echoes
only one scream really it is.

No red deeper than red after black
into this red room red after black
from one black room into another
movement from one room to another
one scream the motive for movement
through black through black to red
through a seething and writhing sea
feels like we're wandering through
through black through empty rooms
one scream the motive for movement
no red deeper than red after black
into this red room red after black
from one black room into another
movement from one room to another
one scream the motive for movement.

Really only one has been moving us
only one within itself moving us
one scream within itself moving us
screams within the one move us away
away from the weddings wedding rooms
from those to this this black room
to our wandering in this black room
moving in this room means wandering
wandering's moving without meaning
no end to moving in this black room
it is like moving in a writhing sea
we are wandering in a writhing sea
seething and writhing in this room.

Seething and writhing in this room
we are wandering in a writhing sea
it is like moving in a writhing sea
no end to moving in this black room
wandering's moving without meaning

moving in this room means wandering
to our wandering in this black room
from those to this this black room
away from the weddings wedding rooms
screams within the one move us away
one scream within itself moving us
only one within itself moving us
really only one has been moving us.

One scream the motive for wandering movement
movement in one black room in one in another
movement in a writhing sea in black rooms
movement into this red room red after black
no red goes deeper than this red after black
one scream the motive for wandering movement
scream from one child who's given one picture
one picture of blood this room full of blood
scream from one child given only one picture
the one child is the poet the child of pain
one scream the motive for wandering movement
movement in one black room in one in another
movement in a writhing sea in black rooms
movement into this red room red after black
no red goes deeper than this red after black.

Doorway without a door
the doorway always open
one at a time inside
one at a time I am one
no third person is one
one is I one is I me
the one primitive I me
I me the child of pain
the primitive I inside
inside the turbulence
inside the black rooms.

One I know really one scream
hard not to within one scream
what it is what the movement
same passionate same movement

first movement of resignation
same as before the same alone
away from the weddings alone
not in the wedding pictures
other other possible pictures
blacktop other blacktopped
not in other I me within one
echoes of in one black room
within one in one black room.

Within one in one black room
echoes of in one black room
not in other I me within one
blacktop other blacktopped
other other possible pictures
not in the wedding pictures
away from the weddings alone
same as before the same alone
first movement of resignation
same passionate same movement
what it is what the movement
hard not to within one scream
one I know really one scream.

The motive for movement one scream
from one room to another movement
into another from one black room
red after black into this red room
red after black no red deeper than
the motive for movement one scream
through empty rooms through black
wandering to music played backwards
seething writhing sea through it
through black to red through black
the motive for movement one scream
from one room to another movement
into another from one black room
red after black into this red room
red after black no red deeper than.

Doorway without a door

the doorway always open
one at a time inside
one at a time I am one
no third person is one
one is I one is I me
the one primitive I me
I me the child of pain
the primitive I inside
inside the turbulence
inside the black rooms.

One scream I know really one
one scream within hard not to
what the movement what it is
same movement same passionate
resignation's first movement
the same alone same as before
alone away from the weddings
wedding pictures not in the
possible pictures other other
blacktopped blacktop other
I me within me not in other
in one black room echoes of
in one black room within one.

In one black room within one
in one black room echoes of
I me within me not in other
blacktopped blacktop other
possible pictures other other
wedding pictures not in the
alone away from the weddings
the same alone same as before
resignation's first movement
same movement same passionate
what the movement what it is
one scream within hard not to
one scream I know really one.

Red after black no red deeper than
red after black into this red room

into another from one black room
from one room to another movement
the motive for movement one scream
through black to red through black
seething writhing sea through it
wandering to music played backwards
through empty rooms through black
the motive for movement one scream
red after black no red deeper than
red after black into this red room
into another from one black room
from one room to another movement
the motive for movement one scream.

Been moving me really only one has
moving me only one within itself
moving me one scream within itself
move me away screams within the one
wedding rooms away from the weddings
this black room from those to this
this black room I'm wandering in this
wandering means moving in this room
moving without meaning's wandering
in this black room no end to moving
a writhing sea like moving in a sea
in a writhing sea I am wandering
in this room seething and writhing.

In this room seething and writhing
in a writhing sea I am wandering
a writhing sea like moving in a sea
in this black room no end to moving
moving without meaning's wandering
wandering means moving in this room
this black room I'm wandering in this
this black room from those to this
wedding rooms away from the weddings
move me away screams within the one
moving me one scream within itself
moving me only one within itself
been moving me really only one has.

No red goes deeper than this red after black
movement into this red room red after black
movement in a writhing sea in black rooms
movement in one black room in one in another
one scream the motive for wandering movement
the one child is the poet the child of pain
scream from one child given only one picture
one picture of blood this room full of blood
scream from one child who's given one picture
one scream the motive for wandering movement
no red goes deeper than this red after black
movement into this red room red after black
movement in a writhing sea in black rooms
movement in one black room in one in another
one scream the motive for wandering movement.

It's time to move time for some passion in this language
to make a move ma-mah-moo-euve-veh it's time to move
move out of this purple light move out of deep red light
the second movement is the movement of rosy transparency
move as a gathering did you think we would move together
come let's waltz time did you think it'd be let's waltz
that ma-mah-moo-euve-veh time it's time to make a move
make the move by yourself move out of this purple light
by yourself alone second movement of rosy transparency
as wedding guests did you think we'd move as a gathering
like wedding guests did you think it'd be let's waltz time
time to move alone time for some passion in this language
move alone move away it's time to ma-mah-moo-euve-veh
away from deep red from this purple light away by yourself
alone and away from the weddings movement of transparency
hand in hand did you think we'd move as wedding guests
hand in hand with bride and groom did you think we'd waltz
no other move time it's that ma-mah-moo-euve-veh time
alone and away from warm welcome always time for that time
away from warm welcome of bride and groom transparency move
blacken their hands did you think bride and groom wouldn't
as blackened to us did you think their hands wouldn't be
time to move into black black rooms time for some passion.

Time to move into black black rooms time for some passion
as blackened to us did you think their hands wouldn't be
blacken their hands did you think bride and groom wouldn't
away from warm welcome of bride and groom transparency move
alone and away from warm welcome always time for that time
no other move time it's that ma-mah-moo-euve-veh time
hand in hand with bride and groom did you think we'd waltz
hand in hand did you think we'd move as wedding guests
alone and away from the weddings movement of transparency
away from deep red from this purple light away by yourself
move alone move away it's time to ma-mah-moo-euve-veh
time to move alone time for some passion in this language
like wedding guests did you think it'd be let's waltz time
as wedding guests did you think we'd move as a gathering
by yourself alone second movement of rosy transparency
make the move by yourself move out of this purple light
that ma-mah-moo-euve-veh time it's time to make a move
come let's waltz time did you think it'd be let's waltz
move as a gathering did you think we would move together
the second movement is the movement of rosy transparency
move out of this purple light move out of deep red light
to make a move ma-mah-moo-euve-veh it's time to move
it's time to move time for some passion in this language.

Doorway without a door
the doorway always open
almost the last doorway
one at a time inside
I am one the I me one
a sentence is a choice
I am the child of pain
the primitive I inside
inside the turbulence
almost the last time
inside the black rooms.

Away from the weddings wedding rooms
I have performed the first movement
I have made the movement of resignation
I have moved away all the way away
from those rooms into this black room

this is a different kind of domination
screaming within that will not decay
echoes of one scream within itself
seething and writhing within this room
away from the weddings wedding rooms
from those rooms into this black room
I am not making a move toward ladders
I am wandering again within this room.

I am wandering again within this room
I am not making a move toward ladders
from those rooms into this black room
away from the weddings wedding rooms
seething and writhing within this room
echoes of one scream within itself
screaming within that will not decay
this is a different kind of domination
from those rooms into this black room
I have moved away all the way away
I have made the movement of resignation
I have performed the first movement
away from the weddings wedding rooms.

Red deepened by black red made deep by black
unutterable depth of deep red brought out
what was unutterable brought out in one room
one picture in one room one room full of blood
room where the second movement is to be made
movement of rosy transparency the self rosy
self relating to self willing to be itself
the self itself in this room self transparent
rosy transparency through power of the blood
room where the second movement is to be made
where everything's given everything given back
where the guest enters and welcome is given
bride and groom take hands in warm welcome
the bride and groom take hands in their hands
I am in this room I do not make the movement
don't complete movement I'm the child of pain
I'm the child willing to be that child self
not burning Vietnamese child not Christ child

not rosy not transparency I'm the child of pain.

Doorway without a door
the doorway always open
the last without a door
one at a time outside
I am the one the I me one
I don't stop being one
I am the child of pain
the primitive I outside
inside the turbulence
there is no last time
inside the black rooms.

Tourists leave Chapel explosion of their talk
giggles of college girls "could you paint that?"
someone doubts Passion of Christ is the theme
someone dislikes hearing about "blood paintings"
I know a woman who was married in the Chapel
the paintings turned out black in her pictures
blue sky humid afternoon it's spring in Houston
underneath peeling blue sky I see this red sky
there are swallows darting over a shallow pool
flower beside pool tiny florets like bow ties
ground where the flower grows turns deep red
this ground that keeps turning deep red ground.

Michael Palmer

5 poems from the Baudelaire series

Mei-mej, here is the table
Who knows the word for it
Sikhs today are dancing in the streets,
some say a dance of death
Bernadette has written *Utopia*
A quadrate sun is entering
and Sappho tells Alcaeus
You are a scratch on a vase
Perfect things here and there,
small marks in stolen house
eyes rolled back inside,
vein, milk and rust
chin's hardness,
"forehead filled with dust"

Word That Would Not Be Written

The secret remains in the book
It is a palace
It is a double house
It is a book you lost
It is a place from which you watch
the burning of your house
I have swallowed this blank
this libel of shores
nights that like the book are lost
You, island in this page
image in this page
evening's eyelid, silk

four walls of breath

I could say to them
Watch yourself pass

Relax and watch yourself pass
Look at the thread

You, island in this page
image in this page

What if things really did
correspond, silk to breath

evening to eyelid
thread to thread

The Opening

The opening is read by the tongue
momently for the dead now

as they multiply
far from here — are

(as words this high) — are
amid sand the few fragments

bowl bread violet
curve swollen outward

of flies gathered
at lips and eyes

Karin Lessing

A Winter's Dream Journal

January 1984

Twilight World Visions

Reading the twilight world visions.

The rock as a gentle shoulder. They were all saying the same thing while clouds gathered to cirrus. This was older than stone, lighter than grass and yet like grass. I cried out in my sleep.

Raspberries, mirabelles. . . ! Raise water, raise it from the well, Mary of Vladimir, star-coiffed one, with your close-fitting hood of antlers! Sprouting from your cheek, the child of Vladimir, redder and paler than magenta rose. . . When I looked up again, the trestled tables were moving away at full speed. An index pointed to where I could not see.

Then it ceased and I whiled away the long day. Angels can still be seen in the refracted colors of the sun's ray.

Naming it

For the coming year, they said, but their voices had already been swept away.

Nearly dry, the Dôa still carries on as if it were a river of some consequence. Its former strength can be guessed at. The wide stretch of cerulean sky between the cliffs on either side is that measure. Only the general staff map and the regional map indicate it running west for about three quarters of its course, taking a sharp turn where it encounters a road and then continuing south-west for a remaining six miles.

D is for daring, *ô* for delight and *a* cascades as *daktylos*, the little finger of surprise, birth, pursuit.

The Chinese Wall

I.

The visitors came and stayed on.

I do everything in my power.

The laws of hospitality go back to Abraham's time.

II.

A bird's-eye view. Kepler was the first to apply the word 'picture' to the reversed image on the retina. With my granulous wings I can reach the city of Shanhaikwan in no time.

III.

Say, I want to thread my way across the mountains;

say, I want you to thread your way across the mountains

but: I want me to thread my way across the mountains

you cannot say.

IV.

The landscape is not familiar. It is not. Beyond the green fields and buff filament roads leading to impregnable gates, the bustle of streets, a low house facing a courtyard. Orderly, disorderly. A dog tries to drink from the fountain; beyond the gates, the sea with its fictitious horizon.

Good Morning!

Why mornings are dreadful. Why you dread all mornings. Like beginnings. Their multiplicity. Their maze of possibilities, thread and thrum. Make a fresh start, they shout and already you run and have lost your way.

Elusive gateway! Put your arms around me and let my forehead settle among the shining fires. . .

Contrary Currents

You arrived like any guest. With your proud scarf you struck the bottom.

I hid in the darkest corner. I was not frightened but I nursed in my heart a wound that could not heal.

Together we walked in bright daylight. The night was given over to sleep. Each season was a palace hung with brocade and words were minarets from which we called to each other.

Like litanies the clouds pass, the weather changes. Contrary currents, insubstantial dreams, till at last nothing remains for anyone to grasp.

The Kingdom of Heaven is Open

As a last resort, they began to dig: an underground passage from the hilltop where the citadel still stands, winding its way under fields and groves and surfacing roughly one mile south where they could easily attain the pass that crosses the mountain and leads to freedom.

Work progressed quickly. The ground was soft and whenever they encountered rock, they circled it east and west until they were clear of it.

Just as the great passageway was finished, the alarm sounded.

In the shade of the far-reaching branches of the old cherry tree you can see the limestone slab where they came up for air. It would take six or eight men to move it. Many years have gone by and no one has moved it but the roots of the old cherry tree perhaps run further and make a more intricate web than those of any other tree in the neighborhood.

A Necessary Burden

'Burst', 'exploded', 'detonated': either of these words might be used but none conveys the exact horror of the German 'platzte' in Georg Büchner's story *Lenz*.

When silence is devoured by its own silence, the soul's center of gravity races through the void. Even as it 'seemed impossible' to the sympathetic observer that the immense crashing sound could have come from the fall of a human being, so the trajectory of that fall is an impossible object of contemplation.

Roommates

A great disorder is an order, it is said. Therefore, half-way up the stairs — the dark, endless seeming spiral of the stairs — my mind is made up. But before I can

reach the door, turn the key in the lock, something shapeless, viscous and yet warm and alive rushes past me. Still undefeated, I fling open the door. 'I'll teach you', I say to myself. The cruelty of these words, the indescribable order of the room. . .

The Play

He admits to nothing and prefers to remain in the background. She refuses to eat or rather, food has outgrown her although she continues to dress in blue. I nourish both with stagecraft. Under the glare of diligent projectors, their pale shapes writhe until they bulge gradually, filling the stage and their anger — that prize! — illumines a landscape of scorched plains and cities in ruin.

The Melancholy Man

No one is watching you; you cannot escape from yourself. Don't touch me. Can't you see that my skull is tattooed with resedas and that my skin was shed by a crystal buried beyond remembrance and death? In my hands five or six little fish I have caught leap to the rhythm of my blood. A striking sight!

The Attack

Anger as ice cold water. Plunge your arm into it as far as the elbow. Insensitive stump! As the little veins reopen and the fingertips tingle with new life, try to forgive yourself. Gather the nature of the indictment and then. . . O anger, vacant as the calendar's unnumbered days.

St. Francis at Dinnertime

for Knud Victor

'Silence, what of silence? Tune up the fine receptors and you'll hear the rabbit sob and sigh like a baby in its dream. Ants are rumbling armies knocking into each other. The spider pulls and flings its sizzling cable through the air and when it walks on its web, it makes a disagreeable sucking sound.'

While he poured the wine, the guests recognized each other by their bright clothes. The bread crumbled and they heard the delicately wrought hammers of agony, doubt, and praise.

Infinitely Small

The infinitely small in infinitely great numbers . . . seraphs, their lips' fervor knows no bounds!

A Voice from the Dream of the Dreamer

A voice from the dream of the dreamer beside me said: I am the dark in the forest, I am also the muddy road, the noise in the underbrush and the tree in which you hide. Catch me, I am the rider whose horse rears on the horizon.

Another voice said: I am the dream within the dream. Not the husk that is shed and falls into oblivion but the field inside the grain, the palace reflected in the mirror inside the palace of mirrors. Catch me, rider and horizon are one.

But the dreamer within the dreamer remained silent. For these pleasures still contained enough charm to erase from his memory all the misfortunes and pain he had suffered. Nothing could rid him of the desire to undertake new travels. . .

The Departure

No sooner had the word been pronounced than I was already standing on the balcony. The cloak rapidly thrown over my shoulders flapped against the iron railing which began to sway. I waved to the group waiting on the street below. When the signal was given, the solid figures dissolved, flooding the pavement as if buckets full had been poured. I looked up at the stars and steered clear of the little reef that jutted out of the waves and had kept traces of human shape.

Minoru Yoshioka

5 poems from Kusudama

Translation: Eric Selland

Collection of Green Branches

I *Earth Spirit*

What is the ritual of asking for rain
Morning the color of scarlet anemones
A girl nude
Then on a branch of star anise
"Sand ashes atop of the clay
The image of a man and woman"
Purification of the six roots of perception
Route 6 intimate association
Words of congratulations are heard
The thrush and wagtails mate
From far away
Black clouds and lizards appear
The earth dried and cracked
Is wrapped in desolation
And beaten by the rain
Around a hut the shape of an umbrella
The leaves of the Japanese oak rustle
Mother pays a call tonight
Seems a woman had twins
Beyond the sacred grounds
Enveloped in lampblack
A large carp
Splashing in the rain barrel
The others perish
Just as a green bud sprouts
A child appears
Holding an iron rod

II *Dream of Water*

On a fine day
(Mother) appears and disappears
 Between the saintly oak trees
Dressed as a huntress
Is she chasing deer and weasels
 In the marshlands where the tips of cattails sway
 Harvest insects are prancing about
Seemingly near yet far
It is the boundary between the marsh fires and the straw fires
 "The spirit of the word grows
 And the rocks grow also"
On an evening which finds love of the mother
I harvest jewels
And pass through the gate of the sorceress' knees
 Stepping on a tree frog
The village grows dark
People in barns
 "Make bread the shape of a male god
 And wrap it in pumpkin leaves"
Serve it on earthenware and give a chorus of cheers
 The five grains in abundance
 The five limbs whole
Daybreak in the fields where daffodils bloom
Miserable the hunters
 And the hunted
 The wild boar falls into a pit with dried leaves
On the water's surface I imagine
Her stripping off her soiled hunting clothes
 — A woman's naked body

III *Fire Wolf*

Two virgins
 Preparing a meal
When the silver dust from a fish's belly
 Is scattered about
 A cool wind arises over the earth
On the other side of the swaying curtain
 The realm of the dead or scent of mint
The world gristles

With nectar and ashes
Boil millet and potatoes
Then add the green of bamboo grass
 This offering to the gods will resurrect the dead
Two virgins
 Raise their voices and thrash each other's bodies
Emptying them
 The rite of passage ends
People will have good dreams
 and bad
Circling the fields left fallow
And circling the graves
 The pilgrims recite an incantation
"All things are illusion"
 "A dream" of the wild
 Banished
From a world of wild strawberries and fairy tales
 Is brought back to life
 In a picture of mountains and rivers
True god of the great mouth
 The living trees burn
 And through a forest in a smoke stained evening sun
 The wolf comes running

IV *Wind Flower*

Be joyful at your father's death
 Smash the chin with a hammer
 And pull out the canine teeth
Go over the weather beaten fields
And throw them inside a possum's den
 Along with a pinecone
Before long a spring storm will come
 The white paper offerings and sacred rope sway
 The gold coated screen falls sadness born
A man-child grows steel teeth
 Mother bears water big brother slaughters a hare
Little sister should start the sacred fire but strips naked
The place is scented with fennel
 It's like "a picture of the holy family"
But time passes away and people pass away

The rocks no doubt made of nebulous powder
There is a youth who has traveled all the way
From a land where flowers bloom
 Wearing a hat the shape of a cow
 He is trying "the descent to Hades"
He sleeps on a pillow of stone
 And is looking for our older sister
If you peek through a bamboo tube wet with rain
 It will be clear
Pigeons and sparrows fly together in the blue sky
 "A goddess with a horse's head" stands in the field
Surrounded by a flock of castrated goats
 The youth's body becomes filthy and bruised
 Graceful noon
"The dead watchdog unconcerned"

Tapestry

The girls are playing
 from good games to bad
Pinching snakes with bamboo sticks
 pulsating and shouting
 the world is full of impurities
Lily bulbs
 heads of codfish
 and placentas
Offered up to the omphalos
Far away from the market of trade
 it is the holy interior of the womb
The inside is lined with orange colored silk
 and there are sixteen flights of stone stairs
Embraced by an old man with white, unkempt hair
 one girl wettens an embarrassed flower pot
Moving to another room
 two more girls are playing
 painting their hands light blue
Alternately throwing into an enameled bucket
 spikes, small birds, masks
 and combs for the dead
One moment in spring

a mist hangs from the rooves of the front facing buildings
As if to weave a beautiful tapestry

Shadow Pictures

Disappearing
 in the shadows of the dried grass and underbrush
 the children playing hide-and-seek
At a crossroads
 frightened by the eyes of a dead horse
 choked by the smell of marvel-of-Peru
A young girl also hides inside of something
 "there is boiled down fish glue
 and rice gruel"
What mother is raking in her kimono neckband
 is not the aging father
 but something that looks like a water nymph
The thunder becomes distant
 and the green corn stalks stand up
 darker than the surface of the earth
Damsel flies
 and paper images float off
 to a rustling bamboo grove
Summer's end
 "the ruby
 grows a bunch of grapes"
 the young girl conceives the spirit of things
Like a line in a poem

Cuckoo

Around back of the hat factory
 (Beyond the bulging floorboards)
Are seen the fixed regulations and pincushions
 A bare lightbulb flickers
(From between the cracks in the walls
 flowers are born)
 The remains of the wood's grain
Is like a fresh leaf's veins
 (Lightning

grasped by the hand of a girl)
Nights when the cuckoo doesn't sing
The factory's long framework
Appears from below the dressmaker's models
(Art will perish
Fashion will thrive)
Until the day the multicolored ravelings
Catch up with the earth
(Scraping, scraping)
There appears to be a column of soldiers
White smoke rises from the imitation guns
(Your uncircumcised foreskins
Are polyhedrons like diamonds which are shed)
Bathing in the morning sun they sparkle
Put on a ceremonial helmet
And go as far as the saintly triangle
Soon it will be winter
Capture (the tip of the pendulum)
The stars which linger at (the height of the eyes)
Covered in wainscoting
(Multiplication, amputation, transference)
In a place completely out of context
One gunny sack is left behind
(It is three times the normal size)

An Autumn Ode

At this summer's end
Objects left by a drowned poet
(One poem on straw paper)
Paint up hands in purple
"Sailor gone down with ship"
If that be the ocean of autumn mist
Land must be at a distant place
Scent of leeks writing old shoes salt
Moving in the clothes of a whore remembered
"Things without teeth or claws"
The transient shapes of their transient world still beautiful. . . .
(Heavier than steel
the noon's water)

A match burns in a sunny place
The cotton cloth gets wet, the ashes dry up
 Warm and snug the dead
 (Exist in half waking and half sleep)
A plover lays an egg like a stone
 Does transmigration begin
 From rivers and caves
The poet hums to himself
 There is (a line like gold)
(Eden is eastward
 hell westward)
Now separating words from things
 (A large statue of a water buffalo is built)
With the hands of the blind
 It is painted in brilliant colors
On top of this thing resembling a life preserver
 An offering is made of the first harvest
 And the girl of the first tide seated there
A storm will come soon
 The days faced towards the graves with bamboo tubes
Looking for a boot shaped ax
 Continuously digging through the layers
 The monologue of an old man is delivered
(A hole with ninety nine thousand hairs)
 Opens full
(We burn alone)

Michel Deguy

Three Poems

Translation: Bernard Bador

Dialogues

Pleasure is one of the figures of acclamation at somebody's arrival. Come! With the erotic poem, I will lace the lines of thought. Elbows still singed at the stratum of sheets. I will begin this collection with "the elbows still singed by the sheets." What am I going to do with this iconostasis, this heap of you on my torso, on my groin, on my back.

—Where are we coming from where are we going what are we doing? we doing?

—But there is no *we*!

—Where are we coming from? Where are we going?

You were beating this dose with your fists, this consecution of the irreal of the past (I would have loved) and of the future perfect (to be he who will have been) which makes an irreal of the present (he who would love you).

Space

Children ask for more of it. "Conquest of space, Space war; space ship, etc." What they want often becomes the titles of American movies. A hunger for spaciality and spaciosity comes into imagination—imagines itself able to be satisfied solely by the beyond of this narrow and polluted earth become a planet, in the "intersidereal" circle of the "non-identified" where Hölderlin's *Himmliche* have become extraterrestrials.

Now is it not a hunger that poetry could also welcome and gratify—at a price of a deception that it alone knows how to handle gingerly?

Desire imagines: from a comet which federates us from the top; then the Ladies of the 5th Ave., Foch and Chelsea *parties*, of Bel-Air and Hong Kong, then all the great paranoid bankers blazoned with Concord, with 4 star suites and icons of the Publicity Strip, then all the red plotters (like the great snobs of "Society" circles in which the VIPs shrink by exclusion of all the others who are really

killers, clandestines of absolute scorn), then we dream they go out into the street, hip to hip, a catastrophe federates them from the top since there is no free place elsewhere, Halley's comet reappears or the fire of the Reservoirs, a high sign educates the chins, and they become numberless arches of the bridge of dawn; they "fraternize," knocking down or erecting towers of liberation—but it is quicker *to knock down*, the symbol is more violent—drunk together from being together stronger than all that is stronger than we, in the *feeling* Rousseau was talking about, in his Letter, concerning the people in the crowd on the square loving each other with a look, everything is possible in this place and this everything demands nothing . . . And each of the terms of the trinity is not what it is without the actual relationship with others, the thing it deals with, equalifraternaliberty, turning in circles, circulating from one to another in oneself, feminine, vortex of the principle, engendering itself, confirming itself, it whirrs and the machine was not supposed to be changed into a guillotine.

I had started to say: it is poetry which would like to be the federal comet, the fraternizer in which the privileges are abolished, the non-snob. And Breton was attempting to appeal to this "general insurrection"? The dream of an adult? But I come back to adolescence; and to deception. What a pity, the adolescent sometimes says to himself, that poetry resides in poems and in speaking in tongue(s); were not this verbal, and verbose, consistency often so difficult, we would rush en masse to poetry! It is Rimbaud's rupture which has made the Rimbaud legend—and in return the reading of Rimbaud; should not the writing of the poem be left for the desert!

The second deception results from the fact that the crossing of appearances—the crossing of the simply positive affirmation and the crossing of the simply negative affirmation—leads up to the paradoxical equilibrium, the "Mallarmean" negation, and consequently the deception is the dwelling, the "regret," and the "threshold" is a "lure"?—which does not appear to make it solidly habitable.

The fiction of the cosmonautic extraterritoriality is their "Bateau ivre": a navigation searching the elsewhere. Far from being envied, despised, the princes of weightlessness are mimicked as more subtle acrobats. They obey like nobody else and they open like nobody else. "They have sometimes seen what man believes he has seen." Beings at the very tip, like Char was saying, but not to unleash envy. Let us think of the *epics* that the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries would still have had written with the "space pioneers"! Now science-fiction novels, war comic strips, films and video games . . .

However, is it not always a matter of *return*; of making conviviality thrive here (at Landauer)? Consequently: to transform, to reconvert, the legend of Fin de siècle

into prose poems, the space opera into proverbs and almanacs. For at the point of the adventurous orbit where the asbestos heroes dilate the rotor, the great centrifuge, it is a love story still which links them to this earth where we are waiting for them.

It is a matter of bringing back the sense of a space to this "poetically inhabitable" earth—figurally, that is. The poetic imagination, the stage director of this world, would provide for it with the Other Worlds? Access to our space by its thresholds? Repatriation enlarged by this Super voyage, a landing sublimely regained having passed through the comparison, ground absolutized anew. And as the spectacle of the sea provided Baudelaire with this *diminutive of the infinite* which enabled him to symbolically inhabit it, the new Space that *fiction called science* opens—on condition that credulity does not hear a tourist itinerary in it, the "non-realization" of which (I do not have a private rocket) would lead to the first deception—could be a new diminutive of the infinite which increases our spaciosity.

Pleasures of the threshold

Limitrophe poetry demands a leap
Which projects onto a border or a ressaut
In the pleasure Lucretius was talking about
Overhang and threshold which makes a gift of as
As it is pleasant to watch shipwrecks
The point of spirit from which wandering can be seen is more pleasant
And the things to be divided in a comparative of the world
*(like a god with enormous blue eyes and shapes of snow,
the sea and the sky at the marble terraces attract the crowd
of young and strong roses)*
Where are we then astonished to be there
and that astonishment astonishes

Andrew Schelling

Of Maps, Castelli, Warplanes, & divers other things that come “Before the War”

"The events of history . . .
we took as events in a mystery
that referred to Poetry." — *Robert Duncan*

A SINGLE DIRECT TRAJECTORY issues from Dante Alighieri to the contemporary literary movement. This is the authentic *modernist* period, for literature as it is for history. Engels, lecturing to the Italian Socialists, cited Dante as the first universal mind of our modern epoch.

This 700-year span is the historic "field" within which Robert Duncan's writing operates. Though literary detritus from previous periods — Hellenic Greece, Thoth's Egypt — frequently informs his poetry, Duncan returns repeatedly to Dante's writing, writing his own way through the Florentine poet's work as though within it lies some principal key to what Poetry can become. *The Divine Comedy* anyhow inhabits a pivotal position in poetry, the outcome of a critical agitation within world history.

While Empire still dominated her neighbors to the north, Italy in the late 13th century had become the first European country to emerge from the so-called Christian middle ages. Her home territories were proving grounds for what would become the two decisive changes: an articulated experimental democracy, as it was fitfully attempting to establish itself in Dante's Florence; and a dream of unlimited mercantile expansion in which the port of Venice, opening eastwards onto a vaguely comprehended landmass, was wrestling for predominance.

The Divine Comedy stands as a summation of that last moment in which Europe could consider herself bound to a single conscience, in which she was a globe to herself and not simply the westernmost archipelago on a continent of overwhelming complexity and extent. The unified worldview of the middle ages is about to fracture; every seed in fact of the incipient rupture is slumbering in one or another circle of Hell, or grotesquely germinating on the slopes of Purgatory. This is what makes Dante seem so modern. But for the moment, what lies beyond Europe's political and religious turbulence scarcely exists. West lies the uncharted ocean; not for two hundred years will Manchester fishermen begin to extract cod from waters off the Massachusetts coastline. "East" is the direction of Islam, which for six centuries has aggressively contained Europe, its armies pressing at critical

moments to the gates of Venice and provoking the construction of walled cities — the fortified *castelli* which are burgeoning from isolated communes into powerful City-States.

Moslem military superiority — and contention written in blood over title to the Holy Land — is the principal spur for European cognition of the orient.

But in 1204 AD the Fourth Crusade had established an outpost of the Latin empire at Constantinople. Venice, in reward for her rather unsavory role in the Crusade's success, received a direct colonial dominion on the Levant. Silk, spice, gemstones, as well as the more immaterial but more enduring goods that travel with such riches — story and legend — have begun to enter Venice's gates of commerce, travelling by caravan from an "East" or Asia that lies beyond Constantinople and which is only superficially Moslem. The allure, the sorcery, surrounding these exotic imports, proposes an other, a farther world than the European horizon might suggest. This other world gave rise, at the same time as Dante's, to another book — a book in its own way as significant as Dante's, if less symmetrical and more awkwardly codified. In English it is known as *The Travels of Marco Polo*, or "The True History of His Adventures in the Far East."

Striking parallels emerge in the lives of Dante and Marco Polo. Though they almost certainly never met, they appear as shadow figures of one another. Children of the same geo-historical cradle, they lived during a period that saw the Holy Roman Empire crumbling to the north of Italy, and a once grand Papacy attempting a last-ditch effort to secure its power in the south. Polo, born in 1254, eleven years before Dante, outlived the Florentine by three years and died in 1324. The critical events to which each would trace the defining lineament of his life occurred almost in tandem: in 1271 Marco Polo set off towards China, passing through the Gate of Gates, or Gate of Iron (or on the contested dream landscape of legend in which location shifts at the storyteller's prerogative, *Caesar's Gate*). This was just three years before Dante would set eyes on Beatrice, a mysteriously alluring girl slightly older than himself, and passing through an aperture of another devising set upon an adventure of similar scope.

Three decades later, when the century turned, Marco Polo had scoured a "far" east and a south Asian sub-continent that would shortly entice a European ex

pansion so furious it would not desist until the globe had been utterly transfigured. Dante had meanwhile been himself instrumental in the changing fortunes of Europe's first modern democracy. Political vicissitudes settled decisively on each man at that time. 1302 saw Dante condemned to terminal exile from his home city. Four years earlier Polo had been interned in a Genoese prison. After his return from Asia he had accepted the post of gentleman commander of a galley in the Venetian fleet. A struggle between Venice and Genoa arose over

dominion of the eastern trade, and in a sea-battle in the Adriatic the Venetian fleet was soundly beaten. Marco Polo was probably captured during the rout and brought back to Genoa as a prisoner of war.

There, imprisoned for a year or two before being freed under amnesty, he recounted tales of his Eastern journey to a fellow prisoner, a Rustichello of Pisa. This Rustichello, a romance writer of modest talent, is best known for his *Meliadus*, a compendium of chivalric tales composed in the *langue d'oïl*. He set about recording the travels of his prison mate, interspersing Polo's spare, objective narrative with his own picturesque and formulaic accounts of battle, as if by some dream confluence of east and west the steppes of Asia had become populated by knights of a European chivalry. This chimerical book is the *Travels*. It is the only book of similar stature to Dante's to emerge from that Italy — an Italy in which civil war and intra-city rivalries were symptomatic of huge upheavals in political and geographical consciousness.

"The events of history . . . we took as events in a mystery that referred to Poetry," Duncan says in his 1972 preface to the reissue of *Caesar's Gate*. After his *Venice Poem* of 1948, in which he had crowned himself and taken possession of a Europe whose history was the history of Empire, Duncan, like Polo, in another twisting of history upon itself, abandoned Venice for the "unreality of Asia."

Passage to Asia, in that such a terrain was "unreal," could only be had through the looking-glass of legend: that cleft in the mountains where Caesar Alexander, in certain manifestations of the story, had been repulsed by an indeterminate Asiatic army and constructed a huge Gate to seal himself off from the strange populated waste-regions beyond.

To abandon Europe in the 13th century was tantamount to abandoning reality. Marco Polo's contemporaries read his book with its detailed, unembellished accounts of Asia as a Book of Marvels. (Cartographers did not utilize his discoveries until more than 50 years after his death.) What Polo's book is, however, is a marvel of precise reportage. If Dante reads as a codified map of the European conscience — (and Duncan, discussing his own development, writes "my task in poetry is concerned with the *conscience* . . .") — the Venetian's book of Marvels is a map of what Europe had not encountered about herself, nor yet within her own boundaries: an unconscious or counter-conscience, a shapeless or misshapen region curiously immune from all those smaller biases that merge in the popular mind with the notion of piety, and generate what's conventionally called conscience.

When Duncan confuses two passages from the *Travels*, and colors them with Richard Burton's terminal essay from *The Thousand Nights and One Night*, he uncovers a map of the sexual outlands of the occidental soul — a realm, so it

seems, insidiously free from an American conscience. One need only recall John Crowe Ransom's hysterical response to Duncan's essay "The Homosexual in Society" to observe the vitriolic pieties provoked when one brings such Marvels home.

Dante's deliberate craft — which is also Duncan's, as poet — is one of rigorously conceived rhyme, of strict consideration given to the just weight and balance of each syllable in the work. No contemporary poet has shown himself more resolute than Duncan in the placement of each of the poem's elements. His frustration and ultimate sense of betrayal by publishers and printers who practice *their* craft of book design to the neglect of the poet's precise directives about spacing and layout have led him to issue *Ground Work* as a photocopy of his own typescript. No one can meddle with his organization of poetic space as it issues from his typewriter.

In a parallel sense, critics have suggested that Dante's stunningly precise *terza rima* was a *measure* the poet deliberately adopted to insure that no outsider could excise, alter, insert, or otherwise tamper with his personally and politically volatile *Comedy*. Every word in the scheme displays its infallible rhyme and reason; any forgery or deletion would instantly offend both ear and intellect. Architectonically Dante's poem is as impregnable as the walled *castelli* that dominated the countryside of his day.

In contrast, Marco Polo's book of *Travels* betrays no "rhyme or reason." Diverse renditions of the *Travels* survive in a variety of languages and dialects of the day — Latin, French, several Italian vulgates, the original almost certainly transcribed into that northern dialect of romance, the *langue d'oil*. Each rescension pieces the narrative together differently. Regions described in one manuscript by Polo do not appear in another, while that manuscript may contain episodes a third lacks. Rumor, error, and superstition are characteristic of the text; despite Polo's keenly trained mercantile eye, and instances of ethnological precision that would ornament a contemporary fieldworker's notebook, few internal devices are operating to reveal what is truth, what rumor; what authentic, what interpolated; what is real and what "made up." So the Europe of Polo's day read it: a Book of Marvels.

The narrative sprawls like continental Asia sprawls — east, north, south, west — dwarfing the "known world." Geographical problems persist in linking certain sections of the narrative to the (as it is now known) planet; but it was at its time a map of Creation such as had never been possible before. The boast occurs early on:

For I would have you know that from the time when our Lord God formed Adam our first parent with His hands down to his day there has been no man, Chris-

tian or Pagan, Tartar or Indian, or of any race, whatsoever, who has known or explored so many of the various parts of the world and of its great wonders as this same Messer Marco Polo.

" . . . raising maps of poetry in my work," writes Duncan. And since Schliemann's excavations at Troy a raising of verifiable maps *within* poetry has been seriously assumed. The poet is a cartographer *also*. Olson made explicit certain modernist assumptions (again the term *modernist* must reach back to Dante, if not Homer) by binding the sheets of *Maximus* in a map of Gloucester harbor. He issued his two successive volumes clad similarly, bound in maps of the terrain he meant them to somehow delineate. (U.C.'s release of the complete *Maximus* has deflated what was a considered impact by embedding Olson's maps within the book, as if he meant them as pages of visual text, equitably located among the poems. This they are not. That the cover of their edition sports a photograph of Olson, instead of a map of the poetry's terrain, displays with what profundity they misunderstood the man's work.)

The map Dante raised in his *Comedy* reads vertically. His world — a middle ages founded on the Thomist cosmology — considered *above* and *below* the directions of significance. Every element of consequence, every soul in Creation, found its fit location along an absolute rule that would admit to no ambiguity. Just so the Florentine poet weighed each word and consigned it to its inalienable place in the orderliness of his Poem.

Marco Polo mapped another world altogether. His, in which the European intelligence has been "roundly" knocked off its axis, fans out horizontally; a tremendous levelling or democratizing has occurred. Polo's eye, feeding on diversity, cuttngly discriminates but can no longer judge according to the European ethos. He is the first and perhaps greatest ethnographer of modern times. What to a Christian must seem shocking ethical transgression — particularly the sexual practices Polo describes with concerned accuracy as he moves from region to region — become subsumed in a new perspective, one of cultural pluralism.

Duncan's contemporaries — Rexroth, Snyder, Corman — approached the orient across the Pacific Basin, attempting to locate a northwest passage to the domain Pound had brought back word of: "the rectification of names," or in the famous ideogram given as "sincerity," a place where one finds "a man standing by his word." Duncan, however, entered Asia along Marco Polo's route, travelling eastwards, and for him Asia becomes permission for the opposite: for error, for rumor, for superstition, to assume their rightful seats in the poetic discourse. His Asia, like Polo's, presumes a levelling of cultural and sexual customs — the

inclusion of a sexual "variance" in which *variance* is shorn of its derived sense of *perversion*.

In the poetic discourse, pluralism is the admission of whatever appears outside the fold. Duncan's is the celebrated quote describing the modernist task:

. . . all the old excluded orders must be included. The female, the proletariat, the foreign; the animal and vegetative; the unconscious and unknown; the criminal and failure — all that has been outcast and vagabond must return to be admitted in the creation of what we consider we are.

* * *

The decade following Duncan's composition of *Caesar's Gate* saw, within the discourse of this country's poetry, many if not all the old excluded orders return. While anti-communist hysteria fueled the Cold War's deep-freeze machine, frenetically operating to insure the continued exclusion of the "old orders," the ascendant figures within poetry were drawn precisely from those orders.

Homosexuals, drug-users, communists, women, anarchists, Jews, blacks, Buddhists, Gnostics, alcoholics, thieves, the insane. Even a behemoth of a man, six foot four and intent on re-mapping world history, appeared. Charles Olson stood as a sort of Grand Khan over the "new American poets." His irrepressible shadow dropped across what must have looked to many Americans like the riotous spirits Marco Polo encountered on the waste-reaches of Lop Nor desert.

In international affairs the phantasms appeared less distractingly diverse, more sharply outlined; and perhaps, as those in power hoped, more readily dissolved. The White House's Bay of Pigs fiasco, practically "next door," was like one final effort at home-brewed exorcism, the sort you occasionally hear practiced by fundamentalist preachers on gospel radio night-stations.

The exorcism failed. In 1962, John F. Kennedy expanded his deployment of military advisors to Saigon. For the next decade Asia, organized according to a new map colored "red," would mean something entirely different to American poetry.

destroyd forests and fields

and from the villages the putrid dead,
phantasms of industrial enterprise

swell fat upon the news of the daily body-count;
after the age of lead, the age of gas, fossil fuels
oil slick on the water, petroleum spread,
the stink of gasoline in the murky air,
the smoking tankers crawl towards Asia—

"Passages 35, Before the Judgement," directs one how to read *Ground Work's* subtitle: *Before the War*. In the apocalypse History enacts, *before* sheds its temporal implication.

"In this mirror," the Angel replies, "our Councils
darken."

History — personal or public — and in fact there is no purely personal History within a theatre that includes napalm and white phosphorous, let alone a nuclear arsenal — History is itself Revelation. Charles Olson taught how to read the poems people are when he said, people do not change, they only stand more revealed. To Duncan, the "bloody verse" written over Vietnam by America's warpower during the sixties was a stripping bare of the American psyche.

With the Asia Marco Polo had first described now transfigured into Hell on Earth — and Polo did, certainly, sail the waters just offshore of present-day Vietnam — Duncan returned as he always has in crisis to Dante. And Dante leads him to Virgil, one who has been there "before," and might guide him through a viciousness of warfare the planet has never before seen. Terribly enough, the only emblem capable of securing such guidance is one's own sense of horror.

This pain you take
is the pain in which Truth turns like a key.

What makes Duncan's war poetry the best, or rather the most truthful witness of its day, is that in it he remains cognizant that no party goes unimplicated. The war is also, horribly, at home. Much of the anti-establishment verse written and recited during the period sounds childish by contrast, an us-against-them blindness towards how things stand, and which in retrospect clearly displays the manner in which the War at Home was quelled . . . and lost. Government instigators, agents provocateurs, and betrayers of any cause could operate with impunity in the ranks of the resisters because a devastating truth about language had not yet emerged: things do not necessarily correspond to their names.

The Hydra prepares in every domain, even in the
revolution,

his offices.

His clowns come forward to entertain us.

* *

in every party partisans of the torment

Tyranny throws up from its populace a thousand
tyrant faces, seethes and dies down, would-be
administrators of the evil or challengers of the
establishment
seeking their share of the Power that eats us.

Malebolge's coiling complexity in this age of fossil fuels requires a shrewdness
Poetry perhaps has not previously required. An adequately prepared witness
cannot hope to map the contemporary terrain from any simplistically organized
stance. One must be constantly lurching and leaping: first to gather the multiple
perspectives that alone can disclose all heads of the Hydra; secondly to secure
linguistic unpredictability for the poet, that the newspeak of the day not engulf
poetic language and neutralize it. The poet learns to cut, the way a linebacker
cuts, the way a collage-artist cuts. "Passages 35" requires at least three languages
including Dante's Italian and Hesiod's Greek in order to outwit the Hydra and
keep abreast of "She whose breast is in language." And requires also Carlyle
and Pound as dodges or texts for the poet to cut into. Vietnam exposed a
brutality afoot in the world that prompted an unprecedented confrontation with
the possibilities of language.

America's Indo-China war deposited a legacy in language which has become
increasingly central to poetic discourse. It is an awareness of how easily "the
powers of business and industry" and "War, the biggest business of all" can
fundamentally usurp our common tongue, what Dante called our vulgar
eloquence. Those who don't acknowledge the usurpation are dupes. Those who
do, confront a difficult task ahead, in Poetry. It is a sad thing, after all the effort
poets have expended in claiming the rhythms and vocabulary of colloquial
American speech for poetry, that those things too can so readily be conscripted
to the service of Evil.

And in a post-Watergate era, suspicion alights even on the notion of sincerity.

Henry Kissinger, after all, is a "man who stands by his word."

Words are shifting integers. Syntax coils with equal ease through the heavens and
hells. That the newsmedia, multinationals, armed forces, and governments on
our planet have learnt this, to virulent effect, leaves writers — whether they
acknowledge it or not — as the only viable oppositionary force. Responsible
users of language, those who Robert Duncan says have maintained "the ability
to respond," stand as never before "Before the War." Words in this Era of
Information manifest themselves as monstrously efficient instruments of
domination and deceit. The turf of language is one of dilating consequence.
When the war "comes home" to brain and larynx, and to the space between all

of us, Poetry — *writing* writ large *or* small — becomes a mapping of worlds in which both world and map are inextricably at stake.

Charles Bernstein

Surface Reflectance

Your job, right at this moment, is to get busy on
the quality of your mental pictures. How, or
grabaway sideshow and rack, lamed under
pained glass with omniscient angle, runs a
rub-out of the hurdle, careening
to dunked mariachis. I thought, as I've
spent; the shrinking allegory of a pile of pent-
ecostal bromides, things no doubt overlapped for
indicative retention, of our in-the-nature mode—
things that but which strike more generally
in response of entertaining back. Completely
wide. Nor is there anything to answer, hence
the slowness is sufficiently primitive whereas
maybe do something like what claims clam
the most would liken as current as carried
over to dismiss: although no doubt arguments can
be made lankily open in isolation or anyway
solution, which of course explains
your interest in the implosive process, i.e. real
plates, is to the point trying to place. About whom
I know very little. When pretenses are introduced to each
other they shake hands standing; they may smile or at
least look pleasant. This is more apparent in
breaking without avoiding than can ever be
at the same time timorous longing and mealy-mouthed
extirpation. In this way, naked
and closing, become
self-inflicted scars of a commitment to the
necessary but unwanted baby-with-the-tub-water dusk
mask. Not only because of but
doing and letting, however something
that requires dismal able and many since. Seems
like to be getting for being the rest of

but very much as contagious as hung
up. I'll
buy that but that beside the relative low-level
flailing just to say we have that despite
is quite sad. "Hundreds of thousands of years ago
our ancestors of the dim and distant past faced
these same problems." Nevertheless
the sun never lights the same
place twice. This is due to the fact that you
probably have never learned
emotional control. "Freezing
up and melting down: that's
the kind of token I am."
(Inflexible mastication, ingestible
renunciation.) Go get
bored (burrowed), the fuselage saturates for
the rest, the milk-toast prescience, preferred
spacebands. However, at this point, we shall introduce
screen prompts with character compensation. All
devices are on to the Controller and share the Controller's
intelligence. As a result, all components can operate
simultaneously so as to eliminate obsequiousness
and redundancy while lowering social costs, e.g.
plug-in – plug-out systems configured
to your exact aversions. "Boy, cut that thing
from under your waist and pull off
that jitterbug hat. You're on the chain
gang now." Belaboring a bumping
pride and orthostatic altercation: swashed
by procrustean maxiserve, the shrill is
exhumation. "So Tarzan of the Apes did the only
thing he knew to assure Jane Porter of her safety. He
removed his hunting knife from its sheath
and handed it to her." Even the most objectionable
people begin to seem benign once they take
an interest in you. I.e., "the stuff is on
now". Windbag winding around Seattle, the worse
for wetness. Now hit this
Studebaker sundeck, cottoning

megabacktrack. An irrepressible torque
meets an unsaturable torpor. . . . *on seas of*
brass, with knees of glass. Nor
introduce a woman to a man unless
he is head of state or head
of church. It's a quality I've always disliked, with a real
sense of acceptable (bar
certainly fell down if they strike you). Full sheaf of
which does justice and quite before making it incredible
dullness and myopia, fly off or jump in generally
parochialism than if there was one, limited
attempt and hear allowing "thoroughly".
Misconstrues other more that come from having
seem of or more about them. Certainly glued
to what. Of course, *I do*; was inquiring, to the
extent of well am not convinced, oddly, on
completely covering-up. Scrupulous misrecognition.
Since one's relation to one's
is not to stand is both behind and ahead.
Not begin to, far from that. Here is
where we'd both. Even is as to what to have
and right also in the instance fairly patently
realize, have time to operate, no doubt
fuels. There can be. Even if some. Is
because it's. Felt finally contestable, cowardly
not to, which are probably at the bottom often
sourly missed. Yet echoes communicative compliance.

And then we'll go axeroxing!

Axeroxing! Axeroxing!

Now let's get back to the teenager whose emotional
life is not so exhilarating, the boy or girl who
goes to school, meets with friends an hour
or two afterward, possibly even helps around
the house later. The problem being

undernutrition not *malnutrition*; personal choice
of 'healthstyle' is only the most marginal factor
in preventing disease. Candles are lit
and shades are drawn; the frappé
bowl is set up. "You ought

to see a doctor about those pains." "What
a bumper!" Ben looked at Debby. "That's
Daddy's name—his Hebrew name!" Taking
the blame, making it plain. The other images are tied
up in long-term deposit earning Heavenly interest for
the world to come between this and the next.

"Despite the disparaging
things that less fashion-alert males have said
about the chemise, Mr. Bernstein plans
to back it. He will risk
several thousand yards of material
which is what he has
set aside for this style. . . . Mr. Bernstein
has been known to sell as many as 12,000
copies of one style in the same week. . . . Of
course there are certain 'classics' that will continue
to sell and probably keep Mr. Bernstein
from closing up shop even
if he guesses wrong and cuts
thousands of dresses that buyers will never buy.
These classics include shirtwaist
dresses and full-skirted cotton with scooped
necklines." *And went down to ship
very bored.* What has not been
made, what has not been
seen, what has not been
spoken: always in the folds of the
audible, visible
projection of desire: to launch
a care, munching a pear. *Mobile
in the site, the piece is*

pierced in sequence. Homily grits,
bungled pie. There is no
other, only recover. And then back down
to the ship very buoyed. Debby
had just about tied the bow of her pink
taffeta dress when she heard the porch
door creak open. "At least when I close
my eyes nobody can see me." Early

warning sighs. Buttressing broncho-
dilation, arcadian
microseconds jostling pansynchronic obsidian vases in the
collation of infrequent mention. As if
the only relief is to be from charitable
demagogues who give a hoot. Invaded by
sweat and reputation. Better blast
and run—can't hide *here*. For there's nothing
so much fun as overelaborating the
obvious. That is, "can't pin
you down" (evidently afraid
to be tied up). "I'll catch you
on the rebound." (Even the theoretical
balk is replaced by if they say.) The next twelve shouts
took a little bit more time: Enormous back up
at the bank. Silk worms or smoke
rings? "*You've got a beach bungalow
where your brain should be!*" "This nation
cannot endure half poor
and half garbage." There are many
things to say, much that can be truly said, but
little that needs saying. Acts
of meaning preempted as an absence
for want of repetition—the needing
is saying, the saying is meaning. Any you,
my friend, back away, & hear only dim
peals to dead throngs. I hear
them too, & you. Speak
to me so I may hear, speak
that I may speak. There are only
plain words, panes of our separation
and sameness in saying. Tell
me of another country and of
your blankest journeys, tell
of the colors you cannot contain.
Afraid of meaning, afraid
of the words, which are
its body.

What do you got?

Bubblewrap in
Place of a heart?

"What a ceiling! What a ceiling!" So do
not ask for whom the phone rings—not likely
for you. I think it's time
we were all put to sleep. The
body, the
body. I, minimus of Amsterdam
shimmy on the waves, and torch
plunge and vanish. *Was*
Maurice Bishop killed because
he spoke English? WHOSE
Christmas? She doesn't dish it out
and she doesn't want to take
it. "I just bought it because
it came out." One day people will be judged
not only by the color of their skin but by
the color in their eyes: Poetics
makes stained bedfellows.
Met her by the meadow. Why
not balk? Why not walk
her. *Here we are at loops ends.*

Strange
not to think
to think of
you.

Enviably miasma. Get this detain out
of default! The where within which
what woos (worrisome weathering).
The clothier makes the person (there's
a change in the sweater, a change
in the smock, from now on
they'll be a change in *you*). *The one man pushed*
the other guy takes away. "You can say it—I
don't have to buy it." Amazingly enough
you can't get a seat on the bus. Whipped
along on a sting as a
pawn. (One could say
she festered under his garrulous

acerbity.) Expansive wastrel. *A fluke*
in Dubuque. WASHINGTON INVADED BY ARMED
FORCE OF MENTAL SPASTICS. Fight
back (flight
bag). Fit
to be fried. *Repudiate*
don't replicate. Spatter
when fingered. *Indelible*
horizon. My country—wronger
and wronger.

Breathes there a person with soul so dead
Who never to himself has said
This is not mine, my native land
Whose stomach has never within turned
When home by footstep does return
From travelling on a foreign strand
It is Shrove Tuesday and Violetta is dying of
consumption. Obviously this didn't work and you
come back to me with a mass of hearsay. In fact,
I'm glad; but on the contrary to skirt for a modification.
But to call me anything but—and this is what I take—
wouldn't seem the same for my refusal. All
of this would go double. "As a practical
matter, we can always use forward bases."

"If words had meaning"
And people hearts
If names had faces
And Desires darts

Then I would build a Conduit
And call it Quarrelsomeness
Then I would tell of bats and hats
Of barnacles and spurs.

Emergence of mush: the hermeneutic ovoid crashes in
on the Pesto Principle; or, he's hooked up
with a poststructuralist woman who's changed
his pew. *Don't speak so loudly, people*
will hear what you think.
Here's the sheets, now
for the towels. (Nothing

so naive as a naive bumper.)
The crunch of
imperative, the blackening of
emblematicism. Go for the
gulp!—a bind is a terrible thing
to pour.

My son is
going dumb
I would pluck
out my neighbor's
tongue if
it would do any
good.

Basking in wrappings. *And the dead men
pull and push but do not heave.* Yet
we 'are' each other only insofar as each
can recognize and acknowledge the differences
(as in separately bodied)—to *confuse* this risks a rule of
power only. For instance, in Manet, the objects
and garb are corporeal while the faces seem
blank: the world thinged in order for any of us
to inhabit it. "People were so happy
when they see Maurice free
they carried him up
on their shoulders & were yelling
& singing." Life as high
as an apple pie. But grieve only
for the survivors, who hoe
in tiers and do not

forsake—hope's stooges.
"And cry, 'Content', to that which grieves
the heart." For there is more to anaesthesia
than simply rendering unconscious
and free of pain. To suppress a twitch
or tone, the anaesthetist
may wish to abolish it
at its origin. A less toxic approach
is to block the signals
or otherwise interfere with their transmission

from source to destination.

On teleologic grounds, one would expect
that more receptors are available
than necessary, and in fact
three-quarters of the receptors must be blocked
before any suppression of twitch response occurs.

The boots are on the run

with no one in 'em. The sky

in an eye, biscuit in other:

pail of crustoid simper. Obligation

concatenates: *Metabolites*

when things go right. Proof

serum. "But they WANT to be invaded." No

where to go but r-a-d-i-o. "I've

cried over many a dead dog

since then." Or as my mother

used to say, don't do anything

you wouldn't do on stilts. In the vast space

of the masque, the earthen covers

kneel in patterns of

stencils. All patients gave their informed

consent to participate in this

study and the study protocol

was approved by appropriate

institutional review committees.

She (he) punched (pumped) the (a) bloated (goaded) dog.

Rae Armantrout

Four Poems

Disown

You may "have" sex —

but those round
sink-holes beneath
the off-ramps,

scabbed with whatever
flat, green stuff —

not in your most
nominative
moon-walk.

*

New one called
"Convoy Village."

Bylaws forbid
visible contrivance:

clotheslines
(like the skeleton),

or crabgrass
dead in long tracks
tipped with green.

Results shall be
unreminiscent.

*

To punch one's straw
definitely
into the fizz.

Arms of pastries
revolve
in their clear cylinder

slowly.

Space "may be shaped
like a saddle,"
scientists say.

A list may pantomime
focus.

On conditions
so numerous
nothing can begin

*

"Run down," they say,
buildings.

Wave of morning glory
leaves about to break
over the dropped plastic
bat, the empty shed.

Hard to specify
further.

Whole body
dotted

here and there.

Areas of interest,
cross purposes,
eddies.

Context

Clustered

berries at dusk
as possible

results. The chosen
context of display,
arrangement and arrival.

*

set against desultory or

"lonely"

puddles, drops.

*

Circles an old woman's
fingers trace
on the nubs of
her chair arms.

*

Waits for the word to come
to her, tensed
as if for orgasm.

Fear surrounds language

Necromance

Poppy under a young
pepper tree, she thinks.
The Siren always sings
like this. Morbid
glamor of the singular.
Emphasizing correct names
as if making amends.

Ideal
republic of the separate
dust motes
afloat in abeyance.
Here the sullen
come to see their grudge
as pose, modelling.

The flame trees tip themselves
with flame.
But in that land
men prized
virginity. She washed
dishes in a black liquid
with islands of froth —
and sang.

Couples lounge
in slim, fenced yards
beside the roar
of a freeway. Huge pine
a quarter-mile off
floats. Hard to say where
this occurs.

Third dingy
bird-of-paradise
from right. Emphatic
precision
is revealed as
hostility. It is
just a bit further.

The mermaid's
privacy

Range

There cloud moves in front of cloud, and above, suggesting
a deep breath, enormous range — such that a young girl
could leave home.

Long wind. Birds splutter and croak.
The difference now, she explains, is that she does not
lose consciousness when another takes the floor.
Who felt the vertigo of bouncing when he saw the fly
land on the leaf?
Who said, "Unnatural?"

The actress — the nun — the kid — the gatekeeper.

One harps continually
because she may have missed her cue.

"One notion, recognizable, with temperament and bluster
for real."

Bob Perelman

Three Poems

Anti-Oedipus

The city is dying because you killed your father, could have been anyone
and are sleeping with your mother?

No problem. Cut out the eyes that deny one and one
is one. Get back in the house.

Inside the house (note the word
standing solid, timbered, painted, mortgaged, but that's okay
because the calendar, white alabaster that it wants to be
works in silent invisible ways
on committees too numerous and boring to name, they never make the papers
Celtics win at buzzer
to build my tomb in advance

So many buildings and liens jutting their private languages
into one another's views. New York could be
the unconscious, or, equally, heroically
consciousness itself, and no one would be any the wiser
because, while the details are being worked out
they're also smothering the crystalline
—don't blink, you'll spoil—combatants, combinations
the lock that no one would pick for parents
and the stage seems to be moving
the actors are falling apart
the trees are losing their leaves.

If only the plot would leave people alone
like a ball in a box on a shelf in a store
to absorb the intensities of their decoration.
What I need is a single body.

Cliff Notes

Because the words are enclosed and heated
each one private a separate way

of undressing in front of the thought window
faces squashing up against it
city trees and personal rituals of sanitation
washing the body free of any monetary transaction.

The parts of the machine take off their words and die away
in a description read to the senses
by the leftovers on TV that no one would think of eating
even in the very act of swallowing.

It's these "very acts" that we must
Pay attention to the flatness of the map now!
For it's this very flatness
that the frailly projected containment of the humanized body
is designed to be pinned to
by, naturally, forces outside our control.

It can't be the knobs' fault because this is back before knobs.
Rock ledges, sacred fainting spells, laurel fumes
later on in the very pictures written, this is back before the alphabet
the pictures of the rocks in the savant's eye
he's chained to these pictures by the sententious wriggle
of the buttocks two classes down, whose owner
can hardly speak, can't multiply, and stands there waiting for Plato
to have Socrates tell him he's only cosmetic.

But, as we know from Aristotle, Plato doesn't know any plots
he can only give orders, dipping himself diffidently into the material
signifier at the same time as the ripples he thinks
he's thinking into their roundness come back to haunt
him in the form of crude jokes about his square calves
at unprestigious dinners. In fact he looks a little
like that table he's always using as an example.

Next come the Romans, and with them we first see the sky
artificial creation of scarcity of meaning
spread out over the proletariat as a visible economic ether.
You can look, but it costs.

We can still see traces
of the tracts where they lived
and can still understand their language,
which consisted entirely of dirty jokes about money.
It's easy to clear away the froth of biology

with a few words
to reveal the naked ageless windwashed marble
holding still for recorded history.

Streets

There's no history in the past
nothing happens there anymore.
A brown twilit civic peace
oozes mesolithically from the clumps of ancient houses.
The narrow alleyways are collagenous
a mat of dusty humus nourishing
the squat human stalks. Fake sky gods
take care of the plot.
By the end, Pinocchio is a real boy.

At its premiere, history was received poorly.
Catharsis was a slap in the face
as the spectators watched themselves
being measured, killed, inflamed, conscripted, armed to the teeth,
invented, and, in a word
loaded onto the train.

The face, fate, race—words blurred
in the upset crowd noise—
something, anyway, was suddenly precious
torn, out of reach, available
at a price, impossibly high.

For the general populace, it was discrete
leftover images: newspapers stacked on the back porch, the smell of
the Chinese restaurant spread across the tracks and
the reddish-green sumac
episodic, meaning less and less after each commercial.

It is on these unmaintained tracks
that the stories, *Ann Landers*, *Dynasty*, the shaped of the cars
arrive in the form of a thoughtless city
run by minds whose characters (the letters of the names)
are complete, not to be altered
certainly not by what happens.

The towers are visible from far away.

The land beneath is valued at the inhabitants' food, shelter &
transmission of

lacunae the soft shredded pages go here
between the rows of traffic.

Jed Rasula

History Lessons in Verse

A Review of *To the Reader* by Bob Perelman (Tuumba Press, Berkeley)

NEARLY FIFTY YEARS AGO a Peruvian political exile wrote the most intense and visionary, politically committed poetry of the 20th century. César Vallejo's *Spain, Take This Cup From Me* was a contribution to the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War, without ever succumbing to ideological polemics. It's fitting that the most adroit, informed, yet innovative political poetry published lately in this country opens with a silent homage to Vallejo. Shortly after fleeing Lima in 1923, Vallejo wrote a poem beginning "There is, mother, a place in the world called Paris. A very big place and far off and once again big." Bob Perelman's book *To the Reader* opens:

There is a company called Marathon Oil, mother,
Very far away and very big and, again, very
Desirable.

Power and desire, sex and politics, language and moral blackmail become familiar companions in this book with poems like "Seduced by Analogy," "A History Lesson," "Why Use Words?," "Institutions and the Individual Application," and "Don't Drink the Water, Eat the Food, or Breathe the Air."

History is a communicated disease, even if we Americans know it only in its most familiar manifestation as economics, the circulation (and monopolization) of coin and credit. But ignorance of the dynamics of history is like being ignorant of AIDS. There *are* biological abuses directly administered by historical forces. "Unclean thoughts attach to counted bodies." There is nothing like a detached, neutral (or immune) observer. ". . . one thinks / / Of the five hundred thousand dead communists / In Indonesia in 1965 as sick caribou / Culled from the herd by the skilled PBS wolves." The instant we attend to distant catastrophes we're subject to the *special effects* of the reporting medium. "Spectators identify with the special effects." This is the political appeal of Reagan and his Star Wars program, cleverly named after a piece of light entertainment to distract us from the weight of its real implications. Reagan's most lurid insinuation is that if we let him do the political acting, we'll be adequately entertained. As long as the president's six feet tall the country is safe. "A nation's god is only as good as its

erect arsenal." We've come a long way from the reclining pharaoh with his erect phallus, though we're still in bondage to primal images that feed directly into the superstitions that govern our fate. Still, fate is fate, even if the range of personal options in the image bank is greater in the U.S. than in the U.S.S.R. We'll stick it out with "The Ideologically Fun Party" playing "some thermonuclear / Game of chicken" where the "hot water" we're in is just "chicken soup." The jargon is bankrupt, and every official political statement is "Another / Terrorist attack on the Word Bank. Terrorist / Is another word for entertainer."

To the Reader is extremely well-informed and up-to-date for a book of poetry. The poems continually feed on images of refugees, terrorists, illegal aliens, military operations, death squads, interrogations, hostages, Nazi eugenics, nuclear weapons and "strategic materials," the Pentagon ("The Pentagon inhales the mystery religion / Of its hydrogen bomb. . ."), Grenada, Southeast Asia, Central America, and such domestic sightings as Toys R Us, "sex manuals, Christmas decorations," and second mortgages. Not the usual stuff of verse. Perelman is the only poet I know who rose to the occasion of 1984 to deliver a report on the zany Newspeak doubletalk of our crisis-consumerism, rendering it intact in all its Dr. Strangelove correlations of sex and power and language, the cross-bred dominant strains of our daily Donald Duck scenario. Perelman is faithful to the original in a painterly sense — even if the poems often sound like satirical trampolines — especially if you think of some of the "originals" out there like Kaddafi, Reagan, Khomeini or D'Aubuisson.

The political climate of the world has made everybody (regardless of the native language) a student of ESL (English as a Second Language). Perelman's brilliance as a political poet is in his ability to make us feel the cornball resonance of our own daily speech.

With afford, agree, and arrange, use the infinitive.
I can't agree to die. With practice,
Imagine, and resist, use the gerund. I practice to live
Is wrong.

We're soon wondering, as he does, "whether 'States' in 'United States' / Is a noun or a verb." In a world of murky terminologies, the stabilizing lure of materialism and concretism is immense. "There is the one language not called money, and the other not called explosives." American Express is short for American Expression. "This salt shaker / (My features, irreducible) / Won't leave here without me." The coercion is verbal and is as such insidiously permitted access to our heads all the time.

Back, earthling, to your partially eaten
Language tamer. Would you buy a used concept
From yourself? Then speak.

Perelman's book the poem ("that thousand-year-old") permits just enough
distance from the contextualizing rhetoric of daily speech and information-
trafficking to allow the words to stand revealed as agents of repression: "Tones
of violence make words / The whole truth and / Nothing but the truth."

Those tones of violence reduce sex (which is, with language, the most acute
expressive and exploratory capacity we have) to a politically subordinate affair,
something that feeds directly into "the political arena of sexual nation states."
Sex, like politics, is always on the edge of "that fine line / Between want and
need." Power, entertainment and the inseminating flow of information between
them. Has there ever in history been a time when the paramount preoccupation
of entire populations has been the sexual activity of others? I'm not referring to
gossip — which is always local, and therefore personal — but to the vast,
impersonal speculation on figures we know only as media images. Once upon a
time, sex was a daily function:

Where once were vaginas like Bibles
And penises like bookmarks, now groups
Of chemically hounded hunters and gatherers
Huddle around the tube . . . glowing
In a permanent rightwing fundraiser.

Now sex is a function of the nuclear bankroll, the bonfire of justice-in-delirium,
nationhood-in-heat.

A man's large, erect penis and a woman's
Larger, more erect penis, these are
the strategic materials

For the in-touch scenarios of people
Who husband the earth's increasingly scarce
Strategic materials. The mighty engine
Mounts the throne, of egg and semen made.

Perelman's images tumble like a load of laundry; everything is glimpsed in rapid
juxtaposition, recirculation, enigmatic non-sequitur segues, tantalizing
analogies piling pellmell on genuinely puzzling enigmas. So where we get, as
quoted above, a cartoon image of the arms race, elsewhere we get an allegory of
it:

. . . If you lock yourself
Out of your car and you
Have left the motor running
And the car is in gear, moving
Away from you (this is not a test)

Then you are still not
Without transportation, which is
The point.

In other places, the most lucid, matter-of-fact statements will escalate into the bizarre in ways truly representative of the moral warp the world's political climate induces.

. . . In Guatemala in 1954,
Arbenz began to expropriate the unused land,
Offering United Fruit exactly the same
Low figure United Fruit had given
Earlier as a base to calculate taxes.
At that point, the CIA intervened.
There is a line, and it makes a picture.

A death's head revolving under strobed
News reports told to the excess orgasm
Skimmed off the xeroxed jobmobile . . .

Such a world is sustained — like Yertle the Turtle — on a precarious pile of negatives. Perelman's masterful book preserves the tottering heap, even its negatives, in image after image of unforgettably balanced reports from the home front:

The only thing standing
Between the Beverly Hillbillies and annihilation
Is not now and never has been
30,000 nuclear bombs.

Why is the book called *To the Reader*? That may be Perelman's most reflective and impeccably political statement; seeking a change in the state of the world, you don't address your tract to those who won't listen. The reader of poetry may be a select creature, but it's not the same as a captive audience, and Perelman's book is not strictly preaching to the converted. The reader he addresses is in the process of reading made aware of the burden of imparted information. Being spoken *to* is still a step away from having a missile or projectile directed *at* one. But the proximity of the objects — of discourse and/or attack — is enough to

make us bear witness to the subtle ways in which we're all a captive audience now, to something far more sinister than "entertainment."

Stephen Rodefer

4 poems from Passing Duration

Subtraction

THE HEAVY BLUNDER BREAKS our sleepy heads and from its make-up, hennaed animal, brown earth is still, prepared a way that memory, mistakeless, shall disclose. Sun is up and poetry decides what that is worth. Music, high on genius, helps us now. Only writing what we see shows us nimble, and we begin.

Proven wrong before, making the forgotten work, we trust to impulse, the difficult body that stands us in the world. Adverse couplings promise happening, highly effective, to tell us something that will follow. There is an empirical sense of what succeeds, understandable: the stick, the dress, the lesson, and the way. You trust the time to gather aid, but chance thought, hazard permission, resigned to go beyond what fools in the third row speak.

Great crowds of women and men plant noise that sighs. Though there is merit, that is not enough. Without first urging, nothing will be right. All is conversation without desire, and who hangs in limbo will defect to hell. Covert speech declaims a new condition, crowing advantage, racking the triangles. The shade is simply a shadow of what we cannot see. Children, for whom we do so much, still lose their souls with ease to win some hemisphere or less. The job is nothing but secondary income.

The distance is impossible for each to span. We separate ourselves with a manner of rest, gestures, syllables. The shade returns what left us edgy. The aspect speaks marks, gains favor, at last is only money. Agreement names the song the sixth intelligence and we pass along. Solid main we fasten, and only green are wise, only grave are mild. The enamel of our lips is highly lit, so luminous we become as seen.

I saw the election with my companions, and raised my eyelids higher, sitting in the philosophy of a family. There was a good collection of qualities, but there was not a moral nor geometries — though endless avid rows made the record of their comments. Dido lost her liveliness in the theme that chases this. The word again will fail its argument. The group diminishes to three. And in the other place the peal will lead us out of silence into air, where nothing shines which is not light.

The diminished human world proposes shortening. But it cannot. The ground survives forewarned.

Identity

. . . YOUR MOTHER . . . YOUR FATHER, there's a rough horse awaits you as your outermost kin. Drawing moist, hit bottom, sport fear, converge upon fact. Miscreate the table in its place, which is hard to speak. Move on drink, better bleat, throw hole down beneath lower still and gaze whitewash wall abutment. Stand on head, push peg through hole. Look mirror empties water. As Don and Dan make thick course in frigid sky — skiff to waffle, turgidity in a dead eddy.

Across peaks identical with the croaking muzzle, dreaming they are livid, storks gnash the ice of your supine posturing, anxious, expectant, so open mouthed. Turn round two so pressed upon each other their hair is intertwined. Why bend your neck, why brush your breast, why raise your face into the sky? There is a lid flood, tearing at the make-up. No camp did ever wood so stack with wood. Such rage butts to them, who are few.

Their fathers built unsalable glass boats. They were time in a valley, and issued once from body, pierced in breast and shoulder rising, fixed now gelatine and arrears.

Amid the heads of scene I put my foot into another's mouth, to ease the smart of separate way. Cheek it was. Turning as though through it was a life, I put my name among the other notes. I longed to go to the contrary. It knew how to flatter birds, founded on a glacier.

Then screen women seized the afterscalp and offered to be its barber. I said you'll never know who she was — unlock my head, bocca, you bark like trade. Pinch the ice, she said, it breaks my teeth. The gorgeous middle was slit and flowery; on what needed sleep it needed to sleep.

Their two bodies together froze the length. One gnawed the neck for bread, spread for brains, known for done. The other wore the other for a hat, which would repay them in life later, promise was, unless the meaning tongue discandy and dissolve — its new vogue hidden beneath the bed.

Heavy Stole

THE SLANTED PART of afternoon companions solitude. Once before the other after, like minor goes out the aisle, I suspected in trouble be like a frog, be like a mouse.

Yes and no don't better go than case makes do with number. If attention be the couple, one thought jumps another, and then an other thought happens, tripling the latter. Think of the ones through two delivered, mocked and damaged, which vex the similarities. If rage mate malice, the fierceness dogs the lever and we snap.

We felt the hair point end and I looked back. I was afraid worsening branches alter and hang on. If the glass were lead, the image would not press within. Your thoughts have entered mine. Of your simulacrum and your face, force diagram orders resolution. Escape can be imagined only by the thing on coast — that slope is so chased. Before dissolve an end the wings will seize us.

Weakened by the sound my guidance took me motherly. Near the bent spoon it took child and flew, not pausing to address or dress it. From the link of the hard bank he split himself into a hanging rock, supine and damned for one reason, for another. When the ladled battalions approached, never did water spout wheel so round, so fast, so spilling over. The leader ate the other for a line, carrying on his breast his son as his companion.

Scarcely had he got unto the bottom than he found himself on top. The provident fear that made them ditch took power from the urge of leaving there at all. We found ourselves growing lean, tired, and overcome, beneath the painted people. The animals had their wraps, their eyes in doubled circles, their pelts cologned.

All lead within, but dazzling some, they glided out, still heavy and so strewn. Straw count ordered turnstyle. Leaving and emerging in a mantle, I turned my left thought to my right — so long with you — intent upon a dream of entry. Then find one known by deed and name, and keep eyes moving as you go. One who understands speaking then will speak. It keeps your feet beneath you and fast smokes the air. Maybe you will get what you will ask.

We still stood. And we are two still, showing by our glance great speed of mind to be one us. But the load retards the crank to narrower. When we come up, we viewed askance the words which brought us here. We turn and admit turning. Life was alive by action of the throat. If it died, what was the privilege of allowing it? The divestment of the heavy stole the standing cloth, so you could say to it, "Dismay, like a sad hypocrite, comes to custom us."

I say back on the beautiful coverlet I was born in the great city, and I still am with the face I always owned. Who are we to distill such cheek from littering pain? Your O is so thick it weighs more than a circle.

Jovial now suggested we meet lunch. Cattle and load chose their lot together. Two people were the maintenance of peace, housed within a matrix that's alarm. You blow hard and fix a body in the round. End of only one was always an expedience. Traverse and feel the weight of passes. Seeds rack up in ditch. Someone walks over the distended row. Gaps were left. There always is a stone that leaves the wall, and at the bottom of its future starts a heap.

False girders hook the innards from below. The fire burns beyond, nearer with the far. The bigger leaner moved with giant steps where anger looked. Separation

learned its spirit and repeated.

Riches

FOR CAUSE ALONE the rich dance with the rich. Clucking voice inflates their visage till consumption. Internal is their journey deep within. The people mount their counter dance, loud howling, flinging off the weighty chest cast down upon them.

What do you retain? What throw up? The answer is current read in curling. Squint eyed in your favor they expanded. They forever chime and butt the other, burying the skin heads mounted to their fortune. Trusted creatures receive their ignorant reputations beyond wisdom. One class commands, the other languishes, covered with the grass.

The permutations of swift necessity made change. Trust held power and pretense equal. The heiresses were in familiar bliss — their diamond mating followed. But every star was falling to depend on path. The fires banked on cleft form, darker far than purse. Their bluish streamlets made a swamp of live malignancy, in which you saw the outer angry to be knocked, difficult to be naked.

The battle was that which saw the written living as a battle. Underneath the surface, the others roiled up whichever way they turned. An eye could tell, the victory wrangled in its word.

The rest were sullen, poured from sweet air into the dumps. They carried this potential smoke inside their chests. Black mire within could then without. This their anthem lot did mountain in the waking dark. They were incendiaries.

Thus between the banks and street, with eyes turned on the group that swelled in brokering, they came to recognize the force of their adulterous tower, which wheeling dangerous to proximity of fund could found its fire on other mart, and with the assurance of the void, almost without benefit, appreciate to its replacent store.

Gerald Burns

The Prose Object

PROVINCIALISM is not necessary but desirable, as to get something out of Swinburne's Study of Shakespeare. I'm thinking of the people who call Poe provincial. The other is a fear of being known, seen around, made of glass.

The wasp-waist silver-nickel cup holder with paper cone full of cold water fades into Picasso's painted sculpture, the glass with painted polka dots a surprise.

Life without sympathy—today I opened a spongy avocado and found the nut almost free of the shrunken, discolored but not spoiled pulp, the shock again as of cobwebs around seamed faces. If one sewed the avocado shut. One wonders if Pater's "curiosity" constitutes an impatience with the normal. What we have allowed, the mock cut-glass of the saltshaker, crackle black spring napkin dispenser, moves slowly away leaving the plants which stamped the shaker tops (and plated them?) discarded or buried whole, approximating to the meaning of archeology.

A licked stamp, for instance, pressed down then brushed across with the finger may move, slide to a second posture, leaving a record of this in glue on the envelope. The jump is felt as unpleasant because we are never sure the glue will stick in the new place.

"Mourning Becomes Electra." "Tea at the Palaz of Hoon." Their titles were themselves. Pater and Valéry on Leonardo were enough to give Stevens Wordsworth as Hoon, though the mock-philosophical approach is like Coleridge—whose titles (*Sibylline Leaves*) were awful. Contemporaries wear cheap gold rings stamped *Karatclad* 18 KT H.G.E. with a large rectangular emerald. Coursey having glued it in added his tc. I found it in the dump of "A Thing About Language for Bernstein" and it's large enough to wear over dress gray gloves, black suit and raincoat, derby for the parade with tiny, tiny transparent stein with green beer in.

But is provincialism the opposite of exclusions, the adequate weight of a shell casing ashtray, an object allowed, prior to decoration. Fred Allen did not juggle on the radio. Perhaps the objects we have when small are real, a pressed-steel black telephone with metal dial that we once painted white so badly, or large cardboard cartons stuck with gas station trash bulbs to be machines.

Cloth in heaps occurs in heaps, depressing in cardboard cartons in garages. One wants to eat out, or burst free of possessions, the stored. Every object is the result

of parameters within which it does not crystallize or combust. Imagine the yellow-green of an early cathode tube, recording something.

Six round balls in a tart pan were cork cadmium coated then a mandarin red rolled in the palms, inch and a quarter five clustering around a center, vivid against aluminum but not like fruit. They are drying or I think of dust filtering on them slowly. Three brass cups mouth downward with rings brazed to the bottom will each hold a ball.

That objects have needs is probable; a poorly cared for collection. I've seen designs abashed. If a theater makes models vulnerable, it invites an action. Close to sentimentality, consider the waterfront set for *Dead End*, pilings for the orchestra's East River, the audience with slum notions. Toy theaters are theatrical; circus miniatures aren't. The stage as a place to contain light begins to contain or work with it. No one does a burned theater, a wrecked circus train. Our galactic films make texture a kind of shadow.

The bilge of ships moves sluggishly like bilge or stomach contents.

People who show you money in the hand and then alter it. Two copper coins, silver. We drop hands full of red thimbles into the derby. If grease paint is heavy enough perspiration can dislodge it from (say) the tip of an eyebrow.

Engraved seals and so on exist as if on a par with other objects, produced the same way. So references to carving now in verse really mean moulding. Car names are written in chrome on cars. Duplicating that effect in titles is now standard, and looks better than mock neon.

There is a very good argument that Eleusis was augmented by hallucinogens. Why do I not believe it? that is not how we think of the ancients as having used drugs. It is too much the stage set, bad engravings of hollow statues with priests behind. One does not place a trained snake under the altar, not and get it engraved on semi-precious gems.

I have just put a little calibrated thermometer in the trash. What will it measure underground?

That tin cans are cylindrical accommodates a seam. I've painted one red for tea, and drawn another with spring and banker clips, paintbox, and when I said a mountain of chairs to my father as a drawing exercise he said crumpled kleenex.

Closing the gate in the dark my foot touched and rolled or moved an extended body, soft against the dry dirt. I used to be bothered by walking through single-strand webs, then thought of us both as inhabitants and for a while had no trouble. In *Snow White* the cottage includes insects, and in this respect is peasant art.

Inclination follows habit. If you live solitary objects matter. In offices they are probably like animals. Rolodex. Milking stool. There are office pastorals. The agent in Len Deighton links paperclips, and this is observation as proof the fiction is real.

I was almost concerned whether a pinking shears might edge news clippings better. Folds in forties papers hold up. I found out what happened to Vincent Coll in the phone booth, spattered with panes of sugar glass.

Clay imitates reed baskets (which I don't know how to make). But Lunsford's Peruvian pots want to imitate animal skins inflated, the extreme periphery of the animal. It's too easy to say a handle tail or mouth spout is a pun; the weaving skill existing now as obscure projec-

tion. Also was this to hang it or hold down the lid, does justify Olson's living on the ground, as does a study of colors. Are the Peruvian uplands clear, limpidly liquid, milky? The Appalachian woman looks out her kitchen window and sees flowers. The need to have a pot look like an animal which may be edible, feeds into a rake or broom made of broom. We made lifesize dummies of stuffed clothes and rubber masks in our dark basement. It's hard to get a waist's flat width, stuffing.

Since there was no heat generated except a tiny spark behind red plastic, the disk vanes on a Buck Rogers blaster did not dissipate barrel heat, were an intolerable weight and impediment to holstering. That a weapon so destructive should be clumsy in use may be a carryover from the war, uniforms like textbooks, drab, and hardware which looked very good but was always heavy in miniature. Tents likewise taxed strength, and resisted mildew by smelling worse. It was probably Victorian solidity done in metal. There is a fellow here who knows where all the dumps are, pitted square bottles, corks. Very well. But the hospital dump had thin glass, like car fuses with metal ends.

Provinciality, the being in a province, will depend on playing with things, whipstock sockets or other, including clumsinesses like trying to hammer with a screwdriver handle.

The pea green of monel metal.

Larkin's Pantheon, a crude thing of canvas and socketed rods, not good in any wind, has photos and souvenir exhibits of what it's like to have a taste only for local products, as if "having a taste" in any other sense were economically contemptible. Yet to approach objects in this way at all is to have left union neighbors.

Electrical wiring and hurricane fences are about equally mysterious, and I have had lectures on cams and history of pipe. We are also looking for a book on pull toys. The Empire children's pencil (anchored lead) draws well, and the vinyl case of my cheap magnifying glass says Hong Kong. Everything is made somewhere.

They are around us, *wrapped* in them or set in them, a box of toys, dairy carts (never with ice), slats for broken logs, there as illustrators find mannikins, thrown [?] a picture. Wristwatch straps or knobs off pots aren't meant to be unattended, or have a limit in use. Sentiment creeps into model train tracks not used paint canvas as a "fluid" the ether. The velvet case for the Lee Commemorative pistol includes

triangular sections with brass knobs at opposite corners. We will have bullets and [?] caps but no cleaning rods.

Everything can be faulty in heat. Beings rip wings off airplanes. U-shaped jaw arcs extend, become angles under stress. The moon has not been sensitive to me a moon, left or deserted. Little cased wood whuffles, trilobite cousins, race through my mulch.

Rinsing tea with milk out of the bottom of my cup with tea evokes not the Mass ritual abstractly but the water's gentle larrups, sometimes the odor. Ex-altarboys raised cup to indicate enough.

Olives in bowls, the fish moving, fish events, captive, hermit crabs in glass shells. Animals should have zippers like missals with fold-down edges.

A young puppy in the yard played with by Mayan children nearly becomes an object. They call to it, Milton or something.

Coleridge's "sumject" and "omject," fronting or trying to front the world in spite of his gaudy diction is like making pottery, the hope that the colors will deepen and not wash off. To have a handle on it (rolled thin, vermiform, so easy it would seem to pull off) or a pedestaled foot, perhaps to isolate heat (for effect, or imagined stability). Coleridge, then, looking at the tea in the bottom of this cup, thinking of brandy or a chop while the Wordsworths eat buttered toast. Is the tea reassurance, or the tint against cup bottom a deceit.

The transparency of mason jars is not evident, peaches or cherries in syrup, the fruit-shaped container with silver leaf lid (with stem and spoon) stocked by the grocery above the registers, fresh ones visible in bins. We have processed them into themselves.

The past won't let itself be reexperienced. That is why possessions are peculiar. One could manufacture false objects dependent on bizarre power sources. A habit as of going unshod might take a while to reconstruct. The Dogon are Victorian. Masks are objects in the present. So, as found in the dirt, are buckles that used to be harness.

In time of trouble draw a human torso and incorporate a text behind which breasts flower or secrete, groin of leaves. This text, about how apples are real, is framed in wood sections in the shape of an apple. It should take hours to stipple the leaves, draw the tiny seedlike cells there being texture or skin depending. Deliberate labor makes a thing.

The prickly feel against the ridge just below the phalanges of a circular openwork faucet handle, will go with black rubber hoses gradually cracking with cotton inside linings, and the water coming out of these is different, *is* different, more iron scrapped in the garbage bogs. Rubber dolls and balls crumbled in gardens, applied paint (on eyes) defining the thinnest integument.

Some animals like armadillos translate to materials well. Meandering twigs make snake wands for the Texas Kid. This is not quite like Eskimo sculpture, fat curves as fur, the dream of animal as oleo.

This morning in the Militaria window: a cutaway house with soldiers, I suppose German, running on the ground floor on loose planks, smoked wallpaper and picture, a tank right through the house side. (Upstairs a fallen machine gunner and two tiny upright cases.) The outside a litter of bricks and a street lamp without its lamp. The powdery gray and dun of the models, in the light through the window, made it perverse theater.

On the Greater Dallas phone book, April '83—a telephone lineman nearly up a shattered pole, wire cutter in hand (all this in neatly tinted bronze; he could be a fisherman, cowhand) with, you see, real cable to cut, for him to cut, as tiny dishes are for dolls to eat with. Better that than a telephone puppet, though in its way a puppet for management. It rests on a turned-wood base.

In a shoe shop with a plastic rhododendron up from a brown fluted papier mache pot, two or three leaves per center section. The leaves snap on to moulded sockets like electrical jacks. Shelves seven shoeboxes wide and three high. Above the mirror a farm boy with bridled

pole waving to old man, horse, child, across a wood bridge by a mill, neat highshouldered living house in the pearl-rose distance.

Today's object was a book—the Bruce Rogers *Compleat Angler*, short squat Aldine shape, good paper and a short-across text, fish dimly visible through the unslitted leaves, ghost fish, as in Perkins chapel we were then told that Margaret's death is a kind of error.

Dark things, stone things. Poe liked to think he thought of them, though there are few sculpted figures and no wings—nothing like a marble lobster coming out of the medium, however pitted or cracked. He doesn't like to *touch* rigid materials. A toy locomotive should be heavy, cast. Otherwise everything is really cloth, bronze mummy falling forward, folds in a Balzac, horses with wire armatures barely holding the wax together, a world falling apart from a will to flexibility.

Bricks abut. Gears engage. All buried things share in augmented density. I want to be thinking about anything in lucite, roses in cubes on end (the corners flattened for more reflections), coins, watch parts. Trapped or on perpetual display, celastic raincoat, fleshcolored stocking objects imitating phalli, the sacred joke. Al Flosso liked a beer bottle you squeezed from which emerged an embarrassingly colored member.

I can't but think that what Beaker folk carried with them, how they conciliated coastal Barrow farmers and herders, was distilled alcohol. Though they had metal they did not lean hard on it, and those curved-lip cups would be good theater and

pleasant for drinking millet whisky, grape brandy. It's just the technique to precede, as trade, a metal economy. They will have worn caps.

Bury Henry Ford? Dig a large deep pit and line the walls with planks. Pour in a bit of lucite. Build a steel latticework box—floor and sides on the lucite and pour another foot. The body in a car wrapped in plastic is lowered in. The open metal top is bolted on. More lucite to cover. The steel beams are for strength.

Do not be known for any of it. The Danubian adze might have been a miner's tool, device to get metal. Everything except display cases ends up displayed. In New York the harbor and island of Bora Bora, water a lighter green under glass sea, better than boxwood wave over initial C. Things unwrapped from camels would include treasures, like my kitchen shears.

It is so sad, with the passage of years — not the passage of years — that we do what we did, collaborating with Europe till it went with the tin hats, Olson's "Quantitative Verse" as if to show he could write something *like* Eliot's *Selected Essays*. Rubber bars to be forced by the gorilla a cliché like the shotgun Y, cartoon effects happening to involve matter, as pebble tools *are* their dotted pictures, so like stone, charming in line cut, or Whistler's doodles on a survey plate. A site is a rallying point.

Now they recede, into the higher limpidity, De Quincey in his cottage framing visions, study of milk jugs and hearths, a fly (lovely word) against bottle glass—we know how to build below the wind, take advice of locals. Books are imports. Years later the drearier Anglican books, by country pastors and determined, perhaps maritally unhappy city ones, go on boats to Dallas, Jesus's stock. Hard to find a 1611 King James. I demildewed the Bible collection in Ireland, black fine-line morocco retaining dusty lunar discolorations against a soft rag, having earlier catalogued disestablishment pamphlets (and how to feed the family, on jowl). Something of the smell stays in bookshops on the quays.

What he did, the man who came in from New York, was paint a jar of flowers talking into a microphone about how he did it, the people came out and one large woman carrying (taped in a heavy frame) the picture. I passed a note saying ask has he seen the Manet show and he had. I asked it partly because his pictures were so dark. *Flashed* a smile, *flashed* eyes, saying catalogue prices, but the manner, neurasthenic recognition, designed to reassure and overpower, made me wonder, as if he lives under a hill being a bad lag-impressionist, the highlights last. I gave away two inks of him working.

"So much talk they had to get through," this of H. G. Wells, and did he meet Jack the Ripper in 1888, the medical training similar. History as idlest conjecture, put forth as up to date, will in later years talk about frogs on a roof playing musical instruments, illuminated from below. They turn in short arcs as they play.

A bad drawing of someone, framed 8x10 in a bar, the darkness of line of lip, incised eyelashes Egyptian around pupils, nose a lump with nostril flare, lump, downward line for cheek, and a matching at mouth corner to show that flesh is a slab, oh wrong these delicate layers, across the street a cat newly dead, few ants just beginning to crawl around the shut mouth.

Here is an object, two-color Everson "holiday greeting" from Oyez:

Here from the valley floor the long rock sleeps
in the sky;

Length over length the steep walls gather and lift till
the far top dims,

and what is wrong with this is object-word and ongoing present-tense verb. Does the object do this at night? No thought for cosmic rays. It is as the observer wills. Objects persist. Even paper, the man's fantasy of his Bible crumbling into little missiles. Bit of pumice, foam rock not much good in David's sling. Goliath reads Stevenson and depends on his bronze sword with the iron core. We bind our handles up with tar or blood—those knife handles that are stacked leather rings—and anything wrapped around to hold a blade is this war magic comfort.

The difficulty is felt as one's own stupidity or thickness. For us to move among, I like it that bricks have names, and the iron disks in pavement, asphalt, a thoughtful brown with if the city is large enough its name.

I'm just old enough to remember milk wagons cooled with block ice. Stopped, you could watch water drip over the figured iron step, with monumental deliberation, and my parents' current house still has a milk chute. Little reddish brown points, government pressed-paper tokens, and the pillowlike rectangle of margarine with embedded sullen red capsule you broke with thumbs and kneaded with hand warmth, till all came yellow. Coursey made his boy a pull wyvern, stylized thick wood and chromed bolt ends, wings hunch-flap and

gryphon head up and down, toy become block, and I was thinking of how tiny bottles might be carved but what would you do for the block ice, fallen chunks with the larger greenness in them, and where did they ride on the truck? It is like bread and butter sandwiches, the slices made of wood, or the fried eggs I saw today, quite small, that stuck to metal shelf uprights.

Spoerri did a topographical map of his worktable and issued a catalogue, like Victoria's, of descriptions—the tiny pocketable items which since Stein and Picasso are *trendlich*. Enormous queen (but short) to be in silver-gilt on her own table, with the compotes with dogs and dead rats. What went wrong, this particularity of mixed materials, as Georgian verse didn't number the cattails by the river. There are marsh imaginings; what is a silver thistle letter opener? In the street everywhere with disposable beverage closers are red plastic moulded tail lights,

each different, and lately a brass key for a lock like my new bicycle's that didn't fit, bars of an electric heater seen in a trash barrel Monday, after a visit to the gallery with African masks, royal carved throne-stools, crescent wood boxes and carved bowls—perspiration dried on everything. No seeds caught in a headdress, images of the wearer (except beautifully stylized)—take us, little red plastic brakelight, you have been rendered by Maffey as (in the middle) a whitehot yellow, but that was in Manhattan.

The horse runs away with the ship. Model horses don't run, because they need a space (like a toy theater) to run in. Similarly clouds even in currently fashionable mobiles don't float, aren't *in* the air they're in. Tilstrom bows at the end, his hands animals. I have seen toasters with card-stock lithographed toast popped up. A small dragon or dinosaur projects a mythic space—as if one could make a puppet of a puppet though this never seems to work. Inside Joseph Cornell's boxes is metaphysics.

The family as illiterate, not a place of learning, satisfied us a long time. So there were cakes for feast days, ornaments from discardable plants, not much light, square bins for running water, artificial pools, as ever one would sink a worn-out bucket. Is there no word like hearth for trapped water. And the razors as if set with microliths, turn the bronze fish or bird and water comes out of the phallic tap.

You take the flat wood trap with the rat on the cover and screw in a large screw eye under the staple holding the restraining arm. This satisfies the need to alter. I slide a crust edge of bread under the bait notch and wrap ten inches of white thread around that. The trap flips over on the animal, and may move a minute or two after. Its tail is longer than live inspection recalls.

I have a little bridey flat in foil to eat and what good are foods shaped like instruments or including baked-in symbols. Hanson mailed a municipal building design, dome and flung windows, over the door rendered as if chiseled APPROPRIATE INSCRIPTION.

It is not the fact that Leibniz could not allow two identical apples, but that he could not allow apples which are mirror images. I said to myself upsetting the board is no part of the rules of chess, and seemed to recall it happens in *Pogo*, raising the question of how a game of chess may be *in* a comic strip. The animals do not make announced moves, but even if they do it is "chess"; a represented game is no game, the philosopher's apple, even if an apple, no apple. Two mirror-image philosophers might resolve this if they could talk. A single issue of a journal, and its plates. We're back to Tenniel drawing backwards on boxwood, though by then it's a plate. These framed never satisfy. One feels one has a hyperoriginal and this is a trick. Dreyer, having photographed a chess game in black and white, projects the negative. Ladies are asked to remove their hats. The magician, in black,

borrows a black hat. Those lightcolored animals (much less birdcages) are a remark about emulsion. If round fruit is produced back then it is oranges, which are exotics. Limes would do, you'd say, as their reverse, but George Jean Nathan objects to green on stage and fruits are costume. Gainsborough made little tray gardens, mirror lakes, pebble boulders, and Tiepolo's models were wax. This is scale, which may have to do with the irreversibility of time. The old magician, finding fruit under the cups, is pleased by the cloth under.

It is good practice to disassemble paper matches, take the staple out and separate the cardboards, peel off the striking surface, glue photographed books or something to the outside of the wrapper and reattach the striking surface, fold the matches in and staple.

It is not a solution, the big paintings of ketchup leavings translucent in the bottle—even tiny models under lucite of littered subway entrances, though on a table with no apparent space for the stairs to go this would be interesting. David, our authority, says the rock wall behind the cave painting must never be taken as "ground"—illusionism, though bellied rock was a belly to them. They did not do cicadas, find annular chitin valuable as design. The muscled stomach in marble becomes back ribs on Cromwell's soldiers, becomes fish. Are you a dorsal or a ventral being. Do you pick up little model cars and turn them over.

In the crystal one sees a woolly red stag, like the one at Trinity all bones one associates not with antlers too large to contemplate, hearing what to Joyce was audible, but knees, massy edible joints, the largest Irish dog, and this must now (not go away but) ribs, all, become joists or shade curved reflection are, that fat thigh, a bottom and knee become single spinal prolongation, the packet of thin but large shells in the fish store, to serve hot deviled crab, tuna eked, combs her hair with an ivory comb, the seductive run of a phrase demanding you put a tail on it, narwhal to keep it from cracking—and in a pharmacy window soak it like ivory nuts in clear oil, and virgins in church panels that look, photographed, like Harlow caringly plump over teeth, are mastodon.

A cicada shell on the lip of a milk bottle must have happened sometime—we all remember frozen necks of cream *and* the thumbnail under leverable up top, our experience of laminate (it would, the semicircle, come up furry, the nail lunate), and on small individual cream bottles like chef's hats, hammer and peg pegs, the ones that forced the ones ahead through arcane routes to emerge through a hole protected by as it were a nicked grommet, a Greek clarity of function with mystery at the core. The tiny staple on the milkbottle cap made it a matchbook.

Michael Davidson

Three Poems

The Fall (Tentative)

I

Sunday becomes consistent
even as the sun bogs down
behind a front of clouds
until only the iris

glint and wave,
Mr. Wicket protests
this is too much like prose
and lunch becomes farther away

you look into it (water)
and it tells you about the coast
its drainages and lagoons
and the real estate that grows there

he wants to "get it"
in the opening lines
which a walk around a lake
defers, turns into an afternoon

so that the "being" of lunch
is not at issue, only the rhyme
of walking and weather
that only a few can't hear

this is where I live
this is my dog
there are other colors
and they live next door.

II

So that an actual bridge
could replace an actual chasm
where before a river

and beyond a blue lozenge of water
could verify a map
wherein the natives had inscribed
each of the animals
by some part of the animal
whose soft pad on the desert floor
leads us to moisture
or where the moisture was
not like anything
then you could begin
and all the buildings and roads
that followed
could be said to have been born
I don't know
words repeated in an empty car
are still words
and I still hear them.

III

I go swimming
in the middle of water
when the rain stings the arm
raised in stroking
down there
I'm simply a sound
a breathing cavity
where the good conversations occur
in one I have defeated my opponents
with a terse riposte
and they take me out for drinks
at the Crab Nebula Cafe
it is very unhappy
but too late to be helped
which is why swimming is necessary
and should be required in school
if only for that blue
without which an idea like Greenland

is almost impossible
in the other

we learn about the West
over there in the deep end
where distance
slopes down into distance.

Subject Matter
for Hal Fischer

I'm afloat on a sea, see,
and this sloop comes into view
that could be a seal
or a green furl of a wave

but it's not
it's a numeral
and there's this naked guy and there's this naked person
who's not wearing any it illustrates

thing you could put your hand on
trying to illustrate a dream whose name must be "Fig."
first you open the door a frame to modify a door
and it's the wrong room like a way of walking
 around a reservoir
you've been there before
then you climb a flight
and someone stares at you filling in a form
this much is familiar with questions framed around it
 like where do you begin
stars form a story overhead and instantly there are all these
cities made out of
minor metropoli stairs you could climb
and you are caught in it or where to end, say
 in Tasmania at the horizon
trying to catch a bus in the furled leaves of a coleus
for which there is no change
chance never enters into it a life force minus the life
some parts of speech equals number, one
 and the sum of one
connect in the dark now you have a vantage
producing a third
and a fourth two sentences dis-
I'm hardly necessary cover a third city
 in whose multiple talk
and where are your buttons something like talk occurs
the other signals exchange
red for the "ideal string" it is late spring
black for the "concrete anchors" fog forms in the afternoon
 listening to you in Arcadia
gold where the light is gold
for where a ship falls
into a book whose name and a formula for the plucked string

The Memo

"Nous auron écrit sur la surface ondoyante d'un souffle!"

(Edmond Jabès)

We might read from the text on private language
or we might speak a private language
made up of doubt
plus the sounds of a child

imitating the family parrot:
he is green
he is going to the toilet
how do you say how do you say

we have papers from the government
and collections of secrets
one of them goes like this:
a man has offended another man

not by anything said
but by a tone in which what is said
is returned, is made
perfectly clear

so that after the conversation
the second man conceives a diabolical plot
in which a man may be marked
by his falseness

and so may be mistrusted in his lonely way
among the also-marked
he has indicated his plot
in a memo to the world

but has coded his intentions
in the bland diction of an institution
that has provided him with paper
and soft lead pencils

in his neighborhood
before the morning birds have begun their racket
someone's lost parrot flies across a metallic sky
calling to the space he was not permitted to know
with the vocables of an intelligent child

just beginning to hear difference
a man wakes to hear it
and resolves never to make war on humans
which becomes the first line of his dream
as he falls back to sleep

Dennis Phillips

13 pieces from A World

1.

A section of the vital shoulder
opens secretly to the heart.

A landing, christened, held obsolete but worshipped:
Plymouth Rock, John O'Groats, Tierra Del Fuego.

An older lesson, born of vulcanism:
Lava tubes pumping from the core
new extremities.

Don't look at me: If the fire escapes
even hope would vanish.

2.

From adhesive. Instead of blood.
A transfusion of venom.

M'amour, M'amour
What and where?

The walls adhere, glue electric.

You cannot take from me
anything that I will more willingly
part withal

This rent a worse wide one sodden, incarnadine.
The spiders have gotten here first what
their mandibles sucked out their webs can't clog.

3.

Doll-perfect
at mother's breast

Unchanged but grown
at her own breast to suck

As if my flu were aggression
suddenly all hell, a fever, casts out.

No harbor. No soothing stream to cool.

Under a fern an icon
her eyes wood her nipples flesh
perfect dark face a harbor.

And times when only wood

4.

The old woman called your fever.
You knew she was dead.

Her voice grabbed into your skin.

You kept thinking of a building
so vast it held marshlands.

Dense reeds and high
then endless corridors.

There was an office you needed
but a pulse brought you to.

"Touch me," she whispered.

"To keep the fever back."

You expected dry, hard leather
but her wrinkles were tender.

"Now tell me what you feel."

"Reeds," you said.

Or was it a pulse?

5.

Laughing that the skull was bolted to his desk he'd
been trying to pry it off, the invisible
jewish skull.

A cat would cry and this would empty
a river's final phase. *Seasilt saltsick*.

The gravity of the single written thing
pulling randomly: image, motive, masque.
So little literary.

6.

But a delta, finger of cocktips a new
gravity where things stand, press against
verticals.

From the window cones and rods
lying against a chess board resting
against a wall.

She comes in her room grey floorboards
a trace of rope around her grecian dress.

Now listen closely it's about sex in one spot
was it you she spoke of or someone else how
good it was tied down, supine, roped
to the floor.

You respond to some wide permission
with ideas of crime.

But she's out by then, hot and searching

You seem to be holding your erection and
humming a Phaiakian work tune.

*They bore him back, so fast, so fast,
Asleep, toward home, at last, at last.*

7.

My hands sweated stickum but no web came out.

"It's only an idea," I said.

"No hourglass on your palm."

But a small hole, rind of blood, lipless tiny mouth.
It wants to speak but it's empty.

Or a clumsy finger at a fragile egg.

What seemed arachnoid is avian.

A threaded nut crowned with a hungry-
beaked man, a pointy adhesive tongue.

"This cannot be mine," I cried.

"It can't be your hand."

8.

Full moon said to cause indigestion
or somnambulism

Wolves watch
gazing down from a glowing fence.

He lay down in the garden
soft teeth of snails searching his face.

Dew, resolved from a thawed layer
clouds not close to the moon
but not close to him, pull moisture from flesh
but that's a kind of rumor, not true, not
in the sense that he knows dew and rumor.

The snails give up by morning
ants and worms find some odd commerce with him.
"Garden bed" almost funny
eyes sullied arms asleep.
He waited for the snap
but it was day again.

9.

He awoke in a crowd that stared off
until a giant light or fire dismissed them.
No compacted or tilled soil detained them.
To find himself across a continent
surrounded by singles bars and convenience stores.

There had been troops
but he escaped.
Down the steepest hills from
barren housing tracts
to overgrown truck farms
to where he couldn't be found
he fled.
His sister's last words, "You'll be killed"
dropped behind.

Sad farewell to familiar scapes.

His gestures now his own among strangers.
A light or fire, a signal. "Notes," he says again.
"Only notes."

10.

Your glistening back
up from warm water
our underview
shallow, bright, full of new creatures.
Esperanza waited naked in our room.

We were all so patient.
You were lovely and indulgent.
She exhibited herself but would not be touched.
I might have known this, but forgot.
We abandoned her

and will remember instead a large black manta ray
and I the touch of your hand
warm in the cooler sea.

11.
They would these lips kiss
the invalid's mouth

 a scene rendered humid
 oppressively humid

the order of envelopes determined
and who would face whom at table

fetching her to join the company

no arms allowed or needed
only a fantasy of danger an
old vestige losing strength a quieter dictum
covering over.

12.
In a dream you would fall
from a ladder

The space is not deep or shallow
a speech you heard in a new courtyard
the only space

an herb you once burned
on the pinpoint of a probe
that tender but fall? No
not fall.

The ladder tips neither Laurel nor
Hardy balance at the top it's
you falling the new bricks rising
but the impact cushioned, harmless

It was made for you to notice

that the words must hold
something you missed the last time.

There were two large stones by Noguchi.

You remembered hunger.

13.

But you had the coffee.

(No one had)

The cuckqueans
our projections, we
bearers of weapons
entitlement, power.

No one had coffee, it was you
had coffee.

No one had coffee.

*

Your hand brought persimmons
face drank mouth spoke
eyes looked away.

What was blamed on weather?
Fatigue, lined skin, fatigue.

What office? The one of delay
the Office of Detour
averted eyes, single purpose.

*

They will have you sit and wait
then drink their beverage.

They will forget then remember
fetch and bow, stand and conclude.

Their contempt or confusion
will be hidden in accessories
desks, blinds, new phones,
highly erotic amanuenses.

*

Highlighted edge.

He showed a white cheek
over his shoulder.

Your bright chest
against my flannel.
No masque.

Phillip Foss

6 poems from Virga. / Icy Gate.

I would question the young, broken in their desire
For nonduration. The drift has receded.
Soon the mountains will yellow with distaste,
A quirk which distorts my perception.
I have raged against the wall until it moaned
Through my mouth and still the geese
Persevere contented in the knowledge of arrival.
The sky is abstract, a faith undisturbed by sin
And the meadows, where I stumble, heave
In sympathy. A girl sings out the window, unaware
The wind sails her breath into my nostrils,
Or that the bland traffic has made her mute. She waves
To nothing but air and turns her back
To the willows.

In a single movement the space we would consume
Stutters away from us. Our skin flutters like torn
Flags announcing the departure of our encumbrances.
We have found the landscape as distorted and precious
As our recollections and we have forgotten
Until our homes are as distant as this air.
We have confused access with our own presence
And are invariably awed that the sky remains
A presence informed by our fantasies:
The dream of water we long for after bitter nights
Of sorting sand. Behind stands succession
And behind succession stands a wall of water,
Our dream, yet we proceed our mouths empty.

You assign yourself complacency as space you reach
To beyond the limits of your voice, real or imagined,
To see violet bent through pine and you are free
To breathe or wait for the soil to become fedundant

With death as superficial as your pores. The air
 Beats its breath against your unending desire
 For winter to stand a pane of ice disposed
 To pain. Your fingers will examine the things of the world
 And you will know nothing from the touch and will
 Return to whatever it was that you were not
 And not one cloud will have fallen.

Autumnal disbelief: I have attempted to see
 The falling snow, but am blinded. Now
 We receive the gifts of discontent, of prejudice:
 Giving the word as if it were the lips. There is a boat
 Bucking through waves of snow
 And it is the momentum I must recall. I am
 Tabulating this disbelief with symbols
 To explain nothing to myself again.
 The purpose is to paint, like fireflies,
 The wooden darkness that seems to breathe
 With the cruel weight of beauty. I have followed
 This suffering and still I am not rescued
 From the innate fallacy: the violin plays the bones,
 Pigeons fall in flames, the time-piece is destroyed
 By dirt, commonplace. Beside the place
 Where the heart resides is interminable darkness.

I bleed for what I have bled: the landscape
 Is tenacious, impossible, a resplendent skin. Smoke
 Rises off the river ice, collapses into itself, a battle
 For continuity. It is the same as my name: a kind
 Of vacuity: white. It is a presence to itself,
 Standing on the frozen river, a prayer with leaves,
 Impeccable leaves, in my hands. The sky
 Is brittle against the skin of my forehead. This is
 Sufficient. There is no odor, possibly no sound,
 Possibly that of collapse. What is certain is that air
 Is white and that my presence exists for a short
 Duration in such.

It is all notions which we, in some delirium,

Susan Howe

The Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson

1.

Náwwatuck nôte- *I came from farre*
shem

Come, behold the works of the Lord, what dissolutions he has made in the Earth. Of thirty seven persons who were in this one House, none escaped either present death, or a bitter captivity, save only one, who might say as he. Job 1.15. And I only am escaped alone to tell the News.

(Rowlandson, *Narrative*, p. 4)

The Sovereignty & Goodness of God, Together, With the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed; Being a NARRATIVE of the Captivity and Restauration of [?].s. Mary Rowlandson. Commended by her, to all that desires to [?]w the Lord's doings to and dealings with Her was probably [?]tten in 1677, by a Puritan woman to her "dear Chil[?]n and Relations" as a reminder of God's Providence. [?]as printed in Boston in 1682 after her death. Avatar of [?]only literary-mythological form indigenous to Amer[?]this Captivity Narrative is both a microcosm of colo[?]l imperialist history, and a prophecy of our con[?]porary repudiation of alterity, anonymity, darkness.

Rowlandson's "True History" was enormously [?]ular at once. Her captivity narrative ushered in a [?]t of others. Throughout the eighteenth century cap[?]ty narratives dominated all other North American [?]ns of frontier literature.

Originally these narratives were simple first-person [?]ounts of a real situation. As time went on and their [?]ularity increased, they were increasingly structured [?]written down by men, although generally narrated [?]women. Protestant sermons came to rely heavily on each cap[?]woman's suffering and deliverance as a metaphor for [?]process of Conversion.

* * * *

Come! our HIMMANUEL, constantly to keep House at *Boston* in New England.

(Samuel Sewell, *Diary*)

Early New England rhetoric claimed for every single [?]istian a particular evangelical and secular use and [?]gress. Individual identity was prophetic and corpo[?]. In the hermeneutics of the Bay Colony every member of the Elect was a figural type on the way of federal eschatology. The break with the old world was a rupture into contraries.

Split forever in the *discontinuous* drama of Promised Americanus, God is a thunderer, a clockmaker, a deer tamer. There is always a political message in the language of grace. Progress. Watch democratic King-birds and naked Nature.

A harsh climate, a wilderness, tomahawks, powwows, quickhatch and wampumpeag confronted the immigrant Children of the Morning.

Bleak necessity caused millennarian affirmations of destiny to thrive on misery. At Boston in New England the distinguishing mark of a saint was that he or she could transcend adversity. Extremity was every Puritan's opportunity.

See, ther's their glorious King Christ on that white Horse, whose hoofes like flint cast not only sparkes, but flames of fire in his pathes. Behold his Crown beset with Carbunkles, wherein the names of his whole Army are written. Can there ever be night in his Presence, whose eyes are ten thousand times higher (brighter) than the Sun? Behold his swiftness, all you that have said, where is the promise of his coming. (E. Johnson, *The Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Savior in New England*, 49.)

Mary Rowlandson suffered for and was redeemed (ransomed) by her people. Typology projects theocracy into our fictive future.

* * * *

While helping the original inhabitants of Earth's millennial fourth corner to become Christians, members

of the moral and profit-seeking Elect helped themselves to land. As white settlers increasingly encroached on Indian territory and the precarious food supply was depleted, hostilities became inevitable. In 1675 the white population was estimated at 17,000. Boston was only forty-four years old, but already the city was ringed by rapidly growing villages. Dunstable, Groton, Marlborough, Wrentham, and Lancaster were at the outermost ring from the city center. Beyond Lancaster trails of the Nipmunk Indians led away into unsettled wilderness.

In 1675 (Metacom) King Philip, the son of Massasoit, and chief sachem of the Wampanoags, formed an alliance between his tribe and the powerful Narragansetts and Nipmunks. These tribes were all part of the loosely connected Algonquin language group. King Philip's War (as it came to be called by the English) rapidly developed into an Algonquin assault on colonists everywhere in New England,

and was the most serious threat to English interests to date. Contradictory motives, including their own bitter understanding that efforts to bring the Indians to God had miserably failed, soon had the settlers fighting a bitter and bloody race war against the forces of "Diabolism."

I have read of a great City that was destroyed by Ants; and of another that was destroyed by Rats, and of whole Countreys that have been depopulated by Frogs, yea by Fleas. Though the Indians are a Despicable Enemy, yet the Lord is able to cut us down by a small *Indian axe*. But though I thus speak, I believe that God will reform his people by this Judgement, by this shall the Inquiry of Jacob be purged, and this shall be all the fruit to take away his sin.

(I. Mather, *A Brief History of King Philip's War*, 176)

During the difficult years of Indian wars, frequent health epidemics, poor harvests, threats from schismatics, and widespread political and financial insecurity, a written emblematic procession of first generation founding fathers asserted the sacred and corporate success of their pioneering Errand-enterprise. First generation founding mothers generally went unmentioned. Often they died young, worn out by frequent childbearing.

* * * *

It was easie to conjecture that the *Naraganset*, and *Nipmunk* and *Quabaog*, and *River Indians*, being all come together, and the Army returned, they would speedily fall upon the *Frontier Towns* . . .

On the 10th day of February some hundreds of the *Indians* fell upon *Lancaster* . . . Mr. *Rowlandson* (the faithful Pastor of the Church there) had his House, Goods, Books, all burned; his Wife and all his Children led away Captive before the Enemy. Himself (as God would have it) was not at home, whence his own person was delivered, which otherwise (without a Miracle) would have been endangered. Eight men lost their lives to save Mrs. Rowlandson.

(BH 110-11)

Increase Mather misrepresented the real event: Mrs. Rowlandson was eager and able to save herself. "*I had often before this said, that if the Indians should come, I should chuse rather to be killed by them then taken alive* but when it came to the tryal my mind changed." (N 5)

* * * *

Mary White Rowlandson, one of the seven children of John and Joane White, was born in England. The date of her birth is uncertain, but the Whites crossed to Salem, Massachusetts in 1638, and moved to Lancaster in 1653. John White was the wealthiest member and largest landholder of the small frontier settlement. In 1656

Mary married Joseph Rowlandson, the first minister of Lancaster's parish. The couple had four children. Mary, born in 1657, died before she was a year old. Joseph was born in 1662, another Mary in 1665, and Sarah in 1669. Their house was both a dwelling place for the minister and his family, and a fortified garrison for the entire community. Through the marriages of her sisters Mrs. Rowlandson was connected to many other Lancaster landowning families. Nineteen relatives were in the Rowlandson garrison on the day it was attacked. She said her life had been easy until that morning.

Joseph Rowlandson was also born in England, probably in 1631. His family emigrated to America during the same year as the Whites. 1638 was one of the great years of migration. Twenty-three ships and three thousand passengers arrived in the Bay Colony during that year alone. The Rowlandsons settled in Ipswich.

In 1651, Joseph, then beginning his senior year at Harvard College, was sentenced to be fined and publicly whipped for the crime of having written a pasquinade in prose and verse that was posted on the door of the Ipswich Courthouse. Later someone said of the accuser who had charged Rowlandson with libel to himself and others: "When he lived in our country, a wet eel's tale and his word were something worth taking of." But the case was tried in Ipswich by John Endicott, Simon Bradstreet (Anne's husband), and William Hathorne (Nathaniel's ancestor). The intimidated and chastened sinner penned a lengthy abject apology beginning: "Forasmuch as I Joseph Rowlandson through the suggestion of Satan, and the evil of my owne heart, by that being strongly attempted, by the depravation of this to facilly inclined to the perpetration of a fact whose nature was anomic, and circumstances enormities" (NRS 155)

Conduct charts are moral thunder in the American creed. Joseph Rowlandson was the only graduate of Harvard's class of 1652.

For the next two years Rowlandson prepared for the ministry, and in 1654 he began preaching in Lancaster. There his mother, father, and brother Thomas soon joined him. He seems to have been well liked by his flock. Twenty years later when a quarrel arose over the formation of the Old South Church in Boston, and the most learned and judicious ministers in Massachusetts were gathered together for advice, he was among the chosen arbiters. When Lancaster was raided and burned, and his wife and children carried off, Rowlandson was in or near Boston petitioning colonial officials for troops to guard the village. Lancaster had already been raided

[?]ce during the previous summer. Later, he spent a great [?]al of time and effort appealing to the Massachusetts [?]uncil to arrange for the ransom and release of his [?]nily.

Shortly after Mrs. Rowlandson's release her children were also ransomed. The reunited family lived in [?]d around Boston until 1677 when they moved to [?]thersfield, Connecticut where he had been called as [?]nister. Joseph died at forty-six the following year. [?]ry Rowlandson's name was listed in the town records [?]1679. She had been granted an annual pension of £30. [?]was never paid. Probably she died shortly after her [?]sband.

He holdeth our soul in life, and suffers not our feet to be moved, for thou our God has proved us, thou has tried us, as silver is tried. (Intro to N from Psalm 66.9.10)

* * * *

2.

Manittóo wússuck- *God's Booke or Writing.*
wheke.

On the tenth of *February* 1675, Came the *Indians* with numbers upon *Lancaster*:
Their first coming was at about Sun-rising; hearing the noise of some Guns, we
looked out; several Houses were burning, and the Smoke ascending to Heaven.
(N 1)

On this late winter day the vulnerable village of Lan[?]ter in the new Jerusalem of
New England feels the [?]rd without and terror within. At sun-rising, on a day
[?]calamity, at the inverted point of antitypical history, [?]ry Rowlandson looks
out at the absence of Authority [?]d sees we are all alone. Spite is the direction
of crea[?]n. In a minute death can and will come. All collectivi[?]s will be
scattered to corners.

Epigraph to *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God*: from the [?]ticle of Moses:

DEUT.32.39. *See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me: I kill and I make
alive, I wound and I heal neither is there any can deliver out of my hand.*

Near the beginning of redemptive time Moses spoke [?]savage song to the
disobedient children of Israel. Now [?]God who has brought his select nation
across an [?]an and baptized them in a new wilderness, has re[?]ked and
ensnared them.

In a jeremiad delivered at the outbreak of King Phil[?]s War, Increase Mather told
his congregation that God [?]reed their privilege and pattern before the world
be[?]. Sanctified affliction must be every saint's portion.

Increase Mather lived safely in Boston.

Mary Rowlandson is a backwoodswoman and God's [?]red stretches farther than
his love. Her quiet village is [?]w a site of terror. At this tragic site to what end

does the [?]rld go on? The Mosaic song is a chant of Combat. The [?]nd is malign.

* * * *

In the first paragraph of the first narrative written by an Anglo-American woman, ostensibly to serve as a reminder of God's Providence, guns fire, houses burn, a father, mother, and sucking child are killed by blows to the head. Two children are carried off alive. Two more adults are clubbed to death. Another escapes — another running along is shot. Indians strip him naked then cut his bowels open. Another, venturing out of his barn, is quickly dispatched. Three others are murdered inside their fortification. The victims are nameless. Specificity is unnecessary in whiplash confrontation. Only monotonous enumeration.

In the first chapter of the first narrative written by a white American woman, twelve Christians are killed by Indians. The author and her youngest daughter are wounded by bullets, the author's brother-in-law is killed while defending her garrison. The author's nephew has his leg broken and is battered to death. The author's elder sister, seeing "the infidels haling one way and children another, and some wallowing in their own blood," begs these same infidels to kill her and they do. Finally the author's two other children (aged fifteen and ten) are pulled away from her sight.

In the first chapter of the first narrative written by a white American woman, Indians are called "murtherous wretches," "bloody heathen," "hell-hounds," "ravenous bears," "wolves."

"There were twenty-four of us taken alive and carried captive." (N 5)

This is the hasty beginning of Mary Rowlandson's narrative of her sojourn with the Nipmunk and Narragansett Indians.

She travelled with them as prisoner and slave for eleven weeks and five days.

"I shall particularly speak of the several Removes we had up and down the wilderness." (N 5)

Someone is here. Now away she must go. Invisible to her people. Out in a gap in the shadows.

A far cry from Anne Bradstreet's polished pious verse. But the two women were contemporaries, and their husbands were builders of Sion.

This terse tense book tells of prefigured force and the dooms of life. For a time its author was elided, tribeless, lost.

* * * *

Oh the roaring, and singing, and dancing, and yelling of those black creatures in the night, which made the peace a lively resemblance of hell. And as miserable was the wast that was there made, of Horses, Cattle, Sheep, Swine, Calves, Lambs, Roasting Pigs, and Fowl [which they had plundered in the town] some roasting, some lying and burning, and some boyling to feed our merciless Enemies; who were joyful enough though we were disconsolate. (N 6)

Pitched into a first Night, huddled together at the summit of George Hill, captives from Lancaster look

down at their burning village.

They are things; abducted from the structure of experience. Rowlandson wraps herself in separateness for warmth. Tyranny precedes morality. Her little girl was broken in a rift of history.

Somewhere Thoreau says that exaggerated history is poetry.

Now the narrative is divided into chapters called Removes. Each Remove is a forced march away from western rationalism deep and deeper into Limitlessness where all illusion of volition, all individual identity may be transformed — assimilated.

We will read no lovely pictures of the virgin forest; no night fishing, deer-hunting, no wildlife identification, no sunsets, no clouds of pigeons flying. Indian towns are smoky and stinking. It is always either snowing or raining, muddy and dreary. Landscape will never transfix her. The beautiful Connecticut River is just another barrier to get across. Rowlandson's apprehension of nature is an endless ambiguous enclosure.

* * * *

Mary Rowlandson has been condemned for her lack of curiosity about the customs of her captors (she was starving, wounded, weary) and her narrative has been blamed for stereotypes of the Indians as "savages" that later developed in this genre of American fiction. These critics skirt the presence in this same genre of an equally insulting stereotype, that of a white woman as passive cipher in a controlled and circulated idea of Progress at whose zenith rides the hero-hunter (Indian or white) who will always rescue her.

But Rowlandson's presentation of truth severed from Truth is a rude effraction into a familiar American hierarchical discourse of purpose and possession. *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God, Together, With the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed*, composed in a bloody fragment of the world, is a relentless origin.

* * * *

A formal ecclesiastical enclosure — God's promise to the elite — confused and assimilated the chaotic geneology of this colonial Archetype. Oh the metempsychosis!

Poor model-muse cut into the cornerstone of New Jerusalem.

You are a passive victim, captured and threatened by a racial enemy until God's Providence (later a human hero) can effect your deliverance. You must shelter the masculine covenant as lost lady and lofty idol. You will water the American venture with your tears. "And my knees trembled under me, *and I was walking through the valley of the Shadow of Death.*" (N 68)

The truth is what you are worth.

* * * *

No copy of the first edition of Mary Rowlandson's *Narrative* is known to exist. All the editions we have now depend on the text of a "Second Addition Corrected and Amended" printed during the same year as the first. Future distortions, exaggerations, modifications, corrections and emendations may endow a text with meanings it never formed. Probably Rev. Rowlandson, who had once been publicly whipped and fined for writing a satirical prose poem, helped his wife to choose scriptural parallels and referents that would support and censor her narrative at the same time they entwined the telling in a becoming christological corporate pattern.

In a culture chiefly concerned with relationships of power and production lip service is a tall tale. An old rule.

In 1863 during the darkest days of the Civil War, Emerson delivered a lecture called *The Fortune of the Republic*. In it he said:

The genius or destiny of America is no log or sluggard but a man incessantly advancing, as the shadow on the dial's face, or the heavenly body by whose light it is marked.

The flowering of civilization is the finished man, the man of sense, of grace, of accomplishment, of social power. (CW 537)

A woman is hiking through the Republic's corporate eschatology, carrying her dying daughter Sarah.

She is a mother ensnared in God's Plan. She has witnessed the destruction of Lancaster/Sion. She and her children are commodities between two hostile armies. What is their legality? What are they worth?

Other to other we are all functions in a system of War.

* * * *

(By my Master in this writing, must be understood *Quonopin*, who was a *Saggamore*, and married King *Phillips* wives Sister; not that he first took me, but I was sold to him by another *Narrhaganset Indian*, who took me when first I came out of the Garrison . . .)

I went to see my daughter *Mary*, who was at this same *Indian Town* at a *Wigwam* not very far off, though we had little liberty of opportunity to see each other. She was about ten years old, & had been taken from the door at first by a *Praying Ind* & afterward sold for a gun. (N 11, 12)

Later, when her captors asked Mrs. Rowlandson to set a price on her own head, she did — £20 in goods, mostly guns. Not long after her release her two surviving children were also ransomed.

"As Solomon sayes, *Mony answers all things*." (N 70)

Sarah was wounded and worthless to her captors. Only her mother remembers.

down I sat with the picture of death in my lap. About two houres in the night, my sweet Babe, like a Lambe departed this Life, on *Feb.18.1675*. It being about *six yeares*, and *five months* old. It was *nine dayes* from the first wounding, in this miserable condition, without any refreshing of one nature or another, except a little cold water. I cannot but take notice, how at another time I could not bear to be in the room

where any dead person was, but now the case is changed; I must and could ly down by my dead Babe, side by side all the night after. I have thought since of the wonderfull goodness of God to me, in preserving me in the use of my reason and senses, in that distressed time, that I did not use wicked and violent means to end my own miserable life. (N 10 11)

God brought Mary Rowlandson into a wood where [?]he lost her children and learned what fear is. *Now* his [?]ace is peace. She says she has thought of God's goodness [?]nce. Like the aboriginals she assures us she hates (at the [?]ame time noting their frequent acts of kindness to her), [?]he attributes causation to spiritual force.

* * * *

A Sovereign thinks the sun. Form and force begin [?]ith Him. If there is evil in the Universe it is good and [?]herefore marvelous. Law scans the grammar of liberty [?]nd surrender. Catastrophe is a matter of fact. Who can [?]pen the door of God's face?

Love is a trajectory across the hollow of history.

Captives have been taken for centuries. Some pass[?]g matter made it necessary. They stoop sideways far [?]land, herds of people re-entering the Light. What do [?]ey want?

and the Lord brought me some Scriptures, which did a little revive me, as that *Isai. 55.8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your wayes my wayes saith the Lord*, and also that, *Psal. 37.5 Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass*,

About this time they came yelping from Hadly. . . . (N 33)

Sarah's burial in unmarked christianography re[?]uces the rational *Designe of all Theologie* to gibberish. [?]ood sense got lost during the Third Remove. The text [?]f America bypassed her daughter.

"Come, behold the works of the Lord, what dissolutions he has [?]ade" (N 4)

Blessed *shall be* thy basket and thy store.

(Deut. 28.5)

Cursed *shall be* thy basket and thy store.

(Deut. 28.17)

Here is the way of contradiction.

* * * *

One of the Indians that came from *Medfield* fight, had brought some plunder, came to me, and asked me, if I would have a Bible, he had got one in his Basket, I was glad of it, and asked him, whether he thought the *Indians* would let me read? He answered, *yes*; so I took the Bible and in that melancholy time, it came to my mind to read first the 28 *Chap. of Deut.* which I did, and when I had read it my dark heart wrought on this manner, *That there was no mercy for me, that the blessings were gone, and the curses came in their room, and that I had lost my opportunity.* (N 14)

Memory of anonymous thoughtfulness bites the mind that thought it. "Yes" signifying affirmation and permission must become "No" at once. Her first choice from God's Book of Wonderful Mercy is a vengeful chapter from Deuteronomy, "Blessings and Curses pronounced." Next she links the curses to her violent self-abhorrence. Each step forward seems mired in the passage of this progress that must always recoil back on herself.

Mary Rowlandson's thoroughly reactionary figuralism requires that she obsessively confirm her orthodoxy to readers at the same time she excavates and subverts her own rhetoric. Positivist systems of psychological protection have disintegrated. Identities and configurations rupture and shift. Her risky retrospective narrative will be safe, only if she asserts the permanence of corporate Sovereignty. Each time an errant perception skids loose, she controls her lapse by vehemently invoking biblical authority. "Not what the Selfe will, but what the Lord will," exhorted Thomas Hooker. Joseph Rowlandson warned, "If God be gone, our Guard is gone."

* * * *

"Thus the Lord carried me along from one time to another . . ." (N 38)

In New England, in the 1670s, the beaver and deer population had precipitously declined. Furs and skins that Native Americans had always used for clothing were becoming hard to obtain, and they were increasingly forced to rely on European fabrics. Mary Rowlandson found that the tribes she travelled with were well supplied with dry goods and needles. Apart from the work she did for her master and mistress, she used her knitting and sewing skills to do many odd jobs for which she was paid. King Philip gave her a shilling when she sewed a shirt for his son. With it she bought a piece of horse-flesh. She knit stockings for Wettimore and fixed another pair for a warrior. In return for a piece of beef she made a shirt for a squaw's sannup. For a quart of peas she knit another pair of stockings. Someone asked her to sew a shirt for a papoose in exchange for "a mess of Broth, thickened with a meal made of the bark of a Tree."

"Often getting alone: *like a Crane, or a Swallow so did I chatter: I did mourn as a Dove, mine eyes fail with looking upward Oh, Lord I am oppressed undertake for me. Isa 38 14.*" (N 39)

When she was Quonopen's slave she liked her master, though she despised his wife, her mistress, Weetimore. None of her captors harmed her. Many shared what little they had with her. Although English soldiers had burned their winter supply of corn and driven them from their towns, she never saw a single Indian die from hunger.

Near the end of her narrative she interrupts the homeward direction of her impending restoration, with a list of specific criticisms of colonial policies toward her captors. "Before I go any further, I would take leave to mention. . ." Then she stops her slide into Reason's ruin by pushing her readers back to the imperatives of Wonder-Working Providence. "*Help Lord, or we perish.*" (N 63)

* * * *

Néechaw *She is in Travell.*

On April 13, 1645, John Winthrop wrote in his diary:

Mr. Hopkins, the governour of Hartford upon Connecticut, came to Boston, and brought his wife with him, (a godly young woman, and of special parts), who was fallen into a sad infirmity, the loss of her understanding and reason, which had been growing on her divers years, by occasion of her giving herself wholly to reading and writing, and had written many books. Her husband, being very loving and tender of her, was loath to grieve her; but he saw his errour, when it

was too late. For if she had attended her household affairs, and such things as belong to woman, and not gone out of her way and calling to meddle in such things as are proper for men, whose minds are stronger &c. she had kept her wits, and might have improved them usefully and honorably in the place God had set her.

(John Winthrop, *The History of New England*,
from 1639 to 1649, II, 216)

John Winthrop was the governor of the Bay Colony during most of the years between 1629 and 1649 when he died in office. The first president of the Commissioners of the United Colonies of New England had four wives. When he was seventeen he married Mary Forth who bore him six children, including John Winthrop Jr., until she died ten years later in 1615. Later the same year the twenty-seven-year-old widower married Thomasine Clopton, who died in childbirth in 1616. In 1618 Winthrop married Margaret Tyndal. She followed him to America in 1631, gave birth to eight children, and died in 1647. Several months later the sorrowing fifty-nine-year-old widower and father of seventeen offspring married Mrs. Thomas Cotymore, a widow. The couple had a son the following year, before Winthrop died at sixty-one.

* * * *

Anne Bradstreet, "The Author to her Book":

THOU ill-form'd offspring of my feeble brain,
Who after birth did'st by my side remain,
Till snatcht from thence by friends, less wise
than true
Who thee abroad expos'd to publick view,
Made thee in raggs, halting to th'press to trudge
Where errors were not lessened (all may judg).
At thy return my blushing was not small,
My rambling brat (in print) should mother call,
I cast thee by as one unfit for light . . .

Anne Bradstreet, a female member of the "Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New-England," sailed from England to Salem, Massachusetts, on the *Arbella*, with John Winthrop, in March 1630. Twenty years later her first volume of poetry, *The Tenth Muse*, was published in London. When she sent her brother Thomas Parker a copy, he acknowledged her gift by composing and publishing a reply saying: "Your printing of a Book beyond the custom of your Sex, doth rankly smell."

For a woman to break Puritan sanctions against public statements from her sex was revolution enough in seventeenth century America. The madness of Anne Hopkins and the banishment of Anne Hutchinson were ominous precedents. Anne Bradstreet, the daughter of a governor of Massachusetts and the wife of a leading magistrate, persisted in her iron determination to keep on reading and writing, by carefully controlling the tone of her rebellion. Although her poetry wears a mask of civility and perfect submission to contemporary dogmatism, sometimes her cover slips and a voice of rage breaks out.

Nay Masculines, you have thus taxt us long,
But she, though dead, will vindicate our wrong,
Let such as say our Sex is void of Reason,
Know tis a Slander now, but once was Treason.
(*"Elegy on Queen Elizabeth"*)

In an elegy on the virgin Queen, she sharply rebuked the Slander consecrated by St. Paul, and emphasized by Anglicans and Puritans, that man was intellectually preeminent over woman. Mrs. Bradstreet was usually more circumspect.

To sing of Wars, of Captaines, and of Kings,
Of Cities founded, Common-wealths begun,
For my mean Pen are too superiour things:
And how they all, or each their dates have run:
Let Poets, and Historians set these forth,
My obscure Verse, shal not so dim thy worth.
(*"The Prologue"*)

* * * *

TO THE READER: As large Gates to small Edifices, so are long Prefaces to little Bookes; therefore I will breifly informe thee, that here thou shalt find, the time when, the manner how, the cause why, and the great successe which it hath pleased the Lord to give, to this handfull of his praysing Saints in N. Engl., and it will be clearly demonstrated, if thou compare them with any other people, who have left there countryes, as the Gothes, Vandals, etc. to possesse a fatter, as Italy, or warmer, as Spaine, etc. (WWP 21)

Edward Johnson, a woodworker, also arrived in Salem on the *Arbella*. Eventually he moved to Woburn, became a captain in the militia, and surveyor general of arms and munitions for the colony. In 1654 Johnson was the anonymous author of the first published history of Massachusetts, *The Wonder-working Providence of Sion's*

Saviour in New England. This *History* lavished praises on Anne Bradstreet's illustrious father, Governor Thomas Dud-

[?]y, and on her husband Simon: "Now Simon yong, step [?]among, these worthies take thy place: / All day to toile [?]vineyard, while Christ thee upholds with grace." [?]WP 141) Simon later became governor.

Captain Johnson excoriated Anne Hutchinson in [?]pter after chapter. She is Medusa in his Song of [?]erica.

Come along with me, sayes one of them [Erronists], i'lle bring you to a Woman that Preaches better Gospell than any of your black-coates that have been at the Ninnerversity, a Woman of another kinde of spirit, who hath had many Revelations of things to come. . . . A Woman, even the grand Mistris of all the rest, who denied the Resurrection from the dead, shee and her consorts mightily rayling against learning. . . . This Master-piece of Womens wit, drew many Disciples after her, and to that end boldly insinuated her selfe into the favour of none of the meanest, being also backed with the Sorcery of a second, who had much converse with the Devill. . . . This Woman was wonted to give drinckes to other Women to cause them to conceive, how they wrought I know not, but sure there were Monsters borne not long after. . . (WWP 127, 128, 132)

When the banished heretic and her household were [?]urdered in an Indian uprising, during September [?]643, in Pelham, New York, where they were living un[?]er Dutch jurisdiction, Johnson eagerly marked their [?]urders down as a sign of the "loud speaking hand of [?]od against them . . . before this the Lord had poynted [?]rectly to their sinne by a fearfull Monster, that another [?]these women brought forth, they striving to bury it in [?]livion, but the Lord brought it to light, setting forth the [?]ew of their monstrous Errors in this prodigious birth." [?]WP 187)

* * * *

For eleven weeks and five days Mary Rowlandson [?]as that "woman in the Wilderness who may have the [?]mit of the Dragon cast her face." (WWP 275) She saw [?]d spoke to King Philip — the Devil. She was the colo[?]st Sion the outcast.

Returned from walking up and down at the ends of [?]rth — with Satan, Reverend Rowlandson's wife knew [?]at her ordeal might mark her as suspect; vulnerable to [?]bivalent charges ranging from pride (she had set a [?]gh price on her own head), to sexual promiscuity, even [?]sorcery. Perhaps she told her story to assure herself and [?]r community that she was a woman who feared God [?]d eschewed evil.

One precaution first — rupture erased in a cloud of [?]s *Glory* in the dust of her text.

I have been in the midst of these roaring Lyons, and Salvage Bears, that feared neither God, nor Man, nor the Devil, by night and day, alone and in company: sleeping all sorts together, and yet not one of them ever offered me the least abuse of unchastity to me, in word or action. Though some are ready to say, I speak it for my own credit; But I speak it in the presence of God, and to his Glory. (N 64)

But her "song of War" tarnishes Winthrop's version of the Common-wealth as a figural "refuge" set apart for the "cheerfulness" and "primitive purity" of these "forerunners of Christ's Army."

* * * *

3.

Mat pitch cowáhick *The God that made you*
Manit keesiteónckqus *will not know you.*

A little Key may open a Box, where lies a bunch of Keyes.

(Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America*)

Oh, yes! oh yes! oh yes! All you people of Christ that are here Opressed, Imprisoned and scuriously derided, gather yourselves together, your Wives and little ones, and answer to your severall Names as you shall be shipped for his service, in the Western World. . . . (WWP 14)

One of the Wives attending to the service of the King of Kings, answers to the name of Mary. Mary re-apprehends her own story while trapped in New England's use and progress. Sometimes her husband Joseph, a godly minister of Christ Jesus, is left behind in their Western Garden.

Away with her by hidden paths into an origin.

There were many hundreds, old and young, some sick, and some lame, many had *Papooses* at their backs, the greatest number at this time with us, were *Squaws*, and they travelled with all they had, bag and baggage, and yet they got over this River . . . and on *Munday* they set their *Wigwams* on fire, and away they went: On that very day came the *English Army* after them to this River, and saw the smook of their *Wigwams*, and yet this River put a stop to them. (N 19)

Here is an amorphous psychic space. Only her retrospective narrative voice can control and connect the twists and turns of time past. "*For a smal moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee.*" (N 38)

Who has forsaken who? Where are we now? God's text in Rowlandson's text is counterpoint, shelter, threat.

"My Bible: *Which was my Guid by day and my Pillow by night.*" (N 38)

Soteriology is a screen against the primal Night. She must come back to that knowing.

But in writing Language advances into remembering that there is no answer imagining Desire. Remembering a wild place there is no forgetting.

"Now must we pack up and be gone from this Thicket. . . . As we went along they killed a *Deer*, with a young one in her. They gave me a piece of the *Fawn*, and it was so young and tender, that one might eat the bones as well as the flesh, and yet I thought it very good." (N 41)

Once Mary Rowlandson was quarry to huntsmen. First she hated them then she joined them now she remembers to hate them again.

She and her children with some nieces, nephews, and neighbors crossed into absence on February 10th, 1675. Out of sight? What of that?

This is a crime story.

Remember, captives and captors are walking together beyond the protective re-duplication of Western culture through another epoch far back. God sent affliction to Lancaster to try Her. Witnesses are all humans linking or heralding truth or transgression in a grammatical irruption of grace abounding.

"The *Indians* were as thick as the trees: it seemed as if there had been a thousand Hatchets going at once." (N 20) "*The Squaw laid a skin for me, and bid me sit down, and gave me some Ground-nuts, and bade me come again: and told me they would buy me, if they were able, and yet these were strangers to me that I never saw before.*" (N 29) "There was here one *Mary Thurston* of *Medfield*, who seeing how it was with me, lent me a Hat to wear." (N 26) "We took up our packs and along we went . . . As we went along I saw an *English-man* stripped naked, and lying dead on the ground, but knew not who it was." (N 45) "They came home on a Sabbath day, and the *Powaw* that kneeled upon the *Deer-skin* came home (I may say, without abuse) as black as the Devil." (N 52) "*Then came Tom and Peter, with the second Letter from the Council, about the Captives.* Though they were *Indians*, I got them by the hand, and burst out into tears." (N 49) "There was another *Praying* Indian, so wicked and cruel, as to wear a string about his neck, strung with *Christians* fingers." (N 50) "There was one that kneeled upon a *Deer-skin*, with the company round him in a ring who kneeled, and striking upon the ground with their hands, and with sticks; and muttering or humming with their mouths, besides him who kneeled in the ring, there also stood one with a Gun in his hand." (N 51)

* * * *

This is a crime story in a large and violent place. Too large for subject and object. Only a few of her captors have names. Nearly all of their names are wrong. Anyway by 1676 most of them are gone.

1677: "I can remember the time, when I used to sleep quietly without workings in my thoughts, whole nights together, but now it is other wayes with me. When all are fast

about me, and no eye open, but his *who ever waketh*, my thoughts are upon things past." (N 71)

Carried away unwillingly into the uncharted geography of North America, an author cannot let some definitive version of New England's destiny pull her. Once she senses oscillations of sense close to the face of her hunger, Scripture is a closure. Allegoria a grid she can get over.

When Mary Rowlandson can't count sheep she lets counter-memory out.

Clamor in the theatre of alienation. Ransom stammers fact of Famine. Divine cruelty and social necessity unleash the dialectical tension between Starvation and Gluttony.

A narrator is narrating something about the recalcitrant Beast in Everywoman. In this wild place every human has a bait she must bite.

There came an Indian to them at that time, with a basket of Horse-liver. I asked him to give me a piece: *What*, sayes he *can you eat Horse-liver?* I told him, I would try, if he would give me a piece, which he did, and I laid it on the coals to rost; but before it was half ready they got half of it away from me, so that I was fain to take the rest as it was, with the blood about my mouth, and yet a savoury bit it was to me: *For to the hungry Soul every bitter thing is sweet.* (N 21, 22)

There she stands blood about her mouth savoring the taste of raw horse-liver. God's seal of ratification spills from her lips or from her husband's pen.

* * * *

"There may be two things spoken in the management of the Truth," wrote Reverend Rowlandson in his "Last Sermon," printed at Wethersfield, Nov. 21, 1678, on a day of FAST and HUMILIATION. This is the sermon annexed to most editions of his wife's narrative of her captivity and restoration. A year later husband and wife were dead.

The idiosyncratic syntax of Mary Rowlandson's closed structure refuses closure. After the war-whoop terror and the death of her little daughter, a new management of the truth speaks to oppose itself. When the teller skids into schism remembering — she calls on God to keep her ground from shifting. She is a servant of the Lord. Fidelity is her privilege. Faith is a first precaution. Muttering or humming.

— Must rely on God himself — whole dependence must be upon him —

Guns guns — tobacco — he on the *Deer-skin* — preparation for a great day of Dancing — Bracelets — handfulls of Neck-laces — Garters hung round with Shillings — *God show'd his power over the Heathen in this — there is no thing too hard for God!* —

— nothing to drink but water and green Hurtle-berries —

— nothing over them but the heavens, and nothing under them but the earth —
 Quonopen fetched me some water himself, and bid me wash, and gave me a
 Glas to see how I looked. I was wonderfully revived by this favor he showed me —
 — *But to return to my going home — Our family now being gathered together —*

RHYTHM OF THE OLD WORLD: "Here you have *Samson's* Riddle exemplified,
 and that great promise, *Rom.8.28.* verified, *Out of the eater comes forth meat, and*
sweetness out of the strong." (PN xiv)

RHYTHM OF THE NEW: "That night we had a mess of wheat for our Supper."
 (N 22)

The trick of her text is the mix.

* * * *

At last, after many weary steps, I saw *Wachuset* hills, but many miles off. Then we
 came to a great *Swamp*, through which we travelled up to the knees, in mud and
 water, which was heavy going to one tyred before. Being almost spent, I thought
 I should have sunk down at last, and never gat out; but I may say as in *Psal.*
94.18. *When my foot slipped, thy mercy, O Lord held me up.* Going along, having
 indeed my life, but little spirit, *Philip*, who was in the Company, came up and
 took me by the hand. . . . (N 47)

King Philip, Increase Mather's "perfidious and [?]ody Author of the War," helped
 Mary Rowlandson [?]mb out of the mud and water. When she was an author
 [?]e remembered to write it.

Her view of King Philip's War and her picture of [?]ilip himself, is a contradiction
 of orthodox Puritan [?]tory.

One moral sense soon cancels another in a country of [?]gress and force.

Thereupon he [Philip] betook himself to flight, but as he was coming out of the
Swamp, an English-man and an Indian endeavored to fire at him, the English-
 man missed of his aime, but the Indian shot him through the heart, so as that he
 fell down dead. . . This Wo was brought upon him that spoyled when he was
 not spoyled. And in that very place where he first began to contrive his mischief,
 was he taken and destroyed, and there was he (like as Agag was hewed in
 pieces before the Lord) cut into four quarters, and is now hanged up as a
 monument of revenging Justice, his head being cut off and carried away to
 Plymouth, his Hands were brought to *Boston*. . . .

Thus did God break the head of that Leviathan, and gave it to be meat to the
 people inhabiting the wilderness, and brought it to the people inhabiting the
 wilderness, and brought it to the Town of *Plimouth* the very day of their solemn
 Festival. (BH 139-40)

This was in 1676. Wootonokanuske, Philip's wife, [?]d been captured earlier that year with their nine-year-[?]son. They were both sold into slavery and so vanish [?]m history.

On August 6, Weetamoo, squaw-sachem of the [?]casset Wampanoags, Quannopin's wife, and Mary [?]wlandson's mistress during her captivity, was be[?]yed by one of her subjects. This deserter led twenty [?]GLISH soldiers to her camp near the Taunton River. [?]etamoo was drowned while trying to escape on a raft. [?]ter her body washed up in Metapoiset. The English [?]o found this newly dead body didn't know whose it [?]s but cut off the head anyway, and stuck it on a pole in [?]untun. Some Indian prisoners there "knew it pres[?]ly, and made a most horrid and diabolical Lamenta[?]n, crying out that it was their Queen's head." ([?]138)

Quonnopin was captured on August 16, 1676, and taken to Newport, Rhode Island where he was tried by court-martial August 24th. The next day, the chief war sachem of the Narragansetts, and Mary Rowlandson's former master, was executed with his brother Sunkeejunasuc.

* * * *

"Oh! the wonderful power of God that mine eyes have seen, affording matter enough for my thoughts to run in, that when others are sleeping, mine eyes are weeping.

"*I have seen the extrem vanity of this world.*" (N 72)

* * * *

She came tumbling onto the American trail with the smell of death in her nostrils, and the sound of women wailing for their children.

"Go to Shiloh, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel. Go, and view it. . . ." (RS 144) (RS 144)

Mary Rowlandson saw what she did not see said what she did not say.

I am indebted in this article to Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier 1600-1860*, and *So Dreadful A Judgement*. Also to Annette Kolodny's *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860*, and Sacvan Bercovitch's *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*.

BOOKS QUOTED

Bradstreet, Anne. *The Complete Works of Anne Bradstreet*, edited by J. McElrath and A. Robb. Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1981.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Complete Works of R. W. Emerson*, vol. xi, "Miscellanies." Houghton-Mifflin Co., Boston, 1878.

Rowlandson, Mary. *The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, reprinted in Facsimile from the 1682 text, printed at Cambridge, Mass. & London, England.

Whereunto are annexed a Map of her Removes, Biographical and Historical Notes, and the Last Sermon of her husband Rev. Joseph Rowlandson: edited by Henry Stedman Nourse, and John Eliot Thayer, Lancaster, 1903.

Rowlandson, Joseph. see above

Mather, Increase. *A Brief History of the War with the Indians in New-England*. The text is re-printed in *So Dreadful A Judgement: Puritan Responses to King Philip's War, 1676-1677*, edited by Richard Slotkin and James K. Folsom, Wesleyan University Press. Middletown, CT, 1978.

Williams, Roger. *A Key into the Language of America*, London, 1643; reprinted for The Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Tercentenary, Co. Inc., 1936. Roger Williams Press, Providence, R.I.

N = Narrative

IN = Introduction to Narrative

NE = Narrative Epigraph

RS = Rev. Rowlandson's Sermon

NRS = Notes to R R Sermon

BH = Mather's Brief History

CW = Emerson's Collected Works

WWP = Wonder-working Providence

I have used the spelling and punctuation of the second edition of Mary Rowlandson's *Narrative* throughout.

Section headings are taken from Roger Williams' *Key into the Language of America*.

They are his definitions of Narragansett and Nipmunc dialect. This was the first book on the Indian language in English, though there were Spanish vocabularies of Aztec and other native Indian languages of Mexico, Central, and South America. And a dictionary of the Huron tongue in French.

Joseph Donahue

Two Poems

Guest Plus Host Equals Ghost

Trashfire
in a barrel,
gnosis. Or:

severed
hand, outside
the doughnut shop.

Or: a guest
you hesitate
to admit,

man with a
newspaper
you haven't read.

Hourolong wait
for an infusion
of blood,

lifelong wait
for a change
in mood.

The Pakistani
bows in prayer.
Red crest

floods Manhattan,
O gathering blaze
of Ramadan.

Girl I ushered
to the hospital
half dead

from false

devotion.

Afternoon in

the antique shop,
looking for the real
amid the replicas.

The brilliance
of the idol
fascinated

Moses, even
as he loathed it.
Bodies dug up,

negligible
martyrs. To find
an assertion

in an era
of disbelief.

To change,

after signing,
the contract.

Their deities came

to understand
them, picking the bones
of the worshippers,

ascending
as black
birds.

Lou Reed

Teamsters in trucks wave blue and white streamers,
a desperate hoopla. Copper wire looped through
the ignition. Into the gas tank, and that's all.

The terrorist in the toy store, taken
by remote control gizmos. Lou Reed steps
to the mike, begins *White Light/White Heat*.

These monolithic theories of myth,
there's just no stopping them. She kissed me

then dropped to her knees. I just want
to please you. That was 1978.
Kill Reagan, someone shouts. A zeal
deemed excessive. The language of religion
replaced by the language of addiction.
Man with the head of a computer terminal
dances with a svelte skeleton. Or angular,
in a black tux. The woman with a gold pocketbook.
Beg, and lash. Beg, and attack. The vodka
hypnotic, as were my conjectures.
(The weak tell the truth, while the strong
take up disguises.) Storm immanent,
lightning. Prairie awash in a purple light.
1970. Pants patched with stars from a flag,
reading Nietzsche: the morality of sheep,
so virginal a concept. Inverted
feelings of national purpose: black
fighter planes hidden in a bare grove.
White light tickles me, right down to my toes.

Harry E. Northup

from Enough the Great Running Chapel

Poem 6-13-1976

child beg shelter
whether i can function or not is another story
i feel something in my balls & immediately went to a
magazine stand off the boulevard & spent thirty dollars
came home & jerked off

the double past
we should order an ambulance for him, to take him to class
mundane
present
lies quest home scent, since parole
i am a student of acting, replied, stash tequila
sills
bleeding apples, stealth & stems, an answer
water death
snuck in & sat on the grass, up front
base at the back of a chair dust, the chair painted blue
mine own ask green yours what this & then an escape
bless blackness ignorance greed
bless youth's accent, giving, giving, where is mine
skywriting when summer draws soon simply the importance of

token wall underneath chariots fish women with goings bodies
bodies claim "there is no bad footage"
work ground the shelter of a front porch, suitcase, a street
named after a tree
skirted sometil
premise bleak & 5 red bricks & a blue sky in west hollywood
who told you
habits, so & so's got a jones, so & so got this much, a weekly
salary, schedule, news, others,
death, dressed in red shorts & a white t-shirt, water ed her
flowers

erupt cunt & explain ask god

6 13 1976

for men who enjoy fucking women
banal fence walls mystic she's rent, where, 2 miles north
a seldom used road
a sky one half of the earth i could see the edges
submission & moist
she asked me some personal questions
flurry & worry, how soon, a pillow for the raising
list deny besides the talk around suspicion, movies root
vagabond
fox
lion
a foreign rock an away an always a lost a love a desire a
memory
the man could have been a woman, he had entered her that far
"i have never felt so far alone"
liquor store
veteran
"i was so high i was lonely"
submission exists in memory, return, coil gusts, escape
determination & pays
benign bereft & somewhere added an i, i have done, i am where,
question guilt does change sometimes
halt
love
a voice watching mine yours mark hi john no it's mark hi carol
sheree tom here & later entered holding his english racer
each of us have our own room
a lot of us think it was the best summer of our life
the film was never released in california
this is virgin territory

6 13 1976

grit praise amoral where's, & what about, the morality
sublime student, hate, a conjunction that will never be

an adjective

star

turn

kick sage the sets through & slightly above where it never
can be seen

west corner seams a missing through & adjectives bleed when
we are about to come

into one another, wage is the discrepancy

payment for a name, another name, over & over, a closeness,
building, an image, tedious

density

into the other & above, sickness claims digestion & fields

hoes handles acres payments families sack lunches

nationalists in nebraska

labor

depot

sharing borrow a bargain, you can have it, exhausted reply

what's good for you is what's good for me

who lost both & all a closeness, without names, without

horror, guilt, fame, happyness, a thirst for energy

obviously six minutes after the known, i seek loss & danger

burst

claim

knowledge, suffer, want, bend & chop, hollow burns hosannahs

where's the morality, leans, in neutral since, in neutral

want, sameness rots

6 13 1976

gash blood illusion accuse somethings someones

appositive here call repose do not believe accuse

resplendent you are my angel & you are my loss

i will not & i never did

nothing to nobody

i guarantee

the first requisite of a country western singer is honesty

do you wash

in an absent door i know him i know her

laundries theories (all catholics shot, sperm since birth

a shell a ritual a marriage, mine & yours & opposition)

the first republic within faith, i must have
without the help of cocaine, 5 times, mentioned 5 times,
no cocaine on the set
iron & steel & roses, american roses, a big black buick
with a running board on either side, each, other
long other another clang clang fuck honesty, honesty &
speed, movement rose & i heard her say i love weeds
& she was looking at me when she said it
i had lost & she stood up for me simply by looking at me
straight in the eyes
with a running board & a spare & as i said earlier that
big black buick eats a lot of gas
 drain & tight
her cunt, winter, tweed, i ordered brown tweed as the material
for my one & only tailor made suit, made to order
rooks & fire & custom

6 13 1976

there is an evident amount of heartbeats in a sparrow
surmount furrows wheat searchlights run throw break
irrigate steal break throw cut spoil
truth secrecy all known we ride down blacktop roads
over viaducts past grain elevators past baseball diamonds
sunday afternoons chasing
rural schools red barns short cuts
& depend upon the weather & pray to god
& give feed
boundary barn porch outhouse catalogue wind dry 2
places flys feed
coverings white sheets dusty sheets
past gurley past dalton east of dalton off the reckon
a speed about to be given
fried chicken & once in a while roast beef
lemonade
 intimate rust caress a car wreck we removed a
man's body from the front seat of a car it felt like every
bone in his body was broken the body was heavy
the young driver in the other car who had crossed the tracks
before entering the ongoing traffic he had thought still

the brake release a part of his thigh just above the knee
we drove slowly home

a warning, will you give me a warning

perfect corrupts aroused rust (the habit becomes a need,
the bird becomes a vulture) selfish is it right to be self-
ish, it was not your death

bugle city park marriage monk soldier birth & later bureau
farm ministry & computers mask the older i get the more & more
concrete the more & more like a computer a river with a north
& a south shallow names sand bridges do you plan to follow the
harvest north to she would have been how old i was one day off
squeal cut crawl deny hold own burn rust wind winter wheat
the fields of my youth in every direction spoils

the anderson's, at george northup's funeral, mary anderson
held a stuffed frog, & later in the house

6 13 1976

i am here since one & amongst thus then thou we desire
all our arms all thighs the bottom of our feet our sweaters
sometimes cold hold skip fuck must allow trust greed gamble
intent figure up front avid july outlets
emblem hone

water

ax

i wisely hone wisely & just a death wed weld purposes a
mind with home

road fence field house well dog grain & rural slids pounds
sinks

avid fences a long long throw home on a line with a bounce
dust & 5 sides

3 vertical

2 further

1 on each side & 2 & 2 & 1 vast contain chalk spike again &
counting avoids chasing

within possibility winning

pride

6 13 1976

home cold patience be be want want will more & listen
my god attack beg academy burnt rinse sell bottle silt
boils nails cut dead
ports cables the back way satellites crude rot close jealous
death is like a handle & upwards
the ripe ripe handles the short & the long
desire if i had a chance i would kill
 out of soil a seed
hangman is there a volunteer
the office in the northern closed
 maybe an ulterior motive something
involves victims we are all victims something more heroic
twice i have seen heroic acting
 religion blade
poetry demands a job to sing
 this is my own my native way
 money & love
freeways
simple & pure as the day is long
lounging like a california surf bum
 loaded surfs deals skis
attacks
nothing
paranoid surf report up & down the coast nearness
 from someone who has been extremely gracious
 i have asked for more than was offered

6 13 1976

resides northern base tidal waves alert i was
reported to get my share of the beacon
gentle respect
islands contain youth & old rivers share arrayed
aluminum
silver as a sunset
because love
because isolation
because sexuality

because fuck
because a whore went down on a man
because a man went down on a whore
because a lady waited
because naked voice

• • words sense spirit
• • arrogant priests deer
 slay
 path
 blood

the isolation of american reeks blood within impotence
impotent wrath & bones sleek as the spots within jump
shields through foreign doors first
when a person opens the door
the hitter struts him in the face with a baseball bat
asks for the money owed next

6 13 1976

promise bless solace (death & speed) addicts scent
sense memory affective memory memory recall sensory
place task bless hands accent near grain elect &
accuse trains oil newclear radium every revolution
must be stored at least eighteen inches from the wall
the cab driver took the warehouseman the long way home
freeways faster
everythings faster went & found skips a place an american
perimeter
labor men railroads completion connects ocean to ocean
sails implements wagons baggage a clock in the waiting
marriage law just keep be on schedule seams two hours
closer to dawn
excuse & men find, lean, fault, a city bus across town
keys compose rhetoric love & justice wed
beneath & beyond closer nearness a fault coming home from
a holiday
an industry town

commerce

lied & unable to follow natural gas this cab runs on natural
the most direct route

6 13 1976

elegant motionlessness, sin, dooms ships wept danger
& lovely sin, puritan ethic, owns, family, guilt, busi-
ness, wage against
our own, we must settle against
lean toward, push away for, colonies split against the
meaning of royal blood, business & glory
scout & hawk angel
a feather tied, neck, subtle & sharp, a sin not to need
bone going into bone
splendid & elegant as a promise, i promise you limits
working man, wooden tub, a woman pours water over his body
sin & danger & love & death, speed & sin, twins
purity commends desire

sight believe seed, acorn-shaped
bluejay shaped, a scent of, in
falling, sweep, wind, a scent
within wetness, pitch, leaves

star bless, & bliss last, again & again trees, space & voice
a sound throughout abrupt, when among men, a regal castle
handsome & perfect, lovely, lady, an immigrant, erupt, soil,
stallions of barbed wire, twice at her feet, gold in the
mist & corn, ripe, husk, above our heads, we walked hidden

6 13 1976

danger escapes reason, it's plus & speed, guilt furthers
pleasure
light, summer, day, & stays compassion
polite passion
white & lovely passion & hear, listen, pull, sheets clean
& cool delightfully, loaded, wasted, reputation always
danger pride, purchased, credit, sin, sight, soil, blocks,
sod

house
cool in the face, abundant hills, gates, flags, cinder,
chimney, coal bin, danger centre, strike centre, chop, a
sharpness
famous passion, passion famous as danger
 guilt,
 the amount is more
hammered, nailed, shot out, the gods have been reason enough.
sex, more fleeting than the emergence of africa as another
god

6 13 1976

proposition: soil & rain & man, pain, grain, wealth,
gain shoulders close to soil, its width, denial
breath, slide, jump, stalls, the handle of the barn door
rope
trees, wet leaves, a young man, a young woman, a democracy
3 times
savings bonds
in a humid state, can you bale hay, lift, & hoist, the
right leg pushes below the weight.

resolution: accurate, stone, whiff, demands priority, be-
hooves order, an order place, a desire order, a private
sector of the society lives with balance & politeness
there is a limit, find sources, & make them stone, an alle-
giance, this illusion, is not my image
one is courteous, one regal, one gambles, one spys, one
speeds, diarists, many poets.

wealth & memory, wet & moist, in the first fastness, in
private horror, a dependence, small & tight as
wet leaves

6 13 1976

holi place, rose & gun lips bleed, beg, copped
a plea
slit shy ness a crossing, a cross on a triangle
gender, image, stone, weight

sand, mark, river, wheel,
the metaphysical approach to write about an angel ends.
dense root soil sod igloos huts demand firing the breaking
of windows miles away
on the inside of within is a must
gods, boss, vision, love & money, for value, within reach
impurity, in the self, i am the self, i made a mistake
when i asked for more
from one who has given, given graciously, & engraved.

6 13 1976

there is a dignity about death that is like a clock
further than thou
further than near teeth match
death moved only through within against & in thus thou
nails
cut
airways & determination freeways speedometers 2 blue lights
about to enter the onramp
the cold of a sunset

6 13 1976

necessity bequeath honor death fuck given heart &
highways clasp
ruins sunflowers
fragile bay
spike rakes
spill roots
land & eagle, gulf, a claim, when rest
i believe in the teeth isolation honor &
trust
wanted, needs, obey, shuttle duty & myth & golden deaths

6 13 1976

George Butterick

from Repartee with the Mummy

*

In a voice like a tea kettle just beginning
to steam, she whistled: Hug my bones, divide
me from myself, grant me conclusion.

It is the old story of the gambling lord and the
adornment. In modern terms, she is suffering
from a poor image of herself. Her image
is that of a pot, breathing.

*

Mama, please! It was like trying to dance with
a fire hydrant! She peeled off sleep and travel weariness
like a slip of bark, her body a servant to the strength
of her intentions. Franco blamed Catalan, saying
Bite, don't bark, your tongue. A ruthless muzzle.
Do *you* know the etymology of embezzlement?
No, but I certainly know the consistency of
entitlement. What kind of men are these?
Occupation-wise. Little else is wise, and comes right
out of the bin at \$3.35. Elses. You wear them
on your shoulders. What else lives in a bin?
Are we still on that? Hell, no—or else. I'll give
you perfection until you're so filled with beauty
you'll need a breast pump. Express it yourself.
Stretch marks glistening like snail tracks. Too rough
for you, babe? Like getting in the back seat with
a bottle washer. A golden arch for the vomitorium.
I'll give you description, your academic heart
will do a nosebleed in the snow. It had been so long,
her pubic hairs clung together like velcro fasteners.
The street looked like musty loungewear. At least
there were enough folds in it, and patches that
could have been stains. Please,

punch my punch. Please,
rip the air. Please, work your will
without action. Please, choose the dark,
the silent, the subtle over the bold,
the active, the forceful. Only in this way,
is the natural order of events
disturbed as little as possible.

Paul Vangelisti

Two Poems

The Woman with the Green Face

what else when the blind wood beat inside out like the heart of
an engine all the way to the top of this stupid hill

as if nothing but the victim were pure and that out of self-pity
the pine across the street lopped off two-thirds of the way
up so squat and lustrous

desert wind terraces inviting the swell of place cooing doves
the beaks of sprinklers somewhere above an organ stuck in old
Vienna dogs' bark the sighing tires diminish every appetite

trees liquid all else passing eucalyptus and willow mostly the
hush of a skirt between pages a hillside of shimmering blue
whisperless windows in spite of us

*

a cat dissects the putrid moonlight
I remember it's morning in Cairo
students dance around the statue of some Presbyterian worthy
I exhale the moon and the bitterest meat of a smile
I fear that they also dance for me

even to claim the drift of these lines
even if nothing but the dread of you like a jealous dream
ridden in rehearsal to wake where only pause and ocean
and not a jot of water to breathe

*

I am not sitting at the edge of the bed
I am not holding the hand of the woman with the green face
the fog is incidental and warm the morning old
little to add but the creamy underside of your arm
maybe murmur something like beautiful and pretend to talk of
thirsty hills and palms through the fog

am I longing for green cheeks forehead flowering even when you
say What?
and those syllables I repeat and lie most shamefully about the
fog

*

does the breeze refresh as memory to bone and tire and motor
chugging down the hill
or as before the fall of Thebes animal to the air among wood and
leaves
thorn of timeless clock that returns numberless faces to the rock
and drives home dumb salvation with every chirrup with every
scurry in the blind grass

*

a pause inhales the pen
no line no margin of flesh between her and you and the dance
no pure dance or pure self or pure heart
I've misplaced the words to what sounded like eternity
I stare at rags of cloud in the waning light as they turn blue
like the sheet of paper turns blue

*

Oblige me you said though I couldn't see clear to sleep all that
dreamy year through
days of heat up to the teeth swelling and shrinking cracks in the
plaster thorns in the soap ants on the sheets the cacti in
full bloom
oblige what but a heartbeat a knife and fork in and out of
windshields big deals back rubs hot tub glass fences that make
glass neighbors
oblige and you kick my smile in in fact even prove it's not the
silent accommodation not the singular room in the singular eye
nor the ripe world that keeps the word from

*

sleep is tongue to the shore where rock and bone and reason like
dreams are heaped
thus the starving faces in the wood

the round of centuries of scratch and claw and hump till kingdom
come
without shadows without emphasis
without drowsiness or dictionary to cheat the quiet of this heap
of dying

*

she named me though I can't remember what she said
she dreamt me and it's been weeks since I slept
she tasted me until I am bitter as my smile
she blistered and slaked me slaked and blistered me till my
whispers peeled like skin
she has left me an eyelash on my own horizon
I stare out the train window north across the border away from you
a few road signs the names vacant a hurtling round of green upon
green

for Giuliano

For a moment I was dozing. The ink I write with is yours. At table on a hilltop in a room of birdsong and insect whirr and broken clocks, a man and woman sat facing. They didn't speak of painting or poetry or even themselves, in fact it was impossible to tell what they were speaking of. The drowsy current suspending their talk seemed limitless, somehow final. My comments on your drawings will wait. Sleep has hold and is about to drop me like a magazine to the table. In the moment it takes to turn a page, I may still be within the flowing room, perhaps even allowed to overhear.

Notes on Contributors Issue Number Two

RAE ARMANTROUT has published two books of poems: *Extremities* (The Figures, 1978), and *The Invention of Hunger* (Tuumba, 1979). A new book, *Precedence*, is forthcoming from Burning Deck. Her work has appeared recently in *Conjunctions*, *Feminist Studies*, *Vanishing Cab*, and *Writing/Talks* (ed. Bob Perelman, Southern Illinois University Press, 1985) . . . BERNARD BADOR lives in Los Angeles and has had work recently in *Sulfur* and *Conjunctions* . . . CHARLES BERNSTEIN is the author of several books, among them *Poetic Justice* and *The Occurrence of Tune. Content's Dream: Essays 1975-1984* is due this fall from Sun & Moon Press, Los Angeles. Editor, with Bruce Andrews, of *The L = A = N = G = U = A = G = E Book* (1984: Carbondale, IL, Southern Illinois University Press), he is currently a contributing editor to *Sulfur*.

"Surface Reflectance" was originally published by the Institute for Book Arts of the University of Alabama in a deluxe, limited edition of works by four poets . . . GERALD BURNS, who recently moved from Dallas to Connecticut, received one of the hundred NEA grants awarded in 1985 and went to Europe, returning with a travel journal, *Paintings Statues Books*, and forty drawings, including one of Gaudier-Brzeska's "Hieratic Head" of Ezra Pound which was reproduced as a recent *Paideuma* cover. His *The Myth of Accidence, Book IV* — "24 long-line poems, on Truth" — will appear in *Temblor* #3 . . . GEORGE BUTTERICK edited the University of California Press editions of Charles Olson's *The Maximus Poems* and *Collected Poems* . . . MICHAEL DAVIDSON teaches literature at the University of California, San Diego. A new book, *The Landing of Rochambeau*, is due this fall from Burning Deck Press . . . MICHEL DEGUY lives in Paris and edits *Po&Cie*. His selected poems, *Given Giving*, translated by Clayton Eshleman, was published in 1984 by the University of California Press . . . JOSEPH DONAHUE teaches American literature at Stevens Institute of Technology. His poems have appeared in *The World*, *New Directions in Poetry and Prose*, and *Hambone* . . . *Sulfur* editor CLAYTON ESHLEMAN's selected poems, *The Name Encanyoned River*, will be published this fall by Black Sparrow Press in Santa Barbara . . . PHILLIP FOSS teaches at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and edits *Tyunyonyi*. Recent work appears in *Hambone* . . . SUSAN HOWE has published six books of poems, most recently *Pythagorean Silence* and *Defenestration of Prague*. Her study, *My Emily Dickinson*, is forthcoming from Atlantic Books . . . KARIN LESSING lives in France and has two books, *The Spaces of Sleep in Midsummer* (Pentagram, 1982) and *The Fountain* (Montemora, 1982). Two sections of "A Winter's Dream Journal" first appeared in *Hambone* . . . HARRY E. NORTHUP is the author of *Enough the Great Running Chapel* (Momentum Press, Santa Monica, 1982). He has acted in 25 films, starring in "Over the Edge" and "Fighting Mad," with a recent television appearance in Martin Scorsese's "Amazing Stories" episode . . . MICHAEL PALMER's most recent books include (as editor) *Code of Signals: Recent Writings in Poetics* (North Atlantic Books, 1983) and *First Figure* (North Point Press, 1984). A *Sulfur* contributing editor, and recipient of a 1985 NEA Writer's Grant, he is currently translating a group of articles and talks on paintings by various French Surrealists and editing a selected translations of the poetry of Robert Desnos for Ecco Press . . . BOB PERELMAN's most recent books are *To The*

Reader, a.k.a., and (forthcoming from Burning Deck) *The First World*. Editor of *Hills* magazine, he also edited *Writing/Talks* (Southern Illinois University Press) . . .

DENNIS PHILLIPS is Director of Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center in Venice, California. This year, Kajun Press in Berkeley published his first collection, *The Hero Is Nothing* . . . JED RASULA is a *Sulfur* contributing editor and his essays and poems have been widely published, notably in *Sulfur* and *Sagetrieb*. With Don Byrd, he co-edits the literary magazine *Wch Way* . . . STEPHEN RODEFER's last book, *Four Lectures*, was co-winner of the 1983 Annual Book Award given by the American Poetry Center. He has published many books of poetry and translation and presently teaches at U.C.S.D.

Other sections of "Passing Duration" appear in *Grosseteste*, *Sulfur*, *Boundary II*, and *Conjunctions* . . . ANDREW SCHELLING has translated two collections of Sanskrit lyric poetry, the most recent being *The Whisk of Hair* (Lucy's Hip, 1985). With Benjamin Friedlander, he co-edits the critical magazine *Jimmy & Lucy's House of "K"*, which first published his Duncan essay . . . ERIC SELAND currently lives in Tokyo. His own poems, and translations of contemporary Japanese poetry, have appeared in *Moving Letters* (Paris) and *Prism International* (Vancouver, B.C.) . . . Six books of JOHN TAGGART's poems have been published. The most recent of these are *Peace On Earth* (Turtle Island, 1981) and *Dehiscence* (Membrane Press, 1983). Next year Sun & Moon Press will publish a new book, entitled *Loop*. His essays can be found in *Code of Signals*, the Duncan and Oppen issues of *Ironwood*, and the Olson issue of *Sagetrieb* . . . PAUL VANGELISTI's most recent book of poetry is *Rime* (Red Hill Press), a sonnet sequence with drawings by Los Angeles painter Don Suggs. Translator of numerous volumes (most recently, *Italian Poetry, 1960-1980: from the Neo to the Post-Avantgarde*), he has also edited several anthologies and the literary tabloid *Invisible City* . . . MINORU YOSHIOKA, b. 1919, is one of Japan's major postwar poets. Author of 13 collections, *Kusudama* (Shoshi Yamada, 1983) is the most recent to further his lifelong project of dislocating language from conventional restraints. His large body of work provides a bridge between the first experiments with Dadaism and Surrealism in Japan and post-modern Japanese poetry.

Concept

to completion.

If you need Creative Services,
but don't need a full service
agency, call ARTHAUS Studio.

We can take your project from
concept to completion—

Providing Art Direction, Copy,
Photography, Illustration,
Mechanicals and Printing.

arthaus

Graphic Design Studio

(818) 797-1881

The back cover is a plain, unprinted panel of dark maroon card carrying no lettering or image.

TEMBLOR: contemporary poets
Issue Number 1 · Winter 1985

Edited by Leland Hickman
Arthaus Studio: Design
Typeset at Wood & Jones Type Works, Pasadena, California
Copyright © 1985 Temblor

4624 Cahuenga Blvd. #307
North Hollywood, California 91602