TEMBLOR

CONTEMPORARY POETS

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Rochelle Owens: *The First Person*
Mei-mei Berssenbrugge: *Ghost Essay*
Leslie Scalapino: *fin de siècle, III*
Nathaniel Tarn: *Amicus Curiae*
Danielle Collobert: *It Then, Part I*
Edmond Jabès: *The Book of Resemblances*
Stanley Lombardo: *Hellenistic Pattern Poetry*

poetry, prose, translations:

Adriano Spatola · Ted Pearson · Aaron Shurin · Barbara Guest · Dennis Phillips · Phillip Foss · David C.D. Gansz · Pat Smith · Joseph Lease · Clark Coolidge · John Taggart · Fred Wah · John Clarke · Joseph Simas · Kevin Killian · Gerald Burns · Bruce Campbell · Pasquale Verdicchio · Anthony Robbins · Clayton Eshleman · Tom Clark · Joanne Kyger · Larry Kearney · Sally Doyle · Hank Lazer · Douglas Messerli · Paul Vangelisti · Antonio Porta · Rachel Blau DuPlessis · David Rattray · Richard Kostelanetz · Stephen Ratcliffe · David Levi Strauss · Beverly Dahlen · Rosmarie Waldrop · Bob Perelman · Donald Revell · Duncan McNaughton

EDITED BY LELAND HICKMAN

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North Hollywood, California
A reading edition

TEMBLOR

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About this Edition

Temblor ran to ten issues between 1985 and 1989, edited by Leland Hickman in North Hollywood. This is the tenth and final issue, published in 1989: forty-seven contents entries over 233 numbered pages, followed by the magazine's cumulative index to issues 1–10.

This edition is set from the scan of a single copy. The magazine is a small portrait book, roughly 6¼ 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.

Lineated and spatial writing is retained as a page field; prose is reflowed. This distinction follows the printed right margin and paragraph structure, not merely the shortness of an OCR line. Sequential two-column criticism has been returned to reading order.

The text was recognized afresh from the page images and its structure reconstructed from page coordinates. Running heads and printed folios are omitted from the body; titles, numbered sections, stanza spaces, paragraph divisions, and unusual horizontal placement are retained.

Printed eccentric spellings are retained where they are part of the writing; recognition noise is corrected against the scans. No editorial matter appears once the text begins. Set in TeX Gyre Pagella, with display type in Termes after the magazine's own masthead; the purple accent follows the issue's cover.

Adriano Spatola

Little Exhortation

translation: Paul Vangelisti

Poetry is not disfiguring the face
of circumstances and delicacy
in occupations so vain and urgent
for the letter addressed to the conscience
or more exactly to the first edition
of a dictionary for all instances
of the language of the system of artificial shock
observer and interpreter of the statistics
of the functions of words which are the same
for the isolated sensation in the instinct
in the implicit mass of mental being
of a man crazy with music and writing
who in his object lives his inner life
extraneous far from the artesian well
of current opinion at the level of humans
of a world carnivalesque and mythical
with its brilliant procession of guests.

Rochelle Owens

The First Person from Discourse on Life & Death

Discourse On Life & Death is an ongoing series of poems that I began composing in 1988. It creates the dynamism of process and is a continual assembly and reassembly of the subject matter: a loose personal narrative around the theme of Mona Lisa and Da Vinci. Pattern and contrast is an important aesthetic concept. Pattern finds expression in the repetition and integration of images into a kaleidoscopic form that deals with all elements of culture—from primitive society to modern technology as well as the personal and universally experienced reflections on history, mythology, and art, The various voices of narrator and characters create psychological polarities of experience. My work is feminist in that my writing has much to do with my personal identity as a woman in the patriarchal culture. The constant shifting of gender as well as singular personal pronoun referents in this long series poem, I think represents an advance in the knowledge of women being part of culture rather than alien to it, a reimagined and redefined awareness of female/male, cultural concepts, transformation and metamorphosis.

Mona's text began as if an unusual
state of excitement overtook me

I focused my body angling superimposing
I saw thin layers treachery in medicine
widening control it is as if

the passage of throat to jaw nor Flora
smirking as if you could be spiritual
in the atelier

slowly you startle while slowly
you depict the icy dots Flora sings
about two versions

so that his cute heinie garbed
in lederhosen so sturdy he is resembles
the curve of a valentine heart

keeping in condition an artist's trick
you say in a lyrical tone & I don't
know you I long to identify I have a
drawing valid mustachioed Mona

to write leaving in its wake reverberations

Lenny who loved to theorize

smeared and powdered with marble dust
luster fashioned with honesty spotlessly
hardly anything is known guided by his
trembling impulse

the pale gray image ruled a current
slow absorption riveted depth exerting
steadiness unchained moved the edge

texturing the configurations trimmed
velvet a lira here a lira there very
early in the morning and did not leave

spaces between two bony areas
sect between benign unexamined tasks
I whispered ill of the dead

inserting fatal caricatures of
Lenny said Sigmund whetting our
palates said Flora millions

of manipulations a pathological
review of a great man searching
the seams of a discarded wallet

changing a light bulb the merchant's
wife thought of Sigmund's words
"the inhibitions of Lenny's

sex life and his artistic activity."

backward focus the point where Mona
Flora Lenny the child jostle for
the attention jealousy & quarreling

of what to do & what not to do

the tutor of Lenny a piece of senseless
impertinence to make a study of things
in him that could just as easily
be found

in the first person one came across

Mona triumphantly smiled on reading
this breathing you have heard simply
the sound of my insatiable design

her first choice the woman covered
with a white throw

Why in the end of the century this
context the fabled diversion

I described expanded my second choice
you reasoned tightening a light
she sealed the hiding place that
they maneuvered that the cycle
we isolated the rhythm to the left of

us grouping the breaking verses

redesigned touching things always
numbering the codifications as a
clever craftswoman smirked Sigmund
mocked Flora laughed in

the center of voluptuousness

I paid a heavy debt here I found
the field of medicine down said
Leonardo pursing his lips artfully —

the flows of his laying on of hand
cleansing the degenerated tissue away
examining the grim effects

the intense secrecy transforming
the stroke symbol cure
the sun would not have blazed nor

the trees greened the left corner
burnt her slow end of the century
lonely artist rocking
in a state of surprise

freeing her from outsight blood nerves nor is this way of knowledge
spaces between two bony areas
through a strange wood
in this monograph of Lenny I write decomposition breathing sighed Mona
it would be futile to blind ourselves arched her wrists vigorously angling

with erect mistrust your notebooks
a young paysanne with smiling little
place them in sanctuaries stretch your
eyes reflecting in the pathological
tongue curl the scrolls of thick veins
circling mirror with smiling little
compositional thought
eyes diabolical artistic activity
that led to a strange wood
explained her tightened eyelids

stretched out arms a woman writhed — «
Leonardo frizzed his beard the edges a
under the white throw exhaling molecular
worldwide complex aim to speak ill of
breathing her fear bleeding
the living

dressed as a traveler confronts the
it would be useful screaming standing
Sphinx of Sigmund divided into hundreds
on a ladder the dizziness after this
of sections the voice angling insatiable
funny moment of smirking

vibrantly she unveils quickly she places
Lenny said a piece of senseless
pushed forward breathing her fear bleeding
impertinence to make a study of things
dressed as a paysanne the sinister
in him

bones and carcasses lowered toward the
that could just as easily be found in
viewer
the first person that one came across

he describes the design sectioned into
Flora justifies her own version of
depth and light cells skinlike tracing

the fable as having for its aim an
the intent of Mona jumping forwards
attempt to explain something about
oil & bread
talking outside about a forgery elegantly
painted that survived
it seemed to her essential to say
something
the shock waves

floating in the atmosphere alone

a neutral din your portrait I the artifice of the canvas conspic
tensed and didn't interact polychrome uously flung risk & compulsion

wild bald eagles permitted to share chattered Mona of her early works
ragged & torn edges of the lake this afternoon Flora was going to
pose instead I turn the objects dead
Flora & Mona think strategically wise around accuse lingering fueled
you experimented beachcombing after my artistic goal
a storm searching
how much the smile floats upon light
the woman covered with a white throw pushing
nor is this way of knowledge unnatural
how the image of the wild bald eagles her strained thorax subtle color
superimposed on Lenny's white-blue simple keloid energy angling

forehead rasping air nasal duplicated slowly the molecular smile tenses
I began to tear paper into strips herself with herself brilliant
a background of fibers _ textile imagery
she experimented with embedding bits she interspersed in her scientific
white mosaic stones the vigorous curve heart-loneliness

of Lenny's dome wild bald eagles swarming a certain Caterina sniffed an art
over the dumped rubble you said it historian probably a peasant girl
had to be a forgery or a fake see her tightened eyelids
that Lenny wore a peasant dress posing I turn relax my muscles
as Mona but I say it is genuinely sodomize the account

Mona who posed artfully made up Flora widening the gap winked Lenny
singing outside the atelier this afternoon blossoms of the sinuous motion hairs
Flora was going to pose on the wrists

I should not jump the gun outside the atelier
switching the vulture for the eagle
fatal caricatures learned step by step but then the boy's abdomen hot
I should not jump the gun

said I'm just beginning _ believes growth on Lenny's open desert
the order permitted rival theories a melancholy
scene bones & carcasses undisturbed
stone splinters & dust past grows
I went again to the atelier
if this is true she reasons if this
is true unknown to me searching myself blooms gathers significance searches
the seams reverberates my manic dream
reading this breathing changing a light
of Mona superimposed
bulb magical significance

then seeks how the shroud was made
with a layer
prolonged searching the atelier
tightening 'neath my shimmery hayre
& Mona seeing Munich's peasant flair
and millions of manipulations
flushed the twofold riddle from her mind
the base a granite stare Lenny's
stela, copper tools, placed lovingly
dressed the boy defiantly wore greasy
sealed the pit with a layer dirt
lederhosen I have a drawing valid of her
gypsum and stone rounded off another
filled with sausage & beer
grouping expanded and redesigned
I knew at first sight
like a contradictory current tricky
Lenny brags
sleight of hand
I was trying to decide what to do
next holding her head to the side moving
the configurations smirking while some
she brags about her different reading artists sleep & dream of models
of what to do & what not to do translated into life

a mental wagging signal _flickerings your face looks back gently trembling
the merchant's wife hairs floats blossoms subtle color
a continuation dream of a young paysanne
is the first person one came across her glance detached from space
my first choice simply the sound
of a fable expressing my own excavation & she let

reworked felt wads of string myself you pose today like the young wife
that fit in exhaling of the Florentine merchant the deepening

the dust on the covered hiding place folds of her dress exquisite

outside the infectious waste

you whispered ill of the dead nor is this way of knowledge
by origin of source Lenny stole a unnatural for the flux insatiable
discarded wallet design without a flaw contradicts
the heaps of heavy stone felt the
that you could focus the scene
of the vulture faithfully serving tears of the boy bent forward _ stretched
fatal caricatures of Sigmund's out both arms the sinister Lenny
folds & wrinkles scrolls of veins
impertinence a volatile energetic
aggression toward the first person And I thinking of that with bowed head
you came across strayed from the main road that led
through a strange wood
throw those procedures open you said
the smile of Gioconda floats upon degenerates the child writhed and arched
his wrists backwards
her features you hook your neck
pursing your lips saturate your dry the scrotum of the artist angling
eyelids with oil and very lightly
his slow molecular orgasm
brush in this preherstory widening
your fibrous memory _ this breathing lazily you touch slowly you maneuver
between random tasks sweeping the dust accuse sodomize because it is not
the author's intent to write rectilinear
enjoying company music showing off you have heard simply the songs
touching your flushed Bacchus with soft of dismemberment rasping sound of
Lenny
crossed thighs the familiar fascinating
breathing
heads of women who laugh
Mona's eyes smile back cunningly
juxtaposed on your portrait fibrous gnarled experimenting assessing the voice
circles risk & compulsion your insatiable
facial nerves your mouth watching my film scenario draping a white
cloth the bleeding of the tot's anus
ingratiating and subversive a pigeon stuffed into a niche
observed Mona _animali sighed Lenny

the different substances reinforcing
holding his head to the side
your fixed image as in a photographic

negative
fueled accidental
and wearing my peasant dress gathered
your fixed image forged worked feared
puckered linen

puzzling sudden intense blood stains
I focused and photographed coldly
not the product from the power of
artful I who loved beauty that I always
the pounding hammer _ now Flora's face
trembled at the sight
is powdered with marble dust jovial &

happy not to sit for Lenny
see how he has made a breast of
his shoulders because he wished to see
just sit coldly she told Mona _he very
too far behind him _ he looks behind
lightly gently brushes in the beautiful
and makes his way backwards
colors

Mona scrutinizes slowly measures numbers
and the atelier in the darkness
and the sun would not have blazed nor
See Lenny, who changed semblance when
the trees become green nor Mona smirking
from male he became female transforming

all his members.
but I said a work is an accidental point

of leaving behind your first choice
and efforts of the hammer pounding my
nor is this way of the grouping
arrangements isolated silently
of energy & time of what to do
you blamed my secrecy my hunger willful
& what not to do

I must make verses

I went again to the atelier Flora brags
hooked my neck because I wished to see
into the fibers of the shroud the raw
backwards and gathered my peasant dress
data deviated redesigned left Lenny

pregnant and forlorn
Lenny scrutinized slowly mouthed
& Sigmund seeing Munich's bestial

vapors
the image is an ongoing thirst
sorcerers we heard the neutral din

prolonged my numbering

[have set before you now feel in the atelier

exactly 4 o'clock my body oriented
yourself

I'm a hungry bum searching the seams
you were no more aware of Lenny's of a discarded wallet
inner cunning out of control stone
quietly muttering
splinters and dust now his
face is smeared and powdered
sealing the fate of Lenny
tightening a light bulb scrutinized
gently he brushes in the beautiful
the expanded grouping 4 corners maneuvers
colors showing not by color
riddle of random devastation
but by light
views burning mistrusts the details
that sinister angling flickering
the edge geometrical and wearing my peasant dress saw
the dead woman lying in the street
works to stamp her impulse smiled
holding her head to the side
Flora in a poetic mood see the holy
coldly I preserve her notebooks
smile revolving roused up traces
of a useless numbering
having all the facts of the young wife
of the Florentine merchant
ligament gray unravelling into dozens
of maneuvers I gently and very lightly
I saw Lenny in the light
my love gallops sang Flora benignly
I had torn a fragment & analyzed
soft flap of the leather sandals
see me going from the center to the end
& bent forward _ stretched out both arms
of the century
writhed and arched my wrists backwards

You noted listened your slanting mouth
his glance detached from space
fabricated authorship
nor Flora early in the morning
sketching the frontal view

diligently manipulating

and if our fantasies are low for such
my work into Mona's work then seeks
a loftiness
how the shroud was made
in no dark sayings
felt wads of string my patch of scalp

you pose today like the young wife seven fine sutures
of the Florentine merchant

projected slides showed how in less reflecting in the window glass when
than acentury the face of a stone Sigmund focused backwards so shall you
hear how my buried flesh ought
angel squeezing his eyes shut
was disfigured by vibration the ceiling to have moved you
in the atelier and Mona's titillating I should not jump the gun you startle
discovery converging opening her hand yourself watching Sigmund's eyes artful
revealing the image swarming with & coy I suddenly interrupt myself

things twice dead darted wonder at me no more will I say and I know that I
speak darkly making up the stories about
And Mona continuing Lenny's discourse Flora falsely contributing mutterings
mouthed the image is an ongoing thirst moaning about two versions corrupting
had she not been intent on another the pristine expanse transfixed
strange thing
an arc of sticks begins to crumble
for through the middle of a photographic Flora liked to bring the brat to torment
negative your face her tormentor

which once I wept for dead
strange sweet odor as he solidly squats
and tortures his cute packed lederhosen
while the boy chewed up hazel-nuts
heating up Lenny so that cellular locations
spitting them out in her hand
press against

& Mona happy to sit for Lenny while he
the scrotum of the artist angling
very lightly brushes against her
Lenny cried that he loved beauty that
hooked his neck because he wished to see
I always trembled at the sight & Flora
backwards
happy to sit for Lenny & Lenny happy
while she very lightly holds her head
the pace of the work broken edges dozens
to the side squeezing her eyes shut
of white mosaic stones V shaped in black
stone the ceiling in the atelier
her slow molecular orgasm
and the atelier in the darkness
sanctified scrutinized Mona touching
her face is powdered with marble dust

so that she looks like a baker

diverted and collide sent through I can no longer do without
a strange wood blocks of the universe Lenny says I am left with less than
when the universe was 0.00000000000001
seconds old comfort before my work
he gently and very lightly brushes
nor is this way of how the portrait in the beautiful colors
fabricating the smile of Gioconda And he is left with less than one drop
using your features I hook my neck of her blood
watching any of the thousand and one
particles the degree of suspicion between himself
and his contemporaries
on the formation of Mona's inner life
roused up like a wild beast I who know her from her numbed arms
in the space of the atelier
not a single line of Lenny's sketches see how she beats her breast there
betrays my fibrous memory _ this breathing so shall you hear how my buried flesh
between random tasks I came across ought to have moved you

besides the picture is a portrait & bent backwards you pose today
defining itself on the fabric then seeks how the accidental point
the last of the onion after all else alone the folds of the dress spatial
see the tensed arched foot
is peeled pulled along the portrait I should not jump the gun
consuming your facial nerves forward
stretched out my numbed arms in the space you had this curious conception of
of Mona's atelier a beaming, jovial and happy Lenny

mistrusts his notebooks riddle of image of a whipped and crucified
the white throw 14 feet 3 inches woman smashing converging numbering
long 3 feet 7 inches wide _ bears faint the codifications trusts her black art
hidden forms _ bears the origin of source guiltless Flora ought to have posed
but Mona is my friend
slowly snow falling see Mona going
that sinister fixed smile see how she has made the fibers

on elongated sinuous lips

structuring patiently head down | then backwards she looks

in the space of the atelier searching

I clamp the fragments through for her shoes

sophisticated orders
that is Leonardo's portrait corrupting
and a little varnish and oil
serving fate by the flourish of the leaves
constant exhaling I say my name
evaluated Mona but the cycle of painting
Da Vinci swells the brushwork hears
disintegrating
the burning spelt out a shift toward

thicker traces of edges screws
stare coldly Lenny said in a poetic mood
destabilizes the engima

look like a Spanish princess
that sinister fixed smile insect
and wearing my peasant dress chanted
parts segmented stretched out my numbed
Flora a woman on the loose
arms

strange kinds of repetitive sinuous
in the space of the atelier writhed
depths into dozens of broken edges
and arched backwards you beat your

breast there
the body of my sounds with molecular

enlarging
then seeks how the shroud was made

echoing his mistrust because she wished
rose like a column of blood
to see backwards consuming the portrait
tensed the heart wall one upon one gaps
spitting it out in his hand
in the pattern filled with white noise

gaps in the history of Mona's life

the pace of the work diverted

Flora said Mona's just sitting here
disappeared

Flora was going to pose but Mona is
see Mona going
her friend

that sinister fixed smile consuming
in the presence of a smirking cracked
your inner collapse
statue you sit eating white beans

watching the boy snake-dance towards
sectioned into depth and light cells
the hiding place
the intent of Lenny jumping forwards

pulled along the portrait

breathe erode capricious playing rotating his tense abdomen

the boy opened his mouth artfully infected with play crawling

under the coarse folds of Leonardo's

Lenny is covered with small marble smock

splinters so that it seemed that it
with that persistence Mona's system
snowed on his back Flora said poetically

watching the boy
her eyes look around

you break into joy singing watching
when she could examine a big part
I'm a hungry bum searching the seams
of the whole you fear for your death
of a discarded wallet
memory flaking bones loosened screaming
my body superimposing itself dozens
tightening'neath my shimmery hayre
into depths the passage from
exhaling repeating prayers in Latin

the hiding place
Leonardo's slow molecular orgasm
she put the lukewarm salt water into

the cup of her hand slowly you mesmerize
a lira here a lira there
underpay the apprentices & hotly stare
he was seized with a feeling of pathos
whence does that arise
his heart-shaped heinie swaddled

in guiltless lederhosen
the breath brush pivoting on the master's

scrotum
while numbering the sounds of my body

in the space of the atelier
inserting fatal caricatures of Lenny

Flora was looking for her shoes
you said

a lira here a lira there the intense diagnostic revenge

of the merchant's wife smirked Sigmund

that the hefty brat had hidden to make a study of things in him

found a box of eyepaint with three
stolen golden chains that could just as easily be found

gratification of the active twisting in the first person one came across

brat

He triumphantly smiled on reading

which once I wept for dead a pathological review of a great man

while the boy chewed up hazel-nuts

a lira here a lira there in order to draw she remained for
hours worked for years diverting
loosened the voluptuous center traced
the number of sketches
the wife of the Florentine, de Gioconda
I worked for years on the portrait and did not leave the brush out
spasmodically of her hand till twilight
until twilight never thinking of with the brush to add a few strokes
eating or drinking without putting her hand on it

never thinking of here nor there
and did not put the brush out of my
hand she always trembled when she began
to paint
I say just do it coldly the final flight of the blood
smirked Flora
peasant dress & slanting smile while sounding the numbers of my body
bitter earwax in the cleft slowly a lira here a lira there
the liquid filters through
an embodiment fueled accidental
on the face of it done coldly the dots
a lira here a lira there
icy the piles of debris higher
than the hiding place an arc of sticks
giggled Leonardo animali sighed Flora
if I thought that two fires

a lira here a lira there
Mona chanted walled in the pattern
& turning the multiple drawings of Mona
filtering slowly to fault
set on fire the cellular details
segmented enlarging two versions
into compulsive dots
one upon one gradual dense
depths cracked segmented a little I should not jump the gun
varnish and oil shifting your mistrust a lira here a lira there

& bent backwards Mona poses today winters are long in Vinci gently she
brushes in the despised smile fibrous
you are left with less than comfort circles the burnt left edge
before her work
and soon divines
so shall you hear how my buried flesh
ought to have moved you

To others you fault like me
my book breaking into parts

who was absorbed
it seemed that I always trembled
was as little due to her incompleted the flows codified burned artfully
clever craftswoman I cared more and more
works the stain due to reasoning
compulsively whetting the boy's spending intentional the passing on
palette
of a message from Lenny to Mona
that a photographic negative
a lira here a lira there
during the year of Leonardo's birth
bony between spaces you focused full of gaps and full of lights foresight
disorderly bundles
traced the fragment

that unfathomable smiles always with and that it bears the logic unmarked
water white mosaic stones to force the absence unfinished
the cycle increase the pathological
I worked for years bent forwards
degree

human animali power loosened beyond
I became a close friend
diversion pivoting on the master's
me as a clever craftswoman coldly scrotum
underpaying the apprentices
a lira here a lira there doubling the versions slowly before her
such wish-phantasies pursing fibrous revenge on reading glances backward
viewed
the smile of Gioconda screws in these
in the end of a pathological review
unfavorable times stretched out my
of a great man
numbed arms in the space of Lenny's
life
a lira here a lira there
gathering tightening breaking my book
when the universe was 0.00000000000001
into parts segmented depths cracked
seconds old mistrusts your notebooks
betrays my sinuous lips consuming using I say just do it coldly
my features you hook your neck watching
any of the random tasks twice some of the past implanted

Ted Pearson

Stanzas from a Work in Progress

VIII

something less than what's more
neither spirit enough nor time
the thing itself, a contrivance
sanctuarial ebb of the sea

IX

particular days in a strange land
in winter, the form imposed is long
particular words, the road another's
and no less particular song

the elemental, if inexact, remains
a sensuous multiple bared
for all intent proposes to adduce
what time, declined, might spare

XI

remote devices, mano a mano
convened to mediate passion's flower
la lacuna's implacable demon

XII

the inconsequent stare of occasion daunts
inconstant relics of consent
unprepossessing and damned forthwith
the hell of it, utterly spent

XIII

restless variants, otherwise narcotic
inhabit the sentiment of form
blatantly obscene, whose life in death
finds shelter from the storm

XIV

a child's garden of uncertainty spans
swollen acres of virgin ground
o fractal mood, resigned to conclude
a goof or graciousness of love, surely

XV

the cell divided remainders that
which ever else reposes in despair
to bestir a breeze of like unease
within the dissembling air

XVI

the brickbats of legend unduly mouth
their mothering frags in heat
such duty-free booty to have lived so long
on the sunny side of the street

XVII

syntax of place divulges the outward
skin compounded of all that is difficult
lost in coincident waves that break
and rootless make up ground

XVIII

a song of the sign, but not so simply
to define the anterior edge of time
where none precede the one in tangent
nor otherwise grace its line

XIX

a rumored anything but random dark
surrounds doucement the world's trial sum
suspended yet animate as if to mark
its fatal medium

of waves, lucid in crystal
the exactitude
warrants our dispossession

XXI

equivocal tones in passing
though the eye inclines toward age
uneasy custom, my wont or pyre
where found things waken under fire

Mei-mei Berssenbrugge

Ghost Essay

Confronted by others who do not share your intuition, there is no way to establish
which truths are due to what you are each saying, and which to experiences you
both have.
So, you could naturally assume there is no direct connection between what
happens in one mind
and what happens in another, when the other person feels pain. She is not a
person,
but a ghost in her body to you. You see a skeletal white horse in a lush field. Her
hurt
and "'seeing" formed a loop in your memory, like "having"' a voice, "touching"' a
windowpane.
The horse becomes a category for the person's invisible feeling in your
consciousness,
translated into a visible but disappearing fragility of it being alive and its
awareness of being alive.
A word like "'defenestration"' turns into a pane of clouds at sunset, voices of birds.
When her idea of her own liveliness is without any compelling source of being
loved,
than the material intensity of her body, she sees the skeleton of the horse as a
window.
Two members of your family next to an azalea bush in a polaroid, misfocused,
the bush and pastel clothes in light, the woods in shadow, make the proposition
that blossoms
the size of people's heads take on their fallibility, or that the people show an
intrinsic beauty,
that memory can be a self, or a structure crossing into your moment, like
expectation or a photograph.
So, she takes a child, and teaches it to understand human speech, expecting a
working relationship with it.
You take an eagle and teach it to understand human speech. The eagle inscribes
unexpectedness
into speech, that denies your expectation of sentience or morality from a relatively
alien species.
The horse and the meadowgrass together possess the dignity of the vigor of living
cells.

'The idea of the putrefaction of the horse is dignified, but seems emotionally unreflexive, when applied
to grass, as if in a dance contest, she moved across the floor until the last minute of competition
and stepping off-stage, arrived in a space of losing in which she could not walk. The strategy
of two people struggling to remain within each other's expectation is: as long as one is speaking,
she can extend into the space of the person's body, why the human figure is often
an integral part of the labyrinth in a child's game.

She is a child in a bed by the sea, facing a round mirror by the window. Lightning lights
in the mirror, then she sees a flicker out the window. She must see the mirror first, because it faces her,
and the window is on the periphery of what she can see or might say. The lightning at the window
extends the space of what you can say or imagine over the water, as across the memory of the other person
in the dark. The two lights are an occurrence of a wish or memory between them, suggesting by synchronization
that the body, which is continuing space, also inhabits a particular space and a particular time,
since the space of the house is commensurate with sky over water and not the space in the mirror.
There is an imagined time lag between the mirror and the window analogous to the space in yourself
between the moment of showing the child an object and her understanding the word for it.
You could actually send out a message to the person in a time and a place, like hail stones
bruising without breaking the space of her body on a wide beach, "particularly" speaking across
the moment when you speak and the moment she hears you. Time can look like this space between things,
a gap around each word, sentence, or your pronouncement of pity.
Rain expresses her longing, berries her hunger, the night, fear. Night enfolds
the speaking of the ocean over a vast space, a sound that cannot be grasped by your memory. Its plaint
discredits your occupation of the space, while retaining the extent of it. You could lay speaking

and a memory edge to edge, and these would be your expectation of the person,
You could say her speaking had deteriorating patches on it, as if you were writing down
the argument and then crossing out each word, so the person could still read them,
with some effort, across the wall of the room, cascading cries accommodated by formal words.
The power to keep her can dilute with almost any other subject.
If we cling to objects, we should trust our clinging impulse, because a structure of your keeping her
may be dreamed, before it is seen, and may first require legitimizing dream metaphor itself,
of the luminous breadcrumbs or feathers. Trusting clinging differentiates human beings from angels.
Though each is self-governing, humans do it through materialized design, like a chair, which
is an invented thing, but also a real thing. In a world we intuitively accord degrees of reality,
it's relatively real, like Pegasus, like telegraphs, altars, vaccines, product liability trials, songs.
The person troubled by weight creates a chair, which recreates her as weightless. Now,
she projects weightlessness onto space between them, a kind of fluttering, incapable itself
of being aware of being alive. Its design is the structure of the perception of aliveness.
She expresses my hunger. Its intensity obliterates her own context, such as recognizing her
by the perceived constancy of her image, despite your movements or hers.

Cloth puckers where her hand rests, holding some objects, or it puckers because of the convexities
of her body reacting to overall patterns of stimuli, perceived as part of the personal context.
Space over an empty place is the cognate for her and her. The fold of the cloth is imageless thought.
This is the process by which her made culture acquires characteristics of the world.
The memory of an occurrence between them is absorbed into daily life by a small bodily gesture.
The state of pain moves her out of the body, to try and make her feeling visible by people's activities,
cut, fire, knife, nail. An object she is holding in a photograph creases her clothes.

Like the impression of a color, its weight inheres in a significance of social values
in the blood and in memory. You can cross your arms and legs so cloth binds you
tightly,
representing areas of color around the bulky object of your body and the
contextual instability
of your face meshing with imageless thought.
It's easy to understand why one should be equipped to react to family and friends
in the environment,
but what about a figure in the mind? Can a reaction influence the longevity of
another?
The kinship has as primary data a system of relations between terms for the family
members
and a system of relations between their attitudes; the purity of the pieces of gold
mosaic of a dome,
and the order and civilization of the plaza. Order and civilization, being a
Doppelganger, which establishes
the scale of a ghost.

Aaron Shurin

Six Poems

The Third Floor

John said, "Hit me again,"' looked down at his own hand. He held his mouth close to him with a cool greenish flicker. The instrument pulled, sipped it slow, he said "Are we a couple of guys?'"' He jammed a thick one into his whole face.

"Huh?" Dave lowered his eyebrows—frail body come apart in wisps—muscles leaned around him through a maze of rubbed fire, bony fingers. He dusted and waited, looked tired, reached across the table purringly licked his lips. With a thick finger he said "Yeah."

The frontal bones stood up. His right hand twisting in the air, polished from sunlight, brown and slender and poised. A tearing sound dragged across his tongue and teeth.

John turned, holding his hand against the sandy skin of his face. '"Take it." With a sidelong look thick sobs and hard eyes like a safe. He formed a wadded mass, flared, almost nodded— there was a long wait, a whirring of leaves against the glass, a husky voice got him at last. "Don't take it too big."

Something was empty in his deep eyes. An open cut between needles that ran into his palm. There wasn't any back door on a chopping block.

Dave bent down and touched the sticky place shocked and stiff. His whipped out nerves shivered, started up somewhere, swelled in sound and faded. '"'Yeah," he said softly, foamy against the corner. He got in and coasted.

John spoke in a tight snapped voice. Down a narrow corridor to a big window stabbing the sky. His face in the dark undressed to the skin. He sipped that, throaty, was blurred.

Dave turned slowly, looked down at him. His white eyes knotted and jerked his head at an inner door.

You're my partner."

On Low

He unlocked one hand, her legs pointed softly in the chair. She surged and felt the pulse on his face, plunged a hand in. Open to the light the purple window busted blood. This dump with a private balcony and his black moustache.

"I'll miss you too" and across the room he punched out another breath. Under the smells his sweet trumpet to a whisper down his back. From niceness there still crawled a blond's voice.

She scissored and a blue rose above the dress was limp at best. There was the gaping bed over her again—touched things he had touched—her boneless exhaustion carrying the room. His left leg shook inside his trousers.

There was no dance floor. Her milky eyes laughed and his hair came up. They stayed very small, leaned against the wall for years, a cloudless sky there was nothing in but both of them.

They were loose, they were dark, they seeped into the night, shade of wound, scorched on the casual floor, undressed my brains, the roots of her hair grow in the bedroom, his opening other room across himself, she was out there,

Watch this: he put a finger to the same spot—the same finger—and let fall a moon whiter than his twisted knuckles. He wiped his face to the door, glanced back, and listened. Soundlessly a carpet of uncanny brightness.

His Promise

Yesterday, I have always seen him. I followed him into Paris: here was the entrance. In the light—and hearing—luxury descended over soothing waves, the boulevard with the sign of fraternal beatitude.

If I give their eyes then I have never seen eyes. Seated, we ate/drank the hours. Impalpable useless smoked slowly soul, and familiarity shown, say, in a homesick pact. I lifted my glass and of its creation: perfectability! His aroma explained progress up to the present moment.

I share a reputation admitted beloved brothers, possession in every corner persuade the devil his brimming pleasures. On this subject I have met with the most invisible companions. We bow to each other like memory, to wipe out old grudges.

At last, shivering, sung by poets and philosophers, it said to me, "I want to take you away." Famous remembrance, "'to compensate for your loss I shall come seeking you."' Flattery and adoration know all this intoxication, flowers warm as he rose me with a smile...

To thank him I left him, little by little crept back to bed. On my knees at the feet of that vast assembly I murmured my prayers: his promise. Half asleep, I seemed

to remember having waited for him before.

One Evening

They're ready. The three of them with that. One starts, then falls into arms. Lines into flowing gowns where the low-ceilinged truth governs.

We are dancing—distort sufficiently—for the pleasure of identities overlap, and their faces remain secret against the ladies. The dress likes the way he looks, hairy; bends down, turn around, suggesting velvet cellos concealed by black silk. Down the stairs, young of the smoke, he would hide his moist eyes.

He takes him by the shoulders and thighs, throwing stones at the children for a sigh. Around the room masks are dancing downstairs. It was she who opened the door, pretending to fasten a garter, and the dawn went straight down to the sea.

At the top of the street his face was laughing, holding him by the arm; the audience was himself—his complement—his fancy dress and his imaginary nights. I would have taken his place; only the great know how to walk swaying, purging distance from the sky. He sang the roses to freshen them up, and every gesture opened the morning street to her windows and what goes on beneath them.

The air fluttered from top to bottom. Not a practical inventory. They heard bicycles, cleaning women, continued to sing on their secret road, cleared with perfume and suspended in sleep. They left behind make-believe gestures to make-up her true nature. To think with precision she thought to herself, "I'm presence."

She was, through her submission, the idea of solidity, Her name was Broiling-Days-In-A- Little-Patch-Of-Shade. They made their way there, heavy with one summer evening; visiting the earth with powder and peopling it with kisses.

Connection

The morning on her bed, of her girlhood, lived next to the telephone; slid open to reveal her body talking to a sexy boy. Modern girls don't have to wait before a shop window. Our hero, standing on end, took a step: it felt so good.

His voice across her bedsheets, licking from inside under her eyes, his fingers went to pieces, sunlight mounted memory and steamed down the vertical slot. She heard a voice: 'I'm here.

Hold on."'

What was she thinking of? I go where I'm interested—then I'm not a woman. Bloated with light and air, she looked up to see her mother standing in the doorway. A dull monologue on how she really feels deep down.

Her optimism sloshes in circles, her thirst for something grand slipping further and closer. She stands and lifts arms, shallow breathing because a phone's ringing;

I want to be there in the mechanism, to leave a message on the moth-eaten rug. I wore a long white undershirt—never again anything purer—watching the night with its moving hands as they touched my thighs, my hips charged with symmetry. Tick away around in circles, shimmying the air....

The city floated in her uneven breathing, pushing from beneath the ladder to the sheets and spreads between us, just the morning. A girl leaned into the phone: distance was speaking. From the crown of her head a wave down her spine brought it all back. Her totemic privacy was mine to give away. The window bursts pink, staining the pillowcase.

Sailed

Under a sky, in a garden, there are serious women and beautiful men, were talking. ‘*You are much more beautiful,”’ they implore, and can’t help their red cheeks from flaming. “You are terrifying, too,’’ and speak in the same voice.

He is already far away, is going to other trees on the horizon, disappear behind that cloud and drew around him closer a sleeping voice, lowered to a rolling feeling. In the dark she is sleeping, stroking on forever, buried in her hair this garden while the eyes of stupefaction ‘widened, and the light curls lighting up this boy in the clouds would find him in some thick aureole covering her back and waking somewhere else...

I walk straight ahead, pays attention without always seeing, playing music the way I’d like to live. His lamentations would bring the cymbals together. I wanted to find out where they were enjoying themselves, followed them at a distance to where the beautiful nights dance like bears. I've remembered a cup of brandy, and went to sleep turned toward their faces, the Stars.

a

From the air there was his eye in his forehead, the sun had a brother. One of them said, “Yesterday moves so slowly.” One of them said, “Seemed to linger with pleasure in the great hollow sky.’’ One of them said, ‘‘Each setting out in solemnity from a beautiful night like thige ssn}?

Barbara Guest

On Dennis Phillips

Controlled Pressure Exploding Upward

A World
(Los Angeles: Sun and Moon, 1989)

A WORLD COMBINES THE STRATEGY OF FILM with the properties of myth. Montage shifts the scenes as they overlap and dissolve. This gives the poetry of Dennis Phillips a stance of controlled momentum. Shards are thrown to the surface. Pressure shoots us upward through the veils of myth, a control discharges us depthward into the organs of myth through which we move into poetic areas of violence or grace.

A continuation of Phillips' earlier book, The Hero Is Nothing (Berkeley: Kajun Press, 1985), there is less reliance on a sympathetic internal search, less of an ego in search of cohesiveness, or the revealing frankness in which the struggling hero cried: "The air is thick in a way never known."

A World wraps itself around zones of conflict. The former heroic gentleness has been dropped, or rearranged. The Hero was a man of inner conflict, sensitive to deconstruction, he was delicate of ear, a poet. In A World he moves into an arena of disparate action, faced with impersonal attitudes towards a disintegrating fabric. He is a collector of shards. He turns to myth, which is initiated in its violent Homeric apparel, and fastens it on to a contemporary structure. Rather than a series of poems divided into sections— and the section titles indicate the abstract signs that govern the poetry—"On Dry Entry," "Ilium of Protection," "'Alone Than Night"—the book can be read as one poem stretched upon a superstructure. The superstructure is weighted on each end by poetry of polemics and poetry of myth; they share an arena.

Women are blown into this arena and they bring the shadow of death as did the goddesses in the Trojan War. Powerful, frustrated women appear, veiled. Women and men from the Moorish world intermingle with the Judaic world and the Black, cast into struggle with adrenalin in their veins, hurtling through gravity. Their interjection surprises us. As we confront damaged Greek temples, there intrudes a poem "My Mosque." A sudden break and the poems are not cohesive; we are

allowed a shift into other brooding worlds. Only a poet with a strong sense of control such as Phillips possesses would venture into these optimal margins.

It is the uneasy, toughened stride of his diction that both calms and shakes us, and his unhesitant grasp of the malleable, demanding form he has selected. The poems, formed under "pressure," indicate a struggle both internal and external, and from moment to quick moment we are perilously alone as the poems move in their febrile, inelastic charge. Phillips is fleet of mind.

Yet he intends to rescue us. His method is to transform both his tone and subject matter from hermetic asides into a lyrical obedience. Phillips is a lyric poet—when he chooses. I suspect he rather takes his lyricism for granted and prefers to introduce his other eutectic selves—the politically controlled persona withdrawn from sea and cloud, and the mirror persona of nature. In this book he favors political intensity, which can turn into abstractions:

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

There is an internal acrid vertical underneath the polemical poems which is made to contrast with the horizontal of the perpetuating observant sea.
But a delta, finger of cocktip a new
gravity where things stand, press against
verticals.

The Iliad is surrounded by the sea and floats in it. The sea claims our eyes, even when we stand on the blood-drenched, celebratory beaches. In the sea sequences of Phillips' poems the Iliadic world meets A World, even as the specter fog disperses the more condensed ideate of his poetry. As at Troy, the poet of A World watches from the shore, examines the particles that float toward him, turns his back on the city:
Saw one dashed by cruel waves

saw tanks of air saw hotels

saw walkways leading to popular museums
unrated but stringy arms (mine)...

Dark storm day but hot

dark noon grey, sea grey.

Any calm disrupted ions

charged or pressure dropping...

* * *

Looked so long it vanished.

Using the word "named"' instead,

A declamation devoutly to be wished.
Force of Helios powering upwards...

Upon a cloud—and lifeless boundary...

Words emerge from Joyce: seasilt, saltsick, connecting the plot with Ulysses, who appears here in a long poem sequence. We are in the climate of a literature of sails, of remoteness, the death watch. The poet's conscience is the mold for these mythic models. We must remind ourselves that Phillips is not writing a book solely about Greeks or even the Attic world. The other half of the superstructure is the world today. Mythic people arise out of slum depths and wasted inclines of our civilization to disturb our conscience. The poems fill with adrenalin (a word of considerate power to Phillips) whenever they initiate a restive anxiety or explore the signals of contemporary failure that run parallel to the terrors of a former civilization. He adjures us to tend to our social awareness in a world that cuts itself off from societal beneficence.

You know the players
your pawns your rocky elements and barren
a place to seek vengeance
for a lifespark you claimed to taste
in this indelible fog.

Places and nature are damaged. A World makes note of damage even where nature is "damaged." Early into the poems there is a sequence which conveys the elegance of Phillips' stance which will turn into an enhanced severity.

Damaged clouds.
An ovum clinging to ladened weather.

No fragment preserves silence.

In acceleration, in pregnant dark, clear.
Release is blurred, edges softened.

If I watch this long enough.

An idea in the form of a story

beginning with an ending, histrionic, sad, a tragedy, inevitable, but false, a mirror not false, not a mirror.

The severity takes several attitudes and one of them reveals itself in a sense of torment. Phillips tenants his book with fire and volcanic ash:
An older lesson, born of vulcanism:

Lava tubes pumping from the core

new extremities.
Don't look at me: If the fire escaped

even hope would vanish.

The poetry tends to take on an argumentative stance and the brunt of it can become dictatorial. "'What voice we asked transmits orders?"' This slight edge of harangue may be due to the ambition of A World, where even as they intermingle, current politics and past history have bituminous identities.

I suspect Phillips wishes to remove his vocabulary outside the idiom of The Hero, even as he argues that A World is a continuation of his hero's progress. He risks adding another kind of muscularity to the poetry, which may have metallic joints. Yet only a poet of finely honed spaces, as Phillips certainly is, can afford this risk. The difficulty is that the reader may tend to lose the scene, an important element in the book's structure, as it dissolves into abstractions. Phillips, to continue with the sense of his filmic direction, may require a camera lens of greater orbit to focus on the extant geographical regions into which he induces us in his formidable operative plan. That his continuing intelligence recognizes a need for a more revelatory scope is apparent in this sequence:
There's a place and it's a crater
malignant beyond chemicals and radium.

There's no incision to excise it.

And it's not just one side of an argument

Because the place breeds explosions
and murder and the home of the destroyed
breeds the next destruction.

Only a boat on a sea safe
steel waters, perpetual pacific

touch land, take water, set off
Adrift, lightless on black ocean.

The film moves very fast on multiple surfaces. Or slows down as the contemporary scene approaches and speeds as the poems assume the guise of the Hellenic war. The interior of the book becomes a labyrinth where there is a struggle to assimilate the congruence flowing between the past and present.

Phillips has made a bold move into the Yeatsian domain where we "Break bitter furies of complexity."" The poetry of Phillips is abstruse, alchemic, equipped with transfiguring silver shears. Even in heated combat this poetry maintains a disciplined distance. A coolness directed by Phillips' verbal intensity throws a shelter over the "cities of the plain."

Dennis Phillips

These Edifices which Do or Do Not Suffice

from Part Nine of Arena

Or my hand suddenly numb
these formulas for evaluation
tenses or cages
pushed me this clue is a word dropped
a hankie come hither.

Nor as you had thought
feeding time or lines.
As the skin is pulled off
the fibers are white and dry.

They speak a different language
I might have known whose name.

The tone of reference.
Or calm sociopathic entrances,
The language.

If it is too abstract or if it's too figurative.
Puerile but what definition would suffice.
As if a story or romance gathered a gravity
then they all felt the urge to conclude.

You ask me to stay away but I asked.

OK then I need the time.
Touch this meter. Leave too soon.

Candles. Boxes of candles.
The truck was filled with tallow,
three-cornered hats, bell-muzzled muskets,
third grade study films.

The flame was not work.
But lighting was.

You can.
What did they speak?

His face therefore in the mirror short hair
nor he who followed as in tailed
arrested by formal guards
taken away.

But the building so old
collapsing and tearing
no escape

all crockery:
It's late the lights are on

The letters or the remembrances
for example: Because the light is fixed on the wall
the shadow across the room behind the cabinet
is always in the same place.

And if the famous building is only crockery
the earthquake will spare none of them.

And those who drove away to prison.

Was it better to ask them not to remove their hats?
But what if they do remove their hats
and become resentful and bury their anger for many years
and use it against you later
when you're unguarded.

Were firm that is resolved
hair short, staring at yourself

not the one who followed you.

Don't attempt it. Not now. Go upstairs.
Urinate. No one will call for you.
The guards will not revolve around the cabinet,
Only the room in its place on the planet will.

But what falls? Who's safe?

Predawn by minutes and the lights are still on.

The whole house awake, everyone asleep.

And he who followed you
taken away in the back of a sedan.
His uniform and theirs.

Do they fit in the car? Dare anyone ask?

Even the ceiling, buckets of water.
None of them would back you.

Only the building and derelict.

A misfit they commented on a new fixture.
Only the gossip was motivating.
If you travel they will hate you.
If you give them directions they'll blaze.

So lie in it waiting.

The plastic curtains. The planter.
Blow it down.

Than the compression. Serious
through the titles.

Your words wearing.
The compression, say, of carbon.

Equal forces. As equal.
Whether balance.

Who makes them so verbose?

A candle would have heated.

Whisper in his ear.
The terminal shows dusk
through chic and clean architecture.

The secrets of commerce.

Or the platform where officials
grant or deny. A terrible toll.

Whisper in his ear.
Or make an excuse that forgives him.

It was only his job.

In the tent, outside,
under the vapor trail. Under cobalt.

May you pass?

Or the oval levels where offices.

How have they raised children
and kept up a business?

How many degrees for each flame?
Then agree to move closer.

These edifices that do or don't suffice.

Say quietly, in his ear, a red speck,
distant, opaque, glazing the set,
off kilter, in a valise that can't conform to its contents.

Then the streets would open
despite who was inside.

If “Give me some money” equals
“‘Money please.”’
The whole complexion of the city.

It’s the way light falls.

Approbation may be sought in many forms.

Then anticipation could undermine
what comes undone in an open field
because that’s volcanic and tropical.
Beige unknown there.

Hold fast then open.

They will you to remain but are none.

The piece of the proud owner
he said and walked into the room.
Or it was a foredeck and the winds.
Reversed compasses or that was lighting.

A teacup ocean incredibly blue.
Caldera but which caldera?
Not bottomless but with a vent at the bottom.

Have the pieces open so that any who enter.
There is a debate to be studied.

The nature of an atom must be brought
into the theologians' equation.

A core sample would be taken and the captain
of the mother vessel will need to speak
neither French nor Geologese.

In this way compression
can be both an artistic and
a physical concept.

Take for example the red pennant.
Nor a pile of ashes nor burial at sea.
With those netted contents
no telling whose mouth.

Make your face as the palm of your hand:
blank and mouthless.

A year. Then a cloth called democracy.

Treatment across the river
to be unopened nor banked each
reference river

Nor the new architects their roofs like airfoils
you know what that could mean

It is not like cutting into a cantaloupe
vivisecting any mammal the seeds
are elsewhere

He said.

The valley the seven hills the hill towns.
Just proced they will not know what
you wish them to know.

These things. The progressive type.
I swear by the almighty.

There were fragments confessions the river
flooding the river unlevied
at the foot

Just define the zone and the forces will be marshaled.

The view will bear me out said he.
Strange hearse said he,

Sacrifice. And then parts.
Not that chop will play here
but the screaming wind and the contact.
The evening when all the celebrities.
Even the taste of a drop of it
and childhood pours out.
They report on death and then read
from t.v. scripts that inflame them.
No one validates them yet onward.
Open yourselves yet no one.

Phillip Foss

Vinland and *The Manichean Apology*

Vinland

Conceal the bones in throwing. False face.

Forests of starvation, sullen, and impersonated gems
As the excuse for excursion: a drunken land.

A new moon, a new taste, transformed tongue,
Mute. Compulsion, the horizon infinite,

The dead, objects. Gathered against the years
Are brief exclamations of transcendence, or torque,

Exquisite defacement into landscape, all bark,
Textural reticence. Defilement through chance;

The soil sucks up the body, politely. Guest.
Solstice as punishment for moons. Dreamt, melded, seen:

Stone stone, word word, blue red.
Anxiety drought, draught, mudhole and vermin: version

Of sky, bobbing clouds underfoot, shattering.
Blue heron wing bone whistles eaten silently.

Coax widgeon, aloof of play, water plane, skip.
Airscape of then token coins in ascension as targets.

Candidates of the spurious; amputated hands.
Plot of magic, crown to torment vision.

Such delusion, the universe cancelled
Of the emotive: ox and cart, rut,

Rut, sundown sleep, wine dream. Never again
Hasp locking the lips against mirth.

The star of paradise but a burst
Of blood in the head.

Incessantly murmuring gods. Helmet of hair.
The cataloging of despairs: micaceous ruins. And horoscopes

Incised in the skin of succulents. Bowstring of nerves;
Instrumentation of fear, berating rock after rock

In the forlorn steps. An adrenalin of pain,
The peeling skin synonymous with redundant bells.

Trail to vanquish. Predaceous sleep,
Quilled tongue as honor and respite from decadent wet

Of midnight air, such singing. Eternal despair,
Rapiers of intent hands mitigate against

Grasping, imprimatur of arrest, as a griffin,
Into dry palms, the honor to kill.

All then sleep, as synchronistic rebuttal
Of consciousness; the hoof is idle,

Mane cropped. Ascent out of unknowing land,
Lust and accord, into transmigration of soul

Or stone, time displaced, place dismembered, fragments
Of representation, graffiti against a pure

White, pure vacuity, pure concession to unknowable
Design: white on white, black on black, the scripture

Braille, eyes plucked, fingers
Sheared.

In defacing moonlight, it is a vinolent erection,
A sympathy of nightmare and shadow;

Every minute is contained by law and the atmosphere
Suffocates with souls. There is no escape

As the pedantic: all have been judged
Guilty and rivers are disguised as white

Effuvium. Without exertion, descent is possible

‘To whatever sea is posited as escape, as release,

There is no clarified; there is no detached.
Only intoxication from observing mutation,

Mutation as it plods through the order
Of every enchantment, every disenchantment,

And ends only as end. No rhapsody, nostalgic context,
Only objects, living or not, residing in proximity

To sensation. The door opens here, cannot reopen,
Cannot be reopened, closed; closed to beginning over,

Knowing. No, no matter how lush, it is always desert,
Opaque, an infinite pane of glass bisecting the head

At the elevation of the eyes. An enticement, incitement,
Projecting from the brain at the elevation of the eyes.

To thus be engaged is an historical error, the battle
Inverted, poet's throat cut, and the boats falling

Off the edge. To where, there is nowhere
To swim, finally, no isle of relief, no shore

Of opulence, no rest. The only refuge is in assigning
Random value to the participants in identity:

Ocean is dog is snowflake is love is not, as yet, lost
To the mere momentum of moving to an other, other

Than the known. A gift, perhaps, in the form of sound
In intercourse with the greater drone of air

Grinding down the topographies of faces.
A gift. Perhaps.

Slough of sky, clumsy mirror of ice: the romantic
Disinterment of selves... (This world will never be,

Nor will to be: manes to be sea spray;
Holiness pursed lips extending wind;

Or the book of feathers, or the book of butterfly wings:
Gravity be your god.) Trail, trough, the steps

Of timidity always in descent, always in ascent,
Toward. The sun sets in the face, the gates

Open and close endlessly, a great eyelid
Concealing and revealing an empty socket, seer.

So then the world becomes white, becomes mist,
Cloud; becomes a waterfall covetous of cakes

And portions of beasts; becomes voice speaking
The alphabet; voice directing the hand

Translating the speaking weapon. ‘To they must come manner.
‘To they must come purgation. To they

Must come repentance: stride, stride, stride; skull
And brain safe within the helmet of faith—

Incantations seared into the scalp
For the sky to see.

All nether land rapport hope in what chance light,
What chance articulation, chance intervention?

Before the fluent what fragrance is worn
Then as word? What strident posture

Assumed in silhouette or sleep? What self emerges
From the recourse of sentience?

Bag and bead, quirt and rod, the season is misplaced,
Fleshes fused, the future has spun

Back behind. A gyroscope, top, of trance
Or transcendence, top. Gone then the opulent excess,

Caliber of quest only an armor sheathed
Over air, the voices minute winds exchanging

Like brief birds relaxing from a fist into ten
Indictments of topography or its lack.

To go where then? In what shout,
What impassioned eye? Aggrieved the idea, idyllic

Cessation of history, defilement of the consecrated
Tool, taste, or marriage of structures. Gone.

The Pleiades. Judgment. Off the side the sea
Gull swirls away, always away. Always

Nether; never is it in hand like a grim toy.
It is abutment of will, stone or sea

Against which to toil in unrequited caste. Collapse
And collapse. The drift drifts; river

Runs. Cast up the eyes, cast up the hands:

Heaven does open: the forehead under serration.

The world is seized. What hands?
The world is bestowed. What hands?

The world is intoxicated.

The Manichean Apology

I am god; there is no alternative hand.

Before my mother.
My face was a hand.

A face,

Six of clubs. Battery.

Battering the focus of one eye.

Astigmatic, as two voices
crossing at soprano.

Ambidextrous hands reveal
deceit twice.

I am the inventor of throw.
Naught.
Of of.

If three women assume
postures of devotion
the third is left handed.

The mother of toss.

Suppose one possessed two hands.

You are then the articulator: zither.

If one is bisymmetrical,
one is two.

But both eyes see nothing.
Nothing is last.

Nothing is bisymmetrical.

Women's hands make them pregnant.

So music is responsible.
For night time.

Or an animal is killed.
Various postures.

These are exact mannikins.

Once smoke was blinding.
Because we believed it.

I am the collector of debt.
You owe your hands, your eyes,
your soul.

Wages; your error is fantasy.

Imagine yourself without hands
or without tongue.

Then you are complete.

I am the repository of forgiven vice.

We shall trade.
My hands for your signature;
my lips for your faith?

I could kill
but I am asleep,
designing structures
of doubt.

Easy: one eye is closed.

Corruption and decay are causal:
I walk backward.

Once there was the capacity
to grasp simple concepts.
Like right.

Once there was a formula
to determine the growth
of geodes: progressive
absence as source.

This is purely entrapment.

All right, I am the two of hearts.

I am not you.

You neither enter,
nor become,
light here.

Here: a vague coaxiation
of blue and desire.

Gather the threads of the garment,
therein lies, perhaps, water.

Siege: you are eroded by light.

No. You are an apology.

Light erodes light.

A template? A vendetta?
A faith.

‘“‘you”’ is a euphemism for “condition”’
?
“light” is a euphemism for ‘fragmentation’

There is no memory involved;
there is no involved.

The Sun?
Putrefaction.

Once the light absolves
you you begin to enter you,
you.

A mountain of flint
does not disclose, enclose.

Sublime distress: call
it posture; call.

So what warrants deaffirmation?
Are the blossoms then projections
of your desire; artifacts
of delight, or of light?

All right, there is the trace
of a tree.

Or of a beckoning.

All right, there is a residue.

Wood grain splits longitudinally.
That is a matter of light.

Fire.

In each fist there inhabits
a reluctance.

A reluctance of speech.

Then the earth craved sustenance.

To face west is to solicit death.
North: efficacious
architecture of dust.

Clouds contrive.

It is a racial habit to move
rock: edifice = buffoonery = aqueduct
= tomb = X.

Why affirm that stone
is tangible light?

You are a miser of light.

‘“‘you”’ is a euphemism for “‘light”’

The scattered feathers.

The feathers scattered.

The great reluctance.

Single trains of behavior;
lift and place;
light and place.

I am slowly dearticulating into soil.

“T” is a euphemism for “soil.”’

You are the light; you are a
way.

In the sea there is a valley
of corpses.
Navigation is by darkness.

The compass
does not invert light.

All this is comprised
by a gesture.

One which says, I am blind.

Artifacts of age
deteriorate in light.

The feathers scattered.

The eyes as recipients
of light are thus destroyed.

There is no one to whom
this gesture is appropriate.

‘no one”’ is a euphemism for “‘light”’

Is music then light
to our ears?

I have moved a thousand
clods of earth. Still,
the earth is unmoved.

Who then lied
the relation of fire
to light?

“‘who”’ is a euphemism for “you”’

The water conspires
the corpses; the darkness
purifies the light.

“corpse”” is a euphemism for “tomorrow”’

All right, both hands are empty.

“‘empty”’ is a euphemism for “armed”’

All right, both eyes are blind.

“blind” is a euphemism for “the eyes
are the windows of the soul”’

“soul” is a euphemism for “‘light”’

“‘windows”’ is a euphemism for “water”’

“water” is a euphemism for “you”

“‘you”’ is a euphemism for “I”

“T° exists only as euphemism:

“T”’ have lied throughout;
I was mistaken.

David C.D. Gansz

Per Missions (in progress)

from Millennial Scriptions

I

Light's verge'n, subtle matt'r; turn'din
to speech, the writ'n god'nveloped wrds.
So's meetly open'd'er mouth trans-muting,
she's clad'n the bloom of sounding light.
Bleeding masses'f darkness the de-com-
position' sindiff'rent el'm'nts; daresay
gone to earth's the radiant abortion.

Happy, the concealm'nt's five-shapes'n
the twice-born wrld'f shatt'r'd surety.
Hiddename's a clencht'ndurance. Fett'r'd,
memb'rs'n pieces dashto the sub-stance.
Hylic organ-ism's reluct'nt el'm'nts'
landed, matt'r's soul'n brute, aforth-coming
short; The hissing silence, the wanting seeds.

Veildeyes, docetic'n onlyness' heartsear.
Earth'sin stabilities, pene-trations, stare's.
To yew's fir's to lead, silv'r's. Ev'ry-body's
fuel'd cisalpine rage'n crucifiederections.
Queenly el'm'nts parley this mislikeness. Atmo-
spheric met'ls'n' greenest plasma, corpo-real's
none retreats from th'one where stone's no stone.

Thick's rain,'n the corpse-cold vastness.
Curr'nts mingle'n consummation of works
of deathless fire. The bones, bare'n' brent,
bespatt'red a deathling. The strange hangingson,
a gorlas'n fortunate concealm'nts, tant' lized

the black’ning womb’s. Insularization tinn’d;
heads of the dead, pow’rless, fractured wat’r.

Fanciful spectres per-haps the black-glass
whole; secret's deep'n to the dark's ache.
Of disast'r's lust, shriv'ls the twist'r'n
multiform triad. Along'd-for land'n willow'd
moon-dew, needfires guard the fish'n the bed's
deep, nameless passions. Shambling wafture,
the noisome sealings, keep the promises broken.

Raked'n taunt'd mind the tin-loaf stares. Out
side the pale's, armour'din fog, a stutt'ring
measure lessin spiration. Shuttles awoven,
kingly materials substance. The takingsinhere
awood-sense, unalloy'd. Th'exempl'ry pow'rs
have'er, mem'riesame'n garm'nts, grave, so-journ'd;
brightly, phant'ms frenzy the cryst'l's throne.

Inimitable silence's the dyer's need. The
dark'n'deyes complete the myst'ry's child's
child. Osirified'n ineffable limbs, shield'd
onaship call'd elsewhere'n secondeath, the
root'd tongue'n nigrescence eartht'n boneless
vow'ls. Astamm'ring spirit's the living corpse's
sometimes why. The fing'rsends the books of a you.

II '

Beat'n from flesh'n to light'n the woods'n' at
th'alt'r, spewn a wrd-sleight otherwhere. Allness
w/stay'd that certain bier, aform of ab-sense
eartht'n aft'rbirth. Veining a cryst'l-body,
menaced by blood-mixt di-versions, to know a veil'd
being'n faceted air. The not-alone one withheld a
grave, for secrets'n' named the yet-to-be named.

Love's a joyous torm'nt, driv'ntodeeds.
Oncesaid, th'irrevocables deep'n to flesh'n
the silent tapestry'swell. The secret's kept'er
of what's the matt'r taken up'n to itself.'Til
nature's re-lieved'n a temple of th'el'm'nts—

ashe loins triadic’n spoken int’r-course—
clave a mazed the final fam’ly, blue.

Ambusht a pill'r'f gladness, hazel-fortress
by ash-tree mound. Wears a birch-garland,
sad harvest of tears. Earth's heapt burd'n
the house of leaves. Triplt pang the pierc-
ing awl of love. Love, deceiver, walks
the wrld abs-orb'd—terrifying frailty—
wearing virtuous stone, the conspicuous wound.

Finisht the pass of arrowsin ultimate earth,
Seeming athirsty land'd, soul-drink'r,
to bloodwood reveal'er that. W/'n a grave
avenge'r, so drinksin the woman these open-
ings—where we're chamb'r'd, bridally
she'n—whom-we-so-journey'n afflict'd
prophecy, chrismata's liquid rest.

Red, reapt the burning traces as witness
bears, hard by cleansing streams. Alasting
sudd'n flame, a blood-bright night. Im-
pregnable affirmation's spiraleyes'n chasuble
brancht; a pomorous isle'n gulfs of liquid
fire. Past whiteness's hyper-boreal gyring,
flow'rs cryst'l the low'r'd root'n us lost.

Burntearthworks a neth'rwild blood'nclosure.
Dryadic'n citiesink, dia-tribes immovablestone.
Ditcht'n' trencht'n' beseigedin thorny strife,
arboreal sweetness from corruption burst. *N
foliage torn, where serp'ntsting w/ the stolen
torque'n' shrewdly smote th'anglishry, to pre-
sent the historic, chalk-raft trees dis-embark.

Countess of snow's bright hue; queen of
sleeplessness' land. Thief'n' guardian
of the grove. Longing's pow'rf'] author.
Beginning'n' end of all pray'r, broken'n'
whole. For her'f dazzling forms the wrld'n-

dures. Ruinous pangs bestrewn, nature's
affliction, to ravish'er fair captive flesh.

Pat Smith

Lauds from A Book of Ours

with David Smith

Light hath no tongue....
— Donne

B,

Journey disarm
travel alone
fence to door.

At first hour, each of the last four mornings,
I have whispered,
outside your place,
a sunrise memory.

A_woman (not) distant

To the other,

At dawn, I looked for you. Tell me again, your
memories, & if you would, what occasions
the number four.

Sincerely,

B

B,

4, by addition, rises to another level,
one which begins to historiate,
for us,
our own mysteries

memory born mourning
weep gate watch
separation
riseup
as day is made and shadow given

shadow
(prefect
of patience
moon and merge)

a woman's ghost by light
palms facing out
til dusk cycles
gestation
and
darkness again
merges
what is given with what is made

before my cell

to chant the ever hermit bends from the disc
the even helmet turns earthward
the only hermit bows

Keep gate comply
circle hips
calyx preserve the ring
when until tonus
another labor will eat

suffer others first
to keep the past cycle next

iterative harmony unrecognized
by sun alone

spit breath
the earth my belly
takes again
their blessed light
and heat

before their very eyes
before they can accord
their keep my wound

Clasp gate feed
kiss suck draw
fullness
from this*fullness Turn

look to balance
flesh flow
For in reply

in a wood alone to fear sleep but never the dream

a bell to my thigh
palms inward
your cup contains my blood

Drink my question
Answer my womb.

Open gate
transform
my memory merges
with your solitude
to coil another entry

to cloister
skeletal hermit forms
a brother preserves
another nourishes

the madness

of light

A _ woman (other)

Joseph Lease

Green Cold Water

reach through the cold
water shining
on the black mud

strength
breathing and gripping the
need

clenching to feel its thick
life

the black sky shines like water,
dew condensing on a car roof,
the rain on the bus
moving with my eyes

the darkness
keeps me
breathing and tightening,
standing straight up,
chewing
water

I feel her words; she stands near me

the darkness beats in my leg muscles
the cold air seems to think;
she closes warmth around me

headlights move in the street;
bright red berries, mucus-slick, are scattering
and bobbing on the water

I still fear her
she tightens me to the strongest angle
in the body

the water on the ground
shines like a polished spoon

there is the clear wind
in her red-blond hair

need in the freezing bark
clamps my eyes shut
I can't breathe—
I am shaking like a thin branch

my eyes boil

pain and shame
build in my throat
like sheets piled
. in the closet
I stare at her
she can't reach me
she can't reach me
the rain hits the window sill
over the mattress on the floor;

the rain stings like ice splintering
on my cheeks—

her words push need through
a bare tree covered in ice,
breathing and tightening,
standing straight up chewing water

I trust her; she teaches me to trust

sunlight changes the water
to green-yellow between the
rocks, where one red leaf

clenches

cold rises from the
hard-packed mud

in sun
sheets rising near the birches'
tense outline,
the shining
white bark

she burns inside my body
I slide under her weight
leaping inside the nerve
sliding on the wet skin
standing straight

my back is aching
she moves in the freezing water
she moves like the fire
inside the tree trunk
the sun heat is ripping

the inside of my back

she rushes through me in
the tight, burning wood
inside my legs

time stops: the walls
and the wood floor
shimmer in the sun drench

Clark Coolidge

from Registers (People In All)

1.

Monk took the blues on upon the surpassing swing
but doesn't understand when someone puts them back in a bag.
How does that big bag adapt?

A drape? Places where
women are up on the screen, times when I really turn.
And painting under his Kleenex, a whole aisle of turns.

Can it be begged for like cooking? Assault on a line
the permission of the American cow. Loose lancer,
dull topic crowds. And in upon the umbrella of an amethyst cloud

blue cooking. Dark places where the women are.
Droughts, the entire curriculum bends. Have you seen what,
to do with it themselves, people are there so beautiful to sharpen

the hollow throat of a ruby black liquid? Death dog rising.
Emplacement bags. A turn to be able to buy more,
and such a thorough shower, took the blues apart in a right hat.

Those whites they found to have a way with, blue consumers aren't,
he cooed into the window blades. Summersault pasha
short of baseball. Very silent in ways, like the cooking

arsenal was open? The poorer ruby American cow sharpening, willing
she was a whole writer, wished. Hold in aluminum bonds.
Wrestle. The question is not a meal, it slows.

What the jelly could be you would learn it should be.
Cars racking disturb in a bunch of the fusion culture's
sensibilities. Great cookie pressing round the many differing tracks

of the precise question, it limits? Figures only vaguely heard
related. I could worse club the words than seem. A screen is evident.
Beautiful evening blue eyes, rag over. Middle ground is cracked

strange and open, lust and dig. A beatable rugose harmony

are you praising above the fur? He spoke the liquid.
There were rugs coming apart in the comatose sky.

Is it not true that they turn from the wrong views, contributions
based on figures? Illimitable hawk cash burning at a loss clogged
old grapes I assume a sofa can sport. As well spot a reaching

Haydn blues, a path to the left of me. A great monkey hook of shoes,
how is its focus' played? It welds. Try to put the spinal focus on.
Life is worn. Drive off the focus of everybody. Ridden avenue

proven where women are speakers. Ripple solution in ethnic grottoes.
Deep artists from not enough time prepared. Someone as Miles Davis
passes the sconce, or bunch of traits.

2.

Does aluminum slow? Brightening is it not, a lash habit?
A Kleenex cow, battened among the beautiful amethyst women.
Caseworker willing and blunted, unable to march so tuggable clanned.

Have you seen what a dog is rising to? A black moon yellow cracks
is the ground close to liquid. The viable wait whams, sold.
Took away the boy's blues, only wrong as a figure. The bond slows.

The hound waits, or ounce enough trait of rage to drive off,
the speakers claim. Is a meal, wait like it should, grapes upon.
Ultimate pasha raised to the ankles, told to have it loose

in the focus of the fusion bathtub, beautiful. Not blank to see.
What you milk, sharpen. Hook on your shoes and bruise your credit.
Alimentary, questionable, cooked to just the right class of money.

Sun come out on swing? Purple hatred of capped well enough, tamed.
Beautiful grotto of hung grape machines, stuttering. I am made
to slight hats, baits, wandering fears. Stopped in that sky to dig

the fur, and held in solution the shoe that whams. Lust above
what's left below. Night of time, whole nights of, time's cracks,
bugs. And cooed him to a beatable focus, a praise worth cooking.

So should be, so silent, so it's you. Curling the entirety of them,
selves at half cap, times when the Kleenex is cooking, cow
sharpening. Aluminum prominent on the middle screen is cracked.

I live in the worst club in the evening. Might tell, so liquid.
Reaching on a try for the book of shoes, you think it's all stuck up?
A redundant rising to sharpen in sense of turns of cloud, oxen shade.

What it took to buy the blues apart, waltz. The rag seem over?
A ground differs vaguely with its screen, to have the way among ways
and the shoes to put everybody in a bunch. The worst club evening ever

a ruby black shower at the dodgeball open? Rust from a water base cooling system. Let's exert the type of power.
Completely taken, fools. Buy more and assume a path, growth trait.

Submarine such seed. All we need is a rumour figure. It's cracked,
why isn't there an odor? Rag over the red heads it limits?
What barrel is worn? The cars are racing a wrong view of the sky,

another one of those open rubbing areas. Dunce that took apart
the blues, an illimitable lake that cased in the sky's corner
blocks and adjacent Haydns. Black screen? Belts? Red focus

to the left of me a wrong iron comes
to drive off the speakers. Ruby hold a meal, ice
and more ridden ice.

es
Does anybody know how the umbrellas stand? Hollow thin
emplacement to wrestle, dope in a smock says he knows the retreat
proper to whomsover is put upon, the night of the rugs

not coming true, bulge. Is it not true that whole
rugs were coming apart in wait, while we walked pressed
silent in very many ways and the reds they limit? Doubts that

professors could, always pressing around the question, aisles
of mention. A police composed of brass rods enters the whole
hull of palladium revetment. That the cave was a wide room

in these woods, forest remnants now so silent. The bird man,
does he learn of redheads? Blue eyes that lust and dig
above the fur. Who could be so thorough? Let the rag seem

over, rather those words than seem. Nobody drags those rugs.
And life is worn as its figures assume a path. Left the limbs,
these ones, overly wrought tubes. Amethyst is what's left

of sky above these bugs. Now what we need is a good rumour
figure, a lead item, gets a few belts from the speakers.
They all rub off the blouse of an odor. As he collects

a ruby in the blackness, another ruby rises black. Waltzes
back open into the cooling evening of shoes. The woods themselves
have. I sense that haze is the seed of fools. It welds

the focus of everybody to ripples, the lead cone doubting its
crease, ruby in focus losing its red. Then the gloves on and
sun shone over the biologicals. Will this questioning make

the silence poorer than you wished? Anti-talk showed then vanished, Shall we cease these open rubbings? And what cars are there that come by their own lakes? I hold a beauty cow

up to the sharpening night. So it's the times. Glow to say
what's the bug cooking, then dice nuts and cease to hook what's
cooked. Silent barrels of those cars that are racing, wrestled

arsenal comatose as the parsee. Then he does praise. Grape shoes
are rusting. The seeds of a fusion odor. Why doesn't a submarine
come out of the barrels of those cars? Time cracks under

such wandering fears, once waylaid deems to hold then shape
the goldening sharpening. He dims his dog's figure with a
trait of rage, a meal of their ankles. Does even Haydn wear

his life in strange blues? There there were clams coming apart.
Would you wish to wait until it shows like a rug? Surpassing swings
of pet doubt chained to the elephant's chair chase. I come by

a bag of the blue cooking. Night short enough I heard a ball coo.
Is even his American Kleenex cooling? I make up from bags myself,
what else open? A dial and then the milk comes out.

:

I think it's a beast, of tin?, hauled the blues apart. Focus that
ruby on anybody. I lit up the sun, that curved one that can
be lifted. Sorry, a pun. Whitish biologicals, those cooling cars

that pretend to contain such a strange blues? I'm not brandy
in-makeup. It's her that's mine, What bags myself, a limiter,
of such high type black table box. Had done with my leg so left

it there with the diaphragm. So thorough you might have wished?
In many ways as the police investigate brass caves. Ones with pumps
for the amethyst figures, the timing of values up and down.

Bates' mother is dead, she is survived. In fields of vegetables
you can see. But I sense ripples. In the subsequent seeds of
those caves there were black odors. The errors that then he does

praise. Chopper into lake. She looks into a blouse that is losing
its red, price pending. You are enjoying night? Wrong. My skin
grey blue with gold inlays, my mouth shaking with anti-talk.

Does she go to make up the milk that comes out itself? Why
question what is mild and not an apple? And he gathers
all that opens into a haze. A big hairy lead replacing the wood.

Have you played it yet, that waits until it warms to show fusion
in a glass? The godfather of fur in that cave was the birdman.
Rugs turning yellow scraggly and purple above the rocks. Roll

the dice on these cooling caves. A sense of weariness about this
whole, its pending wholes. Then the parsee holds the car there.
He is handsome and clear, followed as people who tell. And the lusts

that seem over. And he collects the silicon arsenal into a lead
glove, comprende? There were plastic square seats of a neat white
below the opening black rectangle of dark balls. This may be where

they have been but is stubborn. Let myself down into the cylinder
where the dice sharpen in rage. Does it take a postcard to bring
these bags home to you? Shall we own lakes? I was afraid what was

going on would mean something. Then he would show lights. Then he
cease. The woods are in doubt. Question of a bag. Loop of hair on
a cholesterol ocean. Keep the dreams in cubes, anti-lace. How can you

love a country? Forest of grime, that these limp. Fingertips of
a certain water. The whole comes to its time fate. Traffic?
Dunking. He had to say the amethyst was good in darkness. What

good is it all? Bird teacher with dice dots bends to sip.
I have not heard, have you any brass? The clothing is what is
cooked, here's to you. The submarine is now blue as well and treats

the sea with fish pressed to one breast? Are these at night?
I have ceased at the patio to bang and sing so
thorough. How's the map?

3:

Just think about it, this possibly below all cylinders.
The woods of an ocean are a forest of what you have been denied.
Your bruised credit, avant garde in a pen cell. This may be where

the cylinder goes on saying its dreams in doubt, its styles of
fusion show a brandylike lighted nature. And lusts for arsenals?
My name comes first in the makeup of map timings, those where

the wick limps out of itself. Rock and roll the handsome
whole for the seeing. And the insects last. 1 have traffic with
what is heard but what good is it? Night time? Lack of fish

pressed to sip and barrel rolls to its elastic limit then dulls.
The names come right into my office, big and hairy until the cave
rocks. Like milk my come gathers in a cooling yellow glass.

Lakes full of hair? Leaving the pubis the next morning, black
bathroom blouse for your patio. But he kept going on the woods.
I would like to take this care to comprehend, may we bring these

going woods? I have lighted the car. Have you had your day?
If your mind says darkness, lock a mild hairy apple and play
with it yet, curved and white and clutched. Does mean something

bring home to you apart? I'm not a brandy, I'm not its table.
My fate be that time go limp around. I have pressed you and pressed
you to bang against this submarine. Black balloons of doubt in

dreams, summers when the top of the talk turned placid. Dreams
that limp. A stream dug into my calf. But she's back before Alice.
Throw an apple from that wood through the yellow glass and wait, stop

dunking it all in a brass that beats. But follow the war of beats.
The glove is white and below it a compartment. Red rocks on a roof
of the bluest range come play it on home to you, questions

out of the haze. Does she turn a light on her novel? Swim under
the cross with your chest to one side. I don't know how the traffic
figures. Is it easy to quit? Is ice red? Sometimes

the questions evince like water, like what is cooked that treats
the sea, like dots. What besides a question of haze waits
in that cave, a treble darkening but cooling largeness? He didn't

pretend to clean any of that felt. Gathers at night, played it
like a godfather, sounds the time to sip that here's to you.
Could you be lifted in pretense from her box? Some staple same

heated sea. I place a purple point above the white point. There
could be feet of boardwalk, noisier, you don't know me
by the fingertips. Alice at a loss. April has the cruelest mouth.

6.

This is the history of the universe, sexual and beats becoming
stone. He is not yellow. But what is as large as a cooling night?
Brung layers. He is sexual always. She is at a loss by the sea.

What are you going to say about people, don't turn that on again.
Is it going to work? Figures under water at night, like shut them
off and play love. An angel just came and turned on my television.

Vodka, staples, come from the left and right. Terry cloth commission?
Rock makeup. I placed a noise against the submarine, yes, bronchial.
He enjoyed having his back legs done. Could a good deal of writing

look out of interest? Limp around the backbeat talk. He or someone had been in Sweden. Cocaine nature, pencil of a forest, that's how. Lower jaw buttoned on. And I would like a big next

morning. Oh and guns in school. Merely darkening gathers.
Purples above the point besides. Largeness? Could be lifted into
a godfather, a ramp leading to the top of Lake Placid, the bottom

of things as they bore. I am becoming awake to these beats.
Have you seen that white shack of no windows in the weeds?
The traffic figures like dots. The Martian's black bar room and

I would like to. Have you an apple to bring near the top
of my calf? It's dreams that throw an apple. Not that he didn't
pretend to bring the purple point. The room they chose to fate

did not bring space enough. Gourds maybe, brine shapes. Glass
laughter at the end of things. Glass in bathrooms always black,
then all you have to know to do is move. Swim under the same

figures that pressed you in dreams. Are you eligible for
this program? Played it like a heated sea, broad. Vertebra
could change, given scissors. Is it time to go home under

the dug stream? I'm not you. No doubt, that limp. And what
do we see but the war of the red rocks. Is it a matter of looking
at balls of clay? With a large question besides cooling limpness

he goes out, spa. Apples from white point. He was always sexual,
the very sphere or history of Alice in change. Questionglass war
of the gather beasts? Non-balloon. Give me my pie plans.

What extra light? Why play further on her novel? I have left
something but want to. Anyway, how does any cave clean the sea?
When breath stages damage, where barrels roll further than

what could play. Did I get an announcement to see to the bottom
of things? Loss of boards. Beats
that come with the loss of apes. What dulls

when pressed to your dreams? There are a lot of
darkening gathers, pretty same staples, clips
of the lost wooden map.

7.

Do we have the right to know what word might take us down?
Same black figures they program, little strays from the white point.
Central ham, border lozenge, I have not told you the ticking to tell

by. Wars of light are always sexual. I would like to point to
my dreams in sequence. Doll, pile beyond me those that roll purple
delicacies out of wood. That's a lot of map, short. But they

throughout all burrow into your house in search of soul, pie caps,
level space of brought things, nothing past this coerce. Dial
the wrong beats out of felt dreams. Lower those guns. Stone those

men with sexual beats. Weeds? No black windows in the weeds.
Did I pretend to bring space to things, did I get accused of
what I so far have never been heard to say, would you pretend to

mild arrest? Stages damage. You can sure say that, as much as
you stand past things you hate and love in a dug shack of loss.
I've never gotten enough sleep to clear the hills, no.

Bring me a practice, brave enough business of a like truth.
Smooth the apple glass and gather the beasts in waves. See to
the bottom of the darkening apes. Gourds with purple points won't

lull to sleep in ocean places. Commemorative mirror of the sellout
performance, paste it on a flag, lose all your maps. I'll leave
only when I get my breath. To do is to move. There are a lot of maps

lost in the woods, these pence. Gertrude Stein and I go again
walking into a large fashion fortune. Want to see where the barrels
turn to balls? Is a breath white? Her novel is a history

of the balloon thinly guised, loss of press. Is it time
to throw the apples, I'll go see them and in turn think them
out. I am coming up a ramp leading to no windows. He enjoys all those

rocks out of interest. I'd get a good deal of mellowing done
to the point of flip. Words are shut at the top.
Have I seen your playgrounds? All the things in space do

is move. Have I no windows at the top of my space?
Bottom of the roll, ice collar and dog skates. Ted's hands
are active and say, Let's make it. Red rocks a large question

beside the white point. Never asked her for money from love
beside lower those guns. Longtime pope of the ivory coast or
talk of a forest. A pencil that big will bore the Martians.

Balloons move in a hurried mist, as all they do is move.
That's a bee chief. This here a squall. A desk is left clean when
its rims ring. Those same figures that pressed you in dreams

flowed on a heated sea. Your favorite dream will bring
space enough, room enough for marriage. Could I get an ape, ma,

to gather my dolls?

8.

I firm a better way of waiting, emit blood, Vile, this launch
of plod detail bench pale. I have a sale for decisive people
lets you decide. Ramp leads to your tailored outfits, roam star

tobacco lift staircase penetration limit case of whatever dime star
loft stain Manichean out-image collapses the coastal meat in
on your bones, I can't twin it. I would, but. Then he just rocks

from the love of talk, or reverse lack thereof. Same thing, just
penetration, local carbon packing gizmo afire and from here.
A lacing of a novel. Do you think there are men of words at

the top? The rip desk where the money to ice it. Put the maps
back in the hole. Trips to see films of beef and veal? Never pop
your ice collar, achieve the stage to hate the clear truth.

There is none but only woods. Level space beats weeds and things.
Says as much to things. You could have dug a shack bui no, an apple
dark as glass or a whole flag of ocean. Aluminum staircase waves

beside a chorus of beams. A love to practice the gathers, but I
am coming up out of interest. Do the trees there work? His ex-
girlfriend had an insufficient lining, but I would never ask the pope

about Martians. Gate to steer clear of truths, loss of practice.
Isn't it a mite dim beyond those guns? Put out your cap.
Have you thought capitol cuisine or boarded the beasts in shuttle

suits? Then sleep to the bottom and paste whatever's there. I
would do a little driving. Let's see if you can drive to Hernia.
Uh huh, talk about placid. No determination, no way to lose

all your maps: These points are left up to their own balls.
The balloons that ring, let them. Are you so bored you will always
live? Got cash, threw rotten, planned to move to the cellar. Have I

gotten through enough avenues to loosen my business? Dug a clear
bell and fastened it, that paste has lulled my teeth to sleep.
No impact at all, ratings. Were their trees ever wet? A ticking

to tell your dreams by, throughout all space test. Sung about it
too, real fast. No windows, no skates. A larger love of forest.
I'll leave those gourds to their apes. A balloon made of apples.

A mirror made of maps. It's the place with all those bells and
whistles. Down to earth on the ocean a flag. Not unlike you,
bellbottom snare. I never heard anybody break that log, pepper is

the light behind all crayons. My night sharpened from lack of practice.
Place your pennies below the glass of a heated sea. Their beach

the center of trunks. My heart

a run in her hose. Stop sleeping
in fitted suits. Peer the film from those glowing
machines.

John Taggart

Rereading

He has closed the door to his room and he is reading

he has closed the door and he is reading a poem

he is reading a poem he is rereading one of his own poems

it is one of his own poems a poem about singing

it is a poem about singing about reasons for singing

reasons one of the reasons for singing

the reason was to light the most quiet light

the reason was to light the light that was radiantia

radiantia that was a singing light in darkness.

Light through the window rectangles of morning light

light through the window a rectangle on the floor

rectangle of dragon morning light on the floor

it is like a carpet like a tawny dragon carpet on the floor

the carpet does not transport him to a radiant realm

he does not cry out to be transported to a radiant realm

light through the window rectangle on the wall

rectangle of morning light on the wall

it is like a screen on which only light is projected.

He has closed the door to his room and he is reading
he has closed the door and he is reading a poem
he is reading a poem he is rereading one of his own poems
it is one of his own poems a poem about singing
it is another poem about singing about the reasons for singing
one of the reasons another one of the reasons for singing
the reason was to lift up bones in light
to lift up bones in curled leaves and petals
in a shining ring that is an ardor and a blossoming.

Light through the window rectangles of morning light
light through the window a rectangle on the floor
a rectangle of morning light on the wall
it is not the light in which the bones were to be lifted up
the bones in curled leaves and petals
in which the bones were to be a shining ring
he had intended the greatest gifts
his intention had been rebuked
his intention of the greatest gifts rebuked and scorned.

He has closed the door to his room and he is reading

he has closed the door and he is reading a poem

he is reading a poem he is rereading one of his own poems

it is one of his own poems a poem about singing

it is another poem about singing about the reasons for singing

yet another reason related to the other reasons

the reason. was to sing for heart's ease

to sing with the singing bones for heart's ease in a ring

away from all light to sing in a ring in true night.

Light through the window rectangles of morning light

light through the window on the floor on the wall

rectangles of morning light carpet and screen

it is not the light in which the bones were to be lifted up

not the light in which the bones were a shining ring

he does not cry out to-be lifted up in a ring

he had turned away from the highway

he had turned away from reflecting signs

he had not turned away from all light not all light.

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He has closed the door to his room and he is reading

he has closed the door and he is reading a poem

he is reading a poem he is rereading one of his own poems

it is one of his own it's a poem about crossing

about crossing a desert of glass to the crystal

another reason related to other reasons

another reason child on fire napalmed child

the child is in the crystal the central crystal

central crystal the fire-lit crystal of the wilderness.

Light through the window rectangles of morning light

light through the window on the floor on the wall

rectangles of morning light in which the bones were not a ring

he had been among those who couldn't wait for veiled light

the procession of those who couldn't wait

who crossed to fire-lit crystal of the wilderness

light from fire-lit crystal of the wilderness

all light was in all light was from

he had thought all light was in was from the crystal.

He has closed the door to his room and he is reading
he has closed the door and he is reading a poem
he is reading a poem he is rereading one of his own poems
it is one of his own poems about singing
it is a poem about singing about reasons for singing
one of the reasons related to the other reasons
reason was to brighten the corner where you are
not wait to be lit up not wait to embrace child
not wait to shine where you are shed your light afar.

Light through the window rectangles of morning light
light through the window on the floor on the wall
rectangles of almost too bright morning light
he could not wait to be lit up
he could not wait to embrace the child
could not wait to be in a shining ring not one heart alone
he is not in a ring he is alone in his room
the morning light is almost too bright
he's not in a ring he is alone he is one heart alone.

He has closed the door to his room and he is reading

he has closed the door and he is reading a poem

he is reading a poem he is rereading one of his own poems

it is one of his own poems about wandering

it is a poem about wandering into a red room after black

no red goes deeper than red after black

there was a reason for wandering

the reason was screaming from the child of pain

screaming from the child given only one picture.

Light through the window rectangles of morning light

light through the open window wide open window

rectangles of bright morning light

he questions whether this light won't turn into that light

whether this room won't turn into that room

no red goes deeper than red. after black

he questions whether he won't be willing to be child

not Vietnamese not Christ the child of pain

he questions whether willing has anything to do with it.

He has closed the door to his room and he is reading
he has closed the door and he is reading a poem
he is reading a poem he is rereading one of his own poems
it is one of his own poems about walking
it is a poem about walking about a corridor of rooms
about walking down a corridor of empty rooms
the reason was not his reason
it wasn't his reason the birth was their reason
their reason they had to know how the light was born.

Light through the window rectangles of morning light
light through the wide open window
rectangles of what could turn into crystal light
alone in his room not one of those rooms
not one of the empty rooms on a corridor of empty rooms
he questions whether this room won't turn into that red room
they had to know the secret of the birth
he questions whether his reason was not their reason
he questions whether they are happy in their knowledge.

He has closed the door to his room and he is reading

he has closed the door and he is reading a poem

he is reading a poem he is rereading one of his own poems

it is one of his own poems about sitting

it is a poem about the king sitting

about the king about the king sitting alone

the reason was the same reason his reason the same reason

it's the same reason the king was sitting alone

there is no flower and there can be no hope of rest.

Light through the window rectangles of morning light

light through the window that can't be shut

rectangles of what could turn what could return

the king nailed the singer of the voice

the singer was nailed to the wall

no phosphorescent flower in the king's hand

not in a ring alone he is sitting alone

no phosphorescent flower in his hand

there is no flower and there can be no hope of rest.

Leslie Scalapino

fin de siècle, III — a play

Done in a soft manner by two women who stand separated from each other in a long space, one set a ways back from the other. They use microphones on poles, speaking enunciating slowly with pauses after the poems as from a well or large field. Three of the poems are sung in a melodious soprano and contralto. A few sounds of reed instruments are heard beginning at the second "pause."'

at night stream-
ing like rats

crowds millions tearing at Khomeini's
corpse for scraps of the shroud
carrying it trampling screaming trampled
swaying fealty

in the street at night
to stop the tanks

stopped them sometimes
2. pulling people out of the trucks
and rejoiced

innocent
longing

1. soldiers lost in the park

firing of the soldiers who're
from the countryside who do
who'll
shoot them freely

they do
firing

man with bird cage up to tanks
says to the soldiers they're animals and
they shoot him in the chest murdering him

soldiers in streets in trucks
down streets
who're chanting
down with chaos
down with chaos

the tanks come
through and crush over people
2. and firing lines
some climb into crevices and are
pulled down within range

the old men who
1, order this wanting
fealty from them

octogenarian military men
sitting at a table praising the army
for the massacre after

dictator's military hand in their civil
war ours is supporting is
gunned down
and our official says I am shocked at
the gunning down of
a 73-year-old man

I always thought one had to be tough
1. I like the lowly
because they are tough

long time when
there's not saying
of anything just swimming
and walking

(pause)

we looked down
from the roof of the capital on
mass of chanting
flocking people up the street
in the moist air

he's depressed that we're who're
who'll
here in the air attacking what is "'for
the people"'

we say

(pause)

you know people through
time and they don't value anyone
and hurt and can't redeem themselves
and don't realize that

drunks

P the bureaucrats
on the roof
(sung as if
drinking
a Provengal:
in the sweltering dusk
love song)
of the city

wind wheeling on the pond surface
I, while man in rags paces behind park bench
(sung)
back and forth
back and forth

seen under clump of trees
(sung) hanging over bench
back and forth
back and forth

the proposition:
people here are stopping
people on the street
women stopping men

red
poppy fields huge
heavy drooping swept
in the wind

row houses and
the families're out on their stoops
in the heat

just go through the city
and go into any house
"throws open the door—they don't
mind

they're fourteen in
a room

ducks come down
on the pond surface couples
strolling on the other side in
dispersed formation

that is
random

beating sun
beating
beating

(she runs loping in
a loop several times
slowly forward and then
returning to her place)

not quite right

(she turns
:: n ite ri
an a circle) ot quite right

not quite right
just sitting on a bench
of the dispersed
benches

drank some liquid
sitting
bowed under the
slight shade
the people were out.
the liquid.
some
drank

then and forward
runs
slowly
rubbing

shade slight
the under bowed
sitting
liquid some drank

as no anxiety

to that

Fred Wah

from Music at the Heart of Thinking and Three Artknots

MUSIC AT THE HEART OF THINKING NINETYONE

Again only is it in the thing itself the place which is the driven place as a warm motor song hums under the chakra tree rock or stone creek song I've become used to such a thing always drowning and then owning myself come to my own = again possessed of me as the sib in the place of itself hungry with love again forgiven dreaming and knowing again the tailbone of itself bones claimed again so that 'thing'? to my soul's bark floats again

MUSIC AT THE HEART OF THINKING NINETYTWO

Don't do anything

just sit still and feel the bridge above

forget about the traffic

it's going as fast as it can

down here is the river property no train of words except some tropic text of truth about old creek song flows its utter pure of coolness underneath the fading rose another rose untangled knot a_ permafrost of frozen words unflavoured dirt for roots all this leveraging aggregate compassed grounding cord to compost loops the stomach's locomotor to Gaian feedback shutdown more to do with stellar steering of the junction
box genetic or the fresh-water hoofprint of salmon. salt

MUSIC AT THE HEART OF THINKING NINETYTHREE

Any gravel road's ok by me or is that an ordering intervention so long as it's not pure highway to the end of the void without my story our narrative's just a bunch of rotten windfalls under the apple tree of someone else's eye a statistical cluster made up to cover up and that stupid notion of a project as sticking it to everyone else instead of girdling yourself to the entelecheic text underfoot that dreamt you long ago

an earth doesn't add up to the only implicate map
ethnos is

the new doesn't have to be the purety nation is at least some Love pictographed without lexicon gets us to the grannies grammar

MUSIC AT THE HEART OF THINKING NINETYFOUR

This is no mass synapse I'm after and I've known awhile now being lost is as simple as sitting on a log but the fumble jerked mystique clouds grabbing as the staked mistake or stacked and _ treasured garbage belongs familiar to a gardened world disturbed as heat O soft anxiousness to be found again and again estranged but marvellous then enlived slope of scree and marmot whistle so that synchronous foreignicity rages in music I want to put into a region of the cadence before falling's recognized you know
where there's that disgraceful ensoulment Mao
called swimming

ARKNOT 18

from Schwitters' "Und"' no political or social meaning
knot or note for Nietzsche's Gay Scientist

Dreaming from Magritte's "The Reckless Sleeper'? 1927
some mind-work as a mirror

Egypt actually discovered that bird-like symmetry

and then pawprint loses out to glassiness (apples)
(except for the "T" over her head in the D'Orsay)

ARKNOT 19

Blake's room along w/ Samuel Palmer's "'visions and models of the exquisitest pitch of intense poetry"' pitch,
and dim light

the morning stars

(Jane Shore's penance)

"equal paradise
in all essential points"' keeps

kindled
ARTKNOT 20

Ahead art envelopes Beuys's 4 Blackboards while included in the width cubism narrated signage his word for it "'economics" arrows for HAPPINESS lazy reread to shine fate determining futurism while a
will selects dance

and away far away

John Clarke

14 Sonnets

Bees of the Aether

"The work of reflection, which is the task
before the present age, may ultimately be
explained in a higher form of existence."
Kierkegaard
"With the onset of reflection, an element
partially liberated from phyletic servitudes
began to live for itself."
Teilhard de Chardin

The more into the Elsewhere you roam
the more you can pinpoint, from the smell
of leather, say, focus upon the ranges of things
including the meaning of words, before closed
or ignored as interference, now movement
is just the reverse of what it was, memory
increasing proportionally, arrow of long-forgotten
zen archer coming home at last, sensorium
of the carcass humming, how unlike a poem
which absorbs into itself all attention, the only
observable black hole we've got, better not
enter except to return the favor, Vishnu's maya
means you always lose to the reflection in
the water, or is there another composition?

Green is the Color of Islam

Horse history from the Atlas mountains
driven toward the storms of the East,
nomads guided by brilliant stars braided
into pink appliqué handwoven by children.
who stitch in the ancient way a porous
pattern for women of the emerald night,
compensation for nose-piercing command

before there was ever camel for caravan,
‘Gobi’ trek into blowing wind and sand,
built for shifting landscapes of time,
the staircase of ancient doom as oasis,
tents and horse milk sky blue above
as once Toledo stood out in costume
against the conversation under the arbor.

Alabaster Gypsum

'*People tend to become cynical about
even the most appalling crisis if it
seems to be dragging on, failing to
come to term."

Susan Sontag, Artaud

To do, alternatively—enough or too much—
what you want, even Joyce's washerwomen in
Finnegans Wake cleaning away at the stains
of birth and death, disease, sleep and sex
all gone, no concession to human condition
so-called, more pure than Plato, exactly
as you like it, inside the tablet blank as
Locke could imagine, forever the real you
not marred by face or name, those images
we identify with to have another identity,
one we can part with, think of the horror
of revealing that, so that's what they mean
saying those things about us when we're gone,
they have never wanted to write a masterpiece.

The Flare For Being Right

"Correcting is to surrender to
an earlier picture in which things
hold together, by eliminating
new things that were impossible."'

Robert Duncan

Heidegger may have been right
about the need to rescue Origin,
which is neither Greek, German,
nor Cid Corman, but what a man
and a woman may find together
if they surrender enough to go
all the way to what Hawthorne
called "'ancient principle" (he
and his sister went half way)
only then to complete the picture
by finding it in the real world,
and you can call it Being, or
whatever, so long as it has been
circumscribed by an American apple.

"Wood Pussy"
to Tina
'For beings to whom ecstasy was forbidden,
no glimpse of origin, save by the extinction
of their vitality..."
E. M. Cioran

The point is you don't have to
be in the woods for a stranger
to intrude upon the very thing
you were doing, watching TV or
whatever, now the Biblical and
Greek combine to intervene upon
dear old American sitting room,
no need for an unknown quantity,
example, Hawthorne, incest not
adultery is the thing whenever
telluric forces gather to fuck
brains of whomever has equally
gotten off pastoral run-around
and not been made in any ways.

Glasnost AND Perestroika

Yet another quality of communal culture is openness
to speculation heard or otherwise made intimate by
certainty of possible outcome, no longer toward care
but an earlier riddle answered in the very immensity
of the tribe, the plainsmen compared to the villagers
who wore woven grass and loved indiscriminately(?)
the index finger and other escape routes categorically
determined by previous adept persons not allowing for
final liberation from the uniquenesses of followers
alone fit to be a stream of advice for restructuring
individual interpretation roughly made inadequate as
disproportionate to what produces speech and song in
the swelling of anything overbreathing the variables
of language dreamed of inside the conduit of others.

Nobody is Coming After Us

"The momentum of the retrograde
force is increasing; archaic forms
are moving toward domination
more rapidly than we thought."
Philip K. Dick, Ubik
"Simulation is master, and nostalgia,
the phantasmal parodic rehabilitation
of all lost referentials, alone remains."
Baudrillard

How then get the mind off them,
the old 'memes'—and new ones, too,
not the plagues of Burroughs or Reich
but a wild Virilio viral air zap like
pod transmission goop which glues you
to the group faster than a Kantian
category can resist alien invasion—
Flubbers—those who do not catch
the ball—high school redeems (morons)
more than the rest of us, since
she whom we gave life to is dead
they whom we didn't now reign,
not even supreme, just more ornery
replicas of our last third string.

The Zebraiad

"The romance of your spirit is the most
marvelous of stories. Your wanderings
have been greater than those of Ulysses."
"T noted that all such visions had a
character in keeping with each other,
that they were never mixed up with
modernity."
George Russell
"*Her nature leaps to be the comforter."
James Stephens
Line is still too unknown to be
batting off into epics."
Charles Olson

I just found out today that AE
in nineteen hundred and two told
James Joyce he hadn't enough chaos
to make a world and now it don't
matter, I can only wonder whether

I do. I, too, always liked the man,
and his friend who wrote well of Pan,
have both their books, and didn't mind
for once, that pun in Ulysses, aziou,
because this morning at just about 4,
which was the hour, after Joyce read,
he told him, we all do owe him that,
 that after that Joyce parsed instead
of trying to make one, thing is, do we?

Tibetan Nuts
for Liz Willis
"'Art is a correspondence to something
that cannot otherwise be expressed at all."'

Wood, or seed, not yet glass or bead,
nor 'purie' of jackpot fame, oh dear,
black cocoa beans, eagle stones and
the one I have of yours with that bit
of sea inside, from the 13th century
a Corbin apparition in the visionary
recital of what? Could we imagine
changing for dinner, as aspiration
first arose, the whole family inside
what counts? Raging hunger becomes
a birthday cake, one breath blows
the candles out, did Clifford know
when he stole from Steppenwolf that
glass bead game the shells of Demian?

The Lotus Eaters
for Stephen Crane
"*To say many things is equal to
having a home."
Ezra Pound
"They have forgotten
What had to be endured."
Sterling Brown
"Only the deceased can save us."'
Edward Dahlberg

Blake is home plate because he saw the momentary
incursion hit, though Swift likely saw it coming,
under capitalism it just got stuck on the record
repeating itself, our dwellings once thrown up
against the sound now filled with its spin-offs,
and all removed who might remember, including
Gram & Gramp, as history is confused with entropy
while the laws of analogy continue to balloon
into world-addiction, until homelessness becomes,
thank God, finally at issue, the time of quantity
won't let up, nor the homeless of the homeless be

assuaged save by caravel to the point of overlap
between mental travel and the trip, which then
comes in as future when real time resumes again.

Poem Beginning With A Line From Margaret Johnson

"It cannot be that what we say will make the words
come true," or ""There are not herons here in these
words after all"—I can't decide which, either way
would be a good opening, if I may delay my choice?
This is my first time with her, the only thing I
noticed I thought was off was said by her brother
in law, not her, and I sure liked those 3 short
sentences beginning there with "We cannot begin."
I'm glad she included picnicing and camping among
the formal arts, for there certainly is no chance
now Pound can get out of them, anarchy does rush in
where oblique angels, not Margaret, fear to tread,
see, Margaret would never allow a cliche like that,
so let's go back and begin with her herons instead.

One Police Against Another

for Robin, "'of such listening"

Until somebody notices the law
is already better upheld by us
than the Regulators who visited
at the behest of a spring mechanism
that has now apparently gone slack
so the police of the police pile up
until nobody is clean enough to hold
office except all those who follow
the leader whether a real one or not
because they prefer to watch cops
and robbers on TV & not participate
in these last days of mad scramble
to make the idea of perfection work
having used up the spell of Christ.

The Minarets, So Named, Not to be Parted With

Freud was right to correct Descartes, that it
reduces to more than a thinking ego, but wrong
to place in psyche, and wrong not to specify
the multitude beyond Oedipus, certainly to
includes Moses et al. left on the meta-plane
where no one goeth without them to edify,
hence their Cartesian desuetude, so there
is no room for Noah or a Samson to resonate,
therefore the futility still of the quest for
the honest man, it would make brain-washing
that much harder, that is, not cost-efficient
as doubt for Adamic when Arthur sheafs in
to litmus our belongings in a wider cynosure
than even Troilus' reputed Enochian conjecture.

World Baedeker

for Fred

"The Big Ghost [television] has stolen the night."
Bebtopup, Amazon medicine man

"The System is our polis."
Charles Olson

"Tt is Criticism that makes us cosmopolitan."
Oscar Wilde

So it doesn't end up in the Hegelian State,
history that is, or I told him, in the lake,
in which now everyone would find a reflection,
but just where you'd expect the archaic to be:
et in Arkadia ego—which of course goes for
not only Pausanias, but me and you, too, who're
tired of putting Descartes before the horse,
clearly a dietary religion masked as philosophy,
atheism, the minimalist form of greed just prior
to collapse into sanctioned barbaric rejuvenation,
provided we do ride it out to the end and push
on through mud-wasp heaven past language into
Henry Adams' 'ethereal' phrase of discourse when
last book ends at a harbor where the road dies out.

Nathaniel Tarn

Amicus Curiae (Architextures 22-28)

ARC22: 89

1.M./S.M.

Do but not be. Not be here but do there. Bring in a being. If you must, to be your doing there. Be-lieve here. You're not believed there. Here does not speak you or speak with you. Leave here and dwell there. Where for whatever reason you are not believed, nor even listened, nor lastly heard to, while chances of retrieval retreat for afterglows no one will credit. But there you are (here you go)—core of some inconceivable preoccupation: first atom-tone, and now atone—first star, first minute of (say) first four minutes, at this decisive, unquenchable throw! And none to witness it, So sit in power seat, so speech there. Or voice of music: that knife without a hilt. Grey here, green there, winter and summer single wrap. To shore where heart endeavors thoroughly, move there, swim there, fly that green shore. Ground green on grey: come into possible through parted curtains, come into possible out of paradise. You will recall it was exile there already: they show you from exile into exile. Do paradise will do, not be it—that is dream here, that is not do there, or ultimately doing.

An Herzland vielleicht. Look out for time there: you know this is not time. Here "time"" stands like a stone alone. Hinge of stone. Even stone in air is solitary, continues stone, however high, unheard by air around it. Where even dust assumed his light of once upon. But if that stone can deter light, and not fall back, well, on that stone can you not paradise again? What is that "do"' if not his gift of time? Made whole, as it was once before emergence? They move to you here as dreams do primary, not talk, not address, not recognize of you but—passing, always passing, through nightly mist, black mist of understanding. Lie under you, crushed, weeds coming again. Oh! there you are! Ha! Freewalk, freewheel, and he did not see, expect, invite you to pass by here, to inhabit his dream. Not even were he hand could handshake flower here: he will not see a single winter hand advanced to his in dream.

That face there. Interminable length of animal, beast raw from evolution, lengthy in shank and tail. Tall story. Trailing no glory-vapors out of creaturehood, countless back feet mired in slime still, yet look! That face there, already come beyond! This one encounter. Backlash is flesh but face is not: a sign of paradise to do there, where time can reach again. Shall do with those of cities, however stone

is hard, where men be found and moveable to do. But will, beware that. Enough for now already.

ARC23: 89

1.M./P.c.

Word. Clatter word. Weigh word. Position it. Then, here take word to lips and worship it, word clothed in lineaments of clean desire: so only word is wanted, lusted for. Not to look hard at word even that close but closed your eyes to word, lips laid a little on it, hot body tucked to it, so: penetrate. Hug word, fancy word close. Have you loved less than word without your own: you worm in love? So much for dinglichkeit. Ah, now word bears her offspring, une ribambelle they used to say, and so is sentenced to a length of hardship. You gaze now on this child, now over that, sensing resemblances, snorting the wind of kinship—until sense groups itself around you and you serve, as jury both and judge. And what you knew before you figured word, or while you met it, or even afterward, how does that clothe when winter want blows cold? Nothing prevents you from a turn of page: but, look, they troup again, closer this time, informed by page before, threatened by page to come. Many a page to come weighs on your knees: scarcely a winter blanket to your desperation?

And he enquired: why did you never name them? Whom you committed to a fouler death than all technology could bring them to? That question! By failing this one word: to unremember it? And he waited. For all his length of life, to be so moved! Oh such precise awaiting! For that annunciation would bring a color back to his lay universe! He sees request in his eyes that turn almost to hers, who had always awaited, whose fate was to await whatever might come by. Which, without here, will never touch her—but sail on by as if it were a dream: never to impregnate. To have missed a friend, sailing the night of a whole life, not meeting with those eyes, which thus requested. And he waited on.

For if he says to you: but be it pain, be it suffering, whatever by this face is promised to a word, or by a word, into time's belly—come now, remember! Whisper with wind these names till wind becomes his name, turns rings round planet of blind acceptance. But he humored him not: air stayed stagnant. Voice pleaded with silence without prevail. So quietly he stepped into the water which bore him off within the names he premised.

ARC24: 89

1.0./R.H.P.

aures habent, et non audient...

Weather no wise has an account with him. War begun among heavens (great thunder at outlying seasons), third world, third war that is. Today he gave his life away for a song but paid a man who took it. Analysis requires construction of 1]

Structure of field of philosophical production; 2] Structure of academic field; 3] Structure of field of power. From this to that and back to this again, whole structure of collapsing time-machine. On no account mess with this man unless you are "'knowledgeable"' as he. Which clock broke our philosopher on his own wheel, speech coming pure, high toned—in the form spider, in the form swastika.

Beware materialists without materials: this is no work for you. Beyond you must go, over two breasts ever in opposition, to which no third breast—no hospitable middle—can be attuned. Down through valley of death ride to seat of creation. Ride on right wings of revolution: find positive and negative in bed together. Turn your hard back on culture. Sink into inner revelation transcending all systems: follow arduous gurus and esoteric maestros, bugger four neo-shamans, suck off sweet animal, wrap a medicine tree, worship a whale, sacrifice his hunter. Back in nature the pure, the undiluted! Man is not born and has not been for several million years. What you have here is beast, violence prone.

Hyena hides in woodpile, drinks lives as they fall through the hollows of his hide. Beast as sterile as mule works on this world to swill it, by faint response to drill it into loss. Flies flag of faith-defender: massacres all gods. Upholds all priesthoods: sets fire to their hands. Sings welcome to talent: dips it in holocaust. Prologue of spoilers since world began! Before world even, hiding in woodpile, hiding in seed of world before MO/FA, primal mistake not fortunate, sperm of our woes, sin saturate among hypotheses as to how world would be: foul worm of your own gut: how should love sing without you?

ARC25: 89

1.M./F.K.

He has permission of morning to reach evening. Massively closed of late, doors of eternity open again: would you enter them and be lost? No, he prefers uncertain stay outside gigantic gates he knows to be for everyone alive: excepting him. He has begun to think she is a strange one to take a man crazy with stars into her house. But she can nurse her comfort: he's no astologer. Distrusts each single one of those maddened lights. Sure none will ever actually come down, or stretch to reach him. Suddenly, remembers trains which started out from a known place, arrived another, stopped at a whole bunch in between. As long as they do that is all he'll ever ask or ever will require, Obsessional. He who wrote in passionate friendship a full year after meeting—but had not thought to send some sign between: what do you do with such unerring lovers?

"If only he'd slip off into the light of heaven" she had thought—but he would not. Here is a whole noblesse fiercely believing he has them by the root. Constrained to correspond with him each once a day; call him each once a week; lard him with gifts, honors, awards each once a month, take him to town for ice

cream once a year: and, no, he sits as lone as fossil locked in rock. With that degree of dryness you could not spark with matches however hard you tried. It is the flame-proof dryness of the pharaohs.

Then, he would remember palaces standing in their own sweat of summer light, roof sculptures turned this way and that—some talking at the void, some versing with each other, always one at least singing, a few avoiding others, a couple so completely self-enwrapped, their steady gaze gashed fontanas into the cloth of heaven. From which new stars shone down. That fair rotunda famous throughout the world. Still, he dwells on in disbelief. Stars shine on down, ignoring palaces, preferring in cold wisdom a vernacular landscape. He is appalled at his fate: being a great believer—sometimes, he thinks, an only believer.

ARC26: 89

1.M./H.M.

Project being kill bull and yet keep ears by public grace—bull's ears or public's, no one knew for sure. He waits, dressed in child's clothes for people to collect him: no suit of lights. Back then, had she not been as old as hills, opening herself to him, bone door, but all her lower parts surrounding it, springtime? Passionately, before going out to fight, had breathed that new-mown grass, odor of long-dead leaves burnished to crimson, cherry, peach. Now he had wanted to be child again, received as such from birthday up—and there would be no break between that infancy, adolescence, death. Even gray-haired, they'd end by looking over this multicolored, satellite-surrounded planet. Innocently they came to be wedded here as if to receive a county. Miraculously, the county had given itself to them unalloyed.

But she burned. Where does it begin, the sense you have abandoned meadow for trees? Plots stand erect now like sets of unmatchable particulars. They'll work themselves, threadbare you understand, into her story. The one you always love to hear. Who would survive to hear one reading only, he means care to survive? You would not give a nickel for one of her bones, would you now—but what if bone stood up all by itself, named without waiting which way white beards would wag? And he, still asleep there, under anaesthetic.

Shadows moving behind bone, named now, labelled on skeleton, purveying a relationship from bone to bone so that, at night, ah, you would lean, as if ready to hear, what: gossip? scandal? classified information? No, better than that, door after door opening into, not darkness no: dazzling light. Tale you had told her you would never write, let alone tell. Tale cannot be divulged at any cost, expensive as this morning is, soaking up light. As if light were about to fall for life out of production. And he now, like his father, sleeping the great sleep of eternity, that had been laid to rest so recently, maggot-like, inside the ground.

ARC27: 89

I.M./M.M.M.

He wanted them to realize, at heart in this lost time, that he knew it was being lost. Multiply that by a given amount and you have his "stuff of several lost lives."" You will never find their story: it is untold—therefore shall stay untellable. Without our presidential libraries, all is forsaken. Mind is adjusted without a single guarantee. Small twist of wire: it moves one incremental step, no trace of an experiment survives. Wire could have just as well twisted another way. There it hangs, in its own marvelous light, remote from anyone's control. What mind records bears unmistakeable topographies of an old empire newly dismembered. My God! how he missed those long, fragrant lawns—and how those trees at their limits, where grass rose to inhale his light, called out for his return!

Father, Father, cried our maggot asleep in his wheelchair, you may come home now, all is forgiven. But his voice had meant "'forgotten." Before its loss of song, no son had it afforded any sign of forgiveness. So, imperceptibly, he'd floated out of madness all encompassing into a sanity would gladden peoples' hearts until he died. Infinitesimally, he stood himself alone, grown giant suddenly in fine-grained daylight. He had poured himself into some blue recesses of his being—something, he'd thought, that no one, evermore, could take away from him. He no longer even cried at scenes of family reunion. After that, a prodigal never came home. There was no need to. He sent a mask instead. Stop spinning about that dark pit! He had heard and would try. Give away everything that you cannot recoup! He would be generous in his upbringing.

Far below contents of packets which came by mail each morning was "'packet" itself. That it should have left its point of origin, travelled so far through frozen night—and reached him was all that counted. For that matter, packet could have been empty for all he cared. Once in his life, one packet had contained a book —"here, this was found for you"—and once, it had, by miracle, brought a star to his empty sky. Star belonging to him, he had thought for the balance of his existence, our father's star. Magnificent, belted, with sword and dog, star stood for recognition in splendid void of heaven. Devoid of all stars else. Had kept out all stars else. Stand by me! seemed to cry star. His eyes faltered. He had always needed the most angry scope to envisage anything at all.

ARC28: 89

1.M./P.C.

Who had walked into immense and terrifying worlds of suffering never distant, to shut traps on all else. Walked with eyes turned inward so that inner face of eyes, when outward now, showed pitiable lust for friendship. Finesse required over one lifetime from such friendship known in advance no way attainable. And so small

animal bedded down at heart, once and for all, losing all hope. You have done with such eyes? They could not swivel back into a world of suffering, immense and terrorist. On another side of this place into which he had entered, radical friendliness continued shining out of countenance: movement of welcome to an outer sea become primordial ocean of churned milk.

So that what had been done to those eyes was they were not to be met. From friend to friend had he not wandered, hearing the names (and their innate impossibility), wanting to push it, not pushing it (sojourns so short, so much to savor in such cities)? Among the line, gorging themselves at a buffet, why had this one, choosing a single slice of ham with ineffable meekness, precisely this one, this one alone, extracted such a flood of repressed weeping? An epilepsy among those inner eyes, as long as remembrance would last? Knowing almost all those who knew him, yet had he not continued never to meet? Borne in excruciating shyness his own cross? While both their signs had always shone together, in a full sky of unquenchable stars?

He would have saved a life, perhaps as well as may be, collated river with his own surmise, had he been able to dam that flow. How can it be sworn at this late date they never crossed among their birth streets? Oh, you that would have loved, but knew it not? So that river, rushing along its bridges, forever feeds his sea of churning milk. Let them take him from this city and he would die had been his primal oath. And he had flown with city, fluent in its clouds, who now flowed foul and fallen through its corpses. Shadow, breath shadow failing to reach you. Never to hold that hand. Not only those who have survived their lives have been deprived of them.

Joseph Simas

from That Other Double In Person

In Motherly Embrace

OONE MOTHER IS ENOUGH FOR NOW. O I came to realize early on that I could not impress her. I could hit her or scare her, make her laugh or fill her face with joy, but I could not impress her. Any further inside-out than this, any more transparent, and I would have thought she was not there.

Lagging behind somewhat, sleeping on my stomach, burying my head in the crux of her shoulder, and I felt something more than I could have possibly imagined, a presence whose singularity could not be disturbed any more than it could be impressed. I have no idea if there were other ways of knowing this, nor do I know that I care. I have no comment to make, no criticism that would add to or subtract from this displayed quality, an intellect that is put forth as another body takes place between one and one more. In this, I care not who she was or what she did; whatever filled her words with love was forever there.

The glass is full; it tips over; it is still glass. Empty or full a scream rises to the top of someone's throat, a pair of hands flails toward me and I look back bemused over such a ruckus. No matter how many parts there are, no matter how wet I am, it is still glass.

Slobbering and confused, shitting carelessly and bathing in piss, he grabbed for someone who was not there. Rancid odors and the insipid color of rejection mingled with sweet smells of sensation, touch, an overload, an endless prison of experiential gifts. Nothing can be done here. Someone is in his way. Someone comes back. Someone lifts.

Anything could happen and he would not suspect a thing. Horizontal, the world is a plane one awkwardly flails across. A meandering joy of bubbling and excitable occasions for importunity act independently of one another. A rubber tit —(that poor excuse for moist and salty flesh, a bulb, the warmth of a lull in time, that harmless cushion: the sweet lush of my mother's breast)—gags mechanically. A lump with plastic cylinders balancing from the verbal orifice. The concentrated-milk-in-a-can man. The boiling method and plastic sheets whereas any softness of flesh or cotton would be enough for now, horizons, sunsets, sweet things of distance and pastel softness, water in the form of dew drops, anything mush.

All I want is to rub my little sex in the clover grass, stick my fingers in, turn my little protrusions about, roll my sweet little body in the warm mud. It doesn't hurt!

Ah! and then the warmth of controlled water, a slimy soft glove in the cracks, gently rimming the lips of my ass. Do not be ashamed, mother, go ahead... giggle with me, kiss me and laugh.

Suddenly, Father enters.

What happens to a world that is based upon such authorities, such brutal misinterpretations, such pent up righteousness? Now I have to stand up and fight, and because I have yet to discover that I am in the midst of rivals, I flap my arms about, gaggle, slip under water, come up with a mouth full of soap crying and screaming, nearly choking myself to death.

Now look what you've done! (She brings me to her breast. I start sucking and throw a malicious glance at Father.) That's better... yes, it's alright... he's just jealous, that's

(Father leaves, slamming the door. Mother puts the glove back on.)

But the glove is mechanical.

Already, I have to be considerate of others. Who's to blame? No sooner do I begin to discover another person than someone else steps in to impose a comment or action that may or may not have anything to do with that. One can hope for the best, but what can two hope for? Time and time again has burdened me with a past that has nothing to do with me, a future that must be part mine in order to exist. Yet I have never been alone. Nor shall I ever be. And perhaps this is it: death, the only virtual consequence of my dance: death of the other.

Whereas the individual buffers himself against the world with a false belief in his loneliness, I have finally accepted the fact that I will never be alone, nor can I even pretend to imagine that or try. For what would be better than to feel no need to speak to anyone, at all; to feel content knowing that no one would ever come along?

I have caught myself again, I have been caught; I have been told to start over by the few who mean anything at all to me right now. They are right, I must begin again, though my reasons for agreement are different from what made them tell me to recommence. For them, I might just as well forget it all, myself, everything—very little of what I am or have done is worth the trouble, it's one big knot, one sour canker sore, a blight in their lives, and certainly a harm to others.

I can't understand why I haven't heard this more often and am inevitably indebted to those who speak their minds in such forthright manners. Their wound is wide open and I am in it. I allow myself to sit and fester there, to drive it in, to pour salt on the wound. I seem to revel in the sick gap. That's the first part. It's the first real life fiction I make up myself—and, more often than not, agree with, obviously.

Then a word comes in that is like melancholy; it is a word said in passing, a word most likely forgotten once said; it represents a condition that is hardly ever noticed until gone, rarely satisfied when present: kindness. Jf you want to be my friend, be kind to me. That's all I ask. You have lost the right to ask anything of me. If you want my respect, be kind to me. Just that.

Where have those moments gone when there was no question of becoming—which is to say, leaving behind what you are to find someone else—? It's as if this becoming-another is the only message I have ever understood while nevertheless being thoroughly incapable of acting upon it. I suffer because of my lack of kindness. I justify my weaknesses in order to forget that I cannot become you no matter what I do to try. What I cannot give you is the source of my crying. What I cannot rid of myself is the cause of my grief for you. I lie because I want you to believe that I am not lost. I scream and attack to rid myself of all that is left.

He never expected her to be anyone else. His moods had very little relation to what she might do or say, and if they were in accordance with hers, this too was accidental or the product of an incident that could not be explained as such. There she was day-in and day-out and nothing she did ever changed his feeling that her presence was much the same as his—unquestioning, faithful, doubtless.

Now he lives with her in a different kind of wanting, a wanting steeped in poverty, indifference and neglect. He multiplies himself in order to escape what he cannot become in her. He tires her image with the countless faces of others he does not have to think about. He carries his own image back and forth through futile travels and long-distance accounts.

"Has this discovery hurt your love for me? Can you forget that I live with you in two shapes? Doesn't the diminution of my form also diminish your love for me?"

I have nothing to gain in infancy, nothing to appropriate you with, no condition to return to as if this distance did not exist. Yet, against my better wishes, neither can I assert an accumulation in any measurable sense. Time passed, displacement, or difference, I'm not sure that it matters, but that it must be something, or at least that it is not nothing, something endures and can be said to exist.

I slowly began to understand that my body was not so much mine as all that. One of my first words. It turns out he was not as mean as he appeared. I liked his hands. They were like a cradle. I got my first feeling of release, a new space from them. Being held out in the air like that, my whole body just being held like that, and that I too might hold on. I don't think I wanted to say her name, it took me longer: I didn't want to leave her body. Yet despite all its goodness, I must also have felt some tension in it. Holding back. Social pressure. Forced indifference.

Once I started babbling it was as if the whole world shifted, and I fell down on my two little feet bouncing off anything I could run into, attacking anything I

could attract. Sucking became a snatch or gesture and often I'd grab for her breast, burrow my nose in her clothed nipple. Or I tried mimicking: '"Theup. Theup."'' Making up nonsense words to obscure the speech act, close down the barriers again. But she stood resolute and pretended not to understand, called someone in to help her interpret. Crying worked for a while. The occasional surprise attack.

But I picked up speech too soon. Too articulate for my own good. It took me a while to figure out what had happened. I'd say things like she's going out to play and mom would say no, it's not she it's he, and dad would say, no it's not he it's I, and I'd say that's what she said.

I was a little pussycat, a real tiger, a fast-talking double type. I became a smart-mouthed little pyromaniac, setting fire to anything I could blow. I lied like the wind, smoked in the back room and took a sensual liking to anyone with generous sex. Alone, I loved to masturbate. I finally got dunked in ice to stop the fever from rising too far beyond my head.

A hard angle or square, the bone of my forehead struck a tab or table, a butt end. Blood-pour, too much blood. A concussion, a ripping nail or drive, a confused torque as the skullcap shifts, grinds, puts pressure on the soft insides, now like mush but with bounce, luckily. Too much blood to scream. I sat there in a prolonged tilt, as what seemed like a hundred floating mothers came to my aid. I must have smiled dumbly, or doubl-y: a red gashsmile on my forehead. Slowly, like grinding teeth, something must have forced my cap into place. There's no doubt I knew what biood was. Now I could screamchoke, a long slobbering yard of breath up to the turn... my whole body pulled down by the catch at the inside top of my nose... a yard of sobbing breath again... the same catch... then a flicking image of three mothers with sponge in hand, wiping floor and face, yelling for help, stunned. I began to notice the length of my rising breath... its fall, again the rise... and finally a slowing... a steady diminishing until I calmly looked at my mother, stuck my finger in the blood.

This is why I still love her. Perhaps this is why she continues to wake up with me, to go her separate ways and come back. She's still alive. He still thinks of me. Open that door, I'm leaving... now!

I dig deeper and deeper into flesh. I stick my face between her thighs, put my hands on her ass and pull, fingers outstretched, as if I might melt inside with enough pressure. Ivory, a long slow dive, a kind of cradle, an unabashed desire for softness beyond my wildest guess, a purely sensual love of flesh. In there I want nothing else. Her body is a drape, an island, and at certain times it could belong to anyone else. The rules are forgotten. Suddenly I can feel the gift of body lost inside. I've almost slipped, hold on! Let go! Yes, there, I want him. Give! She pulls back. He grabs my waist, digs his nails in. Deeper! I will never let you go! Come back!

The intellect does not relinquish its act. My hands

' tied, the mind races to that softness, enters it, leaving all but the mirror behind. I still want to show her more. I have yet to give him the world by going inside. There is no one left to make me give it back.

The loner is a liar, the one alone a self-pitying fool at least once. I'd rather have circles than water. The growing little child alone is autonomous, yet she too is prey to violence on all sides.

Five or six foreigners hide when something happens to me and as a member of the club I keep my mouth inside until the tide rolls over. They shaved my head with ritualistic regularity and didn't mind where I stuck my little hands, Whatever mask I had on at the time I'd have been better off with three or four images, two or three magnets or mirrors, a head full of flowers like a bouquet. I stood naked in the middle of the room and watched my little penis stand up while I ate fruit, letting the juice ran down my chin.

They had to let me go after a while and all the little foreigners came out to greet me with shaved heads and similar stories. I grabbed the waist of the boy standing next to me and started sucking at the fold on his chest. It burst open into a car and smashed everyone in sight. We kept screaming for more and more blood until the teacher came in. It followed that we wanted to play; did we have to go in the bushes?

Let's play self-government instead! I'll be the president until we have an election. Now let's hurry up and get organized. What about feeding time? I'll take you and you and you, say anything and we'll smash your ugly face or something like that. Yeah, let's start giggling and aggressing! Let's rub on each other seriously, take ourselves for granted, make fun of anyone who steps outside!

Then the pen came down from my thigh to write that every half of all their bodies was masturbating. The feet were no remedy. One of the functions of the forbidden was why over fields of dismay we laugh. You wait until the if says yes and kissing each come home to a split-open chest spewing hot coals and little gas explosions exaggerating somewhat with tears like this: my love is yours, all yours, take care of me, take care of yourself. But the other little girl got mad, and I was just about to begin again when the song burst out, reminding us all that life is not a school.

(You can ask me to name him all you want and [still won't come any closer to telling you who she is. You're repeating yourself, I've heard that question before. What would you do if I did tell you his name? No it's a girl. No it's not, he's a boy. That was not her name. That's the last time I fall for that one. Do you think I'm going to let you eliminate everyone in sight? You can't make me talk. You can't make me answer your questions. You can tell me what to do and I might have to

do most of it but you can't make me talk to you. Yes J do know his name. Almost, but I'm not that slow. Yes yes yes yes. Sure I could tell you her name if I wanted to but to you... never. When have you ever talked to me. Now is not enough. J did it. Alone. It's not as impossible as all that. You believe me, don't you? No, there has never been anyone else. Confused? Lost? Now who is alone? Don't cry in front of him, hold it back, don't let him see you cry. You think that will get you any closer to his name. Go ahead, hit me again, I'm ready. How long do I have to sit here anyway?)

I've embraced this ailment again, relinquished that little bitch in my side. The blemish upon my memory is this inability to go back outside the time I find myself in and to think of him as living before the written proof that he has gone down. In any event to go back and pick around the hole draws itself shut until I come through to wake him up again. All the numbers lead to a well near the stall when the telling was less than simultaneous. There is no other program than this example, pain of aching flesh, an inflamed thought of fear, a mistake uttered in the wrong social crowd. I have scrambled myself beyond the point of any other intelligibility than what comes to me right mow and I yearn for more, and more. The preparation takes on many forms including approval from some of the right sources. My pain is measured in your demands upon me.

I am put here to ask you why.

Say yes to me, be kind. Open up your heart to a spring of knowing only that each next act is fine if it is measured, sounded, and rhymed. The violence is a mockery of our own stupidity, a shared belief in the consequence of material things, a progress of decisions made on short notice with or without someone else in mind. Let the slow and ostentatious go off to war, do not be so quick to slight the babbling ones. Let them talk, listen to them. Do not be cowered into muteness with images.

Mother! where have you gone? You and you and you! It has been forever since I fondled your breasts, watched you undress at night, climbed into your bed when nights were too long. Nostalgia binds us together now, a tenuous line of blood traveling through years of distance that have brought us no closer than any number of friends, relatives, fleeting encounters. Yet, of course, I love you. I love your name, the way it brings me back to a time when I could not have been conscious of death. Your protection was so much greater than that of others! You brought me closer to you than you were to yourself, I was not only a part of you... [became your better part to watch from a safe distance, a distance necessary to think straight, to let one's own mind go in order to stop the terrible clock. And I took you for granted. I will never forget you for that. I became your death. I could

see you measuring the distance each time I took a step. Small death by small death, punishing you.

Punishing myself. Taking pills from the medicine chest, sticking my nose into foreign things, being attracted to anyone I did not yet know. Yet I was never really seeking you through all of this. The more we have the more we are conscious of lacking something or someone, an insatiable hold grabs on to the heart or throat and an exclamation of this-is-not-it, -this-is-not-enough! escapes and there you are alone while I stand watching from a distance. Someone suffers the strength of an emotion they could not possibly have anything to do with. But you have done well at quieting this pain, of lessening the weight of things that surround you, of falling off to sleep when it is time to slip into bed. Unexpectedly, I began to live my own death.

I was not, am not, ready for it. It is not so much the death as the fact of living it that implies such a shift that I have yet to turn myself around to face it, as if I could just turn another corner instead of realizing the start. Please forgive me for saying that it was much easier to have killed you little by little. I have slowly murdered a part of you, and the others I have killed with more or less effectiveness, they too are gone as I knew them once. Now there is no one left to kill but myself, a deliberate murder in small doses, an undeniable process of thought that will not let me off without a great loss of... who am I? what do I think I'm striving for?

Still I continue to keep the loss as far off as possible, with some compromises. Few have understood my fault. Perhaps there are others, perhaps not, I'm not sure that it matters. That some have recognized me will have to do. That the tone carries us away for what little it is worth. The question I keep asking myself is this: which will come first, loss or death? Why is it that to push on one brings the other close to the skin, a part of the skin, a conscious breath? And yet, if I could begin over, go back to the womb and watch myself grow up in you... would this relieve me of the loss I must face in order to die in peace? Yes, i would have to be you, you alone. No one else would do; there are no substitutes. You alone, an experience so far away from myself that, of it, I can remember nothing at all.

Father, father and I cannot.

The simpler movements are flat. The deception in not finding what I went after turned into a full version, a surface bound to draw me out with time off for good behavior.

Now to think that first person whose origins have no relationship to me at all... whose versions are far less cumbersome than I had thought... whose surfaces are impressionable. Still I ask myself: For what, really, do I have to suffer? What pain have I felt that has not been felt stronger by others before me? Does this mean I

have to begin another fake death, another false start in reaching for someone who is not there?

I left the room for a glass of water. He turned to follow

[= TO LOVE AND I CANNOT and I wish to not love me. I had been waiting for the perfect moment. I left the room for this. He turned to follow me.

I had been waiting for a glass of water. I left the room at the right time. He turned to follow me.

What I had become was this. The human in me changed places. I had become an index of someone prior to myself.

Yet the significance of the event was not as I had previously imagined it. There was no visible fault, no closing gap, and I was taken even further aback by the fact that he did not see it; or he did not want to see it; or he had already seen it and now he did not care.

Someone had grown up in me without my having noticed until he was gone. Even then the sudden absence was not so much a pain as a sign that someone had been there before me, that I might not be as alone as I had thought. There may have been some hatred in my eyes but the sentiment was spent and I had come to another conclusion. We were not alone. While I would not have expected him to turn immediately in my direction, neither could I do anything obvious to help. We could not be alone: to help would have made him believe I was reaching for someone who was not already there.

The nearest room was already in me.

Was there anything else on my mind?

Nothing really ends up the way we want it to. The blank was filled with another someone like myself but better and stronger, as tough and ominous as the other. The subject stated, there was nothing left for me to make of him but what I wanted, in my own image, that is for a while at least. He may have begun but I was soon to follow—so closely in fact that before long little difference could be felt: distance was an ambiguous part of the picture. I took on the characteristics of his little image and because I was in full and rapid development there was nearly nothing that wouldn't fit under my wings for a spell. I smiled in my little white shirts. My little suit had become accustomed to me.

One day, a walk flung me off the path and I started to run for my life as if the trees had swatted me. The branch felt like I did. The dry hot clod was the lump in my throat. The root caught itself on fire. Someone stood by and watched as I sat another next to me.

She laughed and told me to go away. I laughed and said just you try it. Just you try to follow me then, said she, and we were off. The first stretch threw everything imaginable in my path and had me limping and crying for more. I was becoming a

hardheaded little knot and it felt good to have someone as tough as the earth itself beside me. Then she led me into a dark and humid place and I could feel the oil being churned from within. We stayed undercover for what seemed like hours, progressively working our way out from the labyrinthine maze of soil, bramble and bush. She let me rest and we sat there in the hot sun asking each other for more, and more.

What goes better with sun than moving water? We were at the edge of the bank and dove in to emerge miles and miles away. Wetness had become us. I drank of her and she drank of me until there was nothing left but the vanished trace of what we had become. We disappeared for days.

Yet the real forces are of another order and we both knew, even then, that soon the time would come when we would have to speak up and use words strategically. It was easy at first; there was not much left for them to do but talk back once they had found us. We had spent enough time preparing a solid case that began with a look of bewilderment, incomprehension, and fear. She went back inside to lend me strength and before a word could be said that bore the tinge of anger, I spoke: Father, father!

My face was all the more real to him, all the more fragile and insane. I could feel that doubt, suspended, excruciating, unconvincing. It was the convocation in my eyes that crippled him. His pain was everything I stood for; still, to make matters worse, I kept pretending that I hadn't caught on.

It seems much easier to turn down an unacceptable path than to confront the inevitability of loss pure and simple, whoever goes first. This avoidance of pain while often an expression of one's obsessive fears can also be an example of weakness turned inside-out, an honest showing of vulnerability that spares the other in that it relieves him of any responsibility in matters of behavior. Whether proposing or refusing, one sees that the path itself is indifferent to actions, and that may turn out to be just what was needed after all. But, assuming avoidance plays a part in the ini- tial decision, there is no stopping the slow accumulation of losses.... Ultimately, I wanted to believe I could lose the experience of any single instance of loss, at all.

I do not wish to let this happen again.

I do not want to see you turn away indifferently.

Self-sentenced, charactered over by a doubling that displaces itself as the person in front of me is displaced and as my equal begs to place another word. I thought I'd wanted to get out of this alone before I felt the presence of that person whose features I do not want to forget... whose presence I do not want to regret... whose love for me I do not want to double.

Any other foreigner could impress that much upon him. I wanted to arrive before it was too late.

Better late than never.

I am happy to see you here. Yes, you are better than before.

Stronger perhaps, somewhat fearful of regret.

Smarter, certainly, I am glad you have come.

What actually happens when I sit down to reflect and turn my self inward to the charms of fiction I take seriously, each slow step at a time, one on one? By reversing the literal I have closed myself in with him. The jar slowly threatens to tighten around my neck as I hesitate. From the inside I can begin to define a world that is separate from me, utterly removed, and in which my actions are based upon the comforts of habit and meticulously futile care. As time goes on it appears easier —but to talk we must finally leave behind the room we share.

Gradually the jar begins to grow and another room unwittingly begins to appear. Again, the fiction cannot be denied and its affirmation in the face of others elaborates itself with an insistence that is as actual as we had taken the world for granted. Again, I get the chance to step outside, to look back at the little things I have left behind and I want to grasp them, take them in my hands again and feel them for the hard value of their worth.

I cannot have them. I can have nothing. The separation is like a wall that is forever changing density. Now thin and transparent, now thick and opaque, and whatever form it decides to take it is always there. Nothing I can do can change that. Interior changes? Yes... if by that I forgive the world for remaining the same. Exterior changes? Yes... if by that I exclude the possibility of any interior modification, Simultaneous inside and outside change? It seems impossible....

Yet, here we are in kind....

Dying.

Why this self-indulgence? For years that is all I wanted.

Why here? I wanted him to get off my back, to leave me alone, to go to hell.

The line is thinner than I thought. Penetration was the word that came to mind.

The air is pervasive. Little by little, I moved in as close as possible.

This body is not mine. I break down along the way to see how closely fiction resembles the thought I have yet to explain.

Safer structures appear to work best. But surfaces are opaque.

Clearly determined habits of exchange that build character from scraps. But a name is not a character.

Methodical constructions of behavior through lines of a measured length. Still the lines misbehave.

Calculated sources of knowledge. The path remains unpaved.

Connections. Imply gaps.

Wealth. Is never the same.

He is not a candidate anymore. What else can I say? In principle, I could want no less than has occurred, no more than what will certainly follow. But to eliminate a form does not necessarily make room for another. The pretext should be something simple enough to put away....

I've known many fathers since then and with each one I went through a similar process—shorter in time, but virtually the same in style. Father by father each period got shorter until I could no longer remember the influence I had expected to come from him.

We've met a few times since. Occasionally an attitude slips through the past from one side or another. Occasionally the person in me changes places. Sometimes he turns away from me and never comes back.

What more could I ask? Two people look at each other one on one. As they part another double lags behind to think. After all, there are only so many people with whom you can actually meet.

The violence I caused my mother is the first example I can think of you.

It is in my failure to understand that I can approach you as such.

Forgive me, for I have yet to learn your name.

I am violent because in you there can be no violence.

I make sense of things because in you there is no need to make sense.

I can reject you because you cannot be rejected.

There is an image of you I cannot stand.

But you have no image.

My father is my witness in you.

But you have no witness.

My mother is my complaint against you.

But you have neither mother nor father.

I am confused with you.

But you know nothing of my existence.

I am named by you.

Who can only be named once.

Previous sections of Joseph Simas' That Other Double In Person appeared in Temblor 7 (May 1988) and Temblor 9 (May 1989).

Kevin Killian

On Gerald Burns

Thriller

Thriller: Gerald Burns, Some Recent Work

"mountains, which opened out are the shape of waistcoats" ('Madox Brown's Work'')

"Sitting in the mud I washed the teacup with a flattened hedgehog" ("Ing Poem for Sheila Murphy'') the general act of "'written" art: as the hand moves the Bic across a flat sheet of paper, it distorts the paper, and insofar as representation is attempted, Mercator's spirit smiles down upon us. Gerald Burns' poetry is at once critique and celebration of this, the mapmaker's art. Along a map of hunches its calculations and foreshortenments act, push, pull. How far, how wide. Ignore for a while how often this writing insists on travel as a topic; there is no topic. Think instead on how its long line, west to east, proclaims itself its own Starship Enterprise. ""Don't focus on the words, it is a printed page. / Can one be forgiven lines like maps to show where streets go / ribbony exhalation, Xed block, you are here / as I draw a red Volkswagen in the lot next door / coloring it when I can, the need to be vivid'' (A Book of Spells IT).

Folded over like an auto map from Shell, the text gives sparks, like Burroughs' cut-ups, the folded-over part apparently a casualty of the new text—we haven't much access to it. Tug at each side of the folded paper, however, and the missing waterways, freeway exits and suburban towns reappear—not exactly them, but the red boxes, doublechecked lines, and hydrocephalic rhomboids which represent them for us who would travel toward them, on them, across them. "'Mountains, which opened out are the shape of waistcoats."" As he who might add, '"Waistcoats, which 'opened out' are the shape of mountains."' Representation the locus of the pleasure, the pleasure that teases out of thought.

And then just try to refold one of those open tourist maps, especially when the wind behind it blows a concave mirror out of it, into your face! (Stock situation in a Lucy- Desi sex farce.) The bulgy text, like one of Elizabeth Murray's household cleansers pregnant with something e,—only the flapping wind, or the hot dragon breath of Armageddon? "Punch's mouth coming at you out of mist."" Still the American convertible continues inexorably to move, on the Route 66 that leads to Hollywood, California, under Desi's sure hands, the car in steady gear, cruise control. Then, thirteen episodes later, back to the East. Sometimes I think of Burns'

line as a mechanism to catch the blown detritus of 80's trash culture, and the fragmented detritus of classical/romantic culture of many ages. "It is like collage, my father said of Book I / and I've not found domainable engraving assemblage / interesting ever"' (A Book of Spells IT). '"Subject may be / the political addition to a crumbling wall."" For an analogue to that which I have lamely here called a "bulgy text," compare Burns' reiterated trope of the tunnelling mole—writer, reader, subject, burrowing through mounds of effluvia and leaving its own shape, in relic, fossilized in earthwork. The star you see is the one that's not there any more. Those

F LATTENING, OPENING OUT, terms of action relative to leavings tell that the mole, asteroid, has been.

In the "Double Sonnet for Mickey"' (Spillane), the emblems of culture are analyzed. Mike Hammer's "hideous" apartment, in Robert Aldrich's film of Kiss Me, Deadly, is decorated with "camera cases, statues and two-dollar / framed people, everyone's limbs pointlessly extended, plasticman fixed for a decade in bronze, / none of this inadvertent." I'll say. (There's also what might be the first telephone answering machine ever filmed, big as an ox in heat and twice as impassive.) Mike's car is just as much an emblem, or talisman—it has to be, because "one doesn't recognize a Hammer from sketchiest drawing or collage / the way a sphinx or thinker's fair game for cartoon or cover art."' In this analysis Cloris Leachman's beat, windblown artiste can ask, 'Do you read poetry?"' and Mike Hammer can oppose it in a—pause. 'A masculine style." 'He doesn't even answer but just looks at her.'" What can be miniaturized, or what is capable of being caricatured, has the likeliest propensities for longevity, not to mention fame. We move these tokens around like tokens. In poetry, we move these tokens not from place to place but from the beginning of a line through to the line's end. On "context" so much depends. In Kiss Me, Deadly, Cloris Leachman's last words are "Remember me,"' as in Christina Rossetti's sonnet. (Cloris' character is called "Christina"'). Burns: '"The plot / may be said to turn on a book of Christina Rossetti poems but to / me it is that pause, a careless sneer on Meeker's face as he not / only does not answer but sees no reason to get mad."' Cf. Bruce Boone (in "Writing and an Anti- Nuclear Politics'): "'When the camera pokes around Mike's apartment—nosy, just like we are, for clues about this man's psyche—we see clunky 50's type 'deco' furniture, ugly pictures of Picasso type women, faces distorted by anxiety or fear, and dangling mobiles, Calder style, that by right everybody in the movie should be bumping into, they're so clumsy and obtrusive." In "Work is Speech," Burns writes, "'what we think of as style is ternporally local," and in the "Double Sonnet," style's temporality is underlined, foregrounded: "She asked him knowing he would look at her as if a bad / smell in

the car were hers and she, producing it, would know he knew she had.'' What a reaction to "'poetry'"'—no wonder poets love this film, we are powerful genii in it, atomic Aladdins! '"That look is not eternal," Burns continues. "It is a product of the late fifties like Bucket of Blood."

"Praising is what style does, always does, and this requires that style / have a style," and on and on. Once I heard Burns' poetry described as "'origami,'' and this seemed unfairly dismissive until he who thus characterized it elaborated on the intricate and extensive sociology of Japanese paper-folding. But I don't want to sound like a Michener novel about this, a philosopher in a plug hat

"discussing that pit men in shirtsleeves rest from the digging of.'' Manley Hopkins' "'in-folding"' may be a better characterization, the implosion of syllable and Cartesian stress. "'Any old trash, beamed at by Williams, became beamed-at trash."" In The Myth of Accidence, Book VIII ("Fretting an Upscale Themis"'): after Hogarth and Goya, Turner, not the British painter-king, but Kathleen Turner, the 35-year-old star of Body Heat, Romancing the Stone and TV's "The Doctors." It's not everyone who can look out his or her window and see Kathleen Turner there, but whereas O'Hara might have made a setpiece from the experience ("'Kathleen Turner has collapsed, we love you, get up!"') she's only part of Burns' speedy scenery, "'celebritous"' as Caroline Spurgeon or Denise Levertov, or the bum on the street ing spare change, out of Da Nang and Boone's Apple Farm. Indeed the disenfranchised and the abject are powerful counters in a line like Burns'. "'Any old trash"' is correct—there's no object too trashy to fit into this calling. Andrew Wyeth's "Helga loden-caped in boots / accompanies'' the sublime, Hogarth's 'Shrimp Girl enjoys day yellow / as projector's bulb (the picture cooler gray and pink) age / tinting bare canvas."' The painter of "'Juliet and Her Nurse" does make an appearance in The Myth of Accidence, but in Book VII ('"The Passions of Being''). Lana's probably somewhere around too, and Ike and Tina for that matter. I like a that has not only Spenser's enormousness of scale, but his color and panache, Spenser or Ian Fleming, and in American poetry I think of Burns and Blaser.

"The need to be vivid."" My guess is that Burns not only reads thrillers, but writes them too. The strategies of disguise, concealment, surprise he employs to make his poetry so vivid are those of the superior thriller. The aeibicevok of perspective, for example, in John Dickson Carr: "black and white tile, armor and a staircase / to glue as Carr suggests to the mailbox slot / then trick anyone to look in, a policeman." To 'thwart the mind,"' the poet will borrow these tricks from the disreputable mystery story. In The Myth of Accidence, Book VIII: T.S. "Eliot nearing Russell Square, suffering the vulgar, the odorous, his silver cross / with sapphires done up in a neat parcel with a Union Jack to discourage Flambeaux'' is

an elaborate conceit taken from the very first of Chesterton's "Father Brown" stories, "The Blue Cross,"' in which the little priest has been charged with smuggling a precious crucifix into England to a religious conference. "Flambeaux"' is the rare use of the plural of "'Flambeau," Father Brown's antagonist and the "greatest thief in Europe"—the plural used here, I suppose, to catch at the torches of Jeanette and Isabella. Agatha Christie used to joke that the ultimate thriller should be called 'The Body in the Library''; and years later, caving in, she wrote a book with that title. Compare in Temblor 7, Burns' "Socrates Dying in Widener." Suggestive? Not entirely. More suggestive is the thriller's cheesy relation between tenor and vehicle: '"'anything holding its material awkwardly is lovable / as drips on a paint can obscuring the label announce the contents / as a perishable urn keeps (say) lovers on the brink of kissing." If poetry weren't called '"'poetry'"' would we still ize it as such, would its anxiety be manifest? We can imagine West Point without Poe, but Providence without Lovecraft? In Michael Jackson's Thriller, Vincent Price's narration is so hammy and overstated it should by rights be affect-free, but it's precisely its banality that produces, in Michael, real fright, desperate real yelps. "'Socrates Dying in Widener" provides this microcosm of a ghost story: ''A visible form like an untinted glass flower leaves his body / at cockcrow, and goes up out of convention / (to the crystalline sphere itself, amalgamating with it).'' Out of convention: paying respect to convention, or in its defiance? The body is alive, or dead: we can trace its true lineaments by following the flower-like form of its ghost. Poetry's body, not especially succulent or fearful, but somehow, in its own past, indubitably present. The exquisite effects of a Count Fosco, effects he must make seem easy, must paradoxically be revealed within the thriller's landscape, to have been the result of more hard work than you or I are capable of—otherwise we'd be villains too, Or we'd have built pyramids too or whatnot. The moral equivalences of the thriller are those of Labor, and of magic I suppose. The hand is quicker than the eye, but it's slower, too: sie Geen ix henry chan sees Boas Cxguaraaans. nation. In The Passions of Being, Burns concludes his tribute to i aur with a typical turn on "something" and "noth-

"—"There's something of Oz in his imagination, Paul's elbow / vivified, sawing away. Nothing satisfies like Shakespeare's 'Full fathom five,' / eerie song not probably from a human throat, ghost canary from / a magician's sleeve."

And so Burns' writing, diaristic and carefully dated, juxtaposes Wallace Stevens with R. L. Stevenson, a pileup, like a traffic accident, of books and sets. Have you ever seen an unfamiliar word, taken note of it, then seen the same word a day or so later? Word, name, face? This must happen to Gerald Burns twenty times a day! The reiteration of cultural accidents, the guided tour of the great museums, how the curator's shuffling footsteps, how else is the race to continue, without memory

or discrimination? I said that the "disenfranchised and the abject are powerful counters in Burns' line," but why the abject? He or she is thou, who do not know, the ignorant, the hobo, the unenlightened, dumb sweet Watson to a knowing "wartime Holmes."

And so with the sentence, étoufée with Culture like a chipmunk with its mouth bulging with nuts for the winter, so that I will need no other books, pictures, texts, lives; they will happen to me only as events in a hibernation. Nutritious. There's an economic principle working here, of savings, leavings, interest and balance. The primacy of noun over verb, reversing a modernist saw. In The Myth of Accidence, questions fan themselves out like cards on a gypsy table. How long does winter last? (Nuclear winter.) What shall prepare me? What's most commodious? The concerns of tourism, and of warfare, and of NASA, obtain—questions of transport, weight, utility. What can be packed, and reassembled, in the time allotted us? I think of Burns' music as extraordinarily graceful in the defeat it proposes, and the promises it grants for return. Like William Hurt, in The Accidental Tourist, doing his laundry on a skateboard.

I regret that the Procrustean constraints of my approach, the generic categories of "map" and "thriller,"' look so fetching in the leather-store window, then you get them home and nobody likes them. The map, brocaded in code, that forms the heart of Poe's "Gold Bug'"'—that was my point. Obviously this writing transcends genre, except that today no writing does that: genre is "'undercut"' only, as if by the burrowing mole, the laborers in Madox Brown's Work.

Gerald Burns

Fretting an Upscale Themis & other pieces

To be trapped suddenly in the work like some silly German marchen, complicitous, insectile or processual, the bird wing pressed into asphalt, Yeats peering through the rabbit clavicle as Frost pretended the skimmed-ice pane would function as divinatory proves too much but involves us as we find we must, the red thumb-mark ours, key in a plastic rock's tongueshaped groove in a line of rocks by the side of the shed as Stevenson says, the wee bulls'eye lantern under the coat implicated boys individually harmless as a rabbit's face, alias Latour's darkness spread around red. One wipes his runny nose on a cassock in the sacristy press.

A handshake contract is Germanic magic, the Harvard lawbook says alliterative as watch and ward (a poem shouldn't mean but does.)

Puppyish assertion, as in the Essay on Rime or Berdyaev thins in Bergson and Valéry to a nearly mechanical regularity of insight, just after the great age when Freud visited Coué, read Claude Bernard and those who drew shellfish might have drawn medical equipment to issue colored.

Swinnerton prints a photograph of Chesterton playing with a toy theater a light behind as if held like Liberty's torch by one figure no remarkable concentration, the back relaxed as if this were indeed play;

I find the verse of that period increasingly satisfactory.

The language after had cuts in it like trenches, the conglomerate of faces, feces, bits of sleeve mixed in and chilled as they report— we're a little more used to the spectacle of heaped spectacles, midden of hair or shoes that in their metal eyelets or tangs for laces are remains of Jews.

A habit of obedience, as in tiny mammals clinging to mother's back, shrew logic that, meeting, sings in spite of owls, shopwindow decorativeness of oak stump and leaf in stale air setting off the mannequins we accept, from the studied immobility, as we accept givens.

So images, dragged by cars, go back to the highsided wagons even a wounded knight refused to ride in, wicker donkeys wheeled into church a man behind beat.

A false entity, Justitia blindfold, one might almost say a fiction, statuette in the Harvard shopwindow (in a line of green apples, intrusive as an underarm baguette) mislabeled "Themis,"' the pans, her emblem's emblem, suspended from

ball-link keychain in order to have no dignity at all, like serving someone a baked park pigeon.

So Themis as the muse of law issuing in themistes (Maine) may not have come fully appareled as Artemis, unmarried woman it's argued now, did not begin so virginal, had lesbic Cerean followers may be and one might hide a bow in a lantern, coiled whalebone in the stomachs of bears.

Halcyon harbinger, enwindowed to end up engiven, chloroform dripped on the napkin around your head would go with your crisp medical appearance, Pasteur experimenting framed.

Your voice I imagine as percussive only, beat heard in subway walkmans something birdlike about you, the people who trouble Costa on panels, their feet talons.

The only letter I ever got from Denise Levertov was a form letter saying she'll answer no more mail. A glass and its contained water

I thought on the way home, as Husserl might find its contrasted transparency oddly apt collects the mind as the vase's sloshed in stems Manet made (Germanically) the ground of flowers confuse refraction with reflection.

The letter nourisheth. My poster for Amnesty was an open iron helmet, the jaw hinged, stuffed full of stamped letters. Release the captive poet, take this as an emblem of what not to send Denise.

Laws of refraction hold for it but it becomes habitable, laws of imagination not the same, dissolving into merest Hartleian association or the book on Shakespeare that shows you how nouns cluster in his head.

Yet you could argue that any meaning perceived is a law imported. (Kant did.)

It's worse in metrics, a theory of monopressure done up like a digamma or new emulsion's interlocking T's, light-sensitive sigla.

That the law is written (Hart observes) is a ritual thing, clay wedges or historic inscription flowing around Asur-Nasirpal goddy judges infesting the little tied boxes under chairs in Copan reliefs disguised as bone, pebble, feather, dried seahorse, snake slough as if civilization were founded on the heaps of old basket tops and sandals that used to be in Peabody's basement, separated from their labels.

Pan pipes held in the hand of a white marble Mercury ceilingward off Commonwealth balance the winged hat, the surrounding books donated by David McCord, a Further Letters of G. M. Hopkins covetable. We read poems there for which music signified by this catachrestic meuble is a metaphor.

Obedience is likewise this, a choosing to obey knowing the gilt hunt

(if you're lucky) on the polished shield will end up muddy, heaped up in someone's tent.

Poets now make much of imagining prehistoric scenes, peoplelike people groping for tails, gasping lungfish, as if highschool bio makes us insightful and if you look closely at their texture you will find them made from one another's bones the way French recipes thicken egg custard by having you bake and crumble macaroons.

The people in light chiffonesque chitons on museum pots are oddly bland in no relation to the observer at all, and even if one imagined them a troupe, all on one plane like something in Puvis, the paint tube floating, lyre there'd be that sense of discontinuity, like iron fences that survived the war.

The principle of sufficient reason inserted into scholastic compendia weaseling in, fashionable tool, as contract once the heart of law becomes peripheral, inexplicably less exciting, undergraduates no longer going over, like Curley, Spinoza's arguments, no more letters upbraiding the Bishop of Bangor for saying something or other, Newman so cutting on the Workingmen's Institutes forgotten and after Victoria (cataloguing her books) what acid remained to Lytton?

So say, the notion of king isn't altered since World War II, but law is sovereign (ultimate regnant) and right (as lever or even point) gauze we as well as Stirner should have seen through, unearned increment, unlivable on and a poppet without dignity; for our sake balls tip the points of its crown. So we were all to be kings, and are, the term denoting by extension no subjects tricks us like Bottom into gaudy speech and indecorous acts o point of view, that hath its jacobean Wash. Square magnates rummaging trash baskets for finds, belongings to paw through in plastic shopping bags on streets. We've heard of hobo courts and there are films of Villon's Paris (or M or wartime Holmeses) in which those who notoriously prey on each other develop rigid systems of fairness. The actors retire to Jamaica, conduct themselves scandalously on islands, history only, fading as we contemplate the Carburettor, improbably cakeshaped, from the window in Firefly miniature Lost World suitable for saurians on deepest blue, aqua and purple, ridiculously beautiful visited by buzzards which perch up here on allspice and his gravesite metal. The ocean is a belly, any round island a cowrie thrust out like an eye or cloudy glass (sometimes the bottom of a soft drink) nailed roughly in, Our Lady of pins, thing rising out of thing, Venus from the water with two pans ladling thin soup of law, person not really needed, song audible before the siren sang. Elie showed us the Apple graph his Malayan pings and clunks are spaced on percussive: state declining from an initial point-source impetus its definition, genuine gamelan, and all one has to be along the way is interesting. Rules to recognize the occurrence of privileged speech likewise occur, gong. Polish Detroiters who, obedient to the state, gave up their churches are givers of law as Elie is, obedient to what he chose (an eight-tone scale). Themis smiles on Clio, who

with her horn and book, leaves. The cats are weary, says Mallarmé in these Letters' uncorrected proofs oh vivid to think of him ordering (like Foucault) kinds of kinds, delicious hermit! in love with Méry to whom kisses by mail were a thing her mores did permit. English poetry, Edward Thomas's, is stained, old, something unintelligible on a wall like those wonderful plants in Stevens's little poem, post-garden, hardly A Boy's Will. We pay for it with pennies the size of half-dollars, like roman dates on Pound's turn of the century poems, C's ruddiness, dried apricot of coin no longer, like the farthing, viable specie. It is possible that outside this there is nothing, a black-feltlined pickup truck with a detached differential axle, leaking oil, rattling around in the back, nonce stage. Was Villon's gallows, like Tyburn tree, an open form like fluting on a geometric solid, icosahedral, through which the poet, dancing, hung? It is all those people with American flags in lapels putting money in obscure parking meters of fear and obedience having made a knack of praising what deters lust nearly anorexic, the last people you'd say kill your sons on the mountain people whose spirit is a very horizontal triangle like a broken pane. Muggeridge turns the bath tap on and a civilization spills out, roiled water, peaked refraction making do for color, maelstrom of hot and cold. You could call a book of poems Jnterference Patterns, resin spirals on tin tympani Stradivari's dust and sawdust will have had him look at wonderingly and dust of all kinds is revelatory, sign of still air or the relaxing of bonds

as Stevens cutting the lawn in wartime saw parachutists in dandelions. It's easy to say ''the dance,'' '''the measure'' as if court heads of ecole taught corps de ballet postures in the New School in sailor suits in *44. To brag is nothing: You don't wear earrings in the shape of little ears, affect noseshaped moustaches, paint ties on your tie, as if each organ gendered its artifact; move from that spot. Change the words marble and bronze from English to French. The difference your head makes, with its little ears, is dejeuner or pranza confronting lunch Hogarthian judges putting off a hanging (the last was a Fenian, for the Clerkenwell blast) and yet the sculpture drawn or even photographed might be addressed. Baudelaire says ''a flower...''' and the space between words becomes Mallarmé's affreusant or whatever it is, become by interpolated choice the spaces between words in Language, imaginable (speaking) as some Lovecraftian toadlike idol or Wells's fetal sages, all head and a mouth hole to chuck in a nutrient pebble. There is an end to images. Goya went back and back to padlocked ears, Liberty in a jacket of her own proclaiming. Scalepans tilted or not presume the existence of gravity. There is that in us that moves toward this kind of drama, Turner feted at the Pudding celebrity at two (I can see through their upper windows a gathering.) The nun's fiddle strung with braided hair, rebeq, fits in the poche with a tiny bow powdered all about with resin the ebon neck makes fingers stick to. One has

compassion for the veteran (if he is) on the subway who sits down (stench of alcohol) asks you for a quarter. You get up, stand elsewhere, and experience compassion while he talks though patently Anglo to people in Spanish. You shut your eyes. Good book? he'd asked of one on pleasure and pain in Baudelaire and us (Bersani's). Pony of the ill-heeled, riderless as the harsh workers (a drawing) Stevens saw onesided in the glare, chimneys ditto described make one complicitous, not the Masses cover or window, but describing even at pitch is still perhaps at bottom narrative pastime Kafka's actors in their flat black hats playing flutes in railroad station steam. Now writing on detachable Post-It pads on memoranda, perhaps like a slate pencil on limestone or wedjats on coffin sides lightly in chalk or graphite, one with honey or something poured over its inscription, presumably at one time transparent, gone by a trick of time black as tar, obscuring the inhumed's name. My limited experience (Ltd Exp, I suppose) with shorthandled copper adzes (it's always the handles I want, completion of the tarnished arc, put back as it was like a tool labeled Stanley in a shop, love like a new one unsold a while, dusty patent rat trap partly wrapped around with its printed cardboard, discardable staple on the mousetrap's bar, not this easy fellowship Kinnell describes but passion for the incisive root scribing by owllight drypointwise, burr furring line. If Baudelaire made the French language speak, syllable by syllable what voice-weight can a language have? '"'Mind the gap"' is England visible, Eliot nearing Russell Square, suffering the vulgar, the odorous, his silver cross with sapphires done up in a neat parcel with a Union Jack to discourage Flambeaux. Michelin and Dunlop cross, or a Basque dinner mostly fat and he who savors cassoulet knows shuddering what they serve with it. They were a while one language, waiting to speak at once, Anglo-Norman Themis in furs the readiness to utter dicta, promulge Austinian vow or promise the saying that makes things so, fiat voluntas as if word is will pebble under the tongue, the extra thought held back, rocktextured crystal.

It's almost a subclass of the poser that one keeps the phrase intact in the head waiting for the resolve, that one hears in a direction even if it's reversible Cicero's period.

O clemens, we use to sing, 0 pia, crowning the May Queen, plangent as nostalgia;

if the image didn't move we did, plaster against real lilies of the valley even a Romanesque church with a rose window of sorts behind the organ, the light horizontal as the post through a carpenter's box removable section my Themis at the moment obscured by a pasted up ad for the baseball star and his mistress having sold their photos to a magazine and to make this poster.

Behind it lives my statuette in a sentimental version of this poem comparing her sword, diagonal, to horsy reins in Remington standing in the usual sea of apples eight times the size of her tiny head.

Religion was a local motion improvised yet somehow rigid.

One leaves a subway seat without (usually) caring who sits in it then the left that from which care has been withdrawn, or perhaps attention.

Revised, posthumous as Crippen, remains under the cellar bricks are no model of anything, medical dummies bearing names, Gladstone in wax and Jack, whose organs were meant as sculpture. Mahon stored his in a biscuit tin for Bernard Spilsbury to reassemble with boiled meat and blackened bone.

Crimes interest us for what we are, Levertov's knife named on its blade

CARVING KNIFE, as one might label victims VICTIM vitrified.

If words are stars, their influences syntax, seeing through a horoscopic quadrature, the paper vanishing, no longer a plane is like those poems ending with stars, Chesterton's essays likewise ending with them.

Slur words until they smear, blood smear on slide molecules of grapheme.

Scale deceives imagination into thinking it's a tool, Kipling writing poems almost about transmitted power, schematic naming.

All metaphors are dead. That the class of poems makes an "'area"'

is untrue as space is, rock in no sense the ground of the painted buffalo and this is not a manifesto, no question of wringing the neck of rhetoric but indiscernibles end up identical because alike.

In any case rhythm if perceptible is already rhyme anything cumulative, the words Virgil couldn't use from their faulty rhythm.

The poster's gone. The statue's back. I find by looking at it closer her scales depend from an earring hook darkplated to match the rest of her.

Half jewelry half hurricane fence, all horrible her blindfold's narrow the Silent Woman half-visible, entre deux contexts in the window.

It's like Tintern Abbey made of moss, or the King Kong in a Jamaica Plain druggist's maybe fourteen inches high, a waist strap bolted on.

Sword and chain are the same object, hence the cincture Dante threw to Geryon which rose and rose defining horrid void by how he grew.

No matter how approached Themis has to be a little vulgar like Benchley reviewing The Apple Cart or Beerbohm tinting Strachey amber.

Her props are like the potmetal knife and pistol in the murder game annihilated by the reality of the noose made of loopy string— a tool is used just by being recognized as a tool at all

(Wordsworth's way of ending blank verse lines with a rhymish vowel).

The teacup's crack disappears into poured tea as if a tarn and mist if the room is cool may almost be thought to form spirit of de la Mare and Kipling, W. H. Hudson getting rained on what's just, what's fair a hopeless tangle not exclusive to the Georgian.

Madox Brown's "Work"

with the "philosopher"' tucked in (was Carlyle a philosopher? almost certainly not) jewellike as its reproductions in the Lond. Mus. exhibit, laborers in an open pit soil, diggings for gas, Bennett's Riceyman tube collapse, mud slide tunnel's heave tell us, contemporary, the fact is dreamable, sweet, that which labor labors, is, fact brutality of subway repair, more dangerous, Mr. Brown's friend Mr. Ross says than Vietnam large men with hats, bit of beard, cigar and a taste for camouflage attire, wonderful impossible to clean, laborer left out of the designer's plans, but here all made well in the bright Italianate street, sun splashing like children over philosophers in plug hats discussing that pit men in shirtsleeves rest from the digging of, this delicious stasis description of a painting pours over it. A Glackens (Kite Flying on Montmartre) I was sent as a postcard, icy greenblue sky, chimneypots, maybe a windmill dissolved in haze, a kite in cold air as if in a balloon of that color says people are less important than kites, air more important than people, painting is important as air. We need spectatorism in a sunlit picture, Bonnard's dog in the bathroom, busyness of tile, not onlooker or connoisseur as in Daumier's series on the man bending over portfolios of prints' pompier (Eric Newton's term, un- as he says translatable) but these bearded hatted philosophers so sure of knowing what they know, politicality of economy, how it felt to be medieval as in Van Gogh the sower if shod: at all has cardboard brogans paintable as mountains, which opened out are the shape of waistcoats.

Double Sonnet for Mickey

In Kiss Me Deadly Cloris Leachman asks Mike Hammer in the car Do you read poetry? He doesn't even answer but just looks at her. The plot may be said to turn on a book of Christina Rossetti poems but to me it is that pause, a careless sneer on Meeker's face as he not only does not answer but sees no reason to get mad. She has no right to ask the question in the first place of a tough guy whose hair,

Just longer than a brush cut, is stiffened by something bryllish that might ten years before have been brilliantine and he marine rather than air force straight, chin tending to plumpness suggesting a tight military collar forsworn. His girlfriend whose chin likewise etcetera gets evidence on johns in ways not admirable. On the walls of his hideous apartment are camera cases, statues and two-dollar framed people, everyone's limbs pointlessly extended, plasticman fixed for a decade in bronze, none of this inadvertent. She asked him knowing he would

look at her as if a bad smell in the car were hers and she, producing it, would know he knew she had.

That look is not eternal. It is a product of the late fifties like Bucket of Blood, rude look at art, snapshot of The Thinker with your sweetheart on his lap and I prefer another photo of one of its castings blown half apart by terrorists who took monument for establishment, ecriture for prefecture (how do you deface an Anselm Kiefer, already glued up with straw and so on?) It's probably the locution, a Rodin that maddened them, one of an oeuvre, thing valued as one of a series of makings but then it's also celebritous, like the Sphinx now falling to bits, another endangered Man as Hammer is, in the film made because there first were novels about his undertakings but then one doesn't recognize a Hammer from sketchiest drawing or collage the way a sphinx or thinker's fair game for cartoon or cover art. A taste for him is more like going to the fights, choosing to smell of something that goes with Gillette, massages a jaw wider than its forehead and thinks of kicking in a green door behind which shuttered Experience waits, twirling a trilby, trying on a smile above the angled shoulders built up from folded gauze we thought, then, a masculine style.

iil

Wax Works

HHERE'S A COLLOCATION—Cart's -Nazi novel

In Spite of Thunder, and Aiken's Ushant. In 1958

Gordon Cairnie's Grolier Bookshop is where poets went. He always had a copy of Ushant, and used to ask me if I knew Conrad Aiken. I never did. What I (who wrote no verse) was doing there is a question. Improving my Kafka collection. Ordering books on ontology and Joyce. Now it has virtually no secondhand books and is out of my range. Still, if you want a copy of Stevie Smith's New Selected Poems in cloth it's the place to go. I always liked Aiken's title on the dustjacket though I expect it to disappoint in this exlibrary (Brookline Public) copy, labeled E/Ai19 on their dark olive buckram. I'm a sucker for library bindings.

"The Hotel du Rhone, raising a vast elegance of chromium and glass on the Quai Turrettini above the Pont de la Tour de |'Ile, seemed as somnolent as its austere bar." That's Carr, doing Eric Ambler local color in 1956, two before I went to Harvard.

"the infinitesimal ship like a tiny luminous dream in the terrible, yes, lethal, yes murderous, sleep of the sea— and yet not in any sense separate, ship from water, dream from sleeper, wave from wave, particle from particle, drop from drop, electron from nucleus, world from world, but all together participating and dispersing," (Aiken), and the first thing to say here is that the verbs absolutely don't matter. Carr insists on differences, uniquenesses, and Aiken that everything

is himself else, without rendering the else, It's as if Virginia Woolf decided to go in for Expression. Harvard, these lists of books, remembered teachers are your doing, as if the geography of the terrain in which you discovered significance were itself significant.

"*My dear fellow—!' began Hathaway." Carr's people are always baffled by the mechanics of imparting information. The gears, prewar phrases he loves, grind. Aiken, whatever his whole-sentence sounds may have been like (he was probably able to murmur) is in his verbs and adjectives essly modern. On the next page of Carr I find, "Ah!' murmured Hathway.... Once more he looked towards the door leading to a foyer so large and lofty that voices were toned to murmurs there."' No crude foyer. People no longer murmur. Joe Orton wouldn't like it. We're supposed to be self-pastiche, the way Carr's puppets are supposed to be, Stevensonian robbers and pirates. Modern color is meant to be mush, the trick to be precise enough with it (somehow) to make it memorable or rising. A range of tones went, and if we take up "Senlin" it does sound like echoes of Eliot so Aiken could always claim "Prufrock."" But Aiken's "musicality" is Lanier and Cabell, a sense of linear time without the milieu which is a home for tone.

A chapter-end: "'Throw some magazines down there,' he said, 'before anybody else sees. That's oil of vitriol. Or you can call it sulphuric acid.'"' Always abruption.

Now and again, never when I was there, Conrad Aiken would visit Grolier Bookshop. Gordon might tell him of seeing an aviator fly under one of the bridges on the Charles. These visits have for me no shape. Carr: "He looked at the big writing-table against the east or left-hand wall, where chromium desk-lamp illumined a pile of manuscript-sheets in dark blue ink." These sheets are not, and could never have been, a manuscript by Conrad Aiken, who calls Pound Ben Ezra, whose notes never render (as the Sitwells will render) a scene, but simply asserts coming to have his "'place"' in Ariel's Island, "conscious of having acquired his own right to it." This is conversation as referring, flicking over memory keys, Chopiniana. Nothing about one's linen, always a preliminary weighing of whose stock will stay up, a shrewdness not like the boyishness of Emerson or cummings. It is nice to know Alice Meynell objected to a good line in Brooke's "Heaven," I suppose from proprietorship. Yet I read her Essays quite happily, happily as not. Naaow, you say "Chapman" meaning the publisher and sound like Dickens. After a while, Buckingham Palace, the Mall, Downing Street, war ("'It is war.' War.") and last glimpse of Rupert Brooke's bare head golden on top of a bus.

Carr: "'Quite suddenly you put down your cocktail on that coffee-table over there.'" Where are we in all this? (I am in Don Quatrale's kitchen.) In the mystery we want surfaces, substances, even compass directions. Aiken has one square with

a British Museum side but in general not much mapmaking vista. The terrain is in his head. This is what we'd think of as a late Carr; the oomph has gone out of it. What he used to inhabit was a romanticized England of rolled lawns and toy gallowses. People spoke croquet. He had himself phi hed with swords. People must have told him you can't do this "Look here, Merrivale" kind of stuff any more. He stopped, which was a mistake, since his country was an unwholesome suburb of Scott and Stevenson, wonderfully elastic. Carr's landscape, in any case, is not meant to be mental. His furniture is real so the small boy in him can rig triplines. I should say his objects (which I would love to list in order) are fetishist. Naming is a kind of doing. "'"Look here," said Dr. Gideon Fell, 'this has got to stop.'" Mallarmé says, "I say, 'a flower...'"' Carr says a snuffbox, a death'shead turnip watch, a miniature gallows and it stops like Pound thinking of the Emperor's bathtub. This is not nostalgia but a kind of horror at what is gone.

Aiken you get over, the puffedness or concern with self that kept him down, made it impossible for him to have experiences, forced him to make masterpieces that taste brassy. Still, I have to think his wanting it all to flow (this concern over "'placement"' inside a piece, transition) is not like soldering.

"The block of flats lay almost in the shadow of the Pont de la Coulouvreniére, a grey-white shape amid the Rhéne's seven bridges."' "Had a poem been read aloud in a Paris attic? or had there only been talk about it?" Which is better, memory almost totally fabricated or assertion guaranteed by a guidebook? The writer imagines a manufactured object and imagination becomes a means to that object. Carr's invention flags, so with a limited amount of plot he invents quarrels, interruptions, mystifications and what happens becomes information. No one cares about the corpse in this book though she dies upside-down like something in Poe or Orton, nearly a consequence of the fictionist's concern for direction as such. Ushant substitutes for direction the wish. Aiken begins a chapter with copied shipboard instructions. Carr: "In somebody's flat a television set throbbed with muffled life; he knew it was a television, not a radio, from the hoarser, heavier sound."' This is a dream of transcription. Aiken flicks in a reference to the Harvard Square underground shoeshine stand (and a green bookbag). It's as if you referred, not by name, to lots of waxwork figures one at a time, not describing them. You not so much forgo as relinquish all possible kinds of reference, and when you're done it's a memoir.

And Carr: "'I am no longer interested in crime,' he said." That is a character in a book, but it holds for both these books that they begin mechanically because an appetite is only posited.

Bruce Campbell

Three Readings: Gerald Burns, Dennis Phillips, Ted Pearson

"Rude To Imagine Provenance": The Work of Gerald Burns'

N HIS ESSAY, ""THE Prose Osyect,"" Gerald Burns makes the unusual, though not unprecedented, statement that "'provincialism is not necessary but desirable" (Temblor 2, p. 96L [left-hand column)). As politics and economics seem to be increasingly globalized, as we are encouraged, increasingly, to identify with larger and ever larger entities (be they corporations, nations, hemispheres, or the world itself), there is a counter-turn: the anti-universaling thrust of discourse or poetry. Of course, this is not the first call in modern or contemporary literature for the provincial (or local). But this is not to say that Burns' "'provincialism"' is the same as Williams' "'local." Indeed, Williams' "'local"' might now be considered for most of us to be anything but local, given the fact that we come upon him in books: '"Take advice of locals. Books are imports" (PO 98L). But more importantly, Burns' provinciality is less a matter of place—Williams and Olson had each given us the local as place'—and more a matter of objects, or "'the laying on of thing" (BS 11). This matter of objects is unavoidably philosophical', which may be why '""poets are not philosophers / but friends of philosophers"' (BM np). And what is the difference between poets and philosophers here? "'We are not in the business of describing what is / the so, the the, trail left poets by philosophers / (where it leads in both cases may be a story)" (SDW 47). Thus, for Burns, the issue of things is more precisely a question of the things we surround ourselves with: "If you live solitary objects matter" (P 96R).* It is not a question of knowing things so as to master them, for "'mastering life is a cup you drink from" (SDW 46).° And, anyway, "everything is always the Antipodes" (PB 15). Instead, it is a question of "registering and noticing"' the world, for 'the world is much too valuable to be taken in the sense of annexed" (NP 3).° What does provinciality have to do with "registering and noticing'? "Provinciality'" means "the being in a province, will depend on playing with things" (PO 97L). There is an unmistakeable tincture of consumerism here but such consumerism is scarcely nugatory; for there is the echo of a phenomenological rumbling in that consumption ('the being in a province"): "Being there for and a human existent" (24GP 60). Thus, we have a "bottle opener for a phenomenologist" (24GP 71).' Burns' provinciality is geared to play; play expresses this "being in a province." "Play" here signals a use value and anchors the being in real time—for we "'come at the thing in time"' (24GP 59)—the time of

playing. But, further, play involves us with boundaries which are not absolute, boundaries, indeed, which we might even play with. What is essential, first of all, about this "provinciality"' is the way in which its boundaries are experienced as a means of bringing the object into focus; for it is only within the boundaries that we can see (or feel) what a thing is.

On the one hand, then, what is important is the positioning of the object. The provincial is a kind of grid: 'Showing the site / a grid is not energy but completion" (24GP 59). The grid completes the site by making it visible as such—as a bounded site. The provincial is specific. When Burns writes, "But is provincialism the opposite of exclusions, the adequate weight of a shell casing ashtray, an object allowed, prior to decoration" (PO 96L), the answer seems clear. Provinciality is not the opposite of exclusions. It is through the process of exclusion, indeed, that the provincial is bounded as a province and given over to specificity, a specificity, of course, impossible without those very limits (or exclusions). The "adequate weight" of an object is inconceivable—doubly so—without these parameters. For without the specificity there can be no weighing; and without the provinciality there can be no sense of what is (or is not) adequate. Thus, the object in its "adequate weight"' must precede decoration."

How do we—now—escape the convention of decoration? One way is to realize that "we lose permanently when we gain" (BS 9); that is, instead of ceaselessly adding things, we might subtract. Thus, "the champagne cork my deletions just made / argue less is gain if not bankable /

- easier to see struck through text as art" (BSI 40). Here is where "consumerism" can mislead us in Burns: 'The clutter of things in my verse was not in my head beforehand impatient to get out'? (NP 4). "Consumerism" means he begins with the recognition of the role of things in our lives; it doesn't mean he's the poetic equivalent of the bumpersticker, Who Dies With The Most Toys Wins; for we still have choices to make, even if there is a "passion behind all, prior to / all choice" (PB 23).

But this is only half of it; for, the boundaries are also experienced as limiting. Consider, "every object is the result of parameters within which it does not crystallize or combust" (PO 96L). To say the object is the result of parameters is to identify the objectness of the object as an effect of limits (or parameters) and not as a something-initself, some irrefutable essence. The object isn't free- standing or self-evident; it isn't originary or unconditioned; it is a result and therefore dependent on something else. First, it is dependent on us: '"We have processed them into themselves" (PO 97R), Of course, in order to "'process therm into themselves,"' we must be familiar with them, a familiarity dependent, to a greater or lesser extent, on recognizing the idea of the thing, but then "a venture is Ideal'"'

(24GP 61). Our intent underwrites this process.' Therefore, "deliberate labor makes a thing" (PO 97R). The deliberation of this labor is dependent on parameters; for it is deliberate only because there are parameters—of context and intent, to cite two.

But, note what the parameters do. They prevent the object from becoming too clear (that is, from crystallizing) and from becoming too intense (from combusting). The frame, then, is compensatory. If it brings an object to focus (and it does), it also insulates. "To insulate an art find its tools picturesque. / It may be that magic (like philosophy) has none / specific to it" (BSZ/ 48). Thus, the parameter may be a (picture) frame, predicated on the difference between what is inside the frame (art in the sense of the picturesque) and what is outside. This difference "'insulates"' the art, which is also to say it weakens the art. Taking a clue from Burns (""When names, subjunctive, insulate an event" [SDW 44]), we might characterize this difference as a subjunctive difference. What occurs within the frame is a supposition or hypothesis; the frame marks it as contrary to fact. Consequently, the art becomes something to look at. But what we see is sentimentalized because it is subjunctive. Note, too, the picturesqueness depends on a certain specificity. Because the tools are specific, they can be grasped, and, because they can be grasped, they can be framed. What is needed for this grasping? A specificity which is a particularization. "What's in a field is parts (heads, arms like the foto in his studio)" (24GP 71). So there is something which the frame keeps from us—the whole—although we do know, of course, that "any whole is inferential" (BS/7 39). The inference, however, is not framed. It can not be brought into focus and remain inferential. But neither can the frame exclude the inferential. The framing is a particularization only when we fail to grasp the inference. Arguably, this failure stems from a hierarchy which places sight above all else: as we can not see the inference, or the whole, it doesn't exist. But, then, if there is a "'perspective alterity" (CM 96)", sight can be saved from its alterity, can be made certain and justifiable, only if seen as but one part of a whole of vision. Yet, this "'whole of vision" would remain inferential. And so vision would have to take such a thing on faith or admit a relativitiy which makes seeing indeterminant.

Is there a way out of this dilemma? Perhaps; for we are told that 'only a presence can be encapsulated" (24GP 60). There are two things we might note about this encapsulation: (1) it belongs to the framing of parameters; (2) as acondensation, it refers to something inferential—if not.a whole, at least a wider presence. So, because there is what we might call a metonymic relationship between the encapsulated presence and the presence outside, the frame does not destroy the whole. Further, if 'animals and men impress by their presence" (BS// 37), the "impress'"' has behind it the weight of the frame. We might say the parameters form the object but that forming, then, serves to prevent the

individuation of objects. If ‘“‘individuation”’ seems too pantheistic, we might recall Burns’ observation: “That objects have needs is probable”’ (PO 96R). (Or consider the active possibility of “thing / found wending”’ [CM 95].)

This is where magic intersects epistemology: ‘Tissot is proof that everything is domestic. By contrast I would say that magic occurs between leaves in a forest where no one sees, that lichen mutter, unthinkably woody, and the cabochon gem is proof that nature is unwitting’ (A4/V 98R). Magic is not, precisely, a matter of knowing: ‘“Magic is not a sign” (BSIJ 38). It is the opposite of the domestic, of the household or polis built on ratios, for magic here is nothing other than the concern with what happens “‘between leaves in a forest where no one sees.”’ It is ‘creatively open, not custodial or wallowing in mastery”; “a kind of contemplation” (OBD 49). But, as a kind of contemplation, it is a contemplation between the cracks, for magic is attuned to something beyond the parameter. And: “Magic, then, occupies us to that end” (BSI 45) because “‘magic restores a balance” (BS 7)." How does magic “‘restore a balance”? By moving us from logical parameters and aesthetic frames to process: ‘“‘Who is anywhere elevated into process / becomes a visionary whose physics is magic’ (BS 2),

Because, through magic, we know there is more than epistemology dreams of, because there is the more which parameters exclude in their stabilizing, “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” (PO 96L). Because magic tells us there is more, we want more—more than the object which as possession forms a kind of parameter within which we do not ‘crystallize or combust.” The object stabilizes us, but withholds something from us so that we do not crystallize. What does it withhold? Time. That is, the object (as possession) is what we have stored; thus, the object-as-possession has been taken out of its time, out of process. So, we can see here that withholding time withholds the whole. “The stored” keeps us bound to the parameters of object (and identity): ‘“The past won’t let itself be reexperienced. That is why possessions are peculiar” (PO 97R). That is also why experience must push against the grid (and why the grids in Burns’ poetry are multiplied and overlap): “One writes, / here, against music against history” (24GP 64). “Here”? names this push-against-the-grid because “here” in the everywhere we make of it has its place within the grid and yet that place is not “here,”’ this precise place and time. Thus, there is the “‘inertiality of meaning imposed on the ideal pattern” (PB 15). The imposition inertializes “‘here.” This is one reason why “these framed never satisfy” (PO 99R). Further, it may explain why ‘“‘it’s awkward, hearing a life in a sentence”’ (PB 15); for the sentence is like a judgment which must leave something out of the life in order to make it fit. What is left out becomes, of itself, a kind of judgment against the life.

Here memory plays its part, both positively and negatively: “‘Memory which makes all objects themselves / can wrap them in meaning or mere dimension’”’ (BS 5). So memory makes or breaks meaning. Without memory, ob- jects are physical—they occupy dimension, but not meaning. Meaning, then, involves more than the here and now. If we forget that, ‘Mnemosyne is pious iteration in sisal to encourage that kind of gaze,” “the unfixed gaze”’ (BSIT 45). When Burns declares that “recollection is investigation” (BM np), “‘recollection,’’ because it is not simply passive (recalling to mind) but also active (re-collecting, gathering up again), collects the present moment in acontinuum. A changing light is cast from this gathering, and “shades of meaning implies continuum” (PB 23). Instead of tracing the intaglio of memory”, re-collection picks up the threads: ‘‘A ‘threadlike process’ is a summons, questions answers’’ (SDW 46). But it can do so only if it is freed to move beyond the past, for the “‘re” of this “re-collection” must always look forward. Thus, ‘“‘take / renderings instead of schematic expressions”’ (24GP 65). In this way, the investigable recollection is a “definitive meander”’ (24GP 62): “‘Diverge nonsystematically from this line while paralleling it roughly’ could be a/ saw edge or Matisse arabesques (if you can go backwards[])” (24GP 62).

But meander and my meander? We might think here about the connection of time and writing. In one sense, each poem belies its moment because it seems to offer its moment to us, In this, the poem is a possession whose time will not be reexperienced: “If poems are a commodity so is time”’ (PB 21), Yet there is another sense in which the poem preserves its moment: ‘‘And what is it to ‘put them in’ a poem, mention it or make reference to as if meaning can be bourne / or names refer, which isn’t true at all. They’re cries / of their occasions” (PB 22). The poem doesn’t so much preserve the occasion as preserve a reminder (the “‘cries’”), The cries are not exhausted in their occasion; but, what can that reminder mean? The cries are: ‘“‘A word / that occurs, and in that way is relevant”’ (BM np). In their existence is a meaning, a meaning in itself; for it cannot be ‘‘bourne”’ or referred to; it simply is. This “‘is’” is not immutable; identity is not preserved therein. Thus, ‘‘they do suffer a change, as the state in which one would / have written them goes” (BS/J 43— Burns’ italics). They “‘suffer a change’’ because we see them differently."*

Whether we speak of parameters, frames, vision, reference, meaning, or existence, there is something which has still not been “‘inertialized”’: ‘“Think of what we do as like Descartes’ reduction of a candle’ to imagined primary qualities if meditation / stopping there felt it possible but impolitic to go on, potential more than evocation, triangular / stage to concretize what may have a vis, force outside what you right then predict” (24GP 70). After all, if we could predict it, it wouldn’t be a “‘force outside.”” Thus, “not everything is used and it’s a good meaning for

imponderable" (PB 19), Such a meaning, however, equates "use" with thinking. Burns isn't advocating a change from the ponderable to the imponderable. He does, however, recognize a positive aspect to both positions; for, if, on the one hand, there is something positive about what stands outside the "'inertiality of meaning,"' there is, on the other, something positive about what we do know: "'What we remember by necessity we cling to / not meaning asserted but like a hand held" (BS/ / 35-6). This placement of "'by necessity"' is cunning—for it is a question of both what we must remember and of what we must cling to. The second possibility shows us, then, that it is too late to escape from the "'inertiality of meaning': we must cling to something; we must remember something. Still, this meaning is ''not asserted,"' not ''imposed on the ideal pattern" (PB 15). Consequently, it is "like a hand held." This "hand held"' suggests that meaning can have a human dimension.

Meaning is not synonymous with truth; it is not a standard or justification." It reassures us. No doubt one reason why this meaning is reassuring is that it involves a knowledge which is necessary to us. It tells us something about ourselves. What does it tell us? "Anything counts as itself, can be taken at its own valuation'"' (PB 19). But how does something ''count as itself''? By dwelling in itself: "That which dwells in itself / Heidegger's space acquaintance with nonspatialized volition / become longing"' (PB 21). Yet the dwelling-within-oneself is not an end. It becomes "'longing,"' and, through this longing, ''the finished thing returns"' (PB 21); ''not to lose what's unlost because it repeats' (24GP 66). A strange thought for us, as "'the thought of anything going away... / and vanishing is our paradigm"' (24GP 64—my ellipses). But the return shows that it wasn't (isn't) finished—perhaps, it recalls Nietzsche's eternal recurrence of the same. The "'longing'' connects the one-dwelling-within-oneself to the "finished thing." In that connection, the one-who-dwells is made complete within the "finished thing'' and the "finished thing,'"' by being recalled into the present, is fulfilled (once again). For it is ''finished"' (in the sense of being ended or overcome) if it is not connected to the present, but it is ''finished"' (in the sense of finally being completed) only if it returns: ""There was, in the fracture between this and then / infinite leavings and only one meeting / in act" (BS 11). There is "only one meeting" but its moment may be anytime, for ''in act'' we find ''a time all there"' (24GP 60). This is why "'a site is a rallying point" (PO 98L). It is the spot where self-valuation and completion join. The site, then, is not something finished or frozen in time. "Sentiment, the picturesque, fight[s] it out with praxis' (PB 16). What we have learned in the struggle of the "here'' against the grid is that there is the

. “mystery of the continuous thread”’ (BS// 38), of the connection. This continuity, in turn, has been the consistent point through all the shades of meaning. Thus, we circle back on the rallying point—a site is mobile—and that mobility a cause for rallying. It’s not a question of disentangling illusion and reality, appearance and fact; for “‘the ease / with which appearances run into one another the last proof that meaning is / a notochord” (PB 23)."° The flowing appearances show us the interconnection of the idea and physical, gives us the means of grasping ‘“‘a done thing on a notional beach” (24GP 61). The notochord gives us the ability to move and provides us the foundation of freedom: “Freedom is the chance to move the arms horizontally / to change things’ (BS// 34). But this freedom isn’t relegated to changing, rearranging, what’s already before us. This freedom is cognitive in the most primordially physical manner because “anything for the hand [is] a

Notes

1. I use the following abbreviations for Burns’ work:

BM—Boccherini’s Minuet. Salt Lick Press, 1981.

BS—A Book of Spells [First Third}. Salt Lick Press, 1978.

BSII—“‘A Book of Spells, II” in Temblor 1.

CM—“A Chain for Madeleine” in Temblor 5.

MIV—“Magic in Verse—Some Distinctions” in Temblor 6.

NP—Nations in Public. Salt Lick Press, 1975.

OBD—“On Being Done”’ in Témbior 1.

ODS—“[On David Searcy]” in Temblor 1.

PB—‘The Passions of Being” in Temblor 9.

PO—“The Prose Object” in Temblor 2.

SDW—“Socrates Dying in Widener” in Temblor 7.

24GP—‘24 Gnomic Poems”’ in Temblor 3. 2. We might take the (geographic) localism of Williams or Olson to be a kind of “‘composition of place”: “We think composition / of place produces data” (SDW 47). But, of course, it becomes then a question of how the data is used. For Burns, “‘it is not in my temperament to give found things a horne”’ (BS// 41). Instead, he offers “a whole new set of subjects. Objects” (ODS 104). 3. “As writing qualifies things” (24GP 70) indicates both why Burns’ writing is concerned with things and how it might differ from a philosophical concern. For a philosophical dimension to the question, we might consider Heidegger's What Is A Thing?, an investigation of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason. Burns later opines that “philosophy goes in fear, depends on sufferance”’ (SDW 46). In contrast, one could see Burns’ project as “a study for the unscientific’ (24GP 71): “All I have in my care is appearances” (BSI 39). “Yet it is more than the

simple assertion / that knowledge means moving in a network of power" (BS 1). 4. There is some ambiguity in the line, for "'solitary" can be heard to modify "live" or "objects." 5. Of course, Burns' line alludes to Socrates and, so, comments on philosophy's will-to-master-life: "'Ethics invaded by action, self administered / hemlock lets the agora in" (SDW 46). What is the effect of this hemlock and agora? Socrates is '"foregrounded by illusion / no more his body than his body now is" (SDW 49). Because the physical has been disrupted, the illusion is foregrounded. (On the other hand, the physical placement might veer into the mythical: "Mythical as bodies as situate"' [SDW 54].) Still, 'the life of the mind is inadequate after / light in rooms"' (BS 10); that is, there is a physical presence which overwhelms the mind. In comparison with which the mind is inadequate—both less satisfying and incompetent. Thus, we find Burns writing, "thwart the mind" (BSI 39); or, "end thinking as such" (SDW 48). 6. More fully: "It's not that we don't care, but registering and noticing are different from being significant toward. It's like the parable of the lamp; if I say I can paint that lamp I patronize it. The world is much too valuable to be taken in the sense of annexed" (NP 3— Burns' italics). This burden (of refraining from patronizing) is true, too, for what isn't evident: "It's hard to tell a secret without patronizing it' (NP 3). Still, "it is our function to incorporate civics. / Melt everything down" (BSII 35). 7, On the other hand, "'it is a clue, not at all that it is tied to Being but another deity altogether, / for which writing would be different (does differ)" (24GP 60). For us, "at the end of our canvas showing through is canvas" (BSI 34). 8. It may be, if 'the decorous is conventional" (NP 4), that Burns' provincial should be seen as preceding convention. The provincial, then, is the specific just after it is known and just before it becomes duplicated into an overweening sameness. Similarly, "'everyone gets / the is wrong, thinning it down to equals" (BS 6). 9. But Burns can speak out against intention, too: "I don't approve of will in spells and have thought of it as bracketed (or thought of spells as a choice neither involving or not involving will). Usually it's fuzzed; will somehow enters" (M/V 98LR). "Will, like Occupation, thins because coagulable to a thing to trace two veins without meta-

(MIV 100LR). Magic shouldn't just be the will of the magician and poetry shouldn't be just the will of the poet; or else we are seeking to annex the world. "Pointing with intent makes lines by extension / that function like spells on a walk composing / and register the vigor of a subject addressed" (BSI 48).

10. But surely perspective matters: ""Two ways of coming at a single clarity" (SDW 49). After all, the poet has a different perspective than the philosopher (who, perhaps, must transpose his perspective to a higher level simply because "'the eye is not an organ of philosophy" [BS 14]). The poet who accepts the provincial accepts the role of perspective. He finds it is "'perspectival because earthy" (PB

14). “Perspective” doesn’t mean “‘illusion’”’: ‘“To forestall illusionism”’ “visions of transparent alluvial deposits” (BS/ / 33). And it doesn’t mean Burns is interested in the image. Indeed, “image for some of us (Texas writers)... isn’t there anymore” (ODS 104—my ellipses). Image isn’t there because its resistance has been lost. Contrarily, “‘on the index of hardness the image physically resisting” (24GP 64), We should stress one thing about this provincial poetry: it is a poetry of “representative views’ (CM 95) and “revelation [is] imagined as... a multiple’ (CM 97—my ellipses). We should hear in this “representative” both a philosophical and a political dimension. It re-presents as well as stands in for; although there is a counter-turn to normalization, as well: “[Parmigiano] is nothing to me / though I always wanted a model perspectival room” (BS/I 39). The ‘‘model,”’ note, would normalize the perspectives.

11. “Any doubt about the nature of magic / may be resolved if the reader imagine / words are secret but somehow known” (BS 1), The “secret but somehow known” also means familiar but somehow new: “‘Poetry’s saying the name of something you love gets / interesting if the name is new” (BM np).

12. “The unfixed gaze” might lead to “‘just look{ing] at letters without reading them on a wall” (BS/7 45), Such an “‘unfixed gaze,” however, might simply be prior to focus: “If interest is a kind of liking / may dullness be prior to perception / in a sense?” (BM np). But on the other hand, this gaze may lead us to see what we might not otherwise: ““The raindrop not a part of the composition but / not for that reason to be ignored” (BS/I 48). The “unfixed gaze” may be a part of “a quality of attention we have fought through to” (SDW 49). And what have we had to fight through? Arguably, cultivation: “Cultivation from here is anything on a wall to look at” (BSI 44). Cultivation, then, makes everything “‘tactilely slick to the eye” (BSII 45).

13. “Could you say memory is like intaglio” (24GP 64).

14. There is a sense in which bad lines might have their place in writing: “The sacrifice is all the bad lines offered up” (BSII 47). What does “‘bad’’ mean? “‘Wrong, i.e., imprecise” (BM np) Burns had earlier declared. But, ‘‘we lessen our divisor by writing lines / no one can tell are good or not"’ (BS/J 39). Consider, also: “Bad art is to fall from that which, inhabited, expels’’ (PB 17), It is in this later case that a need for “hygiean acculturation” (BS/J 37) is formulated. Thus: “I’m oldfashioned enough to like poems to be Works, definitive’ (MIV99R). And yet, ‘a record, History is not pretty. So nothing that is read is” (M/V 98R),

15. Perhaps we should note that Burns’ “‘Book of Spells, IT’ begins, “I’ll at least write until it [i.e., the candle] goes out”’ (33), And—to show the limited role of plans, here—a few lines later: “I’ve blown out the candle.”

16. ‘“That truth is personal may be true in ways not simple / but I would rather it were utterly without parts / no action mattering, though one is accountable / the laying on of thing”’ (BS 10-11).

17. This “time all there” is called “‘a permanent gain” (24GP 60).

18. As opposed to the notochord, “profusion is achieved by dischord” (NP 8-9). For notochord, compare Charles Olson’s “the notochord / is enough”’ (106). George Butterick defines “notochord” as “a flexible rod of cells; in higher vertebrates, it forms the supporting axis of the body” (A Nation of Nothing But Poetry: Supplementary Poems 198-9).

“Letters to the Vanishing Point” A World’ (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon, 1989)

E MIGHT THINK OF “‘A WORLD” as an indefinite totality, balancing “‘a”’ off against “‘world.’”* But how does Dennis Phillips think of it? Phillips’ A World is situated (if we take the book’s first words as orienting us to this World) between permanence and rupture and between sound and silence: “A permanent sound / on the cusp of rupture” (3). A World, then, is formed between myth and reason, between the mythology of the permanent sound and the ratio of the cusp. But the myth and the ratio threaten to reverse their positions, the permanent sound becoming a category necessary for competence, the rupture a dispersal of understanding. If competence, on the one hand, is a rite of reification, dispersal, on the other, might lead to the ‘lexical diaspora” (in J. H. Prynne’s phrase). But what of the reversal? Is it meaningful? Meaningless? Does the reversal mean permanence and rupture, sound and silence, competence and dispersal are finally the same thing? Or does it mean that there are always opposites, though allegiances are impermanent? Thus, “the cusp of rupture” may at one time be mythical, at another rational. What remains at the center of this reversal is “the irresistible vestige / of using code” (38).’ But—we must ask, especially after the reversal—what does the code mean?

We become conscious of a distance between what is said (the code) and what is meant (which remains problematic). Self-consciousness doesn’t stop here, however. The distance between the code and the meaning unsettles the dependability of any meaning. Insofar as what happens seems to us to be unique it must be inexpressible through the code. In this way, the code becomes a kind of filter and we “hapless victims.” But is it the code or uniqueness which makes us victims? “Happens? or mystery? / An image for each element, / We will never be caught”’ (38). The mystery can “happen,” if you will, only before the code. But this means the mystery “‘happens” outside of a code, outside of (or before) language, outside of an awareness too quick to make sense of it. And what can “happens” mean there? Yet, what can “happens” mean when it is restricted (and reinforced)? “‘And named a name. / And was seen. And was stuck in a moment” (65).

"Happens," too, gets stuck. But to realize that it is stuck, we need a double consciousness—conscious of the code (and the moment) but also of something outside the code (and outside this moment of being stuck). That double(d) consciousness is a selfconsciousness, and yet self-consciousness eludes its own grasp. "'Iam humus. This is the season. / Bury me'" (39). Or: "Who is this person you've kept from us, they inquired" (30). In the asking and in the grasping we find "fragments of concern"' (17). But does the concern we find in the asking meet up with the concern we find in the answering? If not, how can we ever move beyond a plurality of fragments, within which concern simply cancels concern? '"You're looking for a positive illustration of it / but that's in structure not compliance"' (69). What structure must we look to in order to grasp the plurality of fragments as something more than (or, at least, other than) "fields / of well worn parts"' (8)? "'Come to the crucial. Calm down / to the crucial crossing" (70).

But what is the crucial crossing? It is that of the "'permanent sound / on the cusp of rupture."' If the sound is permanent—without the threat of rupture—it repels our understanding. For, without a break, the sound isn't just permanent; it's total, all-inclusive. We can not understand the sound because it is self-contained and, even if we did understand it, we could not use it because it has no bounds. Yet to put it this way is to belie its total all-inclusiveness, for this boundlessness must sop up our own consciousness until, being part of the totality, all we think is totality even if our thinking never reflects on itself in those terms. Being incorporated within it, we could not tell how truly total this totality would be. Ironically, our sense of being posited outside the totality (which is what we do when we say we can not use it) would be no more than a delusion: we are not opposed to the totality; our sense of remaining individual serves merely to extend its scope. We are merely the borderguards of what we'd thought we stood outside of, the watchguards of what we'd considered ourselves independent of. For there could be nothing outside this totality. And so the totality would be beyond use, and there would be no surplus (or waste) for such a totality. We lose, thereby, the "waste that speaks / future perfect" (33).'There is no more to the totality and this lack is strictly a formal lack: '"'Hundreds of forms filled us / but the contents spilled"' (50). It is a totality only because the contents don't count. (Totality loves a vacuum?) But note too the reversal: if the 'forms filled us," doesn't that mean we function now as a form and the forms as contents? "Form" and "'content"' are relative terms, however. Reversals depend on this relativity and the relativity depends upon the story. Thus, on the one hand, "to story would fill this time" (4); on the other, there is "'an idea in the form of a story"' (7). Story is both a content and a form.

However, this is just one side of "the crucial crossing." What of the other? If the rupture divides the sound, that division ends the permanence of the sound. And, if the sound is not permanent—that is, if all we have are fragments of sounds without any larger structure to them; in other words, if they are "'only notes'" (18)'—then, once again, understanding is repelled because the sound cannot lead to anything beyond itself.' "'A voice, a single line, spawned from a word / a sound a quiet; looked for a cate-

' gory" (48). Without that category, the word can not even point beyond itself. It just is. But what is it? "He writes this" (17): "And 'This' is an easy reference / contained, fragment / of a world" (59). But we need some idea of a category in order to recognize the fragment as a fragment and not as the world itself. And what category is it that we need? That of reference—of being contained within a larger framework (the world), but expressly not of being self-contained. Without the category of reference, there would be a "sudden loss of pressure, / Replaced with nothing" (9).' We would take each "'this" to mean only "this,'"' but, because of the "only," this "this" does not point to anything, not even to itself. It is merely the immediacy of a sound. In this immediacy which can not be recouped by categories, consistency is overthrown and, with it, coherence. We must then ask, is this "'Bona Fide or Fraudulent?" (4). The question, because it must be endlessly asked, is endlessly fatigu- ing. But this is the question of "'the crucial crossing" and it "the is crucial crossing' where we must stand. For, we need the form and the content, the general and the specific, the permanent and the ephemeral. Understanding is i negotiated between the extremes, for "one tongue [is] not nearly enough" (70). Yet, understanding, eager to try its powers, is eager to push its limits to the extreme: 'No lip or language too far"' (73).

Let us not be too sanguine about this negotiating, however. Understanding, wishing for a greater role, is ripe for plundering by both extremes (or all extremes), It can be tempted toward the road of the permanent sound or that of the rupture. The negotiation(s), then, are conducted in the midst of violence, Often the violence is perpetrated in the name of order and rule: ""The names of grammar came in. / Their rules disguised / great violence around them" (32). We mustn't conceive of this violence as one-way, even if "'it wasn't violence / it was writing" (59). The rules are violent but so is their suspension. The rules repress; the suspension expresses. And what does it express? Desire: '""It wants to speak but it's empty" (15). Ironically, then, its wanting is emptiness; its emptiness is wanting; and the silence which results from this emptiness is but the voice of desire freed from the repression of rules.*

In the place of this silence, desire would instigate its own law; for, where '""the rules [are] suspended by whims and lusts" (51), the whims and lusts become the

rule, no less iron-clad (or iron-fisted) for being arbitrary. But it is still "empty." And so, the negotiating is problematic and dangerous: "Connective tissue yields a malady / or a membrane, passage" (63). To connect sound to sound, word to word creates a passage. That passage may reinforce the physical, but, by doing so, it may introduce illness or decay.' It is through the connection that we move, or build understanding, but we cannot know beforehand what we are connecting ourselves up to. Passage is perilous, then. It demands a state of vulnerability. But we use what we learn in the passage to salve that vulnerability. We become less vulnerable and passage becomes a matter of ambition and reification: '"Threads steam up a new demand tangle / an agility to spread them evenly, re-weave them, / turn them into something, call them ambition" (43). This is the "'emporium of passage" (36). Ironically, what is lost in this passage is silence itself; for "no fragment preserves silence"' (7) and the passage, though stitched together in our passing, would be impossible without the fragment. Thus, "'a permanent sound / on the cusp of rupture"' reveals an impermanent—but, for that, no less threatening—silence. While the silence may be fleeting, its effect (that is, the fragment) remains and remains a source of concern.

The silence cuts words to shape but leaves no other record than this demarcation of language. "Each word," being less than the silent rupture, is "a minus" (20), yet, as representatives of that rupture, 'words [are] icons" (47). We might say the icons, however, stand for something that cannot be represented—silence. Or we might say the icons deflect our attention away from the fact that they represent nothing. And how do icons deflect us? By triggering the imagination: '"'Under a fern an icon / her eyes wood her nipples flesh / perfect dark face a harbor" (11). That is, they give us signs to read, in the reading of which we forget what the signs hide—nothing. '"This mechanism of distraction /

[is] not a start but a box"' (69). The distraction just holds us, holds our attention and keeps it away from what is important. This is why the "'letters won't cure this"' (52). We forget they are "letters to the vanishing point"' (67). Oddly, we might say this is why there is a continued need for words. Thus: "It was made for you to notice / that the words must hold / something you missed last time" (23). The words hold silence because silence bounds the words. But the holding also protects the silence from inquisitions. This is why there is always something we "missed last time" and why that something is always the same thing: '"The vulnerable succumbed to residue / and residue became obsession'"' (30). But we could never grasp the residue, and so our obsession becomes our silence. We keep faith with it not by grasping it (for, to do so, would mean grasping just a fragment which can not preserve silence) but by returning to it. Our return renders silence

its whole position: it is the force which, always integral and always disappearing, forms individual expressions and invests each with gravity.

Silence is whole, which is why no fragment can preserve it. But, because it is whole, it can not be grasped; it is always everywhere and nowhere. Unlocateable, silence transcends understanding. Thus, it transcends gravity—in both senses of the word—for silence is precisely what cannot be captured in the binary system, although there would be no binary system (no "'cusp of rupture") without it. And, so, "'the voices contend and then / the words are repeated"' (77). Contrary to silence, "the gravity of the single written thing / pull[s] randomly: image, motive, masque / so little literary" (13). Perhaps because it is 'the single written thing," it possesses gravity. Yet, too, because it is single, this pulling is random. There is one thing which "'the single written thing" achieves: "'A new / gravity where things stand, press against / verticals" (14). Due to its gravity, its weight and seriousness, the single written thing is in touch with the ground and provides, thereby, a place '"'where things stand."' In touch with the ground, it is in touch with the "horizontal world" (65). In its pressing against verticals, "things were touching: / Vibrations earned sound // the house a tuning fork" (63)... until the vibrating house proves the presence of something unseen: gravity turns numinous. Thus, there is more than empiricism can account for, even if "thinking beyond that / is only a decoy" (83)."°

Calling it a decoy doesn't mean it's useless, however, if "only a decoy would save us"' (83). The decoy, then, is both a red herring (it's "only a decoy'"' and we've been tricked again) and something essential ("'only a decoy would save us''). It combines within itself contradictory uses. And this contradiction teaches us that, so to speak, ''none of these pieces will fit back into the box"' (74)—which is one way to get out of a dead end; thus the "'mechanism of distraction'"' (69) doesn't solely distract, even if the meaning is in question. Through the distraction, we may have found both "happens" and "mystery" (38). But the "mystery" posits the happening outside rationality and the "happens" posits the mystery outside illusion. Such a distraction will never allow itself to be boxed in (or boxed up). A word will always mean more than it knows. ''Each name / sent you off // and off means other names"' (62). Names do not grasp objects; they circulate in names. If this seems insubstantial, it is nonetheless expansive. Thus: 'Nothing is saved. / Only the and think and live in. And they give us this larger area because each name takes us out into the network of names and the names, as they circulate in this network, give us the means of thinking of something more than a word. They give us the means of thinking A World."

Notes

1, [would like to thank Dennis Phillips for providing me with a copy of the manuscript of A World. My citations are keyed to the manuscript.

2. As Heidegger put it, "There can be only One World, if world equals the totality of things. But there is a plurality of worlds if world is always a perspective of totality" (Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom 17),

3. Consider Jean Baudrillard: 'From injunction you pass to disjunction by the code"' (Stmulations 139).

4. Compare the notion of the surplus in the work of Ernst Bloch: "Cultural heritage will stop being a victory march with the spoils as loans on security—it will stop being a funeral watch, or monument as soon as the earth possesses the power to transform what has been transmitted by the past into something immortal and, if necessary, in spite of itself, to transform what is anticipated that continues to be an element in it and constitutes the surplus—the surplus not only beyond the former ideology but also beyond that which mere contemplation envisions as refined completion of the great work of culture and engenders silence" (The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays 46— Bloch's italics).

5. More fully: "'A light or fire, a signal. 'Notes,' he says again. / 'Only notes.'" (18).

6. The principle of the "permanent sound" might be thought of as an a pron. Heidegger, in his lectures on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, considers the other possibility, that of the rupture, as a manifold of characteristics. Thus, "'as soon as things were broken up into a manifold of the sensory givenness, the interpretation of their uniform essence could proceed only by saying: Things are really only collections of sensory data" (What Is A Thing? 209).

7. Consider Heidegger: "If we human beings are merely open to the pressure of all that in the midst of which we are suspended, we are not equal to the pressure" (WT 189).

8. Recall Baudrillard: '""The need to speak, even if one has nothing to say, becomes more pressing when one has nothing to say"' (The Ecstasy 9. Compare Heidegger's 'the body is transmission and passage at the same time"' (Nietzsche: The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics, vol. iii 79). Phillips is clear about the physical end of this transmission:

"You held the sound to you. / To your pelvis / / Alone. Pleasure"' (58);

or, "Your pelvis the world / where this revolves" (51). This physical leads, then, to "endometrium paring me, shunning you" (56). Generations are involved in this procreative writing, too: "To bring a world / from your dead fathers" (62). 10. Phillips' lines read: "It may be true that it's all about / amassing an audience that thinking beyond that / is only a decoy" (83).

11. Or Heidegger: ""The concept of world stands, as it were, between the 'possibility of experience' and the 'transcendent ideal' " (The Essence of Reasons 75). But, as Baudrillard reminds us, "'it is impossible that the world should ever verify or be reconciled with itself' (EC 72).

Editor's Note: The quotation from Phillips' A World, "A permanent sound / on the cusp of rupture," which Bruce Campbell makes the basis of his reading, does not appear in the printed version. However, the author states that this does not in any way affect the validity of Campbell's interpretive approach, for the theme which Campbell investigates is otherwise manifested throughout the poem.

"A Fatality of the Given" Ted Pearson: Catenary Odes'

(Berkeley: O Books, 1987) vi! ATENARY"? LET Us BEGIN in a defining mood.

Webster's New World Dictionary (Third College

Edition) tell us ""catenary"' is "[n.] the curve made by a flexible, uniform chain or cord freely suspended between two fixed points—adj. designating or of such a curve."' "'Catenary," then, picks up on remarks made in Pearson's prior Mnemonics: '"The curvature of the earth, for example, / or the mind staved in by lucidity" (n.p.). And, just for completion's sake, "'ode,"' of somewhat more familiar usage for literature, is "1 orig., a poem written to be sung; 2 in modern use, a lyric poem, rhymed or unrhymed, typically addressed to some person or thing and usually characterized by lofty feeling, elaborate form, and dignified style.'"* Put them together and what have you got? A book by Ted Pearson... naturally. But what have we got then? The one word (''catenary''') occupies a space between two fixed points; the other (''odes'') is pitched toward the uppermost fixity (''lofty, elaborate, and dignified''). There is, at the least, a tension of direction here. Shall we recognize where we are, between two fixed points, or shall we set our sights solely on that upper reach?

Perhaps the layout of Catenary Odes can, in this case, give us a clue: most often, the book has two couplets on a page, one at the top, the other at the bottom, with a blank space in between; the ninth, fourteenth, nineteenth, twenty-sixth, thirty-first, and thirty-sixth pages have only one couplet, placed in the middle of the page.' Thus, on the majority of pages, the two couplets could be said to represent fixed points and the blank in the middle to represent the catenary or the curve. But what fixed points are represented in those upper and lower limits? As the first couplet has it, "'at home, and not in paradise, / purview: the wild iris" (1). So we should be alerted to a tension between home and paradise, although perhaps what we most want is to be at home in paradise. But how can we tell where we are? The "'purview"' seems offered as proof. Are there no wild irises in paradise then? And, if not, why are they excluded—because they are "wild" or because they are "'irises''? We might note, too, that "'irises"' forms a circuit: it is what we see (wild

flowers), but it is also, in part, how we see (the iris of the eye). And, so, this "purview" combines what is seen with how it is seen. Is it, then, the circularity that tells us this can't be paradise? But we should not think that, because we're seeing something, this can't be paradise: "Eyes (otherwise) set to the (predictive) / antics of heavenly bodies"' (18).* If the "heavenly bodies" are "predictive," then maybe it is the wildness of the irises that tell us we are home. But what does this tell us of home? "In the mind, an incense beyond credibility, / to smoke out the thoughts of home"' (44). Why does it take an incense "beyond credibility'? Is it because of the wildness we postulated in home? Home, then, is hardly credible and, to expose what it means, we need a stimulus stronger than credibility itself, so that, against that incredible background, the difficult credibility of home itself becomes visible —a kind of invisible writing brought to light. Thus, only when compared to an extreme limit of some kind can the familiar be made visible. Without that extreme limit, the familiar is what most exceeds our grasp and it exceeds our grasp precisely because it is familiar, because, most simply, if not contrasted to something stranger, we never think to see it. If so, "paradise" functions in precisely this manner of the extreme limit: it is against the background of this paradise that the "purview" becomes visible.

And is paradise really, then, this extreme limit? "Lies splintered from perjured heaven, speak / to the whole (these fragments mend) in us"' (4). Heaven speaks of the whole, although it does so—necessarily, it would seem—by broken means. The terrestrial, then, is fragmented, although these fragments vibrate with the hum of heaven's wholeness. Thus, heaven is what we cannot speak of, although we must: whatever we say of heaven is perjured, but, because our perjuries mend a wholeness, they may be considered essential at the same time that they must be considered false. And doesn't this mean heaven is beyond truth? Thus, to speak of heaven is to speak beyond truth. But to speak beyond truth is also to speak beyond falsity, so that what we say of heaven is neither simply true nor false, yet, at the same time, both true and false. This "both"' is the wholeness heaven mends but its mending is not logical nor consequent for this "'both"' remains "'neither""— which gives us some idea of the "'beyond"' of this extreme limit.

Yet we must accept this "beyond" and not endeavor to reduce it to consequence. This is one reason why the extreme limit is impossible to accept: we always go too far or not far enough. On the one hand, we are content with inconsequence; on the other, with consequence. Neither contentment is adequate when judged by the extreme limit of paradise, however. Thus, "the temptation of consequence, lock and key / to provisional moments of grace"' (39). So, by seeking to make heaven consequent (to grasp the moments of grace), we betray our attempt. We make it "'provisional," yet the moment it is provisional it can not be paradise.

Consequence locks the process in order to hold fast to the key of the moment, but the key will fit now in no other lock, and, so, the moments of grace, by being made provisional, are cut off from their provisions, from what they must depend on. "Everything lies in motility from which / humanity has taken nothing but a ghost" (19). Consequence, then, is a severing that makes inconsequence, and "the conspicuous integral confers / its territorial demise"' (33).

On the other hand, inconsequence presents its own set of problems, even though, "'if there's no meaning in it, said the king, / that saves a world of trouble" (14), Or, it saves us from one world of trouble, but not from the other. For, where we accept inconsequence because it is easier, we have lost the peace: "Intrinsic ease offends the peace, / elemental blank collects its future" (33), The future of inconsequence shall be inconsequence. We should know better, then, than to accept inconsequence in hopes that it will, of itself, lead to its opposite. It can lead to its opposite only if contrasted to its opposite, only if the (intrinsic) ease is thwarted. With inconsequence, "phantoms emblematize such wounds: / entropic night and rust"' (32). So, consequence or inconsequence lead equally to the ghost: 'Here, these remnants sift untrammelled / ghosts of denial too firm to retract" (35).

What can we say of this "equal lead"'? It makes choice easier, knowing that either path leads to the same destination. And it makes choice impossible, knowing that either path leads to the same destination. For if the result is the same, we can hardly call it a choice. It is as if necessity, fearing that we should see through it, managed to enclose choice within its own fate. Necessity, by underwiting this choice, discloses how fearful it is of choice, how afraid it is that we shall find necessity is unnecessary. But, if the choice in election isn't free, perhaps it shall be a saintly election, after all, where obedience gains martyrdom, our freedom freely spilled on this stone of fate. ""The subject (matter's rhythm) logged / to chart the airs of its ways"' (40). Necessity's presumption may well be matched by our own, as we give ourselves airs: "Presumption suckles fact from matrix / the cleft path to free will" (3). As fact is sucked from the matrix, a gap is left and that gap is "'the cleft path to free will.' Without presumption, there is no gap. Without the gap, there is no free will. So, without presumption, the world is the (full) matrix, 'bent to the fret and slant of fact"' (35). Such a world is natural only if reification is natural. Conversely, free will is natural only if presumption is not self-evident. So, to that extent, it is itself not "natural," which is to say that, even when we take the world to be a laboratory of domination, we are ourselves involved in that definition, although we would most like to pretend we aren't: "Only that which we ourselves construct / can we foresee"' (9).° Yet, implicit here is the fact that the world is more than we can (fore)see. Thus, there is alterity and "alterity varies by the dream" (6).

But where there is alterity, there is conflict and confusion. There is opposition. "'A confusion of motives (sole precedent), / despair as a second language" (24). We experience the despair as expatriates; it becomes our second language, the one we need to speak and understand in order to make our way in the world, the language that becomes meaningful for us when the sole precedent of our native lives (that is, our lives before we became expatriates) serves to deepen our despair. Ironically, our unhappiness serves to naturalize us as speakers of despair, and the second language can come to seem the more natural. And what happens then to the first language? (Was there a first? "Difficult to imagine loss / unless in terms in which the lost / is subject to further seeking" [Soundings, n.p.].) We become inured to despair. And, yet, this conflict needn't be seen from a personal perspective. Despair, then, is despair only as a second language, for, when it seems natural, it ceases to be despair. A second benefit of multiple languages is the inculcation of multiple perspectives. Thus, from another perspective opposites may actually be seen in collusion: 'Opposites entice the deforming flame / and lost estate of play" (17). The opposites hide, through enticement, the fact that the flame has been deformed, the estate of play lost; and, because the true state of play, for example, is hidden, we are given the illusion that play still counts. This is important because the opposites nurture the delusion of choice, whereas one choice (play, in this case) has already been deracinated. Play is not play anymore, for all things must count.

Nothing is more natural than to size up our activities with the eye of an investment banker: where should we invest our time? And diversifying our time is simply a means to be more efficient, to get the maximum return for all our time spent. The ideal would be to invest in both sides of the opposition—which, because, at base, both are one, is precisely what we can do. This investment shall, we hope, procure a capacious return. Yet, "the capacious begets a qualified plural / that comes, but seldom stays" (17). The "qualified plural," then, must be immediately reinvested. Unfortunately, it must still be reinvested within the framework of time itself, and, so, for all that we might feel we have finally reached a point where play can once again be play, time is like inflation eating up the profit of that

"qualified plural. ** And we must reinvest it, the "plural" does not gain for us the purchase to play; it still must be put to work. What we gain, then, is gone on the stream of time and the time (or state) we hoped to reach by means of the

"'capacious plural"' is but all the more postponed. The opposites which hid the "'lost estate of play" were, after all, not opposites at all, And "any equal holds all / else, at variance" (Coulomb's Law, n.p.)

But, if not opposites, what then? "Symmetries"; for both are two sides of one coin. And the coin? "Symmetries of the innate sentence, / the trial by error the period ends" (7). There is, at base, a form which holds the opposites together and that form is at the same time a judgment—in this way, heavenly decrees might have a material base. And, yet, because this symmetry is hidden from us (as something innate, and, thus, not visible), we are pushed into "trial by error" and it is not until "the period ends"' the trial that the sentence is brought to a close and the form of the innate sentence revealed. Therefore, the judgment of the "innate sentence" is held until the end. But "judgment" here isn't strictly spiritual, for "'summoned to recant, condemned to forget / all cause ministers to power of place" (44). Ours is a trial by error not simply because we do not recognize the innate sentence except in retrospect, but because we are subject to another power, an earthly power. By this "earthly power," I mean both the laws we call "natural" (like cause and effect, for instance) and the laws we call social; and social, in turn, means the unwritten laws, as well as the written—that is, how the rich and powerful can summon us to recant our heresies, condemn us to forget our ideals. Because we are subject to this force ("'of place"), we are made to forget whatever we might have known of the "innate sentence."' We judge our actions by a short-term scale, instead of the scale of the afterlife. And, because we are made to forget, we are forced into a life of "trial by error." This trial by error isn't directed toward discovering our innate sentence; it seeks what the power of place desires of us, so that we may avoid being punished in the future.

But, note, too, that if there is the "innate sentence," there must be a kind of "grammar"; that is, a grammar of forms within which the innate sentence inheres. The grammar, then, is the means by which we learn about the innate sentence. But the grammar isn't reducible to the innate sentence, nor is it reducible to the power of place (although place in a sentence wields its lure). Grammar is a median. But what are we told of grammar? "The grammar suffers a fatality / of the given, the forms / we are (lost in them) known by" (43). As given, there is no choice in grammar. Consequently, there is "a fatality of the given." It is what it is. What's wrong with this? Note how "'lost" and "known" seem equal—due to the fatality of the given. We know ourselves to be different from what we seem to be. For others, we must be our form, but for us there shall always be a discrepancy. Yet, we cannot say how different we are for we would have to do so within the grammar of forms and the grammar of forms can not recognize that difference. So there is a sense which is not expressible that we each cleave to as a sign of our distinction (marking us as distinct from what we seem to be). If that inexpressible sense were judged illegitimate and we were bound by that judgment (as coming from the aw of grammar), we could be no more than the forms which precede us and shall

outlast us. In this way, the power of place (in the sentence) reinforces the power of place (in the world). "The fatality of the given" means that, both socially and linguistically, we have been put in our place. For us, then, to be known ts to be lost because knowing is inherently a knowing of cases (or classes) and the function of case (or class) predetermined. Therefore, knowing isn't the human quality; it neutralizes the human quality. It is the interval which is the human quality—as, for example, the interval between what we know and what we can say; or, perhaps, the blank spaces in Catenary Odes. Maybe it is because knowing crushes differences, and speaking (or writing) is intimately associated with knowing that, for Pearson, music provides the context for the human quality: "There are some intervals that carry that human / quality if you play them in the right pitch" (26). Or: "singing / makes much / / of what / little / 'happens' / in a life" (8).

So music is valued because it preserves the human interval: "'Whose music abstracts / thought as works, in song enacts / what distance covers, measure strictly up" (CL). There is a distance and "'distance balks coherent mirrors" (11)—any theory of knowledge which rests on a theory of representation or reflection (which is to say, nearly all theories of knowledge) is rendered incoherent by this distance. Distance balks knowledge; further, as it creates the interval, distance may well be held responsible for the "human quality."'" And, so, we must pay attention to the second part of the title—Odes. But, as '"'Odes"' suggests there is a role for song to play, we might ask if song can accomplish what speech can not—the expression of heaven (or truth). "The slow tongues' stab at reportage / that limns the sweet un-

. heard" (23); or, "angle's incidence wills occasion, / a loop of speech accosts the air" (15). So, speech, directed toward the goal of knowing, forms a speech-loop and misses "the sweet unheard."' Yet, a look at one of the couplets—for instance: "Hardpan pipes a pygmy forest, / believe I'll dust my broom"' (1)—would convince us that, if musical, Pearson's music is not the over-ripe, round-voweled, fullthroated chaunt traditionally thought to be musical verse. But, as music has changed over the years, so has the epithet "'musical."' For Pearson, '"'musical" can not, above all, designate an easy musicality. But, what might "musical" mean, then? Music is an apprehension of visible things: "Without a song, the humblest dream / reproaches judgment with visible things" (4). Song, then, is a kind of balance. Due to it, we may avoid recriminations between dream and judgment; however, without song, the dream threatens judgment. And, so, song isn't the keeper of the dream; it's the keeper of "'visible things."' But what does it mean for song to be the keeper of "visible things"? It means that song cleaves to an entelechy; each thing is known by its form and that form, whether we discover it virtually, aurally, or tactilely, is what we mean by "song." And, therefore, song is

the opposite of grammar's "fatality of / the given, the forms / we are (lost in them) known by"' (43).

Song, then, is what allows us to recognize that "teach thing [is] equal to the shape of its 'moment' / dressing edenic meat"' (8). And why is this entelechy the point of balance? Because this form is essential, the essence occurring between the spiritual or ideal and the material. This also means that, without its own song (as entelechy), 'the humblest dream"' is reduced to the order of "'visual things" and has nothing else with which to reproach judgment, as unlikely as it may be that "visual things" shall ever dissuade judgment. Thus, due to entelechy, each thing, so sung, is singular. The singular isn't, in itself, song, but the song must be singular: "Harmony lifts singleness into song / to shelter all it owes"' (25). So the song protects. But note that its protection isn't a form of proof, for "'if music is singleness in parts, each part / seeming one, being many, proves none"' (M). If song is an entelechy (each thing being known by its individual form), music is a conglomeration, comprised of "'parts.'" While each part may seem to be singular, each part belongs to a whole ("music"), So, uniqueness is multiplied, but the multiplication divides it. Uniqueness become less than individual; this new math finally proving none (and, perhaps, proving in the end, to be no math at all, either).

And yet, it doesn't matter that the song proves nothing; it is still a matter of responsibility if it "'shelter{s] all it owes." But what does it shelter—or what does it owe all to? Desire: 'In the hum of parallel signs that sing, / the first insinuation was amorous"' (15).* Yet, in the song's sheltering of desire, desire is not frozen, there to gaze forever upon the same face. For that would kill desire. Instead, there must be change, so the sheltering of desire shall protect desire from solidifying in order that it remain desire. Thus, "change alone exempts desire from / content's bondage" (34). But this sheltering of desire means that the song itself must be capable of passing away—this is one index of responsibility to desire: "The wind in the wires is also song / of which no words survive, nor want of such / inconstancies as bid one's own to thrive" (M). '"'Seeming one, being many, prov[ing] none"' may be inconstant, but it does not dull the desire we feel for our song to survive, nor does our desire for our song to survive mean that it shall. Paradoxically, in this second change, desire would stand against itself, seeking permanence instead of change. But, were desire permanently realized, desire would end. It would simply be a memorial to what it was. And, yet, this desireagainst-itself is why we sing (or, presumably, write); for we do not sing (or write) for knowledge's sake. After all, if we did, we could not sing (or write) of heaven, for we must know heaven is beyond knowing. Desire, then, exceeds knowing, but, in that excess, is a passing away and in that passing away a trace is

left. And, so, we might say that, from the beginning, desire is "tapped for trace" (10).

This "'trace"' is crucial for the structure of desire, for there would be no desire without an absence or excess, without the possibility of a passage. So, if desire were not capable of leaving a trace (nor, perhaps, of following a trace), desire could not be desire. But, as it leaves a trace, desire leaves a record—even though such memorializing is accidental. For desire does not care about leaving a record; it cares only for satisfaction, which it shall not find in the past. Desire, then, rides over the trace or leaves the trace in its wake; it is not "attached"' to it, however. "In a word, every sort of attachment leads / to the representation of the tragic" (31). That is, attachment leads to the image (as a representative of representation) and the image leads to "the tragic." So the trace is not an image. It is geared to "certain transit" (7).

On the other hand, memory is not geared to "'certain transit"'; in fact, it would as well still the transit to keep the image clear. Memory, then, leads to the tragic because it maintains an image cut off from time, and desire stands against memory because "'memory's cult occludes its cargo, / rank encumbrance, risible stone"' (13). For desire, each time, each act, would be primary. It achieves this primacy as best it can by ignoring the past or by using it up; desire demands short-term memory, a memory that will self-destruct; for desire wants always to bring its past with it (so that its past is present) and whatever it does not carry it finds barren. So: '"The past stands clear of present pain, / the plot prefers the spreading stain" (24). But, then, desire doesn't see that the trace (which, as a surplus or absence in desire, can not be carried by desire) is germane in the most appropriate way: it insinuates openings and infiltrates blockages. After all, the trace is a kind of "groove": "More than a field, the generic groove" (10). How is the groove more than the field? Because it has a "'recompense"—"'filament, stop-time, / law, and veiled conjecture" (12). It's not area or quantity which is important. If it were, the field would be more important than the groove. Though the groove appears to be insignificant (even vacant), it combines the interval ("stop-time"') with the law (and, thus, "the fatality of the given"). So, in that groove which desire plays, joy and fatality are entwined: '"'Death touching the air in the blood"' (32).

It is inevitable that desire, whatever its wants, should someday come to the end of the line. "'Reluctant latitudes of absolute repeal, / matter's terminale"' (13). And the end of the matter shall be the end of what matters, which, in itself, is a kind of "absolute repeal." Or is it the end of what matters? It could be that "'matter's terminale" shall be but a transition. How so? As Pearson put it in The Blue Table (1977), "the end of speech // faith' (n.p.—Pearson's italics), So the end of speech brings us to the point beyond which knowledge is useless, though, with it, we

revert to that other space (heaven) whose tension was apparent all along in Catenary Odes but which could scarcely be spoken, given the state of its perjured lies. Because it was present in the way it bent the discourse of Catenary Odes but in no other way, the words spoke of heaven all the time they spoke of something else. Therefore, "words are not // to be believed" (BT). And, yet, they did speak of heaven, so, "seeming is believing" (30). As with the fragmented lies' mending wholeness, there may be something to these words after all—something beyond belief. "'Alternations of form and flux / figure more than speech" (MM). But, "now even the horizon is a pun"

(28).

This issue becomes particularly acute at the end, when we want to know what it was all for. What were the words for? Was heaven just a trope? "Somehow music (the end of a trope), and signify / where human blood has been spilled" (41). The interval which sheathed the human quality was itself a trope—a trope in a trope, for it was an interval in music. The trope prolongs the interval, by moving that musical interval into tropic language, but, eventually, the trope must end and, with it, the human interval. After all, intervals, human or otherwise, must end, or they would not be intervals. But what happens when the human interval ends? What happens when the trope ends? We lose the metaphoric dimension. Thus, the dimension beyond knowing (the dimension of heaven, for instance) is lost. And, once it is lost, we waken to ritual, but a ritual which has lost its purpose. Thus, we cannot tell why this blood was spilled: was it a ritual? Was it accidental? Was it an attack? With the ending of the trope, music may "'signify where human blood has been spilled," but, as the significance is weak, the purpose being ified, the place has a divested importance. With the end of the trope, significance points backward (to what "thas been" done), and, so, significance is switched to memory and comes to mourn the tragic representation of attachment: the place is important but we don't know why. "Equality of the uncontested / discourse remains a matter of blood" (25).* But the blood, had it been able to remain a trope (as a founding trope of a community, perhaps), would not have had to have been spilled. When the trope ended, the literal began its reign and, for the literal, blood, to be blood, must be shed, yet, once shed, blood is just blood. When the metaphoric dimension is exorcised, we come into the clearing of tautologies and can not move beyond the identity of "'is."""

The literal seeks to disclose the world in the light of (tautological) identity, exposing empirical reason with the same light which eradicates our shadows. Yet, "'hard liquor and a sense of loss, because / you cannot live without your shadow" (41)." So, the literal seeks to disabuse us of our illusions, but the literal brings about its own kind of illusions and those illusions can be quite burdensome. We cannot

live without our shadows. Yet, needing our shadow, we need more than the literal. Need, while literal, is more than literal. It crashes through the literal like bullets through paper, but it is also what makes the literal real, what allows us to redefine the literal so that it becomes more literal. (O problematic "more" that has such catenaries in it.) The "catenary," then, is a way of presenting what cannot be literally presented. It presents a more, which, not being Literally more, might also be less—like the blank spaces themselves. And this is either the emptiest of gestures or the most complex—depending on the role of need. The "more" brings to us things which matter but don't seem to belong here: "Pleasure is not a common name, wind / over low ground (not this world)" (27). It brings us to the uncommon, then, and discloses a world beyond the literal, a world which is important because we cannot point to it: "not this world." Pleasure, then, is hidden behind the "'not,"' and, if we can not take delight in that pleasure, we shall surely be thwarted by that not.

Notes.

1, Catenary Odes is unpaginated.For facility of reference, I have assigned page numbers, beginning with "at home, and not in paradise" as page one. 2. The Ode can be considered a much more radically unstable and troubling form than this definition suggests. For instance, consider Rachel Blau DuPlessis' sense of Ode: "Ode is the genre which symbolizes poetry. When ordinary people resist poetry, it is ode-like qualities which they are resisting: the apparent overvaluing of transcendence; the ecstatic, inexplicable events; the poetic diction of apostrophe and abstraction: excessive, embarrassing, over-blown, portentous, mellifluous.... Odes entail the very notion of, not to speak about dangers of, the sublime; the likelihood, not to speak of temptations and necessity, of dissolution; the febrile outcries; the feminine encodings implicit in this genre, of 'hysteria,' emotionalism, selfimportance, exaggeration, double and irreducible messages, even duplicity, are all so contemptible from a tight-lipped prose/informatonal/direct word 'no slither' norm"' (Temblor #6, 94). Pearson's Odes do not partake of the full range of these qualities, it must be admitted. For instance, they are certainly not over-blown nor mellifluous. However, they do have '""double and irreducible" and are worthy of conternpt "from a tight-lipped prose/informational/direct word 'no slither' norm," although it might be hard to say (but for the honor of the thing) how praiseworthy such contempt would be. 3. For the record, however, note the following exceptions: the bottom couplet on page five, the top couplet on page thirty-four, and both couplets on page forty-three are, in fact, not couplets at all, but triplets. 4. Or consider, "to write paradise, solve for stone: / (impalpably arrayed)"" (30). 5. Contrasted to the true wholeness of heaven (which seems to be perjured in the terrestrial sphere) is a false certitude; one that is gained by

“subbing” for the fragmentation of modern life: ““What strange certitude subs for the thrash / of a discontinuous world?” (20). But the “discontinuous” is not simply true either: ““The continuity (there is) / has been shattered, (a world / we call it) but not the details” (43). So we have details but nothing for them to fit into. The book itself doesn’t escape this continuous/discontinous dichotomy: Sook tes bey wikes Sp Kogencnns of exe, / toothsome sexemes, a rags whose plain unnerves unbroken ground” (16). Theo bovis ("x ube of hos? ie unlined enibs clos Gealy taccnon is gathered (as “‘a quire’’); yet, it is capable (through its “plain,” or page) of threatening what is whole (“‘unbroken ground’’). And, “‘no surface sleeps with logic”’ (M). 6. Ludwig Wittgenstein, in 1916, had written: ‘We can only foresee what we ourselves construct" (Notebooks 1914-1916, 2nd ed. »p- 71). It is also part of proposition 5.556 in the Tractatus Logico- Pearson had earlier written, “the proposition is an image of the fact” (BT). 7. Distance isn’t an exclusive property of music, of course. Puns open up a distance in the word, thereby subverting the “fatality of the given.” Note how “anode” is “a node” is “an ode.” “Anode: the body electric in a brownout, / the western mind in a jar” (11). Perhaps this would be the time to comment on the allusiveness (or citationality) of Catenary Odes. Here “the body electric” of Whitman appears next to “the western mind in ajar,” transformed from Stevens's “Anecdote of a Jar.” Allusions (or citations) are akin to puns in that they open up a space (or distance) in the work and, so, might likewise be considered as marking an interval. 8. Desire may inspire song but it does not sing itself: “Desire, the mute with garrulous hands, / describes a verbal embrace” (39). 9. Or: “Zoned in a prospect lit with names, / duty’s discourse is winged dust”’ (21),

10, “Metaphysics: tautology; religion: tautology; / everything’s tautology except black coffee”’ (36). 11. Earlier (1979), Pearson had written, “But the words die / whose love was strong // shadow and shadow // reconstructs the world // will one surrender / self for love? look // where the surface dances | silvered by the wind”

(BT—Pearson’s italics).

Pasquale Verdicchio

Three for Pier Paolo Pasolini

Qi a bit has been written on P, but little that really gets to his work. Though a very important writer, filmer, and cultural commentator, he has been constantly brushed aside, his impact undermined. Part of the reason for this was of course his life style, and the circumstances of his death. Most of the work on Pasolini really concentrates on finding links between his homosexuality and his violent death. People who should know better refer to the titles of his works, such as "A Violent Life," in order to conclude that he had in fact actualized his own death wish. With this, they detract and distract from his work and the controversy it continually caused; a controversy which at the political level caused discomfort for many and may have led to the '"'excusable"' elimination of P.

What are clouds? takes its title from a Pasolini short in which he comments on the relationship of the natural and the social worlds. Both worlds being touched by the artificiality of language and its actually murderous use on the part of those who pretend to have control over it (socially, the bourgeoisie). In it I recall Pasolini's use of the triplet, which he used in much of his poetry as a cultural recall of Dante. Therefore presenting tradition in order to undermine it, since he (Pasolini) used it with a clear political intention in his The ashes of Gramsct.

Connotes comments on Pasolini's modus operandi, All his (writing) actions were loaded and dangerous. He moved across genres, styles, sociopolitical and cultural designations. Often these actions were turned against him by clever manipulators, but P's work was strong and survived; unfortunately, his body could not take the same punishment.

Pa is what the boys in the slum areas of Rome called Pasolini. It was one of these boys that lured him into his final confrontation. One of the boys who Pasolini had thought to contain the potential for revolution (through language, through the body). PasQuaLe VeRDICCHIO, SEPTEMBER 6, 1989

What are clouds? The power to de-scribe

The murderous hand of language Cannot be an antious eabeae recalled Smooth its leather glove in the popular dialect Picture this: script of given culture to maintain contact frame by frame and with it death meter and melody for other occasions regarding form: fo be alive or dead the indifference who will give his body undoing everyone's sense of the sacred to feed the hungry gathering interviews _ testimony officially it is only a parable

The experience of simulation A path of unheard color an abstract notion maybe from the world lived taken from a ready collaboration in the interim one by one__ not bound in movement defecation urination narration Sex and cannibalism parallel systems excess repetition blood Ideology begins with contradiction torture silence normalcy [heroic and a touch didactic] an effect of reversed field glasses At which point should one scream out Positions defined in torture Films illustrated with words distant. in someone else's view of premythic function Flesh retains its erasure marks: The ceiling of aggression disappeared; who will give his body flattened against the soil to complete the verses repression takes reign

Connotes

1 Bodies and places are little more than diary entries. Perforated by movement. Photographs betray their emergence. Only become apparent much later. Even those who might have better access to apocryphal elements. Extensions that are rarely seen, spoken of, or considered.

2 The concerns expressed explored in one provide the impetus for further investigation in another. Eventual inability to withstand the onslaught of consumerism. This type of approach invariably leads to a process of rewriting. Similar things in different languages.

3 Examples to be found in all genres. Specificity lost in a process of contamination, The risky operation not left behind. From one to the other, quite successful.

The very taking leave of genre.

4 Quick to spot the emergence. Causes a search elsewhere for a similar class. At least a potential opposition. The decimation of difference. Another translated storm.

Pa

Something moves within the failed field of vision disallowed fragile rose

The intolerable absence of innocence an alternative proposal of questionable practices a sterile avantgarde poses in the lap of the executioner

Beyond any approved limit to the undoing of the old world:

a group strategy the fall of all alibis all components undermined

Monologues of desperate analysis diverse rebellion in itself the place nothingness no longer an illusion but an unconfessed word

Marked condition immutable faith muted something foreign become history in a posthumous hell

Anthony Robbins

from Theories of Decline

Prepositional Again

un
done/ whit-list
in lieu of the lost
song-urge: sing of it/if it can be told
how fully the chance in beauty or the prick in his
stream, how frightening the glass fish, his eminence
and clotured termini, each density both a filter and a receptor. Outside
blackness, white water, hence
that one's dictum about place-names is merely a mindless
chiffreschrift, a visceral changed
shape of how he is impostured between fish
and stream, and there nonetheless the anaphoric
dictum of love
given love lost, nomines
sunt consequentia rerum while the skin
gives and sizzles in another, a scroll-
song, that was, before the Author took all
of his Elavil and drove to the throne
of self-obliteration:
it was cunt, cunt in Sparta, Pamplona, greater
St. Paul: Thirty years of balance lost
on that porch, hyperborean lucidity in service
of closing as he began. God. Gyrating off of the honeyed
pivot of conventions into minutiae coming unbidden
out of brain-os: notebooks, phials, goblets,
gummed slips, pictures of angel child, globe
resting on tax forms, book, solar
music box, coaster cut (lento moderato)
from love duet of Tristan and Isolde, mnemo
pad, small plastic organizer full of motes and paperclips,
administrative pollen, a heavy
channeled rhomboidal ash tray running
with amethyst, pippin, northern spy, and vodka, and
Hegel, Hegel, the list is partial, and the Author maybe,
but me not miserable. Not in March! On my blotter! On my desk!

Clouds

Aperire, April, open the fool and flush
the attendants, fester the brain, tease
the sensitive archipelago that posits
a beyond to the sphincter, tougher, windier than the malebolge of March

#t#
of the body crying give me a minute
if only to sing the old
words about the old dying that silent are
amorphous, or deformed, deadly
clotted allusions: J in my cloven
room... at dusk the white calves
queueing... the river's bottom, the moon,
its pearly aponeurotic pallor... as the mind
shivered, the brilliance of its uttered
selvedge could not hold
##F
in an appropriate image. But what was it?
Is It? Or proper now, in April, to say it
when we might so easily get out of it, who, helgrammites,
got into it? How? Behold. There is my daughter. She has a cough and
Oh,
that my sheer temples might instead of a page recalesce
the outer world for her, that she, as forever,
sleep there perfect in the grass,
by jonquils tipping, top-heavy with bock, little
love, her nostrils flush with April
odors, her cheeks and the conch herds in the clouds
each reflecting each, firm pink flesh feeding
on the fluted, luminous edges, sweeter far than the gray
middles of all the perfectible, passing clouds.

On the Tropic of Time (Continued)

Broke, loose from Moroccan amoebas, herb, some numbingly raw fore-
play with an ice statue in Madrid, he sidled toward himself in the testicular
darkness, alone, down and venereal by the river. He bought a navel orange, a quart of hot beer
and wandered back to his room in the Hotel des Grandes Hommes, third floor, flop,
and as he read from Catullus he began to skin
the orange: on the skin a small black oval label: CLODIA / SPAIN. Clodia
was the Lesbia of those poems, the poet's sometimes squeeze, the soft anvil
on which he laid and upon whose large potency hammered his jealous
morality. He was mad about her, a self-made manic and helped on and off it by his will
to control her, or, same thing, his overly asserted non-will. While she,
if you believe Catullus, cat-licked and corn-shucked the bloods of Rome. Poem 97:
"Whatever woman handles this man [Aemelius] is equally
capable of licking the arse-hole of a leprous hangman." It is enthralling, the voice
of the lack of love, as in all jealousy—or of the rhetoric of the monotheistic
mystic, who always feels his love as incomplete and destructive
of her person. Romance, he thinks, anyway a mundane, contemptible
business, but the only thing that brings him into other wonder,
into nervously coagulating hieroglyphs created in flesh and worked out
in the accidental moment between status and prescription. Love is like an emerald
step into a more deliberated cloud, where he can behold himself as, as though a new
penny flipped into the firmament, but even there in some distress
for always trying to ascend to a more fluent flight path. It was Hope. He was
always standing in the fog of hope for the long solution of conjunction,
singing "Rose O Rose come to your Herm," that kind of sublimation. Imagine
his incapacities, social et al.: even with his forelock of limp, pink coral,
that he as himself, the same, but yet in time, was per se comical.
And where is he, where are you now, Catullus? Plunging
toward Phrygia over violent water, plowed on the star-stung
Georgian coast? The book says you knew him for a while.

Colonic

6PM.: March 28 on the river
bank at Istrouma 2 miles below
the new bridge and maybe four above that I can see
the old: stoppage of the bitch governor: a coal barge comes
past and swings tug-tugging S
SW. Then grey barge-tanker rumbling cryptic vaults, super-
structure of valves and tubing. I feel
a presence back over my right shoulder: it is
the bright early half moon, shimmering flaystone
on the deep sky, and in front of me an illimitable
fiery oblate sun. I get up from the log
and make down the cut bank on huge concrete, blasted
breccial debris: an old wall, a bank building,
a sidewalk. The wash-take is predominantly metal: old
encrusted long-handled pliers, a cable woven in
and out of the cut, huge
bolts, nuts, clay-empearled spikes, marine
hinges, cabinet handles, cement ties, heavy-gauge wire:
in the gurged colonic crap of mud-crack
textured on top like worm castings and within
with the nitric, ulcering tincture of the Midwest.
When the river moves, as it will
soon, sideways, through the water-fort
up at Morganza, 60 miles above here, through
Point Coupee Parish, Bayou Maringouin,
Bayou Cortableu will be footings in the channel
pouring west into the Achafalya Basin, through
Morgan City, This part of the river will
from Empire to Morganza be a curt-
ailed gutter, below sea level, brackish then
engulfed with sea water. The bottom will sand up
and even out: the gutter will shallow: the old end of the river
will salinate and wither, salt soaking in
to the amputation, and this bank, willowed
now, will, as willowed die. With it the kingfisher
or it too will move, and the sedge wren, west.
The metal confetti of America will dissolve
and soak into this bank. Old Man? A withering plug,
appendix of abused history, here where I sit
under sky freaked with skin resigned to river's will-swerving:
erasing sweet ethical old rebus earth
full of metal and sun
down and

brother
    mud.
    for Fred Hobson

Clayton Eshleman

Sixteen Years in Los Angeles

weigh less than 24 hours did in Kyoto—
I am sieve here, & the western Pacific so many images,
  the archaic, the supernatural present.
In Kyoto, flies caught on my screen, there
I was a mask to be punctured,
let the recessed manhood
jive with materials emerging from
    jungular green
  tea, white tigers
      lapping—such screens
  met my own, & the jam was
to wrench free a navel potent enough to withstand,
a harakiri-man
      who in vision might fly
attached, navel to pole,
    the bird poem in veer to
    its center here.

And LA? Nothing remains now
  & is a torment like any residue
  not quaffed—place is never totally used,
thus: rich blue ghosts of canyons,
their fur against cobalt lime dusk,
with my car in my chest
my typewriter in my nose,
playing ping pong with Kessler's brain,
watching Tom Clark lap & tear, on all fours, over
  the anit mundi,
aware of his mouth cancer,
the Dorn excreting through his cheeks,
the residue! Broken pimples of downtown,
fantasy of Cal Arts as a tentacular gas chamber,
  around whose bends anything might emerge—
I insist that such stuff, now ash,
kindles & supports creative urge—
it is onto our enemies' faces
we mask our own, & the blooming,
blowing more-than-real southern
  California diadem?

It was porous nest, the boulevards
like action paintings, La Brea
La Cienega, agnostic snarl of pizza
gym parking for porno-underwear,

tinsel streaming in the sun of a day so strong
my mind jack-in-the-boxed back into
the library of its own marvelous clap-trap,
the bricolage of tar & Maya movie plaster
speared on the tusks of ghosts,
collapsible city, gladiator bright, of plastic & the dream of
strolling in the infinite, while nature's radiation
  came to you as an angel layered in coke,
then she lay out across the sushi counter & cleaved, on her own,
ika tako maguro uni,
plane's-eye view: checkerboard of Monopoly homes,
LAX descent flashing Aero no-one,
  the empty power of art
tacked to the wall of television, where God,
an alien yellow, shuffles consumer faith
& the Rolfed young man cries I am,
forgetting that I AM never weeps.
Only the boatfolk in star war with hunger humanize,
a gentle invasion, The Protestant roller-rink:
Jackie Collins her neon lipstick smear of anima
  black lion mane
along the deck of the Strip,
old-fashioned sideshow freak-attraction canvases,
billboards as oil-pumps, on pistons, as one
drives not in car but roadster,
weird 1920s now still-life feel of a split-open
  cornucopia,
plus Hades' clown hat, bubbles of oranges, cleft
  watermelons,
or Frida Kahlo's passion to be ruby-red,
her never-healing sores—how much her image seems to
  identify so much here,
as if Frida is Our Lady of the Angels,
or: what the angels have let go,
Our Lady without Parachute,
  her bandaged shawl,
torn, blackened punk-fashion manikins digging
"The Day of the Dead" in The Soap Plant—
our library: an exfoliating skull sending north
  macabre Mexican gaiety,
coating the Andreas Fault with a pomade of sugar
while a coy sefiorita plays Los Angeles with her fan,
Kali-fornia face, Kali's fornix, Her oven, Marilyn's
  glee,
Her sagging frontier bodice line
where men are, at once, larvae & Valentino,

the chrome brown brittle candy of this western edge,
haunted not as Brittany by land's end
  [thus: abyss everywhere]

but with the American Icarus Dream:
to retain one's bandages near the sun,
—play with it—one's retainer bandages,
 one's servants,
to go to immortality accompanied by every shoulder
 on which one stood—
to neither melt nor meld, to wear the sun
 as a spider wears her web,
to be dolled up as one eats one's mate,
to be & to be, with the same abandon kids pee & pee,
Hockney-sketchy wet immortality, water
paper deep for throngs to admire,
to be the admired liar, the bumpkin surprised by his cow
as milk can & milk stool scatter in a blue sky
imperiled by cancerous fish,
    in whose bowl you too navigate,
    human being who looks like, in vision,
    a scuba effete wandering
    unpeopled streets, wearing
    your house on your head,
    your possessions pyramiding down your sides,
    a walking obsidian relief,
    in through the ramparts of Toontown
    where Porky & Bugs come
    tumbling through the palms,
    squirting your sunglasses with
     hot-dog-shaped diners,
     saber-tooth perfume.

21 DECEMBER 88

Tom Clark

Inside the Redwood

Floating tiers and worlds
a green heaven doll house

dense microwood spaces
needle masses stretch out

big rain shroud wings over
air runways imagined solid

as clouds flown through in planes
thick stacked tufted landings

branch bales piled up feathery
no sky shows through

in there the greens so dark
like blacks with orange edged

light lower lift-ups
of needle tip droopers poised

to move up and down in
the water weighted wind

Joanne Kyger

Winter Sequence at Jon's House

January 3, 1989
Strike the impending muse _ phew!

'and not to search for the perfect poem'

amid the tumbled over cabin
—lessons of stability in utmost gale wind
coming from unexpected direction
of north east fury

No, let us erase the worries the thoughtful worries
as impediments of the Heart _ beats
where truly there is still wonder

with an offering of winter lavender's purple beads
and graceful unfurled calla lily
blossoms of the winter New Year

January 5, 1989
Ridge line silver mist...

hot sun on the elbow
jazz on the radio
Frida Kahlo self portrait with parrots
lays with possible distress on the floor
until she is picked up and the intermittent rain
starts gusting

Man leading his horse off
in the fields—

Social moves and nuances.

I knew this was a day for rainbows
in a field of raptors busy
for lunch

And so what's 'Buddhist'
about all this

landscape consciousness
and its fragile human frequency?

'The mind is as blank
as a bone on the beach
when the tide runs out'

Company that's what
it's all about entwined
in the same air and waking
in the same sun's dawn

January 16 Monday
What's that curling over there—
Incense snake smoke joss stick

You sit down and have an afternoon chat with a friend
You talk about other people, what they are doing
Maybe you characterize them, not exactly judge

them, but mull them over in terms of anecdotes
words, they're very

Evaluating

January 24 Tuesday
Risky show-off shows internal bending. After the super
bowl. What a way to go. In dream we are expanding
the house. This is a portable tool shed and will do good
for you to work in. Where are you now?—hiding behind
the faces of others in dream you appear variously.
Woe is me if I do not recognize the subtle powers
of spiritual vibration pent up in the psychic center
of our being. Oh beloved, don't you want to know?
When the space is as empty mind, the flat meadow,
the ridge line. The way things happen, and then
capitalize moments later. Entering into a dark tunnel
she was suddenly shocked. Nothing but darkness existed
around, pressing closely, firmly. Sit down. You
can see Nothing, the mind buzzing. Fruitful pursuit
of listening to breathing. Singular monstrosities
arise. Panic. Give me some relief, oh Sun, at least
I can see.:

It is significant

to allow
associations, feelings, when they arise.

Longing for heart—must I sit a while?
All this time
All this time has gone by because time is old. Old
-en days of lutes & fragrant gardens watching butterflies
dance lightly, slowly the breeze
ruffles the light silk garment
of this lone sitter.

January 26 Tuesday
Sheer impudence or just...

'The ugly vulture eats the dead
guiltless of murder's taint
The heron swallows living fish
and looks like an ascetic saint.'

that which is well said...

You go to a place... and you go to a place of understanding...
Do you have to move?

'Their presence was a guarantee of calm, an antibody
to agitation.'

Saturday February 4
for Duncan McNaughton
White sheen on open Bolinas ridge top
powdered white sugar
the whole long ridge
is covered with light dusting of snow
'this has never happened
before in my memory...

Dazzling surf clouds snow
And the plum blossoms!

Donald took a picture of it
I tell Arthur Okimura via phone who says
HE has just loaded his camera too

I mean the ridge has been covered with snow before
but not this much. And certainly not in one's
own backyard on the mesa __looks like frost

Looks like Alpine Pacific Village Picture Postcard
Actually it's very cold here and has been
since December except in the sun.

And the whole shebang, the whole ridge line
looks like your HAIR Duncan
Gleaming, silver, white. Happy birthday.

February 6 Monday

It's soo cold the garden hose is full
of ice this morning on the ex-president's
birthday.

He'd be gone for just a day and he'd
be on the phone to her about some little thing-thing—
they were very interconnected. I'm sure he misses
her more than she does him, now that she has
some freedom. Of course whether freedom from
daily routine is really freedom or not is some
thing else.

Of course routine is the earth spinning
and the sun spinning every day too

Head spinning propped in hand spinning
wondering about Sufi Rumi's
tall black hat that is a tomb.
"When between the lover and the Beloved
there is only a poor shirt left
wouldn't you want the light to unite with the Light?'

So, now
this brilliant cold, this freezing
of water in teacups out of doors
Salute your departure? I guess
you are still around in the only heat
for the day which is sun

February 7 Tuesday

The phoebe in the icey cold wind darts quickly
for food in the air while the flock
of meadow larks pecking on the ground wander
near the house at the edge
of the meadow. Nothing stays still
for long they are gone.

February 15 Wednesday
The phone is constantly busy
to you

We're on the other side of time now
Heart
is such a memory

it can't go away but gets fainter
Valentine
of yesterday Little peeper
frog inside the house calls
to his friend outside where frost
comes every night

Although a green
lushness is returning water

February 16 Thursday
It's like regular now the weather
I mean is warm
symptomatically sitting on a stump
in the sun a stick of red incense
.. no one's here right now but we'll get
back to you later...

February 16
Post Valentine Dee Dee & Diana:
What was it I ate?
I won't tell you
I just want you to
Dwell on it.

February 17 Friday
Mist on the orchids
and Mist across the ridge warm
sun at the door come in

Larry Kearney

from Sleepwalk

1. no one would hear me would no one choose
to hear the noise I made surrounded
by angels the angelled numbers not
that it matters as god
is to angel angel is
to dragonfly.

2. and sometimes the air is a cloud of shiny
stockings the slight
pressure of thighs the bruised
light would no one
choose to hear my noise I made
in crowd of angels or angelled numbers.

3. the Great Dragonfly the Grand-
father of dragon-lies spreads his lacy head.

4. in passing too there's Bix
Beiderbecke turned on the broken
light last night in my room.

5. a paltry thing but the in-
sect feeds from the yolk
on the wall and some
times his shiny back
goes angled through the crowd.

6. looking around from a stalk in the doorway the medium
ground, the ground, the braids of the wire in copper
hair, the bright spun
stuff the medium
ground is empty except
for her head—while the zzzzzzzzzzzzzzz
makes the diagrams finer Bécklin's
Isle of the Dead is just, you know,
fine shorthand.

7. and the zone's
a blank sweep then another

reflected in back where the bells are the ice
ringing the time

8. my birthday's a wall at the front with only
a couple of things in it, truly,
or three, or five
things in a vast receding air, crawling
for a boundary the other
's foot dragging.

9. and ornamentally speaking my dead
sister rings me like a sleigh bell. This
busi-ness of zones is mostly
in open sleep the remembering
of things.

10. how the music of life seems to be. Ornamentally
speaking, this day in the house by the ocean in the black wet
looking back at the oval mirror, in the dim part,
shining with wet light the line came
out of its heart and per-
pendicular.

th, perfect
silver, hinged, I
am stuck, trans-
fixed, pinned and
touching, oddly,
Pythagoras.

12. Bix comes by
with the music. You never know.
I make myself clear
and I hang around.

13. the air is right and the rain come pouring down and
other
tumbling down a light
is God's light
is fooling the air and rubbing a child through the stone like a green
light in the wall.

14. I hold my head in my head like a bruised
melon boogie-
stop shuffle there's metal
in the ground comes through the shoes there's voice
from that there's light
in the ground
rides it to metal you shine up so melancholy
is tense and resilient and bending
in the light, pulled with the light
to the mass it came from
up
to the open black but so
battered, and cognizant
music through, about, the feet, the shoes, the floor
the turning
phrase.

15. Henry Gonzalez addresses the empty House and I'm aware again
of the solitary voice metallically approaching poetry.
I can't find the quote from Gustav Eiffel.

Macrostructure is logos.
Colossal right?
On the radio an englishman says
that Isaac Newton was most
certainly a thoroughly
detestable man and I, knowing the story,
cringe.
Here it is.
'There is in the colossal an attraction, a particular charm
to which the theories of ordinary art are hardly applicable."'
Gustav Eiffel

16. a silver line of largening
numbers the opening
out on the next largeness.

17. my romance
doesn't need a castle rising nor a handful of the well-
appointed.
It comes
in still weather with a starry brain.
And no way home but passingly here
and there in the gloss of the rainspout
without
memory, without recourse, without knowing
how to be fatally
glowing in the blood is the color september
in the rain, the galaxy, hear it for the rain you
and me and this in the real the galaxy
forms in the nature of glaze on stretched bubbles
fingertips, bleaten a shape to form the empty
here now there now,
'there now."

18. If I had a co-
herent proof for a doctrine of pre-
destination I wouldn't
be able,
to bring myself,
to say it.

19. A hung veil of tattered
water a sky
built in a box of grays
and tattered water in plane
cutouts make chambers the head—
thwoosh—in to breathe that the head
breathes in its chamber that the chamber's
a pearl-light with edges and finite,
the pearl.

Dadah dadah. Swooping I was somewhere else. It's only
the same fronting street with the green
mountain behind it gray but the sky today is the whole
ballgame. Macrostructure, or How We Got Here. Put just the feet
going up and so big, the padding wolfpaws in rain on the sogged
edges. That be his head. Whatever. Of the size of the whale.
When a human being is in pain you do not say to him

‘tender brokenly quanta.”’

As the bubble gets bigger the rainbowed flaw
curls on itself and approaches the less-
curved, tightening. A space for
the head in the pearl.

Keeps on rain
in (dull green)

look-
khow it's-
srain
nin (dull black).

Necessity, Or How We Got

HERE

20. the long blue fall of snow
grows blue as evening falls. Falls maybe. Grows
certainly. Rilke wrote a book
on the life of the Virgin Mary though
you'd hardly know it, reading the jargon.

21. on a night with just enough light in it to see
down to the ocean to eye level
the shapes all around are waves of a size but one
begins itself behind the ridge goes down
and up broken-backed and dark-grained with foam
arranged in traceries rising and levels
swaying each with minor
broken peak as the shape
comes up focussed to an immensity,
to anything. The size and the care of The Laws
of Large Numbers touch
like hands the love of the size of the edges the Practice
of the Presence of God.

Imaginary -9 -6 47 =6 -§ -4 -3 -7 <1 Gol 40,30 a4 48 GE nr na 25 Imaginary

LO NOPNONA

23. a black wet day with a mirror and dull
silver clouds. The race of the clouds
in a brain with a vaulting of briny air
and stepping down it the Home Guard, the

slightly uninformed, so far away they're
ants in sugar—some difficulty with
their legs on the surface of the hills
in the kitchen bowl.

24. it's a fact there are dreams aren't you wake
up in them full
of glory. I wasn't born
unintelligible nor have I
achieved unintelligibility it
has been thrust upon me and
there's also a beauty which is not to be
appreciated. There are dreams you wake up in. Because.
There are dreams you wake up are blue and white moon-
light. I cover the room slowly and put
my hand through the ghost
furniture. It's you stop and your breath
stops. Because. Because it's not out there.
Because there's nothing but the cloud in bright silver opens
and floods out the good inside _ out and the bright mirror's
flatness streams out the minds in the cloud are one
glory in-forms
time. whose womb was a strange heaven
In open sleep.
Whose arms are the falling of light. Because.
The various
organs feel in space and
have begun to reach
out to each other in dumb
wanting.
Because I am not enough of a piece yet,
to be picked up.

25. the human is set apart by the growth of the brain after
birth, the use of language and the consciousness of self.
The growth is a physical event in which the others originate.
The brain expands while receiving events from outside.
Sensory information arranged in an expanding landscape
makes a physical temple for the recognition of consequence,
time, and self.
Time, or self, is referential in terms of the landscape
of stored information. The point of origin of a generating
language, or grammar, is locked in the need to extend
the existing physical and consequential distance between
events to the outside. A designated sound may be adequate
to the imagined present, but in a predictive or retrospective
sequence it has to be modified.
This says nothing about the soul, which antedates the temporal
and has no chartable landscape.

26. with a headache again I try

to understand the nature
of what this is a hard
simple process in life-
times, possible
ranges of mountainous
afterthoughts, con-
scripted horrendous
beliefs there are no

beliefs aren't
in-
escapably un-
acceptable, false, pre-
sumptuous un-
reverencing closed
circular foul
mentalities if
one wishes reduction there are two
ways at least
to do it one is
this
is not simple but
is in fact
an opening on un-
handleable complications this
resolves itself by forcing
belief or the lack of the other's
this
is not
simple but
at base,
has a deeper
simplicity this
enforces nothing but
reverence faith
refuses
belief faith
refuses the avoidance of either the poss-
ible or
the necessary there'
s a good reason for the theo-
logicians' tacit avoidance
of the golden rule it
is after all
successfully
reductive pro-
posing
behavior which
is possible and thus
reductive of the range
of possible equivocation it
has also its three
faces one
implying that what one would have done
to oneself is, in fact,

acceptable to another, two that the experience of what
has been done to one and accepted
is a standard and three that one should expect
that what one does to others will
be done to oneself but these
are subsumed in the under-
stood that there is a good
the fragments
reflect.

27. Time past
the light with the head, the mind it only
balls with a flat front pushed
from the back at the planes
are nothing one's self
too, streaming through the dark is not
a place of stars getting
faster screaming so 'head'
you might think but isn't,
is mind on a platter, separated all
alone
by the telephone planes
breaking one at a time the eyes flattened in no head,
hair flattened medusa
splayed breaking
empty to empty I can't
go this fast I can't go any faster but the streaming
streams there's the empty
rime of the great curve of white
stone, the arc of it off
to the left the event no
disconnect but mine it's
good my
neck some-
how.

28. to know it will not
be merely fear but terror itself.
No matter what. One says okay,
yeah, that's the way it is. There's an early
grace to the thing, to the abandonment
to necessity, the glory of time in the brain's
girders in this, the structural press of the live
past, its fan, its grace of archi-
tectural function, the bent white
whalebone fan in the dark, the flattened-back
mind in its streaming wave through the zones breaking
sides completed as fanned
petals rot easier, let go.

29. under the skilled thumb of the eskimo
the Ptarmigan's displaced heart.

30. (1) is a difficulty I can
but would not
rationalize. It takes place. It sits there. Given

or not it has the telltale tattletale heart of Penn
Station, old Penn Station.

31. red light was my baby
blue light was my mind. Robert Johnson too.

32. my (his) foot is in the light from the television and the lamp
on the mantle. They wash
together the one cold the one a little
    it's a complete
foot to the ankle its substance,
the white skin full to sculpturing,
the white glow tinge of an isolate foot mine
(its) a part of my name (his) a perch
to watch from in the dim room enough

to sit there the hand would be
too much it stays where it is on the arm of the black
chair the black kettle drum of the blood is so fuzzed
marble light this foot is apart in the dim-
ness the warmth of pulsed statuary
seen, in
the absolute distance observed
is part, parting, hey you out there
(he) (she) (it) come
in the air is the living come
separate this
isolate foot in its marble cloth the thunder
breaks on us, God it does.

33. on the air over Storm Lake and still
remembering his name but it's fading. In a cloud
crackly and hidden comes down like this but he can't
feel right or see
right his insides got
mixed too light and he's roped in this storm
cloud north
of Davenport and not
grounded—put your hand on him his humming
steps down. Stretched out electrically touching
nothing
to touch really hearing
music and figuring
to touch from out of
the air, like lightning maybe
the brain in the house by the lake. You know what it's
like when you're suddenly dead but you just met

34. Bookish maybe but not high
bookish. That's the way it was this morning
when I woke up parsed in the dark air and thunder breaking open
cool, breathless windows.

35. The Man Who Would Be King
So I've been told and it seems to be true
that the desert's the brass of the band,
and the wavering silos of fluttery glue,
the fringe at the edge of the land.

36. is a slowing to a place. In the pressed crush
of reaction.

A map of the city
the size of the city
with shaded declivity inked ‘Lost
Steps’.
Standing above in the shading directly
over the real
Lost Steps are under
the paper.

37. Factory Windows Are Always Broken
You know how the living
live in your head

like Bartleby neither
living nor dead
has a space
with a window
that faces a wall
of an alley with bricks
in a twilight
and all
are red, russet, brown,
ash
white, cinder, ivy-
black and color of low
sun through a dim-lit clot.
38. the urban ghost comes lit up with banks
of lights and center it
takes years I am as a kid damp
behind the ears still shaking my head is
the real from the pictures sssssssssh the top
of the Bowery Ornette makes
Embraceable You of the night
voice raw
picture yeah, look,
eyes drink so
pass from here
pass from here
39. the map__ the size__— of the landscape is
the map overlying _ the brain.
. the hound of blue hell.
41. eighty-five percent of infant sleep
is REM, rehearsing,
the stuff of dreaming rehearsals
of How To Do It. It steps down as the impress mates
on airy new flesh steps
down to twenty-
five percent but then,
but then,
the time is in there too and predictive power and
functionless
remnants, upraised hands sep-
arating the ge-
ometry of turning flats
in space in its culvert the other
42. is, was, or will
be dead low down
soft & sinking
human softness of loss

of consciousness would I walk
I might I'd point at the ceiling I've done

this before un- raged, wrapped up
the arm auton- omous left
raises itself at the ceiling the pure
sinking exaltation as through a window the open
ceiling tornado of stars downing
to rush through an arm to
a head out- side the sinking
and up and down & out the tip
of light at the tip of the finger the dark
in the cone
and breaking the liquid
wetness in bath of broken
starwater, night,
in the wash of the sudden broken deep
the falling spears and silk,
shiny stockings.

43, I had so much presence of mind, as well as breath left, that seeing myself nearer the mainland than I expected, I got
upon my feet, and endeavored to make on toward the land as fast as I could, before another wave should return and take
me up-again: but I soon found it was impossible to avoid it; for I saw the sea come after me as high as a great hill,
and as furious as an enemy, which I had no means of strength to contend with: my business was to hold my breath,
and raise myself upon the water, if I could; and so by swimming to preserve my breathing, and pilot myself toward the
shore if possible, my greatest concern now being, that the wave, as it would carry me a great way to the shore when it
came on, might not carry me back again with it when it gave back toward the sea.
The wave that came upon me buried me at once twenty or thirty feet deep in its own body

44, Journal of the Plague Year

as the particle is perceived in the wave a matter of
perception do not extend do not
extend the event to describe create
these dubious struc tures desires
of bureau cratic man the ex-
tension of smallest unit to repli cation there is no
symmetry nor will I extend the erotic how
could there be in mo- tion leaning
for the outlet the driven nail hole con-
text matter jumps to and lights the empty
hallway spor adically a-
symmetrically as one falls in a dream on her belly Hamlet

takes on the mechanics of contagion the newly opened
Globe with the plague newly asleep there's
the jump there's the mind as fever-hand plucking
the cape the flower the bone
in the lily oh the thought
plucking the sym pathetic vibration
dis ease in the head flowering J
think you will attend my thought with its sensitive
fingers lightly tugging peg o' heart this game
with the roses and the ashes the pre-

mature corpses flower don't they the Globe
packs them in ail in the eyes play hell

packs them in all touching the corpse blooms
the head gleams if you look hard but who

cares living alone's a matter of knowing precisely what
it means to brush one's teeth or take the pillow from
the bed to couch, from head to head in
mirror the un- known scatters in the light in that
glass where the wires live one depth two
depths well the infant sleep 85% dream a mech-
anism remarkable learning is kicked
by the deep repetition or- ganic like
an organ but left dangling an empty something
to do the turning plane things come to it and flop
in vestigial ins and outs the stuff of dreams of the garbled
pecentage of gene's in- for- mation of app-
rehension of terror as time drifts in from circuit
flesh cloud of electrical valleys in close
weather self father
mother cousins the wolves here
too in dripping forest there's
a certainty and the random line
is a generated line the train of maximum
information okay, is the 10
to the 40th position of pi a given before we reach
it? in this cold air,
with the clouds down full of dull rain you know
right where you are and the tops
of the streets are so thin love
I skate on famil- iarity this
larger thing roaring through sleep the sleepers

sleep the walkers walk
the time for play is just beginning
the dead apartment dwellers their own
memories hives at night capped
the purely vestigial vestal
animal parts of the lobby
cards of identity deep pictures like charity
roars its name in the halls overcome
by the in- festation Isaac Newton
laughs in the hall to laugh when asked
what possible use Euclid could be my under-
ground and the bosomy hen with her face in a circlet
of comforted auburn feathers and grace she remembers
the cell of honey- comb graced tower is not
a chicken at all my geometries

the iso- lated touch, my hand in heart-
broken sound in the station the sleepers, sleep, the walkers
walk I know where this is, gone alphabeted.

45. and right now where I am, scared, then. Don't ever mis take what you're given neither living nor quite other. This place is the old wood house on the side of the mountain in november. It's thirty minutes to real dark and the ocean has a storm on it with light bruised on the air and the dark green water dappled to bright on our little-paned, bending windows. Green and purple thudded light with the mountain behind us a bruised thumb pounding its

shifting, cracked, livid fingernail. So much. Take this in its parts and look.
I write by the fire with a watery blue pen. My son is two years old and crawls
through the broken pane in the kitchen door. Ravel for the left hand. Don't
mistake the power of the image. It takes you down that street and not
the other. Don't it? And who knows what's down there down there. My son
crawls through the door with bright eyes and I know that the welter of light
through the wide, bending windows is hatching the map in his head. And this
opens that and that fails this. Oh that's where I am with the sea I ran from
slightly risen again, slightly tilted in a bowl and rising and there are
three of us. I may be inept but I don't forget. In house of old
bending wood with all its strength in the bending-in of the old, small,
storm-lit livid windows the kindness is everything and the heavens are open
front and all around the windy screen. This light too in the house is
always orange. There's the fire and the lampshade made of layers of onionskin
painted lilac scored to orange and if the stars fall it will be easy
to see across the abandoned nearer emptiness. We're a lit salmon egg
rolled in a cranny of dark trees on the mountain and out in front the water's
muscle yeah, the cool room is a fool's room but strange it don't seem that way
to me. My brain, I guess, is still intact though lacking an anchor one would
think, I mean, with the three of us locked so together I'd have some anchor I
should but I'm not capable, I'm drifting, and Orion looms in front at night
as I loop the mountain, ecstatic, Aretha's eye ain't NEver voice trailing
Orion but home in the light I'm nothing but perfectly afraid I'm looking
at my wife and son and wondering what I'll do, to
protect them above all I know it's a world in which there's protection
or none—know too there's really none at all but God I think I can
fake it tacitly praying the Queen of the Planets comes by Euclidean,
green-appareled, of course, robe and empty planets, plumbed depths you
know how wide the night sky is, Orion pinscreen and painted moon,
the archaic noiseless halls and my books, my books, my son, two and asleep
later, sprawled in the house now careening, racketing, an orange spore
through empty heavens the empty and jetstream quiet my eyes are very sharp,
never been sharper, really, dead leaves. I'm just where I am and when
business isn't finished it comes back, it knocks on the head and its light
floods through the door, its imagery with curled space. The water, see,
the ocean rose up higher than the windows surfaced green and not falling and
there were stars in the foam and a ferry toward us and in the curved
sheet of the wave's face the tiers of singers, white in robes with candles
singing in tiers the coming noise.

. [the recesses, holes, hallways, alcoves, magnet, la
the stars]
the fire burns well and I sit in my chair at the energy end
of the pipe and un-
screw my silver
hands and feet. And ribs and clicking

interlockings, thighs silver
pelvis, silver heart and liver shining
lungs spine

popped skull flapped down
in silver halves, brain tipped back
and cotter pulled all
in silver neatly
[behind the skidding downslopes in nothing and the final metal bins
of packed time is this lightly
frictional groundscreen with slightly
parted lips]
47. the empty arrow.
48. From high places geography only
locates the numbers
of pain one can-
not think about, hold, one cannot
hold even one fleshly
action making
or holding
pain knowing
it's there,
or there
right
THERE NOW.
49. In Dreams
the soul of the world in aggregate falls
to the streaming of lines to the plane
of the pin holes the noise
is phhht. It was the red
you never see. By the ocean above every-
thing in its right color except
for the water itself was this red, acid bath,
etching the bath
the brain takes then.
In Dream it was only
the grove of the yews electric
red in all the others, the beiges, the greens,
the sky. And the grace of the one-armed quarterback against
the dull brick wall with right arm back and left withered
and charred at its end a peeking
nosegay. He told me. I was paying attention. It all
broke out. Andy Boy Broccoli. Uncle Willie's
presence, oh, the presence. The burning christmas trees
at curbside. Raggedy Ann. The thrown head the thrown
voice. The spewing of a fine silk over the streets.
Down on the streets to the nodes of the right
away. We learn self pity as a way
out of the presence of others'

consciousness. Their present. The children who haven't
learned yet each a particular rationale. To read the codes it is first
required that one imagine there is a code. I sing,
exclusively, of the first state, the utter, tearing, jellylike, rigid,
heart-shaped, black, doubled, halved, broken, watery, throatlike, runn-
ing, frozen, pleading con-
fusion, con
amore con
dios, vaya, con-
dition red, present, defined, here
it is what
do J do with it all
those lights there are others some
hurt right now, so bad with time will build
themselves
from pieces, from
ob- servation, reason, hope
for the holidays, tuesdays, saturdays,
twinkles over the harbor, _ statues,
hooped iron, dim
recesses of
nine in a circle
every one knows
the cheese will
stand alone in
the miracle nine
want not any
one to be
the cheese but hide
it, hide it.

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Sally Doyle

from Shepherding

LET OUT TOO SOON

How long walking and enough money for bart. A green eye of a blackbird close to my face conjured up this breaking in public.

Bright carrots. Red napkins falling from a moving truck.

I have on trousers and the obsession for saying I SEEK RESCUE. Every helicopter I think has come for me. Heading for the heard. Rain. Jarred particularly is being lost.

LET OUT TOO SOON in Daly City. They said there were people, but I didn't see. They said there was a corner store so I went looking—I never found that thing and I kept walking cold cement and blisters until I couldn't take a step further. Then a man's hands opening my eyes and leading me to a bus. At the hospital they washed my feet until the burning was gone.

SHEPHERDING IS A DOWNPOUR

Forced back out there— not easy with voices calling from each window "PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SWEPT AWAY."

I wake talking to people who aren't here, but their PRESENCE entering the plot.

Wrap my head in a wet towel and head back across the field. Go for the road leaving Phoenix at 3 a.m.

I WANT TO BE A SHEPHERD. I WANT A HORN THAT CALLS SHEEP. I want to wander free. Is a free mind drinking all day? Is it gained by psychoanalysis? Is there a real world I don't know about? Are bus transfers available at this station? Is there a leap that would make me like myself more in this world?

A box of crackers into EVERYTHING. One dress and it hadn't been washed. I left a visor and the town. I left without a slip or bra. I left with only the word SHEPHERD written BIG. I WROTE ALL NIGHT IN A STRANGE HOTEL. Do you believe me?

A shepherd's mind tearing up a perfectly comfortable life. The scenario of sitting in the same chair and asking for mayonnaise.

Are shepherds good citizens? Is there a sheriff near by? Is the maid of honor going with you, and are there enough art objects in the living room?

I said it drives me crazy. She said, "Don't call me crazy. Do you carry a flare kit when you travel?" Not even a phone, but helmets and gloves just in case along with the obsession for failing and saying, I HAVE RUINED THE MUSIC.

The FEELING OF SECURITY had left me and I began stacking and arranging the mother's breasts in different suitable structures.

Sobbing alone on a mountain top is another thing.

Converging toward a clearing I realized a SHEPHERD MUST SURRENDER the illusion of a permanent happy structure to become what? An observer of insect life? Or to write a column on shepherding for the Sunday paper? Or to wear leather sandals and frighten sorority girls?

Is the mad woman yourself or the same route to work? Is the mad woman yourself or that ragged blonde who says I'M DETERIORATING IN HERE. I FEEL MY LIFE WASTING AWAY. And I look at her and she is true. I see her life seeping and she won't get it back. Wander aimlessly into the bedroom and stare.

WHAT HOUSE ARE WE AT NOW?

I WALKED OUT OF MY LIVING AND I KNEW IT. Who said the hills are the real world? Who unpublished my manuscript?

I NEED FIELDS TO FEED THE GUARDS. I can't stand and do the whole program after months of listening to a fever and a deserted house.

Destiny with a wide purpose of a bench. A bench with dark cool sides. The dark of STOPPING anywhere without a family or a car.

There is a sadness looking at the shabby white house—a dangerous sadness. I said, "the sky is a long ugly word." Who said that? Pity is maybe cool and gray. DEAR FATHER, I wrote, I drank, but not with discretion. More rum. Until I drew a house with slanted lines. I drew a past from separate rooms. I held my pencil tightly and my fingertips turned red.

Your door looks dangerous. If I tell you my name you might shoot me. My mother and I have spent many hours trying to find out what my real name is. There are no walls to the room that is my ship. I saw nuclear explosions under the ocean. There aren't enough hyphens so I take the sharpest knife the admiral ever saw and slice the letters A and Q, When you turn the page you will understand that I've become a woman and no longer a sergeant with tattoos on his arm.

This is my longing. Take this in remembrance of me. A BIT OF LACE SHOWING.

I have a door that is ALMIGHTY. I have a core that is made of flowers. Oh, Dearest CAPTAIN BLOOD, do not leave me now for I have sharpened my knife and am ready to cut the hemp rope so we shall sail out of here free, shepherds of the ocean.

I wear a house on my head. Where I grew up there were no doors—only thresholds AND PITCH FORWARD INTO OPEN SEAS. I have dug a hole and watched the dirt around me turn red. The admiral wanted to know what the hell was happening out on the open sea. What were those flashes? Looks like Black

Beard's call I told him. King Neptune looks angry with his feet in hot sugar. My name is dangerous so I keep it to myself. My mother cried because she wanted to know what it was. Out on the sea they sell art at a farewell price. I don't like the scientific drugs they are planning to give the sailors.

FOLLOWING THE ADMIRAL'S ORDERS I TOOK OUT MY KNIFE THOUGH I WAS ONLY A CIVILIAN AND RAN IT THROUGH THE CAPTAIN HOOK. This made me weep for I had wanted amnesty for all the pirates. The keys jingled as I leaped on top of the man and asked him to forgive me. I WAS KILLING ONE OF MY OWN MEN. A man of the sea. A man with a black beard. A man who didn't believe in sharing his medicine with anyone. A man who couldn't pay his dentist's bills, The gale was gaining on us. I have only the memory of that particular order to kill Captain Black Beard. The treasure was buried. Miles were exploding under water.

Why should I kill a man who spent his life on the water fucking his men and paying for their tattoos? My hands detect someone is leaving the building. All hands on the emergency. Blood is on my sleeve. This door is proof they've never released my true name. What a rush to get the tinker toys from the store and in time for my birthday, but not my first communion. A silver locket opened—an ancient rosary fell out, though luckily my name was not attached to it. Oh, Dearest Friend, Captain Beard, I didn't want to kill you, a seaman and a longtime friend of the family, but those were my orders, and in a mighty wind what else can we follow? We cannot separate from our orders long enough to understand what our names really are and to pronounce them without mistakes.

When I woke for the first time I didn't hear any birds at all. HAVE THEY KILLED ALL THE BIRDS TOO? I didn't want to live in the atmosphere of no-birds. I was relieved later when I heard the birds and knew they weren't all dead. Why is Leroy so mad? Why isn't he cooperating? The bus is here. Will it take me home? I need to get some summer clothes from my closet.

It is a comfort to sit in a straight backed chair and think about the divinity of Jesus. The woman next to me asks if Pete Rose is the name of a flower. Not one I ever planted. This is when I begin to flounder. The divinity of Jesus makes my eyes sore. On the fringes they are writing in Italian so I can't read them. The idea of escape prickles me, but the lobby is too long and there aren't enough ashtrays.

INSIDE OF YOU LIVES A SPIRIT, BUT IT HAS BEEN BLOWN TOWARDS THE ORCHARD. Head north twenty miles and wait on the side of the road.

In the lobby my mother was waiting with fruits and vegetables and a bag of donuts. My mother didn't come at all. In the lobby my mother put the pamphlets in my lap. She wore a hat with a little feather bending over her left ear. Was this proper? I was fondling the bus tokens from the welfare office. Nobody had taken

these from me. My mother never asked me what I had done. I wanted to go back to the orchard. YOU HAVE A VISITOR IN THE LOBBY. Something strange is happening here. I know someone is trying something funny. They've made me have four bowel movements in one hour. Someone is fussing with me. They have managed to get in and mess up my things. There is a trail of ants on the windowsill. I want to keep the holy family in my purse safe from these goings-on. My mother is saying something about the expensive, repaired furniture. It has been a long time since she quizzed me on my spelling. I get U and R mixed up. My mother has brought me ironed clothes, but there is no wind. There has never been a wind here and I was grateful to her for weeping.

I wanted to crawl under my blankets through the lobby to the door. I wanted to go in the direction of the orchard. IN THE ORCHARD MY SPIRIT WAITS FOR ME.

She cleared her throat and sat beside me again. The sound of her clearing her throat brought back the sensation of using a washcloth and the feeling of protection. She put the pamphlets in my lap. THE ORCHARD IS GONE. I slid from my chair, but couldn't walk there because I hadn't worn the right shoes. In the cool dirt there had been a war once and plums for my thirst.

DO BIRDS JUST FALL OUT OF THE SKY when they are heading for the orchard? After a while I insisted on not speaking, something my mother despised me for. She asked the nurse why

I hadn't showered. Could I have a basin of water? A basin of trees where the girl disappeared. Where did she go? On each side of the hill was a small fire. Was one of them hers?

I went back to my room to read the lives of the saints. I didn't come out when the dinner cart rolled down the hall. The no-wind had followed me. I read the Bible and thought about our old, killed horse. Trying to smile confused me. Finally the memory of learning to fold a paper bag for the first time made me feel safer. She had taught me that: Smoothing out the wrinkles and pressing where the creases were.

I couldn't quite get to sleep even though my body felt tired. One word kept falling like a bird dropping out of the sky. When I shook myself completely awake I couldn't remember what the word was. The room was still, quiet and hot. What was it, I asked. Nobody answered me. I had to get up and talk to someone. How could one word destroy everything? I opened my drawer. There were no summer clothes. Someone had called me by the wrong name this morning which made this whole thing happen.

GATHERING INFORMATION

In the dry seedcorn and pictures of the older generation, in the piles of cardboard boxes we came (once upon a time) upon a picture we didn't believe a word of: PASSIONATE WOMAN LIKE A CANNIBAL.

HOW DO YOU LOSE FIFTEEN POUNDS? There's no dress-up in the West. I feel dirty next to that fan. GROW INTO MATRON WITH BIG SAGGING BOSOM AND LET THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

I force myself—babies, prams and so forth. His hands around my married to him. WORN COAT AND GROW INTO PLEASANT MATRON OF FORTY YEARS OLD AND CAT

FUR.

SELECTING PERCEPTIONS Ripe avocados for our Mexican dinner. Pile them up—no light anywhere.

Draw your self-portrait folded down into sleep.

My index finger pointed at a cathedral.

Don't be controlled by your moods, Redirect your finger at the alternatives. Notice the fine solid lines of the furniture with pleasure. FULFILLMENT of INTERIOR DESIGN.

Students collecting money for a woman's body to be sent back on a broom to the sidewalk outside of the window, but wearing high-heels..

TEACH YOURSELF

To move fast with a missionary spirit. What frontier travels on the prescribed rails?

I WILL DEFEND THIS LITTLE TOWN. There will be a shooting and someone will start work as a dishwasher.

I IRON HIS CLOTHES made into the screen adaptation. Proof of linear thinking and pattern of efficient bedmaking. The final paragraph exposed all the layers: What WERE your goals?

TO BECOME A SHEPHERD— unclamped Sra un harnessed un lettered where ships sail; and to earn my living immersed in green and purple—pushing forward, moving beyond between the construction of a house and the instant before it disappears. Sexual activity along the highways and in the motels. One word can make you married to a wide road with magnificent trees.

She said, I'M TIRED OF BEING A CAPITAL CITY RECOGNIZE ME. Middle aged feeding. Wipe my forehead into the pillow. March upstairs—THERE ARE HOURS.

Hank Lazer

Compositions 2 & 18

Compositions 2

what agent is at home here whose this con
fused making tusk and tooth lusty youth dis
miss the gardener or cut him back to twice a month
in dentation disruption is a registered trade
mark and what if you did start having visions of
madness my life would change radically harbor
master whispers suspicions that out
cast business is one more thematization who blew that agent's cover

what angel is at home here whose this diffused
making themes good god that was the nineteenth century
nobody here but us angels the way two can build & build
nobody here but us windblown featherless bipeds
praise/prays be to quiet madness _ the blind librarian appointed
chicken inspector the seven volume book of questions

said the state superintendent our history is a good history we should
be proud of it and promote it the c connected to the t as in
an old typeface ef face facts amiss reminds of its locality
to be by you blue

old man heidegger resisted the word spirit his jewish successor
jacques evades the saying of god

what is the quest as can be told is what cannot be told

Compositions 18

what is this casserole melange collage stew soup compote

and the holy one said i am astonished you have waited for me
all these years and they will reply _ if it had not been for

the torah which you gave us __ the nations of the world would have
led us astray soup and crackers fred and ginger text

and commentary _witticism is as natural as breathing

an ever living tradition day and night when thou risest up
and when thou liest down _ keep pencil and paper beside
the bed an oven may bake the bread an oven may incinerate
human bodies gypsies slavs jews the retarded _ the crippled

things are neither good nor bad but thinking makes them so
turn it and turn it again for everything is contained therein
well into their thirties the boys lived at home with their parents _ the father
a local judge and heavy drinker the mother slowly dying of lupus _ the boys
did heroin and whores anice home with a swimming pool in the backyard

a knife is for cutting bread i said all human life is holy
but there are too many of us for that to be so for cutting bread i said
perhaps it would have been better had we not been created _ but
since we have been let us search our deeds a knife
is for cutting bread i said try the soup _here's a spoon
take it slowly you'll feel better a knife is for cutting bread i said

it is true that i have stolen _ but that is exactly what a thief
will do but you the watchman' why did you fail in your duties
the boys would go out at night and the judge would protect them
soup kitchen soup bones' supply and demand _ subsidize supplement
and you shall plant all manner of trees i shall
arise now and go to the arboretum stir it up season
to taste if it contains directions then it's not yet done

open the kingdom with a new pen he said repent
the return of the flattop paisleys are in again designer genes
juniper geranium jonquil japonica open the kingdom
jumbo shrimp military intelligence happy marriage skeptical fundamentalist
open the kingdom hoping the door holding theodore
the fear of dozing off on the city bus afraid to wake up
screaming and stared at kareem won't be denied inside
open the kingdom stand back yield peel back make room

within the gray remark of crafted gloom — sucker blue
i love the way that frenchman carries a tune
could be a word ora plug just a pinch between
the cheek and gums _hey hey we're the monkeys
we're too busy singing to put anybody down
the minister talked excitedly to his congregation after
getting back from two weeks as a military chaplain
was full of wonder at his tour of subs and destroyers
a knife is for cutting bread i said

terrorist bombings reshape americans' summer vacation plans
the private sector said it felt odd to don civilian clothes
once the media are under control impose jail sentences for those
who puncture public illusions cynicism in the defense of liberty
is no vise he had a lock on the presidency pig headed
thin skinned hard headed unbending unyielding

the global picture shifted with the collapse of the oil market
affluence not freedom once again became their goal
open the kingdom _o skinny legions run outside
all war has ended the era of the leader is over

Douglas Messerli

from The Structure of Destruction

An Oratorio for Spoken Voices

Entr'acte: Twelve Tyrants Between Acts; or, Mundane Moments and Insane Histories

[A performer, heavily made-up and dressed in the costume of a vaudevillian comic, finds his way through the curtain part. |

Good evening Hades and Recompense. Lovely to be, hear the one about Mussolini? [delivers the '"Tiwelve Shticks" in the style of a stand-up comedian]

MUSSOLINI SHTICK

Mussolini was on the soap. His face promoted perfume. His fists clenched in anticipation of a chocolate. Barebreasted his likeness was attached to swimming trunks. A man paid a fortune for a chair in which Mussolini was said to have sat. Scraps of his hair went to museums. A church in Fabriano encased his spaghetti fork in glass.

"*To what do you attribute your immense popularity?" an "I am the populace!"' I] Duce screamed back.

"Well, then, how come you to be such a favorite of yourself?"'

"You may put away your pen. You won't be needing it [a nm shot and cymbal crash |

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS SHTICK

When escorted into the room, and her eyes have become adjusted to the dark, the artist sees the Dowager seated upon a teakwood throne, circular in shape, carved with birds and Buddhas and fruits. Her Highness holds in the palm of her hand a lotus into which, as the artist goes forward, she plunges her nose as if to suck in the essence of it.

The artist raises the hem of her dress ever so slightly and bends, imperceptibly almost, from the neck. The Empress does indeed appear to be an empress in the manner one, at least an American, filled with fables and disgust of such potentates, might expect. Yet the Empress Dowager, she reminds herself, has been kind to the visitor during these first months. Two eunuchs behind Her Highness hum an unharmonious hymn. Everything is pleasant. Suddenly dogs, three Pekinese Pugs and a sort of Skye terrier, splutter across the rice-mat floor and fall in pants at Her Highness' feet. Their heads are patted. The artist delightedly taps the floor, but the

pugs pay her no respect. Only the terrier advances shyly toward the hand held first palm out then turned gradually in to pet. The dog accepts.

In an instant, the artist looks back to the recalcitrant ones, smiles, following the curves of the finger and hand with her eyes up the arm of the Empress to witness a face flushed, furious, the flower hurled to the floor in apparent disgust. The hand of the artist instinctively pulls back from the beast, who growls in fear of its sudden jerk. Now the Empress is smiling again.

[rim shot, drum roll and gong]

FRANCO SHTICK On the wall, backed by a tapestry in black, hangs an ivory crucifix, training all attention to the desk on which, in utterly ordered stacks, sit piles and piles of papers. In the center the Caudillo sits, writing a scenario for motion pictures.

The camera pans the room. Focuses on desk.

A hand. Hits the inkpot, spills. It is blood.

Camera zooms back. Victim lies dead, head across the blotter, hand outstretched.

Enter the detective.

His pulse is checked. [drum roll, cymbal, a couple of machine-gun blasts)

DIONYSUS SHTICK

My mother and I sometimes were invited to share the company of Dionysus. The guards brought us always into an outer chamber where they stripped away our clothing. One held me close; another my mother, fondling us in the excuses of a search. Might we not hide within our folds destructive weapons?

When our bodies had been thoroughly looked into, we were awarded white robes and entry into his presence.

He kept us at a distance, terrified that some secret missile might have been missed. He spoke little, for he feared that anything he told us might be useful in a plot.

And so was my mother hidden from all others, and I from anyone save tongueless nurses and toadying servants. Except for gold trinkets, heaping platters of lamb and apricots, and the pleasurable sensations of the male and female paramours pulling at my penis and licking my navel free of sweat, I knew nothing of the world. Like a pet, I was simply "'kept"'; kept as if all that really mattered lay in the territory bound between my eyes and my ass.

The Academy taught me that I also had a mind and feet upon which to stand it.

[2 dagger plunge, escape of breath and body drop |

NERO SHTICK

In Rome, I attended the pyrrhic performance of the flight of Icarus. Never before had I seen such a glorious event. It began in the dark of Daedalus' labyrinth, the audience straining to spot the artist at his work. Upon the entry of the son, however, the walls came alive with the lights of more than 50 flaming torches lit all at once, so that they burnt momentarily into our sight. And when we had recovered our vision, we witnessed that the walls were trimmed in amber and amethyst. Rubies hung in ropes as emblems of stalactites against the cave's lustrous walls, where emeralds represented moss.

Now we could recognize the alchemist's art. As the son danced out the message of their necessary flight, the father unfolded a set of wings, white as marble, that spread a full twenty hands. And in a ritual dance, with some sexual gestures, he fit the contraption upon the boy's back.

When his son had returned the favor, he and Icarus rose through the flambeaus into a gold-studded sky of stars and flew off into dark.

Suddenly a light illuminated the black from below, at first faintly, but in a suspenseful pace, gradually growing brighter and brighter until it reached the floor over which the heroes were suspended. The sun was a ring of fire, through which, when it had approached its proper height, the father flew expertly. But the son, as in the old stories, was singed by the flames, and unable to keep his balance upon the wires to which he was attached, fell to the bottom too fast. Blood splattered upon Nero himself, who sat in a seat overhanging the stage's apron.

At first the audience could not determine whether or not what had happened was part of the plot. And when a cry arose from the chorus, there was near pandemonium. But the emperor appeared to be nonchalant as he took a bit of the blood upon a finger and licked it off. And so the crowd was calmed,

[a round of applause and burst of dynamite]

JOHANITZA SHTICK

Johanitza, King of all Wallachia and Bulgaria, was irritated with his son who sat with colored cloth crying because he could not cut. The scissors lay at his feet before him.

The King tossed the remaining boot which his equerry had been attempting to remove over the head of his suddenly terrified son, who cried now more out of fear than out of frustration.

"You! It's simple!"' And taking scissors to cloth he cut into it deep. "'Cut and release cut release cut release cut...." The cloth, witness to his acts, was in threads, which he as suddenly thrust with the scissors at the boy, running from the room in disgust.

The child, observing his own blood, was so fascinated with it, he shut up. [guillotine slam and scream]

KISSINGER SHTICK

Dr. Kissinger was most disturbed in Hanoi, detached, even dejected. The Paris Accords were all quite meaningless, given the North Vietnamese distrust of the West. Trying their best, they put him in a large suite. But despite the forest of lights, despite the enormous size of the room, atypical in Asia, he was skeptical yet. Each light, for example, had a different switch, so that when it came time for bed he had to scramble about the place, half undressed, to turn the lights out one by one. And when, in pitchblack, he finished and was ready to return, a host of mosquitoes followed him through the netting, so difficult to negotiate in complete darkness, into the bed. His sleep was fitful. And in the morning he could only wonder was it an accident that the masses gathered beneath his window for calisthenics at fivethirty a.m.? [a drum roll, flourish of trumpet]

HULAGU SHTICK

It was Hulagu, as we have heard, who tricked the Caliph of Baghdad by charging with a mere column of men toward the wall of the great city.

The Caliph laughed when he saw these rag-tag troops and took a handful of Mohammeden down to destroy them. The band took flight and, trailed to the edge of the woods, suddenly turned on their stalkers as a battalion appeared from east of the forest and another from the west, who together with the band of original men surrounded and captured the Caliph and his forces.

So the Tartars rode into that city of such wealth that legends of its golden streets are still quoted in some sources.

But there were no golden streets. There was poverty instead. There were many beggars. The palace was impressive, but pearls compare poorly with what the imagination has wrought.

Hulagu, pleased with himself, sent messengers to his conqueror brothers in the north, the east, the west. But he was disappointed nonetheless. As he sat upon the throne of the

Caliph, he wondered, momentarily of course, why he had chosen to rule the southern section of the universe. But there is a breeze in that valley at night that blows through the palms and rustles the silk of the blouse. And so he stood with the moon to his face and back to minaret.

[sword upon sword, metal against metal]

BORGIA SHTICK

Fellow ladies: Dress may henceforth be of worth no more than 50 ducats, to be furnished with gems, stones, and glass equal to. China silk shall not be worn in public, nor velvet, embroidered damask, nor satin. Lace from the Spanish, applied to sleaves and hem, may not be attached to bodice. Gems and silver and gold may be implanted upon the dress unless assessed at more than 50 ducats, but emeralds,

rubies, sapphires, jade, black pearls and diamonds may not be put on anywhere. Fourteen clasps may be attached to the back, two at the front. Sleaves shall not be more than three hands of your daughters deep, flounce and ruffle no more than ten.

Shall these rules be neglected, I have put in the cathedral and every church boxes into which fathers, husbands, lovers, and those women prim and properly attired may drop a complaint of size, sleave, or superciliousness of style. Lucrezia, Duchess of Ferrara

[reports of a firing squad]

STALIN SHTICK

The gardens at Gagra are glorious on summer nights. Above the Tsikherva is a villa where, when the sun lies low upon the canyon, roses light up in ochres and reds. "The air here," the visitor, the Gensek himself, observed, "'is almost too sweet to suck up one's nose." Everyone agrees.

Koba, the Father of the Peoples, is taken down another path and another where fuschia and iris are planted in patterns punctuated with imported peonies. ''For me,"' muses the Great Master of Abrupt Turns and Revolutionary Daring, "it is too pleasant to pass another moment in this place."" And with that he marches his party about face and

His host apologizes for the humidity that hangs upon the river bank. "But why, Joseph Vissarionovich, in such heat do you wear your boots yet?"

"How can I tell you of the comfort I find in them. Such a snug fit satisfies me as when a child is snuggled to his mother's teat. I am totally secure with them upon my feet, for if any gets out of line you can kick him in the head so hard his mouth and his stomach shall never meet again."

[the drone of a squadron of planes}

MOCTEZUMA SHTICK

He, Moctezuma, was a clean man who bathed daily twice. Dark, as the Indians are generally, he had no stubble upon his chin. He was tall and lean. He walked with great pride, upright in a manner that led me to believe he was within as he appeared to my eyes. But wherever he went no one of his men might raise his gaze in that direction, so they could not see as we how a civilized man might look.

His court was richly dressed, each man in beads of shrimp and headgear of green and yellow feathers. Their pottery was as solid as that in Madrid. They sat at supper, he and six or eight others, at a table served by twenty of his wives for that reason selected. There were surrounding him Jesters and cripples, dwarves and jugglers, and further from the central porch at least three thousand more who ate, after him, of the food remaining. They never again used the same pots.

He ate a wide assortment of meats, fowl, fish, maize, and grains not grown in our imaginations. Green fruits and bright red balls of substances at once gummy and sweet. Some have said he cooked and ate babies. But I have seen none, save, on occasion, the flesh of sacrificed fully grown women and men.

[sharp whistle, direct hit of bomb]

HITLER SHTICK

Blondi was the only one who aroused him to human feelings. The dog was obedient, carefully taught. At supper she sat a full two feet from her master, but gradually as it progressed so too did she, pulling by inches closer and closer until she had laid her head upon the Fihrer's feet. Sometimes he permitted her to stay.

But in the morning there were no alternatives. He greeted the dog with a flick of wrist which sent the beast upon the fetch. She was sent away again. And again. And again. Sometimes he permitted her to whimper and jump at the wire fence for a few attempts.

But then the dog was taken and put upon a piece of wood one foot wide by approximately twenty. And there, while he watched in joy, she balanced upon it above the ground at least six feet in the air.

[the wood creaks with balance, back and forth, creaks |

Blackout.

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Paul Vangelisti

Alephs Again

for Adnano Spatola

A is an angel who wants absolutely nothing. She looks elegant in torn trousers and almost never answers the phone. She seldom speaks, especially if spoken to. Right now A's on Adriano's lap making him laugh.

B is bothersome, even bitter sometimes, when substituted for the first letter of your name. Not B, you say, aping your father, V as in victory. Both of you lack ambition.

C is a constant, not unlike chance or a comma not critically needed or a capital after a colon or after so many days and nights and letters and intercontinental calls and an ecstasy still of exclamations. C definitely lacks charity.

D is for deeds done and undone as in legend or democracy, for instance, which you may truly love in order to destroy. Without T there isn't any D. Ideologically speaking D is always hard.

E is easily the most equivocal letter in many European languages. A dipping of the tongue past expectation. Especially when it's become the first letter of your name.

F is found frequently in Finland where I'm told the major golf tournament tees off at midnight June 21. Or is it Iceland? Fortunately none of needs to find out.

G is the most generous letter in the gnostic alphabet. Gregarious to the extreme, he gets under his lover's skin by generally preferring an evening around the table with friends to her whispered generalizations. G also likes good shoes.

H, like hopelessness or history, is happily absent from this alphabet. He's high-minded and writes criticism. H, like heart, is a commodity.

I is for the innocence I won't insist upon. I remember stopping a little boy or girl on the street, or marching into the butcher shop under our apartment to give away my favorite toy. Often something I'd pestered my mother about for weeks. I tried to write an entire book without I.

J is just how I feel after the rain starts, sitting at a window. Or maybe more like judging somebody you don't like, jumping to a conclusion jabbed from the jetsam of self-hate which, in a certain season, juts from the lagoon of your joyless life. Not even the dead believe any of this. Stop the bus.

K is king in the knowledge that a kingdom demands the killing of its sovereign. Or else K is tired of waiting in the Cafe Canova, watching two elderly German

ladies consume a plateful of sandwiches they told the waiter they didn't care for. K is a great kidder, if sometimes a little unkind.

L lingers from the other alphabet, a platitude abandoned, a leak from the other side. L wants almost nobody except maybe some angels, Uncle Bob, his son, T, and his daughter, S, I who got married and seldom talks to on the telephone and now and again a few dead friends like Adriano. L certainly never felt good about himself.

M means all that has mattered, whom you've loved and left out of this alphabet. M's also the man you'll never be. Oh well.

N isn't for the novel not written, nor those poems Nevin would never show me. N is a hero who knocks out the eye of a monster and beholds a long-legged Nausicaa orient among the waves.

O, incidentally, has no private life, what others call a 'life of one's own.' From the desk O sees a little man operate a power mower for a minute or so up and down a patch of lawn.

Soon O's tall blond neighbor, in red shoes as usual, occupies the street with her stride. O is pleased.

P is for politics, the art of pretending to have some power over life. Others are necessary to play. All are expected to have plenty of persistence, some ambition and a winning pleasure. The dead are no good at it. Only children are ill-prepared for politics, until they produce families of their own. Particularly when they think they need to be loved.

Q is unquestionably the queerest letter in the alphabet. When's the last time, for instance, you quoted somebody from Quito? Maybe my tall blond neighbor, who's Spanish-speaking, is from Equador. That would qualify her disdain.

R seems always unreasonable. Even when he's never eaten there before. Recently he tends to make a strong impression. But who knows? Life's irregular that way. At 3:38 this morning a rather strong earthquake kept R awake almost an hour waiting for the aftershock. Which of us, after all, can truly rise to the occasion?

Somebody said S is the most overused sound in poetry. I lisped as a boy so they slit the fraenum under my tongue and sent me to speech lessons on Saturdays. Even if the face of the earth shook, how soon and sentimental depends on the depth of the quake. It seems hard to consider any name but Simone for my daughter.

T is temporarily charismatic, a capital of tenderness. Above it teeter all the excuses you've ever invented. T makes you do things you daren't because there might not be another time. T is the letter, amid a whisper of dashes, the man

upstairs most regrets. T plays the odds. T always takes time. T is one of my son's names.

Unless U is unquenchable rich men will unearth the kingdom of heaven. He sees a fat boy urge a foot off the curb to scurry across the street under his mother's eyes. U as usual feels unfulfilled when he's more likely undone. He's never yelled, 'Kill the umpire!"

Very little varies. Vain resentment then some vague acceptance of a vainglorious life. So much for verisimilitude or the uncle Fred you were threatened with too virulently becoming. No longer the victorious V coached by your dad, the fervor the almost bitten lip, but now come South to lazy empire, the late vowels and the weakened stops, where not only all the ladders start but your name too, as in bad, bag, band, bang and bank.

W's always been a mystery. The complement of mother or a waltz in the waves, Either way sounds windy and not much to do with women or writing. Little's got to do with writing. Maybe death, maybe whiskey, maybe not.

X is too imposing for words. There's only one under X in my thesaurus, X-shaped, and that too chiasmal.

Y I've always heard as a question: whether in the female attitude just yielding enough or upsidedown standing as a man in all too simple yearning. The greek i it's called in Italian. Yes is, in fact, more like it.

Z is much closer to the start than you ever imagined. She stands apart, on nobody's lap. If anything you'd love to lay your bitter head on hers. If she speaks it's right and zealous out of the top of her forehead. Or so it seems. Z, not X, marks the spot.

Antonio Porta

Poem & Obituary

translation: Paul Vangelisti

In 1986, an ample selection of Porta's work, Invasions and other poems (1960-1984), appeared in the United States as Invisible City 4. The book's publication was the occasion that Spring of Porta's first visit to the West Coast.

First Day In Los Angeles

In the endless tropical village

(damp and cold, as usual) led by the ups and downs and the low clouds (Ocean is invisible in the fog and the five or six skyscrapers swallowed in the background) descending on foot toward the house naturally I offer you a sterlizia (as usual) flower of double sex, open and stretched.

"Tt's a fertile place, this, for poetry," so you say.

Like the mouth of sex the words yield flowers and fruit, in these parts.

Don't ask me to unveil the enigma, said Montale, I then am only a loud witness for life, children and numerous works (excuse me, I'm talking too much about myself but this doesn't raise the averages) and to them I trust myself entirely during the race.

And besides, the secret of life lies here, in the text-outstretched, that is a net, that holds us up: exposed nudity uncovers us, shields us from heavy clothes.

From the Threat of Silence: Adriano Spatola, 1941-1988 so quickly and without any reservation a poet of absolute value like Adriano Spatola. Yet one has the unpleasant impression that there is no desire to take serious stock of his death (having come last November 23, at age 47). Have we really become so "cool" toward a poetry that was never conformist? Are we truly content with our modest coaster and our comfortable little neoclassic harbor, and do we prefer repetition to invention? So it is necessary to call attention one more time, emphatically, to the work of Adriano Spatola and I hope these brief notes serve as a guide to further reflection.

His formation was definitely of the circle around i vern, in Bologna, with that master of many, Luciano Anceschi, and soon he was contributing to that review as a very young and knowledgeable critic of poetry. It's been said jokingly, if with a touch of seriousness, that Spatola "was the last poet to jump on the bus of the novisstmi as it was already underway."' Certainly it is true he decided to attach himself to that experience and develop it along his own personal lines. From the

group around il vern and the novissim: (the anthology coming out in March 1961) was born the plan for and the realization of the magazine Malebolge, the most advanced and free-spirited among the new avant-garde in the mid-60s. It was actually in the last issue of Malebolge that Spatola's sound "Aviazione/aviatore"' ("Aviation/ aviator") appeared, a piece which would achieve success in an infinite series of festivals.

In those years Spatola brought into focus an idea of poetry not strictly tied to the page but one that might go beyond, with a return to orality and spectacle, pe: even moving towards the limits of painting and the "'visual."' About ten years later, in 1978, he published his most important theoretical book, Vérso la poesia totale ("Toward a Total Poetry," Editore Paravia), an articulate essay-manifesto a posterior', matured in lived experiences, to give a more solid base to that which was to come.

Verso la poesia totale is also a signpost by which to better understand the origins of his "absolute passion" for poetic making in all its forms and ramifications. The suggestion came undoubtedly from Surrealism, which Spatola transformed into ism, a kind of "'citationism" avantlettre. Surrealism was, in other words, revisited with the awareness of there being something left to mine through a simple and irreducible "faith in poetry'? as a summit of lin experience.

After 1967 the Malebolge adventure flowed into Gruppo 63's monthly, Quindici, and Spatola became one of its editors under the direction of Alfredo Giuliani. With Quindic the new avant-garde (or Gruppo 63) found coherent commitment on various levels, not only literary, yet continuing to maintain literary language as a privileged point of reference,

When the direction of Quindici broke up in 1969 over questions of politics, the new avant-garde folded its monthly and Gruppo 63's work may be said to have come to an end. Adriano Spatola fled to the country, to Mulino di Bazzano (Parma), and remained faithful to his radical choices as a poet. In the wake of his experience with Geiger editions (founded with his brother Maurizio in 1967), he started a couple of years later the magazine Tam Tam. It quickly became an essential point of reference for those who still believed poetry possible during the time of crisis which had

I T DOESN'T SEEM POSSIBLE that we would want to forget struck not only the avant-garde.

Founding Tam Tam was Spatola's moment of major cultural determination. That act of courage, personal and political, which helped many rediscover a trust in poetic language, would have been enough to ensure him a definite place in our cultural history. Still, it would be too partial a vision that disregarded Spatola's poetic works in favor of his cultural activity. After the first novel, L'Oblo ('"The

Porthole,"' Feltrinelli, 1964), the first extraordinary little book, L'ebreo negro ('The Nigger Jew," Scheiwiller, 1964), written with that calm resolution that was the foundation of his

1971), Diverst }(""Various Devices," Geiger, 1975) and in 1978 an = selection of texts from 1961-1977, with the title La composizione del testo (""The Composition of the Text," Cooperativa Scrittori, Rome), with a presentation by Luciano Anceschi. Rightly, Anceschi stressed Spatola's capacity to use once again, with a new sensibility, the

"'ancient musical instruments'? which (metaphorically) seemed lost to poetry.

This project for "musical poetry" remained central to Spatola (apart from his conspicuous activity as a visual poet), up through his last book, La piegatura del foglio (""The Fold of the Sheet," Guida, 1983), as Guido Guglielmi underscored in his introductory note. Poetry as a sense that comes before literal meaning and even as a meaning suggested by rhythm (always reflexive in Spatola) and never discredited by peremptory assertions (even if it is not without certain strong ideological passages).

Ours can't be just a troubled goodbye to Adriano, with an affection for all he has done for poetic language, but a renewed appointment with his poetry which immediately, upon opening the page, vibrates with that which it must tell us, because it is sustained, as one of his lines has it, by "parole che parlino"' ("'words that speak"'), as they spring from the threat of silence.

Translator's Notes

1. Founded in 1955 by Luciano Anceshi (critic and professor of aesthetics at the U. of Bologna), i vem has remained an important European journal of literary theory, nurturing several generations of Italian poets and writers.

2. I novissimi appeared as an anthology, manifesto and extended essay, published in » 1961 in i the il verni series by Paolazzi-Rusconi. Not only the work of the five poets contained (Edoardo Sanguineti, Alfredo Giuliani, Elio Pagliarani, Nanni Balestrini and Antonio Porta)

' but the composition and aesthetic project of the book put it among the most remarkable publications to come out of post-War Europe.

3. TamTam, founded by Spatola and Giulia Niccolai at Mulino di Bazzano in 1972, had been published continuously by Spatola until his death, The magazine has been one of the truly independent and international journals of experimental writing in recent years. Publication continues.

4. In 1975, Red Hill Press brought out my translation of Spatola's Majakouskiititiy) and in 1978 a selection of his poetry (from 1960- 1977) titled Various Devices, as well as the visual poem, Zero, (1977). In 1982, Spatola and I published an anthology, /talian Poetry, 1960-1980: from the Neo to the Post-

Avantgarde (Invisible City 2). Also, the tabloid, /notsible City 23/25 (March 1979), carried a wide-ranging interview with Adriano.

5. On April 12, not long after the publication of this essay in the daily, L'Unit, poet, critic and novelist Antonio Porta died of a heart attack in Rome at age 54.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis

On Anne-Marie Albiach: "A White Fiction" a crown and a page

a woman and a page

Mezza Voce translated by Joseph Simas with Anthony Barnett, Lydia Davis, Douglas Oliver (Sausalito: The Post-Apollo Press, 1988)

What is the page? What is the white of the page?

NNE-Marizé AvsiacH's Mezza Voce was originally published by Flammarion in 1984; it has appeared sumptuously translated by Joseph Simas, with Anthony Barnett, Lydia Davis, and Douglas Oliver, and elegantly presented by The Post-Apollo Press (1988). It is a book of 14 poems, varying in length from one page to thirty pages, which seem to be a meditation on an alreadydistanced interior drama, a kind of passion both in the sensual and in the suffering senses. The most striking aspects of the work are its brilliant obscurity and its pointed use of page space.

It is distant and cold, it is continuously abstract, sublime. It is the shadow on the screen, by someone who has deliberately turned away Srom, bound herself away from the door and the sunlight. A voice, a spotlight of a voice, investigating, but leaving the rest in darkness. In brightness. This paradox from the sense that the whole work is an allegory to which we are denied the key. A voice, the passionate dispasston of the one in the cave. One has the sense of a transgression of identity by others' possession. In its negativity, purity, dispassion, repression of anger, vulnerability, dispersed or boundariless identity, it is a dazzlingly feminine text.

Is this right?

In her use of page space, in her writing of page poems or visual texts, Albiach is among the most startling, but of course not the only contemporary and modern example. By a visual text or page poem I mean a concerted, intended, and forthright use of the white space of the page, not as neutral, unnoticed, and uncritically accepted, but as a deliberate ground for the text's typography and placement. Page space can function visually and semantically by use of indentations, irregular line lengths, quads of white space between line units, new notions of margin or frame, importation of "'margin"' into the "'poem,"' use of non-alphabetic signs (ideograms, flags, mathematical symbols), typographical gestures involving capitals, italics, and ampersands and other of the abbreviation-symbols of the typewriter. Punctuation can be used in inventive ways—ellipses, floating periods and the like.... Page space use can vary from the easilyconsumed

tinkerings of a C(c)ummings, the poster-like advertising hit of much Concrete Poetry which does visually what the affable dinosaur ‘“‘onomatopoeia”’ does for sound. And it can move to the intensities of clarity and overload alternatively proposed by Albiach in Mallarméan gesture on the one hand and (for comparative purposes) Hannah Weiner, with Poundian gesture on the other.

A sensitive surface, susceptible to the slightest touch, the slightest shift. Febrile, aroused, suspicious—the words try to gain control, the typography registers the startling presence of a shifting surface—the italicization of the initial letter of a word, for example, that separates that letter from the rest, denaturalizing it, drives a wedge of emphasis and refusal. As if the very appearance of a word could turn conflictual, emphatic in uncontrollable ways. The play between control and release. The relation between the tool box of page space and THE BODY. “‘Cesura” is mentioned, and it is a gap, a space, a pause. Ina title, it is “CESURA; the body” — this means an equivalence between them. (121) Thus: in the open space of whiteness, is the body speaking? Whose body? what body? what is embodied?

She says, this work is about “identity.” She says she had trouble saying “‘I.”’ She says “I” was “prohibited.” (A comment uncannily like one of Adrienne Rich. A topos for the woman writer.) She says that the work is theatrical, that it is a stage, but that, although there are often two characters, she and he, “one can’t say he goes on stage, he is the stage, and the stage is he.’’ She says that the characters are “‘of an indefinite gender, perhaps even androgynous sometimes....’”

What is the “‘plot’’? There are two bodies, she and he; they are being ‘‘reduced in a corporeal condensation to ONE” (15); they could be making love, or separating irrevocably, one subtracted from the other. Or fused, inter-subsumed. They could be made together into the page. It could be, as in Albiach’s “Vocative Figure” “that the body of memory seeks the body of the One.’”? Does “she” outcrop? is “‘she”? glad to be textualized into ONE? and by who? by herself as writer? or by the anterior works and pages of “he”? By virtue of this event, a “figure THREE of the face of desire”’ (15). Desire has the most “ampleur in the distancing” (and this could be a very familiar kind of emotional fact, like amor loin), so ‘desire’ is bound up with ‘‘Memory”—a fourth conceptual actor, or perhaps “desire” in another form. There is an immediate interplay between binding/bondage (a collar, a framework) and opening or escape. J am talking this way because I do not understand, and I resist—I resist the clangorous layering of ab- stractions, for these prevent “identification,” (“‘first injury: / she intensifies regressive prohibitions / of visual displacements / In cancellations or exposures a constancy of / blindness; // the subversive tempts brightness.”’ 24) Each of these phrases is beautiful, and together they are irrevocably dense.

The work is among other things an alphabetic occasion. She says somewhere an "ennead" (which means a nine), and one thinks of the muses, for everything from epic, to dance, history, lyric, music, and theater are at stake here. A page space poem will very often claim some kind of encyclopedism. And think of the at least nine words which center this writing—and aside from "'memory,'" which is the mother of the muses, a great number of the words begin with "d"' (Desires, Deviation, Divergence, Deprivation, Displacements, Distances, Dispossession, Disparity, Departure, Dismemberment, Default, Denial, Discourse). Which has a strange alphabetic resonance, as the '"'next" letter of a last name that features A-B-C (AlBiaCh). Also, key words (/uncture, Gesture, Look, He, In, Embrace, Mirror, Nourishment, Desire) can have their initial letter italicized. She says in an oblique summary statement at the end, which touches upon a number of her procedures in a kind of coda called "Strata": "speech appearing in echos // or an alphabet engendering itself / in the diverse climates of displacement...."' (161) This use of alphabet is a startling visual tactic, but it alone does not depict the key words, for «French» quotation marks, italics, and small capitals (both italicized and plain) also are typographic actors on the page, creating a plethora of key words, a visual, conceptual, and emotional overload. Upon which we understand that every word is a "key word."' And the white page becomes a shining surface, polished, buffed, a bright substance in which the words' alphabetic blackness is alien. It is as if the words are peepholes into something else, some dark arena, almost overwhelmed by the dazzle of the page.

Albiach's debate seems to involve whether to repress/erase material ("to leave it out") or whether to "'let it travel through the body"' in "'an incantescence of remembrance.'"' (27) The poem is based on a compromise between these tactics—to "'let it out" in a repressed/ erased form. Thereupon we have the words "'terror" and "bloodstain"—incredibly strong words, stronger still in that abstract context of anacoluthon—abrupt syntactic shifts. What is the blood on the page? This becomes a detective story, looking for the crime. Is it a crime? is it a birth? We are not to know. Whose blood?

The sections begin to seem like megaliths. Giant stones set in a circle in a field, or in a line. What do they mean? Is it not enough that they are there? My fascinated resistance to obscurity. To difficulty. Caught on the cusp of reading strategies: the imperialism of mastery, as if the difficulty of the work were a resolvable challenge; and then the sense of difficulty as a sign of the "inadequacy of forms and structures or styles to the life they propose to explain or include'"' whose reading would become the performance of registering one's changing responses to a work as fluid for the writer as for the reader. And yet one writes because there is something to mean.'

And then—is there a "then" in this work?—'"'«he fled»" (43) and after that (is there an after?), something changes. She becomes more aware of the mirror. Why? If

"the real depends on him"' (47), perhaps the reflection depends on her comprehension of the mirror... "A white light cutting across breath: / she begins punctuating / MIRROR" (49) and the mirror is, or claims, the page space. The mirror is her seeing herself. Her seeing herself on the page, on him, the page. I am making this up. Interpretation as frustration.

Whereupon something splits. '"They"' are there, but "She will not take part in what they name."' Some resistance, some suspicion. Who is the other one of the new couple (it seems to be a couple) called "'they"? We don't know. Its genders? don't know. But this 'they' does acts—curiously they seem sexual, though there is almost no reason for this seeming and may be my projection. The They could be parental, and the She positioned as child, always inadequate to their possibilities. And the She is repositioned as spectator of the events of, and on these bodies. Then She and They are no longer the only actors; they are joined by a Chorus.

What can page space do? What does it do here? Two sentences: "The voice just this side of theme'; "A WORD PERSISTS: just this side of / WHITE" (35,37). These sentences relatively early in Albiach's Mezza Voce begin to tell us two things. First, the work is constructed of mentions or statements, in the human medium of voice, which hover without being pressed to sequence-building meaning. There is voice without expression—I don't mean it's exactly expressionlessness or in monotone (although it has a dispassionate, tamped down quality), but that it's what the title hints: without exaggeration, not too loud, not too soft, not too melodramatic, just "'a mezza voce," a voice at medium strength.'

But I meant "'without expression'"' to say something else as well—to mean her withdrawal from the completion of narratable plot sequences. The work is constructed of segmented bits of narrative or motions/materials narratively suggestive. Of readable plot there is none. Or little. Although the work persistently gives the impression that plot (a plot, perhaps also in the sense of conspiracy) is precisely at stake. But what there is has elements of romance, of quest, of over-dependency, of desertion, of "sexual despair" (47), of violence between male and female (or somewhere!), of gothic terror about the mysteries of apparently "'domestic' spaces. Of revenge. Of inextricable cathexis. Of interactive paralysis. And whenever one has a narration by a female writer in female voice in which "the real depends on him" (47), whenever one has a narration filled with the Body, the Mirror, and the Desire, one is dealing, largely, with feminine narrative as a cultural category. Narrative where authority is held elsewhere. Narrative held to the gaze of the power of another. A narrative which may "overreact" in bizarre,

melodramatic ways, because one can never react directly to being in bondage. One in which one's bondage, one's thralldoms are pleasurable.

Is this right?

But the potential "'hysterias" of the feminine, while constantly palpable, are neutralized or contained in various ways. One is by the cool abstract language. Another by the work's obscurity (general and continuous). Another is by temporality: nothing happens in the forefront of reader's vision; what occurs is a reflection of an event.

Another is by tone—the whole work occurs as a kind of neutral reportage.°

Another shift in the feminine is by the spectator position assumed by female author. She describes herself exactly this way: the spectator at this theatrical event is the person writing; the person writing is "'myself."' (Interview, 107) This person is both distant and engaged; she is implicated, yet peculiarly non-interventionist. It is a doubled position for the female: or even tripled: speaking subject is disguised as "spectator,"" who then writes herself as/an object; the onlooker of a scene in which "'she"' is subject and object. Is the woman writer writing herself? Or is she the passive viewer of ways she has been written? Who is making these words? Who writes when the writer is a woman?

Why is it necessary for her to write this way? Is she protecting something, or trying to position herself in the most neutral posstble fashion, as if 'without'? stakes in this, especially stakes in the culturally-repetitious commonplaces of gender?

One effect for the author to claim the position of spectator at a theatricalization of her memory? She displaces audience. There is not a lot of room for a reader here; it is not inviting. If the writer is spectator, the reader is cast, unwillingly, in the position of voyeur. Although the acts are veiled with words. Is reading comfortably seen as a form of voyeurism? (It is odd how difficult texts always appear erotic.) Certainly this reading destabilizes consumption of a text, and in this way it evades various kinds of gender-clichéd reading complicities (whether mastery or co-occurring fantasy in the act of registering words).

Another neutralizing of the feminine occurs by the oblique forms of distance provided by the white spaces— as if whiteness indicates the airless enclosures in which there are terrific gaps between '"'characters," the airy freedom one might get from spanning and controlling the whole experience, or the sensual space of body in which words arise. It is part of the interesting charity, the generosity of "'page whites"' that the fictions they create are as fecund as—blankness itself.

But the page is never blank. She has said that "he" is the page. "He" are the prior texts from which she writes. ('What I write often comes from work on other books.' 106; mentioned are Royet-Journoud, also her dedicatee, and Daive.)

Dedicate, to consecrate; to devote; dedicate, to address or inscribe; dedicate, to commit oneself to a course of action; de = away from oneself, dicare = to say, proclaim. The page has gender. The stage—as page—is gendered "he." To claim this "'he" page, even for an instant, ts to necessitate a practice of the page that copes with, corrects, enjoys, responds to, transposes or releases this engendering. It ts to propose that all the merest and finest tools of writing (the words, the letters, the apparatus, the page) have already instanced gender relations. And that the practice that presents and responds to this fact is vital.*

The second sentence I cited, "'A WORD PER- SISTS: just this side of / WHITE" anatomizes the page space as a strong presence in this work, perhaps the only '"'character" or actor, or some fusion of actor, gesture, and scene. (He. He. He. Does the page accept her words? or does it repel them?) The "white"' shows that the scene of writing for Albiach is something like magic writing, something like secret "'lemon-juice" writing just as things "heat up,"' at the ephemeral point where the word takes shape against whiteness, persisting against the possibility of its disappearance or erasure. ("UNE PAROLE PER-

SISTE: en deca / BLANC."') It creates distinction— each word, each phrase selected enough to be drawn like that, on the page.

And each page looks different. The page space use facilitates visual links between things, links which bypass syntax, drawing the eye to (say) all words on a given page in capital letters. It creates a sound that comes from many points, the equivalent of multi-point perspectives by the auditory potential of many transmitters (as one gets in certain contemporary music), or even what one can get from several noisy songbirds in a few scattered trees.' This page use creates a sense that things can float in from the side, and it thereby shifts the relentless '"'top down"' reading, investing the page with some degree of horizontality, and somewhat shifting the axis of attention.* And (when few words occur on a page) this makes a vertiginous emptiness which, as Benjamin Hollander wrote of Royet-Journoud, creates "an inexhaustible tension... pressuring the sincerity of" the words that remain,"

The work is a stage, then the white is the theatrical space. And "'he" is not another actor, but more encompassing, more total; he is the stage, and he is the page. He. The page. The donné of this work ts that the male figure is the page on which the woman is attempting to write. Does this mean she "'controls"' him? ts marking him, as she was once inscribed, culturally speaking, by the many active "'he's" our assembled texts provide? Or does it mean that she is in a state of alienation since the very space she means, she intends, she needs to use ts already filled, filled to the gills, with whatever "'he" means—whatever the particular

person(s) "'he"' are, and whatever "he" means culturally, allegorically, fictively in general, and to her.

Is she "'trapped" in his page, the way the 'Yellow Wallpaper" woman of Gilman is in an imprisoned struggle behind paper?

Datum: At the beginning of the work she says that his aftertmage is BLUE, which ts like the glaring white of a page raised to its highest pitch.

How does a woman write when her page is made of "he."'

A page space poem also has impact on the line. Some of this has been traced by Robert Frank and Henry Sayre in an extremely important anthology of poetics."* By freeing the margin, the visual text thereby rescues the line from banality; margin and center exchange force. Albiach has a statement that epitomizes that point: "'WHITENESS / DISPARITY; A BLOSSOMING / IN THE MARGINS." (36) By the insertion of irregular white dividers, and visual presentation of words on the page, the work "'disrupts itself," inserts dissonance, and, by breaking the ongoing "fabric of the poem,"' can "'call into question the totalizing gesture of the whole." (xviii) So the page poem has a transgressive aim, especially in relation to the normal shape of reading. Of this there is no doubt. By "totalizing gesture"' is meant the sense of unity, tidiness and closure, for to make a page poem, and impose one's own visual or breath-related design on a page rather than conforming to a variety and range of conventional uses is transgressive. Yet if I test their phrase against Albiach, I get the sense that, by her transgressive designs, she has exaggerated the "totalizing gesture of the whole," not minimized it.

The author disappears; sensation is everywhere, and intellection controls it via memory. There is analysis holding off the pressure of sensation, of which one aspect is erotic. Sensation ts everywhere; it is so intensely felt that it can be handled only in small, pressured, austere bunches of words cushioned by space, a space... The author disappears, the universe is full of voices, at the same time it is filled with silences. One must listen in "'polyauditory"' ways, to statements. And, similarly, to silence. How many ways to listen to whiteness, how many ways to see the whiteness...

Frank and Sayre offer the term "'the poetics of excess" for the notions of interruption, defamiliarization, and freedom they propose. The term seems perfect for the heteroglossic space work of Hannah Weiner, Ezra Pound, Charles Olsen but not so much for Albiach and Sobin (in certain works) and S. Howe, for whom the "poetics of austerity" would be more appropriate. Is it simply that as the percentage of white increases, the sense of abstemiousness increases? Or is the visual text (that is, page-space poems) a place where austerity and excess meet? One may indeed think of extremism—only extremes—in the use of page space. Here the contrast of Weiner and Albiach is paradigmatic: busy — chaste, full—

empty; inclusive - selective; personal — abstract; bothered — withdrawn; palimpsested — bounded; and even, perhaps unkindly; psychotic pressures — precious precisions.

In talking of the page use of Armand Schwerner, George Oppen said, "'A number of experimental poems, largely experiments in the isolation of words, a radical exploration, depend on space and the organization of the page which cannot be displayed in brief quotation but achieve in the book a remarkably pure lyricism of word and silence and skepticism.'" This is certainly a description apposite to Mezza Voce. e.g.

Answer: he to he and I repeat I (85) C.8:, «the body bears the white space of the fiction that divides it»

(125)

About what, then, is Albiach skeptical? One can hardly tell, and these two examples are meant again to note the relentless obscurity of the work. But it seems plausible to suggest that she is at once skeptical of gender and of writing—and yet both are based upon the "'body,"' which is constantly at issue in this work. She, the spectator writing, is skeptical of gender; she holds herself apart from it; she the female figure within seems to suffer the impact of, the impasse of gender.

from the masculine to the feminine a path not yet established (136)

This statement, and a later one which seems to match it, "their words become the pathway»" (157), coming as they do at the end of the work, promise some new sense of gender, some pathway via their words. Well, perhaps. Because the phrase might as well be read, there is no congress, no defined way between our polarized gender stereotypes. Hard to say if the work is utopian, or damaged. But it is a criticism of the mechanisms. Do we need masculine and feminine? The work seems to say—we need a pathway. But, by the same token, we have masculine and feminine; even in our ridding we acknowledge them; no fiats have been invented to disperse them.

And it seems plausible that "the practice of _ pronominal / fiction" (70) is at issue. This practice is based on bodies divided by gender. Thus, the poem may argue this division is only a "'fiction" (125). And fiction itself may be based on this pronominal-ism. ""FICTION is no longer current: characters / vanished into the pages change / into double references / MULTIFORM OB- JECTS" (131). So to write poetry is in Albiach to make an essayistic examination of the possible experiences of, yearnings toward a genderless, or post-gender, environment, Thus her statement, "Already there are characters of an indefinite gender, perhaps even androgynous sometimes..."' (Interview 104). Multiform objects is also a description of the page. Is making the page, each page, an act that creates a post-gendered "body"?

This exaggeration of attention to visual matters in a page poem is of course excessive in relation to socialized reading practices. A normal looking page of an adult book, whether poetry or prose, is relentlessly linear, holding other stimuli in abeyance for that kind of breathless linear read that one gets in the subtle The Laughing Policeman (a police procedure mystery, award winning in 1970) which is gripping until the very last sentence in which the title is glossed. Even when one reads What by Ron Silliman under optimum conditions (sentence by sentence in an airport and in flight—where some of it, incidentally, seems to have been written), the boundary of any sentence in and for itself is deeply respected." It is linear, too. The left to right, top to bottom read that these works use is just a convention: there are cultures which read right to left, or plough-wise/serpentine, or in columns, bottom to top, and there are various conventions for separating words. And some of these may be reinvented by children in our culture, who then learn that "'we" don't read that way. Reading, as any social practice, defines groups. However, reading is always linear, a temporal negotiation of a visual field. In learning how to read (says Glenda Bissex) children must not only decipher or decode letters in combination, they must begin ""'reading the spaces.""

So must we, and yet the visual texts of page poems are in a concerted silent conflict, which is part of their excitement, with linear and normative reading. One may see the page as a gestalt, a picture, a canvas, a stage but one generally starts in the upper left corner and reads right down to the lower right, as best one can. So there is some struggle between seeing and reading (between, in large terms, the visual and the literary). The visual text that most exactingly comprehends—and deploys—this silent struggle between seeing and reading is Un Coup de Dés, which resolves the contradiction in an exaggerated claim for linear reading. The poem unscrolls across that interior boundary, the binding fold, of the book. Mallarmé ignores a different convention (of each isolated and autonomous page) to maximize the space upon which his linear and hypotactic constellations of words float.

Albiach's pages, too, are deeply designed. One is intensely aware of tremendous gobs of white space, and a textured sense of the play of two sizes of capital letters against italics, plain type, punctuation (colons get much play) and« French» quotation marks. The pages are even designed in relation to each other across the fold. But to say any more will lead directly into metaphors of what the page is like, metaphors or analogies. I have already used, by taking seriously Albiach's analogy: that the page is a "'theater." This metaphor and others are latently active in our reading of visual texts; the metaphors and analogies for page space and its functions are, indeed, part of these works' consumption. In fact, the multitude of

analogies (which is the sum of creative forms—theater, architecture, music and so on) is a measure of the work's encyclopedic ambitions.

But in all these metaphors for the page, this turn to Mallarmé, it cannot be forgotten that with gender, we have a doubled cultural mark; all these analogies will have an apparent neutrality, and yet, as Albiach has said, "the page is he."' This makes her work both paradigmatic of general modernist possibilities for the page, and of specifically female apprehensions of it. If I cannot explain this double inheritance, I can at least propose it.

Mallarmé notes, drily, of Un Coup de Dés, that "'the whites' indeed take on an importance,"' a phrase of course about the page (which it is strangely impossible not to read for its shadowy companion statement: a succinct comment about race and power)."* He also offers, in a low-key way, the one overriding definition of these texts, which, if taken as a charge, would transform poetic practice: "'[The Page] being taken as a unit as is elsewhere the line of Verse or perfect line."' This is a major shift of scale and compositional meaning, essentially adding to prosody (the organization of sounds in time) another consideration: architectonics (the "organization of the image field," to borrow a term from Meyer Shapiro)."

Mallarmé, however, backs off from the radical dissolution of prosody in this introduction to his page space work, for he speaks not of transgressing poetic measure but of dispersing it visually into lobes and typeface sizes that adjust themselves to the grammar of his sentences, especially subordination. He claims, with an immeasurable wryness, that he has the same amount of white space as does ordinary poetry; he has just arranged it differently. Normally, he notes, the whites were relatively unnoticed, "'around like silence." He also suggests the distinct correlation of parataxis, fragmentation, and non-regular metrics with page space poems: normal or hegemonic poetry has "'regular sonorous strokes or lines of verse'; in distinction, this kind of page arrangement emphasizes the "'prismatic subdivisions of the Idea."' Taking the lush Platonic vocabulary out, for a second, one is left with "'subdivisions"—units of something else—which can appear "'in various positions" and conjunctures in relation to a central spine or electric charge going through the work (Mallarmé, 210).

It is observably true that often enough in the modern period a visual text is found in concert with a-syntactic fragmentation, or, as in Paterson, with other strategies of "cropping" that "'bring out the partial, the fragmentary, and contingent." (Shapiro, 227) "'Cropping"' is put in opposition to the tactic of "framing," which seems exactly what use most normal poems (poets) make of the page: they compel the page to frame the work, or more exactly to "mat" it with a border of white. When pressured, this normal "'matting"' crosses a tenuous bound-

BA ce Bi ary line into becoming a "'halo"' or "'aureole" for the work, and the page takes on some aspects of gestural actor, not unnoticed paper.

Mallarmé's "'Preface"' is a container for a number of analogies for the meaning and function of the page space. There is, first, an analogy of natural forces: the "'paper intervenes each time an image, of its own accord, ceases or withdraws." Paper is the actor here, but the pulse or alteration of image occurs as an uncontrollable force, like the tide coming and going. This comment has the poet's power over the text fade in favor of a vocation of mediumship: the poet becomes that in which, or through which, these images mark their comings and goings. The phrase "prismatic subdivisions of the Idea" also turns on a naturally inevitable process, of the opening of a band of white light to its rainbow color through the prism.

The word in Albiach which indicates this natural (uncontrollable, inevitable) function of the page space is ""Desire." Her explanation of her writing process goes: "*First there is desire, which is to say a projection of the [theatrical] stage, because without desire, there is no stage, no writing."' (Interview, 107) The page can be a record of the random, or the chaotic, or inexplicable movements of mental/emotional forces whose summary is Desire. Desire for the page. Desire for one's dual positions vis 4 vis the page. Gratification, or pleasure, seem distanced, so desire "floats" or becomes a desire (inexplicable) for these words there.

Mallarmé also evokes a musical analogy. But really this analogy is multiform. Because "music" is not "one."' Mallarmé speaks about the symphonic sense of the genre (mode) of the page poem, which differs from the lyric as '"'personal song"' differs from the symphony. With Albiach, the musical genres one might be most called to are such vocalizations as cantata, oratorio, opera, that is, more theatrical forms, but all involving a Chorus (which, with He and She and a few other pronouns, acts as a '"'character"' in Mezza Voce). It is also notable that her title is a musical direction, involving voice, in a language foreign to both writer and translators. Loudness and softness, different "instrumentation"' and textures seem to be indicated by her typographic shifts. A large, sublime, uplifting and inexplicable enactment seems to occur in the work: the feeling of awe is related to the impact of musical features—the shift up a tenth in Mozart's K.516—but they are as minimally parsable.

One of the reasons for the resonance of the musical analogy (as well as the theatrical, cinematic, and choreographic) has to do with the annotation of events in time. Mallarmé saw the page poem as a visual analogy to a musical score for those readers interested in oral performance. The page is a score for "'acceleration,"' "slowing down," shifts of "intonation,"' "thought laid bare, with its steps

backward, prolongations, flights.' The time is (as the citation says) related to consciousness itself.

Time works abstractly in Albiach. It is a primary category in which all of the lines occur (thus the '"'page space"' can become sheer temporality). De Man's analysis of temporality (in allegory and irony) offers insights suggestive for Albiach, that the "'temporal predicament"' involves existence always in relation to "'another sign which precedes it.' There is no unmarked or unselfconscious time, no time of innocent activity, but only the dis- tance from, some kind of void implying an '"'unreachable anteriority.'' This interpretive stance, shadowed as it is by gaps and self-suspicion, by an impotent nostalgia for theoretically rejected innocence—this is a kind of time at the center of the experience of Albiach. Here the ''whites'' of the page become visual markers of the gaps or voids of temporality.

It begins to seem that the ambition of a page poem is to replace (or compromise the place of) narrative; the whites and what they can accomplish allow for a text in which—precisely like Albiach's—''everything takes place, by foreshortening, as a hypothesis; we avoid narrative.'' And later, "'the fiction will crop out and quickly dissipate itself....'' (Mallarmé, 210) Those statements are hardly easy to understand. First they seem to say that if you avoid events but offer the shadows, summaries, and suppositions of events, you have short-circuited sequence, substituting the multiple suggestiveness of "'hypothetical"' traces. Second, these statements can be extended to posit that the matrix of the page is powerful enough for the poet to "'fix,"' to sort, to pace, to put forward and withdraw all the materials which she wants to consider without it being necessary to construct narrative relations for them. The page becomes the effectual (or substitute for) ''plot''—and that does not just mean the "terrain," as in "'plot of grass,'' but plot, as in narration. The whites of the page poem are a thing which functions (claims to function) as narrative once did. So to speak. Except for the social history of, the social force of, narrative.

So the point is quixotic. The page may be wished into this position. And yet tempting. Mallarmé simply says: "'we avoid narrative.'' He means? we avoid ending? we avoid disclosure? we avoid oedipalization? we avoid the family romance of narrative?

detaches whiteness the place of form and of light

"these women then white in essence their drives dark'"

What is the white of the page? It is skin, it is the Caucasian body, whose division, self-division, sexual loss and desire are primary ground. The white is a body. It is a male body written by a female spectator. It is a female body written by a cultural page. It is a female body writing herself, but saying she isn't. It is a female writer pretending to just watch, in whose mind a theater is performed, and

this theater is the page. The woman has gotten this writing on her skin. She is tattooed with this poem. She is tattooed with the page.

It is sky. It is a blank sky, a cloud cover and high grey, a rain green-grey, It is a square fog, visibility nothing, an opaque white low slung (I look out of a window, in Nijmegen, and se—NOTHING; my window is covered; it is all white)

It is a screen, the scintillating "silver screen" of the small cinema, where, when the dark comes down we all go into some dream of identification, pleasure, at the bodies, and at the spaces out to horizons. It is a cinema in which the writer is the resistant reader of represented memories. Whatever plays there is suffused with light

It is a window, it is a framed site. It is a wall. One can see out. Or see nothing.

The page is a noise, a white noise, a blur; it is always there, the hiss and bumble of the world. And I can hear it now, and so can you, you listen. And the page is "silence"' but a silence is never absolute. A silence always has some sound in it. Silences also may seem louder and softer, depending on the nature of the contexts of sounds..."

The page is erasure; it is what is left, the white has been bleached of words. Few words are worthy of it.

It is a gap. It is a gap always fecund and tempting, always rigid and repressed. It is the gap of not knowing, the space before, "Before the reflections: / opaque / interstices." (VF, 8)

It is a primed canvas, milky with the syrupy sealant, glistening all in itself, and by itself. On which the only fully adequate mark may be its imitation of that: the "White on white" of Malevich. Which holds all marks, and rejects all marks; which is enough, and never enough, which is hungry and full, completely satisfying, or completely derisory. The canvas white is "'funny"'; it is a vulnerable, impotent space.

It is a crisp tablecloth for a good meal.

It is a stage, a stage place, also dark, and also, a productive interplay of that shallow puppeteering roomspace and the explosive depth of the "4th wall" reaching backward into us.

It is skepticism. It is inadequacy. It is being repulsed by the space of one's own calling to mark.

It is light. It is light. It is light, as on the beach, the light of sand. It is a dazzling light, and the letters, therefore, are backlighted, and come to us as silhouettes called "'words."'

It is light, light as through a vista of columns, the dazzling light of the temple at Aegina

It is both veil and body, and, as both, of both

It is nothing, a cipher, a zero, a "'placeholder"; it is the most important number, in relation to 1, the mark. It is open emptiness

It is an emptiness in which there is never nothing, but perhaps, as physics tells us, forces. Uneven forces.

It is the open emptiness of outer space, in which float, as we see them, stars.

It is winter, and there is snow.

It is pure and a-social, but this means precisely nothing, except a stained dream that such could be, for it is not unsocial, and its society is a chattering in the very fibers of the page, in the beaten rag(e)s of the paper, a chattering, among others, of gender

It is the "'site of the mirror'"' and the page reflects back ideation floating in the head of the author. The author sees her own ideas and memories performed there.

They may be "reversed."'

It is "'consciousness" and the page is a map of the dance of materials in mental spaces

It is silence. And "'attentive to the silence / she leans / overcome by a return or / minute elaboration / multiplication / of vulnerable points" (37). It is silence. Does she want to speak? is silence better? but women—'"'their drives are dark" and the dark is the shape of words, scattered relentlessly.

It is insomnia—white nights It is night. "It is this passion which one/ could call white." (129)

It is the matrix; it is memory, the '"'mother" of all artistic practice, the mother of lyric, and epic, of dance, and song; "Space / a parental identity" (VF 6)

It is the absent father

This is a nude written by a woman on a page. The page is "he."' This is a nude written by a woman who watches, as a spectator, her authorship. She possesses the gaze upon this theater of gender and identity, How does her nude exist on this page? How can the woman act if the "theater" is male? She speaks an oblique, allegorical, difficult set of interior observations; she speaks not too loud. Voices are everywhere, as if auditory hallucinations. Are they hers? What has she done here? Has she conquered and rearranged the cultural situation of women, thereby? Or has she been dragged deeper into its undertow? Is there small gain here? Or large? And what ts my desire, (my projection?), that Albiach do this work, this work cut out for all of us, this writing as feminist practice?

May 1989 Notes

1, All the citations from the very important document "An Interview with Anne-Marie Albiach,"' conducted by Joseph Simas in 1984, ACTS 4 (1985), 107 and 104. It is significant to me how much these statements reveal, and how little of this

information is “in” the work. I wonder therefore about the intense restraint of the work.

2. Albiach, “Vocative Figure”, published first in 1985, translated by Anthony Barnett and Joseph Simas, Moving Letters Press, 1986, 14. This work, mainly prose poems, stands in some relationship, almost like a gloss, to Mezza Vice, I (re)read “Vocative Figure” only in the last stages of drafting this essay, and so was not directly influenced by it. It is possible that this strategy was wrong. Will be cited as VF in text.

3. These terms from an argument by Richard Poirier as cited by Leo Bersani, in The Death of Stéphane Mallarmé (Cambridge University Press, 1982), 58-59.

4. Because of the congruence of female writer and her work’s voice (of course an assumption that is not always the way female writers operate) (they can have male-gendered voices, or neutral voices), I did assume that an “Albiach”’ figure was speaking. Thereupon I was astonished to read this line in VF: ‘“These words he used to pronounce mezza voce while fleeing in a flurry of incestuous sheets, forced her to listen to him as if paralysed by an enchantment.”’ (VF 14) This raises the possibility that he, a he, is speaking the work called Mezza Voce. But it is also true that, later in the same poem, “Fever,”’ the author states, “an image, given him, was pursued in her,”’ raising the possibility that a voice (the mezza voce) raised in him was pursued in her.

5. [had thought of this, and then was struck how the word occurs in an interview with Albiach: “There can be violence, you see, but this is a report. The violence is not stated. It is not described, it is simply written... [cut] It is a bit as if it were a commentary, a commentary on a theatrical act, but this commentary would become the theatrical act itself.” Anne-Marie Albiach speaking, 105. Actually, a good deal of energy in the interview is devoted to avoiding discussion or acknowledgment of the Mallarméan precedent for Mezza Voce, substituting Shakespeare as mentor. I have no quarrel with that, as it does emphasize the theatrical, and undoubtedly traces a real source, but it is a peculiar manoeuvre, worth savoring.

6. Here a statement by Cary Nelson is appropriate: ‘Clearly, experimental feminist writing counters reductive and passively essentializing visions of fermaleness by making femaleness powerful and unpredictable. It suggests that feminist writing is uncontrollable by (and even unknowable within) patriarchal discourse. It destabilizes representation not only within its own terrain but also within discourse generally and thus serves as a challenge to restrictive and positivist notions of meaning.” “‘Feminism, Language, and Philosophy,” New Literary History 19, 1 (Autumn 1987), 124.

7. Later, where I do not want to footnote, I use the term "'polyauditory," which I have lifted from Daniel Schwartz, Cornell University, who used it in conversation, and also in a work I think on Joyce.

8. Marjorie Perloff's Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture (University of Chicago Press, 1986) is a historical study that abounds with insights on these modes of modernism; in effect what I am describing in the differential pulls of the horizontal and vertical axes is "simultaneity."' See Perloff, 27ff.

9. Benjamin Hollander, 'In the Image of Language [a review of The Notion of Obstacle|," Poetry Flash 170 (May 1987), 19.

10. The Line in Postmodern Poetry, ed. Robert Frank and Henry Sayre (University of Illinois Press, 1988). Of particular vitality are the introductory remarks, and essays by Marjorie Perloff, Stephen Henderson, James Scully, and Kathleen Fraser.

11. George Oppen, "'On Armand Schwerner," [a review of Seaweed|, Stony Brook 3-4 (1969), 72.

12. Ron Silliman, What (The Figures, 1988). I see this work as "the new novel,"'

13. Glenda L. Bissex, GNYS AT WRK: A Child Learns to Read and White (Harvard University Press, 1980), 122.

14. Stéphane Mallarmé, "Preface (1897) to Un Coup de Dés,"' trans. Anthony Hartley (Penguin Books, 1965), 209. This preface is disingenuously modest, because he starts by insisting his page presentation is "without novelty except for the spacing out of the reading," but bigger though still humbly put claims are made soon.

15. Meyer Shapiro, "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs,"' Semiotica 1, 3 (1969): 223-42.

16. Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in Interpretation: Theory and Practice, ed. Charles S, Singleton (The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 191, 190.

17. Albiach, Etat, translated by Keith Waldrop, expected soon from Awede.

18. Andrew Voight, "Sound on Silence," in the Symposium on Narrative, Poetics Journal 5 (May 1985), 100-101.

Danielle Collobert

It Then, Part I

translation: Norma Cole

It then—It—abandon of the impersonal—of the infinitive—at last resigned—to embody—with flesh in pain—to embody like the thumbnail—It then

I

It—flows—it bangs itself—slammed into walls—it picks itself up—stamps feet—it doesn't go far—four steps to the left—new wall—it extends its arms—leans—leans hard—rubs its head— again—harder—forehead—there—the forehead—hurts—rubs harder—becomes inflamed—not the forehead—from within—cries good start for the pain—head between arms—forehead against wall—and rubbing—skin breaks open a little—not enough—ooh the pain—there it is—feet kicking the wall down low— go on—with the toes—striking hard—thrashing—nothing to be done—doesn't subside—never will subside—the rage—the pain—cries—hits with flat hands—dull noise—a cry—here a cry— no gasp—a little above a gasp—in shrillness—here it comes—collects at the back of the throat—what's going to come out—still below the pain—not enough sobs shaken—saliva at lips' edge—bitter taste—slides a little towards the corner—nose smashing—lips—the lips twisted sideways—pulled back to the gums—moistening the wall—eyes closed—stomach and chest flattened—unsticks—comes back harder—sharp impact of shoulders—unsticks—comes back again with elbows with knees—bangs fists—fists' backs—to the bone—starts over—skin reddens—rips at last—it falls—doubled up—dragging arms stretched along the wall—kept vertical by ends of fingernails—it collapses—impact of back—head rings on wooden floor—it pushes up onto its elbow—drags along the wall—reaches hung-up coat— hangs onto—hoists itself—buries its head in the wool—grabs the arms—holds the end of the sleeves tight—overlaps them around neck—expecting softness—but no—squeezes hard— chokes—coughs into tears—chokes—lets go—hangs onto cloth—pulls hard to rip—rips with all its strength—tears out pieces with its teeth—spits—chokes—arms fall back down—sinks down—-slips onto the ground a body there—practising pain—as if it hadn't had enough of this suffering—at each moment—in floods—in vast wave—trying pathetically to practise it body striking—disfiguring its limbs with the too full pain—which body sudden empty—which violence against—about empty—pain congealed at last—wanting to reach it to set it once and for all—to keep it there motionless—or set it down in front of it—itself—to

make it really visible—in its infinitely numerous images—unceasingly a body there—no—that body there—the one banging its face against the wall—maybe—no walls fictive also—unnecessary walls—no—only to see from the place of the present invisible— here—facing the stripped body—arms motionless yet sweeping around in space without meeting anything to lean on—temporary connection—just for an instant—to slow the breathing down—slow down the beating—to quiet down—this body seeking the place—the hollow in which to melt back down again—heat ruptured—and cold of the world around—its place or position unsure to inscribe against the lack—the shocks of the day it stretches out on the ground—gathers itself up—arms and legs folded—prenatal and burial /position—identity—like this—rarely—when exhausted or crying—daily agony in mute groans—without doubt—since nothing there is listening—nothing blends with its voice—isolation of silence it is going to unfold—it unfolds—climbs back up towards which surface—touches its body— listens to its breathing—directs it—tries to breathe without tiring—rhythm to maintain for the remaining waking—forgets that noise of air inside—opens eyes—again becomes motionless around—places—choice of place—labyrinth—tunnel—chamber—underground—homes—midway—towards the white—the dark or outside—to see—possible for the eye—cities—rivers—the oceans—nothing but dead ends nearby—more or less—faces—bodies—movements—taut—slick with use—to death body upon body—to body lost and cries nearby then—voices choice of voices—present—past—dreamed—a voice coming from lips—unstuck—barely—from

2 176 above the hip—it lifts its head—looks at body level—skin stretched on bone below the face— shudder under the breath—breath little by little articulated—a word—for it—a word—for the skin—there—maybe a first word—choice phrase for a first word sequence—as always necessity the sweetness of saying—to know words for the story its voice lowers—withdraws into the folds—its lips partly open—word—silence—no—sounds of the body—commotion—tries to hear—holds its breath—hears—in the distance—deep—dim story begun there—the inarticulate—the muffled commotion—voice begun there—ends there—at body level this restricted space—the reduced limits—scrapings of surfaces by erosion—the aging ceaseless ripping of creases—brings to light words—rehearse choice—according to the lips and body worn out words—body long worn out—at the same time—same rhythm it hears itself—in the end—last word—last breath—its raised body—tries again to say— stretches beyond measure—crazy extension—in the end—maybe not—the word choked maybe—in a groan—or the breath lost—long lost—for the ear—motionless suffering—without cry for the moment—if desired—plays—moves onstage—the body—speaking—words harmonically— make paths—by flow—across seams of words—horizontal deposit—at the bottom of which

sometimes slips out—separates itself—solidified—a word—walled up inside—doesn't slip out— it cries out—yells—always the same word—twists—chokes without expulsion—neither spit— nor vomit—slow burning—fulminating its flooded body dull corrosion—imprecise humiliated body—beaten ceaselessly by the words—reef eaten by the water—eaten away on all sides—shaken up by shocks to the heart—released to the pain without end—is going to die—goes to pieces—despairing

doesn't believe in it—never—is never dying—will never know its end—as long as it lasts— there—on its body—no duration chafing of the skin—still—muted in the cavities—louder in the convexes—shaving the skin— sound arrives along the whole extent—arrives at its lips—ever ready to fall open—its body open to the words—greedy—suffering—from tension—of waiting open right to the end—starving—to hear still—as much as it hears—the voices in the setting—their words—the world there—so near—bodies close—to know in order to bear—still gasping to say—to hear—not silence—no—not silence—words still—words against its lifeless body some place—wordless body thus its ground—at the heart of misery the words—dust—taken from the body—at body level— choice—then—among all the identified bodies—it rests its hand—its breath in a hollow—head tilted back—detaching its lips from the skin—rests its lips on the body—word between two motions—to remember the word—no—seeks another now—for this interval of time—what it says—could say—still perhaps to be said—if naked still body on body—it would say it picks up again beginning with the word—there—finds another gesture—seeks agreement— links itself from gestures to words—seeking—still—it holds out its hand—at the edge of the face—tangles its fingers in its hair—pulls back—or rather it's its face—in the first gesture— once again then the head tilted back—to find out where starts where ends the linking of speaking knows nothing—shut up inside the word—bewildered pursuit—to fill in space and time—time dead space dead—whence the cold and pain—second—minute—length of the gesture—distance to face—to hands—to erase—to erase—to dissolve there—could perhaps—in the modes of the possible—imaginary incursions—still liaisons possible for bodies some expectations exchanges to put on edge can touch—grasp—shape—with light touch—deep— at surface and to penetrate—stiffness or suppleness of flesh—some equivalents—the ridiculous mooring of old sensations—by slow repetition—waste products from so far seeming—cloudy determinations—the images—forms of words unrolling slow under the detached sliced bodies—out of reach—if not the margin in the margin—the voices hear each other hears itself and collects the shreds—gyres around itself—if it remembers from where—extends—geographical—on its passage—trace—impression someplace minimal contacts of tinted flesh—resonating on the circuit—long walk

groping blindly—from words to music—chance—veritable embrace thick colors' heavy swells—the visible eyes on edge—circle upon circle of dilated pupil—picking up the outlines—lines—map of the body—suffering shocks to the ear it looks—burned—if eyelids could reduce intensity—light memory—of having seen exploding of the eye—felt immensity of a blow—flooding the aqueous surface—will spill over from the body flaming—one day—without doubt at the level of the flesh to look for darkness—it glues its eyes on the dark cavities—lashes stilled—flattened against the damp skin—seeks its night thick shadows' heavy swells—bleeding it doesn't see any more—tries not to see any more—digs in—shivers—as if forever nascent— all along the tinted beaches—the meat market—flowing waves of red—fiction—in the homogeneous liquid nor swim—naked in the density nor float slow fall—without order without distinction

or the dark—hazy—dark blue green grey—fixed point between the closed eyes—hardly twinkling—passing lighthouse lighting—finally perceived black—eyes' absolute silence in the plumbed flesh—black—red on black— on red ground on black ground deep sleep—living's limit duration's threshold in the dark—threshold of a shape dissolved even now—perhaps forever lost that one for other shapes to come—dissolution possible words to dissolve it collects the syllables—squeezes eyelids—speechless on the other body—filled with strained sounds—dislocated—silence without silence—already said—noise of crushed speech—mechanical—grinding—consistency sometimes irreducible—resistance—perhaps—resists with meaning—or unexpected music—stubborn it scatters the sounds—harmony—dissonance—awakening at the unappeased body—is biting—slowness of the motion—of the righted body—fullness of breath—presses elbows underneath—head tilted back—already seen like this—curve of the small of the back—breathing to the belly will arrive the flow—or at the open mouth the word—or spaced the memory—some shreds of articulation underlying the gestures—to glances the flow—can only wait for that—gushing—on groundwork—nerve and vessel work—slowness of current—surges—detours—frailness—uncertainty there—choice to choose the flow of the body—speech—choice of desire's hesitation—of the desirable—to want—circuit of desire it wants—it buries itself in the confusion—it wants—it wanted—would want—will yet want— it was inclined—was pushing away—was seeking—the whole in the present or time's future— shape to desire—its long work of production interruption in sleep—inertia—short moments of peace when it will doubtless be stretched out on its side—arm bent under head—clear vision of a semblance of absence in the world agreement of body with inertia agreement with emptiness weightlessness of time rest on the ground recovered earth—it crumbles—it melts—words penetrating the ground—it dissolves—loss of possessions—loss of power—like dead the buried text voice

silence underground quiet depths to break up yet to rise up out of the ground—folds and fractures—ruptures of thicknesses—overabundance of seams—in trouble being in daylight—to go out into the visible—into hearing—body continually withdrawing—desire out in front of speech—to reach a word—slow crossing either projected—expelled or vomited pliably—to say the awakening mouth open at last—despairing—rush—pain return of irritation to the nerves—torturing the fibres—gaze tirelessly separated—its body falls open—discretion expectation of the blow—opening one by one orifices—pores surface—the least defenses—it's taking it badly—fear that increases—heavy easing—complete submission to the bites of the word it is reappearing—floating up from the ground—unfolded—opened out—its length on the ground lifted up to the vertical—span of outstretched arm—to offer ceaselessly all of its body—stretching out to fullest extension—to absorb—to fill up vibrating easing—elongation—arms outstretched towards the other body—without end—other fear still nascent—to comfort the skin—time of the tension in the tension—it withdraws—folds in—hardens its skin—uncontrollable heartbeat—holds its breath—internal breathing—to eyes the loss—already the inscription if in the silence is bending down—is stripping—is coming close—if it is holding close—a body—like sometimes—surely from the longing to say—from the flow of words—overflowing—seeking the way out of the body—is inventing—intangible discourse

Edmond Jabès

from The Book of Resemblances

translation: Rosmarie Waldrop

from Lhe Book of Resemblances

El-Book

Repetition is the power of resemblance.

"Tell yourself that where you are I have been; where you ponder I have thought; where you walk I have walked; where you collapsed I was flat on the ground," wrote

Reb Mazlia.

"Could the divine name, E/, be an etymon? Here's the mystery," said Reb Kabry.

And Reb Arbib: "Since all words in our language are the name of God, is our resembling Him as we name, as we speak, not simply a resemblance of our name and His?"

"You talk. You write. You raise indestructible obstacles," Reb Eladad replied.

"Then talking and writing would not mean tearing down obstacles, but leaving them behind, leaving all of them behind."

"Where there is no writing, where there is not even speech yet, there is only space ready for obstacles," Reb Bérid had already written.

And he added: "We always die between four walls of words whose thickness and height we cannot tell."

The void is waiting for vocabulary.

In being said—or not said—the void is voided.

In the Silence of the Word

"With me, you shall decipher the characters of the invisible which were never and nowhere designed by man. They were graven in our breath by breath from the divine lungs which we long took for the largest cloud ever to illumine the sky with its lightning," Reb Ovadia had written. "But take my advice. Advance with caution in your reading, because at any moment you risk perishing in flames."

"I do not choose to see. I see.

"I do not choose to hear. I hear.

"I do not choose to feel. I feel.

“But who gives orders
“to my mouth,
“my hands,
“my legs?
“I am at the same time master and slave of my body,” said Reb Alcé.
“And of your soul?” asked one of his disciples.
“I am the sleeping soul of my waking soul, and the waking soul of my soul asleep: the day and night of immortality,” he replied.
“Exile was perhaps the first question because it was the first word—Pre-exile means pre-word—. Question from mortal creature to the fallen immortal.

“The universe, on its own acount, keeps echoing this persistent and vain question,” wrote Reb Amiel.
“Exile and death are subject to the same conditions: for death is the night of exile, and exile, the day of death,” said Reb Nataf.
“We shall triumph in exile. As did God,” wrote Reb Safra whose body was not found after his death and whose soul was said to have become so transparent that not one of his sisters noticed it the time it came among them.
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“Exile had so changed my features,” said Reb Abner elsewhere, “that none of my community would take me under his roof. For all of them, I was already dead.”
“I have dug in so deep that I am cut off from all thought, all desire, all sentiment,” Reb Dabbah had written, “but my heart beats as in the best days of my most valued encounters.”
“There is no rest in the kingdom of resemblances.
“For any question, resemblance is a treacherous dissatisfied question at the heart of felicitous phrasing.
“It keeps the mind on the alert. In the dizzy gap between its sly incursions, we question the mind which questions us,” said Reb Ezra.
“I do not write so much for myself as to please the words in their love and hate. Does God not have all words for His name? Then my writing expresses the love and hate of God. To write for yourself means perhaps only to write against the divine Name, with this very Name,” said Reb Taon,
(“The first word in the dictionary is a name, and this name contains all names, and all names fuse and become this single name which is a word among other words just as laughable: God.

"Ts it not strange that Prince and slave use the same words to express themselves?

"Through them, the Prince turns slave; and the slave, Prince. And neither of them knows it.

"We are all equal before language, its imperatives, the use we can make of it.

"The Prince is ridiculous if he believes he cannot help speaking as a prince; and the slave pitiable if he counts on turning prince by repeating the prince's words.

"Man, who established social hierarchies, should have been on his guard against language, which reduces him to a single word and, like death, promises everybody, if not the same tomb, then at least the exact same nothingness," he said.)

"Learning to love the night means preparing to sway the future with words of love. The moment after is of the dark. All roads lead into night, place of renouncing all resemblance, all of ink's daring," wrote Reb Nessim.

O night of our fleeting nights, ocean of our ploughed oceans, in your infinite black the Book of Eternity is written, pursued by our unseaworthy books.

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"Is that you ringing my doorbell, imagined rabbis of the Book of Questions, singular interpreters and commentators of its paradoxical pages? Your names have changed, for the most part, but your voices are the same."

"Our voices are fitted to the circumstance."

"Will I see all of you again?"

"There are fewer of us now. Many of our sages have faded into their words. Shadows resemble them now, impalpable traces of their passage and our grief."

"IT have long lived in the desert of their shadow."

"We are sand of sand and words of words squeezed by the too heavy sky of night as were the sacred words of our holy books between their bound covers.

"God dies in the shelved book and is resurrected in the book that is opened."

Whirling allows the sand to breathe.

In the desert, wind means life.

"To violate the Book, to rob a rich man's grave are perhaps one and the same reprehensible act. My book is of the poor, my tomb the open sky," said Reb Messoulam.

And Reb Assin: "No burial for my words. Let them be pasture for your eyes, those whirling vultures, till they become pasture for your beaks." He added: "Weep for those among us who will never be in the Book."

To which Reb Messoulam replied: "What kind of land was yours that you could make it your book?

"God had only His name for a tomb."

It is also a book that closes the book.

("What is day," Reb Zaccai had noted, "unless the dazzling stretch between night and night's doom in which our eyes strive to stay open?"')

The book is our law. Like book, like law? One law would then rule all resemblance. We cannot cheat with our likenesses. We advance in their territory.

Only another Book of Questions could claim to resemble The Book of Questions; only characters they could be taken for, its characters.

Could they be reborn through their resemblance because I can only write one and the same book?

—The same even where it is different from the beginning?

This July has been exceptionally rainy. But we did have a few days of sun. Sarah has regained confidence. She will soon see Yukel. I believe Yaél is sincere. Monday, we shall go to Hossegor together.

My feet have taken me to the Odeon. Will I bump into Yukel's phantom here? He had spoken to me like an old friend. I made no effort to enter into his life which, I cannot explain how, was a little bit my own.

The square is no longer quite the same. It is not really different either.

"We live in the margin of time," Sarah had once written to Yukel, "or, rather, in a passive time made present by unearthed images, a presence snatched in time from a frozen past, a compromised future."

The drugstore is still there, but certain shops around it have changed. On 1 rue de Condé, the old office supply store has given way to a two-screen movie house. Yukel lived in number 5. The coal dealer opposite died in 1960, of cancer, as did his son last year. His widow—to escape loneliness, to escape herself—is still running the bistro next to their shop, which they also own.

In this neighborhood, as anywhere in France, there used to live friends as well as enemies of the German occupants, pro- and anti-Nazis. Now there are those who have repented, those who have stuck to their opinions and newcomers with whom one cannot be very sure of what they think.

Ah, I could go on recalling the streets and houses, the light and smell of this nearest part of the Sixth Arrondissement, and all that I have found out about its inhabitants. But as I gather my memories the neighborhood fades, the voices, the once familiar sounds disperse. It is because I was born very far from here, much farther, oh I don't know anymore. So this neighborhood is not the place of my childhood or my life, but of my death. It is the home of a man whom I resemble to the point of being always taken for him, even though people know that I was with him in the hour of his death and that he has been in his grave for years.

There are words which outlive us, gestures which continue us when we have left this world for good, old stories, everyday words, age-old words which we

perhaps said—or failed to say— and which resurface in the great book of space, in characters of night like scraps of dark so that someday someone should undertake to read them.

Every reader is the elect of a book.

(Do I miss the Book of Questions so much that I cannot help trying to recover it through the angle of resemblance? Thus the exile does not leave the land from which he was chased; land, however, foreign to itself for being reshaped in exile.) "There is little time left," said Yaél in a rage. "We must not let it be wasted."

She knew better than anyone that we are not really worried about death, but about what dies with us. For what are we except a moment's chance to die with God, the universe and ourselves?

And she added: "I shall die like a queen, never as slave." We shall never rewind time without the sure help of images. To gather fruit when famished. To take care that it does not drop from the tree.

To the creature's ravenous hunger to know, the fruit of knowledge adds its own impatient hunger.

Fruit feeds on fruit. "A fruitless tree is like a barren woman," he said. "Both are the hunger of their hunger."

"To eat means also being eaten," he said elsewhere. "Death has the same mouth, same palate, same teeth, same belly and same appetite as we.

"Now it is life, now death digging up our image: image of a body sated or a body crushed without sound."

"You feed death with everything you have eaten," wrote Reb Mazloum. "If rich, with your favorite dishes; if poor, with your crust of bread."

And Reb Basri: "Lord, my food on this earth was the Book. My death has only had Your words for sustenance, Thus my life and my death are only one hunger to read."

"God is nothing but gnawing hunger for God," wrote Reb Sasson.

("Images have a past and future difficult to determine. They make us think of them both in their past and in their future. Thus they are the image of thought, of which we never know if it will plunge us into the night of our past or project us into time to come," wrote Reb Sarda.

"By abolishing images, God left us without past or future, but at their mercy."

And he added: "An image is always image of an image which thought veils or unveils. So that there is no past or future except for thinking that has stayed alert."

Te serve as trap, or be caught in the trap of the unthought. Same snare for every thought.

"Beware," he said, "of being seduced by your song's echo. At the last note, the void will engulf you. We are always our own victims."

"The mimicry of the unthought, which consists in treacherously taking on the appearance of thought, confuses the latter, leading it to believe it is again thought when it is really doubled in death. Thus the unthought is but a deceptive reflection of thought attracted to itself and suddenly reduced to nothing. Thoughts crumble at the feet of the unthought like birds at the edge of the sky," wrote Reb Farht.

To which Reb Agiman replied: "Thought dies in thought because the sky of the unthought is its sky also.")

The Perennial Tablets

(One can say words; one can only read a vocabulary. Does vocable then equal written word?

One writes also sous le vocable, i.e., with invocations of..., under the patronage of...; mythical patronage, in the case of the book.

The vocable is devoted to the book it invokes; the word, to the world it translates—but ts the world not in the book? The vocable would add this precision: the word is made vocable where the book is made. In other terms, the word changes into a vocable as sentences make it aware it belongs to a book and as its desire to be part of it increases. Like the silkworm turning butterfly and darting into the air to be part of the celestial world. The mouth is ignorant of vocables.

"We have to meet words half-way, watch them act, listen to them.

"A word speaks against the words it fears, and which sleep inside it. A word speaks for its wounds which it hides or flaunts. A word speaks in the name of silence to which it aspires.

"We must answer to—and for—this silence as the Hebrew people must answer to—and for— the broken Tablets," he said.)

"The second Tablets could not be like the first, being born out of breakage. Between them, the bleeding abyss of a wound.

"The first Tablets emerged from the abyss of the divine; the second, from the red abyss of mankind. Do we have the cheek to claim they are alike when we know that all likeness marks the difference we would abolish?

"God was forced by His people to repeat Himself, that is, to suit His Word to the fancy of His deafest creature.

"From then on, everything had to take place in the stormy space this repetition commanded.

"Thus the law is built on a resemblance become human by facing death and hence eternal repetition.

"And the book, on the hope of resembling the hidden Book," you said.

"Repetition is marked by resemblance. It resembles more closely what our formulations have not quite succeeded in resembling: a kind of rigorous focusing.

"Repeating, repeating ourselves, is a vital act. It means rejecting an assumed resemblance in favor of a different, more striking one with our exemplary object of resemblance. But not everything takes place on the level of appearance. There are delays of time and distance. So that the future is our pledge of likeness.

"Yesterday resembles yesterday, as a step does a step forward," he said.

"The beginning is Everything. We invent nothing. We repeat everything and nothing. What a miracle: repetition—the systematic recourse to Everything—means impassioned return to the beginning," you said.

"We have never been able to distinguish between old and new language.

"Repetition became our way of subversion, for it is moved by an innate need to destroy and be destroyed in its turn where there are no more margins for what is settled," he said.

"Repetition (which can also be a new performance, a new spectacle following any spectacle after, for example, some a priori justified criticism) reopens inquiry when the latter thought it was at rest. It restarts questioning beyond its conclusion, relying on the dynamics of resemblance preoccupied with its multiple aspects and aims.

"Repetition is a chance of permanent change. Change via the inspired means of exchange," you said.

"We are never twice the same, nor other," he said.

"My vocabulary cannot be yours. I am the only one to inhabit it in my books.

"If my house is an exact replica of yours, does that make it yours?

"Besides, if my vocabulary were everybody's, what right would I have to my works? Could I have signed them without dying of shame?" said Reb Avigdor after an evening's discussion to Reb Malka.

"In your writings you assemble, as I do, words identical with those of the language in sense, sound and number of letters. You think you are living in them when all you are is a chance guest of their reflection.

"Every page is a paper mirror. You bend over it and look at yourself. Water likewise gives back our image; but what image has ever been able to keep the river?" he replied.

Any book is a pale projection of God's book in progress. Of the book to be made, the horizon is the first line.

"Ts it not strange," said Reb Mansour, "that the book to be copied is always the book to be written? "Did the Book of books perhaps issue from all potential books? "Then the accomplishment of the first book would be contained in the last. God is the book in the space to be filled by the future book. He is its infinite construction.

"At the end of time, His books and ours would be one and the same completed book."

And he added: "It is our works which require the most erasing."

And again: "The All is faced by the Nothing which will engulf it."

"Ah, the last book is perhaps only the trace of a book in which God wanted to be visible.

"Likewise the point.

"Then all our knowlege would tend toward a point's victory over death. But is God, who is the Knowing of Knowing, not also the death of death, white point in a white abyss, pellucid?"

There are degrees, sometimes imperceptible, within resemblance. For instance, the likeness of white to white, of also-white to bone-white, of the absent book to the book of all our absences.

"You are repeating yourself. You always talk of the same thing. You've gotten old," said Reb Saman to Reb Yoffé.

"Indeed I always say the same thing. But is a moment the moment after?

"Another man, come out of me, always says what I had said a long time ago. This is my way of surviving through my few words of truth," he replied.

The Game of God

("Could it be that the place for the spirit, which God promised man, 1s really a place promised to the wandering question, hence the place of the question—of the book?" asked Reb Barda.

"That place is my head," replied Reb Kalef, "and my head is, like my people, a land without land."

"In any place, God is the place of my soul," he said. They realized that after losing their land they had become strangers to themselves; and their worry hit on the anguishing question which words would from now on supplant theirs?

"Any word is the word of a place. Is even a non-place a place of words?" "Absence of words does not at all mean an absent word. Is God, who is sovereign voice, not a full word in the vested silence of the void?"

"Only the fallible word can be heard."

And man said: "What name will now be Yours, You, whose name is that of all our vanished names?"

And God said: "The deafening name of My vanishing.")

God is named where the universe loses its name, where man has lost God, and God, man.

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"There would still be the name in collusion with the Name, and the book descended from the Book, on the other side of absence, at the timid return of day," he said.

"What difference is there beween silence for you and noise for a deaf man?" Reb Hacohen asked Reb Abravanel.

"The difference between dawn and dusk, the radical difference between silence stealing in and encrusted silence."

"Noise is the brutal challenge of a silence that I cannot perceive, as a grain of sand in its freedom can cause indescribable trouble for the desert," said Reb Safir elsewhere. And added: "God's silence caves in and crumbles where I speak."

Every sound is unknown sound augmented.

"Death may never quite win out over death. God relies on His unlikeness to Himself, leaving the field wide open for the boldest speculations on His likeness to Everything and, at the heart of Everything, His likeness to Nothing," wrote Reb Piha.

Any letter is the ultimate letter getting lost in its perceptible black reproduction.

Reb Raccah wrote:

To the man who asks Him about the place of the book, God replies: You shall go through the book as a mountain spring goes through a river.

From now on, there will be two banks where I have spoken.

There will be trees on both sides of My word and, in My word, all the sand left from My deserts.

To the man who asks Him about being tied to the book, God replies:

Where My word of absence spreads unchallenged, your word will baffle the dark forces of the universe, just as I mastered creation by balancing its destructive forces.

To the man who asks Him about rest in the book, God replies:

May your voice reach the end of all words and thence hoist itself up to My silence; for it, too, I created the seventh day.

(Everything seems in place and, suddenly, nothing holds us. How much longer, ah, down to which buried milestone, will we build on our ruins? And on the ruins of our counted ruins?

One word from somebody or other, one unexpected gesture, and already we do not recognize ourselves.)

I thought I recognized Yaél, but it was not really her; and yet... I thought I recognized Sarah, then Yukel and even, through their fabulous story, Elya and Aely; story of dead letters within the four letters of their name.

If it is not them, who are they? If it is not their book I am leafing through, what book is it? Resemblance is a brief harmony of the infinite.

(You resemble what resembles you for the time of resembling. No image is eternal.

God's eternity is absence of image.)

He said: "The space between two mirrors is perhaps the reflected void of death and the book." He said: "The space reflected between two words is perhaps the void of death and the book."

He said: "The water of transparency is precious dew. "We shall take on the whiteness of our thirst."

Paris does not know us, although it is in this city that the book opens and has closed, although it is here that the words we exchanged have been engraved.

Which book of the collective scream will one day be yours, Sarah, where you are no more? Which book of liberated words will one day be yours, Yaél, where you are no more?

Which book of revolt and distress will one day be yours, Yukel, where you are no more? The book of resemblance remains to be written.

("Unity is dead. I write to keep the words separate so that they should live in spite of the book and in spite of God who is word upon word and book upon book.

"Legibility is a human invention for the benefit of humans.

"God is illegible unity," said Reb Anas.

And he also said: "We are the separation within God, the reading of the entire reading made practical.

"Could it be that writing is in the end only our aptitude for disentangling words like hair to Jind where it parts?

"Ah, let us leave the words to their games of passion. It is in the space of their wounds that they speak to us.

"Reading is the deciphering of wounds."

To this Reb Benhaim replied, not without humor:

"Sometimes it ts through our most modest inventions that we can elucidate the mystery of God. The invention of the comb 1s one of them.

"Could learning to write just mean learning somehow to use a comb?")

I write with resembling words in the resemblance of the book.

("The metamorphosis of the world which is a tested rule of conduct is also the mood of the moment," he said.)

There is no continuity in time.

(Innumerability of God. All reference to the universe goes through the innumerable.)

The book was still hanging—as by a hair?—by a point.

"You tried to tarnish the point."

"The point was the object of my temptation."

"Then you turned away from temptation."

"In my renunciation, I encountered the point."

"Have you forgotten the point?"

"The point is the star of oblivion. The night of the book is the night of a single star."

"Have you noticed," said Reb Assued, "that the full stop is the sun of the book? The other punctuation marks are only its shadow, just as word and book are only the universe it contains."

Fertile forgetting. We shall warm ourselves in forgetfulness where the book obeys a book it does not remember.

In front of Notre-Dame, a blind man sells postcards to the tourists come to see the cathedral:

colored views of Paris.

I believe that every exile is this merchant's brother. A place we can no longer see ceases to be ours. An exile is a blind man without territory. Turned in on himself, packed off to the bottom of his soul, his skin is his border. It tans in the sun and in winter allows the cold to penetrate.

He follows two parallel paths: his memory's and his feet's. It happens that his feet betray him;

his memory, never.

Where does the blind man go? From his apartment to the famous Square and from the Square back to his humble dwelling. The same route three times a day. But can we be sure we are well enough informed about the small details of his itinerary?

He breaks—as if his soul had migrated into a different body—with the alienating ritual of the usual path in order to cleave seasons and continents at the precise predetermined hours when the land which ejects him is in turn struggling with its bloody mutations.

(Lives akin, books akin, Death is without ties.

Engrams perturb death, for only the brain can oppose the void by opposing to its lack of traces the indestructible trace of a formative event perceived by the individual.

Death hounds oblivion. Oblivion is the quick of death. Oblivion is also the thought of death where nothing is left to be thought or to think. a kind of thoughtless thought, like a blighted ear of wheat by the roadside.

“Oblivion is the road of death,” he said, “and not the death of the road. Oblivion is duration where nothing endures.”

A resilient work whose resilience 1s measured, as with metal, by its shock absorption, but in the work itself, in each of its parts.

To resort to the kinetic energy needed to cause breaking, and control it. To be this energy.

“All along its pages,” he said, “a book is nothing but repeated breakage.

“The word is set in shards.”

“The broken tablets remain the unchallenged model of the book,” wrote Reb Ezri, “for every line of writing is shards promised to legibility.”

A book is always breaking the imitated, inimitable book.

“You shall not break the book in anger,” wrote Reb Chemoul, “but in love. For it is in tts breaking that it opens to the divine Word.”

“No need to break the book,” replied Reb Haggai. “It is already broken. Writing only con- Jirms the cracks, explains and interprets them for you.”

“Solidarity among Jews,” wrote Reb Koufy, “ts based on respect for solitude. “We are a multitude of solitudes and the solitude of this multitude.”

“Every sentence in our books,” said Reb Layani, “is an infinite, solitary line. We live and die between those lines.”

And he added: “We have a sentence for our sky, a sentence for our soil, but we are neither on earth nor in heaven.”

Reb Malah reacted in these terms: “Our solitude is a beam prized for its strength. Floorboards are nailed in from above, the ceiling lath from below. But who will furnish the joists?

“Our sky ts below.”)

“Never forget that you are writing on the smooth skin shed by a serpent,” he said.

Life by life. Death by death. Word by word.

(“Night, he said, is a point pierced by dark; day, a point pierced by light. Oblivion bleeds.

“There is no future for the book except in forgetting the book.

“Thus we are driven to write without interruption. For our pulse beats in unison with words struggling in the holes of their memories,” he added.

“Writing begins and ends in oblivion.

“The book is oblivion’s itinerary,” he had noted on top of the page, and at the bottom: “God Sorgets God where He conceives Himself.”)

Forgetting the left page resembles forgetting the right page. Thus the book unfolds in immemorable resemblance.

The Games of Man

"This really is your oval face, Yaél. It is your eyes, their matchless soft black and their cruel blue—cruel when they soften, soft when they try for cruelty. It is your nose, your mouth, it is your hair, soft and silky as if resonant with silence, it is your shapely body."

"It is me, yes, but is it me? It is me, yes, but did I ever exist? How can I resemble a woman who is not, and yet indubitably be that woman? I am Yaél in as far as I am the plaything of her absence, the double of an imaginary creature imagined anew with my features, resuscitated, haggard, in the labyrinth of unsurmounted absence."'

"This really is your deep voice, Yukel, your lined forehead, It is your skinny hands and tapered fingers, your eyes vague and sad, yet charged with such desire to live and love that they sometimes seem like embers. It is your way of looking, rich with all the looks you've reined in, all the books you've read. It is your tired laugh and your slow walk. It is you, narrator of my works, victim of your narration, an open wound—ours—in the empty breach, like the cleft of a woman in labor, a mother's dark cleft, as if indeed the blood still running down her legs came from pushing you out of her seeded womb, out of a perfect world, intending you for a different one, the world of the word to be born of your birth.

"Yukel, is it really you? Then it is me also, and everything has to start over, be lived again, but where, under which horizon, in which generous corner of the earth, on which suspicious and willing page of a book to be composed?

"It is you, Sarah, amid your mad screams which only death could smother. Your silence today is the silence of all our screams held back for a while. It is you, I recognize you not just by your young face worked over by hell, not just by your aimless smile, your eyes red with weeping, but above all by your lips which keep murmuring as if forever repeating Yukel's name without face, without even the hope of a face.

"O Sarah, how beautiful you were and still are, even if no longer the same, even if you are another person and, perhaps, the mere image of another who in other times could have been the Sarah you incarnate without knowing too well what she expects from you nor what you expect from her, without knowing if you owe your existence to the spacious book in which you once stopped beyond death for love of Yukel, for your love, for ours, when there was no love anywhere on earth, when there was everywhere so much hate to quench, so much crime to commit.

"Sarah, shivering in your winters of fever, no sunshine on your ardent youth. Nestled in Yukel's shadow, it was a short—so very short—while that your bodies spoke to each other, yet to your last breath, the words from this voluptuous harmony never stopped shaking you from neck to toe. Alone, your head wavered, is wavering still, a mist glowing at night, a float adrift.

"If it is you, Sarah, then I must also be dead or so ideally, so intimately like your lover that nothing separates us anymore. I died with him, and he lives by my death. He occupies my apartment, my room. He reads my mail, he sits down at my table, he takes my pen, he assembles my words and writes my book.

"And it is you, the old Jewish tailor in the rue de Pontoise, next to your bent, inconsolable wife. It is you, couple feeding on your pain, left alive, ironically, prey to the atrocious sight of the ovens where your children were thrown. But if it is you, why is it you don't seem to recognize me, don't come out of the halflight of your shop with the peeling walls? Why won't your eyes take in the shabby suits to redo for your customers with slender means, why can your numb hands no longer sew?

"It is all of you, but you're probably so absent inside your own absence that you need a long time to answer to my appeal, as if in this space of time a riddle could be solved, a name be known, but in the way that silence gains ground by irreversibly unfolding silence.

"Everything is out of phase where likeness emerges. Being is not being, things are not things, the book is not the book."

(He said: "Forgetting follows forgetting as light follows the dark. "The stars are forever rehashing one and the same word. We talk in the night."

"One evening, I saw the city lights glimmer in the sea and, greatly moved, read the same book there," Yukel had written.)

Nathaniel Tarn

On Paul Celan

Survolant Celan: Quelques sursauts sociologiques supplémentaires au sujet de ACTS 8/9

Translating Tradition: Paul Celan in France Edited by Benjamin Hollander (San Francisco: ACTS: A Journal of New Writing, 1988)

1] Adorno's view that, after the unspeakable, no poetry can anymore be spoken; that it is, literally, unspeakable—fought lifelong by Celan. After Babel, language being the only place where we are or are likely to be, where anyone is or can be—but, precisely, m or on Babel. All communication perforce linguistic, thus ipso facto deficient; even the paralinguistic does not survive the doubt. How then shall language be spoken, after Adorno, where nothing else can be spoken? Language then to be taken from its usual site and placed elsewhere, allegorized, translated, so that it can still, if only at the zenith, be heard. An unspoken language heard, extracted in toto, from the stone of silence, that tongue sticking out, not speaking but the smoking air hearing it. Care that there should be someone to hear—Shemah—far more than that anything should be spoken: if not turn aside and break the Tables. All bastions of I collapse; You still stand to hear there, or float. Steiner's "all Celan's poems are translated into German." Yes, as long as all German is translated into Your ear, listening to the silence of German. Ears of dead smoke in air more live than silence of German and ready to speak. Where else has the God-Aweful Jew ever been?

2] Hollander: Bukovina's "'refined, middle-class German-Jewish culture" (2). A Jewish nightmare not all that well known to outsiders: the particular horror of Holocaust to German Jews who, before the Fall of German, had snubbed all other Jews for not being German. And may still do, somewheres.

3] Dangers of snubbery on Mt. Babel. Horror-struck to stone though we are by Holocaust, is this matter of the "butcher's language"' so unique? All Native Americans speak the butcher's language; all Native Australians; all Afroamericans, ad infinitum. Milder: minute nations make poems for translation such that many nativisms make art for airports only. No mystifications of this needed in nether nether lands.

. 4] Silencing of the word in minimalist directions. The more you charge the less with moving You, the greater the loss of-the more in that cardinal of silence. A suggestion: no minimalists save ex infernos, Portentousness the minimalist sin.

Down from Mallarmé, French, Celan's sinecure, addicted to minus. Celan's turn against Char not for being later than Resistance but for this "self-centered celebration'"'? (184). Béschenstein, again, on du Bouchet: "all valences drown in a neutralizing extinction of the individual voice, even where this still says 'I'" (194) "'so that we neither can nor must look for a key to his texts: they are no longer written out of the tension of a meaning to be deciphered—a tension Celan maintained to the end." (196). Of this whole lineage Celan lived by, only Michaux seems to endure for him, Michaux who took "'language to task for lacking penury. But those who expressly seek it there lapse into artifice' (186): '"'Séparé de la separation / je vis dans un immense ensemble" (187) and "*... et le monde effroyable et immense de la souffrance jamais loin, qui ferme la bouche a tout le reste" (186). After C. who gives a D for Ds and tutti quanti? Silence certainly cannot. Except for M1 to M2. Silence is not saying less.

5] Heidegger, in this hell, a minimalist philosopher? On the whole, writers in ACTS still salute uncompromised Heidegger. But: Pierre Bourdieu: L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger, Ed. de Minuit ([1975] 1988): H. as only getting away with the expression of Volkisch ideology in minimalist language because it is phrased in an elite dialect which cannot be challenged by any other code, philosophy being both Crown of Academe sociologically and the Metacode of all Codes in the Realm of Discourse. Joel Golb, perhaps the only academic in the ACTS issue who is aware of this—in a dazzling analysis of the poem Huhediblu from Die Niemandsrose. He sees the poem as a comment "not only on the fallen status of all poetic discourse... but more specifically on the relation of this 'date' (i.e., 9.1.1939, Nazi invasion of Poland) to the modern, ideologically-tainted history of Hölderlin interpretation—as well as... to Celan's own late, postmodern role, along with Heidegger and Blanchot, in carrying forward this tradition in Paris, while trying to bring it to an end" (our italics), (179). See also Critical Quarterly (v. 15, no. 2): "Special Feature on Heidegger and Nazism." Supplement Blanchot in ACTS (228-239) — that same Blanchot tagged by Golb as "a propagandist for the French right"

before the Occupation (180)—with Blanchot in Cntical Quarterly: "Allow me after what I have to say next to leave you, as a means to emphasize that Heidegger's irreparable fault lies in his silence concerning the Final Solution. This silence, or his refusal, when confronted by Paul Celan, to ask forgiveness for the unforgivable, was a denial that plunged Celan into despair and made him ill, for Celan knew that the Shoah was the revelation of the essence of the West" (479).

6] The codes: Golb again: "C.'s language repeatedly flees from its own linguistic matrix, estranging itself into an idiom that both pays tradition its due and strives for an ideally complete break"' (173). Bringing several languages into his own

German so that it should have friends and the old German be deleted, say by the key ‘‘backspace.’’ This bonding of the bottles thrown out to sea in one glass to land on the shores of the heart perhaps: “‘an Herzland vielleicht.'’ Push of all forms of ambivalence to their uttermost states to secure shots of ‘‘the spectral analysis of things,” no dream but a reality made of “‘unabashed ambiguity”’; “overlapping relationships’; ‘‘conceptual overlay.”

Overall, looking at the corpus of Celan’s translations will help spot C.’s idiosyncratic terms of speech more directly perhaps than by looking at his own poems (Olschner: 70; Felstiner: 109; Wortman 136). Various academic experts show the value of this working model: Felstiner, Wortman and Blue on Emily Dickinson; Bernhard Béschenstein on Daive and French from Char to Dupin. In much less space, and demonstrating that “‘not much cackle is needed” (122) two poets—Kelly with Celan via Marianne Moore and Joris with Celan via Artaud—show deictically and impressively what can be done here.

Now compare the Spicer (ACTS 6) and Celan issues. Celan has, to a great extent, already suffered his way down the academic maw; Spicer has not: the Spicer issue is the saucier for it. The following remarks because ACTS is by far the most serious, thoughtful and valuable of the younger magazines something outside of the “Language” community and one which can only go from strength to strength. The academic code-juggling merry-go-round is interminable. Scholar X or Y presents his/her vision of what C.’s interpretation of poet A does to his translation of her/his poem. But, scholars X and Y differ in their interpretations of the poem in question and, in turn, differ from all other scholars, then differ about the translation. One seems to feel that C. almost improves on Dickinson (113- 118); another (admittedly dealing with different poems) thinks C. is ‘‘domesticating’’ her (136). We hear at great length not only about compound word coinages (frequent in the old German) but also radical compressions and displacements (perhaps less available in the fallen tongue): the stuff of most studies of translation. While aware of the subtitle, it seems unfortunate that we are not given something on translations of Celan into English. Despite the pieces by Bonnefoy, Huppert, Cioran and Jabés, we get only the most tenuous of holds on C.’s life and death here. In that respect, Jerry Glenn’s Celan in the Twayne series seems well worth checking out.

7] The Celan-industry maw has been German for the most part and expands at light speed. It happens I have French, alas not German: less there, but some (sometimes from German into French) most worthy supplement.

E.G., Contre-jour: Etudes sur Paul Celan, Colloque de Cerisy, Martine Broda, ed., Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1986:

A] Beda Allemann: Problems relating to concordance in a complete Celan: comprehending first, out of chaos, a catalogue of particles of C.'s material world (Wéltmaterialen). This close look at the realia infrastructures reminds me of Gadamer's study, partly translated in Michel Deguy's magazine Po@sie (no. 36, Paris 1986) and worth knowing, not to mention a great deal more on Celan throughout the magazine's career.

B] Martine Broda: La Legon de Mandelstam: Mandelstam as an emblem of Judaicity for C. and the amicus par excellence of these and future times; implications of C.'s translation of "no-one" (Niemand) from an absence into a presence, a negative into a positive; on exile as dialogue and the bringing into being of the Thou—the end of monologic Romanticism, as in: "Es gab sich Dir in die Hand: / Ein Du, todlos, / an dem alles Ich zu sich kam..." ('He offered himself to You in the hand: / a You, without death, / beside whom all the I returned to itself.")

C] Renate Béschenstein: on possible sources in Freud, Novalis, Nerval, Keller, Kafka, Breton. Early poems constantly speak of dream, never reveal their content, are never "'contented."' Terror of self-betrayal by dream under tyranny (conscience must never fall asleep) and the growing cancer of anxiety (cf. C. H. Beradt: Das Dnitte Reich des Traums, Frankfurt, 1981). Escape from dilemma of dreamer unable to dream by i) concentrating on the moment of waking (cf. W. Benjamin: Das Passagenwerk, Frankfurt, 1983, 580: 'utilization of dream elements at the moment of waking is the canon of Dialectic") with resulting apparent '""incoherence" and wide semantic gaps; ii) by translation of dream structures into poetic structures (cf. T. Todorov: La rhétorique de Freud in Théorie du symbole, Paris, 1977, & E. Benveniste: Remarques sur la fonction du langage dans la découverte freudienne in Problémes de Linguistique Générale, Paris, 1960), Implications for word-play, metonymy and allegory in Celan.

D] John Felstiner: Hebrew words in Celan denoting

' what cannot, at any price, go into German (and, therefore, into any other language). Hebrew as the root, Ursprache, original language of the kabbalists, discovered by C. to be utterly his, however hard it cost him to use it. (Radix, Matrix: "Root of Abraham. Root of Jesse. Root / of no one — o/ ours"). That which remains, above persecution and triumphant in the State, against neo-Nazism, against his own anguish and Tsvetaeva's, Mandelstam's, Nelly Sachs's. "Perhaps I am one of the last who must live out to the end the fate of Jewish spirituality in Europe" (letter of 1948 in Zeitschrift fiir Kulturaustausch, 3, 1982). He cannot stay in Israel (cf. Address to the Hebrew Writers' Association, Tel Aviv, 1969 in Collected Prose, R. Waldrop, tr., Manchester, 1986), needs all the tension of Diaspora even though, only in Eretz, could the paternal tongue assume the

intimacy of a maternal one. Search for a light, Ziv, that can embrace mother; Rachel & all sisters; Shekhinah, collective she whom Celan has caused to wait for him ("'dich / lieB ich warten, / dich": "'Almond-like, you who only half spoke, / still shaken from the bud, / you / I left waiting / you." in Last Poems, Washburn & Guillemin, trs., San Francisco, 1986, 177).

Only half the book, but, already, we are told so much. The Felstiner piece: I have read little recently by a Jewish critic on a Jewish poet more perceptive and more moving than this.

8] When all is said and done, Celan did not suffer lack of recognition, that plague of most "'difficult poets": two of the highest prizes that can be granted to a poet writing in German were his (he doubted them, of course) and his work had been studied in Germany before he died. There was more. Richness of Sartre on poetic "'suicide"' in his unfinished Mallarmé: la lucidité et sa face d'ombre, Paris, 1986. After M1, poets get more and more serious about God's demise. Everyone wants to be dead—everyone vies with everyone else as to who can be more dead than he. Salt gets lost from poesy, hangs out in science only. M1 achieves greatness by being the most dead of all, by living death more than in dying until dying itself: he is the archdead, the real dead, the honest to goodness fried-fish dead, the maestro of absence: / 'absente de tous bouquets that tricks all presénces into surrounding her void. And "'not for one instant does M1 doubt that the human species, if he were to kill himself, would come to die entirely in him; that this suicide would be a genocide"' (155)—with extraordinary implications for the Holocaust child who died the hard death in his body: let's see elsewhere. The greatest difference of all, however, is between God being dead and not being dead but unable to be said. Weight of history as language minus the which there is no memory (cf. Jack Marshall's excellent review of ACTS 8/9 in Poetry Flash, Jan. 1989). Translation from the past obliterates forgetting so that time cannot comfort but only slowly kill. That is the silence smoke listens to—ready to speak.

9] On the "obscurity" of Celan. Certainly Primo Levi (Survival in Auschwitz, New York, 1969) shows how linguistic violence, yet again in history, is almost unsurvivable in camps: not designed as communication but as extermination—and how obscurity has always been an instrument of political oppression. From there to speak more clearly, most clearly, and of Celan's defeat? Hard to say. Some have only silence to swim to. Most have most places. Often, the dues simply cannot be paid. Much obscurity may be the cheapest drug of all.

10] Suddenly, out of Muttersprache and for no rhyme or reason, after, what, fifty years, the name of Iasi as the rootplace, the mother-root. Moldavia, not Bukovina, but close. It could have been in the sixties, both for C. and M2, had there been world enough and time—and less fear. What is the date of page 15 here? That head

bent forward, the tentative lift of those eyes: "'Ailleurs, bien loin d'ici! trop tard! jamais peut-étre!""

Gratitude to ACTS for a beautifully and bountifully produced symposium.

Nathaniel Tarn "Russkij poet in partibus nemetskich infidelium,"' 03.08.89.

David Rattray

The Pindaric Fragments of Friedrich Hölderlin

Friedrich Hölderlin

‘Many works of the Ancients have

become fragments. Many works of

the Moderns are fragments the

moment they come into being.’
FRIEDRICH SCHLEGEL (1798)

TO HÖLDERLIN, PINDAR WAS THE SUPREME POET, the highest model one could aspire to follow. When the centuries changed, from 1799 to 1800, he abandoned the classical meters for free verse—the bound for the boundless—via a translation of 17 odes by Pindar. Two years later, while working on the Antigone of Sophocles for a publisher who had just issued his translation of Oedipus, Hölderlin returned to Pindar, but this time to the back-matter as it were, the Fragments, of which there were about two hundred. Fewer than a dozen of these short meditations on randomly chosen kernel-texts survive. I. A. Richards says somewhere that a book is a machine to think with. Work on the Pindaric fragments actually began one year after Hölderlin was hit by lightning on a mountain in France, and a strange philosophic afterglow filled the window of his room in Germany. He jotted down an insight: Fire = Tragedy. His “‘Note on Oedipus” was to enlarge on that: ‘The representation of the tragic consists primarily in that the monstrous fact that the divine and the human commingle and the power of nature and man’s innermost self become one in boundless rage may be grasped as a boundless tendency to oneness purging itself through boundless separation.” The pyrotechnic rarifies to the etheric, the heroic to the ideal, rajas to sattva. At the turn of the century, he’d done the 17 victory odes into an idiom neither German nor Greek—German words in pseudo-Greek word-order chosen for their correspondences of sound, gender, number, and so forth. 150 years before, Cowley had said that if anybody ever attempted this with Pindar it would sound like one madman translating another. Starting with Pindar’s First Olympian in 1799:
First Thing is Water of course; like Gold,
Fire flaring

Flashes in the Night, a

Gift from Pluto.

You're here, though, dear Heart,

To sing of Victory

And search no shining Face

Of fresher glow

Than noonday Sun

Solo in Ether...

Water = naive tone = Epic
According to H.: Fire = heroic tone = Tragic
Ether = ideal tone = Hymnic

So Pindar is naming the First Philosophers' First Principles:

Water (Thales) _[ef. Beissner,
Fire (Heraclitus) Sieburth, Adorno,
Ether (Anaximander) Kenner, Weinberger]

To make it work, Hölderlin turns Pindar's "Water is Best" line into "First Thing is Water of course"'
= seven syllables as in the original,

Ariston men to hudor = Das erste is wohl das Wasser

so that the words erste ("first") and ariston as well as the word-order in both lines approximate a perfect
match. Also Pindar actually wrote that "Gold like fire shines by night." This, however, Hölderlin reverses,

the better to illustrate a shining Heraclitean darkness.

Soon it will be exactly 200 years since Hölderlin was the first to jump the whole way into the nonlinear— that is, from the central-nervous mode into a nerve-net mode encompassing the fleeting whims of time like a self-propelled butterfly net. His discovery is the air we breathe. Each of these Pindaric fragments is a hologram, a chunk of shadow bonded with light. Note the urgent union of two pressures, systolic, diastolic,
concentration and release; also, the present tense—in a space of extinct thoughts and actions—listening for
an as yet unimaginable machine that will set forth the grammar of the Millennium.

New York, 1988

The Faithlessness of Wisdom

Have a mind like the hide
of a rock-clinging octopus, my son.

Boost each city you are in, and

speak kindly of whatever is in front of you.

Then think another way another time. Fitness of the lonesome school for the world. The innocence of pure science as the soul of discretion. For discretion is the art of keeping faith under varying circumstances, science the art of being reliable in one's use of one's reason in spite of positive errors. When the reason is intensively exercised, it maintains its power even among the distracted; if it easily recognizes the alien by virtue of its own fine-honed acuteness, it is all the less easily led astray in situations of uncertainty. Thus Jason, a pupil of the Centaur, confronted Pelias:
I believe I do have

Chiron's lore, for I come from the Centaur's

cave where his holy daughters

and wife and mother Chariclo and Philyra

raised me. Twenty years, though,

in which I never said or did them dirt

I spent in there

and come home now

to reclaim my father's kingship.

Of Truth

Mover of grand virtue, Queen Truth,
don't let my thinking run
into a rough lie.

Fear of truth because it gives pleasure. That is to say, the first vivid apprehension of it in the vivid sense is, like every pure feeling, prone to confusion; so that one errs out of no fault of one's own, or disturbance, either, but on account of the higher object, for which, in proportion
to it, sense is too weak.

Of Peace

Let any who can calm the commons

discover the light-filled holiness of manly peace
and let him check that mutinous

hurricane in his heart. It

makes for woe, wars

on the educators of the young.

Before the laws (which are the light-filled holiness of manly peace) can be discovered, someone, a lawgiver or a prince, in line with a nation's particular destiny, whether precipitous or stable, and the degree of existing popular receptivity, must tranquilly apprehend the character of that destiny, whether it incline to a monarchy or a commonwealth in people's relations, to usurpation as the
Greek sons of nature were wont to do, or to custom as among educated folk. For
the laws are
the means of fixing that destiny in its tranquility. What originally applied to the
prince applies by

. imitation to the true citizen.

Of The Dolphin

of the dolphin
whom an irresistible piping of flutes made dance
in the ocean's motionless deep

Nature sings in the Muses' weather as clouds float by like fluff over a budding glaze of golden petals and at such a moment each living thing strikes up its own tune in fidelity to itself and its integrity. Only the differences in species make for division in Nature, so that the whole is more song and pure voice than accent of necessity or, conversely, speech.
It is the motionless deep where the Tritons' pipe echoes sap rising in the water's
tender flora to
stimulate this mutable fish.

The Supreme

Law,

Lord of mortals and

immortals all, which executes
with omnipotent

vigor the most righteous justice.

Rigorously speaking, the immediate is impossible for both mortals and immortals. The god must distinguish between worlds in accordance with divine nature. Heavenly grace means unadulterated holiness. A human acting as a cognitive subject must also distinguish between worlds because cognition is possible only through opposition. Hence, rigorously speaking, the immediate is impossible for both mortals and immortals.
However, rigorous indirection is the law.
Therefore it executes with omnipotent vigor the most righteous justice.

Discipline, as far as it represents that imago wherein each, whether man or god, comes face to face with himself, the law of church and state, and inherited rules (the holiness of a god, and, for humans, the possibility of a cognition, a flash of insight) all execute with omnipotent vigor the most righteous justice; more rigorous than art, they make permanent the viable conditions under which a nation has ever come face to face with itself and continues to do so. "'Lord" here stands for the superlative degree, which is merely the sign for the deepest ground of cognition, not for supreme power.
Age

If a man lives right
and fears God

sweet Hope goes with him,
warming his heart, and
gives him long life, being a
mainstay

of changeful mortal purpose.

One of the loveliest images of living: how guiltless morals keep the heart lively, and then there is
Hope; and this in turn imparts to simplicity a flowering-time for complex
endeavors, and makes
the mind changeful, thus lengthening life by dint of the deliberation of alacrity.

The Infinite

Whether to scale the lofty battlement of justice
or that of humped deceit

and so overstep my own boundaries

is a thing I am of two minds

about going into precise details on.

The sage will have his jest; one might almost say the riddle ought not be solved. The wavering, the struggle between justice and common sense can be resolved only on a continuum, "'a thing I am of two minds about going into precise details on." That I should then uncover the link between justice and common sense, itself ascribable to neither of the latter but to a third factor by means of which they are connected by infinitely precise detail (the infinite) is a thing I am of two minds about.

The Asylums

First the celestial Seasons
whisked prudent Themis

on golden steeds

up and away past Ocean's salt
to Olympus'

ladder of holy ascent and
sparkling return, to be

Savior Zeus's

eldest girl,

but she gave birth and her offspring were
goodly gold-filleted
sparkling-fruited sanctuaries.

Sit as a man may (if, owing to a thirst for perfection, his mind found no peace on earth or in heaven until, face to face with his own destiny, the god and man knew himself anew by the marks of old discipline) in the memory of primal misery a son of Themis gladly stays wherever
he can.

Themis, that lover of order, has given birth to the asylums of man, his silent retreats which no alien thing can harm, for the action and vitality of nature were

concentrated in them, and whoever intuits their existence learns (as if through remembrance) what they learned long ago.
The Enlivener

Once the Centaurs discovered the
man-mastering

violence

of the honey-sweet wine

they shoved away

the white milk and the table
with their hands, and

guzzling uninvited from the silver horns
drank themselves silly.

The concept "centaurs" is surely that of the spirit of a stream, in that the latter
makes for itself
a path and a boundary by doing violence to the pathless primeval flowering Earth.

This is why the centaur image occurs in those localities where a riverbank is rich in rockfaces and caves, especially in spots where the primeval stream ought to leave the mountain chain, obliquely ripping out a path for itself. On that account, centaurs are also the originators of the natural sciences, for in the light of such primeval violence nature is most readily understandable.

In such regions, the stream must originally have meandered in oxbows before tearing open a straight path for itself. That is how wetlands and underground mammal dens like the ones next to ponds were formed. In those times, the centaur was a savage shepherd, like Cyclops in the Odyssey. The flooding water swelled with longing to discover a direction of its own. However, the more solid the dry land became on either bank, taking its orientation from securely rooted trees, shrubs, and vines, the more the stream, set in motion by the configuration of the bank, had to acquire its direction and, impelled by its very wellspring, break through at the weakest point in the mountain wall hemming it in.

Once the centaurs discovered the violence of the honey-sweet wine, they took their motion and direction from the solid, thickly forested bank. And shoved away the white milk and table with their hands, the cresting wave did violence to the peaceful pond. Also, the whole way of life on the riverbank underwent a change. The invasion of the wild woods, with the first settlers—those lords of the forest, raiders and reivers, in their lairs—threw the lazy life of the open heath into an uproar. The steep bluff held the stagnant flood water in check, till it grew arms,

and so, on its own, guzzling uninvited from the silver horns, made itself a path, acquired a destination.

The Poems of Ossian are, in particular, genuine Centaur poetry sung with the spirit
of the stream

and as though by the Greek Chiron, who taught Achilles how to play the lyre.

Stanley Lombardo

Technopaegnia: Hellenistic Pattern Poetry

fostered by Callimachus and other poets was a shift in emphasis from the spoken to the written aspect of poetry. The most dramatic manifestation of this reorientation is the appearance, for the first time in Greek literature, of visual poetry, specifically the pattern-poems known as technopaegnia (techno—art, craft; paegn—play). There survive the technopaegnia of three poets—Simmias, Dosiadas and Theocritus—five poems written in the shape of wings, an axe, an egg, a syrinx and an altar—all dated to the 3rd and 2nd c. B.c. They stand at the beginning of a long tradition of visual, concrete, or pattern poetry in various European languages. I offer here translations of these five poems in verse that reproduces the patterns of the original texts and brief comments on the literary consciousness implicit in the production of such linguistic artifacts.

. MAJOR PART OF THE LITERARY REVOLUTION in the Hellenistic period (300 8.c.—100 B.c.)

We can begin with "Wings,"' one of three technopaegnia by Simmias of Rhodes (c. 300 B.c.), a poet and grammarian of whose work little survives.

Wings

Regard me: master of deep-bosomed Earth, unseater of Thunderbolt's son,
Nor shudder at the beard shagging the chin of one so small.

For I was born when Necessity still was queen

And all kept aloof in dismal mood,

All that crept or flew

Through thin air

Or through Chaos.

No child of Cypris nor

Wingswift son of her and Ares am I,

Nor got I rule by force but by mild persuasion.

Yet Earth yielded to me, and Seas' nooks and Sky's brass dome.
And I went off with their primordial scepter, and made laws for gods.

This was written to be inscribed on the wings of a statue of a bearded Eros, but also to be reproduced as a written text on a page (the evidence is fairly clear on both points). The poem is made to conform in shape to the plastic artifact which is its matrix and referent, and to represent the referent's shape as a visual poem. The metrical structure of the verse, two strophes of choriambic lines (a choriamb is two unstressed followed by two stressed syllables) that diminish and then augment to their original length, is unparalleled in Greek poetry and is entirely determined by the exigencies of the artificial form. The translation reproduces the original's relative line lengths, enjambments and general metrical structure, using an accentual iambic base with trochaic inversions to approximate the Greek quantitative choriambics. The poem does have an acoustic dimension—the lines read well to the ear accustomed to classical Greek meters—but the acoustic rhythm is subordinate to and a function of the poem's graphic delineation. The poem takes the original concept of epigram ("in-scription") to its ultimate logical form: the verse conforms to the object
'upon which it is inscribed. Short of asserting that an Aristotelian teleology is at
work in the evolu-
tion of poetic genres, how can we account for this development?

The same question can be asked of Simmias' "Axe," which closely resembles "Wings,"' and of his '"Egg," in which the conformation between poem and subject is even closer and which has the added dimension of being an involved, self-referential statement about its own genesis. In both these poems the lines are to be read symmetrically (first, last, second, second to last, etc.) rather
than consecutively. I print here versions in the original form and, to facilitate
reading, in consecu-
tive verse:

Axe

Man-goddess: a Phocian as final payment for your tough counsel, Athena, on that fire-breathing fateful day he set ablaze the sacred citadel Although not born to number in the Achaeans' front ranks, he now goes down the Homeric road Thrice blest the man whom this happiness —Glorious Simmias, Rhodian born, virtuoso versifier a steady wind. your smiling eyes embrace, by your grace, Pallas wise and pure. obscure siphoner of a trickle from the sparkling well-head of the Dardans and wrenched from their thrones gold-dipped lords. Epeius dedicates the axe he once used to topple god-wrought towers steep

- * * *

Man-goddess: a Phocian as final payment for your tough counsel, Athena,
Epeius dedicates the axe he once used to topple god-wrought towers steep on that
fire-breathing fateful day he set ablaze the sacred citadel
of the Dardans and wrenched from their thrones gold-dipped lords.
Although not born to number in the Achaeans' front ranks,

obscure siphoner of a trickle from the sparkling well-head

he now goes down the Homeric road

by your grace, Pallas wise and pure.

Thrice blest the man whom

your smiling eyes embrace,

this happiness

a steady wind.

— Glorious Simias, Rhodian born, virtuoso versifier

The axe for which this poem was an inscription was supposed to be the one with which Epeios, otherwise a minor hero, fashioned the Wooden Horse and so won glory. Epeios and his craft stand for the poet and his art. Simmias signs the handle of the axe, grafting together poem and axe, poet and craftsman, epigram and Homeric epos. The phrase '"'obscure siphoner of a trickle from the sparkling well-head" can be compared to Callimachus' line in the famous programmatic passage at the end of his "'Hymn to Apollo": "the trickling dew from a spring's holy height." Hellenistic poets represented themselves as derivative and slight, but discriminating and pure and, like Simmias, proud of their virtuosity,

Simmias' "Egg'"' was probably actually inscribed on an egg; it is his tour de force.

Egg

Twittering Dorian nightingale's Receive it propitiously, for the pure Hermes stentorian messenger of gods delivered it and ordered metrical expansion from monometer onwards Oh he quickly plumped the sharp-plunging slope of sporadic feet and slipping in limbs borrowed from glancing fawns sprung from high-stepping stags, the speed of their feet telegraphing them over hillcrests on the track of her perfect suckling, and then a sudden cruel carnivore's reception of their reverberation in the steadfastness of his den and so following the sound of their cries he hurtles through the shaggy valleys between snow-mantled peaks: On feet

this fleet the glorious god drove the work forward, orchestrating the web of the melody's measures. rockets him out of his rockbed lair wild with desire to catch the dappled mother's wayward progeny passing the bleat of the sheep herds in mountain pasture and the cave of slender-ankled nymphs, fawns who in immortal desire for their dear dam stream after her breath-taking nipples, striking up in his tracks a glimmering jazz tune, a Pierian pulsation, to peak at ten measures and keep current the rhythm's rule. to mortal tribes, having filched it from mother's wings shrill labor of a mother worked it round, and
subtle new textile:
maternal
-_ *= * *
Twittering
maternal
Dorian nightingale's
subtle new textile:

Receive it propitiously, for the pure

shrill labor of a mother worked it round, and

Hermes stentorian messenger of gods delivered it

to mortal tribes, having filched it from mother's wings

and ordered metrical expansion from monometer onwards

to peak at ten measures and keep current the rhythm's rule.

Oh he quickly plumped the sharp-plunging slope of sporadic feet

striking up in his tracks a glimmering jazz tune, a Pierian pulsation,

and slipping in limbs borrowed from glancing fawns sprung from high-stepping stags, fawns who in immortal desire for their dear dam stream after her breath-taking nipples, the speed of their feet telegraphing them over hillcrests on the track of her perfect suckling, passing the bleat of the sheep herds in mountain pasture and the cave of slender-ankled nymphs, and then a sudden cruel carnivore's reception of their reverberation in the steadfastness of his den rockets him out of his rockbed lair wild with desire to catch the dappled mother's wayward progeny
and so following the sound of their cries he hurtles through the shaggy valleys
between snow-mantled peaks:
On feet this fleet the glorious god drove the work forward, orchestrating the web
of the melody's measures.

“‘Egg’’ more amply justifies Simmias’ epithet ‘‘obscure siphoner’’ for the difficulty of its language, a dark Doric filled with rare words, massed phraseology and possible allusions lost to us. The poem refers to itself both as an “egg’’ and a “‘textile.’’’ The latter word, as translation, correctly suggests weaving as a metaphor for poetic text, but although the poem is highly textured it does not explicitly exploit this metaphor, being more concerned with ideas of maternity, genesis, and rapid incremental growth, ideas all appropriate te the metaphor of a poem as egg but developed in a matrix of sound. The metrical form progresses from monometer to decameter in a complex mixture of trochees, spondees, anapests, paeons and dactyls (the translator frankly wings it here). Hermes, a god notable for speed, linguistic ability and nurturing capacities (as with the infant Dionysos), orchestrates the poem’s development.

Theocritus’ ‘‘Syrinx’’’ and Dosiadas’ “Altar,” unlike Simmias’ three poems, were probably not actual inscriptions. Both of these poems are cast in riddling language and invite the reader to figure out the identity of the object represented by both the content and the shape of the verse.

Theocritus is the famous poet of the Jdylls. A syrinx is a Panspipe. The diminishing lines imitate the shape of a Panspipe as we usually picture it, but if A. S. F. Gow is right, the outer casing of Panspipes in Theocritus’ time (early 3rd c. B.c.) was rectangular. This has been taken as proof of later authorship, but it may be that Theocritus meant his poem to imitate the dynamics of a Panspipe rather than its shape. Syrinx

Nobody’s bedmate and marathon-warrior’s mother

bore the nimble herder of stone-changling’s nurse,

not the horned one once fed by bull-begotten,

but whose heart a not P-less Itys enflamed;

whose name is whole, who loved Merops,

a voice-born wind-maiden; who crafted

with a violet-crowned Muse a whistling

wound into love’s fire-reeded memorial;

who extinguished a manhood isonymous

with Perseus & exorcised a Tyrian’s;

to whom Simichidas Paris dedicated

this woe loved by the moleskin-clad:

O spirited and clay-treading

gadfly on Omphale settled,

thief-sired, non-sired,

- box-legged — an envoi:

lisp melodies sweet

to a mute maiden,

a Calliope

invisible.

Of Dodiadas, author of "'Altar,"' little is known. This poem was imitated by Besantinos in the 2nd
century A.D., and by George Herbert.

Altar

That male-attired woman's
husband, mortal twice young,
made me, not the ash-bedded son of Empousa doomed
by a Teucrian cowherd bred out of a she-bitch, but a
Chryse's beloved boy when the man-boiler
struck down the bronze-limbed watchman
whom a fatherless twi-bedded
maternal cast-off machined.
And, observing my structure,
the slayer of Theo-kritos who
set fire to the Three-Nighter
screamed bloody murder, in-
fected with poisonous venom
from a mortal-coil-shuffler.
And out of that wave-splattered exile
Pan's mother's bedfellow, a thief who
lived twice, with a cannibal's son, for his [lion-smashing
arrows brought him to Teucrian, thrice-plundered Troy.

In 'Altar' as in '"'Syrinx"' the contrast between the obvious visual shape of the poem and its enigmatic content is the controlling principle. The enigmas and periphrases in "'Syrinx'"' and "'Altar"' form a tissue of literary and mythological allusions in the manner of Lycophron's Alexandra (c. 300 B.c.), which sustains the style for over a thousand lines. This is a characteristically Hellenistic impulse: to

write a poem whose meaning is absolutely determined by the writer's and reader's knowledge of previous poetry, Providing glosses for such poetry would be wholly inappropriate.

What accounts for the fascination with the visual possibilities of verse in the Hellenistic period? Part of the answer is simply the new environment in which we find poets and poetry. Scholarpoets, working with and producing written texts in libraries, which is the Hellenistic norm—as against the earlier tradition of oral poetry designed for public performance—might be expected eventually to experiment, playfully (as the etymology of "technopaegnia"' suggests) or seriously, with textual patterns.

There are other factors. Hellenistic esthetics inclined strongly toward virtuosity, but on a small scale and preferably in original variants of minor forms. The technopaegnion thus takes its place beside epyllion, pastoral, mime, lyric epigram, hymn and didactic epos as a minor genre in an age that sought new literary directions and cultivated the exquisite and the difficult as compensation for its lost epic, civic and tragic grandeur.

There are philosophical considerations as well. Hellenistic philosophy, specifically Stoic logic, developed a theory of language in which letters and words are potential signs that take on fully actual significance only when arranged in certain patterns and recognized by human intelligence. We know this theory impacted upon poetry: it forms the philosophic substructure of Aratus' Phaenomena, a Hellenistic poem (c. 270 B.c.) in which Zeus, the old sky-god but also the providential Stoic deity, provides visual signs—stars, constellations, atmospheric phenomena—that take on actual significance only when arranged into meaningful patterns by human intelligence. Aratus introduces subtle but clearly demonstrable acrostics into his text, visual linguistic tokens of his poem's theme (see the Introduction to my translation of Aratus [Sky Signs: Aratus' Phaenomena, North Atlantic, 1984] and W. Levitan, "'Plexed Artistry: Aratean Acrostics,"' Glyph 5, Johns Hopkins Textual Studies). This suggests the possibility of some such philosophical significance in Hellenistic technopaegnia: visual patterning as an additional level of syntax in the creation of meaning.

Another Stoic idea: rhetorical (including poetic) forms are all elaborations upon the notion of sign. We start from something immediately perceived—a visual shape for instance—and go on to describe its mode of being, either absolutely or in relation to other things. In this formulation, a pattern poem accomplishes the absolute description by the figure of the text, and the relational description by the text's content.

Other philosophical influences? Richard Higgins, in George Herbert's Pattern Poems: In Their Tradition suggests that medieval and Renaissance pattern poems

were influenced by neo-Pythagorean, hermetic and neo-Platonic ideas of proportion and significance. At first sight these currents seem too late to have affected the Hellenistic technopaegnia, but they shouldn't be excluded absolutely. The reader is invited—the present author forbears—to examine these poems for golden sections and other numerical proportions, although for serious work along these lines the Greek text should be used. Higgins prints the Greek texts (without translation); they can be found also in the Loeb Classical Library's Greek Bucolic Poets, with brief introductions, prose translations and, for those who want to look up the answers to the puzzles, glosses.

Richard Kostelanetz

Expositions

Constructivism

WO POLARITIES OF ARTISTIC CREATIVITY are €xi pressionism and constructivism, each term defining a different attitude toward the making of imaginative things. In the former, the artist thinks he is primarily ‘“‘expressing” himself, even though he is also using forms and materials that exist apart from himself. Allen Ginsberg, for instance, regards his poetry as “GRAPHING the movement of the mind on the page.” A further assumption is that, to quote Ginsberg again, “If the poet’s mind is shapely, his art will be shapely.”’
Surrealism is an extreme extension of expressionism.

The constructivist artist believes, by contrast, that he is building things apart from himself, even though his creations are liable to reveal certain personal proclivities. As Piet Mondrian, himself a scrupulous constructivist, explained the difference, “‘One aims at the direct creation of universal beauty, the other at the aesthetic expression of onself.”’”

In the history of painting, what distinguished cubism from constructivism was the former’s lingering interest in mundane reality (restructured, to be sure), while constructivism emphasized the presentation of invented forms. Thus, constructivist paintings are generally geometric and nonmimetic. In sculpture, the term constructivism customarily refers to objects that are constructed, rather than cast or carved.

The constructivist assumes that, to quote Mondrian again, ‘‘It is possible to express oneself profoundly and humanly by plastics alone.’’ To put it differently, in visual material itself can be discovered all the profundity and humanity that art is capable of expressing. The individual character of the work comes from qualities of style, rather than personality. The poet is not an ingredient in the poem but a catalyst of available ingredients. The constructivist artist is, in essence, the guy who moves the stuff around.
Here and elsewhere, esthetic decisions as such have
ethical implications.

Mondrian thought that constructivist art revealed the essence of the universe, but his claim defies the empiricism entwined in the constructivist attitude.

A primary quality distinguishing recent avant-garde writing from its predecessors is a constructivist tendency that is itself new to the history of literature.

I believe that life is indestructible, and the force that makes

it indestructible is human constructive consciousness....

Art is an effort of our consciousness directed toward a spe-

cific goal—to know and to make known, to give shape to

the shapeless, structure to the decomposed, and to lend

form to the amorphous origin of chaos. —Naum Gabo, Of Divers Arts (1962)

Much as I respect the individual touch it must have no personal element.—E] Lissitzky.

Instead of this universe of "'signification" (psychological, social, functional), we must try, then, to construct a world both more solid and more immediate. Let it be first of all by their presence that objects and gestures establish themselves, and let this presence continue to prevail over whatever explanatory theory that may try to enclose them in a system of references, whether emotional, sociological, Freudian or metaphysical.—Alain Robbe-Grillet, '"'A Future for the Novel'"' (1956)

In European art during the early years of this century, the nonfigurative movements, such as Constructivism, Suprematism, Neoplasticism and the Bauhaus, which were concerned with pure abstraction, had as a common denominator a rigorous formal rationalism. Their fundamental invention was to translate into visual terms the rational consciousness of the world, so that form should express the logic of the hidden structure of reality. —Italo Tomassoni, Mondnan (1969)

Every writer, if he develops at all, develops either outwards into society and history using wider and more material of that sort, or he develops inwards into imagination and beyond that into spirit, using perhaps no more external material than before and maybe even less but deepening it and making it operate in many different inner dimensions until it opens up perhaps the religious or holy basis of the whole thing. Or he can develop both ways simultaneously.—Ted Hughes, in an interview, Works in Progress (1971)

For there zs a fundamental value of modern art, and one that goes far deeper than a mere quest of the pleasure of the eye. Its annexation of the visible world was but a pre-

. liminary move, as it stands for that immemorial impulse

of creative art: the desire to build up a world apart and self-contained, existing in its own right: a desire which, for the first time in the history of art, has become the be-all and the end-all of the artist. That is why our modern masters paint their pictures as the artists of ancient civilizations carved their painted gods.—André Malraux, The Imaginary Museum (1953)
The Life of Forms

IOLOGICAL METAPHORS appropriately characterize the career of innovative forms. That is, a form is born, it grows and matures before passing through a period of senility, which presages its eventual death. Once this process has begun, it may be opposed; but it
cannot be reversed.

In serious writing, naturalistic fiction is as dead as rhymed verse, Shavian theater is as indisputably dead as linear detective fiction.

Collage, which was probably the single greatest formal invention of twentieth-century art, reached its artistic demise in the nineteen-sixties. That is to say not that collage disappeared—quite the contrary is true—but that recent works indebted to collage techniques were no longer so strikingly original. What initially made collage so fertile was not just the enormous number of possibilities but its usefulness in all the arts. Once artists discovered the principle of splicing together materials that would not normally be found together, the potential for realizing pointed juxtapositions seemed limitless. As the syntax of collage became familiar, it was popularized in posters, ads and even popular music. Almost anyone with a pair of scissors and a taste for incongruity could facilely do it.

However, the time came when collage could no longer generate original art; it could no longer instill the sense of awesome surprise that even sophisticated viewers experience in the presence of something new. My own estimate is that this moment occurred around 1960, not because of any historical determinism, but simply because I cannot think of a single avant-garde work, composed since then in any art, that is formally based upon collage.

The last great use of collage in poetry, for instance, occurred in Pound's Cantos, whose own history recapitulated the evolution of its primary form—innovative when Pound began it (1915), and yet by its end (1970), becoming a compendium of ways in which poetry need no longer be written. The last major collage in fiction was William Burroughs' Naked Lunch (1958); in essaying, Michel Butor's Mobile (1962), The last successful collages in visual art were Robert Rauschenberg's three-dimensional combines of the late 1950s.

In my temporal judgment, associational syntax in poetry is now as senile as the "confessional" voice; the first-person narrator in fiction seems as depleted as chronological narrative; reportage of nonsequential vignettes seems as artistically inconsequential as a theater of social representation. Perhaps the surest index of spectator sophistication is the experience of discovering that something that was once shockingly original (and "'unacceptable") is now utterly familiar (and, alas, acceptable).
The spectator today admiring a Braque collage appre-
ciates it not as avant-garde art but as art history.

In art, unlike life, death is one symptom of success.

As a general rule, I would like to add: A work of art is perceived against a background of, and by means of association with, other works of art. The form of the work of art is determined by the relation to other forms existing before it.... A new form appears not in order to express a new content, but in order to replace an old form, which has already lost its artistic value.—Viktor Shklovskij, "The Connection Between Devices of Syuzhet Construction and General Stylistic Devices" (1919)

Modernism presupposes an antagonism to accessibility by accentuating the analytical faculties; modernist aesthetics, for example, asserts the self-critical "'task" of art. Style, on the other hand, assumes the ascendancy of familiar elements which can be easily consumed, quickly assimilated. At the point where modernist forms become a "'style,"
modernism degenerates into mannerism.—Daryl Chin,
"Talking with Lucinda Childs" (1979)

Page 142 from Michel Butor's Mobile [1962].
142 Mobile

a black tongue,
a black hand approaching,
I'm paralyzed by that stare,
the whirling waters,
a field in flames,
horses crossing the lake,
they're waiting for me,
they want to make me dive into that mud,
PRINCETON, Benton County. State Flower: mocassin
flower, —White Earth Indian Reservation.

PRINCETON, IOWA.

A pair of snowy owls on the trunk of a dead tree, against a stormy night sky with a single moonlit edge of cloud.

MONTROSE.
The murmurs at night.
MONTROSE, MISSOURI.
CLEVELAND, Le Sueur County.
CLEVELAND, NORTH DAKOTA.
The great gray owl, with its concentric circles around the eyes.
CLEVELAND, WISCONSIN.

A pair of Richardson's owls, the male in profile with its yellow eye accented by a tuft of hair near the bill.

JACKSON.—When it is three a.m. in

JACKSON,

It is possible, as this process of exhaustion goes on, we might eventually reach the point where there is nothing left, where all literary traditions become played out entirely. I suspect that we are approaching that point right now.

If we have reached the end of literary tradition, it doesn't necessarily allow that there will be no more literature, only that we will no longer have "'novels"' and "'poems'"' and "'dramas"' in the old senses of the terms, and that terminology such as "naturalistic" or "surrealist'' will no longer seem very adequate. Each work of literature will be a unique gesture that transcends all the old categories.—Richard Morris, "'A Dadaist Manifesto" (1982)

On 30 December 1964 Waiting for Godot was revived at the Royal Court Theatre in London with Nicol Williamson as Vladimir. The production was extremely favorably re- ceived by the critics. As to the play—the general verdict seems to be that it was a modern classic now but had one great fault: its meaning and symbolism were a little too obvious.... When the same play made its first appearance in London in August 1955 it had met with a wide measure of incomprehension. Indeed, the verdict of most critics was that it was completely obscure, a farrago of pointless chitchat.

The speed with which the incomprehensible avantgarde work turns into the all too easily understood modern classic in our epoch is astonishing and is only equalled by everyone's readiness to forget his own first reactions when confronted

with works of art that break new ground,— Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (second edition, 1969)
Genres

ERE AND ELSEWHERE, I HAVE USUALLY REGARDED

the corpus of human writing as divided into the

traditional genres of poetry, fiction, drama and the essay. Genre is the literary equivalent of the biological genus—a subordinate class with common distinguishing characteristics.

Although much experimental writing tries to demolish the separating barriers, these terms still strike me as valid and useful. Not only is most writing, even most experimental writing, conceived with reference to particular generic categories—we speak of "experimental fiction" or "visual poetry" —but, indeed, nearly all experimental literature published today clearly belongs to one genre rather than another.

In brief, the common distinguishing characteristics of poetry are personalized expression that favors conciseness and the acknowledgment of forms that can be restrictive to various degrees. "Fiction"" favors language that is more freely formed ("prose"') to create a less personal world of self-referring activity and thus favors extended narrative. "Drama" consists of scenarios to be realized in performance. "Theater" is sound, light and movement before a live audience. "Essays"' confront particular subjects with a high degree of ideation and explicitness.

It is true that some new literature tries to blur these distinctions, especially when its author takes the motives and techniques of one genre and integrates them with another—for examples, "narrative poetry' and "lyric fiction." Part of the interest in works of this kind is precisely the tension between the demands of particular genres and the artist's propensities for invention. (A similar tension informs pulverizing experiments with sentence structure and even with diction.)

Nonetheless, no matter how hard an artist tries to balance the demands of one genre against another, the resulting work usually falls into one or another category.

For me, as a writer, the poem as opposed to other forms of literature has a number of advantages; it can be clearly defined and sharply contoured; in a small space and with little material, it is able to store a relatively high energy and with this produce a relatively strong impression; compared to other genres, the poem—and among modern ones, particularly the concrete poem—is a very rational product and thus especially suited for modern industrial society, with its various propensities for rationalization. —Ernst Jandl, in a speech (1968)
Essays

SSAYS DIFFER FROM POETRY AND FICTION in striving for direct engagement with personal experience and worldly realities. Poetry and fiction proceed from interior understanding; essays from exterior knowledge. The subject of an essay is more explicit than implicit, as the essayist never loses sight of his chosen concerns. "Essay" is commonly used as an honorific term to characterize expositions that, for reasons of style, do more than merely expose.

In essays, unlike fictions, the author speaks directly, rather than symbolically or metaphorically; he favors definition and communication over implication and ambiguity. Since an essay tries to communicate an author's understanding, one measure of "'success" is the reader's comprehension of the author's thoughts.

Since essays are inspired by experience, rather than by literary precedents, essayistic form should ideally follow function; optimally, the essayist should reinvent a form for every new function. One reason why this opportunity has rarely been taken is that people writing about their own understandings nearly always observe conventional structures, rarely considering how else their subjects might be approached. The question to ask, each time an essay is written, is what form would be more appropriate for communicating the author's sense of this particular experience.

The essay you are now reading was written differently from most of my expository writing, which tends to be more introductory than theoretical, in part because this essay has something radically different to say and is thus designed to have an impact different from most of my prose.

A detailed chart is an essay; so is the front page of a newspaper (its subject being major events of the day before). Both of them offer disconnected details that need to be read consecutively. Thus, these essays are designed to be "dipped into"' and perused; they cannot be read from "'be-
.ginning to end,"' simply because they have neither begin-
ning nor end.

Flaubert and De Maupassant lifted prose to the rank of a finger art, and one has no patience with contemporary poets who escape from all the difficulties of the infinitely
difficult art of good prose by pouring themselves into loose
verses. —Ezra Pound, "Vorticism" (1914)

(Next page, an example of a chart-essay: A reproduction of W. H. Auden's intricate chart on Paradise and Purgatory, as published in Richard Kostelanetz' Essaying Essays [1975]. The chart was originally prepared in 1943 and was later transcribed by Edward Mendelson, currently Professor of English at Columbia University.)
Mtkten)

Essential Being The Fall — —- — T ——_— a a of ing refuge Dualism of Experience yy ve aati of the Pure Deed Nature Knowledge of Good and Byil from Nature the Pure Word Power without Purpose Existential Being oe — ce —— [Primary Symbol Sea Common Hight | Forest City Mountain | bora Light i + Ps aie is Secondary Symbols | Blood Tears Serpents | Wild Beasts Domestic Pets Birds | Machines — = —+-—— — ——+ — —_——_—_— — eFC ETH Myth Symbols Dragons Sirens Hidden | Dwarves The Hero Witches | Ghosts Treasure these The Ring —_____ + ——— Si —— — ——__— —— + Metaphysical | Pure Aesthetic Immediacy Actualisation of the Possible Condition Pure Ethical Potentiality Art Growth Science Soul = Spirit bp "+ + ———-- —_—__—__—— + Monist Unity (water) Rivers Differentiated Roads Order Unity Barbaric Vagueness Country Civilisation Town + — -+ —_—__— ae | =, Raturel Cyclical P ot aod Bistorical Irreversible Process Change | Static © sires Genes} QOQ0, Spiral —— + _ —+— Relation Mutual Irresponsibility The Vow Conscious Relations The Contract Between Selves Encroachment Neighbour Liness T —— ———4 Low brow High brow -— Relation to Self Self-Sufficiency Masses Self-realisation Rulers —_—— + — Sensation Generalized patterns Thinking Mental Life Stream of Sensations Memory of fooling lagie Intuition Important facts Feo =. 4 + Objective Instinctive v v Subjects Vi Coleste Conscious lack of neq aes ORE enere Vulgare Joptive lenere 5 of requiredness Blind Eros Agape Seeing Anteros | The void of Indecision or Self-Reflection Criminals Police | Sin Sensuality | Anciety {sarees Pride Bohemians Pharisces — —+—— + Romantic Sophisticated Sex Incest (The Walsung) Adultery Marriage ot Promiscuity (Don Giovanni) (Tristan) (Figaro ~ —— T + — Physical Diseases Cancer Digestive-Venereal Sensory-Respiratory Paralysis + — T _——_—— —_—+——— Montal Diseases Idiocy Epileptics Paranciacs Dementia Praecox Manic-Depressives Schisophrenics 'oe Religion Blind Superstition | Panthedan (Cath,) Faith (Prot.) Deism Lucid Cynicisn (Animism) (Logical Positivism) _ + + a — +" — Theories Irrational Rational Enotionalisn legaliss | art Deda Art _| Serreaiisn Cubism State art Politics Tyranny (Fascisn) Peuial leisser Faire Anarchy (Economic Collapse Aristocracy Democracy Class War) t ——— + — — — +——— — + Political Slogans Fraternity Justice liberty "— + —_ ——— — _ The Tragic Hero-Outlew The Comic or Ironic Hero The Demonic Villain with Don Quixote without natural S[ex] A{ppeal] Hero S{ex] Al ppeal] The ar = Byron's Don Juan ° The Idiot (Dost.) Stavrogin Flying Dutchman The Child (Alice) The Grand Inquisitor Vamp Marx Bros, Detectives (Holmes) | Depraved or Cissy Master-Crooks 7 The Quest Prepared at Swarthmore College in 1943 Transcribed by Edward Mendelson Z

Stephen Ratcliffe

Notes on Sound

NE POINT: THAT THE POET ATTENDS to the sound strucures in the medium of the art, words, whose pitch and duration,
(pitch) |
)

(time) bind inextricably the polysemous configuration words carry and may be used to occupy as counters to what one thinks one means. Sound in the line the syllables one after the other next the other trailing head to foot as if along a road one travels one's way, the end of one line about to become at
that point start of the next, verse a literal turning across that
white, narrow space:

you'd unravel In a sense the sound of the words she compiles as she writes compile the world, or portion of it, figuratively at least insofar as words have in them capacity to frame, articulate, parody, ring changes upon whatever her senses perceive, thought takes hold, this moment or that: wan / want / wash / was / wasp / what / swan / swamp / swal-low / wal-low / wander / watchman / sheer / bear / there / their / where / hear / here / mire / oar

In answer to the question, why lines? which might be recast as, Given the fact of words as the material writers make use of in their work, what does the line do other than say the string of words the sentence, whose limits turns in thoughts marked by comma, semi-colon, the period for instance make felt upon any reader's sense regardless of spacial position on the two-dimensional plane we call page, thereupon the black marks we call letters—in music notes scored in and between literal /ines of treble and bass clef—stand and, as if in motion becoming themselves in that act of reader reading, slip across toward the white space that frames the line, isolates it from all that has come before and all that would follow, its silence an abyss against which each syllable's whole weight presses itself, strains to find access, a purchase, foothold into which stroke and counterstroke, inflection rising or falling, duration might carve, temporarily settle: TRIS / trample / eagle / bugle / command / THat was a lie / seconds shiver away / bang / tongue / scene / scent / Sceptre / scatter / Wing / fetch / vast / Oak dient jut / theday / languishment / Alm / The darkness hideth not from thee

Unloosed, the line will find its direction from that exact pressure, no more nor less, the syllable exerts as its need to make itself a felt presence, confident in the face of all that might have been ‘“‘said” but wasn’t, meaning that one takes as one’s chance knowing as if the line were every thing: ar /
wer / bin / enny / grate / cy / ck / t’oth / cymbal / Mercy

What has weight in such context becomes the sound that is inside words, call it phoneme, subatomic bits of matter the buildup of which physicists at Los Alamos worked to perfect, this attraction coupling say “‘w”’ plus “‘e”: WE, followed by say, “huddle,” etc. whose dynamics sets into motion in varying degrees of play from active participants (tongue teeth lips) certain determined reaction: WE / huddle Un then All / raculus cup in such manner Over / Favorite / Favorite / Favorite / Favorite

It may be useful to slow the line down, for purposes of example as to make the physics of its music/movement perceptible to human (i.e. attentive reader-becoming-listener) eye/ear. As Allegro slows to Andante in a musical score, 45 rpm to 33 1/3, a retardation of the pace, simply, at which one “goes through” any temporal work. Notice the effect (and effectiveness) of certain cut-in “slow motion”’ scenes in the recent German-American film Baghdad Cafe, scenes of say the man walking across an open space to intersect the woman walking the other way: the sudden slowdown—“reality” shifting from 24 frames per second to what, 48?—sets the viewer as if into a dream, all perceptions heightened, immediate. In poetry this might be accomplished, for one thing, by increasing the space between words in a given line: crossed Ohio occuption arrowhead noonday bay/was killing and planting blare campnation or by spreading the words in each line even further APART, as if to float in the field that is the page, in effect reducing the number of words per line:

as
ear
then begins
in
thoughts, from
lo
open
whach
sight
Sitt and so
site A
World is
she (was) shall scale

How also increasing the space of the stanza break (“‘lines of silence’’), will open the possibility that tone coupled to silence and silence to tone, that splicing so to speak of presence and absence upon which everything in the poem depends, may become even more pronounced. To increase the proportion upon a given page of white space (silence) to printed word (tone[s]) throws proportionately more “weight” upon what is “not said,” that silence the white space no ink imprints in effect denotes: J have workt with stlences—with caesuras as definite parts of the articulation of the line, with turnings at the end of the verse, with intervals of silence in the measures between stanzas—related to phrasings and sequences of the with meaning. Significant pauses for the syncopation of suspense or arrest. In the notation of the text a line reading phrase-caesura-phrasecaesura-phrase would be considered to be articulated into five elements.

Punctuation as determinant of rhythm, notwithstanding Gertrude Stein, the dash for instance whose force anywhere, but especially at the end of the line, is as a sudden interruption of the exhaling syllable-delivering breath, slows response, stands on the page as a (literal) line from syllable sound to white-no-sound:
or not

The dash so to speak here a link between figure and ground, the written print of text and unprint (silence) of page, more purely “‘abstract”’ than any given letter could be in that it carries no possibility of referent/content but is sign simply of duration, a pause in time during which no syllable will be sounded, the poem holding at that point, suspended an instant in its forward motion, “‘still” as the background-
space in a 19th century English landscape is “still,’’ before
the figure of a next sound takes the ear.

And the moment of that sound belongs only to it. The world’s ear listens as if suspended there, the pitch and duration of the tone filling the air and all the space it occupies. And if the record could be slowed sufficiently to prolong the moment of this point, and the next one and the next, a single word/note-or-chord extended outward through time and thereby across physical borders, words would approach the perfection they aspire to but cannot have: pure tone. But what could such an abstraction mean? And where does that tone stand in relation to the world we live in of things? For isn’t tone at least like the breath-quality each “thing” inhales, exhales: Nothing but tones! As if tone were not the point where the world that our senses encounter becomes transparent to the action of non-physical forces, where we as percewers find ourselves eye to eye, as it were, with a purely dynamic

reality—the point where the external world gives up us secret and manifests itself, immediately, as symbol. 76 be sure, tones say, signify, point to—what? Not to something living "'beyond tones."' Nor would it suffice to say that tones point to other tones—as if we had first tones, and then pointing as their attribute. No—in musical tones, being, existence, is indistingutshable That sense, too, of pause, the space between the units in a poem, whether they be syllables, words, syntactic units or the line or stanza. And the breaks that '"'punctuate" a poem, whether they be printed marks (comma, dash, semicolon, period) or the empty space after line and stanza breaks, obviously have multiple effect upon the reader/lispage, by increasing the space between lines, and as well by centering a (small) text as if to float within the sea of a (large) white page, isolates the words from contexts which may precede them and/or surround them; separates them in effect from the baggage of their prior existence(s) in usage in the world, making the language "'new"' not only in Pound's sense that the modernist project would necessarily find energy and direction by reclaiming the poetic forms of the past, as in "'Sestina: Altaforte"':

Papiols, Papriols, to the music!

There's no sound like to swords swords opposing,

No cry like the battle's rejoicing

And our charges 'gainst "The Leopard's"" rush clash.

May God damn for ever all who cry "'Peace!"' or writing an epic "song" containing history in which Kung walks beside Sigismundo Malatesta beside Circe beside Andreas Divus beside John Adams et al., all of these presences "'revitalized" at the hand of the inspired poet.

But what if now words lay claim to their own meaning, forging new areas of experience (thereby defining by marking out, as territory, as a circle limits what it encloses) by leaning forward as #f on their own, counting on the page without say reference to the people and events of past or current "'history,"' though these too will have their place:

Mylord have maize meadow
have Capes Mylord to dim
barley Sion beaver Totem
W'ld bivouac by vineyard
Eagle aureole elses thend

And what too if the space between line and "'statement"' were to open, visually hence temporally in the reader/listener's experience of the poem, and that discreteness of language-unit were further pronounced by say other typographic

devices (CAP, ital, other type faces), thereby calling increased attention to the material fact of words as the medium at hand, as Bach's partita tones and Coltrane's 50's sheets of sound:
I need to think of your hand on the paper
it ts the lowliest exercise
a geographical reduction

[page break]

to advance in the dark
all is calm outside of a body

An utmost simplicity of means in the work I am thinking of makes of sound and rhythm something we feel at home with so to speak. Whereas Pound the classicist may "put one off" by means of reference, however beautiful, Williams
the romantic wanted a poem in the American tongue:

the wooden walls of her husband's house

Lat the snake wait under

his weed

and the writing

be of words, slow and quick, sharp

to strike, quiet to wait, A tongue that could as if speaking by stammer catch the real world of things in its mouth, grip what passes moving along the line from now to now, true in the way words in a language can gauge the thingness of things, the even- or unevenness of event:
Popcorn-can cover
screwed to the wall
over a hole

so the cold
can't mouse in

And in this way to keep "'track" of the mind's awareness,
perception of its given life in the world, and thought of and
feeling immersed in same, that record being in effect the
poet's "calling"':
a car door
ts smaller than

a house door

bang

the
momuing

earth smells
drive

off
birds sing

Where words might, set loose in the space that constitutes the page, take on "a life of their own" which the reader/ listener is then herself permitted to meet and in that meeting make meaning. As much of possibility will be left to be completed at that stage of the relation between writer/text/ reader-listener as is possible, not ""completed"' as once and for all but provisionally, this is the way it strikes me now, and now that I look again something (everything) has changed. A succession of pieces I will call my experience of the poem. Which may be said to overlap, intersect with, reach backward and forward into my experience of other word-events, in that sound as echo sets up in the reader/listener lines of connection from the present work to works of the past and vice versa, one writer's voice (sound) literally echoing another writer's ""voice" (sound)—rhythmically, phonetically, as register of like temperament meeting across time and space:
nothing in it

but my hand As a parallel that calls up in the one the other, an echo that brings more than what is present to mind, no matter how
large the differences:
Take it

every atom of me
belongs to you
across distances

one space

When I sit down to read I see the letters and hear the sounds they make in my head. "'b" a mirror image of "d," two "'w"'s the same either way save in different surrounds; a dash-line printed in ue space below the line separates absolutely what has come and what follows, except that that line, like an horizon, acts as if to reflect the sky in the lake, the words above in the words below; as "sense" may also be echoed, shifted, slanted, refracted, reflected in the ongoing forward motion

of the poem, unfolding as it were petal by petal down the page toward the end where all the words sum up to a silence which captures and encloses them:
table was the word

a knot binds the outside
others come to die on the table

silence ts a form Shape too has its moment as lines, margins, punctuation, spaces between words operate simultaneously to nudge the denotations and connotations of words—their mere "'meaning"—toward the larger meaning activated in the ratio between writer: poem: reader/listener. Perception broken up as on the film the brain (conscious, unconscious) keeps taking will then be registered in a language supple enough to bend and stretch and breathe in to and out of the positions our experience of the world takes, In these terms, language creates meaning in the world by setting forward
, analogues—in structures of rhythm, sound, syntax, seman-

tic sense—which operate as counterparts to the consonance and dissonance of events in the world. And like events in the world, this language will refer to itself as much as to whatever is "out there'; will be that is to say self-reflexive, conscious of itself, its wordness as distinct and separate from, yet aligned with as parallel ongoing temporal events (sequential or non-sequential, continuous or discontinuous bits and pieces threaded in time), the raw data of the world:
because, once written, could
Jirst outlines, provisions, for our earliest
rhearsals, nothing, not even the fan of

your fingers, that's not the angle, casting, instance.

For why not say a part of the poem is a part of the world, limited no doubt in the sense that our means of experience in the feeling, memory, the five senses, would appear in the world to come about as a kind of total immersion, all "systems" going at once, whereas a poem is a verbal construct accessible thereby through mental process only, whatever that may include. (Memory for one thing, and feeling, and a sense of all five senses—and if by these means we encounter the poem, who cannot say its body touches ours:
(nereid, or the phrase)

who, by riding back-
wards, blond-eyed and water-

muscle the least phoneme—notous—writes against).

When I listen to the poem read out loud, spoken as it was written to be heard, it isn't only the sense of the words I follow. As if on its own, my mind "'wanders"' in the terrain the words map, following along this thread or that one, as often as not (more often?) not the one the poem itself is at that moment tied to. And the words themselves play on and over me, play me like the instrument they have learned to play—fingers, lips, lungs, breath; keys, strings, surfaces, mouthpieces; voices, pitches, durations, tones:
(of the redemptive: a stray vision)

someday, light
chairs shall fill; the bottles—in
blown sleeves, no
longer need these 'lyric remissions.'

And thus led I follow, trailing off minutes at a time to the play of words J hear as at a distance closer than the ear, because internal, the music of the words already becoming in my brain mine, then coming back to intersect "'what's going on" now:
lapped
shadows, and the

low, breath-papered rooms, as they fade, now, successive, And so again also why not say the meaning of a poem stands in—intersects, and cannot but be intersected by, thus amounts to nothing less than—its sound. Zukofsky, dissecting the components of the poetic object, 1930: The sound and
pitch emphasis of a word are never apart from its meaning.

And again, A poem: a context associated with 'musical' shape, musical with quotation marks since it is not of notes as music, but of words more variable than variables, and used outside as well as within the context with communicative reference. Words as if in the ratio: lower limit speech, upper limit music: in as much as to say an order of words that as movement and tone (rhythm and frtch) approaches in varying degrees the wordless art of music as a kind of But words are not notes, though both take place in time, in that nouns and verbs and adjectives refer, stand for properties and motions in and of the world, whereas the D major chord simply resonates. So there is this alignment between words with their attendant music and the things of this world broadly speaking, details as we know by moving through and among them. And in the poem words bring to play these multiple simultaneous functions: sound and referential "meaning"? not as two

things but a single indivisable “sign”: language as approximate to actual events as may be, by means of the writer’s (and reader/listener’s) attention, possible: shapes appear concomitants of word combinations, precursors of (if there is continuance) completed sound of mirage, of seeing, of thinking with the things as they exist, and of directing them along a line of melody. Shapes suggest themselves, and

At this point, then, sound takes over. As the pitch of phoneme plus time it takes to “‘say”’ it, whether in mind or out loud, fills that space of silence otherwise unbroken were the poem not set in motion by poet thence reader/listener, it (the poem, its sound-meaning) “‘enters the new world”’—and in so doing makes that world as if in its own “‘image”’:

precariousness of role

space is a sentence reassembled by the point

native speech of the obstacle

an unextended speech

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Sonata or Music: Zukofsky's 80th and Bach's Goldberg

Syntax as Music

Zukofsky—"It's the music that's important"

NOTE: The following text is an edited version of a tape of a talk presented at Small Press Distribution in Berkeley on April 22, 1988, to preface a panel discussion among three-part series, Words as Objects— Three Undergrounds, curated by Ronald Johnson.

'D LIKE TO BEGIN WITH two others' beginnings. The first begins Zukofsky's own Prepositions: For My Son When He Can Read

When you were 19 months old your ability to say "Go billy go billy go billy go ba,"' much faster than I could ever say it, made me take some almost illegible notes on poetry out of my wallet. The time had come for me to fill the vacuum I abhorred in my life as much as you had filled it in yours. Though I was not too agile then, I hope you will sense reading me why I had forgotten my notes—had stopped speaking while I was not writing poetry. months were to pass before the atomic bomb was used that ended the Second World War.

Sworn to drudgery, people parted in those months with everything in the spirit of a fool and his money. Yet as I heard your first syllables, no matter how blank the world was it again seemed possible. I saw why definitions of poetry rounding out like ciphers (abstract and like numbers on clocks that read only this century or that century and no other) should not satisfy either of us. For I hope that you as well as I will never want to live by them.'

And John Taggart begins his recent essay, ""Come Shadow Come and Pick This Shadow Up: On Louis Zukofsky," with this sentence:

We return to texts because something cannot be forgotten or because something has, indeed, been forgotten.'

When Ron asked me to do this, I went back to read "A" and All and Prepositions and 80 Flowers, trying to leave accumulated assumptions about the work aside and trying also to keep Ron's proposition, 'Syntax as Music," before me. What I couldn't forget was the pleasure of reading Zukofsky's work.

"A" was the first long poem I picked up and read from beginning to end without stopping. I was not moved to do this because I was anxious to absorb all of the information on Aristotle, Spinoza, Marx, Wittgenstein and Henry Adams. I did it because of the music, because I read "A"' as one long "continuing song." It

sang to me and came into my body, Duncan, speaking of reading "Mantis" in 1937 (at age 18), said: "Its art was beyond me yet somehow available in my sounding the poem.'"

"Tt's the music that's important." This is something Zukofsky restated over and over throughout his writings in poetics:

.,, the whole art of poetry which is 'nothing else but the completed action of writing words to be set to music'—music being the one art that more than the others aims in its reach to speak to all men."

Those who say that the standards of science do not concern taste sometimes also say that the measure for judging a good song or a bad song does not concern standards but one's taste or another's...° (from someone in the audience at the American Embassy in London on May 21, 1979:)

Question: For one who thinks so much in his poetry, it seems rather strange to, in fact, hear you speak only of its music.

L.Z.: Somewhere in the long poem "'A'"' I say—this is sort of part of me—I never remember my stuff but— Thinking's the lowest rung No one'll believe I feel this.° An integral Lower limit speech Upper limit music'

. » » poetry may be defined as an order of words that as movement and tone (rhythm and pitch) approaches in varying degrees the wordless art of music as a kind of mathematical limit."

On Stevens: "For me the lovely course of his whole work is the constancy of its song."

The official verse culture line on Zukofsky (I was surprised the other day when Benjamin Hollander pointed this out, but now I see it) is that he was a Pound disciple; that he didn't do anything in his work that Pound hadn't already done. When the radical tradition in poetry is viewed from that great a distance, the interval between Pound and Zukofsky is reduced to nothing. It is certainly true that Zukofsky was a traditional poet, embracing and emerging from out of Pound. The extent of this influence can be traced in the letters (at least from 1927 through the 30's)."" The constitutive differences in the work must be heard.

In the Twentieth Century the revolution in information technology caused a crisis in poetics which has been dealt with in various ways. A central formal question became— what is the order necessary to coherence? And this question is hypostatized in much Modernist writing. In the work of Zukofsky the question became a musical one—the question of organizing sounds as words (rhythm, melody, harmony): syntax as music.

The tension which keeps Zukofsky's work alive for us and for the unborn is that between the intellection (manipulation of information) in his work and its music (transformation). Information "developed among the sounds of natural things"'

escapes "'the confines of time and place." The information is not just balanced by the music, but is activated by it. There is an insistence that ideas face the music. The intellect delves inward and the music reaches out. The information imparted is important, but it is only znparted in music. "Like the modern composer, if he has expounded all harmony it needs a new ear to hear it."'

The recent essay by John Taggart, "Come Shadow Come and Pick This Shadow Up: On Louis Zukofsky,"' which can be seen as a remaking of an earlier Taggart treatment of the same material ('Louis Zukofsky: Songs of Degree" in Credences, Fall/Winter 1981/1982, pp. 122-149), is one of the most acute readings of Zukofsky yet published. In this essay, Taggart focusses on the first two sections of "Songs of Degrees," "'A"-12 and Bottom, tracing three terms from the title of "Songs of Degrees": song, degrees and valentine (as a verb "valentine'"' means to greet with song). Placing "Zukofsky's understanding and practice of song in an equation with fugue," Taggart quotes Schoenberg' s Fundamentals of Musical Composition to say that fugue i is a composition with 'maximum self-sufficiency of content,' and distills Schoenberg's writings on fugue to conclude that '"'while individual fugues may attain individual forms, fugue itself is not a form. Rather, it is a process of continual expansion or growth, the many from the one, based on the principle of imitation."

Fugue has been called a "texture," and texture is from the Latin for "a weaving." It is this interweaving of melodic strands (or voices) which characterizes "A"-12. As Pound spoke through personae, Zukofsky spoke per sonum (through sound).

Zukofsky's song, which is also text and poem, can be placed in an equation with fugue. This can be done because words in his composition are treated like notes. This can be done, too, because the shape that is produced as effect or suggestion is, analogically, the same shape produced by fugue. The writing of song so understood moves toward a visual end.

While related to imagist poetics, this is still distinct from Pound and Williams. For it does not begin as a visual report. The motivation behind Zukofsky's circular end and, the creation of of a musical or cadential image, is to light up what is loved, to illuminate and to reveal the beloved as substantially as an object held in the mirror of that image. We must hear in order to see. We must hear and see in order to love."

One of the exemplary things about Taggart's piece is that he uses terms like "sincerity" and "objectification" (Zukofsky once planned a book entitled Sincenty G Object-

Jication) as precise terms in poetics. One always gets into trouble pe one takes these terms of Zukofsky's poetics out of context and tries to apply them "humanistically," SYNTAX outside the poem.

CONTEXT is to “weave together” to “arrange together”

Of “‘Songs of Degrees,” Taggart writes:

Objectification proceeds from sincerity as an effect. If the technique of composition has been sufficiently conscious and conscientious, then it will produce rest. The reader will feel no desire for further information, further words. And, as there always will be further information and words, this is where the art of poetry enters in.... We feel as though we know the poem’s emotion as substantially as an empirical object. As Zukofsky writes in Bottom: “for a song when heard has that sense of the substantial rather like the seeing of the eye.”””

Well, I could go on quoting from Taggart’s piece, but it’s better you read it entire yourself. I would like to use the one thing Taggart says about the later work as a springboard into “A”-22, 23 and 80 Flowers:

What Zukofsky has done (in “A”-12) is to separate the words and phrases out from their original contexts to provide hirnself with a vocabulary for composition. So separated, they can be rewoven into a new song. What we have in this is the fully composed stage. What we have in “A”’-22-23, in comparison, is the separated out material which has been deliberately left at an earlier stage as an offering of material—“a raft of stuff’—for others to compose, mix down, into their own songs. Zukofsky’s originality is as a weaver, an unweaver and a reweaver.”

I’m not sure I agree that the later work is “pre-composed” (possibly de-composed), but it is certainly composed differently, in some way, from what came before it. And I do agree with Taggart that this late work is an opening, an offering, musically.

80 Flowers is contrapuntal, is fugal and the counterpoint

(sound) unit. Of course the other element in this arabesque is the explosive foliation of sense in single words, in their syntactical combinations, and simultaneously throughout the grids.

Reading over the early letters to Pound I was struck by a line in a letter dated 5 Nov. 1930, Madison to Rapallo: “‘What interests me is how J Jefferson) uses the names of flowers in his garden book—”’.'* The 5-count syntax rehearsed as early as 1962 in After I’s is dominated by naming, growing into the nominal torrent of 80 Flowers:

GRASSFLOWER Clay tone your purple arrives from deep tubers pussley partially kin touched wilt spring beauty good-morning-spring weed salvage moist-eyed daystar obscures married eras integrity lost spoor midsummer forest returning mayflower lanceleaves shield buds kinless royal Though there is predication, there are few verbs as verbs, and each one does a lot of non-union work. As anyone who looks into it will tell you, there is a great deal of information —“‘a raft of stuff’—built into 80 Flowers, so that it really is a handbook on flowers:

ROSE-OF-SHARON Rose-of-Sharon lilac-red blown hibiscus searing all cues of soft leaves swamp pale lustres odor of musk the thrown burning brand seas glare coast-winds reel high-pitched alterant names descrying black-hellebore white white double-flowered marsh-mallow mallow-rose snowstorm sea-hollyhock torn not thorned rose

Listening to Beethoven's Quartet in C-Sharp Minor to get Zukofsky's "Song Theme"' (#23 in "29 Poems" —"To the last movement of Beethoven's Quartet in C Sharp Minor'), I came across this note on the Late Quartets:

In these quartets, Beethoven employed the basic forms of his tradition, but with such extraordinary originality, variety, and emphases unprecedented in his previous eleven string that the last five were long regarded as formless, astruse, and the arbitrary creation of a deaf, aging madman."

Someone in 1679 said: "I saw him when I was in my Syntax, and now I am in Poetry." Notes

1. Louis Zukofsky, "Poetry," Prepositions: The Collected Critical Essays (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 3.

2. John Taggart, "Come Shadow Come and Pick This Shadow Up: On Louis Zukofsky," American Poetry 5:2 (Winter 1988), pp. 42-67.

3. Robert Duncan, "As Testimony: Reading Zukofsky These Forty Years," Paideuma 7:3 (Winter, 1978), p. 426.

4. Louis Zukofsky, "Poetry," Prepositions, p. 9.

5. Ibid., p. 7.

6. Zukofsky, '"'About the Gas Age," Prepositions, p. 169.

7. Louis Zukofsky, ""A"-12, "A" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 138.

8. Zukofsky, "A Statement for Poetry," Prepositions, p. 19.

9. Zukofsky, 'For Wallace Stevens," Prepositions, p. 30. 10. Barry Ahearn, ed., Pound/Zukofsky: Selected Letters of Ezra Pound and Louis Zukofsky (New York: New Directions, 1987). 11. John Taggart, Amenccan Poetry, p. 47. 12. Ibid., p. 62. 13. Ibid., p. 50.

14. Pound/Zukofsky, p. 60. 15. Philip Hart, notes to Beethoven: The Late Quartets performed by The

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Beverly Dahlen

Tautology and the Real

T MAY BE THAT YOU FIRST LEARNED the word fautology, as I did, in some now dimly remembered course, the basic course in English composition perhaps, and that it was closely associated with another word that must have entered our vocabularies at nearly the same time, the word We were given to understand that these words represented errors fatal to the orderly progress of thought. To commit tautology was to be guilty of circular definition or circular reasoning; one was merely spinning one's wheels. Tautology represents the case in which there is too little information for progress. Redundancy, on the other hand, represents an excess, a pile-up, a chaos of information.

The definitions of these errors have in common the idea of repetition. Repetition is fatal because it introduces a closure just when we might have expected the opposite: an opening, a furthering, a movement towards inclusion, rather than the sort of desperate exclusion we sense in the repeating, that insistence which reminds us of a limit we would perhaps rather not acknowledge. That limit, whatever else it may represent, is, for the moment, the limit of the possible. Might it not also suggest the limit of the real?

At some point the writer may apprehend that there are no "other words,"' that language itself is an enclosed, selfreferential system, that it takes the form of a vast tautology, circular and exclusive, that "it allows," to quote Terence Hawkes, "'no single, unitary appeals to a 'reality' beyond itself.""*

One begins to notice the insistence of repetition in the work of certain writers, as if they meant to demonstrate this limit, this revelation of language at the boundary of the real. Perhaps the most famous tautology in modern literature is Gertrude Stein's "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose."" This line had become a sort of popular joke long before I was born (it first appeared in a poem called "Sacred Emily," written in 1913); it was the one line anyone knew of Stein (if indeed one knew of Stein) before ever coming to read her work. The line became almost the metonym of modern art which was generally scorned and ridiculed for its absurdity.

Gertrude Stein offered a defense of this line in the course of a seminar she gave at the University of Chicago sometime during her 1934-35 tour of America:

Now listen! Can't you see that when the language was new—as it was with Chaucer and Homer—the poet could use the name of a thing and the thing was really there? He could say 'O moon,' 'O sea,' 'O love' and the moon and the sea

and love were really there. And can't you see that after hundreds of years had gone by and thousands of poems had been written, he could call on those words and find that they were just worn out literary words? The excitingness of pure being had withdrawn from them; they were just rather stale literary words. Now the poet has to work in the excitingness of pure being; he has to get back that intensity into the language. We all know that it's hard to write poetry in a late age; and we know that you have to put some strangeness, something unexpected, into the structure of the sentence in order to bring back vitality to the noun. Now it's not enough to be bizarre; the strangeness in the sentence structure has to come from the poetic gift, too. That's why it's doubly hard to be a poet in a late age. Now you all have seen hundreds of poems about roses and you know in your bones that the rose is not there. All those songs that sopranos sing as encores about 'I have a garden; oh, what a garden!' Now I don't want to put too much emphasis on that line, because it's just one line in a longer poem. But I notice that you all know it; you make fun of it, but you know it. Now listen! I'm no fool. I know that in daily life we don't go around saying 'is a...isa...isa...' Yes, I'm no fool; but I think that in that line the rose is red for the first time in English poetry for a hundred years.'

This is a surprising defense, and I would disagree with it almost wholly. Evidently, Stein had never heard of Saussure's dictum that language is a "form and not a substance." Words do not "wear out" because they are not made of anything; neither are they containers of images of fading roses, moons, or anything else. What wears out is the real world of roses and moons. What changes is our relation to the real, and this change changes everything. Gertrude Stein's tautology demonstrates, without her being quite aware of it (unless, of course, she is being disingenuous), a new relation to the object of perception. The real rose, burdened and veiled by the accumulations of centuries of symbolism, is stripped and is seen to refer only to itself, yet not to itself as rose, but itself as name, as "'rose." It is not that the rose is "'really there," but that language is there, at the boundary of the real, displacing the real, miming the real, discovering that form which is, as the Buddhists say, empty.

Gertrude Stein discovered a form which reveals the circularity of the rose: she had made of it a kind of concrete poem. As Virgil Thomson notes, it "had become for her a household object. It had been engraved in circular form on writing paper as early as 1914; par in 1916... fine linen handkerchiefs had been embroidered... with the same device.'"* In this way, she had naturalized the language, materialized it as an object (one might say she had made a fetish of it), and, it seems to me, had already begun to obscure other senses of the line by heightening its value as decoration.

If we exclude the imitative, the power of the sentence as a demonstration of the circularity of naming is evident. It is a kind of mantra: it takes the form of the eternal (it is an example of Stein's use of the "eternal present"), and so affirms presence. But by its rigid insistence on naming, by the eternal recurrence of the name, that is, by its reflexive emphasis as language, it affirms absence. The name obsessively replaces the thing itself. This "presence of an absence" reminds me of Hegel, for whom such a condition is the very mark of desire. In Kojéve' s reading of Hegel ""De- Sire... does not exist in a positive manner in the natural—

, spatial—Present. On the contrary, it is like a gap or a 'hole' in Space: an emptiness, a nothingness.... Desire that is related to Desire, therefore, is related to nothing. To 'realize' it, therefore, is to realize nothing.'"

But that is the point of chanting a mantra: to "realize nothing," to disclose the void, or silence, which is the ground of being and desiring.

I don't mean to make the argument that tautology as a form will always produce such effects: it would be wrong to think we could substitute any word for "rose" in Stein's sentence. If both she and I have noted the cumulative deadening of perception by the weight of literary language, I at least must admit it is in the unsounded context of all those other "'roses" that Stein's "'rose" echoes, that these associations, for instance, to "'a rose by any other name"' (and, of course, that zs the point here) are precisely the environment in which the line opens. The weight of association along the "signifying chain" must always be part of our understanding of meaning.

If we place the line again in the context of the longer poem in which it first appeared (as Stein suggested we do) we find, I think, an oblique and disjunctive commentary on this "weight of association." Let me quote a little from the poem:

Marble is thorough fare. Nuts are spittoons.

That is a word.

That is a word careless. Paper peaches.

Paper peaches are tears. Rest in grapes. Thoroughly needed. Thoroughly needed signs. All but.

Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose. Loveliness extreme.

Extra gaiters.

Loveliness extreme.

Sweetest ice-cream.

Page ages page ages page ages.

Wiped Wiped wire wire.

Sweeter than peaches and pears and cream. Extra extreme.

Put measure treasure.

Measure treasure.

Tables track.

Nursed.

Dough.

That will do."

Of course, you' ll notice immediately that when the line is recontextualized it becomes more complex, less purely circular. It is surrounded by a thicket of word-play, by names of things, e.g., "'thimble," which have escaped from more abstract nouns: "symbol." The "'rose" is modified by the attribution of color ("'mahogany"') and value ("Loveliness extreme.") Then it seems to its own name by the sliding of association and returns as the various names of sweet fruits and rich desserts.

The context diminishes our sense of tautology, while it increases the sense of redun. Some, those of mystical inclination or abstract bent, may even feel it to be merely redundant, as the world itself must seem at times: repetitive and distracting, full of irrelevant detail. The "'rose"' of religious and literary tradition has been by a "'rose"' which is more nearly a household object, not, however, for the reasons suggested by Virgil Thomson, but because it has been set in a new context. This context twitters and chatters, disturbing the silence, filling the void around the rose, representing its existence among such things as "'gaiters" and "ice-cream," the ordinary everyday clutter of the world,

The 'mystical rose'"' has been gradually supplanted by a "rose" which, as Stein thought, was "really there." But where is the real? Surely this poem, or any form in language, must point "beyond itself" to that question. If the form is not a static container of the real, it nevertheless patterns a relationship to the real.

The more I read this passage, the less it seems to be a simple catalogue of clutter. Near the beginning there is what I take to be a quite self-referential critique (""That is a word. / That is a word careless."), a critique which notes the word as word, no matter how '""careless." This is followed by the remark: "Paper peaches." Then comes the commentary, "Paper peaches are tears,"' the final word of which may be pronounced either or perhaps both as /tarz/ or /tirz/, since paper can be torn, and since paper peaches cannot be eaten because they are not real peaches, one may perhaps weep for lack of the real. Next, the imperative "'Rest in grapes" (are the grapes more "'really there" than the peaches?) may (or may not) be the referent of the "Thoroughly needed signs" of the next lines. Is this an expression of the "n for language? or are the "" perhaps the sign (or symbol) of something else? —abundance or the love of sensuousness,

Reading in this way, we must soon discover that the context itself is full of holes, that the surface of plenitude gives way almost immediately to a structure which is ambiguous, and we must begin to wonder whether this ambiguity is not a part of

the pattern of our relation to the real. Ambiguity sets up the effect of oscillation at the boundary which, at the simplest level, prevents any unified reading of the text. We might even suspect, in the case of Stein's work, that this ambiguity is deliberately heightened (by, for instance, leaving out large chunks of context) in order to undermine any notion of the poem as a message, of language as a code. One cannot that simply transcribe the real. There is always something left over.

It is in this sense of the real as remainder I begin again to think of reading Jack Spicer's letter to Lorca, one of several that appear in his book After Lorca:

Dear Lorca,

I would like to make poems out of real objects. The lemon to be a lemon that the reader could cut or squeeze or taste—a real lemon like a newspaper in a collage is a real newspaper. I would like the moon in my poems to be a real moon, one which could be suddenly covered with a cloud that has nothing to do with the poem—a moon utterly independent of images. The imagination pictures the real. I would like to point to the real, disclose it, to make a poem that has no sound in it but the pointing of a finger.

We have both tried to be independent of images (you from the start and I only when I grew old enough to tire of trying to make things connect), to make things visible rather than tomake pictures of them (phantasia non imaginari). How easy it is in erotic musings or in the truer imagination of a dream to invent a beautiful boy. How difficult to take a boy in a blue bathing suit that I have watched as casually as a tree and to make him visible in a poem as a tree is visible, not as an image or a picture but as something alive—caught forever in the structure of words. Live moons, live lemons, live boys in bathing suits. The poem is a collage of the real.

But things decay, reason argues. Real things become garbage. The piece of lemon you shellac to the canvas begins to develop a mold, the newspaper tells of incredibly ancient events in forgotten slang, the boy becomes a grandfather. Yes, but the garbage of the real still reaches out into the current world making is objects, in turn, visible—lemon calls to lemon, newspaper to newspaper, boy to boy. As things decay they bring their equivalents into being.

Things do not connect; they correspond. That is what makes it possible for a poet to translate real objects, to bring them across language as easily as he can bring them across time, That tree you saw in Spain is a tree I could never have seen in California, that lemon has a different smell and a different taste, BUT the answer is this—every place and every time has a real object to correspond with your real object—that lemon may become this lemon, or it may even become this piece of

seaweed, or this particular color of gray in this ocean. One does not need to imagine that lemon; one needs to discover it.

Even these letters. They correspond with something (I don't know what) that you have written (perhaps as unapparently as that lemon corresponds to this piece of seaweed) and, in turn, some future poet will write something which corresponds to them. That is how we dead men write to each other.

Love, Jack °

More than forty years separate these works of Stein and Spicer, and the confident ebullience of the high modernist contrasts with the nostalgia for the real in Spicer's passage. Spicer invokes the technique of some early modernist painters ("'a newspaper in a collage is a real newspaper'') to express a baffled yearning for the thing itself. But the newspaper is no more real than the paint and canvas which surrounds it. It has become a metonym of the real, a part which refers to some larger whole, the entire system of newspapers, which it designates, to which it points like Spicer's soundless "'pointing of a finger." So the real is that which is left out or left over, that which is always necessarily beyond the frame of the painting or the margin of the poem. The induction of so-called real objects into paintings serves, like the ition of the word "rose" in Stein's poem, to demonstrate the lack of the real. The putative real object points not only beyond the frame to some incomprehensibly large system, but also towards its own surroundings, its context, where it may provoke shock or laughter since it is not what it seems to be. A "newspaper'"' is not a newspaper; its self-referentiality within the painting is a tautology, a hole in the painting that reminds us of the essential illusion of art. A "rose'' is not a rose but a part of the fiction of the poem.

Spicer is true to a deep strain of modern thought when he rejects the "image"' in favor of "'something alive" and "visible in a poem.'' The image lies too close to imitation. Here may also be the root of Stein's thought when she proclaims that after "'thousands of poems" the rose is no longer "really there."' It is obscured by illusion, by its own shadow in art. To restore the real, to make it visible in Spicer's sense, is to break the artifice of the poem at the boundary of the real, to shatter the image, or icon, at the heart of the painting, and to point to the gap. What is there, what will appear there, is not nothing exactly, but the shape of the object of desire, which is always elsewhere. For quite simply, to cite Lacan's aphorism, ""The real is the impossible.'"' It is what is excluded (or, in Lacan's terminology "foreclosed'') by language, by the entire order which he named "symbolic." One points to the ghost of the real with an equally ghostly finger.

"{ T Jhings decay," Spicer writes. "Real things become garbage." It's not simply the tendency of the real towards mortality that Spicer notes, but a sense in which death has become synonymous with waste. This is another way in which the real is

remaindered, for if the world is seen as merely redundant, it will soon enough fill up with garbage, with the products of its own decay. The world itself will have become the gap, an absence to itself, the "Missing All" which Emily Dickinson announced so long ago.

And so it is Spicer's desire to discover some quick of the real which escapes the redundancy of death. It may be that his theory of correspondence can be read as the possibility of redemption ("As things decay they bring their equivalents into being"), but it cannot account for the disjunction between language and the real. Spicer's letter points elsewhere, to exactly that gap which is the place of death, from which he writes: "That is how we dead men write to each other."' Finally, his desire for the real is identical to his own death and perhaps to the reader's death as well. Here I would quote a passage I have thought to quote more than once before, from the work of the Lacanian analyst Stuart Schneiderman: The "dead are real because the only encounter we have with the real is based on the canceling of our perceptual conscious, of our sense of being alive: the real is real whether we experience it or not and regardless of how we experience it. The real is most real when we are not there; and when we are there, the real does not adapt itself or accommodate itself to our being there. The concept of the real implies the annihilation of the subject.'"*

The object is then, in this sense, only visible to the dead. The demand of desire is for submission to the otherness of the real. To articulate the demand is to enter again the endless circularity of language, and the theory of correspondence, which one might have supposed could fit an answer to the question of the real, ends in deferment and further redundancy.

But perhaps words are not nothing, that language, as Lacan has written, "'is not immaterial. It is a subtle body, but body it is."'"' If one is reminded here of magic, one must also remember the seductive influence of magic in Spicer's art. The theory of correspondence echoes the sixteenth century doctrine of signatures about which Foucault has written in the early pages of The Order of Things:

The system of signatures reverses the relation of the visible to the invisible. Resemblance was the invisible form of that which, from the depths of the world, made things visible; but in order that this form may be brought out into the light in its turn there must be a visible figure that will draw it out from its profound invisibility. This is why the face of the world is covered with blazons, with characters, with ciphers and obscure words— with 'hieroglyphics,' as Turner called them. And the space inhabited by immediate resemblances becomes like a vast open book; it bristles with written signs; every page is seen to be filled with strange figures that intertwine and in some places repeat themselves. All that remains is to decipher them: 'Is it not true that all herbs, plants, trees and other

things issuing from the bowels of the earth are so many magic books and signs?' The great untroubled mirror in whose depths things gazed at themselves and reflected their own images back to one another is, in reality, filled with the murmur of words. The mute reflections all have corresponding words which indicate them."

Spicer's sense of something '"'visible in a poem" which is yet not an i (not a representation of the thing)— "something alive" which is yet "caught forever in the structure of words" seems, when read in conjunction with Foucault's passage, to have been cast up from the sixteenth century, yet seems oddly moored in our own time. Spicer's "nostalgia for the real" of which I spoke earlier, may rather be nostalgia for some such lost world-view, for a system in which words and things, language and the real were so grandly and, one might as well say the obvious, tautologically unified. And yet this apparently unified surface is fundamentally opposed by the idea of magic, the essence of which is the thought "that anything might turn into anything else."" The progress of this thought actually led to the rupture of the surface unity of the sixteenth century in the holocaust of the witch-trials. I would note here that Spicer too, according to Robin Blaser, regarded magic as "'a matter of disturbance, entrance and passion..."'" The nostalgia implicit in the theory of correspondence (to be at home in a world of unified and shared meaning) is countered by the impulse to disrupt that order.

Finally, it is not a question of magic at all, but the claims for the autonomous real that oppose us. In any case, the thing itself seems always stubbornly resistant, there, but elsewhere, finally untranslatable.

It is this real object Spicer recognizes, and it is as stripped (of symbolism, of interpretation, or the lush growth of language around it) as is Stein's "'rose" in the form of its bare tautology. In its freedom from what Foucault might call "the sovereignty of an original Text,"'" the text of the real is empty, empty of reference, of context, and of. It is at that point one might speak of a "'devotion"' to the real (as Spicer did)" as if it were the purest act of faith.

"T would like to make poems out of real objects," that is, or perhaps because, or since the real will never be anything but what it is, it will fit itself perfectly with nothing left over. And, of course, that would be the poem of "'infinitely small vocabulary" about which Spicer had written in an earlier letter to Lorca, "the really perfect poem."" It will never be written in language because no vocabulary, no matter how small, equals the silence of the real. One points to "'it," "'it"' takes the place of the "'infinitely small,"' pointing to the enigmatic self-similarity of the real, which is not so much outside our experience of fragmentation and disorder as it is impossible to represent in language.

So the heart breaks

Into small shadows
Almost so random
They are meaningless
Like a diamond
Has at the center of it a diamond Or a rock
Rock.
Being afraid
Love asks its bare question—
I can no more remember
What brought me here
Than bone answers bone in the arm Or shadow sees shadow— Deathward we ride in the boat Like someone canoeing
In a small lake
Where at either end
There are nothing but pine-branches— Deathward we ride in the boat Broken-hearted or broken-bodied The choice is real. The diamond. I Ask it."

"There are actually two Lacanian aphorisms about the real that I have used as probes in the writing of this essay, and I should now cite the other one: ""The real is that which always returns to the same place.'"" The form of this aphorism itself suggests tautology, suggests the closure of language at the limit of the real. But it also suggests that '"'bare question," the question of desire, barren indeed, without issue, as it circles the obdurate heart of things. It is a question of origin, and of purpose, of, I suppose, fate, yet the poem resists in the way the real itself does, any simple translation.

However I read this poem, it is not exactly that "diamond is diamond"' and "'rock is rock,"' absolutely other and alien to the "'heart'"' that "breaks," for I always stumble over the word "'like,"" which seems to me to be completely unexpected; "'So the heart breaks /... Like a diamond / Has at the center of it a diamond."' So the "'heart"' and the '"'diamond"' are like each other, both broken into random and meaningless shadows, are signs, perhaps, like the diamonds and hearts of the suits of cards in the previous poem," in a game of chance, or fate, the meaning of which has not been disclosed.

Nevertheless, there is the question: "The choice is real."' And it may be here that the question, and the choice, oppose fate, or chance (randomness) with the real, the end of which has certainly been disclosed, since the real returns to the same place, is not like anything but itself. In this reading, the word "'like'"' would mean its opposite, or negative, "unlike": the heart breaks into something different, or other than itself (which is the effect of desire), but diamond (or rock or bone) is forever the same. There is finally no peal that desire can make to the real.

Jack Spicer's devotion to the real was such that nothing would take its place; at the end of the poem "A Diamond"' he withdraws one by one each hallucinatory image into an emptiness which is the place of the real:

The universe falls apart and discloses a diamond

'Two words called seagull are peacefully floating out where the waves are

The dog is dead there with the moon, with the branches, with my nakedness

And there is nothing in the universe like diamond

Nothing in the whole mind."

Like? or unlike? Nothing is diamond is mind. There will always be a reading of "'nothing"' in which it is full, rather than empty.

To such irreducibilities one must point, and close.

SeprempBer/Ocroser, 1988 Notes

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Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero (Cam-

Rosmarie Waldrop

On Lyn Hejinian

Chinese Windmills Turn Horizontally

Everything is the same except composition and as the composition is different and always going to be different everything is not the same. —Gertrude Stein ("Composition as Explanation")

T IS NOT JUST BECAUSE Lyn HeyjInIAan is an outspoken admirer and follower of Stein that I put this quotation at the beginning. Aside from the foregrounding of language implied in its name, L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetics is a radical focusing of a much larger development: the shift away from the emphasis on analogy and metaphor toward emphasis on combination, a shift that began with Gertrude Stein and has been worked at in a variety of ways by a variety of poets since. (Charles Olson and "'projective verse"' are crucial here, Creeley's exploration of sequence in Pieces, Zukofsky's grammatical rhymes, the spatial syntax of the "Concrete" poets, the tonal shifts of the "'New York School,"' etc.)

I

Before getting to Lyn Hejinian's work, I would like to sketch in the framework of this shift.

Every speech act (every use of signs) consists of selection and combination (Saussure, Jakobson'). This means words always have a double reference: to the code (vertical substitution sets, elements linked by similarity, metaphor) and to the context (horizontal relation: contiguity, alignment, syntax, metonymy).

While both axes are indispensable, literary language tends to divide according to an emphasis on one axis or the other,

Jakobson identified poetry with the axis of selection, with relation by similarity, metaphor. This is more or less accurate for the long stretch from Romanticism through Symbolism and into Modernism and has large implications:

a) The "world" is given, but can be "represented," "pictured" in language.

b) The poem is an epiphany inside the poet's mind and then "expressed" by choosing the right words.

c) Content is primary and determines its ("'organic"') form. d) The spiritual world stands in a relation of similarity to the material world ('the Book of Nature"). Therefore the vertical tendency of metaphor (Baudelaire's "forest of symbols,' Olson's "the suck of symbol"') is our hotline to transcendence, to divine meaning. Hence also the poet's role as priest and prophet.

By contrast, Gertrude Stein and her children champion the horizontal axis of combination with its stress on relation by contiguity, by metonymy. Poems, like windmills, need not be vertical even if we have been in the habit of picturing them thus. In Lyn Hejinian's work they turn horizontally.

It is again on the level of implications that the shift in interest and attitude is most visible. Here the implications are:

a) Nothing is given. The world is constructed, largely by language.

b) The poem is not so much a momentary epiphany as a process of exploring possibilities of combination. The stress not on the "thing" (Williams, Rilke), not on the "mot juste,"" not on the noun as bearing the densest charge of meaning, but on what "'happens between" (Olson).

c) No correspondence to a spiritual world is postulated. The transcendence is horizontal, is language itself: the possibilities of combination are infinite. Hence a tendency to openness, rather than to closure. (The Maximus Poems became coextensive with Olson's life.) On a smaller scale, there is a tendency to prose.

d) Content (and meaning, reference) is not primary, but arises out of the play of combination.

The controversy over this last point has, I think, been largely caused by the polemic nonsense term: "non-referential writing." It puzzles me nevertheless because it is the working experience of every poet that words have their own vectors and affinities that more often than not take us beyond our initial intentions. To quote two poets outside the L=A=N=G=U=A=GsE group:

"The pages of the book are doors. Words go through them, driven by their impatience to regroup... Light is in these lovers' strength of desire." (Edmond Jabes)

"When the man writing is frightened by a word, that's when he's getting started." (George Oppen)

II

In discussing her own work or Gertrude Stein's, Lyn Hejinian definitely emphasizes the combination axis, the relation between things, with especial stress on openness, on "rejection of closure." She talks literally about 'words and ideas continuing beyond the work," but immediately connects this (with William James) with the inclusiveness, the "porosity"' of the mind, and with consciousness as a verbal plane with a vast "range of activity on its surface," so that language becomes "'one of the principal forms our curiosity takes," also an exterior, a sile, a landscape with "'innumerable non-isolating focal points" so that "the vanishing point might be on every word.'"

So when she proposes the paragraph in My Life as a unit representing "'a single moment of time,"' she does not mean a literal time unit and what might have

happened in it, but, again following William James:

a single moment in the mind, its contents all the thoughts, thought particles, impressions, impulses—all the diverse, particular, and contradictory elements that are included in an ac- tive and emotional mind at any given instant. (RC)

There is no chronological or thematic organization. Each of these moments of the mind contains all the author's 37 years (just as each of the 37 paragraphs. contains its 37 sentences), including present perceptions, reflexions, etc.'

The quantitative organization is not perceptible in reading except as roughly even paragraph-length. What is perceptible is a musical structure established by recurring phrases. A recurring phrase or sentence is a very strong rhythmic marker because of its size, more so when it is typographically singled out and yet more when the phrase is memorable. Who can forget "'As for we who love to be astonished."'

However, Hejinian does not just use the rhythmic, unifying effect of repetition here, but has the phrase appear each time in a changed context. As she says, she recontextualizes the phrase, giving it a new emphasis, and thereby ing is adjusted; meaning is set in motion, emended and extended, and the rewriting that repetition becomes postpones completion of the thought indefinitely. (RC)

Stein held that "there is no repetition" because the context is always made different by the mere fact of a phrase recurring. Hejinian changes her contexts beyond that. It is worthwhile looking at a few instances of this recontextualization. The first key phrase is 'A pause, a rose, something on paper."' It clearly describes a privileged moment, set off from the daily routine, involving something beautiful (a rose) and something on paper (writing? drawing? reading?). The first time it appears it is mostly a feeling, a color, but likened to an important moment for the family, the father's return from the war:

A moment yellow, just as four years later, when my father returned home from the war, the moment of greeting him, as he stood at the bottom of the stairs, younger, thinner than when he had left, was purple—though moments are no longer so colored. (5)

Next, it is associated with music and, in contrast to the intense family scene, with solitude:

You could tell that it was improvisational because at that point they closed their eyes. A pause, a rose, something on paper. Solitude was the essential companion. (15)

The following two instances are variations on the context of beauty and solitude. The narrator becomes more aware of her individuality, hence feels isolated, with the desire to communicate, but also realizes the privilege of solitude, of privacy. There is so little public beauty. I found myself dependent on a pause, a rose,

something on paper. It is a way of saying, I want you, too, to have this experience, so that we are more alike, so that we are closer, bound together, sharing a point of view—so that we are "'coming from the same place."' (21) I have been spoiled with privacy, permitted the luxury of solitude. A pause, a rose, something on paper. I didn't want a party for my tenth birthday, I wanted my mother, who was there, of course, at the party, but from whom I was separated by my friends and because she was busy with the cake and the balloons. She kept a diary, but she never read it. (29)

The social frame widens along with the intellectual one:

The ideal was of American property and she had received it from a farmer. It includes buying thrillers and gunmen's coats. A pause, a rose, something on paper. It was about this time that my father provided me with every right phrase about the beauty and wonder of books. (34)

Again, the context gets larger: the perception of natural phenomena gets an analytical bent, foreign travel introduces a sense of history, tradition, of different ways of thinking: But because we have only seven days, the light seems to be orderly, even predictable. A pause, a rose, something on paper implicit in the fragmentary text. The Mayan calendar has more days. (39)

L. S. Vygotsky has a useful distinction between sense and meaning:*

The sense of a word... is the sum of all the psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word. It is a dynamic, fluid, complex whole, which has several zones of unequal stability. Meaning is only one of the zones of sense, the most stable and precise zone. A word acquires its sense from the context; in different contexts, it changes its sense. Meaning remains stable throughout the changes of sense..

The meaning of Hejinian's phrase (privileged moment associated with beauty and writing) remains the same. But even just these few examples show how its sense changes in the course of the book. The privileged moment very much embodies the narrator's sense of self-hood, which began as a vague feeling, a "'color" connected with her family. It changes as she becomes more conscious of her individuality and moves, both physically and mentally, from the enclosure of the family into wider spheres and into identifying herself through art.

It is this, and only this, that makes for a feeling of development, of time passing in this work which otherwise seems completely synchronic. It is remarkable, nearly paradoxical, that Hejinian is able to suggest change and growth through repetition which we tend to associate rather with sameness and stasis. The method puts in a nutshell the tension between the synchronic presentation and the essentially diachronic pattern of (auto)biography behind it. It also very beautifully

embodies the nature of the subject of biography: the person is always both the same and changing with time and circumstance.

It embodies even more the tension between the pull toward closure (she wants "each sentence to be as nearly a complete poem as possible," RC) and the pull toward openness,

Hejinian's most recent book, The Guard, makes this tension its theme. More precisely: recurring phrases and contrasts very gradually map a field of opposing concepts which do not quite align, so that the precise boundary of the opposition keeps shifting: captive vs. roving mind; concentration vs. interruption; order vs. disorder-generosity-confusion; inward vs. outward; concealing vs. revealing, etc. Across this field, the poem roves and leaps, blurring the dualisms; on it, driven by a force that knows no boundaries, "Tossed off, serene, Chinese / windmills turn horizonally."'

The themes emerge gradually, the discontinuity strikes us first. Each of the first 3 lines seems to have a different frame of reference:

Can one take captives by writing— "Humans themselves.' The full moon falls on the first. I

The gaps between the lines are not, as it used to be in Pound, an abbreviated "'this is like"' which brings the two adjoining units closer together, but show a mind taking leaps into multiplying contexts, ina PROJECTIVE rush to set many different fields in relation against the equally strong need to narrow down, to select, as she says in 'The Person":

Here I translate my thought into jump-language, to double fate

But fate imposes its very interesting exercise: select'

Stephen Ratcliffe's ""Two Hejinian Talks" have given us an example of careful reading giving play to the multiple associations which are allowed for by such shifting frames of reference. We don't usually read this way, but his analysis accounts for the sense of richness we have in reading Hejinian even if we do not follow out all the suggestions.

But because the discontinuity is obvious and foregrounded by the poet I get interested in what makes nevertheless for continuity across the shifts and gaps, what keeps the work from disintegrating into "sentence-rubble" (Hejinian's phrase). In general, the more semantic similarity is played down, the more important similarity of sound, of grammar or any other formal pattern becomes. (And this kind of formal similarity is never included in even the most virulent attacks against analogy).

It is true that with line 4 ("whatever interrupts") so clearly in opposition to line 1 ("Can one take captives by writing—") we get a first glimpse of a thematic field. But it is not foregrounded sufficiently to establish immediate continuity. Sound

play, which seemed the most important "bridge" in Whiting ts an Aid to Memory, is certainly present in The Guard ("The full moon falls," "of people... of pupils,"' "'windows closed on wind in rows," "I'd seen the sea /.../ The seance, or chance"),But syntactical patterns attract our attention right at the beginning (and of course Hejinian has alerted us to her reliance on "grammatical congruence"),

If we for a moment consider sentence structure only (and take the dash as equivalent to the period), we find that sentences [1], [3], [5] are parallel: two-part structures whose first half varies while the second half is always a prepositional phrase:

[1] Can one take captives by writing— [3] The full moon falls on the first. [5] Weather and air drawn to us.

Between them, sentences [2] and [4] consist of three words each, both are quotations with, in addition, some sound repetition in the verbs: "repeats" and "interrupts."

[2] "Humans repeat themselves."' [4] I "whatever interrupts."'

If I thought I had found the pattern I was quickly disappointed: Sentence [6] repeats the adjective-noun subject of "The full moon" with "The open mouths,"' but then sets up a quite different pairing of twos. Which in turn gets both repeated and modified. What Hejinian seems to work with is partial congruence, as we already saw in sentences [1], [3], [5]. We might also add that the quotation marks introduce a discrepancy into the parallel of [2] and [4]. As "I" stands outside the quotation, sentence [4] breaks into two parts.

It is such partial overlap we find again and again, as in the theater game where each person must repeat one element of the partner's gesture, but continue it differently.

Of course, there are additional complications. So far, I have completely ignored that the text is in verse. The lines, which at first coincide with the sentence units, begin to go against them with line three:

Can one take captives by writing— "Humans repeat themselves."

The full moon falls on the first. I "whatever interrupts." Weather and air drawn to us. The open mouths of people are yellow and red—of pupils.

The lines are not quantitative units, but seem determined by rhythmic and semantic considerations. The latter are wittily at work in placing a break before the word "whatever interrupts." Like the quotation marks, the line break separates the "I" from that phrase and stresses its ambiguity. (Is the "T"'' part of the interruption? Does the "I" welcome or hate whatever interrupts?) The line unit also introduces an overtone-like secondary reading of "whatever interrupts weather and air" which would reinforce concentration, the mind taken captive by reading.

Again and again, the line units move against the sentence units. This is, of course, an old device to get a fluid rhythm, but the fact that the lines disturb and shift the parallelism of the sentences here reinforces and complicates the pattern of difference-within-sameness.

... they don't invent / they trace. You match your chair. Such hopes are set, aroused / against interruption.

In each of these groupings, three phrases are separated by punctuation and line break. The initial two are both rhythmically and syntactically parallel whereas the third element deviates. But the sequence line break/punctuation mark is reversed, This not only breaks up the parallel, but the line break in each case reinforces the opposition that is there on the semantic level.

As we read on, as phrases recur, the thematic fields gain strength. But, as lines move against the sentences, the image clusters often move against and across the thematic oppositions. ""The open mouths of people / are yellow & red"' at first seems on the side of the roving mind, of curiosity and openness to whatever interrupts. It might even be brought about by the idea of weather and air drawn into us, into our open mouths. But the open mouths are visually related to caves which "cooperate / with factories" and via the cave to:

... The concave sentence— one shaped like a dish

—with a dip in the middle— to read it was like gliding in.

Clearly one of those sentences that can take captives. Moreover, the open mouths (which "'are yellow and red") have already through their color been connected with factories ("It takes hollow red and yellow factories"), so that the mouths are clearly producing, speaking mouths. At the end of the poem we get:

"T am a construction worker, I work at home"

is the difference between language and "paradise" In any case, the image has crossed the lines of opposition. It cannot be pinned down for one side or the other and, in fact, helps blur the lines, redefine the territory. Again, the progression is by partial overlap, partial repetition. The color tie ("red & yellow") between the open mouth and the factory occurs in a different place from their being linked through the reference to "cave."

This partial overlap on all levels is an unobtrusive pattern, but enough of one to establish a sense of form. It is also a smaller-scale and formal variant of the semantic differencewithin-sameness which we encountered in the recurrent phrases of My Life. As I said, it embodies the double pull toward closure and openness. Rather than always folding back toward a center, it makes the text breathe forward and backward at the same time. It establishes a continuity, but a sliding one with always shifting terms. Unless I'm simply tilting against Chinese

windmills, it is Hejinian's most characteristic procedure. Let me close with a stanza plus one line from The Guard:

Yesterday the sun went West and sucked the sea from books. My witness is an exoskeleton. Altruism suggestively fits. It's true, I like to go to the hardware store of Vuillard, so undying in disorder is order.

This essay was presented at the conference on "Radical Poetries"' at SUNY Buffalo, April 1988.

Notes 1. Roman Jakobson, ""Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," in Fundamentals of Language, The Hague: Mouton, 1956. 2. "The Rejection of Closure" (RC), Poetics Journal, #4 (May 1984), pp. 134-43; "Two Stein Talks," Temblor, #3 (1986), pp. 128-40: Not surprisingly, phrases from these essays also turn up in poems, cf. "The Person," Temblor, #4 (1986). 3. My Life, Providence: Burning Deck, 1980. My page references will be to this edition. The 2nd edition, 8 years later, has been augmented to 45 paragraphs of 45 sentences each (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon, 1988). It is curious, and at the same time logical, that mathematical conceptions of form, dominant in the Neoclassical era and so violently fought by Goethe and other early proponents of organic form, are coming back. 4. L. S. Vygotsky, Thought & Language, MIT, 1962, pp. 146/7 5. The Guard, Berkeley: Tuumba, 1984, no pagination 6. "The Person," Temblor, #4 (1986), p. 33 7. Temblor, #6 (1987), p. 141-148

Bob Perelman

Chronic Meanings

Sor Lee Hickman

The single fact is matter.
Five words can say only.
Black sky at night, reasonably.
I am, the irrational residue.

Blown up chain link fence.
Next morning stronger than ever.
Worst after midnight, pain, sense.
The train seems almost expressive.

A story familiar as a.
Society has broken into bands.
The nineteenth century was sure.
Characters in the withering capital.

Fans stand up, yelling their.
Lights go off in houses.
There is still time to.
Only the money is free.

Nine miles and two inches.
Seven million dollars and change.
In no sense do I.
You don't have that choice.

The heroic figure straddled the.
The clouds enveloping the tallest.
Tens of thousands of drops.
The monster struggled with Milton.

On our wedding night I.
The sorrow burned deeper than.
Grimly I pursued what violence.
The vista disclosed no immediate.

The coffee sounds intriguing but.

She put her cards on.
What had been comfortable subjectivity.
The lesson we can each.

Not enough time to thoroughly.
Structure announces structure and takes.
He caught his breath in.
A trap, a catch, a.

Alone with a pun in.
The clock face and the.
Rock of ages, a modern.
I think I had better.

The few sick of oceanic.
Now this particular mall seemed.
The sack of coffee had.
Whether a biographical junkheap or.

These fields make me feel.
Mount Rushmore in a sonnet.
Some in the party tried.
So, really, it's not as.

That always happened until one.
She spread her arms and.
The sky if anything grew.
Which left a lot of.

No one could help it.
I ran farther than I.
That wasn't a good one.
Now put down your pencils.

They won't pull that over.
Standing up to the Empire.
Stop it, screaming in a.
The smell of pine needles.

The price on any given.
Voices imitate the very words.
The sun wasn't included in.
Economics is not my strong.

But still there is a.
Until one of us reads.
I took a breath, then.
The singular heroic version, philosophically.

In school later that morning.
Bed was one place where.
A personal life, a toaster.
Memorized experience can't be completely.

This case the first case.
Current ways of reading reality.
Taste: the last refuge of.
Naturally enough I turn to.

The impossibility of the simplest.

So shut the fucking thing.
Now I've gone and put.
A single line high above.

I need this and a.
Hourglass metaphorics do not equal.
At first I had wanted.
But that makes the world.

The point I would like.
Like a cartoon worm on.
A physical mouth without speech.
If taken to an extreme.

The phone is for someone.
The next second it seemed.
But did that really mean.
Yet the world is inhabited.

Another is myself is how.
Let's see if the rivers.
A fictional look, not quite.
The mail hasn't come yet.

What I thought turned to.
Some things are reversible, some.
I'm going to Jo's for.
The car in front of.

Now I've heard everything, he.
One time when I used.
The amount of dissatisfaction involved.
The weather isn't all it's.

You'd think people would have.
Or that they would invent.
At least if the emotional.
Send me the news as.

I don't see why it.
You don't get much repetition.
This way the least developed.
To be able to talk.

The present of an illusion.
Saying things like this so.
Either it's on fire or.
A present for the moment.

Symbiosis of home and prison.
Then, having become superfluous, time.
One has to give to.
The detail in the picture.

I remember the look of.

It was the first time.
Some gorgeous swelling sounded so.
Success which owes its fortune.

Come what may it can't.
There are a number of.
But there is only one.
That's why I want to.

Donald Revell

In Defense of Elsewhere: The Necessity of the Avant-Garde Poem

Like a patient etherised upon a table... (T.S. Eliot, '"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"')

THE ACCIDENTS, ILLUSIONS AND AGGRESSIONS of originality perpetuate youth and a kind of luster beyond real youth into a writer's and reader's complex maturity. That is why I am never embarrassed to remember my fifteenth birthday. I went to Manhattan to buy books for myself. Among my purchases was a garish yellow volume, the selected poems of T. S. Eliot. I had never heard of Eliot and so assumed that he was an arcane, undiscovered figure. And it was with the clumsy excitement of an adolescent discoverer that I opened and, in the fast yellow light of the subway under the east Bronx, read "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"' for the first time. Its opening lines elated me with the combination of strangeness and intimacy that remains to this day the feeling I get upon first encountering any poem or painting or passage of music that is going to matter to me for the rest of my life. Never mind that when I took my enthusiasm into the next day's English class I learned that my discovery was the single most famous poem of the century. Never mind that in graduate school I learned that practically the whole thing had been cribbed from Laforgue. Never mind that I have lectured nearly a hundred times on the neurotic mechanism of Prufrock's similes. Knowledge need not annihilate passion, and there endures in me a happy arrogance, a loving clutch of sudden rebelliousness, that is the perpetuation of my first reading of that poem. Entirely new, entirely mine (though neither new nor my own), that feeling is the strong, necessary luster of the avant-garde.

(Arthur Rimbaud, 'After the Flood"')

OF COURSE, THE DEFINITE ARTICLE never suits the idea or the essential pluralism of an avant-garde that intentionally spurns canonization and fixity. There is no singular model of a Language Poet (Bernstein is not Palmer is not Hejinian) just as there never was a model Surrealist (Breton was not Eluard was not Aragon). The very names of such movements arose from manifestoes written almost as diversions, disavowed by the poets involved as quickly as ravenous critical establishments accepted them, translating the manifestoes into methodologies of their own. We need an avant-garde to keep the practice of poetry at least one full step ahead of methodologies, to maintain a beautiful turbulence of diversionary pronouncements that mocks and therefore may correct somewhat our

era's excessive and unhealthy rage for understanding. Poetry lives and changes the world from which it arises by drawing that world a little beyond itself, into spaces and moments of uncertainty that require new ways of thinking and feeling, of an obscurity demanding greater patience and keener perception before it discloses whatever mystery first drew a poet and then a reader towards it. The activity of poetry, then, depends in large part upon a kind of youthful aggressiveness, an enthusiasm for turbulence and difficulty such as Rimbaud demonstrates in 'After the Flood," the poem that opens The Illuminations with a cleansing annihilation of all contexts and correspondences. The flood allows poet and reader to progress together in the invention (or discovery) of new contexts, the delineation of new correspondences. In all arts, it is as Braque declared: "Faut couper la racine." The roots must be cut, the necessary violence of floods invoked, the accidents and illusions of youth perpetuated beyond literal youth, because only under such conditions can enthusiasm grow into passion and originality find the scope and freedom it needs to become generosity.

What does not change / is the will to change (Charles Olson, ""The Kingfishers")

PASSION AND GENEROSITY are the operations of liberty. The necessity of the new, the affirmation of the imagination's instinct for change, translates restlessness and the truculent desire to distinguish oneself from one's predecessors into liberation. This occurs because the impetus for change overcomes the weight of History (the paralyzing force of a canon already complete, already sufficient to any reader's needs) and the burden of self-consciousness (the paralyzing force of Culture, the invisible audience who, satisfied by the past, clamor only for its repetition in contemporary terms). The idea of an avant-garde proposes not only that a poet can clear a place at the literary frontier for his or her own as yet unresolved intimations of the poetic; it proposes that he or she can fundamentally change what a poem is and thereby change Culture, recreating the audience by creating a new kind of line, new syntax, new orchestrations of sound, image and sense. The grim demographics of literary history teach us that the audience for poetry is a tiny constant. The dour sheafs of university reading lists assert that the canon is impermeable. It is the bold capering of the avant-garde that allows a poet to reject such "facts" during the time it takes hopefully and joyfully to make a new poem.

Why didn't someone do something to stop the sins of the climate? (Marjorie Welish, "Respected, Feared, and Somehow Loved") You can't say it that way anymore. (John Ashbery, "'And Ut Pictura Poesis ls Her Name")

THE LIBERATING QUALITY OF THE AVANT-GARDE reproves those reactionary critics and poets who insist that the practices of experiment alienate

the readership and isolate the

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Oh TS AT tion — mmemetniliee inmmenf"—bata hapa > poet from the consensus upon which he or she depends for virtue and which in turn depends upon the poet for illumination. What virtue can there be in the miming re-enactment of what is already believed? What is the use of illuminating those very preconceptions that inhibit originality in basic human relationships as well as in poetry? Those preconceptions are what Marjorie Welish calls "the sins of the climate.'"' And for the readers of poetry (that constituency supposedly abandoned by the avant-garde) climate is canon, the cumulative imperium of how the past has determined a poem should be made. By challenging the authority of canon with unsanctioned poetic conduct, or more simply still, by rejecting the idea of canon, assuming that every writer and reader devises provisional canons keyed to the imagination's passing moments, the avant-garde includes the audience for poetry by making that audience a collaborator in the constant redefining of what a poem is and can be. It is the poet who works only in prescribed forms who reduces the audience to the status of passive admirers whose only function is to approve the arithmetic of what they read. The purpose of the avant-garde is not to populate the fringes of culture or to reject for the mere sake of rejection whatever centeredness'a culture may possess. When Ashbery writes, "You can't say it that way anymore," he reminds the poet of his or her responsibility to that audience of co-authors. Revision, not repetition, is the task of the poet, and new views can only be achieved from outside the circle of accepted practice. The point of the avant-garde is to break far enough out of that circle to reenvision it and to offer the audience at the center poems by which the center can be changed and the original circle of culture enlarged by the generosity of greater inclusiveness.

There is a mystery that must be (Clark Coolidge, "A Monologue")

(André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism") INCLUSIVENESS ORIENTATES POETRY towards the future and asserts the poet's integrity as author of that future's language and thus of its very consciousness. As conservative a poet/critic as he grew to become, even T. S, Eliot urged the poets that followed him to 'fare forward' beyond the closed circle of ends and beginnings to which he consigned himself. All movements in the art, even those as radical in their debuts as High Modernism, ultimately restrict themselves to those rituals they have devised and taught their readers to recognize as poetry. Whatever form or forms the avantgarde takes in a particular moment of history, its prime purpose is the discomfiture of those rituals through the advocacy of experience, through the insistence that what may yet be known and may yet be written must surely be more various and more

fully competent to express the entirety of human thought and feeling than any method or measure presently in use. The avant-garde upholds the myth of progress and the mysteriousness of futurity, In a time as distrustful of ideologies as our own, as sodden with grief over the horrors committed in the name of futurity, the avant-garde may seem to some a naive sentimentality and to others a dangerous self-righteousness. However, I believe it is both more naive and more dangerous to assume the helpless repetitiveness of history implicit in theories of poetry that restrict the art to narrative methods and prescribed formal structures: naive, because it ignores the huge contingencies of experience, the accidents that can overwhelm a moment with possibilities and terrors; and dangerous because it limits the ability of poetry to respond actively to those possibilities and terrors. Wisdom, we tend to believe, is the acknowledgment of reasonable limits. Passion is the refusal to accept such limits on the basis of a faith that can only be justified by a barely imaginable posterity. The avant-garde exists to remind wisdom of passion, the backward-looking present of the undetermined qualities of futurity. Life zs elsewhere because only in the indeterminacies of elsewhere can the imagination author both background and foreground, the activity and circumstances of poems as competent as their creators and readers may collaborate to become.

Duncan McNaughton

Clear Spot

When the morning calls in, that golden bird

when it's over, that golden metaphysical bird

when the meaning calls I am in

There were no gold birds in the meaning

other than golden, the metaphysical birds

"Those little golden birdies, look at them'"'

for Lee Hickman 6.23.89

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Notes on Contributors Issue Number Ten

MEI-MEI BERSSENBRUGGE's recent book, Empathy, was published by Station Hill Press... GERALD BURNS has relocated to Austin, where his wife studies law at the University of Texas. His latest book, A Thing About Language, was issued this November by Southern Illinois University Press... BRUCE CAMPBELL has a piece in the next (special William Bronk issue) of Sagetrieb on the status of the proposition in Bronk’s poetry. Earlier acceptances: a piece on Susan Howe's Articulation of Sound Forms in Time in The Difficulties, and a piece on Artaud and

Barthes in Poetics Journal... TOM CLARK''s poetry books include Disordered Ideas, Easter Sunday, and the forthcoming Fractured Karma. He is also the author of several biographies of writers, including Damon Runyon, Jack Kerouac and Ted Berrigan, and is now at work on a life of Charles Olson. He teaches poetics at New College of California, and makes his home in Berkeley... JOHN CLARKE is Editor of intent. Letter of Talk, Thinking, & Document, Buffalo, NY, and 1989 recipient of the Helen and Laura Krout Ohioana Poetry Award (“‘it goes each year to an outstanding Ohio poet, who has contributed to the world of poetry.”’)... NORMA COLE is the author of Mace Hill Remap and Metamorphopsis. Her translation of the entire text of II donc is forthcoming from O Books as It Then

... DANIELLE COLLOBERT, French writer, 1940-1977, author of Meurtre, Dire I-II, Il donc, Survie... CLARK COOLIDGE?’s next book is Sound as Thought: Poems 1982-1984 (Sun & Moon 1989)... BEVERLY DAHLEN lives and works in San Francisco, The second volume of A Reading (8-10) is forthcoming from Lapis Press, but not before the third volume (11-17) comes out from Potes & Poets Press. She has recently published work in Paper Air, Sonora Review, Mirage, and the final issue of Ironwood... SALLY DOYLE: “‘I live in San Francisco and teach ESL and Creative Writing to adults. I’m currently completing a book of Shepherding poems. The first poem from this Shepherding series appeared in the April issue of However)”... RACHEL BLAU DuPLESSIS’ editing of The Selected Leters of George Open will appear soon from Duke University Press, and Signets: Reading H.D., ed. DuPlessis and Friedman, is forthcoming from University of Wisconsin Press, as well as The Pink Guitar: Writing as Feminist Practice from Routledge... CLAYTON ESHLEMAN's recent books include Hotel Cro-Magnon (Black Sparrow Press) and Novices: A Study of Poetic Apprenticeship (Arundel Press). This last July, he began work on a translation of César Vallejo’s Trilce, which Eridanos Press will publish in 1991... PHILLIP FOSS’ The Composition of Glass was published by Lost Roads. He edits Tyuony:... DAVID C.D. GANSZ is Senior Contributing Editor of NOTuS. His books are Animadoersions (Logres, 1986), Sin Tactics (Woodbine Press, 1988), and The Sentencing (St. Lazaire Press, 1989)... BARBARA GUEST’s Musicality (with artist June Felter) was published by Kelsey St. Press, Berkeley, in 1988. Fair Realism was issued by Sun & Moon Press, 1989... EDMOND JABES’s Book of Resemblances is forthcoming from Wesleyan University Press (Spring 1990). Chicago University Press has just published The Book of Shares. His book of poems, If There Were Anywhere But Desert, is available from Station Hill, which has also announced a book-length interview,.. LARRY KEARNEY’s work includes Fifteen Poems and Dead Poem, both from White Rabbit Press, Five (Tomboctou), Kidnapped (Foot), Oz and Damaged Architecture (Smithereens), and Streaming (Trike)

.. KEVIN KILLIAN has written a novel, Shy (Crossing Press, 1989) and Bedrooms have Windows, a book of sex memoirs (Amethyst Press, 1989). His interviews with Rita Moreno, Joseph L, Mankiewicz and Debbie Reynolds will appear in the next issue of the "Official Journal of the Natalie Wood Collectors' Club." Recently, Kevin's poem "Pasolini" showed up in John Ashbery's version of the Best American Poetry 1988; work can be seen in Farm, Talisman and Writing... RICHARD KOSTELANETZ's latest book is a collection of essays, On Innovative Music(ian)s (Limelight). He is presently finishing his second collection of essays on poetry, The New Poetries and Some Olds, for publication in 1990 by Southern Illinois University Press. He is also preparing an exhibition of his Literary Videotapes... JOANNE KYGER, a native Californian, has had 12 books of published poetry, the most recent being Phenomenological from A Curriculum of the Soul series by The Institute of Further Studies, Buffalo, NY. She has been writing poetry since 1957, For the past 20 years her home has been in Bolinas, California. She has taught at the New College of San Francisco, and in the Poetics Program at Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado... HANK LAZER has poems forthcoming in Aerial, Stanford Humanities Review, Central Park, Screens and Tasted Parallels, and Sequoia. An essay on patterns of inclusion/exclusion in university-sponsored poetry readings is forthcoming in American Poetry... JOSEPH LEASE's poems have appeared (or are forthcomng) in Pequed, NOTuS, The Paris Review, Boulevard, New American Writing, The Quarterly, and The Boston Review (introduced by Robert Creeley)... STANLEY LOMBARDO teaches Classics at the University of Kansas, He has published translations of the poetry of Parmenides and Empedocles, Aratus, and Callimachus and is now at work on Homer and Hesiod... DUNCAN McNAUGHTON's Love Triumphant: Meditations on Wm. Shakespeare's Sonnets will be published by Personabooks in Oakland, and CPF, a volume of poems and prose, by Waternet/Tomboctou in Bolinas... DOUGLAS MESSERLI's Maxims from My Mother's Milk/Hymns to Him was published recently by Sun & Moon Press,.. ROCHELLE OWENS has published 13 books of poetry and 3 collection of plays. Her Obie Award-winning plays have been produced worldwide. Futz was made into a feature film and has become a classic of the American avant-garde theatre. Her current project is a production of her new play, Three Front, and an art video titled How Much Paint Does The Painting Need, based on her collection of poems with the same title... TED PEARSON's most recent books are Mnemonics (Gaz, 1985) and Catenary Odes (O Books, 1987). His collected poems, Evidence: 1975-1989, will be available from Gaz this fall. He now lives in Ithaca, New York... BOB PERELMAN's most recent books are Captive Audience (The Figures) and Face Value (Roof)... DENNIS PHILLIPS is the author of The Hero Is Nothing (Kajun Press) and A World (Sun & Moon,

1989)... ANTONIO PORTA was born in Milano in 1935, where he lived until his death last April. He worked for many years in the publishing business, where he was an influential editor, and as a literary critic for various newspapers and magazines. He was also a founding member and on the editorial board of the cultural tabloid Aifabeta. From his numerous books of poetry, fiction and drama, which established him as an important figure in what became known as the "'neo avant-garde," three have appeared in English: as if it were a rhythm, Red Hill, 1978; Invasions & other poems (1960-1984), Red Hill, 1986; Kisses from Another Dream, City Lights, 1987... STEPHEN RATCLIFFE's books include Distance and Mobile/Mobile... DAVID RATTRAY lives in New York City. He is a member of the Lost Tribe of Bonare... DONALD REVELL's most recent collection of poems is The Gaza of Winter, from University of Georgia Press, and his third collection, New Dark Ages, is scheduled to be published by Wesleyan in 1990... Poems from ANTHONY ROBBINS' Theories of Decline have appeared recently in Sulfur, New Directions Anthology 52, The Southern Review, Pulpsmith, and loblolly, and others are scheduled for forthcoming issues of Exquisite Corpse and Partisan Review, He is currently completing a book-length study of the poetry and criticism of Hayden Carruth. He teaches at the University of Minnesota in Duluth... LESLIE SCALAPINO's book way (North Point Press, 1988) received the Before Columbus Foundation American Book Award, the Lawrence Lipton Prize, and the San Francisco State Poetry Center Award. The play "fin de siécle, III" is included in a book of Scalapino's essays and poems titled How Phenomena Appear to Unfold (Fall 1989, Potes & Poets Press)... AARON SHURIN's most recent book is's Dream (O Books, 1989). He has essays on collage methodology and textual landscape in Poetics Journal 8, and AIDS and Language in ACTS 10. He is the recipient of a 1989 California Arts Council fellowship... JOSEPH SIMAS' co-translation of Anne-Marie Albiach's Mezza Vice is available from Post-Apollo Press, and his work, including translations, is included in Benjamin Hollander's Translating Tradition: Paul Celan in France... PAT SMITH is the editor of NOTuS. He is the author of Hour History (Burning Deck, 1987) and Detroit (St. Lazaire, 1988)... For information on ADRIANO SPATOLA, see Antonio Porta's obituary of him in this issue... DAVID LEVI STRAUSS' writings on art and culture appear in Artforum, Art in America, Arts, Artscribe (London), Arena (Madrid), Artes de Mexico, Afterimage, Re/Search, Cinematograph and elsewhere. He edits and publishes ACTS in San Francisco, where ACTS 0: In Relation has just appeared... JOHN TAGGART's poems have appeared in recent issues of Epoch, New American Writing, NOTuS, Tyuonyi and Sulfur... NATHANIEL TARN's new book, Seeing America First, is from Coffee House Press, Minneapolis... PAUL VANGELISTI lives in Los Angeles. In 1988 he received an NEA Poetry Fellowship. He has published numerous books

of poetry and translations. Two recent book-length poems, Villa, an epistolary novel in verse, and Nemo, continue to circulate

. - - PASQUALE VERDICCHIO is editor of the chapbook series Parentheses Writing Series. His latest publication is Foresta Ultra Naturam (Red Hill Press, 1989), translations from the Italian with Paul Vangelisti. He teaches literature and writing at the University of California, San Diego... FRED WAH is currently a contributing editor to Open Letter and a managing editor of SwiftCurrent, an electronic literary magazine available through a database at York University in Canada. He now teaches at the University of Calgary, and since 1965 he has published 12 books of poetry. Waiting For Saskatchewan was awarded the Governor-General's Award... ROSMARIE WALDROP's recent books of poems are The Reproduction of Profiles (New Directions) and Shorter American Memory (Paradigm Press). Her novel, The Hanky of Pippin's Daughter, is available from Station Hill. SE

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