Aufgabe

Number 1, Summer 2001
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(the absolute impossibility of being heroic anymore drives me sad and alone. This is a political statement.)

— Andrei Codrescu
The invitation from Peter Neufeld and E. Tracy Grinnell to contribute a “French section” for the inaugural issue of Aufgabe coincided with my completion of Crosscut Universe: Writing on Writing from France (Burning Deck 2000). Many of the texts in that volume had first appeared in French literary journals of recent decades. American readers frequently expressed complete unfamiliarity with these journals, in fact surprise that such journals would exist. My response was to make a “French section” which would begin to address this blank.

This section begins to map spatially and temporally the variety of poetics and aesthetics of the editors. Some of these publications existed as a vivid flash, others have endured over time. Claude Royet-Journoud’s l’in-plano was programmed as a daily single page event produced for one year. On the other hand, Henri Deluy’s Action poétique (Revue trimestrielle) initiated by Gérald Neveu, recently celebrated an extraordinary fifty years of publication. As its front matter indicates, the periodical Change was directed by a collective with Jean-Pierre Faye at the helm. When Banana Split ceased publication in France, it was “adopted” by editors in Denmark, at which point its former editors in Marseille, Liliane Giraudon and Jean-Jacques Vitéon, along with Henri Deluy and Jean-Charles Depaule, began to publish if. ŽUK, Tartine and SKORIA were single folded sheets of paper, l’in-plano a single unfolded sheet, whereas Nioques, Siècle à mains, détails, fig., FIN and Java for example, are perfect bound.

Presented within our publication constraints (alas, no color reproductions; and our uniform page size presents publications of varying sizes, formats, with gorgeous color covers, graphics & a range of production values—try to imagine them!) this section is an introductory display in which front matter indicates editorship & dates in order to anchor the existence of a journal within a history of written production. Tables of contents reflect demographics. The section is an array of particulars, a sampling of the editorial art itself, inextricable from the instants of writing among which publishing events take place. Selections are inflected by the desire to make known the dedication with which writing from other languages has been sought and translated for French readership.

—Norma Cole
French Mags

*action poétique* #36 front cover, table of contents, front matter
*action poétique* #113/114 front cover, front matter, contents & Deluy text
*action poétique* #144 front cover, from Joseph Guglielmi “Journal” (a regular feature over several years), from Serge Gavronsky’s “Letter from America”
*action poétique* #151 50 Year Anniversary Issue front cover, contents & front matter, Huguette Champroux text, “Luage”
*Banana Split* # 25 front cover, front matter, table of contents, Guglielmi text, back cover
*Banana Split* (under new Danish editorship) #7 front cover, back cover (Jacques Roubaud photo)
*Change* # 18 front cover, front matter & table of contents, 2 pages of Jean-Pierre Faye text on form.
*Change* #38 front cover, front matter and table of contents, contents plus a page of Faye text, beginning pages of Danielle Collobert In Memoriam section
*détail* #2 front cover, front matter & table of contents, beginning of “six novels”
fig.1 front cover, front matter, first page of Claude Royet-Journoud text “i.e.”
fig.3 drawing
FIN#1 front cover, table of contents, back cover
*if* #1 cover, front matter, Tsvetaeva page
*if* #11, table of contents, Véronique Pittolo text
*Java* #17 Dominique Fourcade special issue front cover, table of contents, page of Fourcade text
*l’in-plano* #19 Pascal Quignard text, front and back of issue (each issue is one sheet of paper)
*NIOQUES* #5 front cover, table of contents, front matter, Micaëla Hennich drawing & Jacques Derrida text
*Revue de littérature générale* 95/1 “La mécanique lyrique” front cover (annual, two issues appeared edited by Pierre Alferi & Olivier Cadiot)
*Siècle à mains* #11 front cover, front matter, table of contents, 2 pages of Michel Couturier text
*SKORIA* #6, title section (*SKORIA* consist of a single sheet of paper printed on both sides, horizontal and vertical fold)
*Tartine* #10 title page (*Tartine* is a single sheet folded in half)
*Vendredi* 13 #1 front cover
*Z U K* #7 front (folded), inside (*Z U K*, eds. Spectres familiers & Claude Royet-Journoud, consists of a single sheet folded in half)
action poétique

andré barret
gil jouanard
pierre lartigue
franck venaille

baudelaire
par andré barret

pour dada
par paul-louis rossi

henri deluy alain lace
franck venaille

traduite et présentée par jacques roubaud :

LA PREMIÈRE POÉSIE LYRIQUE JAPONAISE

au quatrième congrès des écrivains tchecoslovaques :
l’intervention d’antonin liehm

REVUE TRIMESTRIELLE - N° 3, 90 F.
1er TRIMESTRE 1968 - PIERRE JEAN OSWALD ÉDITEUR
la poésie doit avoir pour but la vérité pratique

le « man'yoshû » et la première poésie lyrique japonaise
l'impossible dialogue ?
contribution à la discussion lors du 4° congrès des écrivains tchécoslovaques
quatre poèmes
poèmes en marge des regrets
l'apprenti foudroyé
pour dada
le paysage heureux dans l'œuvre de baudelaire
notes et informations
poésie et publicité

36

3 jacques roubaud
25 henri dechay
26 antonin lichan
34 andrée barret
36 oll jouanard
39 pierre tartigue
45 franck vensille
49 paul-louis rossi
55 andrée barret
49 andrée barret, slain lance, franck venaillle, henri dechay
73 alban bertero

Les textes doivent nous permettre d'appréhender, en trois exemplaires. Les manuscrits non retournés ne sont pas retournés. Pour toute correspondance, joindre un timbre pour la réponse.
### Action poétique

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Dépôt légal 1er trimestre 1968

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POÉSIES

EN FRANCE

1978 - 1988

action poétique

rue J-Mermont, République, 75020 Paris
publié avec le concours du Centre National des Lettres

A PARAÎTRE
POÈTES EN URSS - LYRIQUES LATINS
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Pédales : une histoire d'amour : Charles Dolecsynetz
Dante, notre poète : Franco Ferreri

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Christian Tartary ..................................................154
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Où donc va ma vie : Fernando Passos, trad. Henri Delay
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CHRONIQUES NOTES INFORMATIONS EDITIONS REVUES


* *

Les photos qui accompagnent l'article sur les rencontres de Tarascon sont de Jean-Yves Courset.

Henri DELUY

LA DEMANDE...

Pour Mitsuou, que nous aimions

Nous souhaitons, cette année, poursuivre la réflexion amorcée, et que chaque livraison, depuis plus de trente ans, relance.
Nous souhaitons tenir à faire le point, comme ce dit, sur les états actuels des poètes et des démarches d'écriture qui se manifestent ici et maintenant.
Nous souhaitons marquer ainsi, dans le geste et par les textes, l'importance qu'ont, pour nous, l'intelligence des moyens et les approches théoriques. Dans la diversité qui est celle de notre revue. Et dans une volonté d'élargissement qui taille son rayonnement.

Ces dix années sont riches de mouvements profonds et d'accélérations peu communes dans l'histoire des événements, des idées et des hommes. A l'échelle mondiale : dans notre pays dans notre quartier. Les développements, et les régressions, économiques, l'évolution des rapports de force, les affrontements de classes, les débats idéologiques, n'ont pas manqué de se faire sentir. Y compris sur le terrain qui est le nôtre.
Dans l'histoire de notre poésie, la période visée s'est déroulée dans un climat particulier. On en trouvera ici la trace.
Action Poétique

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Jackson Mac Low
Bernard Heidsieck

Camões sous la prose
Henri Deluy

Jean-Pierre Faye
Liliane Giraudon
Philippe Beck

La poésie...
Les avant-gardes/
Les totalitarismes (I)

Serge Fauchereau, Hubert Lucot,
Pascal Boulanger, Marc Petit,
Patrick Beurard-Valdoye, François Boddaert,
Kast(h)i(n) Molnár, Philippe Beck,
Marie Étienne, Jude Stéfan, Paul Louis Rossi,
Robert Davreux, Christophe Tarkos,
Vannina Maestri, Jean-Pierre Bobillot,
Éric Clémens, Claude Minière,
Jean-Paul Auxeméry, Laurent Jaffré,
Joseph Guglielmi, Gil Journaud,
Jean-Michel Espitallier, Michel Ronchin,
Christophe Marchand Kiss, Jacques Sivan,
Dominique Buisset
LE JOURNAL DE
JOSEPH GUGLIEMI

Parenthèse du 27 05 96.
Quand un artiste est né, ses parents, ses amis ont le droit de pleurer chacun un ou deux larmes qui ne vont pas au bout de sa tristesse.
À utiliser dans un poème en cours au studio Barbès.
Je ne suis pas jaloux votre escorent choante, chantante "bechiala ink clitraiv" ha trugado
pour sa reverie.
Mercredi 25 octobre 1995. (suite)
France Ma. Qui l'emplace s'apelle Nysen (privé...)
Photos prises à la regretive bibliothèque Biflina, rue Violete-De-Temple... Simone Gallimard, Gratelie Bourget, Per Aage Brand, Philippe Malaunam... Vers 1992 ?
Mort de François Beltrameau, sa voix douce et poétique.
"Ted Brettman scrit une poésie-drame intuitant..."
geste che à mort...sa mort aussi chez lui... Il ne savait pas voir "la mort".

Pendant la "metropole"
Le voyage continue, m'envoie-t-il en délicace en 1990... Beltranmetti, sans doute un héritage... "Gaule milh !" Julien Gracq compare les souvenirs de Saint John Perse à du chewing gum : comme lui, elles perdent aussi leur saveur.
Jeudi 26 octobre.
Enfin, on finit, poive !
Vendredi 27 octobre.
 seize heures après douche et téléph rire Simonet...
Un peu de Fee Ma...
Rivière, le jardin est encore tout nu.
Pres de vert convaincu...
Emotion stête...
Verte couleurs et cuivre, image d'une bête...
Midi...
Regardez, Echenor, ça fait...
Echo zon
Zone Che
Hier Nathalie Saurina à la télé
Lecture de poésie dans le Murauto!
Je rentre par la rue de Turenne, Saint Paul, le quai jusqu'à Henri IV...
Je croise une blonde pressée dans l'escalier du mâtre. On esquisse un coupé-pied au portillon. Sourrises. Bonne de partir...
Nuit chaude pensée fleur,...
J'en trouve une autre, pas terrible !
Cœur et soli con...
Parenthèse du 31 mai 1996.
Ah que je suis heureux. Nous sommes quelques-uns abrités par le silence de Christian Pogent qui n'aime en somme que peu de gens qui n'ont pas vraiment "étonnant..." ceux, qui, n'ont pas réussi leur "œuvre"...
Ouf ! (voir, Une erreur de la nature, F.O.L)

20/10/96.
Suite.
Métis, vent chaud sur Isly. Musiques dans la rue...
"Museo Randard à la soir..."
Fabuleux ! La sape de Gary Grant en 52 !
C'est dans ce film qu'a été inventé le shampooing et la couleur pâle. Voir l'arrangement hard du cuir de Marylin Monroe et le clap avec l'aide d'en Gary Grant sublime en bleu jean...

Dimanche 29 octobre.
Dites des foils de chasse. Berger afghan, bagages...

Le rouge, tiesta... Machine à écrire Remington, mod. 1950, Leurd...

Lundi 30 octobre.
Chattson-Coligny, Ronne.
Parenthèse du 1er juin 1996.
L'homme est le seul animal qui ne sait où il vient si où il va...
Rolland Garius. Les frenches tombent comme des mouches...
Fête à l'école de Gabrielson...

Tentative de purification artistique à Chimaera... 30 octobre 95.
Champ de colzas en fleurs... Brume...
Froid au bord de "Eigamo assommo..."
Chaussures Elégant vêts. Sampa pour moi qui n'aimons (horreur des cléments)...
Je m'envole avec un bouchée de kugel-bog... Sera...
Cinq heures. Suis tombe...
Jacob's ladder de Denise Leveret... UN OURS BLANC passe dans le neige... con-
leurs satis... Éclectique faible ou alors ma vaine haute ? Il... l'estrone entre un souhait et la déprime...
5 h 30. Je file ce cahier...

Mardi 31 octobre.
Gris. Suis plante. Dix heures. Je regarde le gris météorologique de la Remington. Silence. Je ne peux taper (j'ai pour Sans risque de crier l'homme... Plus tard... Le capitaine du désert (The searcher), pas vu jusqu'à la fin... Parrait que je me suis complaminé...
"Lyriisme modéré", expression de Manuel Bandera...

SERGE GAVRONSKY

LETTRE D'AMÉRIQUE III

Y a-t-il aux États-Unis un espace quelconque où le débat poétique ait lieu ? L'espace, me semble-t-il, est multiple car dans l'univers du pragmatique, l'idéologie n'est que soupçon de vapidité, je veux dire simultanément écrasé et "tamponne composé de déchets... "Gavronsky. Erreur quand, paradoxallement, l'idéologie correcte prend le devant sur la réalité complexe de l'Écriture. Sur les rayons des librairies le nombre immense de livres signé en masse. Voir les Catholic Genghis (Penguin, 1992); ou In Another Part of the Forest, An Anthology of Gay Short Fiction (Crown, 1994); ou New Chicana / Chicano Writing (Alicein, 1994) ou encore Motherlands, Black Women's Writing (Rutgers, 1994), entité New York, An Anthology of Puerto Rican Poets (Merton, 1994). Je n'ai rien...

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Action Poétique

4 conversations :
Remmanuel Hocquard
& 10 sonnets
choisis par Viviane –
Juliette Valéry
Alexandre Delay
Maya Andersson

&
Per Aage Brandt
Marc Petit
Joseph Julien Guglielmi
Huguette Champrioux
Alain Cressan
Michelle Grangaud

Olivier Barbarant

50 ANS
Huguette Champroux

"Luage"

"Alcyon" est un trio.
M. Monnombe
Un endroit secoué.
Une montagne. Non.
Nouveau. Non.
Un autre. Une chariotece - 3
3 alcoolises violets. Zones.
"Vous. À vous.
Mère absence. Même volonté.
Schiffer en ça. Puisque j'attends.
Un porte maïs pour y mettre sa voix. Son
corps sage. Un poudre rouge pour
accomplir.
vire -
Alers. Alcyon oui.
Très rarement observée
parce que nuisante technique
lager
à 2° du mois un gelèel rond met fin à l'aïge
U
est-ce partout, eff.
dans le partire fin de cobalt.
à gauche ou à droite
ce vendredi dit gauche
Samedi. Dimanche non
Alcyon
Tro
Lundi ou
est Alcyon
un mot pour transmettre
indiquer décharger quelle théorique
tel cobalt quel-degré quelle phrase (finale) (dedans), plus
une note cependant
tel qu'en iradiant

mais qui "M'ALCYON" - quotien quotidien
chacun
chacune
M'TION - veut écouter AL- NON.
LUAGE du même STAF
Est rode ? Donc
iradiant - Pas moins Ce jour ci. Gauche
On écoute c'est le soir. Protoode
Anais avait mis beaucoup de
musique.
VIVA
Banana Split
L'ABONNEMENT A BANANA SPLIT COMPREND 4 PUBLICATIONS
IL EST REGLABLE (100 F) par C.B. ou C.P. à : Jean-Jacques VITON
(27 Ave. du Prado 13006 MARSEILLE)
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*NAVIRE SANS GOULET* (IV) p.252 Jean-Luc HERISSON
À Norma Cole, Michael Palmer, David Antin

LE CIMENT DU LIVRE

D' un livre
dont je ne lirai pas l'introduction
Proclus, par exemple
qui est- il ?
un philosophe ou un poète
l'éliotrope ou la prière ?

le voir citer :
« moi, une image
de moi

*
Banana Split
Tidsskrift for multinational poesi

7

ISSN 0906-6489

Jorden rundt, ca.
I do love Banana Split
Chili
Matta
Chomsky
"bains de sang"

Cortazar
Tolmacz

Jean Pierre Faye
mouvement du change des formes

J.C. Montel
état des proses

états de poésie
Jacques Roubaud

L. Robel
Mitsou Ronat

Yves Buin

Rossi
Bénézet
Guglielmi

Torrigiani

Groupe Information Armée
Congrès de Santiago
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5.0 L'exploration du futur humain passe par l'investigation de la déraison : elle se heurte à une « raison » répressive ou plutôt à une contre-raison, qui remplit le rôle du dressage dans une mise en scène fixe. La mission que se donne cette dernière sur le théâtre mondial est d'intercepter le changement des formes à l'œuvre sur les objets de l'histoire, et d'en interdire les transformations. Mais ce discours de la contre-raison est lui-même véhiculé par une économie qui en déplace les lieux, par un « change des lieux » (Stellenwechsel) ou des rôles, qui fait jouer à ce gardien de l'ordre et à ce conservateur culturel la fonction de l'incendiaire et du brûleur de livres. L'incendie des « bibliothèques de Babylone » est produit au terme d'un brûlage par la fiction, auquel appartiennent aussi le télégramme élogieux de Borgès à un homme d'État — à un homme de la raison d'État —, celui même qui a énoncé l'ordre de cribler d'acier les bouts et les forêts de tout un peuple.

Désormais, la bataille dans les égouts de l'économie, et la lutte et les détournements aériens du langage, masse par masse, s'articulent mondialement et se joignent. La jonction dans la divergence — la disjonction qui engendre —, voici qu'elle relie les frappes différentes du processus révolutionnaire dans l'étoffe du langage et sur le sol de l'histoire.

Il s'agit pour nous de déchiffrer cette pliure des couleurs, dans les langues de l'idéologie et sur les choses — et de capter les déplacements de leur intensité et de leur fréquence, et la frappe de leurs effets.

Uppsala, 28 novembre 1973
la machine à conter

Jacques Roubaud le conte du Labrador
Danielle Collobert survie
Agnès Rouzier à haute voix
Christian Rosset
Gérard de Cortanze
Robert Cordier
Fender
Hubert Courcoux
Alain Helissen
la narration vous change la vie
Marlène Sebou
Lulue

Noam Chomsky & Régis Debray

narration et pouvoir → l’effet "media"

Peter-Paul Zahl prisons Abdellatif Laâbi
Jerome Rothenberg le Vaste Dionysios Solomos
Jean Paris Saul Yurkiévich

Change
Collectif Change

Jean PARIS

Jean Pierre FAYE Léon ROBEL

Mitsou RONAT Saul YURKIEVICH

Jacques ROUBAUD

ASSISTANTE DE RÉDACTION : Marie-Odile DEMENGE

La Machine à conter

5 Conte, rapportage : la machine récitante Jean Pierre Faye

11 La princesse Hoppy, ou le conte du Labrador Jacques Roubaud

31 Survie, et fragments Danielle Colibert

42 Pour Danielle Colibert

71 • A haute voix :
    ce qui se fait dans ce qui se parle
78 • Le fait même d'écrire

Agnès Rouzier

Critique

Noam Chomsky et Régis Debray
Narration et pouvoir : massacres et media
Noam Chomsky État de compte sur les massacres à Timor :
    déclaration aux Nations Unies

médiatique

Christian Russet

148 L'étendue muette
LE CONTE; LE RAPPORTAGE
la machine récitant

La figures centrale de la révolution française est née à Arras, rue des Rapportsurs. Rapporteurs, relaturs, relationnaires — narrateurs, en d'autres termes, ou récits — l'action vive est tissée de leur toile. À la différence des contes, ils ne disent pas qu'ils contrent. Mais ce qu'ils content, bientôt va compter — au nombre de ce qui compte.
A l'un des bouts de sa chaîne : le conteur, sauvage savant — théorème cristallin.
A l'autre extrémité : le rapporteur, contant — sans le dire.

La suspension ou l'événement du récit, dans le moment mal-larméen, a donnée evidence à son omniprésence action —
« Narrer... cela va... l'universel reportage dont... participe tous... »
Sa fonction économique s'y fait visible —
... « encore qu'à chacun suffirait peut-être, pour écarter la pensée humaine, de prendre ou de mettre dans la main d'autrui en silence une pièce de monnaie... »
Deux pôles contraires —
« Au contraire d'une fonction de numéraire facile et représente... le Dire... »
A partir du conte initial ou, agrandi, de l'épos, procèdent et se séparent les deux opposés — le rapport et le dire.
pour

Danielle Collobert

Jacques Roubaud
Anne-Marie Albiach
Bernard Pingaud
Michel Camus
Henri Deluy
Aline Dobry

Hubert Courcoux

Danielle Collobert... je l'entends, je la vois,
elle est mêlée à ma parole, et le travail que
je fais lui fait sa place, ou plutôt elle trouve,
sans effort et douleurusement, sa place au
beau milieu.

Ludovic Janvier

quelle tristesse, je ne peux pas écrire,
pardonnez-moi.

Samuel Beckett

comme brûle jamais. dit.

pour Danielle Collobert

temps. pour elle.

avec le temps, pour elle, la prose
au sens inverse du sens habituel était, devenue,
poésie, mais comme la prose de récit. pour elle, était
née d'une mort, de poésie c'est de la mort.
du récit qu'est venue, plus tard, pour elle, de nouveau la
poésie.
à l'extrême bord, de sa mort. à
elle
impossible, de séparer
de sa mort. ou
jourd'hui.

&

Sixromans, p. 36
N°2 PRINTEMPS 90

Robert Walser, Le Roi de Prusse, Le flic, p. 7
John Ashberry, Autoportrait dans un miroir contrecœur, p. 12
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Charles Olsen, Peines de Maximus, p. 50
Witold Gombrowicz, La littérature et l'œuf, p. 55
Ernst de Rotterdam, Lettre à un ami, p. 59

Revue publiée par Pierre Olfré et Suzanne Depuydt
41, rue des Fossés-Saint-Bernard - 75004 Paris
Dans les rues devenues inutiles il pleuvait tard pour la saison mais on croyait qu'il ne l'entendait plus,

Il l'avait dérobé à l'étalage sur un marché couvert.

La gueule béante, masquée par ses excroissances charnues, la Matemata attend.

Tu me l'as demandé : — pourquoi tu ne renvoies pas Japhet Kibisu ? —

Salvatore m'a cédé cette chambre sans y renoncer tout à fait.
i. e. Claude Royet-Journoud
Où j'en suis Danielle Collobert
Distance Robert Creeley
Voyage aux étoiles Panamareako
D’un amour volé en éclats Alain Veinstein
Gindecca Edith Dahan
Lettre du 23 nov. 1980, l’œuvre Joerg Ortner
1978 Pierre Devin
Conversation pour l’igloo Mario Merz
Lettre à Claude Royet-Journoud Roger Laporte
Le plomb De la naissance Danielle Collobert
1 en arrière de l'image
il n'y a plus aucun recours
l'extériorité des choses épuise l'émotion

une dernière fois
il accompagne le bruit
l'espace autour
Sommaire

Jean-Pierre Bertrand  Cinq définitions
Alain Veinstein       Temps d’antenne
Anne-Marie Albiach   Un discursif, l’espace
Jean-Pierre Bertrand  Dessin aussi vite que l’acide du citron
                      5 fois
Dominique T. Pasqualini Test de vie
Lan Fredrikson        Autoportrait
                      Lettre à Claude Royet-Journoud
Alain Veinstein       Sinon la nuit
Jean-Pierre Bertrand  Détail agrandi d’un dessin vite dans le format 12/7
                      5 fois
Claude Royet-Journoud Llan
Robert Creeley        Poèmes traduits de l’américain par Jean Daive

Couverture et ♛ par Jean-Pierre Bertrand

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publiée avec le concours du Centre national du livre

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issn en cours
Dépôt légal : mai 1999
anna akhmatova boris pasternak christian garcin marina tsvetaïeva bruno cany jean-charles de paule michel de nostredame jean todrani
Marina Tsvetaieva (1892-1941)

Poèmes
Texte français Henri Deluy

INVITATION
à la soirée intime
de
MARINA ZWETAEWÀ
— poésie —
ayant lieu au Studio „Eurythmie”
b. rue Huygens (XIV) — le 15 avril 1917 — à h. du soir

Extrait de L’Offense lyrique à paraître aux Editions Fourbis
Véronique Pitoëlo

Le Roi Louis

C'est le prélude, le commencement, les chevaux glissent, une figure apparaît, descend, enfile un pas vers l'avant, elle se retourne pour annoncer quelque chose.
La cérémonie se tient devant le château, tout est paré, près, les boucles tombent sur le tissu de brocart d'or.
Des portes s'ouvrent et se ferment à intervalles réguliers, on nous voit bouger, collaborer à la transparence de l'eau.
Les corps se délient pendant le deuxième mouvement, cette fois c'est le paysage qui se transforme avec l'impression que le monde fut devant nous.
Plus tard, Constance n'ira pas déposer des fleurs sur la tombe de son Roi, elle préfère se souvenir d'une figure vivante.
Pour le moment, le Roi danse et étudie la philosophie.

Le Roi est toujours au seuil d'un palais, d'un paysage, d'une émotion, il lit le mouvement naturel des choses. À son passage, chacun suspend le pas, les sujets se tont face avec perplexité. Ils tracent une courbe avec leurs têtes pinolées.
Le monde est silencieux quand Louis se dresse au milieu du feuillage et fait glisser sa cape de soie, le ciel se transforme et on distingue chaque brin d'herbe.
Les mains passent et s'appuient de nouveau sur les hanches traversées.
Le Roi annonce qu'il faut observer le ciel comme une mer.
Dominique Fourcade
au propre et au défiguré

Hugo Ball, Tenderenda le fantasté (extrait)

Vannina Maestri

En guise d'introduction

Dominique Fourcade

Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot ?

Frédéric Valabregue

"Une chose fuyive"

Michelle Grangaud

Pastiche à ma façon

Jacques Sivan

fourcade frikasé

Yannick Liron

Un string minimum, et la sorbétére chera

Olivier Cadiot

Bé-bégayer

Katalin Molnár

Et je retiens

Jean-Marie Gleize

Le poème est l'afflux de cela

Carole Darricarrère

La menace des flèches

Phéppe Beck

L'envolée

Hervé Bauer

Entretien avec Dominique Fourcade

Bibliographie

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Pose 1.5, (libre antenne) (extrait)

Jacques Sivan

la fuite

Olivier Blanckart

Ma mire

Jean-Michel Espitalier

Monsieur Davidson attaque Turin

Attention Travaux !

Charles Pennequin

Cher Jean-Michel

Storage
Dominique Fourcade

Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot ?

(notes sur le thème)

est-ce que je peux placer un mot ? et à qui poser la question ? il faudrait identifier la puissance qui autorise c'est qui c'est qui et qu'est-ce que placer un mot

Avril 1998 : je me trouve dans le temps qui suit l'écriture d'un livre, halo de mort qui l'entoure et se prolonge après sa parution, des mois durant. Nocif au possible. Toute parole est sucée par lui, engloutie par cet aspirateur informe qui a nom Le sujet monotype. On ne mesure jamais l'ombre d'un livre. Rayon d'action. Ni son absence de finalité. Sa beséialité. Il me tire vers l'arrière - mais le pire est qu'il est également en avant de moi. Harcèlement sexuel, fellation. Pire encore, le mal n'est pas là.

la puissance qui délivre la puissance qui délivre maman montre-moi tu toi tu toi donnez-moi une gifle, montrez-moi montre-toi maman vous vous

je suis l'enfant arrière et sa mère aggue aggeu dis aggeu mon chéri arreu il a dit arreeu aggagagaguigu je suis l'enfant et la mère arrière vous m'emmerdez avec votre langue bébé vous m'assénez qu'on ne parle pas la bouche pleine mais comment parler la bouche vide de mots
FABLE XVII

UN JOUR DE JUIN 1537, À LYON, ANTOINE
DU SAIX CROISE DANS LA RUE GASPARD DUIFFOPRUGCAR


Il introduisit le mot désastre en français. Il pleura de joie. C'est en 1537, un jour de juin, Antoine du Saix avait chez lui une large fenêtre à banc de pierre. C'est sur ce banc de pierre, compo-
sant un sermon, qu'il inventa le mot désastre.
Les astrologues italiens usaient du mot disastrato
pour qualifier un être né sous une mauvaise étoile.
L'article désastre du Dictionnaire Étymologique de
la Langue Française de Bloch et Wartburg est erroné.
Ce n'est pas François Rabelais, en 1546, qui a noté
ce mot pour la première fois. C'est son ami Antoine
du Saix, en juin 1537. Il avait trente-deux ans. Il
était l'aumônier du duc de Savoie.

Au même moment - à Lyon, deux rues plus loin -
un luthier de vingt-deux ans natif de Freising, au
nord-est de Munich, en apprentissage à Lyon, mettait
au point le premier violon. Il s'appelait Gaspard
Duiffoprugcar. Le mot violino ne parviendrait en
Italie que vingt ans plus tard, en 1562. Gaspard
Duiffoprugcar épousa Barbe Homeau. Il mourut déprimé,
ruiné, en 1571, à Lyon, un violon invendu sur son
lit de mort. J'imagine qu'il a à la bouche un mot
français qui était à la mode quand il avait vingt
ans. C'est le mot désastre.

Pascal Quignard
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Comité de rédaction : Bernard Carlier, Jacques Clerc
Jean-Marie Gleize

Le numéro : 95F. Abonnement un an : (2 No) 175F. Étranger : 220F.
LA SÉTERÈE Jacques Clerc éditeur 4, rue de Croner 26400 Crest
810. Toi qui est : les livres érigés comme des pierres tombales après le séisme des noms propres.
Revue de littérature générale

95/1
La mécanique lyrique

P.O.L
SIÈCLE A MAINS
72 Hornsey Lane, Highgate, Londres N.6, Angleterre
No. 11 1968

Directions:
CLAUDE ROYET-JOUMOUD
Anne-Marie ABLICH
Scellière de Rédaction
MICHEL COUTURIER
L'ABLATIVE ABSOLU

cel roucoulement bus et coupé
l'empreinte s'enfonce
prend eau de toutes ses parts
drainées tantôt en talus et
tantôt tournées d'aillex
là où je porte la tête
sous les arbres
j'ai hâte
l'angle d'incidence
instruct comme par mégarde
le pan de mur la touche et le fuseau
dans la fibre qui se déchire
lentement
je m'y formerais sans trêve
à la cantonade,
dans un tissu nevralgique
impunément
dans cet esprit
dans son atterrir cette réserve

un soubassement obstiné dans le motif
porte une volaille en cendre
jusqu'au déclin
les parois éclairées
dans le mouvement l'aurore en dépêze
laissant des marques ombres
taches
pans coupés
au biseau
d'une figure aveugle au toucher
qui se déformant par saccades
voile-face
prises de profil
à l'étendue rejoindrait
continûment
daussi l'articulation du désir
à hauteur dans la
branche
daussi le mur droit au sol
Éditions Spectres Familiers. N°6
Lectures - Notes - Parutions - Textes & Travaux.

LECTURE Des nuages et des brouillards : Emmanuel Hoequard.*

Au centre, quoi ? (1)

A l’issue du récit
la rumeur traçait un cercle.
Claude Royet-Journoud.

Deux versants : et l’analogie, entre. La rumeur,
one trainée de peur. D’un bord la rumeur du monde.
De l’autre la rumeur de fable.
La rumeur du monde, sans retournement sur
elle-même, dans une fuite sans terme : celle qui ne se
saisit pas, celle qui se propage dans la solitude, va et
vient entre sa bouche et son oreille. Celle qui se chu-
chote dans l’ombre, chacun n’étant qu’un relais entre
une bouche et une oreille. Celle qui dit qu’il y a autre
chose, une vérité cachée derrière les apparences. Celle
qui tente de donner un sens à ce qui n’en a pas, celle
qui veut donner un contour, une cible, à sa peur, qui
veut nous faire accroire l’idée qu’il y a une origine. La
rumeur du monde : la réponse à cette peur du non
sens, du sans origine : une conjuration du moment,
conjuration de la peur par la haine.
Nus (1)

Surgir du pouvoir tel un spectre
Un genou offert aux feux de la rampe
Pour mettre en scène la lumière
Le spectre d’une phrase
On hésite à faire l’analogie
Avec sa propre volonté
Tourné vers tourné contre sa propre espèce
Ou estimant la bonté
Réinventée
En couleurs atones
Compréhensible car en dehors
Un aimable mais difficile
Spectre d’une phrase
Ouvrant un prétendu accès
Cette image brisée de la victoire

Jerry Estrin (tr. F. de Laroque)

Extrait du demi-cercle

'les actes rencontrent des digues
sur les dimensions qui hésitent
amenés au jour
épars
ils ne dépassent pas
VENDREDI 13


HÉLÈNE BESSETTE, Si ; Paris, Gallimard, 1964.

A l’alternative, ce roman refuse de succomber : archaïque, le récit guide les mots, « moderne », les mots guident le récit. Mais c’est toujours la même sauveté qui tente de sauver l’honneur dans une pose tragique, ou de le faire disparaitre pour mieux le préserver par la mise en avant des objets : persiste l’illusion des avant-gardes dans l’illusion d’une décision libre, formelle ou syntaxique. L’aîle d’une expérience des limites ne conduira qu’à s’extraitre de soi ou de sa propre métaphore ; le texte : l’identité reste l’hypothèse nécessaire.

Si on lit le livre d’Hélène Bessette à l’écoute des cris qui s’adressent et se destinent à l’usure de l’hypothèse risquée d’un titre affirmé, on ne saura jamais si le suicide de Désiré ou que désirait Désirée ou que désirait Désirée, est ou n’est pas l’exhibitionnisme ironique de tout mythe initial, comparable à la réitération du vers de Gertrude Stein : « A rose is a rose is a rose... ». Ou bien, traduction plus osée: un livre est un livre est un livre..., car « la dernière et lumineuse » paga « avec son mot dernier ne paraîtra pas ».
L'étranger / EDMOND JABÈS

J'ai quitté une terre qui n'était pas
la mienne,
pour une autre qui, non plus, ne l'est
pas.
Je me suis réfugié dans un vocabule d'encre,
ayant le livre pour espace;
parole de nulle part, étant celle
obscure du désert.
Je ne me suis pas couvert la nuit.
Je ne me suis point protégé du soleil.
J'ai marché nu.
D'où je venais n'avait plus de sens.
Où j'allais n'inquiétait personne.
Du vent, vous dis-je, du vent
et un peu de sable dans le vent.

Tmel / DOMINIQUE FOURCADE

En poésie il y a des probabilités d'apparition
Je guette la vague de vingt quatre mètres qui apparaît
statistiquement tous les cent ans la vague de miel noir
contenue dans le poème avec ses abeilles
Ct
Instinct
Le zinc se découpe instinctif

Une vague est contenue dans le poème sans paraître — elle emporterait les stations de pompage mêmes.

Vous ne vous trompez pas prononce tncel comme vous pouvez Ça se prononce comme ça se découpe il n'y a pas à donner d'exemple.

Je vous supplie d'inventer la prononciation du poème son découpage vous ne vous trompez pas

A. Z. / MARIA GRINO
traduit de l'italien par Joseph Gaglelmi

peut-être faudrait-il s'astreindre se soumettre à une ligne une dictée accepter leur déroulement la ligne qu'ils exigent

traitement d'un objet

À long terme / KEITH WALDROP
traduit de l'américain par Françoise de Larque

J'ai perdu mon chemin plus d'une fois. Par moments, la question semble d'importance. Une soudaine prise de conscience et puis.

Supposons que je me conforme au sens commun, incapable de me rappeler les événements du plus récent passé. La souffrance, ses "témoins", ne font pas la lumière.

Ce que tu apprends en état d'ivresse, tu t'en souviens mieux en état d'ivresse. Je ne peux même pas penser le temps à rebours. La mémoire est meilleure après le sommeil.

Travailler à reculons, apprendre à apprendre. Je ne comprends pas que la naissance de Jésus, par exemple, rende "aujourd'hui" indispensable. Une diversité au-dessus de zéro.
guest edited by Leslie Scalapino
Two Poems

P. Inman

—for Heather Fuller

long. black. veil.

a. round. accuracy. shape. paragraph.
   hairs. made. of. pitch. wherever.
   i. near. jellied. peered. at.
   bugs. into. notes. but. it.
   doesn’t. pencil. through. in. nerves.
   the. undermine. from. an. old.
   bark. how. lace. flusts. how.
   flat. between. stall. made. of.
   coffeepot. haired. edges. in. everywhere.
   suit. oat. on. a. desk.
smokestack. lightning.

a. mind. landed.
as. nothing. but.
structure. a. width.
arch. looked. at.
ink. feet. did.
irish. of. how.
gestured. swim. put.
to. stutters. neap.
width. less. ness.
through. wife. rises.
at. last. coasted.
parfl.eche. insides.
of. me. seen.
to. rock. pen-name.
ashed. chords. along.
women. how. decimal.
color. in. it.
dusked. sweat. drops.
sight. nodged. how.
simple. lake. worth.
leggedness. in. fell.
ill. to. gusts.
too. glimpse. ice.
the. cake. midst.
of. anyone's. name.
flatland. around. popcorn.
loire. so. chinned.
only. the. two.
pitches. to. husks.
failure. crossed. through.
build. horned. film.
say. its. stem.
gaberdine. landed. through.
of. glimpses. its.
knock. etches. the.
brook. depth. of.
a. single. passenger.
the. hairs. along.
their. pencil. the.
earshot. i. can’t.
bolt. washed. history.
neg. olive. lowlands.
by. a. boat.
what. she. contained.
in. a. stream.
of. theory. itches.
my. nose. hairs.
at. the. light.
turned. out. feet.
wide. such. swim.
maned. moot. Beowulf.
“heart. failure.” cliffed.
after. how. color.
in. someone. to.
mice. thinnesses. to.
perch. cents. tawn.
under. the. pause.
in. my. Hawthorne.
haired. red. the.
better. gaunt. outside.
the. land. has.
begun. too. late.
to. be. stutters.
under. the. moss.
forms. church’s. hips.
a. woman. in.
a. field. coned.
in. to. vote.
at. name. from.
own. ankles. on.
the. rinse. troved.
flat. ticked. capillaries.
Luxemburg’s. stand. on.
tribalism. her. rice.
about. Juan. Gris.
earth. around. wash.
on. a. page.
these. islanders. capital.
over. fowl. glare.
apiece. how. snowed.
greek. plumbed. tracks.
the. natural. world.
less. as. it.
was. some. knock.
filled. with. maize.
edge. hide. stunts.
outside. of. a.
book. lump. notes.
mind. shone. out.
Three Poems

Miles Champion

The Beige Suprematist

We made some drawings of the volume lengthwise.
There was a typewriter key in the sweat.
What of the resolve that curtains us into a solid trope.
I see him loosen what’s moist,
    and acquire a mute pathos.
“That,” says Kazimir Malevich, “makes a soap man.”
On an island of noise, attach
the sockets to a mucuslike substance.
But what are these wooden pipes on the floor.
Points of beforehand in Deanna’s basement.
In the end, though, I came out on the square.
He said it was white and felt cheerful.
Our smooth shapes angled off in flakes of noun breath.
They have the inner beats.
Seems Tim swam off, forming two domes, whose crystals had dislodged.
Put literally the cylinder seems to striate the flicks.
The box that holds it has a burly dynamism.
A sausage-shaped ball roosters about this.
In constructing it, what I say breaks
    into heavy props.
Basic plastic strain exhausts artistic feeling on the roof.

So language, stopping, creates a square.
My sharp eye out, the size is no break, it words the interstices
    and creates a split.
That chairs be ladders, each chair rescuing a flake.
Chet bakes the fast eye.
It’s ridiculous to gargle the lance.
Miss Betty fit the armband, paints, bird mask and a powder nucleus
    into the stem.
As butter spins so does the powder arm
    against the scape.
Space rebounds from the brink to be gendered.
By the time I get there they have built a new bridge.
The spilt hope of a writing is taken as payment.
She farms the silhouette and I rain.
A gentle person blunts the efficacy of this tool, throwing himself instantly both back and ahead.
The brief world peels an alto.
Her sister slowly added a radio to the place and watched the redness of moments but would not participate.

The thought behind it makes a non-balloon on which the feelings are rung.
Chances are his chair, the sky is the plate, to tune among.
Of course anything can be used to sling shit but the larger structures are generally more full of it.
They clutch up each around its own excremental figment.
The rabbit has perfected a flag.
A pencil that big will bore the Martians.

It hefts an ego, or a testicle, or both.
He came to, a sky or hole.
Evidently thought was tolerated into runs back past the established wedge of consensus.
Then an addition dates his grasp, something uncertain sort of parallels the attributes of technique.
In the heat of something mid-afternoon additions write up.
Awkward meanings settle beyond the contracts.
I began to smell the set holding sound itself like a stick with the hat on it.
Onlookers are not always sure if the man in the street has been indoors.
Work flung some distance from a shoe was in the hills.
The remaining white says put.
Pinking

The buyers keep my hat
on structure Woods
use skirts lost in the woods Alone
together Our teeth in a corner
Cornet On my lips, the
shape of the word the Tease,
tone Airs knit
the pattern's freckle
Decides hangs stuffs
(Patience of the eye to load that
Them, there Surgically
tenting
the scent of
the treetops Did
potatoes fugue
Sum rubbing, plainly X
Earlier, liming the portrayalized jinx
Green face
Dilated beer case
two prongs poked thru the paper,
takes the ice cumber, number game
duets soloing, I
log the defect
the woods sore from rain
against the landscape
the indigence of rattling goofs up
our brains tungsten tears The cage
momently clogged, blunt pipe  Curved costs, umbrella footage  A tenor reaches for the high note My throat is in my heart, open mouthed  Ligature of freshing traits  Hiding tungsten snaps the oxygen pressure, she hasn’t scienced since yesterday’s leap  Tree  Cyclops The air is cold We hate the radio Leaves meanings jogger Highlinesed map, or woman’s sugar internally stirred by thoughts, mind shorts  Organic, edible burners fit tin cups from speckles throws on the salten pettles beneath the weeds burial circumstance choose life (bump and goose chew on mustard seed, heed what lies otherwise the leaf of the maker in thrall faultless no, or undertaken behind the tree I picture in my mind’s eye (ill nerve flaps a heated wire
Count Pointer Count

His mission lay among a few small islands
Looks like heads are blessed with hands
The wipe names, lowering over sentience
And you can reach for it, grab it and pull
Dreams of tangents from the rough circumference

What happens next is locked in pattern
Cut it this way, I don’t want chunks
The water dense and gloriously reflective
Kind of lid to drain the scattered mass
Insides waving in the dead light of sunset

Unencumbered except for wings and gnats
So unlaced the outside of the room
I begins with belt and zipper
Sign over door obscured by two
Gauche camels bashed the line of vision across

Blind Spot out at 4.7sec an obvious danger from trap one
St/range: An uncertain range

Pierre Joris

*I do hate to be chucked in the dark aboard a strange ship.*
*I wonder where they keep their fresh water.*

—JOSEPH CONRAD

What then is stranger than this? Not the word “this” nor the word “stranger” — noun or comparative — and all it implies — but the very thing in, with, toward, against, around, through which I am trying to think. The *la,* what gives the *la,* as the French say: “Donner le *la,/*” or, doubled in echolalia the note leads to the German verb “lassen,” which, to Celan, is all anybody, even a prophet, lightbearded or not, can do in this age, this our time, i.e. ever since Holderlin. *Lassen,* to babble, to give the double *la:* give it (in) the anguish of repetition, the double thing, “give it also its shadow,” the anguishing, (in) language.

But then language cannot really be the strangest thing either — I do make use of it, manipulate it, for better or worse, have a certain familiarity with it, which would suggest that the most strange is unlikely to reside there. Or could the strange be the uncanniness of the range of the familiar?

The strangest could thus be, despite all, the act of writing itself, even if or possibly exactly because it too seems so familiar to me, so very familiar indeed, because it is the act, the act of writing, the one that does what I am doing right now here, (no, there, i.e. back here, from where you, who read this, are) and which measures my days, and which I propose to myself and to others as the measure of my doing, even if that measure is already beyond measure, is exactly excess, situational potlatch, as all language is, because unnecessary, because “always already second.”

And even in its absence, even in the lack of writing, this act remains familiar — which is what makes this absence so strange, which is what makes the impossibility to write on a given day, a given week, a given month, so familiar to me — while simultaneously remaining strangeness itself: because it is what I do not understand, what I can’t and don’t want to understand. Even if as right now here I try to speak of it, to conjure the familiarity or the strangeness in a language that is both of these to me.
The strange in the dictionary is first off the unfamiliar, the previously unknown; secondly it is the out-of-the-ordinary, the unusual, the striking — that which differs from the normal. There are thus already two strangenesses: one that just happens to be at some point unknown but will become familiar once it has been experienced; and another one that is so other that it strikes you, that it opposes your familiarity so fiercely it remains as the other, keeping its strangeness.

3. "Not of one’s own or a particular locality, environment or kind; exotic.”
4a. “Reserved in manner. Distant.” b. “Not comfortable or at ease; constrained.” As by these quotation marks, which keep the dictionary at bay, in its (familiar/unfamiliar) place. 5. "Not accustomed or conditioned: She was strange to her new duties.” A strangely familiar example: the female who has duties but doesn’t know. The familiar politics thereof. 6. “Archaic. Of, relating to, or characteristic of another place or part of the world; foreign.” Strange that the relation between strange and foreign should be archaic!

So we become familiar with the word, seemingly, as we look it up in the dictionary, that homey place where everything has its place, where nothing remains strange. But the end of every definition leads out of the dictionary into the old uncanny other lives of the word, showing even the most familiar word to be a changeling, a mutation, a creature from some black lagoon. In this case we are sent back to Latin extraneus, adventitious (there’s a word to be looked up!), foreign, from extrā outside, from feminine ablative of exter, outward. So the male form, exter, outward is not strange; what does make it strange however is the female ablative, the female of the case indicating separation, direction away from, sometimes manner or agency, and the object of certain verbs. Could be another tribe’s tale of “circumcision, circumfession.”

Which is what happens in Indo-European languages. Where “strange” returns to, or comes from, this female ablative in the form of eghs. Clearly a strange language-matter my built-in e-dictionary refuses and asks me to alter, suggesting: eggs, egos, ergs or gems. When the array and the spread point to the nomadic descendants of ūx- or ek-, with such distant travelers as:

“electuary,” “synecdoche,” “eschatology,” “Eisteddfod,” “samizdat.” Keep it strange. A range of Roussellian procedures comes to mind. You start with a drug mixed with sugar and water or honey for oral administration via Greek for licking up, a sweet familiar thing that will give you the experience of a part for the whole or inversely, of the whole for a part, back and forth, the figure for the background and vice-
versa, wherefrom arises a sense of finality, a final judgment, the need to discourse about last things, the ultimate situation of world, human-kind or not so kind. Which can be done either by hunkering down in a circle of poets & testifying aloud, or by circulating secret underground missives, a lived yet endangered writing.

In the poem “Ode or Nearly There” from h.j.r a line wrote itself: [To] ”caravan / atoms into lines of flight.” The oddness of that line was brought home – wherever that may be, if ever caravans do get there, which is neither here nor there – when my French translator queried it. Though French certainly isn’t home either, as no language is, despite our desire to make it so. Language, even after the long trek through the dictionaries, remains the stranger, the other, we want to engage – and which always and irremediably so remains the outside.

Our outside we are building a future home which we will never inhabit. We can only inhabit that which will disappear with us, that which does not survive us, i.e. ourselves. We are our home, this infinitesimal second – die Sekunde, diese Kunde (Werner Hamacher thus reads a line from Celan) – of presence to ourselves we imagine in retrospect to have been us present to ourselves when we / it is already too late, gone, a cadaver as we move into a here that, even before we can dot the I of our quasi-presence, has become a there.

A there that does not exist, is always already an ex- (eghs? eks? As above, but also here now heard as ek-stasy, to stand outside, always outside & in the strange) if it “is” at all, but really, neither back there nor ahead, as René Daumal says: “I am going towards a future that does not exist: leaving every minute a new corpse behind me.” His was a slower time; this giddy fin-de-siècle makes that every second. “Sirrt die Sekunde.” Atom of time. One by one, second to none. Uncuttable: from Latin secare, to cut, to split. The deepest cut. And uncuttable sequence. Daumal’s minute may be tropologically meant to stand for the minutest, but it is still a molar comfort.

« Corps étrangers » the French say for what we call “foreign bodies ”: outside medicine, outside the text, citations, grafts, prosthetic devices. What makes the strangeness of my own texts more familiar and at times simply bearable for me is to encounter in them familiar quotes, sentences I love and have repeated to myself for a long time after finding and “removing” them from the texts of other writers.

Like pebbles, rounded, smoothed familiar shapes, made so by the eternal return of the waves. Le ressassement, says Blanchot: the sifting, winnow-
ing, again and again, repeating, harking back to & on – an eternity that can be reduced to time by turning the sieve into an oracle, “faire tourner le sas,” making it turn magically and when it stops reading the result, “diese Kunde.” Or like the pebbles under the tongue to learn to shout over the waves, a poetry of sounds, with pebbles eventually smoothed in saliva’s acid? Like pebbles, I said, these citations of others in my texts, strange stones, foreign agents against which break or wash up my own sentences in the making, across which I can make my way to the other side without drowning in the familiar.

strangeness. n.1. The quality or condition of being strange. 2. Physics. A quantum number equal to hyper charge minus baryon number, indicating the possible transformations of an elementary particle upon strong interaction with another elementary particle. Strange particle n. Physics. An unstable elementary particle created in high-energy particle collisions having a short life and a strangeness quantum number other than zero.

I knew it the first week I moved to Paris as a young medical student. The morgue was too familiar already, familial nearly, even in Benn, always the absolute return to self, same, ness as only escape. I knew then I would never return home, or live in the familiar of that place or self. I set out to learn how not to “separate the yes from the no,” to keep both always there, the poles, the opposites, the familiar and the strange, it takes two, it takes you. The other’s language, the strange language, open range of uncertainties.

And yet, isn’t in strange that in all my dictionaries the word that follows stranger is strangle.
And so for old women, suppose half what they say is pretext or invention. They still convey stories we’re willing to receive.

Filling their memory banks are samples of all people, categorized, put into sequence and connected.

Anyone who says, “It’s none of my business,” betrays young, mechanistic tendencies, whereas the average old woman or computer has more curiosity, receiving, regardless of fact.

She’s trying to construct a thing and rejects front doors flanked by imitations of copies or Renaissance coach lamps.

A thing alters by what we’ll accept as being there of a space inspired by openness.

Territory around becomes blurred and open.

I did not know, setting up construction, I’d move away from my alterations, to propagate gelatinous algae in glass walls of the facade, transforming a fundamental category to decorative.

Purple lights reflect a plane in front of the glass, matching its amorphous lesions in places, to exist on one plane, like an old woman’s ring of truth.

This happens even when the story is unbelievable.

Information is not memory.

I see reflected light, while behind me in dark is a proliferation that’s biological or life-based in the sense of a vested interest.

I have to focus in front, then back, it’s not transformation.
She tells me events that occurred before I was born.

The events lose substance and break up, emitting byways that return, break up again, but never reach the back of the site, separated from nature by the dangerous curve of the Rim Road.

This is a no man's land of sheds and warehouse allotments, like a circus bordered by tracks.

Progress on-site tended to sum up corrections in terms of my seeing to that point, allaying fear of failure.

Construction alternatives were pursued simultaneously in a transferred sense, from lines of force like collagen above a pit, where nature was taking over.

A sense of identity would categorize data without abstracting from it, but I waver between physicality and my sense of loss, if scintillant algae will survive heating by day.

I tried to complete a life circumstance like a building I aspired to, loose in space on used land.

I made a shape against sky on flat land like a cut in the weeds, but I got bored and didn’t finish.

Concrete surfaces need support, and my illness made calculations difficult, shadows fell like hinges on erasures.

This site is riddled with plastic wood paneling, plastic ducks and discarded coach lamps.

The iconography doesn't ethically correspond to its present cut up and eroded state.

I make something, which as it changes and falls apart, offers no clues to itself before.

Small daisies grow in the cut, preserving the shape.

Physical significance becomes an area lacking objects, a changing surface as limit, like the surface and mass of a lake.
Nothing was completed, but there are lots of sketches.

Actually, I designed two bungalows: the gold leaf, and one later, because I had missed something.

Gilding was pure decoration and irrelevant to private space.

Now, when I see my work express loss or failure, I no longer say, get rid of that.

It was my intention to make an outdoor shelter in the dark, the way she stands on a balcony, distinct from intention, so I'm overlooked.

It's a significance-free structure with an aptitude for site, by way of cladding or filling.

Doors, windows are permeable points in a fermented cloth.

The icon soaks through walls of undesignated space, dispersing into the space as a whole.

She's still visible, like an experience devoid of content.

I renounce the facade of light sensitive algae, where elements flow down.

I replace granite cladding with metal painted like gold, and the oriel is replaced by trompe l'oeil.

The decorative becomes a tectonic of the future, noble distance at which a representative quality can be achieved, of stardom,

A madonna's face extends matter beyond the predetermined space claimed by feeling.

Now, physical elements place anywhere in a formerly worked face.

Existents of the impertinent, neither physical nor mental were my attainment, aging, your letter to me.
House of one or house of two,
house
to be drawn up, house
to be new – the day
or this, thanked, returns
the unburnt house, returns
the milling world

Though the house is willed it is also shiny – though it
spares others, some it doesn’t, though it has a child,
it is clear, stolid, imperious – though it laughs at the
waking needy, it compels grace, walks awake the named,
any of them, any & others, clear it has, clear it laughs,
house though some, house & rescue, also shiny, in the
sounds made, in the sounds created, in the sounds &
in their laughing, it is a house to be reckoned with, built
in the mania of inaction, a still, unbuilt shining thing where
the knowing crosses into every where you would, & the
sounds are made tame, & the sounds til, & the house
sounds, & because, & I would do the house a favor,
& fill this sounding, & would is shiny in the sounds, built,
unbuilt, a laugh or child of them, the sounds, the grace,
the poetry of the house, its seeming, but it has never
seen itself sound, yet its knowing can, because there is
no false in it, again it houses as it had & has house being,
green eggs or ham, & puts Peloponnesian there, shiny,
holding the deranged oracle by the ear, making its
wishes, housing the one it loves, with a sound
The flourish in the house might
tower above the other concerns
but eventually it tires out &
has a makeup day.

Perhaps this is a rescue fantasy

The mention is the house in this case

Its loams & wills warp the partake

Yet there is a well from which to drink

The water is not good unless it is clear

This reverie noodles the lovely house
like the pleasure of not reading
a badly written headline.

The technology of transcendence
is a speaking, infinite, rescindence.
It does not matter if we trust
the house. Because I am the one
speaking right now I can say
we. Therefore I think, to the
degree that you can, you should
trust me.

The ground of the house is what
the useful things grow from.

The ground of the house has always been there
as far as we’re concerned.
Nefarious
underlearnings
tile the worn sturdy,

our tanks are thankless

a treatise grown
into a clattering
wayside strump –

then the house creaks, riotous,
& the year’s angles bid
for moss because it’s hard
to breath, because an encapsulated
mania droops, & a pall of
recognition billows in the surfeit
waist

———
the rhythmic heartening house
& gentle return, & gentle
to be believed must be wed
to the ratio of need – wisdom
for the half-heartened
implies a certain humming
in the halls, of the circulating
pump, where the branch supply
pipe, unadorned, rises
vertically through the fortunate
parquet past the goose-neck
to radiate its rising warmth –

the bleeder valve
& column placate the striation’s
un-nixed imaginary –

          the good house is curled

& blunt
inside
    an instrument shelter
whose construction-
    play is paced
w/ nonexistence, the pale
cornice of what this is
reads back the
wanderer’s return – a danger
    which is distance come back, the trees
hang high in the heart
where hope is built
& nurtured

If the house is just poetry
we’re in trouble
blade-shaped, bending
in, creative –

a need
a part, it in peril

housedrone & damage,
piled in the road

like a person

houseperson, co-
opted strength of this

stayed apart, person it's gone
house against us, house
trounce,

the way to underbecome it

– no, it is
possible, this
life or not, this
trust, it must

stave love

stirred

then amidst

& what equal
& what quiet

– if it is
a story, make
of it
no menace

to what actually
happens.
It would be best
if no one pretended.

The will
whether human, nascent, or
lathered, sings
to the banana & bicycle,
breaks us, a nut
like a brick, goes
backwards, pales in the
modus operandi –
we cloak
the individual
wheel & come apart
like cookies.

The good house
summers on Long Island, reads
Debord, & rests
like a scythe, well-oiled, fervent –
vehicles permeate
& are colossal – think
the knots, think
the mobius core

Cheery
& it's moving, copious

trilateral intoning
shmooze, which is to say-away
what a good house
moans,
knotted embedded,
suffering & bold
The good house gave away a certain sincerity. It got bought up. But the ravages of equality rack it – not unforced, not unburied, the good house or murmur

displays its living air
& puncted, rides
the miracles, foamy –

If the house were to be unlived, which it is, what ideal decadence could undermin the contoured, stylistic, yearning of the satisfied whiles of crux – it serves the vivid involuntary american, born at the weighstation, raised on the right wing, bent apart by breaking hearts, yet unblamed, the bills reading the skies as they die, & our world is done.

The good good house, the stake
in samsara, loaded on
Sierra Nevada, screaming
at the game.
Go inside, good house,  
& do not clone, do not  
reconcile, rather groan –  
for what is good hurts too.

the sudden crunch chords  
no longer surprise the  
heathen clan, & the mellow  
tunes tho nice, settle  
on the mind like make-up

if you’re thrown by saturnalia  
if you’re taking that nap  
if completely fucked up

call what parts  
shed the wizening  
labotomy of lurid beams –

that it not will us  
that it renegotiate, carve  
into, & fell the wacking  
unworn stasis

that it strangely spell this  
or time, & remake the road  
that it will not us  
to the unfolding implode

this & begin.

this & stopped.
The hot moon is divided, crackles, as if under footsteps, a man's paving walking through brush in the dark, as an interloper. He's (if he is at all) in the divide between one house and another, making himself noisy, incautious, obvious. Then comes the silent aftermath that divides the adventure of hearing the man from the night in which I don't hear anything — in time it is slightly altered, the silence moving higher. The heat is below. A raccoon trills, thrashes — the word 'busily' comes to mind, unbidden, followed by banal phrases as if muttered — forming hearing, by which I am divided from the night, afraid and saddened.

LH

No eluding events as some are in the aftermath? A series of only early mornings. In one now. The aftermath of the hot moon dividing and the man walking in the brushed dark night — one not hearing anything but making up 'silent' phrases which are 'heard' instantly (one's own 'half' 'silent' as unspoken phrases) divides from hot night and 'only early mornings series being' — as: hearing the man 'from' the night. Being a female "interloper" which I thought — in social group in which they would put that down and ostracize but one's eluding that occurring, while there — had been exciting occurring in one's apprehension (not theirs) yet actually occurring. One forms it (while it's occurring) — the hot moon dividing crackling, also there — yet someone might never have had that occur while it's being done to them.

LS

Yes, there is no eluding. This is because there is dividing. To say no (as, for example, when someone rejects, denies, ostracizes) produces a division, not an elimination but something to be acknowledged even if only in confrontation: "No!" I 'conquered' my fear in hearing the interloper in the dark; that's not the same as eluding the event. The crashing of the leaves in the brushed dark formed one series (footsteps) which divided another series (night so deep as to seem without divisions) into a set of beginnings: I was repeatedly beginning to sleep but without sleeping, hearing the crackling. The bliss of beginning formed the deep divided night into hearing. Only then did the sad aftermath occur.

LH
saying only, no events are eluded in a divided night. alluded divided night but it was there – ‘divisions being night’ and ‘so deep there are no divisions’ both. [as one’s perceived events outside between people also.] (of both) in the aftermath, my saying to you, that walking on a long straight ‘balcony’ roofed as if on a breakwater where not on water, past a man leaning playing a stringed instrument, another man standing before him singing – then walking on pass another man playing a stringed instrument, another man singing – then another pair and continues, is happiness. there some listen. the experiencing happiness in hearing then the stringed instrument walking by quavering dividing ‘their,’ a person’s, singing there.

LS

Being ready to hear, then hearing, one discovers a fate (one of the many that imbue productive sequences) – in and as happiness. The stringed sounds are divided, coming to one (as sounds changing in silence having changed), the paired sounds chaining. The sequence is not fated, has a fate – both. The sounds of the rain falling divided through the night at the same time (and where I hear them obscured by a river in the green forest running over rocks (there is no breakwater, though there are locks) partially obscure what the (fated) dream singer is singing. In the morning (where I was) the plaintive sheep are bleating, as if in a sad aftermath that is not divided from happiness (the bleating, like the sound of the cows sucking from the river, borders happiness).

LH

the early morning dark is happiness in that not-fated – paired with the cows sucking from the river, that not-dreamed. the cows fated is only as sound there the same as stringed instruments, then changing in silence. if it isn’t dreamed it’s implanted – but dreamed is implant of cows on lily pads kneeling rolling, conceived before or outside sleeping – where the aftermath (of both – implant or no implant) is in sleeping some time. at dark of early morning hasn’t rain then (any time? would be fate) but some time it does. there there are birds hearing it and so singing hearing their singing

LS

Singing is stringed and so fated. Happiness is emanated, the result of amor fati – fate occurring silently but between audible sounds so one can follow it, in and as happiness. Fated silence is moving, or is in moving of piebald horses set in motion by men or little boys with sticks. The motion is fated (silent) until we hear it (in and as happiness). Little boys, you said, seeing bears on their backs eating black grapes at night lay on their backs and ate
black grapes by day. This occurrence is an aftermath (a stringed entirety – formed in silent following (is that an implant? the bears eating when the boys were (supposedly?) sleeping? dreaming?))

playing. by ear. lying on their backs. by another’s ear – a pair, and hearing there. a different time. he said of that time “at night there were bears eating the black grapes lying on their backs – at day there were boys.” his speaking of ‘it’ as “paradise” and separate. as the two are separate. “the boys doing calisthenics ran by and in the day lay on their backs eating the delicious black grapes – and by night the bears lying on their backs eating the black grapes” – ‘occurring’ is the ‘same’ time and they’re separate being happiness. too. so there isn’t a different time there or one listening. seeing was also left out as causal so it was silent first?

The bears begin to eat grapes by night, the boys begin to eat grapes by day, they begin the same beginning, eating – sustenance occurs, it is world. They world black grapes, day and night. It’s remembered as something luminous grunting from indigo (blue-brown bears slurping like apes). Bears on backs, boys on backs, different happy fated difference different (bears, boys, black grapes). Hearing begins, separating boys and bears, beginning knowing something (the difference between boys and bears) (that difference as one occurrence). Intuition occurs – as a causal enthusiasm for the boys and bears, slurping. By intuition I know from the start what are boys and what are bears.

fur indigo barrels thick rolling on their backs woofing. the fur barrels brush indigo muscles through the air; then. the crowd thick trunked squat on four limbs runs after one. a crowd on four limbs disturbed. one runs. glinting in the sun, one lying on the person’s back limbs up howls in laughing. capitalists stripping everything slurp at the trough. one can tell them apart. those who slurp are separate from those who run. in luminous grunting from indigo, some bears by the capitalists run.

Will fur indigo barrel over the capitalists as the capitalists claim the field (as the capitalists claim they can)? When I was a bear and a boy (i.e. a girl), I heard that capitalism and the field were the same (which means I didn’t hear “capitalism,” only “field”). Bears and boys run on and off the field, taking
turns, some by night and some by day, over the surreptitious unobserved capitalists who have the field. This isn’t to say they are interlopers (i.e. girls). The capitalists have the field (they know this and can remain silent about it occupying the field they have and they intend to enlarge it), but the boys and then the bears and then the boys and then the bears again have the grapes, then at the end of the season, in wintry silence, the grapes are gone. The girls will not go away, they will discover the capitalists (unhappily).

barreling glints indigo in the sun. the capitalists are ahead. but in the ‘aftermath’ – a man becoming sick loses his voice – ‘there’ appears silent. here some buds and blossoms appear silent. so they separate. the girls can’t tell seeing apart from hearing, seeing words mouthed far away one ‘hears’ the words. then seeing is the way the words can be transmitted by mouth. so the now interloper girls coming very close to the blossoms are mouthing without the sounds. far away the words mouthed soundless are received – by other silent blossoms from the first silent blossoms here.
from *Hard Science*

Ted Pearson

1 and so they came
to the shining city

the burning city
the entropic city

an arcanum devoted
to punishing choices

as ingress of fact
as desolation

5 if how things work
is what things are
demolition is progress
watch our dust

while elders raise
their hands to praise

a landmark writ
in rubble
the verb seeking
to be was

to animate not
to annihilate

in those days
they had eyes

for visions – keep
the peace, Bozo

the climate they fled
was never the weather

but the very streets
they walked on

who burned their crosses
cut their losses

and beat their boards
into time-shares
bread and slaughter
a plenary indulgence
from venture capital
to virtual cash
snake-eyes herald
a new regime
of passwords
and panache

the city tires
of the poet
his idylls of love
and death
the bare limbs of
trees in winter
the young
in early spring
17  the mirror decodes
    a mated pair

    autonomy hums
    in the tain

    a toccata for tongue
    in a red sector

    my one vice
    my other

18  tangible assets
    wow and flutter

    legs for days
    and endless nights

    a karmic sutra
    in erotic sexameter

    or hardcore dithyramb
    early to rise
a pyrrhic hard-on
tops the charts
domestic content
in high-erotic guise
such is the curator
of scar’s surmise
coming home from
a psychometric binge

memory wracks
the geo-syllabary
limbs inscribed on
catastrophic stone
impaired faculties
gloss the ejecta
Vesuvial sunrise
archival ash
Blood Program

Heather Fuller

we don't go there anymore pentecostal
with the mill kids but still the hazard
under the wine tree blotto slaven and scuppernong
lacuna in the thing that caught up and dragged in
the southern last capitol of narrative

where nobody’s brother would wind
down and go to pasture go or reckon

and beaten for going with the mill kids in
Central Armature we heard nothing
and the talk of the deaf son and copped a heel

then a punctured eye

through Central arm in arm with
the compulsion to pick up the left
behind or watch the pilotlight in the wine
about the same time
a man dead in a shipment of bananas
and also his bag of clothes and dry tack there

gloomming in the yonder there was suspicion
on our sides as we were beaten and in the wine and
what arm through the window it wasn't fun when
someone poked an eye purple round your heart
gobetween gloomming in higher power
transference technique and picking up the left
behind deaf son and not forgiving you're
notorious when you're poor

in the mill church stricken
sick for days we were
above the ravine after 8 years swept
away the tent city as if children
hadn’t been grown there

when elsewhere NY drama getting fat
and educated and the bananas
shipping as if a higher power

and by the mill underwear showing
everywhere we’re sure someone poked
an eye and copping a heel

elsewhere NY drama rock stars in
holiday home videos making
toasters desirable

until beaten like nobody’s brother
back to wine and copping in the ravine
shoes lasted a lifetime reheeling and
reheeling we couldn’t imagine how
worn down a heel until
the mill kids where the hand
went perpetually to our eyes
glomming
in the purple eye night watch

_is god resting beside you_
_the panting you hear_

the thirst that bit you
glomming in the wine and not
registering the dangling eye the
glomming transferability in well
heeled mill kids dabbling in
eye water fifths down throat after
throat drowning old scratch why
the ravine was bursting and we glomming
in the hobo museum of our minds marveling
what fashioned from railyard tin a bouquet of
afflictions a hound the naked eye can't see

when the reverend Turnipseed

at the end of the day
soap ends for the poor people
gathering by the river
beside the sick feeling carefulness of
wet umbrellas while the dead man pulled from
the bananas and the only doctor an eye doctor

a birdbath full of vomit and then
the wine scabbing over a one-eyed
cicero at a busstopfull don't get off at
this stop on the way home just don't
do it you hoarse on the bus as we'd caught
it from the mill kids leaving
for the merchant marine and we
getting fat and educated

abrahaming a way out of Central bad
ticker to get fat and in the wine

and at the end of the day
I can't tell you more
than people move on
from *Nice cage, no bird*

Jason Ellrott

"That’s what you do, you always do it, take it out of context, set it up like an equation." I said this to myself before a sizable blister formed in the space between the laboratory and the altar.

Peel away the borders. Curiosity carries experiments further than intended. Pasted limits shrivel in a boost of hopefulness, a property of careless meaningfulness.

Occasional laps of cool air in thick intensifying heat.

Fragment of clouds crawl across the blue. Wispy lavender finger tips hang down where escaped clouds dissolve back into the mother front. Here there is no way to return to anonymity. Progression is towards crude definitions unsettled in their need to be labels.

Go in circles from one bucket to another. Tip each one forward until nothing has spilled. Mechanically step to the next.
Dreams of experiments, of golden chalkboards, and the testing of equations all seemed to be at an impasse. All questions and notions left a wondering, of the fault of the self projected into any thought. Time was wasted sorting out the line between raw sensation and individual perception. A few minds wound on after the rest got sick looking.

Convolutions, empty shadings; the gaping blue pulled shut with a dusty cloud haze.

Wanting to know what's at the end of the line but always getting to the end of the line and having something be there; new efforts towards an unanswerable forward nowhere. A decision to turn around would simply be a new going on from a different starting point. Backwards is nowhere. Clouds disintegrate into blue, reemerge into cloud cover. The storm takes place, clears up, and hits again.
After midnight the night opens up, hours are spent alone, hurtling towards daylight. Where you are, I am now. A quiet focus bends thoughts into words, overrides the perceptual system and delves into distortions, trying to express now to then, here to where you are now. Night skies run together. One blindness drifts into another. Tonight is every-night that days don’t obliterate. I can just as well think about endless days between nights but it doesn’t add to my understanding as much as a single infinite night would.
I fear that not living near the ocean has hurt me in some way. Tumult and calm in continual alteration. A flashing vision of current in a circuit holds me in anticipation of electric fires. A pilgrim makes his life near the city to sit an hour away and stare at trees. The head slightly heavier only faintly rings with pain. Everything here is precisely timed. When purpose turns out not to have one we pretend. The insidious cycle is persuasive. Seduced belief and feigned confidence. Eyes out the window can't tell if it's lightly drizzling or not. The glowing light beyond the computer is something to focus on, something to aim for. Tonight doesn't end, glows into the purgatory of day. The lights go out, the mind listens to the house settle. A pink-orange dawn glows beyond the tree-lined horizon, purple-red comes out beneath. Pale flames of sun rotate and we're there in a second, contemplating the tide, moving among the obstacles.
The moth on the inside rim of the lamp-shade recites a mantra to the lightbulb. Parts of me are worn like pennies with different dates passed thru different hands. The moth warms up from its infinite autumn. Cobwebs on top of the lamp-shade reflect a halo.
Understanding is automatic yet falsely assumed. Every recession exudes a new form of endurance. Shock cannot be induced. Dawn and dusk, simultaneous and perpetual. The direction light is going in never changes the situation. The sun is the most reliable thing there is. The wind is how we breathe. Naked trees in rows set against grey sky. Newly fallen snow insulates the roots.
Three Pieces

Susan Bee & Charles Bernstein

Action Figure

Ryan Sit sit!
& Ryan Sit sat
Watching the sun set
O! Li Po!

My Murphy bed is rusted
I took it to the store
They charge me $50
Won't see that cash no more
Charles

You got

Felix salami

with peppercorns!

He can’t eat it —

Try elsewhere!

Bernstein & Bee
The Splinter

Fanny Howe

:::

When I was a child

I left my body to look for one
whose image nestles in the center of a wide valley

in perfect isolation wild as Eden

till one became many: spirits in presence

yes workers and no workers up on the tops
of the hills in striped overalls

toy capes puffing
and blue veils as yet unrealized in the sky

I made myself homeless
on purpose for this shinnying up the silence

murky hand-pulls
Gray the first color
many textured clay beneath my feet

my face shining up I lost faith but once

(theology)
:::

To stay with me
that path of death was soft

this pump's emotion
irregular, the sand

blew everywhere

My hands were tied
to one ahead

driving a herd to the edge

(mother)

:::

She said I said why

fear there's nothing to it
at any minute
a stepping out of and into
no columns no firmament

Most of each thing
is whole but contingent
on something about
the nearest one to it
Confused but moving
the only stranger I know
has a bed a blanket
a heartfullness famous
for hypocrisy

When she's not trusting anyone
she leans her crown
upon her hand
snowslop all the way to the grating
before lying down

in a little block of childhood
(one hour for the whole of life)
and her book to record it

Was the chasm between her mind
and things

constituted by the intellect's catalogue
or by the presence of senses
(around her face

objects fall into special functions

tangled loops against concrete walls
moonish nuclear fission capped with molten gold)

or by a sticky sub-atomic soul
See how this being at the neck and bowel
gives the head and groin a taste of hell
that seeps throughout some nervous systems
all senses battered and enflamed
where the soul drinks disabled
and attacks only a she a she can see
who smiles in dreams between clenched hands
sobbing from wanting to win her pity
her in the born-hating
thing she finds there living

(Skin is what I she and they see when we see feelings)

Not I but a she-shaped one
over fluid frame
sized to capture what comes in
agony that heaven doesn't begin

(to know the soul imprinting is in pain)
Short of being nailed but sure of being labeled

now my name is forced now her name is first
into my ear my hearing her not being

here so I will know that this is the hour
when I will have to hear her

named and cringing rise
to the utterance

as my own excruciating presence


Very pain it came first
through my eyes
they were so compressed
I could still see
forms that will never be
eliminated and illuminations
and words whose imprint
(branded in agony)
still can't be interpreted
Coal is the first sign of a wreck
that your face may blacken
with bliss of the night

Recognition
You can hide
from whoever is red enough
with force or sex to make you sad

The history of the defeated
Eternal lie
as if to prove
the principle
root of the verb
to falsify
is life
itself an excess
since whoever is
identified
is already buried
while staying still
will show what nothing is
So if her skindeep faith
could stay intact
and the original forgery is genetics
and lies increased belief
then was her brain always seeking
the right word
to show that consciousness
does die in places
out of range of her own flesh

:::

Last night I hated her
when I was what she saw in her mirror

and rage can only be appeased by praise

(the winning world backs in on you this way)

:::

Does she mean what she says
or do statements form on her lips

Does she mean what she says
or do statements rise to her lips

If it is she then I exist
but if the words are mechanistic

then they can only be read
by reversing images

(the urge to hurt her emerges)
She grew to dare herself to murder that which worked to murder her and murder what was birthed to murder her as I also aspired to murder slaved and longed to murder her name my own murderous member

This way my always unquiet mind would clear its one evil would not go to sleep insane
After all should I become a fate like any other not if she can remember not if she could reconnoiter those faces better faces now strained through her hate where a woman among them wonders Why can't I be like her and hate her

(The globe is a brain
It always believed it had no right to life
Its father was its mother

After the blessing came the naming
and accounting for the birthing order)

Where I grew life
and died as a little apple

- forget nipping and chewing -

I stopped she dropped
beside an especially long worm

the balls of her feet aching
somewhere out in the rain

one of those rains that blink until dawn
with the eyes behind them
Depression in the sea
a heavy day
unbecoming anything
after the hope
that drags behind
the one she doesn’t want to see
or waves away
cruelty always more credible

The holes in our haloes
widen the higher we die
(a light snowfall
the airport stilled)
And just a pane away from a face
one glove is waving
All our provision gone to waste
:::

So the first shall be lost
and the zero before it

and the weight of faithless skin
shall thicken its authority

in a mind fired by a spark

whose intake of breath is automatic
until it isn't

:::

Winter spears
its buds of snow
until a white rose
bleeds gold and trembling
and barely visible
(artificial)
two at a windowpane
from *American Letters*

**giovanni singleton**

![Figure 1](image-url)
Fig. 3
Fig. 4
Fig. 5
**Thin Straw That I Suck Life Through**

*Mary Burger*

**Episode 18**

it’s what we did that generation:
go around cities
not having relationships

this is fuel and no vehicle
this is waiting for someone
to run you down

“*I was a poor impersonator of myself in public.*”

always almost stalling out

his death provided an occasion for us to stay on the phone

it is exact
and your own
misapprehension
swerves

synapse registers disturbance
a message
intrudes

you assume
the cheap sign on the false dome
and cardboard viscera

innovation replaced injustice as a rallying cry
we stopped feeling others’ pain
a space I passed through

it was a space I occupied

phylum genus species youth

historic deeds mismatched
in thrift store windows draped
on this year's model girls and boys
and the
  evacuated viscera
display the mischarge,

careless candle burns a last note left by the dead

excessive scope betrays passivity
  in all its limp allowances

  the past and its accomplishments
  not much

under the new rubric
  a neighbor
  and a neighborhood

somebody left  somebody died

time shuffles
  to keep up

  a gyroscopic constant
  powers its own axes
  to make more
  than a mess

to say so
  and so
  to go back
  to nuances

unreadable  unparaphrasable

hiding  seeking

  an event
  where it will be responded to

and to maintain equilibrium
Episode 21

a loose cannon
with a loose wheel
blowing smoke and fire and iron balls

no events
but in words

mice and moths and termites
scatter when the barn burns

compulsion  need  creation

scissors – paper – stone

economy and energy and my imagination
Three Poems

Patrick F. Durgin

A Majority in the House

strumming rolling the credits could see other events. others events. a several
digits of light through the historic district. exemplary objectional tone. tone
to object. defuse the diffuse querent via closed reading. if then you therefore
am there you have it: utter vistas bunch and the world is a basic curl coming
to a once. a termed again. is to be seen as. as believes be to be seen. administer
the historical: the well of lonliness. we’re talking a national tradition of sedi­tion of. I. despair for you can see the credits rolling.

from tone to object there’s a phenomenological rift which includes its own
ornery ordinance as culture caulking. we’re talking. a despair of utter
administers. so once this will to that. the diffuse have it coming. sue the manu­
facturer: there are no more traitors. but. you could set your stopwatch by a
two-dollar bill. on the road is now the Rod Stewart of theophany. I despair
for all you who strum digits lightly through the reading.

the creaking tomcats of animate the left blame themselves from universities
for the sputtering of agrarian chutzpah. that is: the world-book is not an
ennabler any more than Marilyn Manson is bigger than Christ. that is: re­
call the white album is now the Rod Stewart of theophany. that is: populism
gradulist misanthrope. that is: conversation just doesn’t make the stars shine
any longer. that is: phonemes are an idustrial habit to which it takes an
English major to ascribe coup d’état.

the querent bunch is a world of diffuse coming. own is to include but your
set could stopwatch a bill. the curl is closed. readings are rollings. therefore
am therefore am. but but. a: you and I are meant to meat. in another time
another place. hence displaced hinterland whenever event lonliness traitors.
utter the once will. sue the two-dollar culture. thrice have Rod Stewart and
Marilyn Manson set to caulking.

so as: indigence is a smart fall look sybillance for the autumn of years. so as:
the day’s first conscious phenomenon no new algorithm for spacializing wind.
so as: the everyday the never thunk. so as: it is good to know it is good to
know. so as: children know they’re being lied to children know to abide them.
so as: no known algorithm to child children many smeary summers to go. so
so as: there’s a worm there’s a lurker on the list.
Improovisations Frumth

one) not too worry wen yer sic. ansuing squirmish feeds me queasy. the weather wont help at night cannt be seen. anhedoniastique it is as if. all of it as such travel tm sgreatly reduced byd safety seeel. it is as if. fits a ynt recreateth daie waywhen anywho

two) how you like to jabber. plaie along and ampathize. herze roomtante in. arealfork. you un a wares. the self-conscious poetr. like a. like a. goodand swift. like what youdo with fork

three) enuff unbidden permission. egain withen permissable emphasis. and by way permissable likenesses. beginth way by likeness. thin this. thingsis disablist reaction. risking begin first off wide abaeyance. mendicant nessness again enough rough laissez-faire cometh hidden. sobeen it by way of permis

four) at the audition. the bstemious habitual. analeptic. thumppeedoo dah-dee. whompahan dathe keys. falling. last etudes

five) hail to the lord’s annointed. the puny proud and pointed. largely comprised of post-consumer. of course a sortliced climbing with humour. youward sar hardly fully noughta constitua scenario. bale to the bored sandointment. and pointed more or less a way

six) how you like throng ward. doughnt confuse what snatchural ly oversimple. simple over cover. doughnt boredis. yourwrong tospite me. we alwan twa sbest fer thinnocent. wearell innocent. no one knowsus
On A Lark About Your Sentence

*The representation cannot be represented.*

—**DON BYRD**

On a lark about your sentence  
I have a capability for an infinitely  
Negative desire now enjoinder  

: or the triumphant  
slow fold of the arc along new senseless  
*aw c’mon:* that is to say we exist only in tandems  
this is not about him but a general  
admonition a colleague  
is something else we hope  

the new scansion is deeply political  
anyone can witness mortality in a toothache  
anyway all the evidence that  
can be touched as (the rest)  

(sparkunderfoot) when coasting
there are always footsteps connected to the circular: mine, your’s. a fall betokens motion. “ee’s all screwed up & took a header.” we’re still in a position calling for change. the move to the outside line opens opportunity. “a trend in motion stays in motion.” so much for a philosophy of life riddled with decision within and out of one’s control.
the peasant's bend shoulder
accommodates convention
traction accounts for spin
hay; as in making

vertebra
the stimulus of rolling slightly backward as the clutch pulls cable. notions of stop hedged by movement. the legs form reversal. a tale of fortune within hesitation mediates on birds pooling overhead. mixing chords of a modernist symphony. the scarp slides downhill as a condition of moisture. gravity acting as direction in the raw clay scar.
Figure 31a

spinning a wheel of hope
finds motion
impinging motive

compass card
Balance

attempts to strike it waver. the smell of tar overpowers its transmutation to cover. a wave of wands spells attention from body to head. each decision founders its way along parabolas of degree. doubling a perception performs the axis of change. left for right, depth for death. the smaller counts for closeness.
Figure 41a

prospect is little by little connected via season

positions of the earth
Boxes

=A= Catherine Wagner

A Box for Connie S.

Dear woman read them words
illit redlit curser
Glown red compatriot
proud afeard mottleface
eggeyed inner glasses
Stupid got lost at sea

A Box for Donald

Blank inside means pain in
blank inside to you kid
I flee influence see
the revels come where you
lanky eagle crest head
gave the favorite book

A Box for Lincoln

swing you high scared twinkle
big chicken nugget boy
some pink knees are jumping
not scared only cranky
sad sans jump hug sir
A Box for Martin

weird weird wanting weird weird
helmet for my blasting
well met well met my one
rue love well met said she

two green wrinkly pillows

A Box for Zachary

Gleam red lips eyes looky
sat on your breakfuss bar
speak thinking Zachie please
Brilliant shadow Lincoln
Runs through populous rooms
Play secret throat language
Theoria, Sung

Inversion resembles parade
and atmosphere fat
transmogrified. This

we must confront, so too
an alien hand in the frame,
a garbled simulacrum,
a fathomless menace

such as water on the elderly. Therefore

is it not to draw a straight line
that is the object.

Glimpse principles of overlay
in liquid fallow called Spuyten Duyvil.

Otherwise
the status quo will demonstrate its favorite trick.

It is sandworn, disengaged:
a gaud, a bead, a tacked-on
corsage.

Left hastily in flight is a television
left on in a room no one is in;

we have since left off
nattering on on cartoon cliffs.

This project was begun before
the loss of minim, the challenge
to articulate control; and so
we have the early dross of warfare.

The weight of immemorial will be measured in hands high.
Power Ballad

ño cherished / standing
colorized / standing waving
astride /
the chuff of the steamroller

/ eyes that are closing
in pain /
of salvo / the end

of the museum / have looked
on you / the answer
/of your being
born / between mirrors
cost / a swarm of
betweens /

the mouth rested
/flummoxed on it /
an act something
like staking /
for the fittest / of Pangea /

majesty sees itself
/scribbled over and
knows / the worse /
deduce away /

after acquainting
yourself / with the engine /
one harried sprint
from your birthplace

/the periodic table will
go on
/eating its squares /
you are the flora

you grow up in
/things / such as they

are / will be milkweed
No fat meat bones

The man sits outside the bagelry
begging in the mode not
of activity but presence

I study attachments
the roots that bring me
to my stop and start

proximity to source, isn’t
that the universal
rule for feeding?
ones who sit
are in a mode

made outside their form,
but is in the present

enlacings a borrowed one –

Tacit agreement from without
along a raw telepath –

I see like vibrations of time and money
to be placed along these forms.
The pariah is a reverberation,  
and the sounds from him  

are obstruction and  
clearing language.  

They make the tone restart,  
they don’t signal.  

Word-sound in passing  
grudge    murmure  

greeting in questioned space  
like the mark on building space  

“we are here but our own”  

•
The air is filled with bits,
the air is filled all the time.

Facts are bad nails,
deflect as they compel

solid sound from the tendrils
tones from the outside ones
from their place in a crisis

the outside
ones ask

they ask
the various
from Paper Head Last Lyrics


= Andrew Levy

Have faith in this present piece

he ate his heart
he was never mistaken for someone else

what will you do once you arrive

Large and uncut looking for AM action

You are going to die

evaporated parts of himself
he let go to the sky

you like them a lot

lack of sugar, butter
impedes either yellow or blue
determines green
(implying that we are near the shoreline)

sharing a sexual secret

Somebody is living on this beach
always being washed away

An emerging genre of cheerfully
subversive poetry

Oh, Oh bay-bee...

the abysmal stupidity of insects

his chameleon thing inside

as it rises to the surface all the nerves go bloomy

159
Those who choose the path of license are completely deaf
And hear nothing.

He paid a very high price for everything. So did she.

an intelligentsia separate from itself
Would think ‘postmodernism’ is that

Given the last 'sentenced

A good poem, he said, has no intention
of disavowing

In this country I have seen three different things:

An excruciating capacity for endurance
An identification of faith with patience
An investment of power in the exploitation
of this accursed patience.

Also, a heyday for semiliteracy “funded”
the ruling elite

perish time

somebody is living on this rage
self-critical try frying pork chops

“self-critical poetry” a coinage of
self-critical writers? of poems?

rushes to be washed away

since you bid this night thing goodbye

Have faith in this present piece of paper

he ate his hat

nobody could ever mistake him for someone else

‘You sell my soul for a handful of dust’

two old women on folding garden chairs
    On the same stoop
pointing index fingers at each other…
    “You’re crazy!” “Who’s crazy?!?”
    “You’re crazy!”

the Excedrin coursing through my veins

I spelt with Mr. Spicer when I was 5
    I think I know him better than you

These are not the most outstanding books
    written by anyone

2 sexes, 3 standards
solid and handsomely mounted

these were the moments that
appeared to him in the form of attention
he’d come to feel at home in.
I always walk around with
  a dish in my mouth

exercise: cup up several different comic
  strips and rearrange –

I would rather be run over by a truck

  the body is the
  soul perceived
  thru the 5 senses
I wrote that in the dark on a
  violet colored paper

the ire between the sentimental
  and the metaphysical
  or
  nothing is in the room

      Hand over hand up the
      length of the bat

    expression of a principle
      inside the visible world

pure of sin and blemish
Sandbox

more fiddling
  a moment perpetuated forever

pages falling out of spine of book
  hope abandoned

spice of book

the world map in a small holographic eclipse, green pavement of gold bullion

Prison stories

Abject adulation is their common goal.

  a leap into delinquency
    Nietzsche's scattered waste

  Zen has no tunnel. Zeno, on the other
    Alright now, you take care, ya hear – Okey dokey…

Thursday the 146th, end of an assassin

Dear /system sunshine,
  have felt craushed (?)

You could argue with what it’s saying

  the evanescence and insubstantiality of cold
    shudders in the belly

An unleveling of thought in the ether of a new space?

  a shooting star succeeding through sheer perversity
    as though innumerable transparent tissues hovered
      over the same strip of film
A key unlocks my entire life
brittle ice in beautiful limbs

postmodernism would never be mistaken for the bank
And watch, the hands of my partner

the sentence undulates

And we are always here

and the trees, the splendid fuel, the flowers seem, free relations,
deadly fish, the proverb, flourishes, the dust in the, immediate
or yesterday, the phone, horizons are, the curves, the unwanted,
places of night, my friend’s, is soft

Continual thought grain was to eat

obligations and cautions
and so on. He passes, so to speak

Sunday happiness, that’s how a garment
worker might describe it, musicless but nonetheless
acute as the scent of wet leaves
in a schoolbook the regime of eloquence gives
way to step-by-step philosophy (just quotes
strung together enthusiastically) as in the bourgeois pleasure
of a visit to the art museum (after sex)
lost to us now? After warm food?
What is important is muscleless
where the curtain has fallen on unfinishing

to discourage the world from concerning itself with us.
All the rest

is lived in the verb to bear
witness or swoon so the little boot that bobs
on the postindustrial lake
will always know its mother: FARM
HORN MOB PASTE (NOT
BE). She is an example
of the circle of the sun when it
becomes a god, and what a wit
miles from the nearest dot or ammo
cache, then, having earned hard scrabble
under pressure of death. Now that's a condition

Do I wake like a house on fire or do I
slope in waves? Sleep? None to be had. What's
important being uncontained, a box, disappointed, say,
at finding itself a television and turned
off in the distance where armies dissolve
in simple fascination with their weapons.
I am frequently carried away by the illusion you
outrun your shadow to get naked
in my arms (you splendid girls, infinity
is in you!) – it is my own, and a great one

left over. It was not to interest society in myself

that I assumed these names, but to get the ball rolling.
I didn’t want to cool thinking down, so I insisted
on a story that was pedagogical
(after all, the shoe, clinically speaking, comes after the foot)
– a discombobulated phase that leads another of my names to ask,
“Fire is historical?” – not an irrelevant question, given
the children's recurring nightmares and the volcanoes
I jump willingly off as if thought as such were the push-over we know it to be bleeding into typical problems. I sit down
to write in the name of a drop in the bucket: nothing
in the flex of an index. A person’s false end

It would not be incorrect to speak of my imagination
but would it be important? I would divide my resignations
into veer and varnish; the participants
don’t seem to mind the quotes. Forget diction; you might die
watching television unable finally to ask
“and is art nothing?” Blank is blanc
is an overstatement, lyric
inside out. So let’s make a monument
to the cheap parts (someone might be living there) and anyone
made uncomfortable by all the holes in me

or any son of a gun. Because of their shape,
these untamable creatures

deify representation – genitalia out of this world!
As, reaching from a zero point to the topmost apple,
they see themselves split, a linguistic problem
but a turn-on too, a memory of bliss stuck in the fear
of losing one’s own eyes. Buster Keaton checks his pulse
then ear again to hear the ant shout (just audibly), “The emperor
is a greedy man! Turn him into a big wild pig!”
Well, the ability to tell the tale wouldn’t be so important
if one had ever laid eyes on a “perfect space,” or, the best ethical position
involves a second thought. In a numb landscape
like the porcupine. But the real anxiety arises

from repetition, like an important sleeper, whose dream
is poked by a pin on the chair of the absolute
teacher (didn't she feel anything?) and then resumed
in [expletive] explanations. The return of the same
day in, day out...the story speeds up
with the noise of a big dumb machine and so on into the night. She was,
you might say, completed in the end, having no link
with her mother (off in a burrow or dead
somewhere), the uncanny apparition of an unmoored
infant, waiting to be with you

the whole of the dull, dark, soundless day.
"Water is the best thing"

I remember thinking. It was like the proverbial
forest, or the forest itself was a proverb leading up
to the text that is history, or anyway paper-
backs. Inside was a scared little person: She said
she saw dirty bottles she said she saw
the swallowing subway she said she had a little
money, shifting importantly in her seat, present
and accountable [living] on a bicycle
If you live in a country where it never rains –
Revelation? Fortunately there is no such place
from *a list of dreams*

- Pamela Lu

Dr 2f.1

Upon waking she finds herself in a tucked-in position, with me firmly attached to her back.

Dr 6e

That another life might be breathing, blooming beneath the visible life.
By day, the Trojan walls. By night, Tristan and Isolde, Troilus and Criseyde, Montague and Capulet. We passed messages through cracks in the stone, stretched our searching arm through cannon holes until our sleeve flapped in the breeze on the other side, waving wistfully in a shallow region of pure air.

I had tossed and turned. I had awakened to a large sunlight. And the hell that had flowered beneath me dried into the stones of this earth.

Mary and I found a number of discussions worth continuing, not in the writing itself but in the talking about the writing. It was part of a critical faculty that brought us in from the cold, the way that spies feel most at home in their aliases.
Dr 6a.1

While our suffering co-workers sleepwalked through the lethargic halls, smacking into walls and sharp corners from the boredom of underworld.

Dr 6b

Is that why this was meant to happen? Is that how the majority of us spend our days, locked up in the collective unconsciousness of a downtown highrise?

Dr 6c.1

If we dreamt of anything we were quick to deny it the next morning by the coffee machine.
The mountain and its cloud as a reminder of what you had invented once, without knowing it. The world as a reflection of the dream reflection of the once lived world.

I wanted to be presented with the same choice the devil had. And then to choose, what?

To have all my lingering doubts, all the subtle confrontations in my being, suddenly and graciously resolved.
Dr 1c

And at the end of the dream canal in which I was walking, my feet sloshing in the brackish water, I would find a place of infinite worth, a lost and found of no more secrets?

Dr 2a.1

Meanwhile, Lauren feels quite confident that her unremembered dreams are living out full, productive lives on their own, and that she feels the benefit of these unseen existences during her waking hours.

Dr 5b.1

Further evidence suggests that our sleeping selves have conversed calmly on the lower registers. An undated photograph from Hoa and Dale's farewell party shows Renee and me passed out in adjacent positions on the futon, slumbering sociably.
Dr 4a.2

In the ashes of a preliminary full dawn, the dream friends crossed boundaries of burnt sleep, stepping carefully over the flattened hedges which, come daylight, would rise like leavened bread into a fortified great wall.

Dr 4c.1

Or the keys had never been lost to begin with, and I played both Romeo and Juliet, on opposite sides of my lingering insomnia.

Dr 4f.2

We had promoted our dream relationship to an upper room of sacred curiosities, our dream characters to custodians.
Dr 34.2

I feel certain that I may have forgotten something, that my sub-dream self has recovered remnants of my most important dream, only to promptly misplace the interpretation.

Dr 2e.1

Between our dream memories and sub-dream recollections, our sleeping and waking selves, we must have contained all the answers. But the mystery remained unsolved, at least until we had found a body.

Dr 2e.1

In a Sahara dream she makes good progress through repetitive sands as a camel, one steady foot after another, with a bemused, agreeable grin on her lips. She is proud of her landscape, proud of her special hump which she cannot see but which stores enough provisions and sustenance for weeks on end.
Dr 5.2

Renee and I lived our second friendship in writing. That fictional "Pamela," this fictional "Renee," did they have any relationship to us? Had we been introduced to one another by way of the necessary narrative?

Dr 2.1

Lauren does not remember her dreams. Neither does Renee. Lauren sometimes remembers a dream, often a nightmare, sometimes about me having an affair. Renee has described dozens of specific sleeping positions in her writing, but rarely the contents of a dream.

Dr 4

Some may conduct entire friendships on the level of dreams, while their waking lives suffer from missed appointments and lack of social time. The dream friendship flowers, develops immense sympathies, and the waking mortals, mere faded reflections of these subconscious notations, wonder how and why they have been so touched.
Mayvonne Quilty

“Girl wants waiting on table, housework or cooking in mornings. $10 a week. No Sundays.”

“Colored college girl wishes housework or care of children – after 3 pm.”

“A pleasant white girl wants work in a family. Can do plain cooking well.”

- Berkeley Gazette, January 16, 1924

Her feet aching off the car. Her umbrella. Corner of College and Webster. A man approaches. She wards him off.

Incident reported in the paper. The journalist courting her then for weeks after. She wards him off.

Walk to the place where there is rebuilding. Look through outlines of new walls of bright, just-cut wood to dead gray dirt, burnt shrubs and thistles.

The year Mayvonne began college there was a very serious fire. Her rooms, however, were across town. A country girl, she found the urban fire and its hectic aftermath quite interesting and wrote several letters home about it as the weeks and months wore on.

In dark shoes, in lectures.

Leaning to the side of the car. By the time she was fifty, those rails would be broken and removed. There were to be many more shipyards, many more apartments.

She cared for a girl of nine and a boy of six in the hills north of campus, just below the fireline. A stream through the backyard where she and the girl had doll parties while the boy splashed around. The boy, bored, dipped a doll for a swim, a rag one. This was the largest incident of her employ.

Wearing an apron in another’s kitchen. Licking the bowls with the children, the prickly city dog scratching at her ankles. She wore the same pair of
shoes all the time, took them to the cobbler for mending, then for a new heel. Half inch, with a buckle cross the top.

In her own parlor, entertaining a young man, a journalist, another. The landlady knitting beside them, rocking, turning the radio up rather noisily, then suddenly down. Spying, according to Mayvonne.

There were no younger sisters or brothers at home and that was how she had reached this.

Fortunately.

Her mother beside herself with the female chores, in letters Mayvonne tucked in a box which the curtains fell over. She’d moved her desk into the dormer window. A tree flopped over itself in her window. She liked it. Leaves tucked astride leaves astride leaves. A squirrel. A cat.

When he asked her to marry him, she always said no. Under oaks, above roses: the Oakland garden. Eventually he stopped asking, and then he stopped coming to call. This alarmed the landlady, but not Mayvonne. Nor her mother, as she had no idea, nor her father, as he didn’t either.

The landlady was a stranger to them, to everyone actually, it seemed to Mayvonne.

In her junior year, she went abroad with the money from the children she’d cared for, and from her father. He called himself indulgent, under his breath, a fool.

When she returned, she was especially thankful to herself that she had rejected proposals, and when she graduated nine months later, she moved to the city and found a job as a secretary at the newspaper office. Her suitor had since left for Chicago.

If you looked across the bay in that era, there were no bridges, only boats.

She was allowed a bit later to write a cooking column, though she didn’t cook very elaborately herself, but not an advice column, for she was still far too young for anyone to think she had any to give. She had her secret hopes.

She no longer lived with a landlady but in her own small flat on Jackson Street. Chinese men still often had long hair.

When she ate dinner out it was usually with another secretary or two. Though
now she was no longer a secretary. She was assigned to write a story about "fallen women", thus impersonated one, and was taken to Associated Charities.

She kept her notes in her head. She wondered if you could be taken for something couldn't you mightn't you then, be that something.

From this, she wrote a play.

She interviewed a local playwright, and slipped it to him.

The rest is history.
The Lions/The Scenes

Pretend she was her own mother. How then did she fare? was she known?

But will this woman efface herself so completely her daughter might fancy herself Eve simply for having one incomplete dream?

By porch railings, the same, later.

In celebration, we’ve acquired a little fern which hangs in the bedroom window, she wrote an aunt, feeling scandalous to say so. (She was just 19.)

pale instances – to make of herself any possible exception

The bored student will add circles which can be read as plants “dotting” the hillside. The instructed student will have at least one of the sun’s “rays” running off the paper’s edge. Some students may shift the hills’ intersection, making it off-center and thus dynamic.

- Carol Treadwell, correspondence

authority is not in the future
but in a future about another past

three lions sit facing inwards. one becomes bored and begins to pace

Luke perceives the action of God in history

- New American Bible, St Joseph Edition,

The Scenes

I
the son of god marries the horizon

Holy Grail Services
prop: M. Magdalen

specialty: The snake – wherein 12 men & 12 ladies are lined in a row: ladies on cots, men on the floor. Let snakes in & they bite only the gentlemen on the floor – which is all 12 (usually) – wherever they the snakes choose. Out-
side after quick dressing of the wounds the men rush back in bleeding and crying and trying to ignore their pain and inability to quench their desire in integrating with the women upon their high shelves.

at the time of the great calamity (calumny) in Kora, this was going on elsewhere:

on the banks opposite the ladies danced with glee and gleefully did they approach their task of masturbating with the toy soldiers held (gleefully) to their muffs.

2 Straddling SF & Santa Cruz is something no girl should do. And it’s not simply that she had two boyfriends at this time. Can you return an engagement ring? She threw it across the room at him and it hit the shellac wall. Like with papier mache practically they had divided their tiny digs.

3 (new) scarcity of flock and gesture, ever folding mantle (drama of bathing) like strange round of debutantes we have no penetrant (wailing) wall!

arcane self-measure, swan beat. verified by punditry

_the freak’s delight_

(the gift of gab)

soda-soaked gymnasium

like a way maniac somehow I knew she would be

3a Men always say women have intuition, but really it’s just that we pay attention.

—YEDDA MORRISON, _conversation_

mirrors (find correct page)
excited at groping summits

*teenage what he wants*

4
Barbie as waitress – her pointy feet hidden in black plastic tennies stolen from Ginny, her black laudanum bustier slipping up over her breasts, arms raised in stilted victory a skirt the same length as an apron

the two-headed soldier, his broken agency

(he[/she] totally misuses the female form!)

assemblies of:
reciprocity

“We were taught not to be empirical,” she
from *Nova Suite*

≡  *Standard Schaefer*

Fluctuations in the phone lines
If here comes the questions
If the edge of the weather meets the beat of oars
If the woods resume where wind is worn
Was it not a time when thunderbolts steered things
Or a matter of cadence in the manner of measure –
A transmission summarized in wire, struck down in frills, day and day
  sawed-off
Still, a kind of stamina – icons in the circumference
Attenuation of lesions accumulation of addenda
Tail of a lizard, tip of an eon branching off through a blizzard of religions
To be saluted in leisure and refuted by
How surely others have done it, but that’s all, yes, that’ll be all.

---

1 Adders, mathematicians and other talented citizens could not ignore the unconnected phone even as they could see that it could not be unanswered.
Unto Asunder's what is Asunder's.
Unto Grog, Grog's.
Allpox
The sand reduced to glass.
A hall of mirrors structured like a gas
Slow and aristocratic so all in one piece
A single mirror to hide anything,
Two mirrors to demean the topic.
What remains are mere demons, daubed in nothingness, conducive of nothing, become one long comet or an air pocket, drifting into the glass.

Glass gradually reduced to sand.
An opaque future reflex, reflected in Immanence.

Recited and brushed past like a little death or a simple matter of documents changing hands by way of a stroke or spurt of paint that clings forever to the bright, uniform of fact, gradually reduced.

An exsanguination of demons —
To destroy clarity with clarity
To get to the matter that remains —
An oval educated in stone.
A slab of pond.

---

2 On this point, the Faculty of Theology contradicts the greenskeeper and thus the ancient appeal to the articles of Paris (who has gone a long time without seeing beauty). In place of the greenskeeper, a philosopher was sent, heavily robed and wearing his bat-winged hat, but lacking any formal understanding of the arteries. He returned to describe a dream in which he had performed his own autopsy in the hope that the story would prove useful to those who were awake.
A blow to the head.
Then the pinpoint.
The stars continue nothing, I continue them from beneath these fobbed off robes
a slab of stone, a blow to the head keeps this top revolving around whatever is not appropriated by a blow to the head.

Events in extreme, drones of the imagination.
Two Poems

Lytle Shaw

On Jeff Wall's Wall

Withal there were cleanliness issues.
oil slick, wilt greens on said
sink side razor. Let this typify
the difficult pleasure of retractable living units
(I hereby announce, promise or christen)
whatever their utopian claims,
the more appealing in late 60s colors.

But bombing wasn’t practical
air support tied with troop transports,
at least until the code-breakers came through
clear, underwater photos catch
carrier hulk, silt lodged three miles down

Which returned us to the office
oddly quiet at this late hour
though the best time to rethink
cubicle patterns, circulation flows,
egress and the national fantasy
that had begun to swirl
around mid-level bureaucrats.

And what kind of machine is your studio?
asked the oblong headed one, preparing
allegorical woodcuts for the Renaissance fair.
Inversions small, if personally central:
so back to your couch – here we
hang weekly exposés, there store
maps and printed scrolls, Cruz
will be by shortly to scrape olives
and tomato chunks from the public stalls.
Wilhelm Meister

Be fate a vomitous word, still
signs of hussles at his expense:
Canadian quarter among coins,
dog usurper upright and salivating
on his return – slunk home
to examine yard spiders enlarged,
compost sinkish remains,
calculations to an ideal friend,
moors door to door.

Or in villages, around flight strips,
at the Papish anachronism.
The time it takes to list.
The fight with rising times.
The wheels inside the hand.

Action is easy, thinking is hard.
He stares in wonder, impressioned
by molding; he learns by playing
as a diagram makes his rage concrete.

In the gold-clasped writing book
he pours his inner lament:
“There is unrest in the forest.
There is trouble with the trees.”
But forest details flag
and he could but blink
toward a parentless array.
Well, more occasions for largesse,
 pockets double stitched: later
 resolved by the castle's hidden archive:
 parents' sold paintings, that first
 Angelschein — all the while players
 perform speeches on his early years
 above festive songs and toasts.

No time for gardening among the rehearsals,
 ski slopes gone to gravel,
 gunshot husks lining the driveway.
 Let's pour a cold one under the umbrella
 he said. Last ones drone history, drop off
 until seriousness takes him by surprise.
from *Other Grounds*

== Jocelyn Saidenberg

social practices
sensuous experiences
immediately and entirely

outside of reach. reaching further again
grow and fix yourself trembling
only a few if you can touch it. keep reaching

unremarked
not not noticed

neither self evident nor straight forward
our need being on our knees and in need
directly felt seen and known

we are
industrious sprightly
birds with lumps of sugar and
thistle seeds buried under spotlessly
clean tables and china across
the yard basket in mind and hand
between wayward and wayless

war to champion the act the man thought
main thinking instantaneously translated into deed
the order materialized into action
riding westward

a power to obliterate confirms him
in his theater of operations he appraises
his exactitude of destructive beauties
terrible orderliness an order to obey

by death in deed my dear no response
corrections receive correcting back turned burned

open wide here comes daddy
expanding agencies mobilizing grounds on other grounds
a ready-made substitute not no ghosts
joining of unlikelies no guarantees not no never

not to mention on our knees again – unhinged?
going to pieces concealed still
immerse ourselves in its night in a working dream
caveway caveway wayward home
to carry out by a mere act of willing

proctoring what was its own great score. piano music tonight. no hope of
getting out of here water water water bring me to your knees. unfix
inasmuch as perfect motions are all circular and multiplying. might be. an
ever changing link as a point of departure. to collect a varied assortment
of necessaries: shoes, sealing wax, a knife, an armchair, fly papers, a
telescope, a kettle, nails, a barrel of flour another of meal, a straw hat, a
compass, a hasty farewell
gently insinuates a vast bulk against them. abominates. revels here awhile. small junctures. an exotic body left all over the world, wobbling toward some impotence some more abominations. forswear and disband themselves sulking again along the meridians. her hull no longer a young bull face down in the mud again. i force the proxy to bend before the kettle’s logic. spur and history of errors. weary, cast down upon that which might bear aloft.

for all you have done, thank you, thank you, really.

with many kindly thoughts and A very Good Wish for

long hours silently guided steadfastly
Nodal says: points. partial fixations. entangled predicament. she asks: don’t unearth me ask but how are we building this boat. her hull. a phosphorescent light upon the sea.

Muffled speaks: the struggle against subordination has to be visualized, and then slumps back into her chair, unzips the cuff of her jacket for some breath, partially. not willing really to fight and die for this country, nor to create life, more inclusive citizen, but still but still.

New Citizen speaks: a social agent. an ensemble. corresponding to the multiplicity of social relations. sexual difference in many ways and means as far as ships are concerned. precarious forms. that the breakable be made clear among bones penetrated with love.

Naphthalena writes: "Twas a moment embalmed personal distresses a solid certainty determinations nobody can wrest away from us grounded in more than its own compass our own
embryonic effigies in these circles. not concentric not completion. impos-
sible motherhood. waiting for it to stop hoping. refrain from false starts
starts again. associated starts. social agents, start becoming.

but who would want but who would want to. never noticing when things
end never wanting the end why would I would you. drop eyes drop
everything in front of my eyes clam shells the only one. strange. the rule
of the worst. select some few words for you too, short syllable. the slough
of des-pond said pli-a-ble.

then suddenly you see a child or an old man or someone and become
disarmed the face appears populated and dimensionalized holes tires
garbage filthy water and scraps of metal litter your path it is hard to get
around constant obstruction maimed war wounded crawling between
lanes of traffic bound by our own funerals sheathed barely visible violence
wrapped in torpor sealed off from the past and the future
circumference was all over us is the then and now of our person floating in space. after and through the in of it. from those who. she who was. you who were. a random statement needs topics including she was late for the third time. the slow moving one.

talking to oneself as a kind of rehearsal for life. a closed window or a rowing oar. close to nothing to wanting. the heaving your thought. our chance somewhere in between what we knew and what we wanted listening for it. while still talking. await to one side aghast. out turned.

the storm we promised as countless as civilians like luggage in a row with our ears plugged. closed against moving objects.
Passive Passage

To invoke you by spelling
the soft spot skull’s horizon
in diaries of Anon. Friend
days are named after your
arrival means absence is
a place for recreation be­
tween your eyes our thoughts
no space for words here
us think too fast to say
you already know we’d
rather be seen by you
than touched by anyone
Liner Notes

Write down what you can’t
Make up in health or mercy
Waiting for that place to arrive
A static rises and falls over you
At last no information or irony
Or boredom is a wilderness too
Tired to map the privileges
You enjoy without intention
Suspended like a planet or a wasp
Saying this music is too cold
While that one it too hot
To drive yourself until it’s lost
A matter of pronouns and pre-
Positions finding a place in
An event is an event and so on
Sleep, like the other virtue,  
is self-expelling,  
to be identified by  
that somnolence as  
overheard:  
recitation and  
whatsoever, perchance  
to colorfully dream

e.g., We went to a fair, in the dark,  
and the jester knit an elastic sieve

Yes, she did, and caught  
us, falling

The other virtue,  
honesty,  
is sometimes irrelevant,  
especially for those

who cannot overcome exhaustion.

You know who I mean,  
siren-in-the-body-of-a-jester,  
in which case the alignment of  
truth  
and unconsciousness bears  
little on elasticity
A carnival. I waited in a long line for an unknown benefaction. We said we wanted to go on the ride, to sip confection. All the mechanized ups and downs would remind you of tenderness, or a gesture tendered. I want to motivate limbs of an actual body. Drowsy ones, Awake! If an imperative could lessen its lie, then we submit to direction, of any sort. A filter.

Suggestive of a further story or venture. Forthright, disappointed.

There’s a safety net hanging

Eavesdropped over.
Two Poems

Jackson Mac Low

She Has Plenty Today

(Stein 41)

She has been safely coloring Cook.
Three intend to win plenty.
He will be walking in place that day.
Indeed vegetables relate more.

Mother's away Sunday.
All wish safely to color.
Second knows and has been a Cook.
Three intend to win plenty.

He will nearly not be little that day.
He cans miles of walking vegetables.
Relations are farther away from Mother Sunday.
Second wishes all to know he's safely coloring too.

Cook.
Three intend.
Happily.
Second.

Third.
Capital.
Inlay walking places.
Where indeed is he responsible to be at noon?

What did Cook come to call for?
Three intend repeating.
Very very verily he mentions cuts.
Such a relation is second to cake.

He intends to wish for little vegetables.
Mother can walk more miles than he.
All know his near relations are far away.
He will win plenty today.
Eight quatrains derived from a passage in Gertrude Stein’s play *Capital Capitals* (*A Stein Reader*, ed. by Ulla E. Dydo [Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern UP, 1993], 421–26, the play’s end). The passage was run through DIASTEX5, Charles O. Hartman’s most recent automation (1994) of one of my diastic reading-through text-selection procedures developed in 1963. I used as “seed text” a paragraph from *A Long Gay Book*, by Stein (*ASR*, 214, par. 5).

The numbers 421 and 214 are permutations of 241, found by opening a math-table book I used in high school to a logarithm table to which I pointed blindly. The extent of the source passage was determined by random-digit chance operations.

To make this poem, a word from the seed was added to the source passage before it was run through DIASTEX5 to allow the program to complete one full period. The program’s output was revised freely but without the addition of new lexical words.

Every line ending indicates a short pause, strophe breaks somewhat longer ones. Periods and question marks call for sentence-final intonation contours.

Martha Was Certainly Thinking Together

(Stein 75)

Martha was certainly certainly Martha.

Martha who was living and sometimes listening to something was certainly remembering interesting things.
She being one needing being living was going and being a living thing.
She was being living.

She being feeding was living and was altogether she.
She was needing to be going.
Some such younger ones could not completely be such things.
And then she was living.
She or any or all of them

She was one going and was sometimes almost important then.
Such important older ones were certainly always talking.
Older and older ones were certainly thinking.
Certainly anyone being living and stopping living was not needing anything.
Certainly Martha’s sister was sometimes being tender.
Almost all of them were living.
She and her sister were certainly listening.

Anyone who was needing anything was certainly being living.
She was certainly one of them being living.
Martha and her sister would not stop being interesting.
One of them was sometimes important.
Some children were certainly listening.
Many of them were living together.
They certainly could not be listening to other existing children.
She and some others were certainly interesting.
Certainly some younger ones were good at completely stopping thinking.
Using this different thing in an older way the men and children had certainly been listening to something together.
It was certainly important to Martha that she should be stopping her sister from going on repeating something longer but not in a better way.

She was certainly thinking she could not deal with living any longer.
That thing might have been anything she had to be needing to be stopping.
Thinking about stopping living was interesting.
Some younger ones could not be really needing not to be living.
She certainly could not be needing anything then.
Martha was not listening to anything.
Some younger women were willing something.
Certainly anything and any one could sometimes be needing to be stopping.
That one and all of them were really needing this thing.
Something existing can sometimes be something feeling.
Some remembering can be interesting.
When young men have not made some remembering interesting younger women will not be willing to be living with them.
This one is really listening to something longer than that one could
She is certainly one living with some suffering.
She is one that is needing to be completely listening.
This one needed something to be interesting and important.
Martha and she were certainly feeling younger.
They each have something interesting to be thinking together.

Six strophes derived from a passage in Gertrude Stein’s “Two Women,” published in A Stein Reader, edited by Ulla E. Dydo (Evanston Ill.: Northwestern UP, 1993), 215–17. Lacking notes, I believe this passage was run through DIASTEX5, Prof. Charles O. Hartman’s most recent automation (1994) of one of my diastic reading-through text-selection procedures developed in 1963. However, I do not know what “seed text” I employed in this process. The final poem was either made by “mining” the output of this procedure and freely producing normative sentences from the words I extracted, or by some more systematic procedure. These sentences were divided into strophes that comprise successively numbers of sentences corresponding to the Lucas number sequence 1, 3, 4, 7, 11, 18.

...I call the monsoons hermits
at other times they earn the appellation of colloquial straw
because the northern current reverses
& I am reduced to intoning at the depth of the Java Trench*
because Gianini knows there are only snakes to catch
only snakes to populate the trawler
with its somnific flask
with its verdurous weathering
with its shape of an eel at macro-cosmic twilight

Gianini whispers
that I eat Spartina grass
that I indulge in “invertebrate chordates”
that I drunken myself on a cunning hydroid liquor

you see
Gianini relates to Sri Lankan minerals
mentally feeding on graphites & gems
he whispers that he hails from Jaffna
& I hail from the eastern shore where we dance the “Kaferingha”*

I feel as though evolving from a sphere
which exists as diaphanous clepsydras
a republic of ambrosia
brought to its power by the fact of anaesthesia
so that the Indian Sea
with its transitional flux
with its analogy between life & death
allows me the complication of a smoking urchin’s vortex
certainly not a pasture of bullocks
or the zodiacal life marked by exterior scale
or the mathematical ingestion of a squid

& I am not speaking of skioptic “response”
which relates
only to “light and shade”
or to a primitive form of shadow
it is not that I am a bloodless form
full of scarification & heat
or
aborted & microplanchic

I have a burning love of verbs
a driven micro-sorcery
alive
within a blank hellish drone
as a ghostly cheval
staying alive by crucifying prudence with my compass

my body being of dark electrical thorns
like a watery desert of veins
fishing for serpents
embroiled by Gamma Cygni
a “White supergiant 800 light years away”

it enhances grace
it spins the body in physical movement
like a stunning kind of pictograph
above my “Intrapsychic conflict”
I am never within the structure of jealousy or depression
electrically hidden in massless ice sheets
more
like an evasive expansivity
an expansion unblemished by the cubic or by volume

it is above galactic latitude *
like a lepton fountain
dispersed by geo-centric parallax
by a simple dwarfing containment

perhaps I am more condoned
by the “Hirayama family of asteroids *
that I have broken with human motion
in that the cells
are collected & dispersed

collected on the level of the prone & visible body
then dispersed on a plane much higher than neutrinos
true
the galaxy cosmologically shifts
leaving me deranged at the psychic diametric of velocity
an ulterior body whose passing is "short lived"

in this fundamental sense
I am Mahayana & of Africa
both Sri Lankan & non Sri Lankan
in that
I am of a newly elected "Radial" width
comprehending my projection of rays
like faceless chromium at twilight
an absence
like "intergalactic hydrogen"
perhaps a complex love of gravitons & lightning

I learned to speak when my solar journal was commenced
then I was magnetized at the age of 12 to a fleeting form of fatherhood
& now I sail
never eating for days consumed by scalar neutrinos

I've been reported as expired in Jaffna
& been burned in effigy for interminable wandering
for the crime of emitting vertigo by my movement
for inflicting the human spirit with a parallel genetic engenderment
being compared to the sun in the afterlife
a wanderer in a zone with fluctuating kelvins
breathing unknown dice within my schisms

at times I swallow peril
& Gianini teleportates to Jaffna
& scorns me
& returns to the trawler like a ghost
to mock me
to fulminate my captures
to heap upon my cells a code of abrasive torment
threatening to pile up scholars at the behest of my eternal disadvantage

their argument being
that the winds will one day dissipate
that my oxygen will flare out like a nova
incoherent in demise
that the "Gulf of Mannar" will disappear
that I'll return to realias no proper distance can quantify
& so I ask of Gianini
did the Buddha ever waver?
did he cease to exist because of unjust reason?

Gianini then disappears & disappears
remaining sequestered in a liminal Jaffna
in a turquoise incompleteness
making his way through insidious salamander flowers

as for me
the shock
the uncompromising totalitarian sky
muttering in a lake of connivance
de-configured by maggots
there then exists for me
durations of time
of deadly sojourns in circles
transfixed in planktonic oblivion

& so there exists nothing as outward circumstance
as separated boundary
as immaculate bell to be rung without the core of aboriginal timing

so I exist
without the ultimatum
without the creatureless blackness that the preacher’s pursue

I am without didactic conundrum
without the law which inverts & shatters
& invents the cold incontrovertible monuments
which contort & psychically poison
the neural field then subject to bloodless catastrophe
to a range within distorted phrenic reality

me
condemned to tragic imperceptibles
to cauterized anomalies
open at a depth of wandering enigma
which exists at maniacal apogee
incapable of termination
or the magical shapes in sun enriched snowlight
so Gianini has become a traitor who ferociously exists
who dwells at Guenonian blazeless incandescence*
as a poltergeist capable of terminal teleportation
like a witness within a graph of integers
watching me
chop off the head of a serpent
with my rusty spade
with my hands like magic lightning hooks
from the beginning of this strange vestibular journey
casting spells
which combine & supersede the galaxies
like the shadow from a dying igneous torrent

because I have never sought in my wandering
a catechismic plankton
or a global dossier on movement
I can only reveal to one
the structure of magnets
& the way charisma ignites above a zodiac of disfavour

so I am never annulled
or pillaged by disfiguring darkness

when
Sri Lanka floods
I am empty
transparent without resistance
condoning the power of its valence
refusing to keep a log
or handle a rapacious coding journal
so that Odysseus or Marco Polo exist without analogy
or profit to my mnemology

for instance
the moon as conundrum for millipedes
for jolts of interminable stillness

& so what the mind would call confrontment
what the reductive mental faculty would deem as equational fear
no longer dissolves me
no longer equates my eternity with phrenic models transformed into
prayer
into a mode of dolorous subduction
this is why Gianini appears & disappears
spying on my trawler
like a form of arcane treachery
whispering my visage through the highlands into Jaffna*
recollecting my shadow as a steep & insidious power
to be negated
to be signed by the ministers from dark judicial hamlets
that I am robbing the oceans of serpents
that my trawler demonically flashes
that I harbor a tribe of Sphinxes on board
who've abdicated land
& I
the surviving criminal party
devoid of earthly habitation

neither Sinalese or Tamil
it is said that I hail from Eistla Regio on Venus
that the serpents I catch are forced to imbibe lava
that I'm training non-human forms to invade the Sri Lankan populace
seeking to steal the root of the land
all this
by one whose name is hidden
who wanders between nothingness & living
who destroys his unnatural cradle by means of unnatural schisms
yet who imbibes as his source general heresy & disjunction

for instance
I've stated to myself
the fact of seminal disjunction
aligned with carnivorous tides & traces
& so the ministers feel threatened by any whisper of my presence

even the murdered the sullied
eat me as necessitous but unsavorous wheat

& from the dungeons they call out my voyage
they intone my isolation in the death camps
because I sense my apparition at different levels of scarification

my self-ingested exile
its insidious malfunction
I repeat again
that cacophonous causes immolate my effigy in Jaffna
& all the renegades decide in my favour
all those who've taken danger as a power
as ferocious authenticity
as salt catching fire
like a monsoon existing in the sudden abnegation of neutrality

& so
the monastery blurs by subversion
the rules burn
the texts become ulterior
the discipline breaks by means of ulterior treason

there are no memorials to propound
only negations
which obscure the living mind
which seems to preclude a centralized refinement
which even the monks desire to propound in me

because of my spirit
they drink from a flask of vertigo & ink
& desire that my next thousand lives will be a force of problematic
charisma
that I'll exist as a haunted beam on some flash between the asteroids
that my rhythms of assault will be gainless
devoid of plethora or exclusion

so why would I exist?
what would be the forms of my illusion?
a Cervis axis*
a “Pteropus giganteus”??

yet
I'm alerted by the void
by its spinning immigrants' silence
by its faceless pacification
pervaded by darkened alluvial smoke

there exists no passive comfort
no fort of perjurious ethers to direct
one could see me as a wiry scorpion dentist
as a graceless indigo wrestler
seething
purely indifferent to the Loxodrome’s craft
which I seemingly embody
alive
in a gathering of psychic millstones
taking on liminal nigredo
much the way eternity incessantly spins
my lucidity then lessened to a ruthless insomnia
to the voice the size of a body of dust

so I face the sea day by day
as if I were a cunning Sumerian
struck by transformative extinction

Gianini has warned me that special praetas are befouled
& I am one whom he says is inextricably befouled
like a stupa divided
in a blazeless hatchery of bells

he claims prophecy
he claims the deviant gift of vatic ignition
appearing & disappearing
coming to life in the sea
spreading rumors about my evils across Jaffna

I call him the woeful praeta
the injudicious Remora
the being whose being is schism

he who lacks the stamina of wandering

like the Guajiros of Colombia I fish*
& I sustain myself like a civet
like a “ubiquitous jackal”

I sustain myself
like a barrel of rum with the image of a leopard burned in its wood
or I could torture myself with brine
or with strangely ingested starfish
or take on the cast of an Astra-don
part shark & part bird
& reveal to myself that I thrive on imaginal couscous & cassava
which allows me commingling with my astral kin
the Tuareg*
the Turkana*
the Bambuti*

the bartered salt from the Bilma oasis*
or the breadmaking skills of the “Gaduliya Lohars”*
or my magic cousins the Akuriyos*

drinking gruel from a lion’s belly
while droning over cups of pure lava

Glossary

Kaferingha – African derived dance performed in Sri Lanka

galactic latitude – The “angular distance” of a “celestial body” north or south of the “galactic equator.”

Hirayama asteroids – “…debris resulting from a collision between larger asteroids in the past. Named after the Japanese astronomer K. Hirayama.

Guenonian blazeless incandescence – “psychic remains left behind by a human being in passing to another state…” Defined by French thinker Rene Guenon who was converted to Islam in 1912, and who died as an “Egyptian national” in 1951/

Jaffna – City in northern Sri Lanka

Cervus axis – A “white spotted deer” of “southern Asia.”

Pteroptus gigantus – A giant bat from Java.

Guajiro – Fishermen, goat herders, salt harvesters, from Colombia. Indian nomads, tough and self-sufficient.

Tuareg – Nomads of the “Central Sahara” “famed all over the Sahara for the endurance of their camels.”

Turkana – Nomads from Kenya

Bambuti – “Pygmy Bands” from the Ituri Forest.

Bilma oasis – Oasis in the Sahara, “East of the Air Mountains” where salt is harvested.

Gaduliya Lohars – Wandering “Hindu artisans” in India, numbering more than 25,000 people.

Akuriyos – Hunters from Surinam whose numbers have diminished to less than 50 souls.
Communication with Drowned Souls

So deep
That motions become blessings.

Below the danger of –

How unlike a weapon
That leaps into the hand, a thought.

A system of thought
Shifting in relation to –

Now, cloak
Approaches clock like a prayer.

Hued, as in air; hewed, as in stone.

Where bells of
dissonance are still
Half-submerged in distance.

Where the quickening of eyes equals ice.

Always departing
In never-to-be-repeated patterns.

Furious, the frozen moment
whose fractures
teach accident & order.

Why is there something rather than nothing?

The bottomlessness
of things is answered only
by a question.
What Spills Spells

1. The Spoils

Neither raven nor haven, but a sound-drowned line.

All hollowed, no name is news to a drum.

The complete sentence holds its antlers high, antennae tuned to distant static.

Here a cloud is seeking a crowd, a clown a crown.

As “we,” apparently ageless, converge upon a place of no resistance. Many words remain missing.

Now one of them – “rose” – appears to raise the dead. To the stillness inside the story.

Whose mouth – exponent of zero – repeats this order, aping the natural mask whose picture nominates speech.

To hold what is holed: reason’s trapezoidal portrait.

The twin of (the body of) between.

In other words: appearance is a blind spot, a space of turbulence caused by an actor walking into a mirror –

Is, then, a “shine of recession” always to be posed against the interrogative? Perhaps.
2. *The Spools*

“Vanishing into visibility” is considered circus-like today.

Believer, return to the first erasure.

Resurrected for a hooded audience, a bird-winged book.

How a phrase freezes when sun-struck. To be illustrated by mourning, morning, and the abstractions induced by winter.

Doubt fills the margin of the page (confession of nudity).

Face averted, lacking every commentary. Soiled evidence, in ceaseless arrival –

Either “there is no time” or “there is no time.”

How the mystical tenet *turns faster than* the groan of regret. This, within the same wheel of words.

Writing as the art of reading as rewriting.

“Drink me,” says the dramatic sky. But there is no school for red weather, and the Moon shines with a borrowed light.

The hidden handprint is always represented.
3. *The Spalls*

So goes the *via negativa*. After the likeness of –

A riverbed (a porous science).

Alluvial fan opening meaning. Defined by, defied by, deified by, one word deposited upon another. Neither source nor mouth, but a crossed-out sacrifice.

How “the myth” is deposited upon “the mouth” –

Uncollected images of –

A rock’s reckless reckoning. After magic, contingency itself appoints the letter A.
Hyphen's Hyphen

Nothing is thought
or what we
thought

I stayed out of your body
to let it air

but the air would not

I stayed out of the air
to let the body
but avail
not

The unopened room in which the tide had gone out
exposing miles of floor never before seen

Where there is everything

is never there

what in the world
susceptible to the call

to mean an order

hostage time

How continue
where there is no
outside

proximity's estuary

before
incident, arrival. Sojourn in matter. The sun's mind. Kymatik. Isn't musical experience

outside sound's
light

drop song

a phenomenon keeps watch on itself
scouring the seabed
for unforseen

We enter the epoch
And nothing will stay stay
nothing left
was
nothing
last
Songs for Song

-after Lorine Neidecker's "Progression"

May will buy you flowers
   arrive at the door and
Give them to yourself
   May June me you July

Great distance Great access As if Great: object
   Great distant access as if great object

How love happens coaxed from
the dark where sleep is an animal
wakeful and directionless

   Great distant access as if great objects

I typed all the miniatures into
   long-lined pages    I said the love
before the dark was dark
   I said before
now before is before before
and I not I

Great great is the great wild distance

lies in wait    can't
cup
cup too many
too bad too
actual place no place
Great great lies the great distant

This time eclipse of time
glissando you in the mirror
my account so far is
glare the unconscious in a well
bucket recite minerals
renewals animals

Great Great

Behind one apparent one
who insists on the disappearant's
shadow larger gasp than any
appearance could summon loom
looms the loom

Great no one No
And bought her flowers to hide her face in
and the flowers by the bedside by the roadside
the flowers in the season of her mother's name
and the flowers over her that blind her

Great
For each day centuries sent
  this bright world
This bright
  lobelia  hibiscus  grapevine  jacaranda
world hand in hand the last
  sleep  sleep lattice
Graze window of ever last
  strawberry  winter’s idea
the imagined’s present
from *an ives set*

*Joseph Noble*

**PART II**

5 single and signal
sound is content severally
music is distance met

when is something in
'playable shape'?

seismographic, oscillographic

that it is what it is
more than reflecting something
the music is something

'scribbled in pencil
with many perplexing alternatives
sketched in the margins'

and 'experience' moving
"the poet's flute is heard"
""the whole body is one sense"

"let Nature flow through him and slowly"

what is sung is a meeting and departure
what is called is what leaps between
a slow moan a quick yelp
ground sense whistles lip fit
amazement sounds several calls
lip limbs slip scale
sort cipher –
air is reminded
of a tune

this is earth
and this is eating
which one eavesdrops?
moraine at the anvil
pinnate and ovate
broken bread

sediment on the lips
listening is a horizon

light and cuniform bones
rim look rib tone

why not twig tell
into its own bowing

a toe grows
tangible and undefinable
upon the turn
5 separate but equal
dancing around each other
tune filings in the rib furrow
shoes wrinkled in time
along the way
others also wear
where you are
another way
and where

Passages in double quotation marks are from Ives himself or attributed to him by others; passages in single quotations marks are from other people — friends, relatives, musicians, composers — talking about Ives, or are from other persons not discussing Ives.
Not the matador but the other one,
Shoulder back hips (out of frame)
still outstretched quiet ascending

listen
partake
abide

– I can learn
only that next to
breath

Silver spray painted sky dance
Six feet pad soft sand

Bull
Roses bleeding from its nose

Stringing interruptions

Glitter clapping rhythm

[stood at the twisted frame and looked at the eye bristles skin shifts like a sheet]

cthoom...
wet purple fur

– Everything smells as if it has been sawn through

Sangria

seeds of the saints feed those

who ask

– where are you staying I wish to graze
I’ve got a bad habit
remove the dust
there is none no other
no way to know
other’s theirs feet it slows me down I know keeps me from reclining more
fruitwater is there another warm shaking

“Still and quiet”

Cthoom…

Not the matador but the other one
copper words embroidered into vest and epaulets.

(sugar lines)
"I wonder if he knows more If he knows is closer is more wants more wants it more if they he knows needs"

- where do you graze black saplings from outside of town remain intact perhaps a tendon has snapped your black glass is tender and dim with the effort of pushing out your nostrils sugar water stay here they are not there coming see the dust make a bed of grass

[seven small dark men are under your neck, holding up your head, playing your thick neck like an accordion, each holding a large greasy green leaf so as not to be stained.]

Not the matador nor a soldier but I hold a book with small words

"I am the furthest, he is second closest"

- nails stained by sharp grasses yellow fields washed in wind sleeping there is the other one is there a second in the field wearing nothing
Hooves pull through silent sand
Six black shoes
pad softly

– your shoulders
carry a thunk within
the broad bones a
door closing the air
the wet window
black some more
glitter clapping white
brown white brown
white brown white
brown see the
fingers white brown
white brown they are
close

Heavy lungs bead up with copper letters. Scratching packets full of
warnings.

listen
partake
abide

230
I can hear the blade, 
the color of a dime, 
slide into you. Shuk.

— it’s only a page, a 
slight tear I can tape 
clear

Crisply shaven and smelling of cut grass.

Highlight titanium
Thick rooted lashes
Scraping canvas

The Dutch sky

— painted in the 16th Century sky silver blue this is beautiful sleep has come this is the smell wet and cold linseed oil nothing more sugar water more is there oil blue sky large blue clouds very common large very beautiful will be with you the blue will never leave now they are here

Everything smells as if

Applause.
Subverting the Eye Gunk

The Polar Caps of mars sit
in a deep depression like ice cream in a bowl,
which no one really believed.
Was it the boon of man to
study snow on a distant rock?
Old clothes mark the territory
How can “it” not know what “it” is?
If only you could see what I’ve seen
with your eyes.
Big genius designed your mind.
Fashioned after enormous rocks hurtling
through space collecting ice,
subverting the eye gunk.
I Pity The Mud

I pity the poor beanpole
who wishes he would've
these shoes still are good
everything will be different
soap becomes edible
people console themselves
ask the birds, I juggle time increments
it doesn't matter
if invisible faces
fend off expression
we must cold call skull plates
deflect bullets of small caliber
ping. ping. ping.
I pity the fascist mud
are my songs up yet?
the yeti waits. awaits.
Vino De Milo

John Glenn a pigeon
I am the oldest people in space
Here are bunk flowers,
they soften arteries
some are plants some
wisps of air to sample
among a cypress

Cloud things with
airplanes
fall to me
while I watch Australian
football
in my space ship

There is no space beer
under my space beer

& space peanuts
dance to the space
jazz up here.
Why Men Confess

One’s mind furnishes the grounds for a lifelong armageddon.
To avoid bad luck, modern man often knocks on wood.
The devil in her case was about the size of her arm, he also took shape of cat.
Simone, the editor, outdid them all in turning the truth upside down & in self-vilification.
I am writer, supposed architect of soul.
I deliberately shielded them by perverting the campaign.
The worst fears of our authorities were to be realized.

All 12 men confessed.
16% hold full time propaganda jobs.
The germs, so the story went, like Saturn, successfully devoured their children.
The Anthropic Principle

The pope of cosmology addresses a convention. When he talks the whole atmosphere changes. He speaks through a computer. When he asks can you hear me, the whole audience says yes. It’s a science locked up in a philosophical debate. There are a few different theories. There could be many different realities. You might say ours exists because we do. You could take a few pounds of matter, heat it to an ungodly temperature, or the universe could be a freak accident. There may be a limit to our arrogance, but one day the laws of physics will read like a detailed instruction manual. A plane that took off from its hub in my home town just crashed in the President’s home town. The news anchor says the pilot is among the dead. I was hoping for news of the President’s foreign affair with a diplomat’s wife. I felt a mystical connection to the number of confirmed dead whose names were not released. Like the time I was three handshakes from the President. Like when I thought I heard that humanitarians dropped a dumb blond on the Chinese embassy. Like when the cable was severed and the gondola fell because the pilot flew with rusty maps. What sane pilot would land in severe rain with hard hail and gale force winds. With no signal of distress. With no foghorn to warn the civilians, the pilot lost our moral compass in the bloody quagmire of collateral damage. One theory says it’s just a freak accident locked up in a philosophical debate. It’s like playing poker and all the cards are wild. Like the arcane analysis of a black box full of pilot error.
Souvenir from Anywhere

People of color untie-dyed. Got nothing to lose but your CPT-shirts. You’re all just a box of crayons. The whole ball of wax would make a lovely decorator candle on a Day of the Dead Santeria Petro Voodoo altar. Or how about these yin-yang earrings to balance your energy? This rainbow crystal necklace, so good for unblocking your chi and opening the chakras? Hey, you broke it, you bought it! No checks accepted. Unattended children will be sold as slaves.
Outside, on the cruise ship, it’s night. The Cadillac that drives the bikinis, its seats required to reflect a largesse. The car helps the docking, lassos the fourplex. It chips the paint a little, blows a fuse. The tenants forgive blemishes made because from the spectacle, their lives gain a story that pulses in their habit, a false light that hints at a demeanor without a keel.

And hearing doesn’t turn on to the crash alone, but is against a listening to those who speak to me directly, mean to address my vacant, covered body, a whole chicken served, thighs not afforded. I couple wires and calmly nod.

Yes, with their flax and their silence, boats are chartered, money is held hostage under gilded roofs. Indoor swimming pools, a delight for those to whom relaxation is a less common term than sanity.

Having worn garters with denim to eschew the fine satin cause, on a border between without a definite personality and deep within it, shrugging shoulders, counting antelopes, a pastime. Then, after settling into legged scarcity, it became discovered there were only other animals doing this kind of mathematics.

This, my submarine, is sealed, compressed buffets of juice and magazines. On the boat that stays adjacent to the coast’s ledge, but, nevertheless, deep and underwater. Ship’s leave is a consideration the talk of it received in letters:

Dear E, I have heard of you. Do you exist? Go to Manila or Lompoc where I am not. Send no pictures, but tell me of your days, your expeditions, and my comprehension of your words, my response will be said to be lost in the system.

Write soon or as your will abides.
Love, [name removed]

PS. I will here guarding the flax you have written of. It visits me here too, but I have invited it inside and locked all the windows, the exits.
6 As the ship comes in and goes out from the coast, the sidewalk, a wish for an outside the anything, for the light to go home, to stop answering blank glances of those who deserve because they have little else besides their scarves to keep them warm, their men who leave and return, no wiser. The flaxen women cannot understand their faces.

These women exist not in my room or in my breath but to the birds that won’t move for my car, who I cannot squash. The password for the meeting place where the stockings are slung is innate, like the supposed penchant for candles while dining.

In the distance in uniforms, correspondents are pleased with my notes, as my speech is enough to scare, my hand avoided, my eye not pierced. Awaiting the letter to instruct where to scavenge next. Will travel to find that my century has passed. My hero is dead in a storm, when he was not traveling to my side.

7 Dear [Name Removed],

It is both cool and warm here at alternate seconds. I have been protecting myself greatly against any outside communications, but there are those with arms, that resemble what I imagine yours would be as they push up sleeves, but yours much more pent up with grief and beckoning. Chicken and misdirected love last night. Tonight, attempt no less than ten rounds of solitaire without being begged for slight intertwinements.

Yours indeterminately, E

PS. How are your women coming along?

Having located Manila, but not yet Lompoc, I mourned all the deaths that occurred without cause, without written consent. Some have crossed over from the ship to gawk at my spectacle. I offer them bits of my fare, but nowhere to sit, as not to assume they would want to stay, as not to embarrass them and their clothing. The talk is of dolls with red lips and white skin, similar to a compliment I received from one of the shipmates, being compared to a small, coddled object. Before I slept, enraged at my coquettish response, my brain fell silent to my body. This internal retaliation was to be the first of many suicides attributed to the act of the antelope counting. The solitary habit I could not break controlled my every move inside the cabin.
The base is shifting. There’s a discovery, a megaphone repetitive with doom. Carrying throughout the cabin: the home is without an objective. There is little to travel that isn’t spezatto. The appliances, sure, snappy. And the empty chairs remain so, as I am not yet against a fear of cruisers.

A ton to note though, wars and breeches of loyalty, but this genocide and apology reflects a little too closely an attrition of the inside, approval of the necessary sense, left-handed scissors.

More elected solitude, as the flaxen women who entertain others have gone to their meal, careful not to betray their faces.

Dear E,

I hope you have found flax like mine, gullible and posable, red and sassy, for if not to share your bed, to at least respect and feign admiration for their scholarship, their emotional ethics. I am thinking now that I have not recorded your position on god, perhaps you are not at liberty to speak against alien concepts, considering the brief knowledge I have of your mission. I admire your inability to proliferate the consciousness of journalists, your lack of need for coterie. I suck on my millions slowly through a straw, which is why I have no need for a flesh colored deity.

Best, [Name Removed]
The poem’s job is to ground itself while running aground of work. The poem finds homes for all the noises by bestowing placement upon phenomena, which is all the world’s construed argument and this line’s divisive description. A dog’s bark whooshes by in language for the something of sound speeding the dog’s speech, once “looming large on the nighttime or suddenly anonymous street” where the anonymity is the authorial inscription. Units, names, have been proposed — “line,” “image,” “phrase” — the value of writing minus writing. One could disqualify writing with time — “suddenly” — or the same effect reflects light admitted by lying: “if the truth were known.” Lying outside, uselessness gets made by gesturing utter meaning.* “There is little natural silence left in the world.” Enfolded in noise and space, its culpability is confined to a cluttered area, outdistanced, yet of the world, into the being of sound breaking. “Just a quick trip back / to mark the spot / where things stop / looking familiar.” Which marks with an x what’s invisible — Creeley’s “As real as thinking” — that sets the world and its bearings within the form, thus inflected on writing (that’s language’s object), what thinking accompanies studded out through what isn’t mine, digging into writing’s claws. “Now here it is / slowed down / by the introduction / of nouns.” Knowing things as confusing as “God” which stubs the thinking toe upon both history and spirituality, where truth’s capacity is the capricious lubricity of what one charges. “To come true, / a thing must come second.” This preface entrenches its spirituality in trained reality, writing a particular word, an intention — truth — a value negated by thought, though process’s posited intervention is its perhaps at a thing’s metaphysic heyday.

* (To speak of “utter meaning” is to: a) speak of speaking through the power to assume the truth-mantle of truth; (the truth’s knowability); b) believe that meaning is the inherent object of writing, thus placing the poem in direct relation to what it can produce at its opened end — the poem is a chronological machine which begins for the reader as writing, then becomes poem, and thus ends as an axiom. Although the poem I quote from is named “The Known,” it isn’t so or writing would end. Instead it presents a place for an unwritten object — sound — which is neither an object nor a presence. It sounds outside the poem, which finds a home for it in saying it does by resisting the turns of certain phrases, and thus saying them through the “as if” hypothesis. So the poem is at home by honestly admitting thinking and dooming the poetic act. Yet this thinking is admitted into the poem, which does not judge thought, but judges art.)
Lunations

Laynie Browne

1 She contains the most complete form of matter. Where was the moon when she conceived? Live — in a coal scuttle — with strawberries in the sea? From ma, to measure. Perilous descent, corkscrewing down a bony passageway. The mother’s widest spool flies to the mountain to feed upon dew. She is elsewhere which bothers the clasp of knowing.

2 Objects are pulled towards the horizon at a correspondingly high speed. A silver nutmeg and a golden pear. There is no reason to go there blindly; all perform the same choreographed routine. The head turns to the side. The chin is forced onto the chest. She looks no longer for the curtsy-ing wind. Voices steep, and charter. Hands are many layered curtains.

3 Oscillating brightness. Thistle seed mended with silk. Crowning occurs when she has no access to divide, having spent all cardinal pearls. The body falls, towers, disrobes. She sees figments of darkness beneath the glass of her eye. Direct measurements of seafloor motion have never been available.

4 The velocity of the companion, a little curl, and red herrings grow in the wood. Something no one else can accomplish. The shortest distances are most difficult to travel. Bare spots mark locations structures swept away. The deduction of a whole comes by default. Then there are words to go along with the pictures. The spectrum given off by a glowing coal and a human body. Soft blankets buried in deepest snow.
The system has now returned to its quiescent state. With cockle shells and dapple gray we may approximate any mirror dividing thought. She can close her eyes now since keys will guide her ontologically. The inkstand is still, liquid crystal. Gravity is unchecked, and she collapses nearly to a mathematical point inside a surface of no return. She watches the sea rise above the event horizon, then recede below the low-watermark.

Plunging straight in with no time to radiate before being swallowed, she dreamt she heard bleating exceed silver bells. After the crest of the wave which dwarfed a lighthouse, is a chasm between the present and all former action. Her hands have begun to marble. The concentration of an arbitrarily large mass in something approaching a point. Until then she is parted from all time. The dense glowing corpse of a sunlike star.

Radiance emitted from the vicinity of each type of body, waves as high as a twelve story building. She took up her crook, determined to find the present where sandstorms approach the colors of a lake. Blue powders smudged across stiff white paper. She writes messages to the atmosphere, tiring the alphabet of stars. Who lives the life of a rose, having forgotten to wander or gaze idly. Fedstar, used as a gem, bewildered or silly.

The salient difference between past-present maidens and those already having crossed over the chasm: the former have hard surfaces on which matter can accumulate. Here she attempts double blind flight – typing up flowers, sweeping letters from the floor. Moonlit, modest, the infant’s face turns towards the mother’s back. Travel by candle. She is no longer cold, merely covered with hesitations. They emit no radiation, at least not levels observers could ever hope to detect.
Angular momentum, from a transient source, taking a pulse. Leave them alone, and they will come home. Was that not a dainty dish, curds and whey? Still another quality of these verses is their actions. She adorns herself with paste or ice, the pearl combs of fleeting ancestors. Rides upon her gander, blows a horn. She drops her dress at the entrance to a cave. Picks up some bluebells and places them in a vase. To return, far away from these ravaging tides, she would need to give up matter entirely and convert herself to singularity. An old woman tossed up in a blanket. Empty of observable attributes. Discarding future-present pictures carrying their tails behind them.
Suppose persons who can’t see themselves because of an obstruction.

The immobility of the obstruction and the impossibility of its being dissolved by an individual will.

Imagine traffic occurring in the vicinity. Whole moments in the circumambient air.

The camera pans to its embarrassment. It’s a fantastic performance. We watch ourselves perish. An intellectual effort.

There must be ways to express this (?!!!) A general panic. No one understands the writing underneath the personal chrome apparatus.

Camera pulls in on one, standing next to bank. This is Person. It’s apparently in no relation.

Writing is a disease that destroys faith in more socialized activities.

Person next to bank is sunlit. Cut to vehicle twisting through right turn.

There is supposed to be drama in this context. But it’s hard to get it together.

Imagine a film of this as proof. Events happen, including cars and banks. Caught in the transaction, people can’t understand.
At the supermarket there is waiting that goes on under darkening sky. The parking lot is hot. Much of the intrigue is there in that traversal.

Plan to understand by damaging the thought. Idea steps out, outside the arrangement allowed for it. That's the conceptual.

Perhaps they achieve some implicit awareness. That is scary for others. They would confuse it.

An individual instant is invaded by entire tension. A narrative presence. With stakes.

The density of the state shrivels the person. That's why he smacks that rear view mirror angrily. He has a lot of choices.

Inside their mind they are problematic. Thinking is cash for them. Can the brain work to overcome what creates it?

Philosopher can't fix this emissions problem. There are too many sensors. The computer is vague in its transmittals.

They are among those environments. There is no memory. But there is a little memory. Speculators in the human ingenuity work quickly to absorb even that slim awareness.

Person at bank may be (crushed) promoted. First steps in old direction. The northwest corner.

See light looking out at you from reversed prism. Together we're tied to this. It was our career decision.

Script of history is in air pockets. The real remains unrecorded. Who noticed those three smog trees?

So “activity” is “sensuous.” This species-being’s essence fails occasionally. To be, you have to be at that meeting. It will reproduce you.

The hysterico-juridical moment of late capitalism. Incarceration and assassination as practical strategy. (Anthony Baez, Ezequiel Hernandez, Chubby Hood, Sheila Detoy.) The uses of the irrational.

The main verb here is subordinate. “Because they were tired, they worked.”

Person appears there in that lounge. In profile. Peers over the cafeteria. It’s momentous.

We meet for a reason, really. A face is the universal. I just realized: history looks like you.

Individuals sometimes touch through the bars. Customers are human too. This is also your terrain? People, as such, are lovers of each other.

Answer each question in a few sentences. Choose the most important details. Include your opinion. Be organized.

It’s a beautiful picture. For whom? Who can pay for those colors? Whose peace have they procured?

A rowdy crowd impinges on emptiness. What’s all the commotion? People who, for a moment or two, knew.
Forgetting the tumbled sheen of home
we calculate a rescue out of summer
Lovely missions in early green
A dream of love dearest curtain painted just beyond the face a trembling show attending moonlight the verso alive against you

Anyone has half a life like salt in groggy sunlight a dreamed acceleration forgetfully & fully there: arena’s circumstance a textile jolt awaiting debt asurf in drift on peels or wheels
Our daphne dissipates
a young mist
Must she follow
the if/then into ether
A little myth
in the grass
never hurt anyone
or so
they said
“little apple cake”

A fateful history
beginning to clang
to hunt the doe
in a row of air
*Things* like sage or virtue
A reader desires
to be crushed by sun
I defile books but
I don’t drink beer
Bent into a box
I wrastled fair
I & I
to make it new
or rue among the rose
Grammar is coral
a gabled light
against the blue
a dark museum
Durable thing

. .

I find you in a string
I find you everywhere I'm writing
on a leaf, a
satire of fleshliness A tree
is pure intent
and mindlessness
as once, the it
was he or she
Without an arch
triumph is a fantasy
of daily warfare
lunging into nightly airs
Iron can’t protect
a feeble word, I’m
less confident
than butter The blind
limits of a ragged
suggestion: to follow
like an Astor, to belong
to dirt, like a question
essays
notes
talks
possibly or
Colleen Maddingill & the history of error

Elizabeth Treadwell

introductory remark #1:
How quickly unities bounce back even in/at the margin(alia)s of an officially un-unified field (such as: “our” “post-language” “poetics”.) “Their musty rules of unity, and God knows what besides, if they meant anything....” – Aphra Behn

introductory remark #2:
When Elizabeth Fodaski uses the phrase “[sic]” as a device in some of her book *fracas* (Krupskaya, 1999) I think what she is doing is: in the middle of writing, for example, a history of the word/person/action “Mary,” punctuating it or pausing in it with an evocation “[sic]” of all that is unknowable, unspeakable, wrongly (&/or incorrectly) recorded, or lost, about “Mary.”

selfish moment:
When I was 26 I had a nervous breakdown. I spent a little over a week in a psychiatric ward in Blackpool, England. (One explanation: “post traumatic stress disorder.”) Some days I think all my writing since, and perhaps even before, is an attempt to make coherent and visible all that was inside my mind and body when for some long-seeming amount of time there I could not speak (or read). These were skills I certainly (!) already had at that time: but they were lost to me in those moments. Also, writing to make coherent all that led up to and bled into that experience, of being so open to “vision” (history) or “emotion” (despair, joy) that I was hospitalized (against my “will”). (In the bed there, I did try to write: diagrams comprehensible only - barely - to me.) (A month later I started the MFA program at San Francisco State.)

the guts of it, the “argument”:
When I heard from the poet Liz Waldner about an essay I had written for *Tripwire* 3: Gender, in which part of what I was doing was reviewing her book *Homing Devices* (O Books, 1998), she was concerned about a note I’d made to mention that I knew nothing of her “biography.” She thought this might be an indication that she as a person might seem “unstable” (or something) because of the compositions she had made as a writer. That was not my intention.

However, part of what I was doing in that essay was looking at and celebrating writing that seems to me to break the bounds of “what can be said,” that
constructs in language experience that has not yet been constructed in lan-
guage, thus making it, for the reader, more real, or at least legitimate, recog-
nizable. Putting it on the record. Making it, actually, in the act of writing.
And making space for it. When I write of groundbreaking acts, women and
"madness" are rarely far from my mind: but of course both of these "cat-
egories" are made by the very constructions in language that I wish to and
that I love to see overcome/broken/(busted!). (And I don’t wish to romanti-
cize the experience of “being” in either category.)

Or what has been erased in language, for example in “post traumatic stress
disorder,” and how useful that can be.

Helene Cixous and Leslie Scalapino have both written toward this concern
for the space of the un- (or not yet-, or mis-, or impossible to be-) spoken in
the opening essays of their new books (Stigmata, Routlege, 1998 & The Public
World/Syntactically Impermanence, Wesleyan, 1999, respectively).

Cixous, in her essay “Bathsheba or the interior Bible,” is meditating on
Rembrandt’s painting “Bathsheba bathing” when she writes: “There is no
smile: no exterior. No face that lets itself be looked at. That knows it is
looked at. No face. No surface. No scene. Everything is in the interior. No
representation.”

She compares this painting to the unreadable yet flirtatious Mona Lisa.
Bathsheba, here, is in no mood, or mode, for flirting. She is nearly absent
from any observer. How does he render this feeling? And, but why be afraid
of flirting? And when a woman is the renderer would this mean not think-
ing of audience? Not wanting the audience to look first at a woman writer,
but I say: not wanting them to not particularly not.

There is nakedness and there is being naked while looking in a mirror. There
is the interior nude: not nude. The question of clothes, structure, (costume,
unity) then, is a non-question. But it’s not even about that: it’s about being
without being seen or even the thought of being seen. But that fits into
being an object rather than a subject, thus not renderer.

Yet there is another figure in the painting: a female servant. (Looking into
one’s blind spots: can you?) The female body is trained to the male eye.
Some might protest this statement, at times even me. But what to mention
is: female writing is trained to the male eye. Isn’t it? Very strange. Not trained
to one’s own eye: worried. The canon.

But it’s not about that. It’s about what can’t be said. Rendering the interior/
exterior, the historical female experience when it has been erased or struc-
tured into a galling falsehood, can be, um, difficult. Always having to be renegade, or explanatory (or gendered). Having no, or very limited, or very hard-won, access to evocative, inspiring history (/present). Being a young female poet – Kathleen Fraser says, “one must simply flick off the lowlifes.” (Outlet (4/5), 1999) Of course, just as on the street.

But to get actually inside it, perhaps:
The place of aphasia, not having the power of words, trembling with them anyhow.

Scalapino, in “The Cannon,” writes: “I was interested in a syntax whose very mode of observation was to reveal its structure; that is, its subject and its mode are subjectivity being observation. Since it is itself subjective the viewpoint is ‘without basis.’ It removes its own basis, that of exterior authority, as a critique of itself.” Of course, the habit of being trained or accustomed to a particular type of eye changes the “I” itself. The habit of being a feminist, a patient, a teacher, as well. The habit of thinking of eyes, readers. Always being something. How can “I” get attention, money, love, my “point” “across”? And this is terrible, in writing.

Getting to the interior field(s), but not at the expense of the exterior field(s): living in a place of being able to do that, sometimes, by, in, writing. Longing and practicing for that.

Berkeley, 1999
It is an interesting thing, how much of Stein’s work is presented in the coloration of pedagogy. School books, primers, instruction: how to write. Useful Knowledge. Not just “Plays” but “Geography” as well. The original edition of *Lucy Church Amiably* was designed to look like a child’s exercise book. *To do:* a book of alphabets and birthdays. The *First Reader*, also designed as if for children, consists of twenty “lessons” (although only the last of these is truly didactic). And the title of her actual children’s book is a lesson all by itself: The world is round.

Before we consider the way this pedagogic aspect might work within the texts themselves (is it symbolic? is it perfume? is it in earnest?) it may be useful to look briefly at the environment of education in America during the turn of the last century.

Stein came into adulthood at a time when “higher” education in America was evolving into the full-fledged university system of the present day. For a young person of a certain socioeconomic class, predominantly but not exclusively male, going to college was becoming a standard expectation. It was an era when the rhetorics of “self-improvement” and “self-instruction” were everywhere present. America in the early 20th century was earnest about education in a particularly missionary way. For someone like Stein whose role as mentor of the young was a large part of her adult life, who never stopped thinking about the roles of teacher and student, such an atmosphere must have influenced her both in its direct message (the various summons to instruction) and in the myriad forms (pamphlets, advertisements – such as the one at the start of *Lucy Church Amiably*) the messages assumed.

In this, it’s interesting to compare her with her contemporary Pound. Both are erratic students (though fervent autodidacts) whose writings presuppose for them an (entirely appropriate) alter-identity as teachers. But after this commonstance, the divergences are more striking than the correspondences.

Pound’s “instruction” is earnest, hierarchical, culture-driven, hectoring, and (in his mind, at least) pragmatic – he is after students, young adults setting forth whom he can lead in the ways of cultural triumphalism (or triumphant culturalism).

Stein’s teacher’s ego is every bit as big as Pound’s, but the bias is different: she is not as interested in instruction, in the sense of guidance; rather, she is interested in something both smaller and larger, which is learning. In this, she has a particular investment in, and clearly an intuitive relation to, the atmospheres of young learning. She seems more interested in getting them...
earlier – what is being learned isn’t as important as learning itself. She is after schoolchildren.

Of course, the above is true only in a certain sense. At this point we are indeed dealing with the role of genre in her work, and the expectation she has of what might be called a composite addressee, one who can revel in the deflections of the address. That is to say, she compounds the notion of her possible reader (the “addressee,” the stranger to whom the message in the bottle is intended, in Mandelstam’s metaphor) by seeming to point it in one direction (through genre) while leaving actual readership undirected, as an open proposition.

To a degree, then, one must take the pedagogic armatures when they occur as indices that point to the patent meaning, but also as figures that serve additional ends. And indeed one can see these armatures as part of the wide range of cognitive games that comprise the heart of her conceptual innovations, and which (to keep the proposition open!) resemble lessons. Stein’s work is an ongoing “game” of Imagine: imagine George Washington as a novelist. Imagine an autobiography written by someone else. Imagine a back-to-back succession of Act Twos and Chapter Threes. Her work is a testament to alternate imaginings. In this context it’s not hard to imagine a children’s book that is really something else (or many things).

The question now is: might there be a genuine instructionality at work, a call to a different understanding? I believe that there is, but when it occurs it does so at a more subterranean level, one not so obviously framed by classroom rhetorics.

Learning is growing, but growth has to have a starting point, and in my view Stein’s work achieves its optimum originality when readerly intervention follows the model of a prepared ground. This isn’t a question of having nothing in one’s head but of being as it were freshly conscious, aware of a place to start, a place that has not been choked by overdetermined cognitive structures. This is what is meant, I think, by the “continuous present,” a nodal point for maximum reception. Lessons teach, but a new lesson takes you back to the start, and the formal consciousness of starting again is operative once more. A long piece like “Two: Gertrude Stein and her Brother” consists for most of its length of sentences where a variation is made among an extremely limited range of words – “she is one in being one and in being one thinking she is one being one expressing that some can be ones being some one.” But roughly a third from the end, the sentences drop this limited score (not suddenly but gradually, like a lap dissolve from winter to spring) and become much more expressive and dynamic, with a wide range of syntax and vocabularies: “Bend the head and lie down sleeping, sit in that way and he snoring, send the water which is hotter so that forgetting it is colder, pass the feeling that has that communion pass it in and have attraction.”

The effect of this shift is enormous, and has the strange feature of seeming to be a narrative shift, not so much in a diegetic “fictional world” as in the
narrative of what the reader thought language was and wasn’t capable of. The reader starts the piece in one world and finishes it in another. A gnosis has been revealed. A lesson has been learned.

Discoveries like these are at the heart of what Stein’s writing does when it’s really working, and what I think it ultimately aims for. She is incited and moved by the unbound potential of a mind “starting out”: inchoate, avid, unsure of the big picture but in some ways living in larger spaces outside of it. This may be an apt characterization of her writing as well: its power is in the way it occupies a space where directionality is everywhere implied but nowhere insisted. The space, one may say, like that inside a cauldron (or a young mind), that will admit whatever one wills to put there, where it may remain as admixture, or (more luckily) gather toward reaction. In its willingness to risk the former to achieve the latter, hers remains the writing most linked to a sense of its own potential, its own graduation into significance—not just useful knowledge, but future knowledge, an extending, exemplary releasing of possibility.

Notes

1 Right around the corner was the adoption of the German gymnasium system, a highly ordered treatment of the “hard” sciences that, in its American version, was also (and misguidedly) extended to what we would now call “liberal arts,” so that even the study of imaginative literature had about it the rigors of causality and sequence more appropriate to the study of, say, mechanical physics. It’s hard to say how close these ideologies may have come to Stein’s Radcliffe—how in place they may have been—but it’s tempting to see in her constructionist, “building-block” sentences a writing influenced by the proximity of systematic energies.

2 I am speaking, in fact, only of the writings—of their real-life activities as mentors and instigators, much could be said. It is a measure of the depth of the “teacherly” in their creative work that one can comment on it without reference to the more putative didactic writings—the lectures, the tracts—each produced in abundance.

3 For a really abrupt shift in the middle of a work, one that ushers in the “portrait” period with a stroke of the pen, see the “Portrait of Constance Fletcher” in Geography and Plays, p. 157.
The division of its labor that the writing mind obsessively impresses upon itself (poetry/ story/ theory etc.) does a violence to it. Imagination doesn’t divide inherently into these separate functions. Can we claim a sense for poetry that outstrips the limits of the artistic?

Or: could there be knowing in writing that wouldn’t erase the particular in knowing it, by accommodating and essentializing it? That would instead respond to the world, and include it in the work, as intrusive, in favor of a fluid and dialectical validity.

Not give up on understanding in writing. Particulars compel, in their particularity, a negotiation with them that brings us into relation: that’s getting to a knowledge.

True tales are told toward the center of the web of social relations. They depend upon an involvement in that metabolism. (If you want to get in, go outside. Shut the door firmly. There the grass has covered your bones and you mumble your answers to the proper geology.)

Imagining something doesn’t mean we get to see it. Who will support you, in your picturing? Meaning is a real architecture to get out of. Don’t expect assistance from the denizens. They aren’t hearing that. Among the buttresses…

No one knows a thing. Things instead seem to own us. That relationship is our vocation. An attachment, that dooms, to be challenged.

Vulgar anti-instrumentalism. As if being of use were something to be embarrassed about. As if there were a being-in-language that wasn’t brought to bear on some materials, towards some end. Living itself is using being. The self is outside.
Thinking is difficult. It hasn’t been done before, if to think is to think what doesn’t exist yet. That would be a “creative writing.”

Can I look up out of words at you? They are a trap, a nest of a trap that we fell into as a result of an escape. They are our way out, our exit into being bound by them. (Saying isn’t freedom, but a confinement that makes possible.)

Stuff doesn’t only exist by means of or through language. But what the material is capable of depends very much on it. What senses are accomplished.

So much work for so few words. Though they eat up event. So many instances are their responsibility. Can they comprehend that?

Poetry is news of language; but already that language belongs to somebody. So it’s news of how something is being used. It needs to be critiqued, not only for what it does wrong, but for what it does right as well.

What makes poetry convincing: to sustain an argument would be to admit its dependency on us. What’s true doesn’t want that kind of logicity. Instead it would exist between the human.

We look down into prose. Through the concentric rings, a world disappears. Story as a way to get to absence.

Who gives permission to paragraphs? What kind of a license? Can I register this intention with the Board of…? I look through the mirror at the official technology. It’s computing me. The machinery loves (hurting).

Mind reels after attack. Realization is effect of the wound. Knowing isn’t healing; it’s the pain of healing. Let’s examine the throbbing patient.
Somebody stumbles in thinking and knocks into the real a little bit. It was an accident. Person doesn't deserve it. Knowing is stolen from things. Put it back where you found it, please.

One day I discovered a language that discerned me more or less correctly. Nice to meet you. But it had already occupied me and uttered those words. That was a redemption, but not mine.
I just got back last night from two weeks in the Midwest, where the only manifestations of Asian-ness or Asian identity were a restaurant chain called Wok and Roll – which served up Japanese fast food cooked in a wok and which my Jewish host and I proclaimed to be the most authentic example of contemporary middle American culture precisely because of its glaring inauthenticity - and the isolated pockets of young, bourgeois 20/30-something East Asian and South Asian Americans, many of them imported from California or beyond, clustered around prestigious universities and large computer engineering plants.

It's this latter population of upwardly mobile Asian Americans that I want to use as a springboard for my part in this panel discussion. As an undergraduate at UC Berkeley in the early 1990s, I found myself in the heat of a consuming stew of debates, on multiculturalism, on political correctness, on the revision of the Eurocentric canon, on everything from stereotypes to identity to affirmative action to interracial dating. The Ethnic Studies department had recently been formed, the Gay/Lesbian Studies department was in its birthing stage, and all sorts of people were up in arms about the role of politics in art, the personal and political, and so forth. As an Asian American student in a large public school that was maybe 30–40% Asian, my choices seemed to be binary: I could either conform to a relatively conservative, conventionally success-oriented status quo, or I could perform its opposite.

The opposite performance seemed to entail jumping on a performance-based, slam/spoken word person-of-color platform, in the hard-hitting rhetorical style of radical political and cultural activism. Though I respected the powerful voice and direct agenda of this aesthetic when it was done well, I remained skeptical of exactly what motivated many of its 20-year-old practitioners, who assumed arrogant, self-righteous, and intolerant stances toward ideas, styles, and aesthetics at odds with their own. I could not suspend my disbelief that their bandwagon approach wasn't just another form of adolescent conformity, at the same time that I was desperate to find and define an aesthetic space that could protest the interruption of the bandwagon performance by the ringing cell phones of complacency.

I can safely say that it was my quest for a more authentic, more complex representation of marginalized identities that led me to the avant-garde. I never in my life thought of the avant-garde as being an elitist aesthetic (its
social/historical exclusivity, of course, is another matter); rather, I saw it as a natural transliteration of an identity and an existence that could not possibly be satisfied with neat, one-to-one correspondences between language and lived experience. So-called experimental writing, therefore, became a sort of ESL, an unpretentious vehicle for representing and inhabiting the still not fully explored reality of living in a cultural, political, and linguistic diaspora.

So that’s the general form of it. Here are a few specifics:

*Ethnicity and language:*
One could argue that standard written English is no one’s native language, and that by writing in English we are all writing in a “foreign” tongue. I’m particularly interested in the idea of proper English as a form of drag, and of Western culture itself as a kind of assumed identity. Because I learned English from reading books, especially British novels and world literature in translation, I came to absorb that too careful, often too correct to be realist, “translator’s voice” - the kind of English that struggles to convey another language that remains partially hidden or encoded. The irony is that by writing drag and effectively “passing” as a Western subject, I have actually been able to reinvent my own content and context and render a truer sense of postmodern being.

*Avant-garde lineage:*
Certainly I’ve been influenced and inspired by other innovative Asian American writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston, Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, or John Yau. But my models for thinking about aesthetic experiments have not been limited generically to literature, geographically to the States, or politically to race. To this list I might add Nam June Paik, Yoko Ono, Maya Lin, I.M Pei, Akira Kurosawa, the pop idiosyncrasies of Hong Kong cinema and post-war Japanese animation. Given the polyglot, internally multicultural nature of the Pacific Rim diaspora nowadays, along with the relative newness of the Asian American community as a community, the future of Asian American literature would seem to be a relatively plastic aesthetic - conducive to a sense of conceptual multiplicity and the hopeful adventure of a wide open playing field.
What, really, do small press publications accomplish? Is it about creating a community, or reaching a larger audience, or making an archival space for work that won’t be preserved elsewhere? Do non-commercial books really provide a significant cultural space for writers and readers? And what, specifically, is the value of that space? What is the relationship of that space to the increasing commodification of literature and all the arts? Could there be a more effective way of doing whatever it is we’re trying to do with the small press?

I’m interested in the utilization of both poetic and narrative tensions: the flagrant surfaces of lyric, the sweet dream of storied events, the terror of ellipses, the audacity of dislocation, the irreversible solidity of the past tense, the incarnate lure of pronouns, the refractability of pronouns, the simultaneity of times, the weights of balances of sentences. I’m interested in the lyric’s authenticity, of demonstration and narrative’s drama of integration; lyric, whose operation is display, and narrative, whose method is seduction. I describe a set of binary terms across which I see writing passing an exchange of values, and it becomes a multiple texture/text-writing in just those created tensions between surface vocalic tangibility and referential transparency; between theme and emptiness, measure and interruption, the eternal present and past of memory/future of dream; all present, all heightened, operation. Such conflated writing would be worthy of Barthes’ definition of the text: “not a coexistence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination.” One seeks to be out of order, to shiver out of subjectivity, to shake off the mask of the material and to shimmy in its arms, to finally retreat from logic and advance by radial maneuvers, gathering meaning.

The current tension of the book reflects the present tense of electronic media continuing to come into being. This is not a contrast between the space of the real and the space of the virtual, but between two modes of imaginative life of thought, language, and the eye, each competing to determine the
relations of history, language, and idea. As the page was once written so the monitor redraws itself. The new temporal logic of history still remains to be seen....Where will the marginalia appear, the annotations of the reader, if the history which writes itself in the future is always on the inside of a glass surface which resists inscription? Whose idea will have been a moment on the screen and whose impressed on the receptive pages of a more tangible memory when both are proved to be material traces of the elusive, immaterial seeming, process of thought?

What does it mean to make a model of the universe?

The model of the universe that we describe here is that of a self-gravitating collection of mass-energy embedded in curved spacetime.

We will construct a map of the world according to some specific but arbitrary conventions.

The model ignores a lot of things. The model presumes that they are irrelevant, and it is the task of experiment to verify this.

Without some language, it cannot be discussed at all. A certain amount of the content is contained in the language itself. This is a tricky point, and is both good and bad. On the one hand, assumptions hidden in the very language used to discuss a situation often go unnoticed. This can be dangerous. Such assumptions often go unchecked. On the other hand, a language in which most of the content is automatically included is usually an efficient language to use.

The process by which we model a situation is called representation. The reverse process, by which we take a structure and find situations that are described by it, we call realization.

The informal ideas are intuitive and straightforward: that a coffee cup and a donut are alike, and not like an orange or Swiss cheese. The formal development of these ideas involves formidable complications that are of no use to us here.

Over and over you will find us moving between discussion of objects and discussions of their representations. Sometimes it is useful to distinguish between objects and their representations, and sometimes it is not.

We will be able to generate the standard models, to explore their properties, and to discuss the choices between them. To step outside this limited class
of models will be beyond us. However, this limitation is not as serious as it might seem, since we are in fact so ignorant about the universe that we have no justification for choosing any more detailed models.

[This] book contains a large number of problems, and they form an important part of the book. They span a wide range in difficulty, and some require much initiative.

This is a genuine advantage for the reader, who can become actively involved, and should acquire tools that can be safely used. The common descriptive treatments can lead too easily to vain and foolish speculation by readers who have been carried over their heads by excellent and persuasive prose.

The difficulty of the material here arises not from complicated analytical manipulations, but from the fact that it demands subtle and fundamental thinking.

The dimensions of the book’s form...cause a certain tension, stretching the eye to the longest horizon of a line, a page, a paragraph condensed or slung out long and low. Or it may be harmonious, this tension of dimensions, in keeping with some guarantee of relations—a golden mean, a perfect trine, a strictly ruled and regulated space of margins, text, and tribulations. There can be the weight of pages sinking to the floor with all their pretense or their difficulties—height to width, side to side, arm to arm; a veritable exercise of visual aerobics.

From the structural to the conceptual—a leap from the observation of form as specific to the medium to the associative play of form as idea: the metaphysics of the book, its full range of roles from initiation and knowledge to perfidy and deceit. The tiny diary revealing all, the elephant folio displaying its riches and wares, the fine, fine insights of the well-wrought manual, explaining itself without difficulty to the real material of some other world. Reference and reverence, physics and dynamics, blindness and the raw face of insight staring back from the pages and into the backlit screen of the mind. The trials and tribulations of sanctity, betrayal, violation, and the mutilated record all bound into the affective legacy of the Book not merely as Object...but Book as Topic as Subject as Prospect and Charge.

And finally, not least, the endlessly mutating status of the book as a commodity which identifies itself with confusion these days—the portable companion, the fetishized original, the almost-a-portfolio, the tale of the literal, the visual, the virtual—all vying for a place in the marketplace of salable,
tradable, identifiable items for consumption, sale, and resale. The book is value, the blue book, in itself and for others, the guest book, the social register, the family album, the scrapbook, the black book whose social and cultural functions weave in and out its functional and ideational identity. What is the book to be, now, in the interspace of hyperelectronic nodes? A nexus of events? A momentary intersection of concerns? An immaterial form of non-record of what might have been ideas or events? Or a new form of the Mallarmean mutation, that final, realized Book which is the full equivalent of both the world and the self, the total spiritual symbol of knowledge as complete, replete, and yet, satisfyingly bounded into itself. A whole. Or is it instead to be an endless fragmentation, in which we all, each, have our part to play in writing, scribing, projecting, painting ourselves as a place in the constellation of a synaesthetic newspeak.4

Capitalism is changing, obviously and drastically, but our ideas about capitalism – about what’s wrong with American life and about how the figures responsible are to be confronted–haven’t changed in thirty years. Call it, for convenience, the “countercultural idea”. It holds that the paramount ailment of our society is conformity, a malady that has variously been described as over-organization, bureaucracy, homogeneity, hierarchy, logocentrism, technocracy...

The ways in which this system is to be resisted are equally well understood and agreed upon. Th Establishment demands homogeneity; we revolt by embracing diverse, individual lifestyles. It demands self-denial and rigid adherence to convention; we revolt through immediate gratification, instinct uninhibited, and liberation of the libido and the appetites...

The patron saints of the countercultural idea are, of course, the Beats, whose frenzied style and merry alienation still maintain a powerful grip n the American imagination....That frenzied sensibility of pure experience, life on the edge, immediate gratification, and total freedom from moral restraint which the Beats first propounded back in those heady days when suddenly everyone could have their own tv and powerful V-8 engine, has stuck with us through all the intervening years and become something of a permanent American style...

Its frenzied ecstasies have long since become an official aesthetic of consumer society, a monotheme of mass as well as adversarial culture...

Consumerism is no longer about “conformity” but about “difference”. Advertising teaches us not in the ways of puritanical self-denial..., but in orgiastic, never-ending self-fulfillment. it counsels not rigid adherence to the
tastes of the herd but vigilant and constantly-updated individualism. We consume not to fit in, but to prove, on the surface at least, that we are rock-n-roll rebels…

As existential rebellion has become a more or less official style of Information Age capitalism, so has the countercultural notion of a static, repressive Establishment grown hopelessly obsolete. However the basic impulses of the countercultural idea may have disturbed a nation lost on Cold War darkness, they are today in fundamental agreement with the basic tenets of Information age business theory. So close are they, in fact, that is has become difficult to understand the countercultural idea as anything more than the self-justifying ideology of the new bourgeoisie that has arisen since the 1960s, the cultural means by which this group has proven itself ever so much better skilled than its slow-moving, security-minded forebears at adapting to the accelerated, always-changing consumerism of today…

Contemporary corporate fantasy imagines a world of ceaseless, turbulent change, of centers that ecstatically fail to hold, of joyous extinction for the craven gray-flannel [conservative businessman] of the past…

The problem with cultural dissent in America isn’t that it’s been co-opted, absorbed, or ripped off. Of course it’s been all of these things. But the reason it has proven so hopelessly susceptible to such assaults is the same as the reason it has become so harmless in the first place… it is no longer any different from the official culture it’s supposed to be subverting.5

It is often said that the West’s great undertaking is the commercialization of the whole world, the hitching of the fate of everything to the fate of the commodity. That great undertaking will turn out rather to have been the aestheticization of the whole world—its cosmopolitan spectacularization, its transformation into images, its semiological organization. What we are witnessing, beyond the materialist rule of the commodity, is a semio-urgy of everything by means of advertising, the media, or images. No matter how marginal, or banal, or even obscene it may be, everything is subject to aestheticization, culturalization, museumification. Everything is said, everything is exposed, everything acquires the force, or the manner, of a sign. The system runs less on the surplus-value of the commodity than on the aesthetic surplus value of the sign.6

[The mainstream of american poetry, the part by which it has been and will be known, has long been in the margins, nurtured in the margins, carried forward, vibrant, in the margins. As mainstream and margin both, it
represents our underground economy as poets, the gray market for our spiritual/corporeal exchanges. It is the creation as such of those poets who have seized or often have invented their own means of production and of distribution. The autonomy of the poets is of singular importance here—not something we’ve been stuck with...but something we’ve demanded as a value that must...remain first and foremost under each poet’s own control. And this is because poetry as we know and want it is the language of those precisely at the margins—born there, or more often still, self-situated: a strategic position from which to struggle with the center of the culture and with a language that we no longer choose to bear...

At the present time, the lesson...is the reminder of what is possible where the makers of the work seek out the means to maintain and fortify their independence. It seems possible that with the new technologies now opening—computer-generated publication and the still wide-open possibilities of the Web—that the great tradition of an independent American poetry is still alive and well.7

I’m really lucky with the whole book deal thing, the fact that all of this is happening. You have to understand, when I started...I was barely coherent.

I tell you, the process is very draining and very hard, and I don’t know how much I can deal with it. I’ve still got all this...inside of me, and I feel like I can cope more and function better, but there are many ways that I can’t function and I can’t cope and I’m sick of it and I hate it and..., and I’m not saying that to sound cool or whatever, ‘cause believe me, I see people outside who look like they’re enjoying their lives, and...I would like to be there.8

Notes
1 Aaron Shurin, Narrativity, 20 Pages, a Division of Sun and Moon Press, 1990.
5 Thomas Frank, “Why Johnny Can’t Dissent”, Emigré #49.
8 JT Leroy, Bay Guardian Lit June 2000.

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Belief’s Afterimage

Susan Gevirtz

*A body by itself doesn’t mean anything. You have to surround it with a story.*

— VLADIMIR DZURO,
Czech Police detective, forensic team.
Nov. 1, 1999, New York Times

Body in the field – beyond uneven brick,
meaning in advance of itself.

— BARBARA GUEST,
*If So, Tell Me*, 13

Beginning again and again surrounding a body with story “another story begins.” *(Rocks)* Was there ever a body to begin with? Or can a body by itself exist? In Barbara Guest’s three recent books there is only surrounding – something imagined lying across the field of the page beyond the uneven brick of type. Something in advance of meaning. Ship on fire at open sea. Scene of a crime. Scene of a find.

To read Barbara Guest’s three new books, almost simultaneously, is to visit a land of elaboration. Due to the accident of their publication, all appearing in 1999 within a few months of each other, *Rocks On A Platter, If So, Tell Me* and *The Confetti Trees* converse more directly than they might if they had appeared further apart in time. Instead, I (as many readers may have) read each all the way through then saw that by their own momentum they began to shuffle – three decks of cards – doors to worlds so complex that comment is paltry, leaving only the possibility of response. Although *The Confetti Trees* was written long before the other two it fully participates in the orbit of this trialogue. Formally and otherwise the books are vastly different from each other and cannot be conflated. But in the land which surfaces from the orbit of the three, Guest elaborates a relation to language and writing that is more than “poetry” or a “poetics.” It is an interrogation of the structures of making, of meaning, and of the conduct of the writer in writing, toward language.

In this land there are only the trappings of story. Story is a decoy that never does its purported work of identifying the unmarked: “She submitted a few stories she called *The Minus Ones.* … “ *(The Minus Ones, Confetti Trees).* Like the solitary body story is always minus, always hungry. *Sporagmos*¹ – ritual dismemberment – the body by itself is ecstatic, flying to pieces, mar-

²⁷⁵
velous in its occupation of the place no story can fully enter. Here in this crevice, death palace, where the decay of story’s function is revealed, the writing takes place:

Now the pain has left the body. Only an outline remains. Down by the bathhouse where the soundless waves tumble the Montage ends in an unfinished tree. Nothing is alive. A writer sits at Windows, a woman on his Screen. He puts her on a reef with the shipwrecked sailor. The feeble sun he paws will not burn.

“Nostalgia,” The Confetti Trees

The problem of making the body mean, burn, is always present in this work – the body as the form, the outline, the music of the writing – comes into being, like the blood or thought of a flesh body, as part of breathing, not prior or in opposition to breath; not as if words were mere content or subject, but letter by letter, syllable by syllable, line break by line, the body of the poem proposes itself, becomes a burning organism or not. And the subject of Guest’s writing is often also the conditions of this becoming. In the above poem she suggests that the conditions of each making differ depending on who proposes them, and by what means they are enacted. This time a he sits at a (computer, or film, or dream, or TV) screen looking out its windows into the (computer ?) Screen. “A writer” thinks he is writing – thinks he is producing something alive. In “his” screen he sees a woman who he thinks is not a reflection of himself. But Guest tells that “Nothing is alive” in this “Montage” and he confuses his reflection for a screen woman, or thinks the screen woman is alive – He “puts” or writes the screen woman “on a reef” – an order of looking, of fantasy, of reflecting, a putting as order that produces “A writer” or writing in which the “the feeble sun he paws will not burn.”

Throughout the three books, Guest investigates the conditions, the various means of burning, of producing illumination – by reflection, a trick of mirrors, or by candle, computer, lamp, cigarette, film projector – each from a different era and producing different effects in the hands of different operators – poets, philosophers, composers, among others – rifling through her effects – In the above poem “Nostalgia” Guest makes a nostalgia that replaces the proposition of happened with the act of told. Nostalgia becomes not a longing for what happened but a desire to investigate how what happened was told. If there is no actual event, only telling, only writing, then how it was told is what happened. Each of the three books return to an investigation into the conditions of illumination which is also an investigation into the conditions of telling. As a detective might return to the scene of a crime in order to discover what happened – here, where there is “Only an outline” the “remains” – Guest gives clues of story as memory of that which may never have occurred but like fantasy, like the symbolic order, con-
continues to impact us. Here the alive poem reports on, builds a place in which nothing is alive, but the poem itself is burning. Thus “Nothing is alive” takes us to the unsurrounded body, imagination itself — where everything is animate, even things that may not appear to be

They told her they liked real fires and not those of the imagination. Imagination was harmful and always messed up the set.

“The Minus Ones,” *The Confetti Trees*

Putting burning where the props and plot were on the set, Guest harms the set, strikes it, replacing, stripping, what appears to be intact. Writing as an act of removal — exhuming the body to reveal — unravel the story to keep the furniture, the food cooking on the stove, while removing the walls of the house. Use the utensils, the elements, the structures of myth, poetry, fairytale, screenplay, narrative, to expose the beams and bolts. To require that we listen inside-out and doubly. Surround the body with subtraction since the body is always already cloaked in story as before it is born it is clothed in a history. That which is made up and can never fully reveal the origins of it's making

That which shows itself and at the same time withdraws is the essential trait of what we call the mystery. I call the comportment which enables us to keep open to the meaning hidden in technology, *openness to the mystery.*

In all three books “openness to the mystery” is Guest’s comportment — mystery is also a word she uses in “Mysteriously Defining the Mysterious” a talk given in 1986 about poetry. Guest’s mode of accessing Heidegger’s “meaning hidden in technology” is through a technolog of writing in which the word *make* is as important as the word *meaning* since the mode of making, the technology and the meaning are inseparable, are the same. A writing repeatedly emerges that is techné about and of techné, mysterious but not mystifying: writing as finger on the disappearing present body of writing, of writing

White
perpendicular lights attached to the shoulder
I touched the wrist with my writing finger and from the center the orb of the eye was enough fire to light the writing lamp and afterwards the blade withdrew from the writing shoulder and that writ blew away flame lit with nothing and nothingness stayed

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Skin of the lost paper
Knuckle smooth (touched the writing).
Nietzschean thumb on the trout
and they disappear.

_Rocks, II_

Technology’s _techne_ the machinations, writing finger’s methods of making, chosen, as it were live on camera, while pawing a “feeble sun,” or at gunpoint, that is, in the face of the urgency of “poetry of the moment” a “flame lit with nothing and nothingness stayed.” (Overboard, _Confetti Trees_) Each moment approaching nothing because: “In whatever guise reality becomes visible, the poet withdraws from it into invisibility.” (Guest, “Mysteriously Defining the Mysterious”)

This writing that invokes the apparition of nothing, as if to make the invisible visible – a practice, a technique of deception which makes encounter:

practices of deception existing: to encounter arm, and sun,
cloak did not have its own ambition until they _vanish and return_

Meaning, also.

“Deception,” _If So, Tell Me_

Through this (writing) deception, things discover their “own ambition” which is the ambition, desire, of the poem. Practicing techniques of deception in order to create encounter which can only be “vanish and return” – what appears to be the light of day is “sun, cloak…” Revealing and concealing meaning Guest requires that we listen doubly, duplicitly, quadruply, to mystery, day’s ambition, the light of night, illuminating “This elaborate structure around the text…” (Doubleness, _If So _) Thus the three books confound distinctions, particularly that between poetry and poetics, making _comportment_ more useful in thinking about them than _poetics_. A comportment toward language, the mystery. A practice of approach, that is, of writing, “…which expresses ‘yes’ and at the same time ‘no,’ [named] by an old word, _releasement toward things_.” The release of meaning to it’s own life beyond what is meant “Moves outside the text into the dark _under text_…” (In Slow Motion, _If So, Tell Me_) Meaning that disregards genre or answer except where useful as toy takes instead “repercussions, soundings…” – music of thinking or conversations across time, replace explanation or telling, though the ve-
hicles, demonstrations and sounds of it differ. "We once took a ship" – listen "royal traveler" – is your name "dissonance"? Is it Schoenberg? Nietzsche? Walser? Richardson? Spenser? Husserl, H.D., Hegel, Chaucer, Heidegger, Adorno, Coleridge, Holderlin? To whom and with who else is address? This is decay's deportment: place of story without story begging and undoing story

"Skin of the lost paper
Knuckle smooth (touched the writing)"

 Conjuring an ethnographically "real" Hollywood of World War II in *The Confetti Trees*, Guest uses the film camera to demonstrate exactly the ways in which "practices of deception" can illuminate more than "realistic" documentation or plot ever can. As they do in the desire to enter an ideal world of the made, displaced by the entrance into the *motion* of motion picture:

The action began in heavy mechanical studio rain. An actor in a brown overcoat lit a cigarette and detaching himself from the group entered the house. Other actors in brown overcoats with lit or unlit cigarettes entered the house. One by one as the director watched, the actors reappeared. Each carried a barrel he then pushed down the rickety steps of the house.

One more detail decided the Director. Over his loud speaker he called to the actors to put out their cigarettes. "No smokes! Not in this rain! Keep the unlit cigarettes in your mouths. Keep pushing the barrels! In and out of the house more and more barrels! Four more times. Before the real storm hits."

.....He lived in the real world too much these days. He hated reality. His raincoat had already dampened the seat of his expensive car and there were puddles on the floor. Puddles! In his beautiful car! That was what was wrong. You had no control over reality. He sat back in his seat, prepared to reconsider the film in terms of an apparition with absolutely no intrusion of the physical world and its weather.

"Details," *The Confetti Trees*

The action begins in doubleness that is likeness. The sublimated "physical" of the physical world. ". . . heavy mechanical studio rain," and "Puddles!" – "lit" and "unlit cigarettes" requiring further investigation into the nature of semblance:
She shall disclose herself (herself still pointing)

essential to the hidden

possessiveness in back of a throat,

the double S of the word.

“Deception,” If So, Tell Me

herself herself

the double d

of hidden

and the lower and uppercase

d of Director

As in

“A likeness to what is believed

is the poem. The camera takes us, momentarily.”

“annunziare! Dora Films 1913 Elvira Notari in Naples,” If So,

Just like what you believe, is a world of proposed beliefs, but the poem is not itself what you believe – and likeness not where you would expect: Rocks On a Platter the “poetics” book is poetry about poetry, philosophy, reading, etc, no more or less than the other two are Rock's subtitle: “Notes on Literature.”

In this land there can be no ideal platonic form of poetics or the poem “outside” the poem that occupies a realm of belief. In advance of meaning or behind it – the apparition, acts of this particular comportment are what one can believe and the poem is belief’s afterimage. “Yet this demise…” – of belief? of the poem? of the soul proposed as “an actor in a brown overcoat” lighting a cigarette? putting out a cigarette? – “…shows itself in fragments, just as the poet slowly dies in his or her poem making sure there are fragments remaining of the empire which created the poem, the empire of the poet’s soul.” (Guest, “Mysteriously Defining the Mysterious”)
Notes


1 Sparagmos – Should be written in the Greek but I do not have the keyboard for that. The Dionysian rite of dismemberment performed outside the walls of the polis, usually by women (not citizens) as a holy act. That is, outside of the civil order of the Appollonian governance of the Greek pantheon. Dictionary definition: The tearing to pieces of a live victim, as a bull or a calf, by a band of bacchantes in a Dionysian orgy.


4 In her talk “Laboratory and Industry: The Speculative Poem,” given in January 1999 at Small Press Traffic in San Francisco, Myung Mi Kim uses the notion of comportment in a way which is also useful in thinking about Barbara Guest’s work:

In the midst of a fully developed commodity society

The appearance of a new kind of prosody involves a creative jump or synthesis.
A new line comes into being and with it, a new pattern of relationships and connections – a “particularizable” prosody of one’s living perplexity that occurs through gradations – experimental procedures – an experimental comportment

A time of the poem, a line’s motion that sounds the activity of lived life – the multiphasic, living instant

5 Heidegger, 54

Thanks to Myung Mi Kim, Norma Cole, and also to John Tranter who asked me to write about Guest’s work for his online magazine Jacket. An earlier version of this piece is in Jacket No. 10.
What is the situation of the object in contemporary poetry? The form of this question, posed by André Breton in 1934, might seem disingenuous today. What concerns us now is not the object in itself but the system of signifying practices responsible for its construction. Yet for Breton, the “crisis of the object” is precipitated at this very point, at the juncture between the word and the world. Here, signification is unfailingly surprised by an emergent reality, a surreality whose hazardous objectivity moves in advance of all language games. Something like a surrealist philosophy of nature is implied here, where nature (both human and non-human) is conceived as an inherently self-revolutionizing process—that is, as an autocatalytic system. The emergent object has the capacity to convulse or negate the very system that engendered it. In poetry, this object would manifest itself by means of an image powerful enough to overthrow conventionalized regimes, not only of thought, but of bodily sensation as well.

No doubt the surrealist image, which was intended to violently reconcile perception and representation, can no longer revolutionize poetic language. At present, representation has gained the upper hand over perception; the content of the sensorium, to the extent that it is meaningful, is held to be “always already” structured by discourse. Today, the perception of strange and unprecedented phenomena, once facilitated by poetry, is pursued instead by revolutionary science, most recently in studies of the nonlinear dynamics of complex systems. Meanwhile contemporary poetry, preoccupied by a concern for textuality, has largely lost sight of the ontologically disruptive object, along with most of the frenzies, delights, and paradoxes of sense-perception.

In light of these developments, how is one to construe the object at the center of Clark Coolidge’s poem *The Crystal Text*? The object is, in fact, a crystal, a naturally-occurring substance. An object that humans, in imitation of nature, have learned to produce but that owes none of its defining features—its stability, for example, or its symmetry—to human design. Coolidge, in the course of a book-length poetic contemplation of this object, discovers that the crystal itself is empty and still, that it can be filled and animated only by its reflections and refractions of human experience. In this poem, the natural object provokes memory and reverie. But Coolidge emphasizes that the crystal itself “cannot speak” (107). That is, nature without human presence is a deserted stage, a desert, as Kant declared, along with many other thinkers of the Enlightenment (Diderot remarked in the Encyclopedia that “it is the presence of humans that makes the existence of...
things interesting”). Likewise, in Coolidge’s poem, the crystal “does nothing” (116); it seems to contain the light of experience, but remains “nationless of its fill” (111). Coolidge comes to realize that “What you see is only what you put there” (93). By treating mind as active subject and nature as passive object, Coolidge’s work appears, at first glance, to be inscribed within some version of idealism.

Coolidge’s long dialogue with the unanswering crystal is effectively a monologue, a day-book of the poet’s frustrated attempts to communicate with “the stone.” The apparent failure of this procedure would seem to confirm a scientific understanding of the crystal, and of nature in general, as a cold mechanical system, indifferent to human supplication. However, Coolidge’s approach to the stone is anything but scientific. For him, the crystal becomes a magic mirror that transforms the questioner’s own visage into an oracular mask, mouthing riddles and giving back the questions themselves as mirror-reversed answers.

Coolidge’s poem thus participates in the prescientific tradition of crystal-gazing, of “scrying,” as the practice was called by Renaissance magi. In this tradition, the scryer would retire, as Coolidge does, to a quiet room to consult the crystal. Beforehand the crystal would have been magically charged by a series of ritual incantations known as “the Call.” The passages of poetic improvisation with which Coolidge frames his own questioning of the crystal similarly accelerate meaning, lending a polysemous “charge” to the object at the focus of the text. Finally, the scryer would fine-tune the sensitivity of the crystal through methods of astrological and numerological positioning. Coolidge also is alert to occult correspondences — as, for example, when he observes that “There are 13 letters to my name... There are 13 facets to this crystal” (99, 100).

Unlike the Renaissance magi, however, Coolidge is not interested in using the crystal as a means of clairvoyance. He pursues only the traces of his own presence among the crystal’s baffling lights and silences. Because the crystal refuses the petitions of its scryer-poet, all his accounts of the stone’s interior inevitably become self-reflexive. To keep a record of crystal-gazing is, as Coolidge states, “To write / a long book of nothing ‘but looking deeply into oneself’” (12). But this is a prospect, he adds, to be greeted with “a laugh. / A scorn, not for oneself probably but for the possibility of a self view” (12).

In this passage, Coolidge compares the self to a mirror that, as a “reflecting surface,” is incapable of reflecting its own image. As Coolidge confesses, “I dived at you, self, but you rubbed me blank / in all my own mirrors” (12). Writing of the crystal’s emptiness, then, bears a strong similarity to writing of the self’s own emptiness: “The crystal attains toward a transparency / my mirror approaches, face or no face” (13). At the same time, crystal and self mirror each other’s emptiness within the “reflecting surface” of writing; as Coolidge states, “Writing is all reflections. And said reflection’s stilled / connections” (115).
The self, the stone, and writing all appear to be faces of the same crystal: a diagram of their relation would form a triangle, the most basic of linear planes. The play of light in *The Crystal Text* is conditioned by the self-reflection of this triangular plane as it rotates through various configurations: "I crystallized myself out of flesh / but this is wrong. I learned to scratch / down words on paper by tendency of crystal / adjacent to sleeping area" (37). Later, Coolidge compares the written page to a facet of crystal: "Writing on the side of a page, a wall / in a world of inter-bladed and filtering walls" (47).

If writing is "all reflections," then the system of writing can never reflect itself. The true face of writing appears as the vanishing point at the center of a self-reflecting mirror. Consequently, Coolidge writes, "The text of crystal might / reveal everything but itself" (79). Musing on strategies of writing, Coolidge remarks that "One could divide it all up into / those who know how the work should be / and those who never know before the work" (33). Those writers "who never know before the work" are undoubtedly poets; after all, Coolidge asks, "How much poetry is unprovoked thought?" (27). Consulting the stone in this regard, he announces: "As the crystal says, speech without blindness is worth little" (84). The work must take shape blindly but surely, in accordance with a process that resembles crystal growth: "It fascinates me now to see if I find things to speak what shapes their sentences will take" (29). But even as the poet attempts to "find things to speak," he also finds that "The crystal cannot speak. The good book cannot speak" (107). At one point, the poet, "[b]ending over the crystal... wondering what writing would proceed," exclaims, "If only speech could talk" (42).

Coolidge’s meditations on the inability of a reflecting surface to reflect itself seem to recapitulate the theories of the nineteenth-century mathematician Georg Cantor on the paradoxes of self-referential sets. In 1895, Cantor asked a question that remains unanswerable in terms of ordinary logic: Is a set that is composed of all possible sets to be counted as a member of itself? If not, then the set fails to correspond to its own definition. If so, then the set chases its own tail by becoming a number larger than itself. Here, Coolidge’s doubts about “the possibility of a self view” are confirmed by the Hegelian philosopher Howard Kainz, who considers that "self-consciousness is that class which is a member of itself.” Neither the self nor its “text of crystal” can adequately reflect itself without falling into contradiction and, ultimately, silence. Looking into the crystal, Coolidge asks, “Is the heart of poetry a stillness?” (150).

Coolidge’s question finds some precedent not only in logical, but also in linguistic theory. For example, structuralism posits a crystalline stillness within language, analyzing the relation between signifier and signified as a series of “stilled connections.” As the hermeneutic philosopher Manfred Frank points out, in Saussure’s structural theory of language “one and only one signified is assigned to every signifier. This, moreover, occurs according to a form and
lasting rule that allows both the differentiation of signs and their recombination...call[ing] to mind the image of a crystal lattice.” Frank goes on to observe that “In a crystal lattice the molecules are not only distinct from one another, they are, at a constant low temperature, fixed to their places; i.e., they cannot swarm outward, nor is there any blurring that would make their location and thus their application uncontrollable.”

Yet for Coolidge the appearance of “stillness” is imposed by the paradoxes of self-reflexivity, not by the fixity of the connection between signifier and signified. Such fixity can be attributed only to a closed and stable structure, whereas Coolidge’s text of crystal fails to either enclose or stabilize its own reflection. Furthermore, its “stilled connections” conceal another paradox: as the poet discovers, “Movement is the hidden / apex of the stillness / the crystal tends” (128). Here, fixity of structure is “collapsed in a calypso of eclipses” (62), a play of light and shadow that multiplies in all directions without benefit of a centralizing “self view.” Thus, “there is something missing from it [the text]: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions.” All the same, the work of Coolidge does not entirely corroborate the poststructuralist critique of centered, stabilized meaning. The moment of divergence is obvious: the depiction of language as a crystal, an idea supposedly shattered by poststructuralism, persists in Coolidge’s poem.

The poet claims to be writing, or growing, a “text of crystal.” And, as Coolidge acknowledges, “The crystal is a problem of structure” (142). But in what way is the structure of Coolidge’s writing crystalline? Even as its paradoxes of self-reflection empty into silence, The Crystal Text continues to be filled with noise: with anecdotes, scraps of other texts, desultory notes, diary entries. The texture of the text – at once improvisatory and coolly detached, a kind of “writing without thinking” (115) – resembles the random swirls of atoms in liquid or in glass (a supercooled liquid) far more than it does the orderly rows of atoms in a crystal.

Nonetheless, Coolidge insists that “The window glass is but a gross imitation of the crystal, as speech is of poetry” (107). Here, the “glass” of speech is asserted to be an imitation – a poor reflection – of the “crystal” of poetry. In other words, the glassy disorder of speech is held to derive from even as it distorts the higher, crystalline order of poetry. For Coolidge, it seems, ordinary language is merely the projection into our three-dimensional universe of a higher-dimensional language, the language of The Crystal Text. Since we cannot visualize higher dimensions, we may find this order of language is inaccessible (“Poetry is the closed voice?” [107]), but at least its reflection, its “gross imitation,” is evident in everyday speech. The tangled vernacular of Coolidge’s lines turns out to be a cross-section of an elegantly structured hyperspace crystal.

Strangely enough, just one year after Coolidge completed his poem, researchers in a government laboratory discovered an “impossible” crystal requiring a theory of higher dimensions to explain it. In 1984 at the Na-
tional Bureau of Standards, a metallic alloy was first melted, then rapidly cooled to produce a substance that paradoxically combines the amorphousness of glass with the interlocking structure of crystal. The atomic lattices of this new substance, dubbed a “quasicrystal,” fit together as perfectly as those of an ordinary crystal. But the arrangements of quasicrystalline lattices do not repeat in the usual crystalline manner. Instead, such perfectly fitted, yet nonperiodic patterns appear orderly only when viewed as the projection of an abstract, higher-dimensional lattice. Of course, this picture provides only a mathematical, not a physical, explanation. As one scientist confessed, “no one could think of a mechanism by which millions upon millions of real atoms could arrange themselves spontaneously in those intricate patterns.”

Most attempts at physical explanations have involved a theory of tiled surfaces. That theory, formulated by the mathematician Roger Penrose ten years before the discovery of quasicrystals, solves the problem of how to cover a surface completely with sets of tiles whose patterns do not repeat periodically. To ensure nonperiodicity, Penrose developed specific rules for fitting the tiles together, rules that govern both local and global features of the resulting pattern. But the blind workings of nature must act locally and cannot think globally. As one scientist put it, “Local rules for adding tiles are analogous to forces that attract and hold new atoms to the surface of a growing quasicrystal; they are plausible ingredients in the growth mechanism. Global rules are not. The atoms on a growing surface do not plan ahead. They respond only to the interatomic sticking force of their immediate neighbors. If quasiperiodic patterns could be constructed only with the help of global rules, they could not be assembled by real atoms.”

So far, this contradiction remains unresolved: the locally applicable laws for fitting the parts together are not sufficient to generate the whole pattern.

This contradiction manifests itself also in the “impossible” crystal of Coolidge’s text. As Coolidge observes, “There is no overview but in / the strictly local system…. Back to the thought, the crystal / open while closed” (27). The structure of The Crystal Text, since it permits only a local rather than a global view, would seem to have more in common with that of a quasicrystal than with that of an ordinary crystal. This talisman of the self and of writing is “open while closed”; open because “now we have no method and the crystal is as clear as unmixed air” (118), closed because the principle of its making, its poiesis, remains inaccessible and perhaps unknowable.

As Coolidge testifies, “Perspective lies, the / universe has no one comprehensible form” (81). This he demonstrates by the presenting an object that he himself defines as a locally interacting, non-globalizable system, one that cannot reflect itself as a totality. If the overall pattern of a system is determined, not by system-wide but by local interactions, and if none of these local interactions reflects the pattern of the system as a whole, then the behavior of that system fractures the mirror of cause and effect and becomes nonlinear: “Words that are shavings off the irreducible block. / Words
that remain the elegance at Chaos Gate” (62). The defining feature of such complex systems, according to systems theorist Niklas Luhmann, is that they contain more possibilities than can be actualized. Coolidge conurs: “The crystal is but one nexus in the drain / of speeded possibles” (94).

Not all unrealized possibilities, however, hold the promise of revolutionary change. Many nonlinear or chaotic systems (a swinging pendulum, for example) cycle through endless variations, none of which need alter the character of the system itself. In many cases, the behavior of a nonlinear dynamical system is locally unpredictable, but globally stable. This is true of the formation of quasicrystals; is it true of Coolidge’s text as well? In the citation above, the “words” derive from an “irreducible block,” a state that implies stability. Coolidge further says, “It is perfect of imperfection. / The most perfect field a surfeit / of randomly bounding objects” (90). Now, in the vocabulary of nonlinear dynamics, a map of all possible states of a given system is called the “phase space” of that system. The phase space of The Crystal Text, then, seems to be represented by a globally stable “most perfect field” that contains a locally unpredictable “surfeit / of randomly bounding objects.”

However, as the philosopher Manuel De Landa points out, “since phase spaces (by definition) include all the possible states for a given system, it follows that (by definition) no truly novel states can be represented by phase spaces.” The emergence of truly novel properties within a system disrupt or even eradicate the topology of its phase space. For example, the emergence of living systems disrupts the phase space of chemical reactions governed by entropic flows, just as the emergence of language bursts the topology of instinctive social behavior.

A revolutionary rupture of this order constitutes the “crisis of the object,” as the surrealists understood it. The surrealist object materializes (at) this unprecedented – and therefore fantastic – moment of rupture. In contrast, Coolidge’s object conserves reality. The crystal remains a crystal, a field of reference within which everyday experiences randomly rebound. The transcendental emptiness of the crystal – and ultimately, of signification itself – defeats the senses and turns the mind back upon itself in an infinitely reflexive recession.

How is this different from Breton’s declaration that surrealism seeks “the annihilation of being into a diamond”? First, Coolidge insists on the textuality of the object, while Breton insists on its inescapable materiality. Furthermore, the textuality of Coolidge’s work leads to the object’s dematerialization, while Breton’s commitment to materiality recognizes the object’s emergence from elsewhere (namely, the realm of the marvelous). Unlike the poetics of textuality, surrealist poetics shares the conviction of Enlightenment science that sense-perception has the power to overthrow the structures of the mind.
Notes

1 All citations of Clark Coolidge's *The Crystal Text* are from the 1995 Sun & Moon edition. The poem was first published in 1986 by The Figures.
7 Ibid., pp. 76–77.
Three Reviews

Elizabeth Robinson

What follows are paragraph-long reviews of three pamphlets which I’ve enjoyed in recent months. By way of warning: because I have little time for reading, I have focussed on chapbooks, have often (of necessity) read rapidly, and so my reviews may be correspondingly impressionistic.


This is, prima facie, a formal book. Poems on the left hand pages make use of the page as a visual field, often in a striking and witty way. Poems on the right hand pages have their own “meticulous order”, constructed as they are of rather dense stanzas of three lines, followed by deeply indented fragments or phrases. The tone of these right hand poems, too, has a formal quality, a sense of reserve and control. A pseudo-scientific language of measurement, atomic behavior, of seemingly objective reflection marks these poems. But that tone proceeds awkwardly. The sharp humor and the openness of the left side pages foreground the tensions first against and then within the right side pages. The left hand text moves airily about the page, punching holes in the self-contained, tidy neighboring text. And note the ‘self-awareness of a right side poem in this process:

The components are ignored by the playful ones, tweaked by the angry one, but followed in the slavish manner by the humbled majority

nothing of the matter (p.3)

The right side texts start to pull themselves apart as emotional, sometimes political subtexts exert pressure on their orders. There are disquieting murmurs: “social problems”, “could find no work”, “recalled happier times”, “having disappeared”. The poems access their power in their submerged and emerging tensions. A spectral angel breaks through the skin of the words, insisting:

The damage occurring today limits the anxiety that we are bound to display.

his inside connections (p. 5)
Or no angel manifests at all. The grace of this work is that it purveys unease.


To say you in fin, feather & hoof –

not true or untrue

but these amplitudes

both of and beyond you.

Like the anatomies he constructs, Dan Featherston’s body of work has a quality of useful (and, if it’s not too much an oxymoron, considered) injudiciousness. From the odd, sometimes discomfitting lists that comprise “Objects Found in the Body” to the insistent repetitions that make up the various bodies of “Pink”, “Odors”, “The Hand” or “Soap”, Featherston addresses “amplitudes” in relation their parts. The whole suggested in his constructs becomes less a thing or entity than a moving landscape through which one, in turn, moves. As Steven Marks has commented elsewhere (of Featherston’s chapbook *26 Islands*), his work “expose[s] the working out of the relationships between language and the reality of perception, conception, and power.”

Featherston’s poems call into question by just what a body (of any sort) is constituted. By the random force of a list? By the rhythmic accretions that attend repetition? By the clatter of alliteration? For this poet does use these modes to build or birth in poems that are unself-consciously sensual and smart.

And their pungeance is also their transparency, their movement toward invisibility. For all the crackling specificity of Featherston’s language, his poems are willfully inconclusive. In “The Hand” for instance, he deconstructs the skeleture of the hand, translating the terms he finds into a sort of riddle:

A man sits in a boat at a great, trapezoidal table under the moon.

On the table there is a wedge, a pea & a hook.

How will he handle these things?

The question of how “things” are to be handled remains, after all, the most compelling one. Returning to certain subject words almost obsessively,
the poems struggle to enhance meanings in such a way as to underline them, defamiliarize them, reconstruct them anew by subtly defiant terms. The ruminative urgency of the work lives in a productive tension with the humor and almost erotic authority of its language, “How the skin forgets the world.” How Featherston will handle these anatomies is not really a matter for resolution. The reader comes instead to trust that he is adept. And at what: (re)membering:

Memory slides like oil over the world. Palpable & elusive.


Eleni Sikelianos’ poems have a blessedly untidy, headlong quality. They race recklessly into the gorgeousness of language and there intention takes a backseat to impulse (or, perhaps, intuition). In some senses, therefore, the attempt to form a critical response to the work is not only difficult, it may be misguided. I’ve tried and tried again to read the two sequences in this selection slowly and with an eye to form and content. Each time, I am carried off on the flow of the work and find I’m later washed ashore in a pleasant delirium. What may be most relevant is that I’m perpetually ready to go back and read again. Sample:

Slipping between atoms
on the walkable air

because the best attitude
to take is not

always one
of falling

the material’s heat
animal and un-

a kind of sexiness
in the way numbers add up

(one sliding
into another one)

rocks, reptiles, thunders & wings
even the ideas in my heads
& distance from one point to the next
in all as part

of everything
I can

comprehend (p. 14)

Sikelianos has acknowledged that her poetic concerns may not be exactly “fashionable”, but it’s her concern to interact with the sublime that gives her work wonder and energy. In “Gold Trout”, the second sequence in this book, the unreserved sexuality of the poem takes on a sort of visionary quality. It’s as though the material and the transcendent were the serpent with its tail in its mouth: and off the ourobouros rolls. As Brenda Hillman said in a discussion of this poem, “What she does is dismantle her subject, this beloved, and then...re-mantle him.” It’s an apt description. The lover, the poem, is pulled to pieces in passion, is remade, and in so doing embued with an aura it had not previously known.
To read Kit Robinson’s *Democracy Boulevard* is to be allowed to witness the world from a rare calm, centered perspective that allows insight and focus while fully engaged with the accelerated world of which it is a part and to which it is inextricably tied. Upon entering the book – and it is easy for the reader to think of the book as a location or series of locations, both transient and permanent – the reader quickly encounters the central idea or mode of operation behind the work, the relationship of the person to the world.

In “The Person,” Robinson explores the idea of the person as “a way of doing something, never explicitly experienced as such, because it is the world that is felt, its mute pressure filling out the corners, as of a rhyme.” The boundary between person and world is thin and fragile at best, more likely transparent, as the “emblems in an elaborate game whose rules the person is only beginning to understand” flood attention and influence the person: “The room gathers each sitter in.” Only occasionally is one allowed true comprehension of the meaning of the images of the world, “through an illness or brush with death,” stripping away the symbols, the stand-ins for meaning:

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Under all the symbols —
going out to eat, letters,  
punctuation, full motion video —
there is life — indescribable, not
to be denied. And under
life — nothing.
(from “Transmission”)
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While Robinson maintains the distance and quiescence that an objective stance allows, the poems are as shaped by this world as they are by the writer; they are not Orphic transmissions from beyond but the meditative clarity of here, as rarely experienced, with little mediation:

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Information Week

Jar brain loose from presentation
   a table
   three men
a window behind the one speaking
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occasionally one of them turns a page.

Robinson seems to be able to jar his brain loose from the constructs of daily life, especially work life which figures heavily in Democracy Boulevard, in a way that allows him to occupy the moment, rather than escape from it, and record rather than construct or evaluate. "Information Week" has both the immediacy of a scribbled napkin note and the crisp elegance of minimalist form.

In Democracy Boulevard, Robinson also reveals his considerable range as a poet, writing extended single poems in addition to the shorter serial poems. As the product of dissent, they are, sometimes, "a junkyard of mangled signs heaped up in silent protest against a century devoted to the material possession of form." "The Messianic Trees" and "The Rude Bridge" embody this approach of piling up images and symbols in language upon itself, taking on the disorder of anarchic protest but maintaining complexity through unlikely, undulating syllogisms and even, at times, an almost lyrical beauty as in the following section from "The Rude Bridge."

Out of blindness
rhythm
the succession of ties
switches
flower bank
legs crossed
in a pinch
I have no idea
and will fight for it
edging morning sneezes
blue Pacific rim

And later in the same poem:

Flight simulation
movie disposal
lab report
guy talking
to big white tulip
water running
through pipes in wall
paint the ceiling
then do the floor

This construct, "the person," that Robinson discusses in the first piece is a "cliché-ridden isomorph, a creature of habit. One has certain convictions, obsessions, eccentricities, stylistic features, indications that set one, by pre-
scription, apart.” But, according to Robinson, what is more essential is that which is elusive, that which avoids deadening definition and categorization. Though Robinson uses both a straightforward discursive mode and more abstract language-oriented methods, at times the poems don’t fall neatly into either type. Often they seem to be building toward something in a syllogistic manner only to slip out of the reader’s comprehensive grasp at the last moment, inhabiting the space between conventional meaning-making and abstraction, rewarding the reader with complexity.

Weight, as in the weight of these words, coalesces around a manner of speaking, charged up, occasional, and like France, twice its normal size. By the time you get to the end of it you are reminded of the very beginning, when so many shapes could be made out in what later turned out to be the world.

(from “Equanimity”)

There is an exchange of influence in Democracy Boulevard between the person and the world. “It is the world that is felt, but it is a made place, and within it they make it who alter its composition simply by living and doing as they will and can do,” explains Robinson in “The Person.” Again, the writing is slippery, difficult to categorize, because although the shaping influence oscillates, from person to world and back again, it is often balanced somewhere between, refusing to be pinned down, not coming to rest in the familiar “I” nor in the overwhelming exterior. In “Distribution,” Robinson jokes,

...The objective and subjective elements of the work seem to be evenly distributed, eh, monsieur chair?

And more seriously, in “The Messianic Trees,” evoking timelessness and specificity, he both describes and eludes:

Not knowing not explaining not repeating just sitting waiting for the garbage trucks of morning thus the twentieth century caves in around the edges in anticipation of night the long seminar
Robinson negotiates a largely artificial landscape in *Democracy Boulevard*, one of hotel rooms, business meetings, industrial parks and lobbies, the most “made” of places. The titles of the last four serial poems echo, in their dry, corporate language, the world they are derived from: “High Technology,” “Media Studies,” “Hospitality Suite,” “Agriculture, Mining and Construction.” And although many of the poems are grounded in specific geography – the titles in “Hospitality Suite” are all locations, many of them hotels – they are, with some exceptions, synthetic, transient locations, a world that may fall over at any instant, one that changes rapidly, creating dislocation, displacement.

*Infrastructure Park*

Go outside and walk around
no reason to go in any particular direction
nothing to see
no people
nature=the sun
this is the West
trunk lines underground
telecommunications, transportation, and utilities
what once was fields
will some day be something again
meanwhile
your guess is as good as mine
and then some

But in this environment is a clarity and sense of humor that is “not to be denied.” There is an urgent necessity to this writing that “impresses its mark on the spirit;” it is “an insistence lived, a laugh in the face of horror.” Kit Robinson is able to engage fully with the world and the society he lives in and at the same time remain aware, insistent and alive. He show us, through his writing, how to face down the barrage of symbols, with open eyes and an open heart.
Even the titles of the two poems, "A Language of New York" (Collected Poems 94–101) and "Of Being Numerous" (147–179), show George Oppen's involvement with a topic of prime importance to him: language and community. The former poem appears in This in Which and is an earlier and shorter version of what became the latter, much longer poem. The earlier version has eight sections while the latter has forty. All of the earlier poem, except section four, reappears in the later poem in some form or other. As Oppen himself stated,

Of Being Numerous asks the question whether or not we can deal with humanity as something which actually does exist.

I realize the possibility of attacking many of the things I'm saying and I say them as a sort of act of faith. The little words that I like so much, like "tree," "hill," and so on, are I suppose just as much a taxonomy as the more elaborate words; they're categories, classes, concepts, things we invent for ourselves. Nevertheless, there are certain ones without which we really are unable to exist, including the concept of humanity. I'm trying to describe how the test of images can be a test of whether one's thought is valid, whether one can establish in a series of images, of experiences...whether or not one will consider the concept of humanity to be valid, something that is, or else have to regard it as being simply a word (Interview with L.S. Dembo 175).

In this oft-quoted passage about "Of Being Numerous," Oppen references many of his major concerns: his focus on the substantive, on nouns; his inquiry into what humanity is and how it is defined; how language and poetry are a test of one's thought; his belief that there are certain basic words without which we cannot exist; and whether or not these basic words are even valid. "Of Being Numerous" is a large and major work of Oppen's, too big for me to deal with justly here in a short essay. However, a look at the shorter, earlier version, "A Language of New York," will give the reader some idea of how Oppen dealt with the topic of language and community.

Before I proceed to Oppen's poem, however, I would like to discuss briefly my use of the word community. My use of that word is very much informed by the way Oppen, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Heidegger employ it,
though here I will mainly talk about the former two writers use of the term. Nancy states how

Community is revealed in the death of others; hence it is always revealed to others. Community is what takes place always through others and for others. It is not the space of the egos — subjects and substances that are at bottom immortal — but of the ἑαυτοί, who are always others (or else are nothing)....It is not a communiation that fuses the egos into an Ego or a higher We. It is the community of others.” (The Inoperative Community 15).

I would point out a few ideas in this quotation from Nancy important to my purposes in the essay. The idea of the realization of the “I” through others is found throughout Oppen’s poetry, as in the line, “Things explain each other, / not themselves,” from the poem “A Narrative” (Collected Poems 134). Also, through the death of others, one realizes one’s own finitude and the being-in-common of that finitude. Rather than community being the site of a social communion, of a bonding, something that happens, or is desired to happen, in a fascist Gemeinshaft, community is the site of beings’ recognition of their finitude and the being-in-common of that finitude. Ironically, that which separates us, our finitude, is also what binds us. In addition, Oppen thought of community as a conversation. Oppen stated in a letter to his sister, June Oppen Degnan, “I mean to be a part of a conversation among honest people” (Selected Letters 55), and in “An Adequate Vision,” “‘Mankind’ is a conversation” (17). Writing, too, is part of community for Nancy: “what communication writes, what writing communicates, is in no way a truth possessed, appropriated or transmitted — even though it is, absolutely, the truth of being-in-common (The Inoperative Community 40). And for both, as well, community and writing are necessarily incomplete:

Moreover, there is no entity or hypostasis of community because this sharing, this passage cannot be completed. Incompletion is its “principle,” taking the term “incompletion” in an active sense, however, as designating not insufficiency or lack, but the activity of sharing, the dynamic, if you will, of an uninterrupted passage through singular ruptures. That is to say, once again, a workless and inoperative activity (35).

“[W]hat is important is not the conclusion, but / what we are talking about” (“An Adequate Vision” 9)

“A Language of New York” doesn’t just deal with whether or not humanity is something which exists or is valid; it specifically deals with humanity in the context of the city. In the first section (94), we read,
A city of the corporations

Glassed
in dreams

And images –

And the pure joy
Of the mineral fact

Tho it is impenetrable

As the world, if it is matter

Is impenetrable.

Here we are in the world of Frigidaire (4) and Lever Brothers (43), found respectively in Oppen’s Discrete Series and “Tourist Eye” from The Materials, though in this first section Oppen is not so much criticizing this world as commenting upon and observing it. We see the incorporeal become the corporeal, or is it the corporeal becoming the incorporeal? The city is glassed in “dreams,” “images,” and “joy,” but have the dreams and images made the city, or vice versa? The city revels in the “pure joy / Of the mineral fact,” which, like the dreams and images, is both what built it and what it builds, what sustains it and what it sustains. It is interesting that this city, which is such an overwhelming fact in itself and delights in the “mineral fact,” is glassed in dreams, images, and joy, all incorporeal things.

The joy in the mineral fact seems to be what grounds the city, but also what might make it inaccessible to man. There is a similarity between these city buildings and Oppen’s father’s home in “Birthplace: New Rochelle” (34). Both poems give us a sense of the buildings as part of what Oppen calls the “stone universe” (Selected Letters 33). The city here is “impenetrable // As the world, if it is matter // Is impenetrable.” The city may have come from our dreams, images, and joy, may still be of Heidegger’s zuhanden – those things made by man, as opposed to the vorhanden which are those things made by nature – yet it is still impenetrable to us, and, consequently, like the stone universe; indeed, the city is itself a “mineral fact.” This section recognizes both the thingness of the city we ourselves have created and our feeling of separation from that very city.

The sentence structure of section one also bears examination. The lack of finite, active verbs and the predominance of disjunct, dependent phrases and clauses contribute ironically to both the section’s nominative feel, reinforcing the notion of the city as “mineral fact,” and the sense of a city that is balanced precariously on glass, dreams, and images. Because of section
one’s indeterminate feel, the reader finds it hard to tell whether this section is celebrating the city’s “pure joy / Of the mineral fact,” or criticizing it. One of the things we see in the first poem of this series is Oppen’s balancing of the nominative and substantive with a fruitful indeterminacy that causes the reader to question, think, and choose a reading for him/herself.

The picture of New York City that we receive in section two (Collected Poems 95) is a much more critical one. It is a place where people are “Unable to begin /At the beginning.” The “fortunate,” though, “Find everything already here.” This leaves the conclusion that there are some less fortunate who neither can begin at the beginning, nor can find everything already here for them, the poor and out of work that Oppen chronicled in such poems as “Return” (26–28), people like Petra Roja. The people who do find what they want already here are the “shoppers, / Choosers, judges,” i.e., the famed ‘discriminating consumers.’ They are defined by consuming, indeed, are even consumed by it. So what type of life do they lead?

here the brutal

Is without issue, a dead end.

They develop

Argument in order to speak, they become
unreal, unreal, life loses
solidity, loses extent, baseball’s their game
because baseball is not a game
but an argument and difference of opinion
makes the horse races.

These people are not engaged in what Oppen would feel is the “conversation among honest people” (Selected Letters 55) which takes place in community, but rather in an argument; in fact, their whole existence, even their games which are no longer games, are defined by the contentious, the argumentative, and the brutal. Can “humanity” be said to exist here where there is no real vital communication? These people are nothing more than “ghosts that endanger // One’s soul.” Though their brutal lifestyle may bring them “to the end / Of an era,” a “dead end” by all accounts, as the “First of all peoples...one may honorably keep / His distance / If he can.” The fact that these people come in first in this brutal rat race that they run is, of course, looked at ironically here. However, Oppen senses that “There is a change / In an air / That smells stale.”

Concerning the formal dimensions of section two, I would draw the reader’s attention to Oppen’s use of line endings, a subject which he addresses in his interview with L.S. Dembo. In the second stanza, the phrase “and difference of opinion” at first seems to apply to baseball: “baseball is
not a game / but an argument and difference of opinion, “but then, as we read further, we don’t know what the subject of “makes the horse races” is. We then realize that the phrase “difference of opinion” is the subject of “makes.” So the phrase in question would seem applicable to both clauses. In other poems, Oppen uses this same technique. Why does he create this indeterminacy in the syntax through the use of line endings? Possibly as a way to reinforce the notion of relation in his work in general, and in this poem specifically. The notions of contextualization and interrelation are important for Oppen, and his use of language in this indeterminate way seems to reinforce these concerns, but also seems to point to another view that Rachel Blau Du Plessis gets at in her essay on Oppen where she compares him with Pound and shows how Pound takes essentially a didactic and propagandistic position in the Cantos a good deal of the time, therefore putting forward a program of what social relations should be and how to go about building them, as opposed to Oppen for whom relations among human beings and the world they live in are always contextual, always changing, and not a system that should be imposed (Du Plessis 123–148).

Another aspect of this section’s formal dimension is its paratactic structure, especially in the first stanza. Here we find the three main topical elements placed side by side: the fortunate find everything already here; they are shoppers, choosers, judges; here the brutal is without issue. The structure of the sentence is not: “Because these people are this, therefore, such and such is the case.” The elements of the stanza are simply placed next to each other in the mode of Oppen’s figures of perception (Selected Letters 8r) as opposed to what he describes as the figures of elocution. This technique gives the reader the feeling he has more direct access to the elements discussed and allows him to participate more by connecting these elements together himself in whatever way he feels is called for by the poem. This dimension of reader participation can be found in many of Oppen’s poems, and it speaks to the dialogic process so important in general in Oppen’s work.

Right after talking about keeping distance from the people of New York at the end of section two, the very first lines in section three (Collected Poems 96) say, “I cannot even now / Altogether disengage myself / From those men.” The men about whom he is talking are those he met while in the service during World War II. Why can he not disengage himself from these men, yet wants to disengage himself from the shoppers and people of New York? What concerns Oppen is particular people. He asks how can he forget those particular men he knew during the war, whom he calls by name, and all they went through, and “talk / Distantly of ‘the People,’” whose names he doesn’t even know? He asks,

Who are the people? that they are
That force within the walls
Of cities

Wherein the cars
Of mechanics
And executives

Echo like history
Down walled avenues
In which one cannot speak.

This passage, and indeed the whole section, echoes some of Oppen's earlier poems. The topic of how one dwells in the war environment is dealt with in section three of "Blood from the Stone" (31–33), only in that poem we receive a picture of Oppen as soldier cut off from the place he was in because of the war, whereas in this section of "A Language of New York" we encounter Oppen feeling more in contact with his war companions than the people he lives among in New York City. The discussion of cities and how people live in them echoes so many other Oppen poems, such as the end of "Return" (26–28) with its talk about Petra Roja, the Depression, and The Relief, as well as "From Disaster" (29), and "Blood from the Stone" again. The "walls" and the people "within" them in "A Language of New York" strike a similar chord with the "halls and stairways" and the "deep bulk" of the buildings in sections two and three of "Tourist Eye" (43–45). And the mention of "cars" in the poem at hand connects with the other discussions of cars in numerous other Oppen poems, especially from Discrete Series.

Though section one may have been more indeterminate, sections two and three seem to take a dim view of the city. It seems ironic that the people whom Oppen values so much, whom he knows so well and as individual people, he met and came to know under the duress of war, while the people in the city in which he lives and dwells are just that, "the People." Does this show that people are constructed by the context they inhabit, that when they need to depend on one another as soldiers do during war, they get to know each other better than in a city during peacetime where they, ironically enough, "develop / Argument in order to speak"? And it is also ironic that in the picture presented here the city does not provide opportunities for establishing relations between people, while war does. Is one reason for this because in war there is an enemy to fight against and, therefore, the duress of dealing with the enemy makes individuals band together, while there is no enemy in the city except for the way of life or each individual around you? And if the latter are your enemies, how can you connect with your neighbors or culture or environment when they are what you are fighting? And again to make a connection with section three of "Blood from the
Stone" (32), compare that poem’s wartime picture of “Standing / Shut by the silent walls” with the poem at hand’s civilian picture of “walled avenues / In which one cannot speak.”

In this particular section, Oppen seems to be saying that after the kind of experience that he’s had during the war with others, he can no longer talk “Distantly of ‘the People.’” The intimacy of relations that he achieved with fellow soldiers during the war makes the lack of connection with those he lives among in peacetime seem unreal. What we see happening in “A Language of New York” is Oppen continuing the momentum of his previous discourses in earlier poems on people’s relationships with the city in which they dwell and writing longer and more extensive ruminations on those relationships, this more extended work itself eventually expanding into the forty section poem, “Of Being Numerous” (147–179).

The unreality of “the People” and Oppen’s relationship with them, of these people who “are ghosts that endanger // One’s soul,” the unreality of a city “Glassed / In dreams // And images – ,” of the cars that “Echo like history / Down walled avenues / In which one cannot speak,” this unreality is continued in section four (97) which reads:

Possible
To use
Words provided one treat them
As enemies.
Not enemies – Ghosts
Which have run mad
In the subways
And of course the institutions
And the banks. If one captures them
One by one proceeding

Carefully they will restore
I hope to meaning
And to sense.

The “institutions” and “banks” are the same agencies of power as section one’s “corporations // Glassed / In dreams // And images,” the same agencies of power as Frigidaire (4) and Lever Brothers (43). It is in these places, and in the public spaces like the “subway,” that words “Have run mad.” Notice that in section two we encountered the “argument and difference of opinion,” in section three the echoing of the cars and the “walled avenues” where “one cannot speak,” and here in section four we find words that are “Ghosts / Which have run mad.” So far in the poem, this is how the language of New York is characterized: argument, echo, inability to speak, madness.

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How to define humanity by using this language is the question. Like Heidegger, Oppen starts from the ground base, questioning and examining the foundations and essentials of things. Encountered as is, words have become unusable, but it is possible to use words “provided one treat them / As enemies. / Not enemies – Ghosts.” The adversarial nature of the city, its brutal and argumentative nature, calls for an adversarial attitude towards words, but then Oppen changes his mind and decides it would be better to treat words as ghosts. The vacillation in the train of thought here emphasizes the nature of many Oppen poems as process.

Treating them like ghosts, like traces of words, the poet must pursue and come to know each word one by one, “proceeding // Carefully.” He must come to know each word by its name, so to speak, as he did the men with whom he fought in the war, and not like one knows “the People.” When one rediscovers and redefines words in such a way, then, Oppen says, “they will restore / I hope to meaning / And to sense.” Notice the important phrase “I hope,” because it points to all the work that has yet to be done and again shows Oppen’s commitment to the on-going process of conversation that is community.

Another thing to notice is that Oppen seems to be promoting a kind of domestication, a civilizing. Though the people who are “ghosts that endanger // One’s soul” might be said to be civilized in an urbane way in that they are discriminating shoppers and have developed a communication of argument, these are the very reasons they have “run mad” like the words they use. Indeed, the madness of the people and the words seems to be symbiotic, each feeding off the other. The people themselves have not been restored “to meaning / And to sense.” The idea of civilizing that Oppen values takes the form in his poems of the incomplete process of communitarian conversation and a respect for each being’s existence and finitude. Besides intersecting here with Heidegger and Nancy, Oppen also shows himself to have much in common with Ezra Pound who himself refers to the place of the dialogic in civilization when he writes, “A civilized man is one who will give a serious answer to a serious question. Civilization itself is a certain sane balance of values” (Guide to Kulchur 137).

Also, notice the use of line endings again: between stanza one and two. The word “Carefully” can be read in two ways: one captures words by proceeding carefully, and the words themselves will carefully restore to meaning and sense. In the first reading, power is in the hands of the one who captures the words; in the second, it is in the hands of the words themselves. We can extend this scenario. Since the people are referred to as ghosts in section two, there is a sense that the ghosts that have run mad in the subways and institutions and banks here in section four are also these people, or are even both the people and their words, that they are identified by their words, and that the people themselves in a way need to be captured and
carefully nurtured in order to be restored to meaning and sense. But then again, as with the double reading of “Carefully” in the context of the “words,” the people, by transcending themselves in the Heideggerian sense, and capturing themselves through this transcendence, have the power in their own hands to “Carefully” restore themselves to meaning and to sense.4

Section five (Collected Poems 98) begins with the dependent clause, “Which act is / violence.” Is this a question or is it a clause referring to something? Is it referring to the previous section? Is the act of capturing words and restoring them to meaning and sense an act of violence? Or is Oppen asking which act in the previous sections is violent: fighting in war or living in New York City? The rest of the poem gives a context to these first two lines, but it does not really define them any better and instead leaves them in that indeterminate space much of Oppen’s poetry can occupy.

Stanza two seems to be saying that the trappings of technological progress are not enough: “No one makes do with a future / Of rapid travel with diminishing noise / Less jolting / And fewer drafts.” Rather, what everyone waits for is war. There is a deterministic attitude towards war; it comes “As always.” The hope seems to be that war lets their “juices...flow”; yet “the juices lie,” which means both that the juices don’t flow, and that they falsify. One may feel invulnerable and alive when the juices flow; there may be the “passions / Of that death” of the “Great things [that] have happened / On the earth and given it history,” the history of “armies” and “ragged hordes,” but, still, “who escapes / Death?” War and the great events of history, the passion of fighting for a great idea or cause, haven’t been able to answer the whole question of our finitude. War is not looked at here as it is in section three where Oppen contrasts the intimacy he had among his fellow soldiers with the isolation he feels from those among whom he lives in the city. In section five, war is seen as part of the “argument and difference of opinion” of the city dwellers, of the life “run mad” in the subways, of, as this sections says, the “future / Of rapid travel.” This section demonstrates Oppen’s ability to hold contrary and opposing points of view in the same poem towards a single thing. This indeterminacy shows us Oppen thinking aloud, so to speak, and engaging in the process of conversation with himself and the world in which he lives, specifically here, New York City. The series again reveals its dialogic nature.

Whether or not there is war, whether he has
Or has not opinions, and not only warriors,
Not only heroes

And not only victims, and they may have come to the end
Of all that, and if they have
They may have come to the end of it.

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The poem ends with the same indeterminate tone with which it started. The other half of the “whether” clause, what is usually a definitive statement or declaration, is not supplied; instead, more indeterminacy and conjecture are added: “and they may have...and if they have / They may have.” Oppen doesn’t know whether or not humanity has come to the end of war, warriors, and heroes, but “if they have / They may have come to the end of it.” What is “it”? Life, violence, war? We don’t know. Again, Oppen is willing to reveal his doubt, uncertainty, and the limits of his knowledge on this matter at the time of the poem’s writing. We witness him in the midst of his deliberations on “the People” and whether or not they “may have come to the end of” their “passions” for violence, war, and technology and have faced the finitude of their death. So far in the poem, Oppen seems to be enumerating a number of distractions – shopping, sports, work, war – that humanity has constructed which enable each person to avoid facing his or her own finitude.

After the confusion, uncertainty, and madness of sections two, three, and four, section six (99) is a point of calm.

There can be a brick
In a brick wall
The eye picks

So quiet of a Sunday.
Here is the brick, it was waiting
Here when you were born,

Mary-Anne

The image of the wall here echoes the city walls and the walled avenues of section three, only here it is an image of endurance, patience, and fidelity, rather than one of containment and claustrophobia. It is also an image of witness and companionship: it was there when a woman named Mary-Anne was born. It is a marker of her birth, yet how can it be a marker if it is only one of hundreds of bricks in a wall? The bricks of the wall are like “the People,” numerous and anonymous. The only way one of either the bricks or the people stands out is when the “eye picks” one out, when there is a selection and a zooming-in, as happens in this poem. Here we come across one particular brick and one particular person, Mary-Anne. She has a particular name and time and place of birth, and, therefore, though she still is of “the People,” she becomes more than just “the People”; she becomes restored “to meaning / And to sense” by the eyes’ act of “Carefully” picking her. Oppen’s sense of vision here is the kind that he says goes beyond the physical, though also including that, to the metaphysical: “The most tre-
mendous and compelling emotion we possess is the one that forces us to
look, to know, if we can, to see (Interview with L.S. Dembo 186). I also think
of the woman in poem twenty-one (Collected Poems 11) of Discrete Series who is
awaiting "locally – a date." Unlike that woman, who dwells in the indeter­
minate place of the potential of being, Mary-Anne has entered history and
her being. This poem also shows how "the People" become viable to Oppen:
"One by one."

Mary-Anne is again found in section seven (100):

Strange that the youngest people I know
Like Mary-Anne live in the most ancient buildings

Scattered about the city
In the dark rooms
Of the past – and the immigrants,

The black
Rectangular buildings
Of the immigrants

These are the same buildings described in section three of "Tourist Eye":
"Rectangular, rearing / Black windows into daylight" where the child played
piano in the "deep bulk" (44). In both passages, we encounter the young
living within these dark, ancestral, and even somewhat forbidding domains
of the city. This convergence of the "youngest people" and the "most an­
cient buildings" documents the meeting of the past and the present in the
city. These "children of the middle class" are ""The pure products of America
- ."

Oppen sees these children, these "pure products of America," as "In­
vesting / The ancient buildings." The language used to describe the chil­
dren, "products" and "Investing," points to the American emphasis on mak­
ing money, and the American tendency to treat even people as capital. We
saw the American, omnivorous, consumer lifestyle earlier in section two where
we witnessed the "dead end" of the shoppers. Yet, the "change / In the air"
that Oppen writes of there is present here towards the end of the poem, in
sections six and seven, in the children, a group that holds a special place in
Oppen's metaphysics, as can be seen in his poem "Sara in Her Father's
Arms" (Collected Poems 30), and even in "Tourist Eye" (43–45) with its am­
bivalent image of the child playing piano.

But Williams' "pure products" are more akin to Oppen's "the People."
Here in section seven, Oppen seems to be turning the words “products” and “Investing” to a different use, seems to be using them in the sense of “issue” from section two, something that the “shoppers, / Choosers, judges” are without. The children invest the ancient buildings in that they renew them and make them come alive, in that they infuse life into them. In a way, Oppen restores William’s “pure products” “to meaning / And to sense.”

The young inhabit these buildings that are of the past and “Of the immigrants,” the latter mentioned twice in this section. The young and the immigrants, those outside of the mainstream, are ironically the ones living among history. By living in these buildings, the young both follow in the immigrants footsteps and remind us of the immigrants’ history. The young “Jostle each other // In the half-forgotten, that ponderous business, / This Chinese wall.” The young stir up things, such as the city’s “half-forgotten” history, of which the immigrants are a part, a history which stands like a “ponderous business,” monolithic, like the Great Wall of China. What was the purpose of that wall? To protect Chinese civilization by keeping out the barbarians. But do these walls we build, these buildings we construct, help civilize us, help create a safe place for us, or do they cut us off from each other, as can be seen in “Tourist Eye” where “The solitary are obsessed” (44). Heidegger’s words on dwelling, freedom, the safe are pertinent:

Real sparing is something positive and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own nature, when we return it specifically to its being, when we “free” it in the real sense of the word into a preserve of peace. To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature. The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving. (Poetry, Language, Thought 149).

The “change / In the air” that Oppen senses may come from the children; they may be the ones who will be able to capture carefully the ghosts and their ghost words and restore them to meaning and sense. And only by returning people and words “specifically to [their] being,” as Oppen does in section three with his comrades from the war, and not treat them anonymously as when we “talk / Distantly of ‘the People,’” will our lives restore to meaning and sense. Since the next and last section of “A Language of New York” makes direct political reference, and since the issue of the safety of our cities has arisen, as well as the issue of American economics, I think it worthwhile to quote a passage from Oppen’s daybook:

Suppose there were a headline screaming ATROCITY every time a bomb dropped in Vietnam or THE STREETS ARE NOT SAFE every time we built a bombing plane.
The name of the game is imperialism, and we throw away our lives for it. We can hardly be said to possess our own lives ("An Adequate Vision" 25).

With that type of economics sustaining our way of life, our streets and cities will never be safe.

Section eight (Collected Poems 101) of "A Language of New York" is comprised entirely, except for Oppen's identification of the author, of a quote from Walt Whitman that is dated April 19, 1864, approximately 100 years before Oppen's poem was written. Whitman obviously wrote this passage while he was in Washington D. C. during the Civil War. The two settings to which Oppen has referred previously in "A Language of New York," war and the American civil setting, are here combined in the setting of the American Civil War. Yet, we do not receive a graphic portrait of battle scenes; instead, we come upon Whitman's description of the American capital, another building, functioning here as both the seat of government and a symbol. This symbolic building is given fairly positive and enthusiastic treatment by Whitman. He tells how the "capital grows upon one in time," especially since there is this figure that he supposes is the "Genius of Liberty" on top of it, a figure that is twice described as "great," a word that refers to both its size and quality. This figure is also described as "wonderful" and "dazzles and glistens like a big star." The passage has telescoped from the capital as a whole to this symbolic figure of the Genius of Liberty. The main editorial and creative change that Oppen has made in this section is to separate the last word, "curious," from the rest of the passage, an action that both accentuates the word's meaning and gives it a sense of irony. After all we have seen in "A Language of New York" about civil life in an American city, the word "Liberty" indeed seems a curious one. After he himself fought in a war to end fascism and preserve liberty, one of the questions Oppen seems to be asking is what kind of liberty do we have in a city like New York? Yet, to be curious is to ask questions, to want to discover, to be open to things. The word "curious" implies process since curiosity is a state in which one continues to ask questions. Curiosity also conveys a sense of wonder. Oppen and Heidegger both share that sense of wonder that the things which are are. Oppen himself said:

And I set myself again and again, not in the spirit of any medical pragmatism, any philosophy offering to cure everything, nor in any effort to improve anybody, but just to record the fact, to saying that I enjoy life very much and defining my feeling by the word "curious" or, as at the end of "A Narrative," "joy," joy in the fact that one confronts a thing so large, that one is part of it. The sense of awe, I suppose, is all I manage to talk about. I had
written that “virtue of the mind is that emotion which causes to see,” and I think that perhaps that is the best statement of it. (Interview with L.S. Dembo 185–186)

This sense of presenting what is seen while not offering definitive answers is what happens throughout Oppen’s poetry and is what happens in “A Language of New York.” We are presented with the people, things, events, and situations Oppen sees, both physically and metaphysically, with all their complexities and perplexities. The poems he writes are themselves “curious,” questions that he is asking himself and is asking the reader about human being. And indeed, by being presented with situations without definitive answers, the reader is allowed to puzzle through and answer these questions in large part for him or herself.

But there is also a notion of history in this last section of “A Language of New York.” Whitman and the Civil War are part of the history that is “half-forgotten” in section seven. Oppen’s work many times gives us this sense of history slipping away, and of him gently nudging it back into our consciousness, or more exactly, nudging the notion of history back into our consciousness. We also find ourselves in a relationship with history, with its legacy of ideas and attitudes that we have inherited and assimilated, ideas about how we are to dwell together in these buildings and cities we have built. For Oppen, history and being are domains about which we must always be “curious,” about which we must always be asking questions.

Another thing to notice about this section is that the Whitman quotation both filters Oppen’s thought through a persona and gives voice to another person. This technique shows the person in relation to others and can be traced back to the first poem of Discrete Series where Oppen quoted Henry James. Oppen again places his ideas in relation to those of another, continuing the “honest conversation” that was such an important part of his being and, indeed, helped define that being.
Notes

1 For further reading on this topic of community, I would refer the reader to Jean-Luc Nancy’s *The Inoperative Community* or my own essay, “Oppen, Heidegger, Nancy: Being-Together in the World” in *Talisman*, No. 17.

2 “All the poems are about the same thing....But that is what I write. About you, me[,] Mary, our adult child and everything we touch enough – stone universe, but we are not. So, if the nothing place reclaims our own atomic structure to itself I WILL NOT LIKE IT. And unlike God in your story, I will give a damn” (*Selected Letters* 33).

“My whole life is a fight against death. Yours hasn’t? And death’s around us in the dead matter we came out of” (33).

“That was the first victory in my life over the stone. Or the steel and iron” (33).

“The universe is stone, but we are not. The universe’s time is some kind of elapsed time, whatever that may be, but our time is historical time, and the difference between one generation and a next, and we make that time. We are not really such ‘Strangers’ even if we are afraid ‘in a world we never made – speaking of the historical, and not the astronomical world. Our times are really a lot like us, and we are really a lot like our times, and it’s surely clear if we think how much our fathers were like their times. ‘No stranger, nor a stranger’s son’ The bird is like a bird of Chaucer’s time – but we and our times are different from Chaucer’s.”

“– the poem is a poem of hatred of the ‘Stone universe’ and of love for ourselves and Linda – and all we have made of the universe by looking at it. I’m afraid that goes to real metaphysics in the Missile. Says among other things that we didn’t make the atom we are made of, but all the rest is subjective. I believe it – and it matters to me. Have to say it. That’s why it opens with the lyric of praise for vision” (29).

3 “But the ‘middle generation’ failed, I think...not because I disagree with what they want to say, but because they abandoned the figures of perception for the figures of elocution, of assertion, of syntax” (*Selected Letters* 81).

“The important thing is that if we are talking about the nature of reality, then we are not really talking about our comment about it; we are talking about the apprehension of some thing, whether it is or not, whether one can make a thing of it or not. Of Being Numerous asks the question whether or not we can deal with humanity as something which actually does exist” (Interview with L.S. Dembo 175).

4 “Projecting into Nothing, Da-sein is already beyond what-is-in-totality. This ‘being beyond’ *(Hinaussein)* what-is we call Transcendence. Were Da-sein not, in its essential basis, transcendent, that is to say, were it not projected from the start into Nothing, it could never relate to what-is, hence could have no self-relationship” (*Existence and Being* 339–40).
Bibliography


