Aufgabe

Number 5, Fall 2005
Contents

Re and Not Re: an Editor’s Note 7

Feature · 19 Moroccan Poets

guest edited by Jalal El Haïmaoui and Guy Bennett, with translations by Hassan Hilmy and Guy Bennett 9
Mahmoud Abdelghani, Three Poems 17
Mehdi Akhrif, from The Tomb of Helen 20
Ahmed Barakat, Six Poems 21
Ahmed Belbdaoui, Two Poems 25
Rajae Benchems, from The Dead Never Die 28
Mohammed Bentalha, Three Poems 30
Omar Berrada, The Archangel’s Old Slippers 34
Jalal El Haïmaoui, Two Poems 36
Mohamed Hmoudane, from Incandescence 39
Wafaa Lamrahi, The Eighth Day 42
Mohamed Loakira, from Even Burning My Lashes 45
Rachida Madani, Untitled 49
Zohra Mansouri, Two Poems 51
Mohamed Meimouni, A Wisp of Smoke 53
Hassan Najmi, Cold Sun 55
Mostafa Nissabouri, from Daybreak 56
Abdel-Ilah Salhi, Two Poems 58
Abdelkarim Tabbal, Three Poems 60
Mubarak Wassat, Two Poems 63

Special Section · Re and Not Re “John Cage” 67

Introduction by Richard K. Winslow 69
Norman O. Brown, “John Cage” 73

Elizabeth Willis, Art Against the State; Or What I Lived For 95
Craig Watson, I Have Nothing to Say and I Am Saying It: Three Performances for John Cage 98
Diane Ward, March 10, 2005 102
Rosmarie Waldrop, Music is an Oversimplification of the Situation We’re In 108
Anne Tardos, The Nature of This Lecture Is by John Beauty 113
Mark Tardi, Partita 118
Leslie Scalapino, from The Forest Is in the Euphrates River 125
Trey Sager, Untitled Satyagraha Mesostic 129
Joan Retallick, An Apollonian Diorysus and His Other 132
Jed Rasula, Norman O. Brown/John Cage: A Necessary Confusion 144
Ange Mlinko, *Against Touching* 148
Andrew Joron, *Brownian Motion, The Cage of* 150
Brenda Iijima, from *Salient John Cage* 152
Susan Howe, *Hermes* 158
Jen Hofer, *there is no more – no less – there is always – more*
*– no – or nothing more – nothing – or less and less*
*certain – dappled – biology falters – is dappled*
*failing – more faltering* 160
E. Tracy Grinnell, *Two Poems* 165
Clayton Eshleman, *Headpiece Stuffed with Books* 170
Therese Bachand, *bardo of the émigré soul* 178

**Contributors’ Notes** 190
But the strange thing about the realization of existence is that like a train moving there is no real realization of it moving if it does not move against something...

— Gertrude Stein, Portraits & Repetition
Re and Not Re: an Editor’s Note

Ordinarily when I write mesostics I write about the person whose name is a row going down the middle of the text, though some are a collection of mesostics "re and not re" that person.

— JOHN CAGE,
Themes & Variations

Any issue of Aufgabe, or any journal for that matter, is essentially “re and not re” x. However, this issue lends itself particularly well to that designation, given the unexpected intersections between the feature section, “19 Moroccan Poets,” guest edited by Guy Bennett and Jalal El Hakmaoui, and the main section, which is precisely “re and not re” “John Cage” by Norman O. Brown. Given as a lecture in celebration of John Cage’s seventy-fifth birthday at Wesleyan in 1988, and subsequently published in the Bucknell Review, “John Cage at Seventy-Five,” Brown’s fiery interrogation of Cage’s poetics is itself “re and not re” John Cage. Included in this section, for example, are poets who knew Cage and/or Brown, as well as younger writers who were interested in responding to Brown’s lecture or exploring their own relationship to Cage. Solicitations for work were open-ended in order to generate a variety of responses to and interactions with this lecture.

I am delighted to find resonances between the two sections (on an elemental level, for one), “...pregnant with every imaginable fuel/that defies my conquerors” (Rachida Madani, p. 49) and “...the pact forever sealed/Between yourself and essential/Fire” (Mohamed Hmoudane, p. 39), implicitly directing us to the question: “Where then/Is the poem?” (Mehdi Akhrif, p. 21). I am also grateful to be reminded of the challenge presented by the work of both Brown and Cage, “the turn of attention from where you’re going to how you’re going to get there,” as Elizabeth Willis puts it in her response. This is the kind of attention I believe is present in the range of responses to Brown’s lecture—poems, essays, recollections, conversations, forays, and reckonings.

Thomas Brown was incredibly generous in his support of the reprinting of his father’s lecture, which appears in its original format. I thank the Brown family for permission to reprint the lecture with no restrictions as to the manner of publication, including all editorial decisions. It is in this spirit of openness that these works are presented—that is, this is not a definitive collection of criticism or interpretation, but a sampling, in the interest of encouraging ongoing engagement with the past, present and future: the ways we connect living to writing, writing to living.

I am above all indebted to Richard K. Winslow for the opportunity to embark on this project. He has always been a steadfast supporter of my writing and editorial work, but in this case, he lit the fire. Brown’s own
acknowledgement bears repeating: “The only true begetter of this occasion is Richard Winslow…”

Mark Tardi was an invaluable second editor for this issue and Paul Foster Johnson a steady and meticulous copy editor. Many, many thanks.

Aufgabe #5 is dedicated to the memory of Jackson Mac Low (1922–2004), whose response to Brown’s lecture I had hoped to include.

— E. TRACY GRINNELL

July 2005

*Bucknell University Press, 1989. v.32. no.2*
19 Moroccan Poets

guest edited by Jalal El Hakmaoui & Guy Bennett

Translations from the Arabic by Hassan Hilmy,
and translations from the French by Guy Bennett

Artwork:
Ferid Belkahia
One is tempted to ask: are there any? (U.S.-Moroccan relations, I mean.) The answer, of course, is yes, and historically speaking they go back a long way. Not only was Morocco the first nation to officially recognize the newly independent United States in 1777, ten years later the two countries signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship that, amazingly, is still in effect; according to the U.S. State Department, it is the “longest unbroken treaty relationship in U.S. history.”

That said, U.S.-Moroccan literary relations are another matter. Though it is common knowledge that the Beats passed through Tangier, that William Burroughs wrote *Naked Lunch* there, that Paul Bowles lived most of his life – more than 50 years – in that city, that he wrote about the country and its culture, and translated, among others, Mohammed Choukri, Mohammed Mrabet, and Ahmed Yacoubi, contemporary Moroccan literature is far from well known in the U.S.

This is especially true of poetry. Aside from the work of perhaps one or two poets (notably Abdellatif Laâbi and Tahar Ben Jelloun, though the latter is better known here for his fiction than for his verse), contemporary Moroccan poetry remains largely invisible to American readers. This can be explained in part by the sad fact that, generally speaking, American readers and publishers are embarrassingly indifferent to literature (not to mention poetry) written in languages other than English.** Also, it must be said that American translators have shown relatively little interest in Arabic poetry in general, and Moroccan poetry in particular, compared to translations from other languages.

Things may be changing, however. As I write this note two major anthologies of Moroccan poetry are currently in preparation in the U.S., and they are sure to catch the attention of those American readers (and translators and publishers, one can hope) interested in what’s being written outside of their own country. It is my wish that, though more modest in scope, the following pages will serve the same purpose. By shedding a little light on the poetry of our “oldest international friends,” perhaps we can extend that friendship a bit further into the literary arena.

---

* Cf. the Morocco page on the U.S. Department of State website: [http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm)

** Recent studies by the NEA and UNESCO have shown that translations account for approximately 3% of all books published in the U.S. (the same is true of Britain, by the way), compared to 20–30% in Western European countries.
The present feature comprises the work of 19 poets spanning four generations and representing the major facets of modern Moroccan poetry since that country’s independence in 1956. In making our selections, we have focused on writers whose work is little known, if not entirely unknown, in the U.S., and some of the poets in question appear in English translation here for the first time. Though far from exhaustive, we hope that this selection will give a glimpse of the breadth and richness of contemporary Moroccan poetry and encourage further exploration.

Needless to say, this project would not have been possible without the effort, expertise, and dedication of my collaborators, whom I would like to thank here. My gratitude goes to Hassan Hilmy for his skillful translations from the Arabic and for his patience with my questions and quibbling,* and to Jalal El Hakmaoui for his love and knowledge of Moroccan culture and poetry, and for his generosity in sharing them with me.

— GUY BENNETT

Paris, Summer 2005

* The language in which the original texts were written is indicated at the end of each poet’s selection. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Arabic are by Hassan Hilmy, and all translations from the French by myself. — GB
The origins of Moroccan poetry can be found in the timeless call of the Arabian desert. They reach back to the pre-Islamic *Jahiliyyah* period when the Arab poet set off on horseback, either alone or with his tribe, a nomad wandering from one oasis to another. He gave voice not only to his flesh, but also to the soul of his tribe. He was its official spokesman, bearing the magic power of the divine word. Contemporary Moroccan poetry shares this conception of the art and the language in which it is written with the other poetries of the Arab world, but these two components alone do not reveal its specificity. The corpus of Moroccan poetry bears multiple signs—Arabic, Amazigh, Vandal, Phoenician, Sub-Saharan African—all of which are evident in the Moroccan poetic text. To understand its uniqueness today, we must consider how it has evolved over the last century.

In the 1920s many young Moroccan poets abandoned the traditional poetic model, which they found unsuitable for their ideas, hopes and aspirations. This model, which fossilized the Arabic poetry of the period, was dubbed the “fruit of decadence”; it made of poetry a hollow shell in which gratuitous stylistic exercises were used to create artificial, lifeless worlds. Like Sinbad in *The Thousand and One Nights*, these young poets set off in search of a new poetic language resilient enough to bear their youthful intensity and the scars of their history. This moment coincided with the *Nahda* (“Renaissance”) that was sweeping the Levant, while in Morocco French and Spanish colonization was gaining ground following the capitulation of Abd el-Krim, leader of Moroccan resistance in the Rif, in 1926.

Though those involved in the poetic renewal supported the push for Moroccan independence, the staple poetic form remained the *amud*, a classical form with two hemistichs. The late Allal El Fassi, who was both a poet and the leader of the Moroccan nationalist movement, was one of the key figures of this renewal. Poets Mokhtar Soussi, Abdellah Guenoun, and Mohammed Ben Brahim were also active in it, though they would later follow different paths. After the Second World War, the contours of Moroccan poetry became more clearly defined as a result of the ideological commitment of the reader. A newfound sensitivity to reception encouraged the shy emergence of a Moroccan “voice” able, by freeing the subject of the poem from the legacy of tradition, to express the anguish of a new society struggling under the yoke of colonization. The model was that of the Levantine *Nahda*, embodied then by Egypt, but no less influential was western Romanticism as represented by Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Musset, Pushkin, Goethe, Shelley and Keats.

Interestingly, at the same time, in northern Morocco a group of poets—Spanish, Moroccan, and Levantine—defied colonial logic and initiated a
cross-cultural dialogue that would bridge the two banks of the Mediterranean with the founding of the journal *Al-Motamed*. Published bilingually in Spanish and Arabic, it appeared from 1947–1956 in a total of 33 issues. Its editor, the Spanish poet Trina Mercader, lived in Larache and Tétouan.

Thus in the 1950s Tétouan became a door open onto the world of Spanish poetry. Also, with increasing numbers of children going to school throughout the country, more and more young Moroccans were being introduced to the renewal of Arabic poetry as well as to modern European writers, notably from England, France, and Germany. A number of poets were born of this interaction, among them Mohammed El Haloui, Abdelkarim Bentabet, Abdelmajid Benjelloun, and Abdelkader Hassan, as well as younger poets like Mohamed Sebbagh, Abdelkader Moqadem, and Mohammed Serghini. The Moroccan Romantic poem at last began its long, liberating voyage outside of the classical Arabic poetic tradition that had held it back for so long.

The 1960s represented a turning point in the evolution of Moroccan poetry. It hinged on two fundamental questions: the nature of poetic language on the one hand, and on the other the political status of the poet during those troubled times. A new poem began to take shape, informed by an aesthetic that was at once Romantic and anti-authoritarian; Ahmed Mejjati, Mohammed Khair-Eddine, Mostafa Nissabouri, Abdelkarim Tabbal, Tahar Ben Jelloun and Malika El Assimi were its chief proponents. This innovation knew no language barriers, and was common to both those writing in Arabic (thanks to the advent of free verse, which would become the cornerstone of modern Moroccan poetry), as well as to those writing in French. The ideological debate that ensued was motivated by the concern that the anti-authoritarian poem itself engage the social realities of a nation in the process of decolonization. In this context, the journal *Souffles* played a significant role in launching a new debate on Moroccan culture, but it quickly sank into a political activism that stripped it of its poetic and culturally deconstructive force.

In the 1970s, however, Moroccan poetry began to reflect a different way of thinking, one that sought to reinvent a changing and increasingly violent world. The dominant influence of the time was the modern Iraqi poem. During this decade Arab-language poetry became more visible, and many of the francophone poets abandoned the poem for the novel and Morocco for France. Poetic language in Arabic and Tamazight was also being revitalized. Mohammed Bennis’ Arab-language journal *Attakafa Al Jadida* ["The New Culture"], which was censored a few years later, played a decisive role in this era, defending the autonomy of poetic writing with respect to political writing, and encouraging younger poets to innovate and experiment in their work.

In addition to Bennis, the poets of this generation included Abdellah Rajae, Ahmed Belbdaoui, Mohammed Bentalha, Mohammed El Achaari,
Abdellah Zrika, and Mohamed Loakira. They were joined in the following decade by other young writers, among them Ahmed Barakat, Hassan Najmi, Wafaa Lamrani, and Ahmed Assid, all of whom would work with the prose poem. One of the most striking developments of the 1970s was “the calligraphic experiment,” which examined poetry’s relationship to language, painting, and visual form. Lead by Mohammed Bennis, Abdellah Rajae and Ahmed Belbdaoui, it consisted of using “Moroccan calligraphy,” which in the political history of Morocco was traditionally reserved for the makhzen (the traditional power of the royal palace), to write a new, subversive poetry. This disturbing détournement, in the Situationist meaning of that term, has never been truly analyzed by the critics – those who dared touch the nakedness of the sacred were met with silence, for Moroccan calligraphy was the official graphic form of both the Qur’an and the powers that be.

The 1990s saw the emergence of a new generation of poets who were blasé, disillusioned, and defiant. A “lost generation” that no longer believed in the successive corrupt governments, nor in the peddlers of ideology on the right or left, nor in the literature of their aging predecessors, nor even in the hoopla of pseudo-democracy. These poets have abandoned the conventional rhetoric and free verse that were the staples of their precursors, and work instead in a minimalist, straightforward language, their form of choice being the prose poem written in free verse.* Generally speaking, their thematics can be described as the fall of the subject into the gutter of the quotidian. Their writing tends toward the visual and the dynamic (cinematographic montage, filmic shots/sequences, borrowings from foreign languages, references to rock culture), and it shows the influence of American poetry, particularly that of the Beats, Charles Bukowski and Richard Brautigan. The poets in question include Abdel-Illah Salhi, Mahmoud Abdelghani, Hassan El Ouazzani, Aziz Azghai, Jamal Boudouma, Rachid Nini, Taha Adnan, and myself.

Currently the least developed facet of Moroccan poetry is that being written by women. With the exception of Wafaa Lamrani, who is internationally recognized as a major figure in contemporary Arabic poetry, few women poets have established themselves as writers on that level.

* A word needs to be said here about the Moroccan prose poem, which to western readers does not appear to be written in prose at all, but in verse. Explaining this apparent contradiction of terms Norddine Zouitni has written: “Most of the modern poetry received as ‘prose poem’ [gasidat annathr] is in fact ‘free verse.’ This is so because the break with traditional metrical poetry in the 1940s in favor of ‘free verse’ was not as radical as it seemed to many at the time. What Arab poets conceived of as ‘free verse’ [shi’r hurr] was a form still governed by the metrical unit [tāf’ilah]. Thus, when they were first acquainted with the ‘prose poem’ as a form, the major feature that drew their attention was its radical break with that metrical unit [tāf’ilah]. Perhaps this can explain why nowadays most of the prose poetry in the Arab world looks to the western reader like free verse.” – GB
Following the significant reform of family law undertaken by Morocco’s young king Mohammed VI, the new rights for Moroccan women, and the affirmative action which gave women access to some thirty seats in the Moroccan parliament (a first in the Arab world and in Africa), we can hope that a new generation of women poets will soon make its voice heard. Among those poised to do so are Widad Ben Moussa, Aicha El Basri, Iman El Khatabi, Zohra Mansouri, and Fatiha Morchid.

When we consider the situation of poetry today in a Morocco in “transition to democracy,” we find ourselves somewhere between the boundless sea and the desert. Far from the nomadic tribe, whose fire of hospitality has gone out. One is tempted to say that the Moroccan poem has been orphaned, in fact, twice orphaned: once by the West (we are just miles from Europe, which turns its back on our literature), and once by the Levant (where Moroccans were long considered excellent grammarians and religious scholars, nothing more). Somewhere in between, contemporary Moroccan poets mark their territory and run ahead toward the light of the open, unconditionally universal poem.

— JALAL EL HAKMAOUI

Translated from the French
Three Poems

Mahmoud Abdelghani

Herman Hesse

Do you know that you and Herman Hesse look alike?
You are not Herman Hesse,
You are someone who looks like Herman Hesse,
Someone who poses as Herman Hesse.

Do you know what you and Herman Hesse have in common?
You are slim,
And so is Herman Hesse.
Herman Hesse is slim and so are you.
You smile
And Herman Hesse in his pictures does smile.
Herman Hesse smiles
And you smile in your pictures.
You claim to be Herman Hesse
But Herman Hesse does not claim to be you:
He has better things to do.
The Three Days of Speech

We went out and bits of bad news piled up before us. It was not we who, throughout the night, gave blood to bad news. Behold! The seven walls protect us from roads affecting the attire of harbors. Thus we learned to save changes, as though the breeze at this point took us by surprise. And the letters of the alphabet ceased to leave our hands whilst words, like pebbles in rivers, rushed away.
The Painter

An egg in the middle
Some men dance 'round it
You can hear human voices
And see birds that fire your imagination
There was the first look,
And a few hours consumed their pain.
Another woman came
And the lower sands lay silent in the dark.
There stands a cheerless man
holding a snake with seven
holes and screaming: don't
play this flute! A night came
and it was most pleasant. I
persuaded a bogus woman,
desired for a lifetime, to lie be-
side me until oil gushed from
my shoulder. But when the
morning came I hid my face
from her and from God.

Translated from the Arabic
from *The Tomb of Helen*

≡ *Mehdi Akhrif*

Barefooted
Helen
Walks out of Suheil’s paintings
And heads for Bab Al-Raml,
Prompting elegies with her silken rebeck
Till the dusk that cleaves to the eyes of
The departing comer grows tired.
What mirror
Would disguise my mysterious face
That a pseudo phrase may become transparent
In her silence,
Silence protected by
The last
Afterglow?

Helen
Is reborn
Whenever the waterwheels
Of thirsty indigo smoulder
To ashes on a new line.

No, she returns

whenever
She strays.

Helen
Is a wine-rhyme
She is the ardor of the cupbearer
She is the one who stirs yearning for embers.
Helen is fading
And that millennial countenance
Unsheathes the hymn.

Helen
Stands at the edge of ink
Guiding errant journeys
To the gist of the ode.
Helen’s absence is present,  
Hers is the North Sea,  
Here are the seasons of the impossible,  
Here is her protective robe  
And her harbor.  

Helen  
Dozes part of the year  
Beneath the eyelid of an enchanted kitten  
That belongs to the fairies of the black Jinn  

Helen  
Neither stayed nor departed.  

Where then  
Is the poem?  
Is it in the sea reefs,  
Or in the obstinate dialect  
Of limestone?  
Or is it the storyteller who copied  
the tale  
with his own  
spurious longing?  

Wandering in memories  
That left nothing but foam  
And in the scattered fragments of renunciation  
In the depths  
Among paintings  
Of seaweed  
As they grow in amulets left over from-  
The epiphany of queens during Fassi carnivals  
I would come near then run away  
From your island  
Which emerges in winter  
To hide me deeply  
in wine  
skies.
O anise flower
On the Rilke cover
Do enter
The verse garden
And with the effervescence of metonymy
Daub the lips of Helen-the-poem
The poem ending (at the beginning)
The voice of Helen
    has not yet grown clear
    in my throat burnt
    from calling!

Translated from the Arabic
Six Poems

Ahmed Barakat

An Open Blue Umbrella

Come let’s rain together
Under this umbrella

Ecstasy

And night and day
Were two glasses poured
From the same bottle

The Park

The treadmill
The labyrinth

And swings all the time
An Attribute

My tongue the only fish in my own sea?

Another Idea

That is possible only in one case:
All that surrounds us
Not in darkness
But in wakefulness, and under the whip of light

The Evening Wind

This is not a desert
But the cloak of a dead mystic
And those his bones teased by the evening wind

Translated from the Arabic
Two Poems

Ahmed Belbdaoui

Misfortune

If only the various breeds of hedgehog died out or became extinct
Or even fled
So that the axe may fall on the head
And misfortune come;
For who but the hedgehog would dare approach
the lion's lips
And frankly and loudly say unto him:
Thou art foul-mouthed?
Outside the abbey, every one of them impatiently awaited the return of the saints.

From above
The bell looked down at the abbey with sanctimonious eyes.
The bell usually sees what the friar cannot.
From time to time its strokes fell one after another into
The river, indolently and discourteously setting traps
For the friars’ farts*
The bell’s clapper takes its shape
From outside the law of mutation,
Its eloquence follows custom and instinct,
And the share of heretical copper it contains.**
Here’s an example:
On the path,
And before the eyes of the statue of the Virgin,
The friar with bent frame had been wondering
How to adjust the distraction of the Cardinal’s shoe and the yawning of the Archbishop’s cap.
When the other friar, the one standing behind him,
groped in his pocket, he could only find the remnants of words uttered long ago about the labor pains of female tsetse flies, and how the late Cardinal Leo Augustus could entertain himself by repressing desire in Al-Jahiz’ insects, and was elated at seeing a male fly; after a twisted delay, burp as it landed precisely between the echo of the wink and the doze of the chair.
Their Colleague, heaped below the icon in the farthest corner, touched his mouth with his forefinger to confirm that the hair growing inside his lips was indeed the vestige of some last kiss; he can no longer remember exactly where, who, or when.

* There is a different version in one of the manuscripts: “the friars’ path”
** In another manuscript the line runs: “And according to the brazenness of metal its substance contains.”
The fourth,
The one sleeping with his left eye open,
Is St. Prutus of the Latches.
He was praying in the temple;
Bereaved sins and the weeping of Eternity sat in his presence, beside the rosary. When he finished his prayer, he winked with his right eye at the candle and out it went. He then fell asleep, hoping to dream of virgin saints.
As for the pontiffs, they were still at the gate before the eye of the statue of the Virgin,* their eyes anticipating the return of saints.

* In manuscript C this occurs as: “...at the gate a few prayers away from the statue of the Virgin...”
The dead never die.

On the rim of their dark pupils, they retain
The clear, permanent image
Of the child’s first scream

They cling to it,
Awaiting daybreak
With their vibrant patience.

It never comes and they never die

The dead lay motionless
In the interval of dusk

*

The vast, pensive stretch of plain
Recedes to the edge of the horizon
Where far off a child is heard.

Eyes riveted on the summer mist
He watches as the memory of his mother
Seeps slowly into the blind sky.

The frail, warm light
Of the gas lamp on the table
Shines weakly on the father’s shapeless face.

Abandoned in his solitude,
The child looks for the doorway to the mid-world
Through which his pale, dead mother
– inevitable and revived – will appear.

*
Seated at his window, the child
Peers into the deep blackness.
A light shines in the distance.
Could it be stars?
I don’t know.
I don’t know yet.
With its brightness it pierces
The dark, shadowy flesh of the sky
Drawing small, silver points in space
And when the wind blows and
The fable is nearly finished,
It dances slowly
But never falls
Into the frail hollow of my empty hand.

Translated from the French
Three Poems

Mohammed Bentelha

Nakedness

When he'd devised a saddle,
And twice tested it, fitting it on a marble horse,
He was wearing a necktie,
Trousers,
And his torn beige socks;
He paid no mind to those who besmirched him;
But, as he began to speak, he recoiled,
Bit his lips,
Dozed,
And fell asleep.
A First Closure

In the tavern at the harbour,
The rebeck abated and the jug sighed.
Cadiz was a boat,
The wind its oar,
And Cervantes made a sign...and then disappeared
Transition

When in the depth of the Nahawnd
I burned
My sail
This passionate parchment went blind.
The star then turned to coal,
And the echo in the pastures turned to grass.
O reed flute cut from the rock
As primevally was my arm!
How has the coal become a star?
And how has the cloud
Become my sail?

Translated from the Arabic
Jilali Gharbaoui
The Archangel’s Old Slippers

Omar Berrada

Rotation of spheres
The primordial Elements couple
Warmth cold dryness dampness
Higher letters are generated
The being of the limits

Negation of every form
of relation (eternity)

Letters are the limit of the physical world

No vocalization
inert body
unfigured breath
rest

dead language

Not sound signs but soundless signs.

I go beyond duality: I take off my two sandals
I invent an order on the scale of my frailty
The veracious foot advances
The Archangel Israfil blows his trumpet

opening abutting withdrawing
That makes an image
position of the lips  colorations of the exhal
Three vowels in the world
consonants between two
subtle plans links
of the encounter the djinn or the angel
ascending  descending  horizontal

The vowels حَكَمَات  are the movement of bodies.

In writing the solitary alif
airy letter  absolute vertical
stands straight of itself
“Ali is connected to it and it is connected to nothing”
The origin of all letters
thus is not one
“The alif supporting the hamza is a half-letter
and the hamza the other half”
For what joins also divides

Fusion without confusion is but a semblance of science.

Translated from the French
Why Does the Poet Take His Wife Out to McDonald’s?

Conceited you sit with your legs crossed
While the waves sleep beneath your feet.
You look like a herd of wild camels
As you eat American hamburgers
For the first time in your life
Patting
Your wife’s fat neck
As you tell her about Al-Nifarri’s washing machine
And Othman’s shirt with the hole in it
And the blond American fly you just
Unwittingly swallowed.
And she talks to you about your hideous car
That looks like a scabby greyhound
Suggesting you trade it in for a respectable donkey
Before she herself trades you and all your critical
Theories for anything that might do to decorate the bedroom.
Your wife giggles out loud
As she hollers,
Spreading the feathers of her legs for the tongue of the air.
You wish you could take her in your teeth
And crack her open as you would a rotten walnut,
Or stick her inside the empty matchbox on the table.
But you are a loyal person
You believe that your own marriage was the culmination of a
love story,
That you married a pig with the face of
Al-Manfaluti and the trotters of Nazik Al-Malaika,
And that you (therefore) commit suicide daily,
Overdosing on classical poems.
Surely you don’t joke with swine
And the swine (this is what is important) have no time
to waste joking with you.
For as soon as you press your mouth to the mouth of the whale sitting in front of you, you realize that the earth can’t sink in a glass half-filled with chilled water, and that you are a poet at the peak of happiness.

The skinny girl with the tiny head
Like a tennis ball
Reads *Femme Actuelle*
And stares stupidly at
The couples in McDonald’s jail
As happiness dribbles from their big mouths
Like spit,
While they, with paternal affectation, put their hands on the
Butts of their blond kids who shout as they point at the
Street with their little plastic fingers:

*PAPA... PAPA... Regarde... regarde...*
*Cet homme pisse sur notre voiture*

McDonald’s laughs and scratches its tail.
And the true poem is a net with huge holes
Made to trap as many hyenas as possible.
I don’t trust the poet’s wife who has the face of Al-Manfaluti
Nor do I trust the eyes of the net.
No more the skinny girl
Who reads *Femme Actuelle*
And from time to time glances at her watch
Without drinking her Coke.
The Sbata Schoolgirls

In Wadi-l-Zahab Park
The diligent schoolgirls sit
On an ancient bench
Worn out by lovers’ trysts
And they think of math exams
And of teasing invisible customers
Who, once every seven centuries,
Come from Italy laden with the feathers of happiness.

Translated from the Arabic
from *Incandescence*

Mohamed Hmoudane

*To my late father*

Here a burning Alphabet Is the pact forever sealed Between yourself and essential Fire

Fire Whose hearth You would have been Eternally...

.

From a secretive explosion Of wings into ashes You descend heralding An already Future fire...

.

Flames flare Hardly do you dream of spreading Your wings syllable by Incendiary syllable

Flames flare Strata by cleared-away strata By beating wings that slice the air By time weighted down With blood and corpses...
Revolve tombs
Revolve carcasses
Stars and ashes
Dazzling bright…

Rise and fly from my hand
And beyond the immense lesion
Rise and fly off

Pour down
Upon the dark cities
The spectral fire that I feed…

With a hand seeming
To return from afar
From opaque evasions
Laden with emptiness
And blazing light
You sculpt from still
Glowing ashes
Myriad meteoric
Appearances

Of that ageless
Fire
Clutching at you
From within

From a tree-like hand
With flames for fingers
Tangled
Like candlestick branches,
A drop falls
Ripe fruit oozing ink,

Blood
Quintessenced by night
It is the dust of eternity
It is the shipwreck in the spyglass
In which mirror shall we cast anchor
In which image shall we die:
I am the creature grazing
In ashen deserts
I am the creature licking at
The hemorrhaging mirage
You are the branching star
The star blazing
In ink…

Dim as the most dazzling day
The day mirrors and sky are extinguished
I remove my skin and enter silence
Embracing embers

On tiptoe I enter
Through doors thick and shadowy
That fall and at each step
Raise nights
Irrigated with wine swords and ash

I enter as if in battle…

*Translated from the French*
The Eighth Day

=Wafaa Lamrani=

"And he said to me:  
the day of death  
is the wedding day  
and the day of solitude  
is the day of cheerfulness.  
— AL-NIFARRI,  
Mawqif of Raiment"

1. Root
I was born of a feeling that resembles neither love nor hatred; it often resembles pride.
They did not want me but I came. By force did I emerge at the moment of my own choosing.
Before the beginning I identified with defiance
I announced that the era and I
Were split along the edge of alienation,
That time and I are forever two times.

2. Genesis
From insight do I initiate
My genesis
I extend along a space narrower than the needle’s eye.
I feign permeation into my own substance.
The wind in the hollow comes from neither Al-Sham nor Al-Maghreb.
Thus do I set forth:
Departure could not carry me away,
Nor transit escape me,
Nor even arrival entomb me.

3. Body
Whenever the voice of the body waxes ecstatic
The femininity of wisdom blossoms
And with roses covers those of its parts
Still dreamy in their coyness.
I rush into longing...
4. Love
My free and tender heart
I have set on the highest peak of the Atlas Mountains,
For the reeking hyenas
Are accustomed to decadence,
And grow dizzy and nauseous
In the heights...
My heart is a flower voluptuous with fragrance
But he who picks it suffers from a cold!

5. Semiotica
I emerge from the squall of a time
That does not come,
I tame the dripping of seconds,
I pour them out, signatures of a lifetime
Filled with departures...

6. Bleeding
The loneliness of evenings consumes me,
Gnaws at my passion
Then casts me off, a scrap
For the fugitive glow.

7. Pattern
If there were a meaning
If there were a color
If there were a day
Not the Monday mail
Not the Tuesday train
Not the Wednesday laundry
Not the Thursday meeting
Not the Friday nausea
Not the Saturday loneliness
Not the Sunday boredom.
How weary Sunday afternoon is...
If there were a face instead of a face,
A figure instead of a figure,
A lifetime instead of this lifetime,
A time instead of this time,
A sun instead of the sun,
An earth instead of the earth,
If there were an air that is really like air...
I am weary of that which is around me, weary of parts of myself, of my entire self.
I am weary of being a muse for poets, of the earth that is not up to me and of the sky.
I am weary of my colleague who backbites me, the street that molests me, of my brother who bothers me and never cares for me.
I am weary of my dwelling and of my time.
I am weary of weariness, and I am weary of myself,
I deny all conditions and am even weary of denial.
If there were a day, A color, A meaning...

8. Coronet
What does the wisdom of the body say?
“Loneliness is more pleasant than boredom,
Gentler than stone.”
That is why the eighth day is mine,
So that the letter may on that day impregnate me
And I give birth to twins,
So that death may on that day utter me
And I may heal...

*Translated from the Arabic*
Sleep frees me up.
It lets me stroll through locales, lairs, winds and wormwood, slips out between my eyelids and leaves as it came.
Subtle and malevolent.
I'm still short of wake, muttering dreams and muffled torments, grumbling as I ready to switch sides, when your thigh suddenly brushes my wall. It hisses gems, star-incrusted pebbles and horizons embroidered with tiny smiles and hopeless comings and goings.

You beam at me.

I assent, integrate the reverse side of my sails and select, graciously, the fate you've picked out for me.

Hiding night in my back pocket, I sit up on my axis, positioning myself in the angle of a diagonal ray.
I see the rising sun graze the walls.
It leaves a bittersweet aftertaste, rambles, invites me to wear one of life's new ages.

Now day breaks.

Like a rainbow veil that seems to gnaw at its knots to let candor shine through;
Like solitude, slaking its thirst with sharing at the idea of at last leaving its refuge;
Like the wish to go, as far as possible, vehement.
From blackout to ecstasy.

Feverishness I make mine, in the sky, on the ground. Even in depths of fresh or brackish water. I hear birds with painted feet chant the air with rapture, walls working open their cracks, storing reflections of a mirror. Cracked? No matter.

I follow trails, service roads, clamoring for lost pilgrims.
Returning from a long harshness
I catch myself happy
Between pillow and basin
I spot you
Half-siren
Half-camel

I mate with birds poised to die of exile.
Cruel, shameless, languid exile
Metallic exile
So stripped of their feathers by promises changing
Tone and face
That they live exiled in the very home of their birth.

I stick them to the cavernous opening we share
Saving a snug spot and sympathy
For other tormented souls
Other illegals
Other survivors
Others brooded over by time

... and hover we all over a cyclone foreshadowing finality
He resolves to conquer
Beginning with those close to him

Beatitude and wild laughter
Follow
Punctuating the euphoria of footsteps

Rarely do I happen to sleep like an angel.
I'm afraid I'll lose my harness as I flee. Possibly.
When I do, I keep my eyes wide open and smile as I count the occasional wolf,
mark the route of the rapacious, stare wide-eyed between two sniffs of the behind, then
bray with laughter at the sight of my mule teeth turned gazelle's.

At times, I bemoan my inability to master the melody of dried clay.
In glances.
So I set out, pond-hopping.
And on my way I find
The same crushed dog
The same uprooted poplar
The same fork-tailed shooting star
The same distant call of the alleged
The same deafness
The same malevolent grace
Parade
Whip
Rock salt
And opacity in spite of the divine
The same callus and the slope climbs
The same scissors stones forgetting
The same simulated handicap
Turned commerce
At each crossroad
On the corner of every street
The same life worth less than an onion
The same adulteration
The same drownings massacres
Depraved, grating winding mechanisms
The same bootlicking
The same navels of glistening pearls
The same oases circling garbage dumps

Translated from the French
Inaudible the sea
and pathetic the Islands of Eden
that my dreams painted green and pink
absolutely outside those slit open continents
where Arabic is buried.
I stopped counting my dead women
when they became blind
cleavaged bleeding in cities
or tanned corpses rolling with the sea
ebb and flow of pearly nudity
on stifling boulevards.
I am filled with sand and malice
pregnant with every imaginable fuel
that defies my conquerors
every anxious minute
I bring forth a witness
a milestone
a vein
to be set on the slightest back surge
of memory.

The sun sets as orphaned stars
light up,
equal to the night that possesses me
I give birth to painful struggles
knowing my centuries of infertility
and the gashes in my womb
and the panic of being
in the restlessness of shadows,
it won’t take much for me to open
my wounds to the wind
to seize my shuddering
and the complicity of moons
to unearth my dead women
give them a password
and a permit to settle
in my temblors
as in my voices
hoisted to the treetops
ever since the wind that bears me away
veers off
into another destiny.
That's when the vein storm hits
when all is tallied in bundles of bones
the word slips down into the fingernails
and teeth become taut necklaces
on clots of blood
round the necks of faceless dancers
torn to pieces
tearing at the veil and the grave
tearing at the night that tears at them
and is equal to the night
that tears at me.

I expect and am sure
of graves ruthlessly open
something stronger than Arabic
that buried me is buried
and imposes a new language on me.

My hand that I questioned
now stops where
my gaze begins
and questions me.
I embrace my truth beyond
its lines
beyond he who declared me
still-born.

My word has the tenure of the moon
and the moon is a knife
drawn over the aorta of time.

*Translated from the French*
Hallucination

I emerge from myself, like an exotic bird.
I absorb the strangeness of the place,
Drawing a sea with the bones of men.
White salt spills from their sockets,
Gulls soothe the emptiness of bridges in exile
And the wrinkles on the wan horizon.
How shall I find the exile of my bridges,
Wind-forest that I am, stirring up dust,
Discovering other suns, counting my mortal remains?
Smoke issues from my body,
My decadent flesh
Bestows its mysteries on the spirits,
Prepares the pallor of the night.
The ocean churns in my depths,
As do beginnings
And the lesion of names.
My trembling rises from this emptiness.
Confession resists me still.
My remains I conceal in dreams.
My path into the bush
Divides the face of the world
And the moon, encircled, drifts off to sleep,
Drops into the hollow of the heart.
I shall reconstruct the exploits of time.
On flesh shall I draw the ways into death.
Space is a glass of water I spike with salt,
When it ages I gulp it down,
I destroy it within me,
And we become eroded clouds,
Moon shards for vesperal pageants
Or nocturnal ports.

Translated from the Arabic by Said Anfoush and Guy Bennett
A Memory

I remember the place’s two candles
The invitation to say goodbye
The henna that hides its yellowness,
I remember
The moon as it fell
The palm trees hunched over the road
The dream meals of forgotten ash
In dusty corners.
I gather up the pallor of dreams
I remove it from the tops of my towers
As it comes to me
— Quaint specter — dying,
Like the tents of a wave
Its veils blackened by April.
Butterflies swarm in me
Plying their folly in the recesses of my memory.
My breast is the opening window
That draws the sky.
For my drowsiness
I burst, become wings of flight
And my hidden spots lilies,
Or waves that lull the night.
How many of my dead will I need
To enter your heaven?
That your seduction may reveal its mystery
I show stars to my sparkling
I conceal my cleft in mirrors
I observe your unveiling
I sow it with my clouds of ash
The place is a flower spike deprived of my shadow.
A tearing of sky
A tired falling of plants
And when emptiness sets in,
My blood will be the place.

Translated from the Arabic by the author and Gzy Bennett
1. HAPPINESS

Happy is he who gets through this night
without losing his own face
in the intense darkness.
Happy he who sleeps under the light thorn,
for his house will not be shaken by ghastly storms.
Happy he who calls a spade a spade
and is satisfied with sweet fragrance.
He dubs water a rainbow that crowns the mountains
with a thread of mist
and the wick of a lamp.
He walks the meadows and valleys of heaven
and considers them an extension
of unknown desert realms.
He hears the hum of the spine
emitted from mineral seas
that rise like mercury,
like a fireball.
Happy he who on his shoulders carries
the face with which he will find rest
on remote islands and beaches,
the face with which he will perceive the body and soul
that have not yet recovered from their fear of the sea,
trembling to the vibrations of the prow of the boat,
while the last star
still swells the sails
with a puff of blue light.
2. DOLPHINS WITHDRAWING

You were searching for something not considered cheap
that you might blend the echo and the elements.
One night
your thunder fell from the brink of dawn
and your day beached its boat on the sand
while dolphins gradually faded
into the cool horizon.
You were searching for roads unknown to caravans.
You journeyed through an eternally youthful time.
You hesitated between the horizon and the tribe
and were accused of violating rhetoric.

3. LIGHTLY OVER WITH SAND

You were searching for something not considered cheap
and the world would say to you:
Boy –
you’re free to savor the taste of soil
and call out to absent brethren,
call out, too, to the abyss connecting
the spring of passion to the bay of spume;
you are free to set fire to straw,
to follow the wisp of smoke,
and end your evening by covering yourself
lightly over with sand.

Translated from the Arabic
Cold Sun

Hassan Najmi

Evening yields
The wind goes vertical in the world’s slowness
Faces travel beyond the confines of the age
No need for turbans
The sun has risen far above our heads
And the poet is like a child wishing to catch the light.
He picks up whatever falls like stars
And the servant remains without a window

An other darkness
A man extinguished by night

Here, he can die free

Translated from the Arabic by Mohammed El Amraoui and Guy Bennett
from *Daybreak*

== *Mostafa Nissabouri*

*Come along; see the sun has touched the meridian and on the shore night is already covering Morocco with her foot.*

— DANTE

I

Daybreak
nothing like first light
for the apparition of these poorly stowed dunes that some vague retina brings forward without my knowledge flight path of final parabola sketch in feverish shriveled suns

it emerged from the daydreams that stir me here the foliage and its text an ornament that exhausts itself retention of sparrows on the delirious walls dead zones of other peripheries

nothing like first light extension of myself to the rhythm of passing clouds to the climax of night repudiated including the one I free myself of to gauge its trace my pale phalanxes have captured spots the body hallucinates in sunshine
Daybreak

as possible narration with concurrent flux
and wind on graves
that in a desert I imagine
conversion of the letter
to the elsewhere I saw
only because it is the stanza inverted to splash up
in spindrift and the hypothesis of its runaway climates

Yes it is an interiority resulting
from other even more inward interiorities
that gives over its share of mediation
to the reinforced tinge of daybreak
to the mountain its thickness
its poignant intimacy to the substance
of the text flashing
in starry density

though here a mountain is no longer a mountain
and it is good that it be a concretion of memory
it is indeed here that trees are
personifications of imploring mothers
that my own duration is elliptical
in its delusional raving framework
that shuddering in its instabilities
a landscape saturated with reflections
just breaking the surface of water and mixed with sky
is organized in shimmering scars

while the unreality of a language
is granted me and that permanently
through a flood of entropies images

I am aware
of an infinite reappropriation
a wandering perception
of an evolving whole

Translated from the French
Two Poems

= Abdel-Illah Salhi

Paris-Rabat Express

At the Hôtel Balima, in a 350-franc room
Love stumbled like an old Congressman out of arguments
There was some raisin bread, a lot of anguish
And an androgyne from the south
Willing to do anything
To buy her son a cellphone.

It was winter 1999, and everything was more or less in order
The dead were happy with the little they had
And in the depths of shantytowns
The rumor was making great strides
A new era was in full swing.

I played at taking inventory as I waited for a train,
Just wanted to catch up with this pitiful nostalgia
That was hanging in the air.
Beggars were getting pissed off for nothing,
Pimps were counting up their girls again
And cops were testing out a new jargon.

Two executives were betting noisily on a huge importation of industrial brioches to cover up the chaos and jumpstart advertising.

Their gold wedding bands gleamed aggressively, saddening the coed who pretended to read the paper while actually thinking how overweight she was.

The new millennium is upon us
Like a shipment of brand new road signs.
All we’ve got to do is invent the accidents that go with them.
Full-Time Arab

For Kaddour

When I woke up this morning I decided to get visible. I turned up The stereo. My neighbors can’t stand Raï. Old men and women who own their own apartments, their own dogs, their own bodies, stuck from childhood on bridges that never led them to their own souls.

I want class, Kaddour, Class Go on: break out in barrettes, sachets, whatever you like. You got the plus of surface and zigzag. Your ties to the real are clear.

I want to knock off holidays, Get muddled in the slightest promise, Create the first merguez-shaped being. Past thirty, it’s obvious, you don’t owe anyone anything

There’s little hope I’ll ever bump into love, We don’t have the same skin We don’t have the same schedules.

Translated from the French
In the Sky

I asked a passing cloud
how she grew grey
and senile so soon.
She murmured: Such is insanity—
troubles rob you of your
eyes and then command:
read the book you hold in your hand.
Insight

These thrones
mean not
prestige
and are not built
on gold.
They will crumble,
bringing down those
who sit on thrones
set upon water.
Then will roads be paved
for weary
vagabonds
and I shall drink the flood
from a glass and,
in a frenzy,
run in all directions of the universe,
singing like the wind.
Untitled

That’s a prince
with a wolf’s face.
And that’s a country
turned upside-down.
How can I penetrate
austere language?

Translated from the Arabic
Two Poems

Mubarak Wassat

The Dawn

Wounded comes the dawn,
having freed its wings
from the fetters of legend.
At that very moment,
joy ran red from our noses
which no longer recognized us.
We are not the only ones perplexed.
A Mission

The night has elected me
to extract honey from the planets
suspended over the heads of pretty girls.
This is why “I sleep only occasionally.”
Farid Belkahia
Since John Cage used an arcane verse form called *mesostic*, and since mesostics appear in the Norman O. Brown essay, I offer a description. *Mesos* means middle. A mesostic is a verse with a word or name running vertically through its middle. Cage, who wrote hundreds of them, described *mesostic* thusly: “what makes a mesostic as far as I’m concerned is that the first letter of a word or name (the one running vertically) is on the first line and following it on the first line the second letter of the word or name is *not* to be found. (The second letter is on the second line.)” For example:

*Song*¹ (for Jasper Johns)

*not Just*

*gArdener:*

*morelS,*

*coPrini,*

*morels,*

*copRini.*

*not Just hunter:*

*cutting dOwn*

*ailanthHuS,*

*cuttiNg down*

*ailanthuS*

Norman O. Brown’s “John Cage” is a combative essay by a Marxist/Freudian/Joycean/Classicist/visionary about a famously iconoclastic composer dedicated to the use of chance in art.

Both Brown (1913–2002) and Cage (1912–1992) loved language and the way it responds to print. A glance at Brown’s text confirms this. For example:

Broken heaventalk, poetic diction
that ocean
in which the Apollonian ship capsizes
that ocean is the crowd
get lost, in the crowd
Here Comes Everybody
Holiday Crowd Encounter
(Bakhtin
(Carnival

---

¹ Song is a type of poem or musical composition.
And Cage. Here is an excerpt from his *Writing for the Second Time through Finnegans Wake*, some 39 pages of mesostics on the name James Joyce. [Note the freefloating punctuation marks, liberated from the mesosticized *Wake* portion, and oriented in space by chance procedures. The marginal figures are source pages of the Viking Press edition of *Finnegans Wake*.]

[Introducing the Joyce mesostics, Cage wrote, “Due to N.O. Brown’s remark that syntax is the arrangement of the army, and Thoreau’s that when he heard a sentence he heard feet marching, I became devoted to nonsyntactical ‘demilitarized’ language.”]

Cage and Brown became friends in 1960 when Cage spent a year at the Center For Advanced Studies at Wesleyan University, where Brown was a Professor of Classics. Cage was famous for such pre-1950 works as *Sonatas and Interludes For Prepared Piano* and post-1950 compositions created with chance operations including 4'33", the notorious *Silent Sonata*. Brown had published *Life Against Death* in 1959 and was working on *Love’s Body*. The two men promptly connected and began an endless conversation exploring each other’s ideas and concerns. Later on (1977), Cage wrote *Sixty-one Mesostics Re and Not Re Norman O. Brown* which includes this:

```
no one knows how to converse But you. Is it because you do
so much Reading?
do you talk to yourself
While
writing
```

It was a friendship that prevailed. The friendship was tested, however, in 1988 when Brown delivered the *John Cage* piece at a Wesleyan symposium in honor of Cage’s 75th birthday. Brown had for years been disturbed by the idea that chance might indeed be a valid arbiter of reality. If that were true, then the deterministic beliefs on which he’d shaped his life and career were invalid, wrong. It’s as though Brown now tells himself that he must vanquish his admired friend, that champion of chance, John Cage: “I don’t think
it’s true that…”; “But it is not true that…”; “I never hesitated in rejecting chance…”; “John Cage…a living oxymoron…”

The audience heard the lecture as an accomplished celebration of an extraordinary man. But Cage winced. In conversations with John Cage published in her book *Musicage*, Joan Retallack records Cage saying in 1991, “I don’t have his friendship as I had it formerly,” and, “We were together at Wesleyan when there was a concentration on my work and he wrote that (lecture) which shows that I’m Apollonian rather than Dionysian. And for him, Dionysian is of the essence. So…that’s why he doesn’t want to be connected.”

It’s a pity that Cage did not live to see Brown’s coming to terms both with chance and the Apollonian/Dionysian question. Here are extracts from two late unpublished Brown essays:

...a palinode or recantation is in order... this old determinist from way back – Marxist, Freudian, Spinozist – now at this late date discovers chance; in 1992; having known John Cage’s chance operations since 1960. In 1992: limping, not flying. Limping, and late.5

...I began to see in the idea of chance the Dionysian alternative. The idea of chance, so much identified with John Cage; my friend since 1960; but I would not listen... In *Love’s Body*, chapter xii, it says “Nothing happens for the first time.” That is dead wrong: everything happens for the first time. That is the meaning of chance; it contradicts both the Christian idea of eternity and the Nietzschean idea of eternal recurrence.6

In recanting, Brown deprecates his “John Cage” essay as “a noisy Dionysian protest.” Well, maybe. But reading the essay puts one in touch with a massive and massively informed intellect singing possibilities of life and language under the guidance of a superb ear. How rare to find Apollo and Dionysus touching base with the farced epistle to the hibrws.

— RICHARD K. WINSLOW
March 30, 2005

NOTES

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
A Lecture by Norman O. Brown

AT WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, FEBRUARY 22-7, 1988
With all due honor and gratitude to the genial spirit of Neely Bruce and the fresh young folk his fellow-workers

The only true begetter of this occasion is Richard Winslow Professor of Music all the time that I remember who, in the 1950s, in the deep sleep of the Eisenhower era, had the wit to see that music at Wesleyan could be different and took steps to introduce new wine into this old bottle.

John Cage tells the story how his mother, on being informed that Wesleyan University had invited him to their Center for the Humanities, asked, Did they know you were a Zen Buddhist?

They didn’t know anything.

The rest is history

Which is hard to tell.

Not wanting to speak about John Cage
my nightmare last December:

I was bringing bouquets of flowers to John Cage in the midst of a vast audience, students writing earnest essays of appreciation; I was rifling desperately through pages of unmanageable notes, undigested bits and pieces, facing the last minute necessity for extemporaneous speech and knowing it was beyond my powers; waking up from the nightmare thinking of Morton Feldman’s story:

I was walking up to see if John was at home. I met Richard Lippold the sculptor who was living next door to John. He just looked at me and said, I’m moving. I have to get out of here. John is just too persuasive.

That isn’t the right reaction, either.
It’s too late to run away.
I have to stand and face, or fight

I don’t think it is true that nothing is accomplished by listening to a piece of music.
The events of this week will bear me out.
Our ears will be in much better condition.
Music is movement
a dialectical confrontation with the course of time

The origin of civilization
How to Start a New Civilization

With this lyre Orpheus, Amphion, founded the humanity of Greece

a tale of stem or stone
to move these hearts of stone

We must fetch it from the stones of Deucalion and Pyrrha, from the rocks
of Amphion, from the hard oak of Vergil.

Obliterating the distinction between sounds and things and people
to get things moving
All lives, all dances, & all is loud.

Let’s not quibble about emotions
the thing is to keep moving
not without emotion

The power to move
the making of music is inevitably, will he nill he, an exercise of power
to move these stones

Like Stefan Wolpe’s *Battle Piece*
it makes you tremble; it overwhelms you with its power
or John Cage’s *Atlas Borealis with the Ten Thunderclaps*
hearing it will be more like going to a storm than like going to a concert.

Amphion, or the Pied Piper
a different drummer
will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you, come a join the dance

To remould people to their very souls, revolutionize their thinking

I will destroy the existing order of things, which parts this one mankind into
hostile nations, into powerful and weak, privileged and outcast, rich and
poor; for it makes unhappy men of all. I will destroy the order of things
that turns millions into slaves of a few, and these few into slaves of their own
might, own riches. I will destroy this order of things, that cuts enjoyment
off from labor.
That's Wagner, in 1848
the same year as the *Communist Manifesto*
and in *A Year from Monday*:
Our proper work now if we love mankind and the world we live in is revolution.

Can we hear the crisis of society in the crisis of music
Cage’s music, socially sensitive seismograph in the tradition
of Beethoven and Schoenberg
Beethoven and the French Revolution, Schoenberg
and the Golden Calf

Harmony, the repressive principle of the real
for the past century in a process of disintegration
we strip off the decent drapery of Western Civilization
and discover Noise.

Cage’s music is prophetic, and it is not saying that every day is a beautiful day –

Have you here? (Some ha) Have we where? (Some hant) Have you hered? (Others do) Have we whered? (Others dont) It’s cumming, it’s brumming!
The clip, the clop! (All cla) Glass crash. The (klikkaklakkaklaskaklopatz-kletschabatcreppycrottygraddaghsemimhsammihnouithappluddyapлад-dypkonpkot!).

It is not true that noises escape power
noises, not an extension of the palette of sounds available for aesthetic appreciation
noise is the primordial violence out of which civilization is made
the original thunder, as in *Finnegans Wake*.

Civilization originates in thunder
Hexagram 16. Yü/Enthusiasm
Thunder comes resounding out of the earth:
The image of *ENTHUSIASM*.
Thus the ancient kings made music.

The image of enthusiasm
the name of the god is Dionysus

To Greet the Return of the Gods
Dionysus is Noisy
the Greek word is *Bromios*, from the same root as *Bronte*, meaning thunder
It’s cumming, it’s brumming!
HCE is that Brontoichthyan form
Yoh! Brontolone slaaps, yoh snoores. Upon Benn Heather

Noise is violence
never more so than in a John Cage concert, violating our ears
our ears are not now in excellent condition

Noise is noisome, nuisance; nauseous, noxious; Italian *noxa* meaning dung;
noise pollution

The pollution that purifies
our ears are now in excellent condition
something is accomplished by hearing John Cage’s music

Listening to noise is a little like being killed.
Naturally, we don’t set out to kill ourselves.
We do not mean to, but we do.
Some one is always getting killed
Civilization is an altar on which a sacrifice is being made

As in *Finnegans Wake*
What we are learning is how to be convivial
But, “Where Are We Eating? and What Are We Eating?”

Grampupus is fallen down but grinny sprids the boord. Whase on the
joint of a desh? Finfoefom the Fush. Whase be his baken head? A loaf of
Singpantry’s Kennedy bread.

Yes, that’s Senator Kennedy. It happens again and again.

Conviviality is Eucharistic, and
Eucharist is cannibalistic.

Volhardt and Jensen have shown this very clearly; the killing and devouring
of sows at festivals, eating the first fruits when tubers are harvested, are an
eating of the divine body, exactly as it is eaten at cannibal feasts.

*Violence and the Sacred*
For the vegetable world to continue man must kill and be killed.
Violence is vital, is life itself
The name of the god is Dionysus
The violence of history
Dionysos in Amerika
the violence of history in which John Cage has been an actor
“The History of Experimental Music in the United States”:

“Why, if everything is possible, do we concern ourselves with history (in other words with a sense of what is necessary to be done at a particular time?”)
And I would answer, “In order to thicken the plot.” In this view, then, all those interpenetrations which seem at first glance to be hellish – history, for instance, if we are speaking of experimental music – are to be espoused. One does not make just any experiment but does what must be done. By this I mean one does not seek by his actions to arrive at money but does what must be done; one does not seek by his actions to arrive at fame (success) but does what must be done; one does not seek by his actions to provide pleasure to the senses (beauty) but does what must be done; one does not seek by his actions to arrive at the establishing of a school (truth) but does what must be done. One does something else.

S, 68

We do what the times require
we do that untimely thing, something else, that is necessary in order to renew the times
to get things moving

We live in historical time: the process is history
we submit to the yoke of historical necessity
It is by reason of this fact that we are made perfect by what happens to us rather than by what we do
(Meister Eckhart quoted in Silence)

S, 64

We suffer history

Pound, 425

The enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant’s bent shoulders

We submit to the yoke of historical necessity
madness follows, another throw of the dice
our lives are historical wagers

What must be done has nothing to do with improving the world, or making life a success for everybody
It is space and emptiness that is finally urgently necessary at this point of history

S, 70

This nihilism is not ours to say how much
Dionysus, the god of exuberant vitality, is also the god of death.
All those interpenetrations which seem at first glance to be hellish are to be espoused.
Cage quotes Sri Ramakrishna, "Why, if God is good, is there evil in the world? In order to thicken the plot."

But we are not God
nor is God writing fiction for our entertainment
or for his own entertainment
as in King Lear, or Homer’s Iliad:
As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport.

There is no spectator, or artist, or aesthete, God
there is only the suffering god
Dionysus
the identity of the God, the victim, and the priest
the process is all one (sacrificial) fire
in one body
in which we are all expendable, combustible material.

At the end of “The History of Experimental Music in the United States”
Cage for the first and last time writes a vision of the historical process as in one body:

History is the story of original actions....That one sees that the human race
is one person (all of its members parts of the same body, brothers – not in competition any more than hand is in competition with eye) enables him
to see that originality is necessary, for there is no need for eye to do what hand so well does. In this way, the past and the present are to be observed and each person makes what he alone must make, bringing for the whole of human society into existence a historical fact, and then, on and on, in continuum and discontinuum.

That was Cage in 1959.
Cage quotes Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki as saying of a certain monk who figured in the history of Chinese Buddhism, “He lived in the ninth or the tenth century.” He added, after a pause, “Or the eleventh century, or the twelfth or thirteenth century or the fourteenth.”

This is Zen Buddhism as a screen of indifference to temporality and history.
But Cage in 1959 is not the same as Cage in 1974.
Happenings are in history
In the later Cage, “The Future of Music” (1974), there is a cure for tragedy.
we know all we need to know about Oedipus, Prometheus, Hamlet
what we are learning are the pleasures of conviviality
the text ends with the word “cheerful.”
The minds and spirits of people are changing. The change is not disruptive.
It is cheerful.

Not disruptive but cheerful.
That is to say, not Dionysian but Apollonian.

What comes after tragedy?
In Buddhism the idea of tragedy doesn’t really exist. In order to have tragedy
you have to have a separation of gods and man. Whereas the world can only
be viewed as comedy when you see gods and men as being together.

Cage knows that after tragedy comes Finnegans Wake.
But Finnegans Wake is not a comedy, it is a farce
his farced epistol to the hibruws.

History is not a bourgeois comedy with a happy ending. It is something
more sinister, a farce.
That most enlightened moment in Karl Marx, the opening of The Eighteenth
Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte: “Hegel says somewhere that, upon the stage of
universal history, all great events and personalities reappear in one fashion or
another. He forgot to add that on the first occasion, they appear as tragedy;
on the second, farce.”

Two bloody Irishmen in a bloody fight over bloody nothing.
Farce is nihilism.
We are slowly getting nowhere and it is a farce.
In Nowhere has yet the Whole World taken part of himself for his
Wife;
By Nowhere have Poorparents been sentenced to Worms, Blood and
Thunder for Life

An interlude of farce or fooling
in the ginnandgo gap between antediluvius and annadominant
Saturnalia, season of unbridled license
interludes of impromptu buffoonery interpolated by the actors in the liturgy
or sacred dramas
Carnival, or Feast of Fools
jest jibberweek’s joke.
Even the Mass was burlesqued
Sometimes an ass was brought into the Church; solemn Mass was punctuated with brays and howls, the priest braying three times and the congregation responding.

Noise is king
or Carnival is King
a Roaratorio
or Donnybrook fair

Louis Mink’s Finnegans Wake Gazetteer: This fair, held in August every year from 1204 to 1855, was noted for its bacchanalian orgies and lighthearted rioting. The village was a mile and a half southeast of Dublin, and is now one of its suburbs.

Donnybrook fair; or Donnerbruch Fire; or Donkeybrook Fear

Convivial joviality becomes the shoutmost shoviality; and then the eatmost boviality.
The beast has got to get into the act

Finnegans Wake is a farce or satyr play
after tragedy comes the satyr play
we go back to the original Dionysian goat-song out of which both tragedy and comedy arose
prehistoric horse-play
Tragoedia = goat-song
Finnegans Wake, that tragoady thundersday
that fishabed ghoatstory
HCE is Hircus Civis Eblanensis, old goat citizen of Dublin
Giles Goat-Boy is his American offspring

got by the one goat, suckled by the same nanna, one twitch, one nature makes us oldworld kin.

Nietzsche: What does that synthesis of god and in the satyr mean? I estimate the value of human beings, or races, according to the necessity with which they cannot conceive of the god apart from the satyr.

Superman has got to be subhuman.

When they brought the ass into Church, they sang the Magnificat, Mary’s response to the Annunciation:
My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.
Perhaps the final conflict will be as it was in the beginning
the battle between Carnival and Lent
a confrontation between rational regimentation from above, and spontaneous movement from below

Carnival and Lent
or Nietzsche's last word: Dionysus versus Christ.

As the masters of illusion intensify their nightly show on TV
With futurist onehorse balletbattle pictures and the Pageant of Past History worked up with animal variations amid everglaning mangrovemazes and beorbtracktors by Messrs Thud and Blunder. Shadows by the film folk, masses by the good people.
Dionysus will inspire their Satanic opposites
everything must be done in reverse order
to lead from disguised to patent nonsense

Ritual clowns in primitive religion
masters of shocking stunts, reverse behavior, and backwards speech
the inversion and retrograde forms Cage celebrates in "Composition in Retrospect," 1981
I need not remind you what God spells backwards

Something of the 60s will reappear
Abbie Hoffman clowning
Ken Kesey clowning
of these the most original was John Cage

Dionysus in Amerika
jamborees for the electronic soul
Hip champoureec! HipHip champoureec!
The wild man from Borneo has just come to town
One stands, given a grain of goodwill, a fair chance of actually seeing the whirling dervish, Tumult, son of Thunder.

Not disruptive. Cheerful.
Not Dionysian. Apollonian.
I can’t improve on Nietzsche.

John Cage said in 1979 that from the late 40s he has steadfastly maintained that the purpose of music is to sober and quiet the mind, thus making it susceptible to divine influences.
Sobriety and quietness, the essence of Apollonian discipline; the opposite of Dionysian drunkenness.

Discipline, a reiterated vertebral word in Cage’s mesostic “Composition in Retrospect.”

Nietzsche says the word Dionysian means the urge to unity, a reaching out beyond personality, a passionate-painful overflowing: the great pantheistic principle of solidarity and sharing; the eternal will to procreation, fertility, recurrence; the assertion of the necessary unity of creation and destruction.

WP, #1050

Apollonian means the urge to perfect the separate life of the individual, to compensate for the pain of separate individuality with the seductive pleasures of aesthetic enjoyment.

There is the Dionysian energy to change the world, creative destruction, and there is the Apollonian consciousness haunted by the question, Is Life worth Living,

– Thoreau, Cage says, did have a question: Is life worth living? – and finding in aesthetic enjoyment reasons to give an affirmative and cheerful answer.

We open our eyes and ears seeing life each day excellent as it is.

EW, 3

John Cage’s sunny disposition is the mark of the natural-born Apollonian

Apollo is the shining one, the god of light

his eye must be sun-like, Nietzsche says, the pure undimmed eye of day.

BT, 954, 978

Apollo is the god of boundaries, of definitions, of separations, of clear and distinct ideas.

I tend to separate things, says John,

“We wondered if you could talk a little about food, perhaps in the bigger sense.”

When you say food in the bigger sense, I think of Nobby’s beautiful book Love’s Body. It has to do with the body and of course with all these things like eating, the functions of the body being like the functions of society. So he thinks of reading, and reading is like eating too. All the sense perceptions. It gets very very mixed up between what you would call spiritual and physical so that it’s all one thing. I tend to…I think this is the influence of Indian thought on me…but I tend to separate things, so that I would prefer to cross the street successfully rather than thinking of it as some form of eating. I like to look at each situation as having its own characteristics, and acting appropriately to each, rather than going in this way which I think comes from the Germans, the idea that everything is one thing.

TGGIS, 16
This is that hearty Zen Buddhist wisdom which says when farting fart, there’s nothing to it; forget the paradoxes of the Freudian Unconscious forget the puns in *Finnegans Wake*.

But it’s not true that men are men and mountains are mountains riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environ, HCE, man-mountain

Men are not men, as any feminist can tell you in *Finnegans Wake*, the first riddle of the universe: asking, when is a man not a man?

We go with *Finnegans Wake* rather than Suzuki.

In that Dionysian body in which we are all members of one body things are necessarily confused ordinary language is always wrong we do not want to recover our sanity

What a mnice old mnness it all mnakes!

It is not true that each thing is itself and not another thing It is not true that sounds are sounds and people are people All lives, all dances, & all is loud.

Chance operations are an Apollonian procedure a perfectly sober procedure the Apollonian “I” remains in control “I ask the questions”

In “Composition in Retrospect” (1981), a mesostic rosary of guiding principles
The principle underlying all of the solutions acts
As a composer
I should give up making choices
Devote myself to asking questions
Chance determined answers'll open my mind to world around

The Apollonian, says Nietzsche, in the midst of the dance remain what they are and retain their civic name
Just as in a stormy sea, unbounded in every direction, rising and falling with howling mountainous waves, a sailor sits in a boat and trusts in his frail barque.

And the results of chance operations are univocal and unambiguous, not polysemous speaking with tongues as in *Finnegans Wake*.

To ensure indeterminacy with respect to its performance, a composition must be determinate of itself. If this indeterminacy is to have a non-dualistic nature, each element of the notation must have a single interpretation rather than a plurality of interpretations.

Everything is taken literally, even silence

Instead of symbolism – in a Symbol there is concealment and yet revelation: here therefore, by Silence and by Speech acting together, comes a double significance –

Writing for the Fifth Time through *Finnegans Wake*
getting rid of the syntax
getting rid of the cadence
getting rid of the puns
Getting rid of all those other voices
Really it is not I who am writing this crazy book. It is you, and you, and you, and that man over there, and that girl at the next table.
All those other voices speaking as one voice
in Pentecostal confusion.

Chance operations avoid real uncertainty
the negative capability of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, and darkness

The results of chance operations are always impeccable: the experiment cannot fail
no choice no error no blame

I’d rather be wrong

Many years ago John Cage offered me chance operations as a solution to my hesitation to publish

I stammered broken heaven-talk in the class-room
To Greet the Return of the Gods
How to Start a New Civilization

But the fragments would not arrange themselves onto a publishable page.
I never hesitated in rejecting chance operations
I am trying to understand why

Chance operations get rid of the hesitation
HCE, hesitancy is his middle name
he stutters fore he falls

civilization originates in stuttering
Bygmaster Finnegan of the Stuttering Hand
(Balbus babbles, Balbus builder of the Tower of Babel)

things are necessarily confused
we necessarily stammer
half a sylb, helf a solb, holf a salb onward

Broken heaventalk, poetic diction
that ocean
in which the Apollonian ship capsizes
that ocean is the crowd
get lost, in the crowd
Here Comes Everybody
Holiday Crowd Encounter
(Bakhtin
(Carnival

that ocean is language
the voice of a great multitude
as the voice of many waters
the waters of, hitherandthithering waters of. Night!

The Apollonian discomfort with the crowd:

There is the possibility when people are crowded together that they will act
like sheep rather than nobly. That is why separation in space is spoken of as
facilitating independent action on the part of each performer.

The Apollonian principle of separation
Cage’s trouble with the orchestra
I advised them not to listen to each other, and asked each one to play as a
soloist, as if he were the only one in the world.

The Apollonian ideal of nobility:
I must find a way to let people be free without their becoming foolish. So
that their freedom will make them noble. How will I do this? That is the
question.

That is not the question in Finnegans Wake.
Finnegans Wake, that farced epistle to the highbrows, is directing us to rejoin
the human race; to the vulgar, the vernacular, the crowd; all the hoolivans
of the nation.

The anarchist dream of the noble individual

But besides Thoreau there is also Whitman
who is a simple separate person
but who is also able to utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.
Dionysus is a mass phenomenon.
The Apollonian refusal of the Dionysian rabble:
Not trying to put his emotions into someone else. That way you “rouse
rabbles”; it seems on the surface humane, but it animalizes, and we’re not
doing it.
The rabble, the revel, the rebel
crowd psychology, mass psychology, is Dionysian psychology
Canetti says: Suddenly it is as though everything were happening in one
and the same body.

The mass-line of Chairman Mao will live again
it is as inevitable as mass-production.

John Cage an extreme case of the artist, suffering the contradiction between
Dionysian and Apollonian tendencies
a living oxymoron

The extraordina contradiction between this work and the world around
us
the unresolved dualism in the world around us between the need for
organization (Buckminster Fuller) and the need for freedom (Thoreau)
the same unresolved dualism inside the work of art:

The function of a piece of music is to bring into co-being elements paradoxical by nature, to bring into one situation elements that can be and ought to be agreed upon – that is, Law elements – together with elements that cannot and ought not to be agreed upon – that is, Freedom elements.

The contradiction aggravated by his own awareness of the inadequacy of
dualistic thinking:
We open our eyes and ears seeing life each day excellent as it is. Having this realization we gather our energies in order to make this intolerable world endurable.

Acceptance of whatever
must
be complemented
by the refusal
of everything
that's
intolerable
revolution can
never
stop

Leaving an ambiguous message:
Everything dissonant, I hear as consonant.
Making this intolerable world endurable.

Zen Buddhism can become the theory and practice of joyful consumerism:
just an open ear and an open mind and the enjoyment of daily noises.
And Satie’s furniture music can be hard to distinguish from Muzak:

Nevertheless, we must bring about a music which is like furniture – a music, that is, which will be part of the noises of the environment, will take them into consideration. I think of it as melodious, softening the noises of the knives and forks, not dominating them, not imposing itself. It would fill up those heavy silences that sometimes fall between friends dining together. It would spare them the trouble of paying attention to their own banal remarks. And at the same time it would neutralize the street noises which so indiscreetly enter into the play of conversation. To make such music would be to respond to a need.

A living oxymoron, obstinately reasserting both sides of an unresolved argument, is not yet a dialectical fusion or coincidence of opposites

The fusion of opposites is that “antithetical sense of primal words” which Freud discovered in dreams; which refutes the Apollonian laws of logic and language; which becomes the act of faith on which the absurd language of Finnegans Wake is founded.

It is the Dionysian or drunken or mystic wisdom of Meister Eckhart or of Heraclitus; the Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Dionysus is the coincidence of opposites
Thunder and Silence
Life and Death
Eros (Love) and Eris (Strife)

And paradoxically, as Nietzsche showed by his whole life,
The synthesis of those opposites Apollonian and Dionysian is itself Dionysian

Dionysus has returned to his native Thebes
it is too late for Apollonian art or Doric discipline

Dionysus is all fire
not Apollonian light but Dionysian fire
not purified by Buddhistic extinction of desire
but Thunder of Thought and flames of fierce desire

Canetti has fire as the prime symbol of the crowd

Nature is a Heraclitean Fire, vulcanic, violent
this world is now, was in the beginning, and ever shall be, ever-living fire
The historical process, the Last Judgement, the great, the everlasting bonfire in which we are all consumed, all the time

Love is all fire
beyond the Apollonian principle of devotion reaffirmed in Cage’s beautiful mesostics, “Composition in Retrospect.”

Devotion based on discipline
(If the mind is disciplined, the heart turns quickly from fear to love) keeps the Apollonian cool
in the midst of the dance he remains himself and retains his civic name.
Love is all fire
and so heaven and hell are the same place.

John Cage knows about fire
never underestimate John Cage.

The 1974 lecture on “The Future of Music,” that lecture which discards tragedy in favor of the pleasures of conviviality, ends like this:

I want to tell the story of Thoreau and his setting fire to the woods. I think it is relevant to the practice of music in the present world situation, and it may suggest actions to be taken as we move into the future.

First of all, he didn’t mean to set the fire. (He was broiling fish he had caught.) Once it was beyond his control, he ran over two miles unsuccessfully for help. Since there was nothing he could do alone he walked to Fair Haven Cliff, climbed to the highest rock, and sat down upon it to observe the progress of the flames. It was a glorious spectacle and he was the only one there to see it. From that height he heard bells in the sounding alarm. Until then he had felt guilty, but knowing that help was coming his attitude changed. He said to himself: “Who are these men who are said to be the owners of these woods, and how am I related to them? I have set fire to the forest, but I have done nothing wrong therein, and it is as if the lightning had done it. These flames are but consuming their natural food.”

When the townsmen arrived to fight the fire, Thoreau joined them. It took several hours to subdue the flames. Over one hundred acres were burned. Thoreau noticed that the villagers were generally elated, thankful for the opporunity that had given them so much sport. The only unhappy ones were those whose property had been destroyed.

Subsequently, Thoreau met a fellow who was poor, miserable, often drunk, worthless (a burden to society). However, more than any other, this fellow was skillful in the burning of brush. Observing his methods and adding his own insights, Thoreau set down a procedure for successfully fighting fires.
He also listened to the music a fire makes, roaring and crackling: “You sometimes hear it on a small scale in the log on the hearth.”

Having heard the music fire makes and having discussed his firefighting method with one of his friends, Thoreau went further: suggesting that along with firemen there be a band of musicians playing instruments to revive the energies of weary firemen and to cheer up those who were not yet exhausted.

Finally he said that fire is not only disadvantage. “It is without doubt an advantage on the whole. It sweeps and ventilates the forest floor, and makes it clear and clean. It is nature’s broom...Thus, in the course of two or three years new huckleberry fields are created for birds and for men.”

It was a glorious spectacle.

O Sages standing in God’s holy fire  
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,  
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,  
And be the singing-masters of my soul.  

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

And there in the midst of the burning fiery furnace they began to sing

Benedictus

Botte alle schalle be wele, and alle maner of thynge schalle be wele.  
Which being interpreted is

Nichi nich kore ko nich  
(the only Japanese I know: I learnt it of course from John Cage)

Day Day Beautiful Day  
Every day is a beautiful day.

And the fire and the rose are one.

Strange company in the fire:

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.
Sing a Song of Sixpence,
A bag full of Rye,
Four and twenty
Naughty boys,
Bak’d in a Pye.

When the pie was opened,
The birds began to sing;
Was not that a dainty dish,
To set before the king?

A diller, a dollar, poor twelve o’clock scholar,
I give you the authoritative version in *The Annotated Mother Goose*.

The footnote says:
Later, “Four and twenty blackbirds.”

***********

The citations from John Cage:

FTB=*For The Birds* (Boston: M. Boyars, 1981)
R=*Roaratorio* (Königstein: Athenäum, 1982)
YFM=*A Year From Monday* (Middletown: Wesleyan U. Press, 1967)
X=*X* (Middletown: Wesleyan U. Press, 1983)


Other Texts:

ΦBK=N.O. Brown, Phi Beta Kappa Oration, Columbia U.


WB. Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium”
T.S. Eliot, “Little Gidding,” *Four Quartets*
Art Against the State; Or, What I Lived For

Elizabeth Willis

What is it to be cheerful in the face of history? What is history’s face? What does it mean, humanly, to look into it?

For me, John Cage’s work has the simplicity and satisfaction of cleaning up, a timeless act of ritual attention. His work is a form of loving even the random facts of existence – as rereading a poem is a way of loving it, an act repaid by the poem’s sudden fanning out of unseen meanings, a dance of the intellect or moveable feast. The pressure of imagination leaving its imprint on the world, invisibly, repeatedly – whether as a manifestation of Cagean silence or meteoric Brownian impact.

How is this imprint felt? The artist votes with acts of attention, attention driven by the pleasures of intellectual and artistic discovery. What is a more “beautiful” undoing of disciplinary boundaries than Brown’s voracious Dionysian eye in love with Cage’s cheerful Apollonian ear?

At times, another’s words seem to gather the energy one is unable to gather for oneself. “We gather our energies in order to make this intolerable world endurable.” Such a sentence signals the relief in understanding that the battles we fight individually may be nonetheless shared. With the political right collecting its energies – its “natural” and ideological resources – in plain sight, Brown’s distinctly American outrageousness is an anodyne of grassroots intellectual power. It is deeply rooted in a thinking through of collective experience, a performance of imagination in battle with imperialism of many kinds. It concentrates, or gathers, “our energies.” It stands up against the noisemakers of the Reaganomic axis on which even the new century continues to turn.

In 1988, when Norman O. Brown delivered his talk on Cage at Wesleyan, George Bush, Sr., was in the throes of his read-my-lips campaign. Had the electorate gone deaf? Was this something Silence could cure? In Bush’s attacks against Michael Dukakis and Willie Horton, America was being taught a lesson about corporate power, about crime and punishment. I was a graduate student at SUNY Buffalo who wanted everything to be “anti-didactic.” I wanted texts to mean many things but for their ultimate meaning to be indeterminate. And yet, what appealed to me most about both Norman O. Brown, whose books I had dog-eared, and Cage, whose work I was just beginning to read, was precisely the certainty and conviction of their statements. These were figures who seemed to suggest a new life for didacticism, a new life for literary and literary-critical form itself. Like Robert Creeley, who had kept the Black Mountain ethos alive at Buffalo, they seemed to propose that “higher learning” was simply an extension of
the kinds of knowing that might be encountered through observation and apprenticeship in the world at large. Both Brown and Cage sustained my fascination in remarkably similar ways, mainly in the unspoken premise behind their work, that life was being performed, by us, and that the question of how to perform it was inseparable from other daily questions. Daily life was composition: how to live, what to do.

A few weeks after Brown’s talk at Wesleyan, John Cage visited Buffalo to talk about silence and anarchy and to read from the phonebook in the Music building. Alone on the stage, Cage was unfazed as his audience steadily dispersed. Choices created real-time patterns, and even acts of refusal could create a kind of art, a performance of the moment. The event was mesmerizing and, in unexpected ways, moving. If connectedness had been bought out by corporate telecommunications – it was certainly being exploited in their reach-out-and-touch-someone ad campaigns – what was interesting was its form, the thing that had been there all along and would continue to be there in the ancient beauty of the catalog, just one thing after another, a life of parataxis, each of us a five-second presence called into being, momentarily located. If one paid attention to the aesthetic depth of such an ordinary and familiar act as looking up a number, would life not be unimaginably rich? Rather than seeming impoverished by the daily tasks of living, could the simple act of paying attention to them buy them back, bring them back to the realm of art?

The wildly expressionist Brown shared with the quietly procedural Cage a vision of art as elemental rather than ornamental – as lived experience, as method, as process and reality. When I have fears that I may cease to be, and when in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes, and when everything is the war, and the only war is the war against the imagination, I find in Brown’s declarative, monumental address not so much solace as fuel for the Heraclitean fire, the Thoreauvian fire, the fiery furnace of biblical legend, the cataclysmic power within everyday acts of attention and resistance. Brown called it apocalypse and/or metamorphosis. Cage said: “There’s nothing we really need to do that isn’t dangerous.” What Brown and Cage shared, and what continues to make their didacticism useful is the turn of attention from where we’re going to how we’re going to get there. Such attention is the only thing that seems to make cheerfulness possible again, regardless of the ways the end is being written around us.
NOTES

Men Against the State; James J. Martin
what I lived for: Henry David Thoreau
dance of the intellect: Ezra Pound, Marjorie Perloff
moveable feast: Ernest Hemingway
the pressure of imagination: see Wallace Stevens
“cheerful,” Apollonian: Brown on Cage
we gather our energies in order to make this intolerable world endurable:
    Brown on Cage
how to live, what to do: Wallace Stevens, Adelaide Morris
read my lips: Clint Eastwood, George Bush
Silence. John Cage
reach out and touch someone: AT&T
Process and Reality: Alfred North Whitehead
when I have fears that I may cease to be: John Keats
when in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes: William Shakespeare
everything is the war: see William Carlos Williams
the only war is the war against the imagination: Diane Di Prima
Thoreauvian fires, fiery furnace: see Brown on Cage
Apocalypse And/Or Metamorphosis: Norman O. Brown
there’s nothing that we really need to do that isn’t dangerous: John Cage
I Have Nothing to Say and I Am Saying It: Three Performances for John Cage

Craig Watson

I have nothing to say and I am saying it
The performance requires an audience. The audience is gathered from the public. Anyone can come if they pay. They pay the owners of the room. To be a member is to be in the audience. Members usually travel in groups. They sit in front of the stage. The room is mostly dark. The audience is not allowed to talk. The audience is not told what to say. They may be told how to feel. The audience understands what is real. They may freely leave. They do not perform.
there's always a chance
where you will
will lead to
that the next sound
you can tell
you neve know
at the wrong time
the wrong thing
get it right
METHOD
MEANS
CONTROL
March 10, 2005

Diane Ward

for Steve Benson

Are all answers answers to all questions?
As Ball, it scores, and everybody breaks out the high-fives until

Am I still moving not without emotion?
Who contends that multimillion-juries run amok, dollars settle

Is this more like going to a storm than like going to a concert?
Used Flash Flood night-sound, budget-sound cuts domestic spending, Haiti-sound

Is this the remould here, now?
All fours on the streets underscored just how much all the old knowledge

Will you choose sides (order) or destroy the order (but not the 'sides')?
Great classes of millennial stock, what were you doing when the market existed

Will you rejoin labor’s slaves, destroy riches’ enslavement of the unhappy?
Of All. On Your. Own. Part of basic travel through the domestic within

Will our work be love, to live in this revolution?
Out of your element, then military life is doubly unfair, the sacrifices three

Is harmony the repressive illusion of the real?
Not you! Phrase: A larger proportion of the population than any other nation-groups

Didn’t I say every day, not every beautiful day?
From the “Beginning” edging away from the dollar, data showed I knew it limited

Is the image of enthusiasm a name, or a movement?
Words in the context of political protest only does group occasionally

Do you like Noisy Dionysus?
Uninflected Pain: Public Rapper and our former protégé call home
Can we do what the times require?
Et cetera AND violent video games AND other entertainment directed at you

Will we get things moving?
Extract money as if congress pimped a transportation bill stuffed under

Do we hold our breaths for another throw of the dice, our lives as historical wages?
Words, say students, are often annoyed he does not let let let

Did the interpenetrations that you hold dear seem hellish at first?
No Muscleman Guidance has helped bring down a new generation of bosses

Is personification gone now that the gods kill for sport – like wanton boys swat flies?
I is crumbled amid intransigence of the day’s developments – sidelined parts of one’s

Do we feel the parts of Our Body, the whole (p)Art of Earth, in a combustible, sacrificial process?
Oppenheimer quotes “…the Mighty One…I am become Death, the Shatterer of Worlds.” terrible, terrible teachers

Should we be watching out for hand (quicker than) in competition with the eye?
Yet-Again Plan has pressed persistent anxiety, widespread and alone among us

Could we be more careful of Zen Buddhism’s screen of fuzzy temporality?
You could be a few of the really immense ones astronomers say seem to be

Could the cure be an answer to, not a silencing of, tragedy’s question?
He was inventing awareness of how they corporate-account the scholars

Is change a cheerful spirit?
Invented the laser-like and added another and added most

Do we have to know what comes after tragedy to think beyond it?
Oh Strategy, vowing to overcome the obstacle-environments groups have enter

Is tragedy simply separation?
Be burdened by a poor public barely managed to displace the image
Did Marx leave some space on the wheel after the second occasion’s placeholder, farce?
Truth testimony was coached into him two years

Does it seem we’re getting nowhere as farce quickens?
Hearing 51 death rows, yesterday has withdrawn from us

[Do supermen encompass subhuman?]
She is a network of yesterdays asserting she would not be each, without

Are we disruptive or cheerful?
Closing Exhortation Brought Him Such Ridicule!

Is the purpose of music to sober and quiet the mind, prepare it for divine influences?
Be prepared for considerable political power behind the cause that barely registers its name

Does it mean the urge to unity, beyond personality, passionate-painful overflowing, solidarity and sharing, creation and destruction?
Both Forces quit under pressure by opponents of occupation

Does it mean the urge to compensate for the pain of separate individuality with the seductive pleasure of aesthetic enjoyment?
Of Him in office (smile down) said most supported him as His effort

Do we open our eyes and ears seeing life each day excellent as it is?
Poem Commander to the Officials: Consider the known as an important catch

Is Apollo the god of boundaries, of definitions, separations, clear and distinct ideas?
Drew a large [patriarch] one, my eyes became acquainted with its details

In our Dionysian body are things confused, ordinary language always wrong, and we do not want to recover our sanity?
From within the army: Disband its band and ask its political wing persons

It isn’t true that each thing is itself and not another thing?
Remarks cannot fully explain the death of intelligence

It isn’t true that sounds are sounds and people are people?
A group today has been found in a remote valley near the border where no one
Are all lives, all dances, & all loud?
Investigate the music of settlement outposts, or, consider criminal, or, some other

Are the results of chance operations univocal and unambiguous, not polysemous speaking with tongues?
Answer is in possibility’s disorder out of determinacy’s order

Is it possible to ensure indeterminacy in a performance with a composition that is determinate of itself?
The sound in the settlements started small and grew large from their now on

Will the indeterminacy of the performance be non-dualistic if each element of the notation has a single interpretation?
I copied: History is the fact of order, the comfort, and of the free will’s choice to fly away from: Oh Nest! (is the inspiration that grows dimmer)

If there is no choice, no error, no blame?
What is his relevance under if he makes no concessions to opposition’s demands

Do we need confusion, to stammer?
About allies here about the post he quit here about pressure under new

Can we be a crowd, get lost?
Us as individual attentions, there, where big money can be made

Is the voice of a great multitude, an ocean, language?
Or, she’s still, terrified to take the train, without interpretation

When we are crowded together, can we act nobly or will we act as sheep?
REMATCH – the incumbent is off saying he has it to do to all the others as others

Will the separation of space facilitate independent action on the part of each of us?
To hear the sound of four years ago, squared off in an effort to hear, be heard

Can each of us play as a soloist and not listen to one another?
no fear of personal data of more than kept by information broker
Can I feel like the only one in the world?
Language seeping no fear, self-worth is hospitalized in a remote town after eating cake

Are those noble individuals in the anarchist dream?
About children, about love, some of it shot, some beheaded and would have been one

Can I refuse to put my emotions into someone else?
Sound holy war against control of the republic a day after Age

Does the roused crowd become animalized?
Compressed present shoots four suspects, a man, an envoy, and does same to slaying – all gone

Will we stand in unresolved dualism, between the need for organization and the need for freedom?
Empty dusty square has a paper help wanted sign that’s all

Will we agree upon the Law elements and disagree upon the Freedom elements?
Soldiers last week in a friendly fire accident mainly because which is it

Can we gather our energies in order to make this intolerable world endurable?
First be the bereft and aggrieved forms, be the dusty roadway outside-in

Do you hear everything dissonant as consonant to make our intolerable world endurable?
In the waste of soldier cultures, language is a longer cymbal crash on a mountain

Do you think of it as melodious?
A piece of anchor with quiet thanks and a personal wish for world

Can I help you obstinately reassert both sides of the unresolved argument?
If the goal is to create opposition in order to isolate and destroy opposition then differentiation equals isolation and destruction

Are we the coincidence of opposites?
Initially we may be the last national historic site moved to the courts so wilderness stills
If our mind is disciplined, will our heart turn quickly from fear to love? 
As a loud drilling in a wild life refuses the leader leading

Are we here, in the same place, heaven and hell? 
Failure and rewriting of it are all here

Is the Question/Answer Period over? 
If there are no answers, are we done with duality?

*I posited quotes from Brown's text as questions; I then used a chance operation (one day's *New York Times* front page section) to find "answers" to these questions. I took these phrases as raw vocabulary (one phrase, chosen by chance, to answer each question, forced into being by myself) and worked them into "answers."
Music Is an Oversimplification of the Situation We’re In

Rosmarie Waldrop

the silence of this great noise. Sounds take place. The noise of this truck. Wherever we are. My mother’s fury in my heart. This truck at fifty miles per hour. A voice out of hell. Or an open door, quartet for explosive motor, wind, heartbeat and landslide. Hair standing on end to harmony. Bury yourself in sound. It warms the body, forfeits the horizon. Wide-eared. Notated or not, sounds eat space, a means of rapid transportation. Not written down they appear as silence. Is the ear behind glass, like the eye? Suppose I found grains of sound in my pocket, should I brush off chromatic proximity?

absence against ambient ambiguous anxiety art atonal attention awe babble bang beach beat beautiful become Beethoven birth bizarre blood body bone breathless brick broken brush bullet burn bury candle cemetery

constant connection to the past by the principle of form. One person’s harmony is another’s brick wall. To beat his head against. The past everywhere is preying on nervous systems, methods of fingering. What a night, I said, what a night. The piano hammers its felt into stellar space, a synonym for submersion. We don’t need to destroy the past: it’s past. Shaken. Echoes on track. Depending on whether you are born deaf, a sonata may be conceptual escape, absence of gesture, or a horse galloping along horizontal evolutions. To spread, to resemble nature, to rush out of sight. Lit-up overtones. Spontaneous anxiety. We dream forms of fire, scorched fingers on the keys.
THE IDENTIFICATION OF POISONOUS MUSHROOMS. In a matrix of war, color drains from the inquest. The habit of scales, counterpoint, harmony concerns discrete steps. The high-pitched nervous system. On steppingstones twelve. Overtone structures. Frequency of blood in circulation. Bizarre and exhausting in the night. We open our fears, bang our fists. Stare holes into our eyes: phantom weapons, flower-bullets. Frequent pitch, maximum loudness, overkill structure, the sound of fury. At any point, along any line or curve one has a choice.

cow-bell crescendo curve danger dark day deaf death denouement desert destroy Dionysus discover discrete dislike disparate dissimilars dissolved division dream drift ear earth echo ecstasy edge electronic element

INCOMPLETE EXPLOSION OF LIMITS EXPLAINED. The empty space in the heart is reserved for Kansas. There is no empty space, as there is no silence. Kansas like nothing on earth. I do not fear for the future of music or mourn the sound that dies away. A hedgehog interrupts my being lost at the edge of the tape. March night crescendos into desert. Oil on fire. Try to imagine a music free of imagination. Frequencies free of memory would open the total field of possibilities, all dawn above magnetic ground. Even before we add to imperfections in the paper. If we retraced our steps to where positions are not inter-changeable, we would need to light a match.

cow-bell crescendo curve danger dark day deaf death denouement desert destroy Dionysus discover discrete dislike disparate dissimilars dissolved division dream drift ear earth echo ecstasy edge electronic element

HAPPIEST OF COMPOSERS. His waking expression, is it not a smile? The sleep of his reason gives birth to rhythms a far cry from horse’s hoofs, to mushrooms that outgrow both rain and explanation. Is he not a bit lost in his too-large suit? He twitches his nostrils, stretches his eardrum. As for nature, he carries it from the edge of thought into his body. An error of localization, say his detractors, juggling extremes of joy and pain. See integration of opposites, compare Dionysus. Why will he not separate art from life? What is his purpose, his lack of, his thought, his ought? Horrid heavenly interpenetrations. A piece of string. A sunset.

cow-bell crescendo curve danger dark day deaf death denouement desert destroy Dionysus discover discrete dislike disparate dissimilars dissolved division dream drift ear earth echo ecstasy edge electronic element

encumbered engine eraser error escape evolutions experience explanation explosive expression extremes fail faithful feeling field fingering fire fist flatten forfeit form found free frequency fury fusion future gallop

gather gesture glass grab ground habit hammer happen happiest harmony head hear heartbeat hedgehog high-pitched history hold horizon horse human ideas identification ignorance imagination imperfections

109
THE DANGERS OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC. We might never know them. A
sound as sound does not require we hear it without feeling. Or camp near a
cemetery. Pitch is not a matter of like and dislike. See how he picks shells on
the beach, a curve away from ideas of order, day unending in the burning sun.
At the corner of the square full of potholes, a sudden horse bucks the rider
and the sound of words. Do you flatten yourself against the wall? Strings are
instructive, voices too, and sitting still anywhere. On track, the unknown with
such sharp clarity. To listen or not to listen. Do you try to grab the reins? As
if by habit, the potholes fill with rain, and bodies stand on their heads.

INDETERMINACY. At each structural division, a toss of coins, a music of
changes. A vertigo where your childhood could have dissolved had your mother
not pulled you back to human savings. Error beside the point: once it happens
it is. Structure unnecessary, though of interest; even indeterminate, it remains
present. Crabgrass. Kudzu. Transparent weddings. Two inches of silence on
track one. Hold watch to mike. Stretch membrane. The ear you won’t lend will
forego marvel for His Master’s Voice. In its nest, bags are prepared for your
body or others, a long safety without tightening in the chest or late clouds.

CLOSE ATTENTION TO CLOSE ATTENTION. The worn out sounds are not worn
out. Beethoven as surprising as a cow-bell if you listen with ignorance. The
points of fusion are many. From one of them, you may invite clusters of jazz,
wingbeats, billboards, combustion engines, and wildflowers. The warm vigor
of a horse. The air shivers timbres toward the tympanum, though without
denouement. Yes, I’ll enter your ear, like any mother, no need to hold it open.
Lolling tones gather no mushrooms. While even mossy patience gradually
wears away, fear leaves scars on the retina. We’re left among electrons, atonal,
aching.
“IMAGINARY LANDSCAPE NUMBER IV.” Shock of the new and awe of mastery fail before the silence of a 500-pound bomb. In a city of 150 mosques, there are no longer any calls to prayer. An eraser is used wherever necessary. The air trembles at the sound of a plane. Somebody’s church celebrates napalm sunday. The mind may be used to ignore ambient sounds that are unmusical or distasteful. Look for clean walls to put bullets in and whistle three times at the stench. I have not yet told any stories. Or the mind may give up on improving the world and function as faithful receiver of experience. Small pieces fall from the air with long tails of smoke. We’ve broken the backbone. We’ve destroyed everything. We’ve provided the chance for a new start.

piano pick piece pitch place pluck pocket point poisonous position possibilities pothole prayer prepared present principle protect provided proximity pull pulse purpose quartet radio rain reason receiver remain repeat

incumbent middle. Every day is a beautiful day. Every beautiful day is like every beautiful day. Sunrise. A child is born. A piece of music. Perspective becomes orderly, radiating from the needs of the child. This is a lecture on composition. Structure, method, form. Why do we rush along the road like magnetic tape on fire? Form without spontaneity brings about the death of all pigeons and magpies in the skies. In the coexistence of dissimilars, pitch leans away from purpose, and urgency is implied. Inward, to a point in dream. Outward, to the tips of fingers and toes. Let’s retire to an open window instead of the woods, including tables and chairs. Is every tone virgin? If repeated? Masterpieces are the most frightening monsters. Whereas night gets dark by itself.

resemble retrace rhythm road root rush safety scales scorched sense separate shadow shaken sharp shells shock sight silence sky sleep small smile smoke sneeze sonata soul sound sour space spontaneous square stand

observation. Is there such a thing as silence? And do I have to listen to it? To something? To a stream babbling, if in the woods? I’ve buried the horse. Its gallop so faint silence couldn’t but absorb it. Provided that clumsy bones are no obstruction. Thickly instrumental. Almost breathless with continental drift, encumbered by radios twelve. Let us consider contemporary milk. At room temperature it sours. Unless we protect it from life by placing it in a museum. Then it is art. Which affects ear, nose, throat, tongue. And all you can do is suddenly sneeze. This observation is not profound, but against loss.

111
THE IMPERTINENCE OF EXPLANATION. Immense field of possibilities divided by square roots, the travel through micro-macro rhythm so unpredictable. He obtains oracles by toss, surprises constellations by disappearing into history. One does what must be done. Before death cuts in. Our time not calculable by stopwatch or plucked string. Shadows by falling. The soul, gatherer-together of disparate elements, goes out, brief candle. Ambiguously tonal state of affairs with twelve bricks, but no plan. Can’t we discover the ground of sound, and let life be both on land and in the air? While ecstasy pulses to every point of the labyrinth and night comes due to change of weather?
His religion is to live without regrets.

Due honor
gratitude and a double-click.

The bottom dollar gorgonzola of a Wesleyan Zen
Buddhist.

Bigelow jumping gigolo bump.

John is at home.

Musical pedaling and filial duties invite
revolution harmony.

Let me read my book in peace.

A klikka-klakka on a beautiful day
represents human sentiment.
The first voice in the morning
The first one to speak

The one that says
Yû = Enthusiasm.

We need oblivion to escape oblivion.

Noise is violence.
Conviviality is eucharistic.
Eating mammals is cannibalistic.

Now that you’re gone your beauty is still here
I can’t read what I’ve written so I thicken the plot
I can barely say my own name and so I thicken the plot

Now that you’re gone the enormous tragedy will thicken the plot.

Or was that soup?
We suffer history.

Immediate memory of space and emptiness.

Have a madeleine! It's good for the memory.

There is no spectator.

We're in the midst of an explosion and think it's just everyday life.

The human race is one person.

We are sitting on the notion of our minds within the years of consciousness without a card, holding hands.

Not disruptive, but cheerful.

An interlude of farce or fooling.

All around us clockwork resolution happiness and conflict.

Noise is king and here comes everybody.
My life takes time

A cat will follow a very strict routine during the day, by preference. Ritual clowns in primitive religion. He avoids all this.

Not disruptive cheerful

He may avoid all this.

Apollonian sobriety and quietness in the face of Dionysian drunkenness

Is life worth living? Each day is excellent.

To write.

To be hungry and see oranges flung about. Love's Body. Food in the bigger sense.

I return to myself with a sigh of relief.

Discipline discipline discipline. Everything is taken literally, even silence.
He may be avoiding getting rid of syntax, cadence, puns.

Well what did I expect? I stammered many years ago.

Excessive success and artistic ambition lead to silence, as does failure.

My solitude is my freedom which allows me to work hard.

The anarchist dream of a noble individual.

Circumstances.

Silence in the garden.

Never underestimate fire.

Love is fire.

"The Nature of This Lecture Is by John Beauty" is an interweaving of elements drawn from two sources: "John Cage," A Lecture by Norman O. Brown at Wesleyan University, February 1988; and "The Aim of All Nature Is Beauty," February 2005, parts i – iv, by Anne Tardos. Selections of the elements were made by making rapid intuitive decisions, as one would during a musical improvisation. Later, I refined the text, as I would in any editing process.

– Anne Tardos,
New York, 2005
Partita

Mark Tardi

after Lutoslawski

I am a lawyer because I have a fluent tongue, and am interested in legal subtleties; I am a stockbroker because my judgment of the markets is quick and sound; I am a professional batsman because I can hit unusually well. I agree that it might be better to be a poet or mathematician, but unfortunately I have no talent for such pursuits.

Without mistakes life would be music.
A free-swinging pendulum gradually rotates.

Among European artistic circles and aristocracy in the 1800s, dying of consumption was widespread enough so as to be chic. Maternally minded women flocked to the pale and delicate men, no more drawn in by their social standing or accomplishments than by the charisma of their cough.

Chopin’s cough had particular sex appeal, or as Marie d’Agoult noted, he “coughed with unspeakable charm.”

It’s too late to run away now. Like an arm through a window, the events of this week will bear me out.

Blameless, perfect, etc., but I’d rather be wrong.

Throughout his life, Mozart remained unconvinced by Protestantism: “It’s all in the head.”

The only solution is to get smaller. If I keep getting smaller, I’ll lose all size. When I lose my size, I’ll become a zero; when I become a zero, I’ll become everything.

Anacleta, are you possessive?
Yes, I envy those people who never existed.

Menacing and peaceful forms. Probably this is the smoke of brush fires in the hollow. It might be the smoke of a burning house. Probably not a burning house. A bed in Majorca.

limited aleatorism or aleatorism of texture: the performers are given the freedom of establishing the order in which the formal elements, as composed by the author, are finally presented to the listeners. See also: Conversation; Prayer; Marketing.

An impression disguised as centuries.

Rain and the rhinoceros, obligatory parasites: all partings are equally sad, then water.

To say nothing of the Greeks, or Joyce for that matter.
Tone

for Agata Pietrasik

Impossible, this swept curve, sleep torn.

Almost unguessable fractions, one more rehearsal, impossible, purely so, curved in fog. Though not in any strict sense, a door opens and goes on opening, impossible, to negotiate the difference between a handshake and a poem. We all know dying in Cleveland is redundant, yes, or maybe it’s the weather. To just walk into a photograph, impossible, sure, but plausible enough. And I’m grateful. Impossible to marry my mailbox, impossible the curses this early. An impossible affection for the same.
There is no permanent place in the world for ugly mathematics.

As you know, I arrived in Buenos Aires on the liner Chrobry a week before the war broke out.

As you know, we’ve taken steps to institute an auction.

After his death in Paris on October 17, 1849, and in keeping with the composer’s request, Chopin’s heart was cut out and placed in a jar headed for his homeland, Poland. Fearing it would be confiscated at the border by the Russian government, Chopin’s sister Ludwika hid his heart under her dress – between her legs.

A kiss, a continued fraction.

They tend to let in some fresh air in one way, and in others they increase the danger of suffocation by locking all the windows that look outward to the world, or toward the sky.

What the unity of intuition must.
So many deformities crouching in all this, bathed regularly from the slate.

Or else, think of the brain as a kind of spiritual lung.

Gombrowicz, Witold (1904–1969). *A Guide to Philosophy in 6 Hours and 15 Minutes.* See also: *Diary; Ferdydurke; Cosmos; Pornographia; Trans-Atlantyk.*

Individual events. Events beyond law. Events so numerous and uncoordinated that, flaunting their freedom from formula, they yet fabricate firm form.

True or False: Your lover thinks your pubic hair well-groomed.

Could you answer a few questions about the precatory pea?

One could say, of course, this sort of thing puts us right next door to madness.
Interior

*after Lee Bontecou*

So why this body again, less inglorious, absorbed in interminable games of patience. Why

the doorbell once more, the anticipatory suspicion, why confess, why the hammer or lorry or spaceship?

Why not mine or someone else’s yellow expanding?

Now you lag, tug, looking back, inescapable perhaps, no longer a mailbox to speak of.

For the day, or a certain part of it, the rain slides.

Prior architecture, the perfect colander:

Why not a candle, carpenter’s bench, little hats and all manner of birds?
The conceptions of “tragedy” or “farce” as the alternatives of either human live or written expression seem reductive (‘about’ Cage or anyone in the present) unless a writer were to ‘force’ experiencing now into these traditional conventions as structure that are anomalies or non sequiturs at present – since: part of our not knowing the future or present is having no guide in the sense of relation to these. So we have to make up the structure.

In Brown’s essay on Cage, “the Sacred” is connected to violence as connected to the vegetable world being man-centered. A stream of someone holding connections. But the vegetable world isn’t man-centered in my opinion. What is sacred (to any one), much less “the Sacred”? – is it only connected to violence because violence occurs and it can’t be the Sacred if it is alongside other phenomena, like violence, The Sacred must predominate.

“Violence and the Sacred. For the vegetable world to continue man must kill and be killed.” Unless Brown means that forests can only exist if men kill each other before they get to the forest whereupon they kill it, there are connections as supposed logic which isn’t logic but a fabric of his construct that would have to be abandoned to disrupt, alter, or alleviate the course of violence in history (is that possible?). “We submit to the yoke of historical necessity,” Brown quotes Meister Eckhart quoted in Cage’s Silence, as if Brown’s double quotation has the double weight of authority, irremediable and (and ‘as’) tradition.

The act of repetition as speaking Silence (reading) which the reader does even in isolated silent reading of Cage’s writing, Cage’s also reading as quoting – which is only its (the quoted writing’s) present – is at the same time the sensation of ‘one’ speaking (as if one and many – by many being quoted – at once). The accumulation in one’s reading and hearing Cage’s Silence doesn’t feel as deterministic as Brown’s constructs on Cage (which nevertheless align Cage’s gestures with farce, as more open and receptive as a mind/social form than tragedy is).

Akin to Stein saying the present is the most troubling time, any determinism hasn’t the sense of the present. Since farce and tragedy are structures by which humans and their relation to The Sacred were seen determined, these older structures might exist as the present only by their disruption, as disrupting.

In a long work, titled The Forest Is in the Euphrates River, I intended to transgress the sides and the center at once. Meaning, there is a sense of sides and center in space. There is no sense of tragedy, farce, or the Sacred in my poem (or ‘a long work’), though there’s certainly violence, which is unfathomable. These are two poems from it.
Avril

people cruising

Toyotas the rose desert breaks everywhere because they are on its surface then only

a woman ignorant and from eyes blank gloating savaging others speaking only no one speaks there they’re not reflected in her eyes her

either for her anywhere tyranny of inverted in her/gloater’s being defined as the social outside

their kindness a train hurls on tiers seen in the sky no sight admitted into the gloating one savaging others then doesn’t make sights cattle came to a blossom

so a man threw a ball

blank to everyone is inverted by her savaging speaking only they cruise the rose train surface at

night

126
no reflection of anything on the rose floor everywhere

they leave the side

Ex in cite ment of get ting up be fore dawn to be gin wh

at to

be gin a gain dawn

be gins from night, no or oar be gins from that day

be fore it one night comes

for ward

birds sing ing are hid den fly ing by fly ing – we speak to

them the trees height waves e ve ry where yet the cars

cruise the rose

dawn be gin then two glis ten ing ly Ca na da Geese stood

on the cliff of

o cean th eyre honk ing on the o thers to come yet la ter

on the men and wo men laugh ed

the air eir honk ing ar riv oar in honk ing in
tan

dem makes eir fly ing see ing two days

the trees’ si lence is sides thoughts edge

one’s not in either the outside or oar

rain pour s on red rose s and a ny thing can’t hear

plants si lence are theirs

of the senses,

but how are events anywhere

eir in re verse is for ward if we don’t make the out side

drops out

if we’re not

the outside oar a gain

are peo ple mass of in di vi du als then not mak ing that
later together for then outside sole

first we're making anything 'ahead' future is itself and

separately in 'the present here is endless' do they and

do the birds make or are the

outside's green on flock of cyclists race there

oar alter and make everything outside the side both

birds doing so that

they jut in black air beside there their the oar

outside that's blue
**Untitled Satyagraha Mesostic**

* Trey Sager

caPital
n0thing vakuum –
mulch mE
jostled licks in common
Rhythms
zephYr fragments    dim

xylophonic worlds transform
maximUm
inconStancy
in Two

Handmade
liminAl
Vortex &
machinE

strumMing operas
mEw
invAding deth
Nothing is    exists
all permitted
fiNomanal meaning
Golem

mInd
Nova

i didn’t kn0w
staRs    the
iDyllic
lady dovEs
privately matRx

www.eTruscan.
  v0x
animalz di chianti
landslyd into amnIotix
   Viz. (mask)
ghost thEm dove dross

v.nAm
   Shadowz
tAnzy
agammmNon

plAStic
   Chance invading
ancienT

c0lumn w/
   Flawz

the orPhan
   anArchy
my nocturnal thankS villifys
   masS
   a.I.
inVoked
nakEd want

in lachRymose hands
manual accidEnt
   Soft
   man maId
twin handS
   kunsT &
   mAnna
ammeNds
tumesCentzs –
what vivid monEy

i can’t dFind
   sOngs
   viRal communicate

whAt cd only
manhandLe
   Luv
the wasPy words
swArm
Styrofoam construx; tv & mtv u chant
disjunktive commandS
climacks In
aVant
garde jihad

waRsaw
dEth
Styx
jump high & amass the nIcht
the trojan flowerS his
manTra “swallow
my Apollo”
mutaNt
wrathChild
invading answEr

man & woman kInd
talk Swan

w/ mallaRdz
to transform valley of shadowz
caSh
the wIlderness manajd to
Stomach
mTnz christmas adam
didn’t know A
maNimal
an aCorn
w/ mEmory waz

rusT w/
linden candOr

praxiS
prom g0wns
moMentum
which Endz
advanTs –
tHink
awkward
wIndows down –
vacaNt lastly,
nothinG viva
Like many of my contemporaries in the 60s, I avidly read and reread Norman O. Brown's two iconic books— *Love's Body* and *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*. Written in a Nietzschean style of aphoristic proclamation, they harnessed the dual drive of Freud and Euripides for a convincing argument of psychic destiny. This was one of many wake-up calls during that period—the call to acknowledge affective content that had been repressed or denied by an “up-tight” culture. The work of John Cage during the same period was redefining what music could be in his own project to open up new possibilities—to do, as he put it in “The History of Experimental Music in the United States,” what needed to be done at that particular time. When the two met in the early 60s they became instant conversational, mutually admiring friends.

Brown’s study of the Greek classics had brought him to the complex intersection of Dionysian tragedy and German romanticism: *The Bacchae* of Euripides as interpreted by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche’s philosophical poem takes up the agonistic relation of the Apollonian and Dionysian in Greek culture and remarkably leaves the tension between them unresolved. In fact, that very lack of resolution, the continuing of the agon, is the necessary source of what has been an extraordinarily creative tension in the history of Western culture. This is true of all the great binaries—rational-irrational, masculine-feminine, etc. The Apollonian-Dionysian irresolution in Cage’s work is manifest in a kind of organic dialectic of intention and non-intention (functional equivalent of rational-irrational) that informed all his compositional methods in music, language and visual art. From 1990 through 1992 I recorded conversations with John Cage that included detailed discussions of these methods and the values that propelled them. I Brown would have disagreed with my reading of *The Birth of Tragedy*. In his lecture for the celebration of Cage’s seventy-fifth birthday, he clearly reads it as Nietzsche’s defense of the Dionysian as against the Apollonian—in Brown’s terms, “life against death.” For Brown that ancient Greek duality was alive and menacing in its absolute, dichotomous state. One had to take sides. On meeting Cage at Wesleyan in the early 60s, Brown had identified the already iconic avant-garde composer as Dionysian avatar. One senses his disappointment and anger in his 1988 lecture. In it, Cage is depicted as having gone over to the other side: he is preoccupied with method, he turns away from an avowal of the tragic in life, he has the sunny disposition of an Apollonian in denial. Brown uses the terms of Cartesian epistemology, “clear and distinct ideas” to link Cage to “Apollo...the god...
of boundaries, of definitions, of separation" — all of which Brown associates with Freudian thanatos, the death drive. Dionysis is the resistance to death in a fully embodied life.

The friendship between Cage and Brown was very intense for a number of years, but grew troubled as Brown found more and more evidence of what he took to be Cage’s essentially Apollonian nature. Brown, whom Cage still fondly called “Nobby” even after their friendship was ended by Brown’s vehement, even apocalyptic, 1988 attack, had been one of a group of humanists — Buckminster Fuller and Marshall McLuhan were others — Cage felt in a kind of close collaboration with as they each worked on ideas for improving the world. Brown’s dramatic change of mind — from utopian comrade to incensed philosophical opponent — surprised, hurt and, most of all, puzzled Cage.

In the following excerpts from *Musicage*, Cage turned to this matter just before and after the two again participated in an event honoring Cage, his coming eightieth birthday: The John Cage Festival at Stanford University in January 1992. (On August 12, a few weeks shy of his birthday, Cage died.) Norman O. Brown initially refused to talk at the event but eventually changed his mind and delivered the passionate, aphoristic lecture entitled “Dionysus in 1991” that once again criticized what he thought of as Cage’s delusion that past, present and future were all in the here and now “in this room.” Cage and Brown participated in panels where they spoke to one another with highly charged intimacy from what seemed to be almost incommensurable worlds. Brown this time refused permission to reprint his talk (written on small pieces of paper that he tossed to the floor as he read) in the proceedings for the event.³

*Musicage* is composed of three extended conversations, about Cage’s work with language, visual art and music, respectively. These selections are from the first and second conversations, followed by an excerpt from the introduction, written after Cage’s death.

*Notes to the First Interview, “Words,” 1990*

Cage had been at a meeting that morning at the home of Jasper Johns who, together with Cage, Merce Cunningham, and others, had formed a foundation with the purpose of giving money to worthy art projects. Cage said they were not getting interesting applications and found the whole process of reviewing them too time-consuming, so they were not going to do it that way anymore. That morning they had discussed scheduling a lecture series but had decided all the people they really wanted to have
lecture were dead (Buckminster Fuller, Marshall McLuhan, etc.) with the exception of Norman O. Brown. Cage said they were concerned that “we don’t really know what’s going on,” what is, and is going to be, important. He was looking for suggestions.

Among other things, Cage credited Norman O. Brown’s invention of the word “mesostic” for the way Cage wrote acrostic-like poems, but with the key letters running down the middle of the text rather than at the start of each line.

*From the Conversation on Visual Art, 1991*

jc: [Speaking of São Paulo.] ...As you look out your window, you see these giants...facing in different directions. And they’re alone. (pause) Really. (pause) So, I had made an etching using smoke on copper, and it was not so much the smoke on paper, as on copper. The effect of the smoke on copper was to make an imprint that resembled smoke, so that it was like an atmosphere, rather than like a thing. And there was a good deal of variety in the edition because different plates were put down in chance-determined ways. I grew to think that that atmospheric quality of the etching [*Where There Is Where There*] too much resembled book endpapers. (laughter) It looked as though it had been made for books. So I thought, how to change that? It occurred to me, because of this experience in São Paulo, to put skyscrapers in the margin of the etching, so that they would come up, in chance-determined amounts, into the etching and go out into the margins. So that it would be like skyscrapers were in São Paulo. [This became the series, *Where There Is Where There, Urban Landscape (1989).*] The etching would be taken as horizontal, rather than vertical, and the black rectangles would be partly in the margin and partly – they’d be along the edge. And since graphic work is horizontal, the edge of the piece became a horizon. The etching itself became the sky, which was polluted, hmm? I was aware of the thought of Norman O. Brown – that now that we have ruined the environment, we have made the atmosphere beautiful for sunsets. The sunset now is extraordinarily beautiful because we’ve made the air so polluted. Isn’t that amazing? (phone rings)

…

jc: ...You see in music, we have the opposition of classic and popular. So that “serious” music is theoretically “unpopular.” (laughs) Which means it can’t be funny.

jr: Yes. There’s also that “funny” opposition in opera – of “grand” and “light.”

jc: Yes. There’s another, even worse word, *buffa, opera buffa.* But “farce” is an important word.

134
jr: Yes, interestingly, farce is closely linked to tragedy. (pause) But tell me why you think “farce” is important.

cj: Through Norman Brown. It’s he who informed me that it was a serious word. (laughter) And his book, Closing Time. (pause) I don’t have his friendship as I had it formerly. Not because we’re – Well, partly, because we live at opposite ends of the country. But every time I used to go to San Francisco, I used to stay with Nobby and Beth. His wife is called Beth, and he’s called “Nobby” because of N.O. Brown. Do you know him at all?

cj: No, not personally. I’ve read his early books.

cj: It was a great joy for me to talk with him. I’ve written a text about him in which I express the pleasure I had conversing with him. Then after his interest in Finnegans Wake, he developed — and I couldn’t follow him — he developed an involvement with Islamic culture. He became in a detailed way knowledgeable about Islamic literature and the different sects of Mohammedanism . . . of Islam. They’re very important, and of course it’s of the greatest urgency from so many different points of view. As he’s put it, it’s culturally urgent. He puts it this way: now that we can read Finnegans Wake, we can read the Koran. (jr laughs) Isn’t that marvelous?

cj: Yes, that is marvelous.

cj: The Koran apparently makes no sense at all! Have you looked into it?

cj: No, I’ve at times felt I should —

cj: — read it.

cj: — find out more about Islamic culture, but I haven’t.

cj: Well, apparently it’s almost impossible.

cj: I’ve had trouble finding —

cj: — any sense in it?

cj: Well, trouble finding any pleasure in it, which is even worse than not finding sense. I don’t expect sense without a good deal of study since it’s such an unfamiliar culture.

cj: Well, Nobby says now that we can read Finnegans Wake, we can —

cj: — that’s a very humorous statement.

cj: Well, he means it very seriously.

cj: But I also mean that very seriously! (laughter) Because his statement brings up the possibility of a conceptual, even a cultural, shift with respect to something from which we have felt estranged, just as readers once felt estranged from Finnegans Wake, and listeners have felt estranged from silence, no? I think that’s very interesting.

cj: Yes, it is very interesting. And I would know more about it if we had conversations, but we don’t.

cj: Well, you will at Stanford.6

cj: No.

cj: Won’t he be there?

cj: Yes, but he won’t talk. I’m sure he won’t.7

cj: I thought he was on the program.
JC: Only—what do we say?—nominally? His name is on the program, but he won’t—I don’t think he’ll be on the panels or anything.

JR: Why? I’m surprised, and disappointed.

JC: Yes, I would be too, but I don’t think he will be. He wrote to me saying that he had refused.

JR: Refused...?

JC: To be on a panel.

JR: Did he say why?

JC: Well, he wants to be present, but he doesn’t want to be part of it. (pause) We were together at Wesleyan when there was a concentration on my work, and he wrote... do you know that text?

JR: Yes, the one in the *Bucknell Review* book?

JC: Yes, I gave a lecture on anarchy, and he gave that one, which shows that I’m Apollonian, rather than Dionysiac. And, for him, Dionysiac is of the essence. (pause) So...that’s why he doesn’t want to be connected.

JR: Ah, yes, the “birth of tragedy” — but this is, I’m afraid, the tragedy of dichotomous categories...of separation.

JC: I don’t think that the Apollonian and the Dionysiac are in opposition. I don’t think that the notion of “being in opposition” is beneficial to our society. I think that the opposites must come together. And that’s what I think is the position of Eastern philosophy. In Tibetan Buddhism, the sudden persuasion—which is what Zen is in Japan; it’s not the gradual learning, or coming gradually to enlightenment, it’s the sudden flash. Do you know in one of the Sutras, the Buddha is asked how enlightenment comes. And he says, suddenly; and gives the example of lightning. And then in the next paragraph he’s asked, how does enlightenment come? And he says, gradually; and gives the example of a seed growing slowly. So it comes both ways. But in the sudden school (JR laughs) — which I prefer — there are three principal truths. They’re called the whispered truths. Which means you oughtn’t to talk about them. People shouldn’t know about them. And the reason people shouldn’t know about them is because they won’t understand them, hmm? So they have to be spoken of so that they won’t know that they’re being talked about. (laughs) And the first is that creation is endless, hmm? That it’s vast! Incomprehensibly...great. And the next is that your action in that situation of vast creation your action should be as though you were writing on water. Isn’t that beautiful? Or, pulling yourself up into the tree in winter. In other words, not to make an impression. And the final thing is to realize that the opposites are not opposite. (pause) And that’s what’s so dangerous. And that’s why it’s whispered. Because if you learn that the important thing is to meditate when you’re not meditating, hmm?, then how will we persuade people to meditate? (laughter) And when you speak of utopia, generally, people are worried. About letting everyone have money, for instance, hmm? If everybody had money, wouldn’t they do the wrong thing? But we have to bring about richness among the poor. And it’s certainly been the office of
religion, to try to bring poverty to the rich! (laughter)
JR: Well, yes, in principle at least. When there is talk about the humor in Zen, there are always stories that demonstrate that the moment of enlightenment is humorous.
JC: Yes, yes.
JR: And it's often demonstrated by a story using –
JC: – non-sequiturs.
JR: Yes, yes. The thing that the master does that's completely –
JC: – irrational.
JR: – out of the blue, and that produces enlightenment, suddenly, surprisingly, making no sense. And the moment of enlightenment is accompanied by a laugh, a “Ha!” (Cage laughs) Thinking about that in relation to what I was saying about the connection of humor in the West to figure/ground shifts, or exchanges – I think that the moment of enlightenment, and therefore of that particular kind of Buddhist humor, may be about the disappearance of figure/ground – the sudden experience of the collapse of those divisions. And, here I am, thinking about fitting your work into the line of artists and inventors and scientists in Western culture who have created figure/ground shifts – and I think you have done that with your reconfiguring of silence; I believe that that's true. And yet, I think your work is about the complete disappearance of figure and ground, as well. So the humor that I find in it is connected to both Western and Eastern needs and structures. And in its dissolution of opposites is particularly close to the basis of Eastern spiritual thought.
JC: I hope so.
JR: But humor is, I think, of –
JC: Well it's very much like the sort of thing we were saying earlier. The humor accompanies it, rather than illustrates it. Isn't that it?
JR: Yes, I think the humor is in the process. Or perhaps it just is the process itself – movement, the fluidity of shifting percepts, concepts, emotions.... Or to put it another way, one could say that humor is structural – it's the enactment of structure. I think, interestingly, that this is very close to the medieval idea of humors – shifting moistures.

From the Conversation on Music, 1992

JR: There are many who would say, have said about and to you, that your social concerns, particularly in the face of blatant instances of desperation and violence should result in an art that more directly addresses, say, the terrible gaps in the distribution of wealth and power in this country – that is, as we discussed earlier, the possibility of a more explicitly political art.
JC: So that you change the work in order to mollify the opponent? (laughs) I'm not akin to that kind of drama. I don't feel that I can.... As you quoted from
Kierkegaard – you say that so beautifully – I can feel admiration for it. And I’m sure that’s close to the feelings that Nobby Brown has when he’s faced with the idea of things getting better – having a tendency toward the good.

JR: Your persistence in your views in this respect is particularly interesting because your work does not seem to have to do with denying what is, or shutting out life. Though it does have to do with disciplines of attention. And attention, to the extent that it involves heightened focus, means excluding things, leaving certain things out. At the same time the challenge to return to life with open ears and eyes seems to be at the core of your work. So your refusal to be an activist, to be politically involved can be confusing. (pause) And then I think of Adorno’s ideas about the relation of art to society and his feeling that the future of music, after Schoenberg, looked pretty dismal, except for John Cage’s work, with its inclination toward silence and the meaningfulness of its “terrifying,” contingency. All of this coming out of his notion of art operating like Leibniz’s monads – unconscious, windowless and yet reflecting everything else.

***

JR: When you moved from tossing the coins yourself, to the computer, there was the first simulation of the I Ching that –

JC: – had a bug. Produced repetition, which as I told you, I accepted since I knew I had been working with nonintention.

JR: It’s interesting that “nonintention” isn’t here –

JC: Isn’t there.

JR: – among the fifteen words in Composition in Retrospect.

JC: I think, between Intention and Discipline, you’ll find it takes place. Don’t you think so?

JR: Yes, under “Intention” you talk about “purposeful purposelessness” and how you will not accept the role of composer unless, you say – I’ll quote you directly – “Not to accept it unless I could remain at the same time a member of society, able to fulfill a commission to satisfy a particular need, though having no control over what happens. Acceptance, sometimes written out, determinate, sometimes just a suggestion. I found it worked. Therefore I nap, pounding the rice without lifting my hand.” This is something you kept from the 1982 version of Composition in Retrospect [I–VI, P.425]. And then discipline is for you training the mind to notice what is given, and of course the very particular and complicated use of chance operations. Discipline –

JC: It’s repeated three times, which Nobby objected to, you know, in his essay when I was seventy-five. He spoke in particular of this text, Composition in Retrospect, and just as he objected to my quoting Suzuki about moving toward the good, so he objected to my use of the word “Discipline,” and laying such importance upon it as to repeat it three times where the others only get stated once. He thought that discipline was Apollonian rather than
Dionysian, which has been his statement all along – that I should be more Dionysian.¹¹

JR: I find that such a strange struggle. At Stanford the two of you seemed so connected to one another, and yet you were at such odds, you seemed to be coming from incommensurable worlds – hardly enough overlap to really have a conversation.

JC: But we used always to converse with great pleasure.

JR: What happened?

JC: He developed, first of all, an interest in something of which I could have no experience. It began to take all of his attention. It no longer does.

JR: Islam and the Koran.

JC: Yes. It followed his work with *Finnegans Wake*. But he doesn’t do that anymore. At least I said something to him at Stanford about that, and he said he wasn’t working with Islam anymore. It’s very curious, because he was doing it in a highly detailed way, which I couldn’t follow. Knowing the different flavors of Islam, as you would know, say, the difference between Presbyterians and Baptists.

JR: Do you know why he stopped the work?

JC: No. I’ve had no conversations with him during it, or, unfortunately, after it. He wrote me a note, which I haven’t answered, saying how exciting it was for him and Beth to be with me at Stanford, and hoping that I would come see them...again. I don’t know. That brings to mind, the title that Jap [Jasper Johns] wrote about friendship, “The Fabric of Friendship,” which changes of course. And one doesn’t know what causes those changes, hmm? You can remember anything you like, but you don’t know what brings about a change.

JR: Well, the two of you met in the 60s, yes?

JC: Yes.

JR: And I have the feeling that – in an atmosphere with the presence of Bucky Fuller and Marshall McLuhan – there was a sense among you of all being engaged in the same project – to save the world.

JC: Utopia.

JR: Yes. That was a time when you felt that music was – I don’t know if you ever called it therapeutic, but –

JC: Beneficent, I called it.

JR: And weren’t you doing, during that time, work that had more open structures, with some similarities to the improvisational nature of happenings... more that could have been identified by N.O. Brown as Dionysiac? Your work has changed a good deal since then, but I have a feeling his is still closely related to that time, particularly after hearing him talk at Stanford. I was struck by how close his eruptive, aphoristic talk was to the spirit of *Love’s Body*, wrestling with Nietzsche’s oppositional categories – wanting the Dionysian to come out on top in what he sees as a fundamental, antagonistic dualism. I had reread Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy* just before coming out to
Stanford, and I was struck once again by how Nietzsche leaves Apollo and Dionysia in a dynamic tension—doesn’t, can’t, declare one or the other the winner. And then, most strikingly, your work seems very fundamentally to have moved beyond dualisms altogether.

JC: I hope so. Well I think the absolute statement of an irreducible opposition is just not helpful. I think we must understand the identity of the opposites, together with the idea of endless multiplicity, a multiplicity not of things that can be counted, but of things that are countless...

JR: Even more than ten thousand things? (laughter)

JC: Don’t you think? It’s just amazing. I think that goes beyond adherence to the idea of Apollonian and Dionysiac as essential opposites. There’s a piece of mine—to give you an idea of what Nobby recognizes as Dionysiac—in connection with my work I mean—there’s an early piece called Amores, [1943] and there are two solos—one for prepared piano and two percussion pieces, one for drums and the other for wood blocks. Well, in the fourth piece—which is the second piece for prepared piano—there are several sections, there may be ten, actually—and the last two phrases struck Nobby as being Dionysiac. There’s a descending line, not an ascending line as I was describing yesterday (laughs), but it’s a heavy downward thrust—

JR: Toward the grave?

JC: And an insistence upon it by repetition. And even the use of a kind of sound that, that seems to—Oh, it could have the feeling of a scream in it, hmm?, at the same time that this downwardness is felt. So he was quite impressed.

JR: Actually that makes immediate sense—

JC: Dionysiac sense, yes.

JR:—given what he was saying at Stanford. It sounds like at least your concluding phrases could be used as incidental music for The Bacchae.

JC: (smiling) Something like that, yes.

JR: So the upward thrust in the music we were talking about yesterday [Tino]—It must be that you choose to go in that direction now, no?

JC: Uh huh.

JR: That it’s coupled with—

JC: It was a very curious instance of it at any rate, because I was ostensibly looking for things to fill these empty brackets with, and I had the variations of Satie’s Vexations on hand, so to speak. I pulled them out of a drawer. And I pulled this microtonal business for the violin out of, say, a recent drawer. And then the two other elements that are included are this ascending gamut, and that brought about—the other one is stated as an ascending series of possibilities for the violin to make an interval, but in fact it will simply be an interval, it will be static, it won’t have any sense of ascending in it. The only one that will really have the ascending business is the gamut on the piano. And I don’t know...whether it will be convincing, as ascending. Because they’re not regular steps. So it may be more impressive that it’s leaping, than that it’s
ascending, hmm? If you’re thinking about “ascension,” you can tell very well if it’s regular steps, like a stairway. But if it’s a series of unequal jumps, which it is, through chance operations, it may not give the impression of ascending to a listener. That may not be what one hears. I don’t know.

JR: So you think it may sound like leaping, but not progressively leaping upwards.

JC: I don’t know. I rather think it will be recognizable. I don’t know.

JR: Would you be disappointed if it wasn’t?

JC: No. (laughs) Or, another answer is, I’ve been disappointed that way many times. (laughter)

From the Introduction to Musicage, JR

(Note: One fundamental difference between the two men was their views of death.)

JOHN CAGE: SILENCE

Flowers? Very good
Play? All right
I am ready, he will say.

R.H. Blyth gives this as an example of an “incomprehensible” translation in his book of senryu. For me, it echoes Cage’s reply to an impassioned challenge by Norman O. Brown during a panel at Stanford University. Brown had protested that with all the talk that was going on, the issue most present and least discussed was death: “I do not believe that the past and the present are all here; and that is related to my perception of death . . . Death is everywhere present in this room,” he said, turning to look directly at Cage. Cage smiled sweetly, saying, “Nobby, I’m ready.”

The last conversation in this book took place on July 30, 1992, twelve days before the instant and massive stroke from which Cage never awoke. He died the next day, August 12. In Western culture, 12 x 24 hours of the earth circling the sun equals time for a dozen classical tragedies to take place. Cage’s death did not require even one. It was certainly not tragic. It did not occur in classical time, or even contemporary American time as most of us experience it. It occurred in Cage’s time—along the horizon of his Amerizen consciousness. For Cage there was a very real sense in which the past and present and future is all here, now. For Cage, as Zen-minded composer of music, visual art, and words, imitating nature in her manner of operation, fascinated by the proliferation of detail as art moves into everyday life, the aesthetics of space-time could become an intricately expanding fractal coastline for ears, eyes, and humors to explore. What one discovers is infinite
time-space in finite space-time (Or is it the other way around?), breathing room... free of the impacted terminal moment that characterizes possession and control, and that we fear death must be.

“What nowadays, America mid-twentieth century, is Zen?” Cage asked in 1961 in the foreword to Silence. For Cage this was a life and death question that remained for him a long-life-long question-as-practice with a continual updating of the time frame.

Each time I went over the transcriptions of our conversations, listening to everything all over again, I dreaded coming to the last of the tapes recorded on July 30. It takes up only 10 minutes of a 30-minute side. Cage is the last to speak. His words are followed by the sound of the recorder being switched off and then by a blankness that is a stark contrast to the noisy silence of pauses filled by the sounds of the loft. I found myself listening to the blank tape each time, not wanting to turn it off. Listening for more, thinking maybe this had really not been the end. Perhaps there was something more that I had forgotten. Fast forwarding. Wanting more. Finally finding it. At some point that blank silence too became fully audible as a delicate, microtonal whir. A whir of music both in and of silence; John Cage’s gift, again.

Everyone who knew John Cage well knew that he didn’t want to die but that he died just as he wanted to. He always said he never liked to know when a composition was going to end.

They die
As if they had won
A prize in a lottery. — Kazuji

There’s an American source for this too. The summer of Cage’s death, Walt Whitman was being celebrated all around New York. It was the centennial of Whitman’s death in 1892 and Cage was delighted by the attention to his work, the way it was so much “in the air.” He loved Walt Whitman, the Walt Whitman who wrote:

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.16

NOTES

1. Published in Musicage: Cage Muses on Words, Art and Music, John Cage in Conversation with Joan Retallack, Edited and Introduced by Joan Retallack, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, CT, 1996.


7. Norman O. Brown did in fact give a talk. See introduction to this selection.


9. Referring to Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which the struggle between the Apollonian and Dionysian seems so fundamental as to be irresolvable—a dynamic, generative tension, rather than an either/or.

10. Theodor Adorno writes, “The dividing line between authentic art, which engages the crisis of meaning, and resigned art...is...whether it represents an adaptation to the status quo; whether the crisis of meaning is reflected by the work or whether it is immediate and bypasses the subject. Highly revealing in this connection are musical phenomena such as John Cage’s piano concerto, which imposes the strictest contingency on itself and gains a kind of meaning in the process, meaning in the form of an expression of terror.” “Consistency and Meaning.” In *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London and New York, 1986, p. 221.

11. *John Cage at Seventy-Five.*


13. That the subject of death should be addressed.

14. At a weeklong festival and symposium on Cage’s work called *John Cage at Stanford: Here Comes Everybody* in January 1992, seven months before his death.


In that Dionysian body in which we are all members
of one body things are necessarily confused
— NORMAN O. BROWN
"John Cage"

N.O.B. — I knew him as Nobby (and heard, but not from him, of his amused
sanction of terminological slippage to Nabi, or prophet) — returned to
Wesleyan University to speak about John Cage in 1988. Wesleyan was where
he taught throughout the 1950s, and it was where he wrote Life Against Death
(1959), the book that launched him from Marx into Freud; and, from there,
into Love’s Body (1966), and the History of Consciousness Program at the
newly founded Santa Cruz campus of the University of California. It was
to the History of Consciousness Program that he delivered “Dionysus in
1990,” the talk that concludes his last book.

Brown begins his talk at Wesleyan by honoring the decisive difference
made there by Music professor Richard Winslow, who was responsible for
inviting John Cage and David Tudor to campus periodically during the years
Brown taught there, and was also responsible for the publication of Cage’s
books by Wesleyan University Press. The first of these books, Silence (1961)
and A Year from Monday (1967), are contemporaneous with Brown’s influential
titles, particularly during that turbulent decade when both men became
guru figures for the counterculture. Only one piece, however — “Lecture on
Commitment” in A Year from Monday — was actually delivered at Wesleyan;
but, dating from 1961 when Brown was still teaching Classics there, it’s likely
he was in attendance.

The theme of commitment would have caught his attention, quite apart
from his growing friendship with Cage. “Who first stepped in this puddle
anyway?” asks Cage. “And how did this mud get to be so luscious?” (A Year
from Monday 116). One audience member likely to have nodded, smiling, was
the author of that extraordinary chapter, “Filthy Lucre,” in Life Against Death.
In “Dionysus in 1990” he recalled how that chapter ultimately led him to
the Dionysian epistemology to which he would thereafter adhere, and which
is much in evidence in his lecture on Cage. When Cage spoke at Wesleyan
in February 1961, Brown was on the verge of considerable notoriety for his
Phi Beta Kappa speech at Columbia University, delivered in 1960 but soon
to appear in the May 1961 issue of Harper’s. That address, “Apocalypse:
The Place of Mystery in the Life of the Mind,” would become the opening
chapter of Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis thirty years later.

It was a defining moment for Brown, in which he aspired to rival
Emerson’s own infamous Phi Beta Kappa address (albeit at Harvard in 1837) “The American Scholar,” which he characterizes as “a Transcendentalist anticipation of what I want to say” (Apocalypse 5). He quotes Emerson’s excoriation of the bookworm as typical product of the university, and he chastens his audience of budding scholars as Emerson did before him. On an occasion meant to rouse aspiring scholars, Emerson denigrates the scholar as mere “delegated intellect” in a social atomization that cuts mercilessly through the population as a whole. Consequently, he said, “you must take the whole society to find the whole man.” Properly speaking, “Man is not a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, but he is all.” However, “In the divided or social state, these functions are parcelled out to individuals…. But unfortunately, this original unit, this fountain of power, has been so distributed to multitudes, has been so minutely subdivided and peddled out, that it is spilled into drops, and cannot be gathered. The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters, – a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man” (Essays and Lectures 54). Brown does not cite this memorable passage in “Apocalypse,” holding it reserve, it seems, as a privately guiding light for composing Love’s Body, that bracing tract on overcoming social division by way of Dionysus, the god of the necessary madness he prescribed for the Columbia students. (A few years later, when students occupied the administration buildings at Columbia, they may have had Brown’s exhortation ringing in their ears, possibly with distant associations of another man named Brown whose prophetic determination helped kindle a ferocious conflagration a hundred years earlier.) In 1990 he returned to his patron deity, suggesting that the Dionysian madness transcended the Freudian outlook on pathology. “What does it mean to take one’s stand under the Dionysian, rather than the Freudian (or the Marxist) flag?” he asked. “It means that madness is not an individual but a social phenomenon in which we all participate collectively: we are all in one and the same boat or body” (Apocalypse 180).

Far from being an innocuous homage to Cage, Brown’s 1988 lecture turns out to have been a charged occasion, making much of the contrasts between his and his subject’s outlook. By the end, they may appear to be irreconcilable. Or rather, the terms of reconciliation are fierce and unambiguous: it will be achieved only in a burning fiery furnace, under the patronage of Dionysus. Is it a gesture of friendly appeasement, or a work of cunning to be expected from the author of Hermes the Thief, when he calls Cage as expert witness, as it were, in the case of Thoreau setting fire to a woodlot near Concord? Brown casts his relation to Cage in terms of the Nietzschean polarity, Dionysus versus Apollo. But, following Nietzsche, he insists “The synthesis of those opposites Apollonian and Dionysian is itself Dionysian.” It’s hard not to detect in this a resolve to have the last word. What’s more, it is a last word in the face of mortality, a condition he implicitly extends to Cage even as
Brown himself plunges into the furnace of the “one body in which we are all expendable, combustible material.”

The adversarial posture is hardly confined to these apocalyptic scenarios. Brown is not so much wary of Cage’s Buddhism as he is dismissive of it – “the theory and practice of joyful consumerism” he calls it. Cage’s characteristic compositional procedures fare no better. “Chance operations avoid real uncertainty,” Brown declares. “The results of chance operations are always impeccable: the experiment cannot fail.” Facing this paradox (the use of chance as a means of achieving certainty), Brown says, “I’d rather be wrong.” So, “We go with *Finnegans Wake* rather than Suzuki,” a prospect in which “things are necessarily confused,” in which “ordinary language is always wrong,” in which “we do not want to recover our sanity.”

The reference to *Finnegans Wake* reveals a crucial subtext, for this lecture may be primarily about who is entitled to receive and transmit Joyce’s challenging book. Brown set the precedent for an interactive engagement with the *Wake* in *Closing Time* (1973); Cage followed with *Roaratorio: An Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake* first performed by IRCAM at the Centre Pompidou in Paris (1978, published 1982). Music critic John Rockwell complained that Cage’s freewheeling resources in *Roaratorio* “hardly match the poetic clarity of Joyce” (*All American Music* 54). But such an aspiration could hardly have been the point in the first place: after all, the *Roaratorio* was billed as a circus. In any case, Cage’s mesostic method of extracting text from existing texts would appear to reduce the source text to rubble or, to use Brown’s vocabulary, to burn it up. With this in mind, Brown turns out to have been a bit more wily when talking about Cage. The quip that Buddhism is a “practice of joyful consumerism” takes on different overtones when we recall that something burned up is also said to be consumed. In *Love’s Body*, after all, the chapters “Food” and “Fire” are adjacent. In “Dionysus in 1990” he spells it out: “To really enjoy is to consume; consumption is the way separate beings communicate; and real consumption is inseparable from Dionysian violence; the consuming fire” (*Apocalypse* 192). The apparent hostility to Cage, or Buddhism, is actually Dionysian tough love.

Brown’s lecture ends with a cascade of citations, the last of which is a nursery rhyme. Beginning with *Love’s Body*, Brown had pioneered a critical method in which argument advanced primarily by means of citation. Reducing his own writing to brief interjections, bits of stage management, Brown sustained this method in *Closing Time* and in some of the pieces collected in his last book, *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis* (1991). As a method, it follows a precedent Brown could not have known: namely, Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades Project*, which appeared (and only in German) in 1982. “Methode dieser Arbeit: literarische Montage. Ich habe nichts zu sagen. Nur zu zeigen” (*Gesammelte Schriften* V: 1, 574 [Das Passagen-Werk Nia,8]). Literary montage, Benjamin calls it, in which one need only show, not say. With this pedigree, and the proliferation of attention to Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* (or Passagen-
Werk) in recent years, the time is ripe for a more adequate recognition of Norman O. Brown. Unlike Benjamin, who died before accomplishing his vast project, Brown demonstrated not only the virtues of literary montage, but he took it into a realm of artistic practice fully commensurate with what Cage was doing. As witness to so many of Cage’s own presentational tactics, particularly during the years before he took up montage, Brown is likely to have learned from his friend a vital posture of attention: to listen, to attend.

Brown was a true teacher in that he inspired and demanded. Reading “John Cage” I am, once again, his student, and he has made me work it out for myself. This is what it comes to: The two of them, Cage and Brown, stand revealed in the end (furtively, implicitly: shown, not theorized) as those bickering siblings, Shem and Shaun, around whom so much of the mayhem of *Finnegans Wake* revolves, which both men would surely consent to having the last word:

We are once amore as babes awondering in a wold made fresh where with the hen in the storyaboot we start from scratch.

So the truce, the old truce and nathonbuff the truce, boys.
Drouth is stronger than faction.

*(Finnegans Wake 336)*

REFERENCES


Against Touching

Ange Mlinko

“April 15, 1958: Fire at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, USA. Loss of one life, 33 injuries, several galleries, two major paintings, including a Monet, seven paintings severely damaged. Origin was workmen repainting second floor galleries who were smoking on the job. Loss estimated at US$700,000. Detectors but no sprinklers. Museum area was reopened three years later.” (www.museum-security.org)

1

When I imagine the completely blackened Waterlilies, I am astonished that water did not repel fire.

Perhaps salamanders from the fire wanted very much to jump into Monet’s pond.

Were Matisse’s goldfish safe from fire in their watery bowl?

2

I first saw soot paintings at a show by the artist Josh Dorman. I asked how it was done. He wrote:

A. just hold a candle under paper or canvas—leaves a nice sooty black.
B. Use a small (or larger) butane torch. For mine, I use a pen-sized little flamethrower.
Also, I have used and seen used, people soaking the wood or paper in spots they don’t want to char or brown.

They’re called pyrographs, and artists have done nocturne series with them.
I am too casual, too literal in my belief that a painted pond can’t catch on fire. John Cage was literal as well. He created prints by building fires on a printing press. By running wet paper through the press, he put out the fire and fixed smoke in forms on the paper.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche correlated music to the Dionysian and sculpture to the Apollonian. Music dissolves boundaries, and belongs to the crowd; sculpture requires boundaries, and represents the individual.

The painting or print (even when unframed) frames itself, and represents the individual.

“It is said that the sculptor Phidias, while constructing the Athene in the Acropolis, carved his own face in the center of her shield, and connected it by an imperceptible artifice with the statue, so that, if any one wished to remove it, he must necessarily break up and destroy the whole statue.” (Aristotle, “On Marvellous Things Heard”)

The conservation scientists who finally found a way to lift the black soot from the ruined Monet, 50 years later, first proved their technique on a Warhol that an admirer had left lipstick on.

The unspeakable thrill of kissing a painting when even to *touch* it is a stronger Western taboo than representing God. This is the ultimate fetish of the Apollonian, this Modern Courtly Love.
Brownian Motion, The Cage of

Andrew Joron

Brown is hot, Cage is cold.

Brown discolors the, Cage confines a.

The Brown of sorrows, the Cage of series.

Can the sore rose come to sere ease?

Random asks its answer (Brown proceeds to crown, then drown).

No, no, no. Now’s gnosis, at most “nowest,” the nest of oneness, knows no highs or lows. (First Cage; then cages.)

Silence & Chance, the white absolutes, stand with/against the black absolutes of Eros & Thanatos.

Brown noise is repetitive, a monotonous pulse; white noise also holds no surprising information. Matter is outside, mater is inside. That hierarchy makes history.

(Every note, every mote to have its sound-silhouette, to halve its rank, sound-sweat.)

Desire wants to stop. The system, therefore, is open-ended.

Cage’s intensive lack of will wills a way out of outside; Brown’s fulfilled body negates even the ghost of the negative.

The Cage of separation; the Brown of fusion.

Cage to ward the minimal, Brown to ward the maximal. Infinite regression’s return to the womb.

X marks the identity of these embodiments: sex & text.
Brown’s homage to Cage: a body composed of textual fragments. Fire is furious because it can never catch up with nothingness.

Nothingness appears between the bars of Cage’s music; as fire leaves the edge of the page curled Brown.

Gift of the impossible: *total fragment* that includes only what excludes itself.
There is the littlest gap between language and the world. Instead of fretting whether language is or is not nature, Cage uses language in kinship with nature. There isn’t a significant ontological divide between the world and its representation. Writing is its own presence, not mimetic or merely representative, but often influenced and inspired by nature: “Music as weather.” It is its own world located within a world, in the worlds of worlds. Such is the richness of the universe. Truth in this case is not related to a hermeneutic code or a universal proposition (superaltern) – inferences and correspondences are exacted open-endedly. His orientation has a feather anchor.... The key is not to decode part by part mechanistically but to expose essences and particular possibilities as they happen in varied contextual ecosystems of language and music. Fractions let off charges and energize the whole: combinatory interrelations of porous continuums. Elements don’t compete for the foreground, the present. Cross-currents, frictions and the variousness of the texts shuffle time.... Many of his pieces are like haikus undergoing a Big Bang phenomenon.... Whether or not the sign has an arbitrary nature is moot here. Deliberation and arbitrariness are interchangeable in his process, not mutually exclusive. Both are viable, functional, interesting, saturated with meaning.

“...The prepared piano, impressions I had from the work of artist friends, study of Zen Buddhism, ramblings in fields and forests looking for mushrooms, all led me to the enjoyment of things as they come, as they happen, rather than as they are possessed or kept or forced to be.” These webbed contextualities spawn meanings that rise and set as liltingly as can be expected from such open-ended text. This isn’t the mire of fathomlessness. Spry language!...

Components of language are studied in their uses. Ideograms and Chinese characters: kernels containing both the sign and the signifier. Cage comments in the forward to Empty Words that he is “amazed (1) by their beauty, (2) by the fact that I had not been seeing ‘em as beautiful....” The drawings he made, interspersed throughout Empty Words (see image below) are organic icons and operate in much the same way that Chinese characters, or ideograms do, only they fall outside the systems of language. Actually, placed alongside the wild scattershot language particles and particulates (which Cage has generated via his chance operations with Thoreau's Journal) they have more resemblances to concrete phrase structures than the text itself.
Due to N.O. Brown’s remark that syntax is the arrangement of the army, and Thoreau’s that when he heard a sentence he heard feet marching, I became devoted to nonsyntactical “demilitarized” language. I spent well over a year writing *Empty Words*, a transition from a language without sentences (having only phrases, words, syllables, and letters) to a “language” having only letters and silences (music). This led me to want to learn something about the ancient Chinese language and to read *Finnegans Wake*…

Cage recognized specificity as well as interrelation – they commingle. How else could the insight that is music and poetry come about – into selves. How else could one find the music to make (ready around). In “Sixty-One Mesostics Re and Not Re Norman O. Brown” these lines follow one another: “find sOmething/to think.” “yOu/were carried away.”

Intentions waft and that is his weave. You can never hope to start at an end or a beginning. Those points don’t exist.

```
to Became
fRee:
noT
to knoW
whether we knoW or noT
```
I am not so sure John Cage’s work proposes a utopian situation or that it equals a utopia rendered. This would involve omissions, guidelines and codification of the sort that don’t present themselves in his texts. Of course, in Cage’s work omissions, guidelines and codification occur. They happen with flippant seriousness, too changeable – too momentary to solidify into an outline for a model of a preferred habitable community. “I gave up making choices. In their place I put the asking of questions.” Utopias require mission statements, resolutions – certainly determinations. And priority is social shaping. (Even) a supposed democracy is a set-up of terms and conditions. Freedom is quite something else. His works, when they happen to be predicated on a concern, concern themselves with huge spectrums (even when he sets clauses to pare away at a process) even when there is a micro focus… In his preface to Lecture on the Weather, Cage writes, “More than anything else we need communion with everyone. Struggles for power have nothing to do with communion. Communion extends beyond borders: it is with one’s enemies also.” In this sense he is an idealist. His work strives for an ideal of humanitarianism, community (which includes the environment) the dignity of the individual and their relationship to the total working whole of space and time. In most of his works there are implicit environmentalist messages and warnings. For instance, he is alarmed about global warming and states so in Empty Words, published in 1973. He states that most of the cultural examples touted to be brilliant “exemplify monarchies and dictatorships. Composer and conductor: king and prime minister.” He is interested in “making musical situations which are analogies to desirable social circumstances which we do not yet have…music suggestive and relevant to the serious questions which face Mankind.” Cage’s pursuit is of the moment – accomplished with the slightest trace, deftly – counter to the thrust of the Megalopolis, the Law, the Status Quo (their muted heaviness seeks to deny this nation’s historical basis, which is fraught with mass exterminations of indigenous peoples, wildlife, forests). Tautologies and other vacuous effects are not present in his writing. Instead, polyvalent micro reflections stream along and energize a capacity for seeing, listening and doing. Circumstantial events of a personal nature are bridgework to a collective conscious. Active reasoning without analysis or prognosis is fresh and regenerative. I venture to say that his work is effective as a corrective to many corrosive emotional features of postmodern life.

The mesostic as a poetic form is quintessential Cage. Spinal column, DNA strand, operational grid – its metaphoric effect is fecund. There is an aerial quality to this way of writing. Writing becomes visually layered instead of how we are usually led to read – in a coiled, serpentine undulation from left to right, left to right. With the left margin adherence done away with, a fully
rendered three-dimensional form is created. Often the shapes remind me of centipedes, millipedes—insects of some sort. They also look like antennae. Mobiles echoing star clusters. They look less pyramidal than sedimentary. In effect they are timelines telling of the production of a text. The title for his book X replicates this structure in a single letter. Points of operation and contention are not tied down to coordinates that stay put. Cage operates in liminal zones. X, in this light, is the wheel axle—it lends structure to devices that work with motion. “I have found a variety of ways of writing mesostics: Writings through a source: Rengas (a mix of a plurality of source mesostics), autokus, mesostics limited to the words of the mesostic itself, and ‘globally,’ letting the words come from here and there through chance operations in a source text.”9 The occasions keep coming. Other living things are growing out of these mesostics dedicated to allies in the art world. Morels, coprini and ailanthus take root in a mesostic for Jasper Johns…

…Intellectual realms shifted to terrestrial, tangible realms. In the 1950s Cage left the city for the country. Guy Nearing guided him in his study of mushrooms and other edible plants. They founded the New York Mycological Society along with three friends. Supposedly, when the weather was dry they focused their attention on lichens. I am interested in how this new attraction informed his poetics, and I am equally interested in the pursuit itself—mushrooming. Many edible specimens grew profusely in the forest behind our house when I was growing up, and I would harvest them with no scrutiny from adults—simply collect them: boletus, Gymnopilus spectabilis for example, shake the dirt loose, haul them home in a basket made out of my shirt, then sauté them with onions and butter in a pan. Nothing is more succulent.

ADDENDUM: MUSHROOMING, A BRIEF STUDY

What is the aim. To find delectable, edible foods harvestable off the forest floor, growing on rotted logs and trees—but the result can be poisonous. Study of diversity and specificity—the Earthstars—Myriostoma coliforme (fruiting body; outer skin splits into rays; the spore mass is brown at maturity; egg-shaped with pores; rare), for example. Primal animalian pleasures of foraging, discovering—set in the imperative mode. Mushrooming is an activity within an activity and within this are numerous mental and environmental shifts. Autonomous environment—enveloping dramatic zone of overhanging foliage, ground cover, geologic activity—boulders, streams, precipices, gullies. Soil content, what has rotted to make the soil right for mushrooms. Mushrooms not only decompose dead plants and animals, some attack other living organisms, the remaining types have symbiotic relationship with the root systems of higher plants. Mushrooms fall under three categories in terms of how they interact with their immediate environment. Saprophytes
exist by growing on dead organic matter such as logs, leaves, needles, grass, pinecones, dead or living fungi and animal matter, for instance. Parasitic mushrooms are invaders and may often kill their potential host. Some of these mushrooms rely on other organisms to damage the host before they are able to colonize the site. Finally, mycorrhizals form a symbiotic relationship with adjacent life forms. Mushrooms provide moisture for the plants and in return the mushroom receives sugars and amino acids.

Mushrooms are organs— that is, the portion that sticks out of the ground is the reproductive part of the organism. Its main body is underground or runs through decaying wood and consists of a web or mat of hair-like fibers called a mycelium. Some mushrooms, like the honey mushroom, have mycelia that stretch for miles. It is possibly the longest organism. A mushroom name often sounds bodily specifically sexy: *Clitocybe odora*, *Flammulina velutipes*, *Clavaria vermiculais*, *Volvariella bombycina* and *Catopilus prunulus* are a few of these.

A mushroom’s cellular flesh varies—it might be spongy, rubbery, soft, slippery and/or light. Their caps can be convex and knobbled, dry, viscid, glutinous, hairy, cracked, hard, frilly— or clustered, cespitose, imbricate, tough, overlapping— or woody, hoof-shaped, with chambered heads, or round spore sacs. Some are covered with small blunt warts. The features of a mushroom are studied using the following distinctions: their caps, gills, annulus (ring), stipe (stalk), flesh, odor, taste and host. Noting their seasonal fruiting is helpful of course.

This May my mother and I came upon a cluster of *Gyromitra* (false Morels) in the hemlock cluttered area of the forest bordering my parent’s property. This particular mushroom resembles at least seven other mushroom subsets. All have tuberous, thick, stocky stems leading up to a sloppy, oozing cap that is wrinkled, slimy and caramel-colored. The mushroom book I referred to written by Orson K. Miller, Jr., says that he avoids attempting to eat any of this variety in the Northeast for this very reason. Some are harmless while others contain the toxin monomethylhydrazine which can cause death. So we delicately viewed their quirky sexual towers protruding through the rotting leaves and needles.

Mushroom toxins vary greatly. One book I read claims few varieties have been adequately tested for their effects on humans—from the mildly hazardous, resulting in symptoms of nausea, mild hallucinations and purgative effects, to the most lethal: phallotoxins and amatoxins. Some species are edible but they adversely affect some people nonetheless. *LBM* is an abbreviation for “little brown mushroom”— these are the mushrooms that most often cause a negative reaction in the uninitiated. Perhaps the mushroom gatherer is out searching for the hallucinogenic variety sampled previously. *LBMs* come in great quantity and variety and are the most likely to be extremely dangerous. To make matters worse, they cause a stomachache soon after they are digested, but then the pain fades. During this time the liver of the unsuspecting person is being wholly poisoned. If medical treatment
isn’t sought immediately, several hours later the liver will be completely
damaged and a liver transplant will be necessary for survival. A novice had
better seek out the Suillus. There are no known poisonous ones within this
genus containing 50 species in North America. I have a session scheduled
with my aunt this summer for the foraging and harvesting of chanterelles
in the hills behind her house – as she is apprehensive of the black bears that
make their home there – I am to be an accomplice. We will wash down the
sumptuous flavors of the chanterelles with Birnewasser – a Bavarian pear
brandy. Such evocative, combinatory terrestrial fruiting bodies…!

NOTES

    com/artists/cagej/autobiog.html
    Empty Words.
    In Empty Words.
5. Ibid.
An unfortunate outcropping of outmoded language: “Mankind.” I wish in
its place Cage would have used the more all-inclusive term “Humankind”
– especially when making a statement about systems of power, etc.

OTHER SOURCES

http://www.bluewillowpages.com/mushroomexpert

157
Norman O. Brown. How does a person exist in a name? I always wondered what the ‘O’ stood for and why he kept it there. These days I tend to mix him with another professor with three names whose academic speciality was Nathaniel Hawthorne. Norman Holmes Pearson was a Hermes figure in H.D.’s writing life. His code name when he served in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in London during the WWII years was “The Puritan.” Brown also served in the OSS during the 1940s, and I like to imagine the author of Love’s Body, Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History, and Closing Time as an archetypical New England Puritan: John Cotton or Jonathan Edwards.

“On his head an oake growing”

Historical distance Campion’s rule of thumb its prior under-

current here on so-called Earth

“in a skin coate of grasse greene

a mantle painted full of trees”

He wrote to me first after reading My Emily Dickinson. We struck up a correspondence that lasted for years. During all that time he never began a letter with the salutation “Dear” and invariably signed himself NOB. “Nobby” was a another name used by initiates (students, colleagues and friends). I used to wonder if the position of vowels and consonants in that one was calculated or if the way you pronounced it said something else. A decipherer may find a world of dream furniture, even an anagram, when none was intended. Dante’s allusion to the “mother.” Portinari as a blind.

I am too much your mother
as half daughter your quiet
part to go where the gospel
has not been named if I am
willing to hunt in the woods
after sinners it’s only after
you will now will you listen
How could someone so completely not care and yet bother to care so completely? During the late 1980s and early 1990s, whenever I left home to teach I depended on his epistolary notes, though more often than not they appeared to have been thoughtlessly dashed off. This form of empathy, to say the very least, is a problem I have with personal relations. When I form a deep initial affection for a self that isn’t a self — absence can be transferred into a sense of present comfort. Even at an abstract theoretical level endless connections beckon. Looking back, I realize that the poems in *Thoreau* and the essays that make up *The Birth-mark* were liberated and disciplined by the power of his terse, invariably mixed messages. For both of us quotation was a way of writing so we were already familiar with an aesthetics of astonishment, concealment and forced constraint. There could never be documents enough. I took to signing my letters to him SH. There was something wonderful about having arrived at that. Loyal loving premeditation left us strictly free.

I keep you here to keep
your promise all that you
think I’ve wrought what

I see or do in the twilight
of time but keep forgetting
you keep coming back

The library of some American university but not Buffalo because more in community. Buildings are spread across fields in spring. Early American captivity and conversion narratives in the language of historical sedition and scorched-earth policy. “Woe to the dark mountains and fat valleys of Connecticut.” Neither Paul nor Apollo — the whole dying million operation. If poets were ever leaders of people, nine out of ten afterward altered to our present prehensile turn-around as printed.

Those bones the Indian tall
as tall lucky old man as you
cold chilliness yes yes you

with me here between us — of
our being together even in
english half english too late
there is no more — no less — there is always — more — no — or nothing more — nothing — or less and less certain — dappled — biology falters — is dappled falling — more faltering

≡ Jen Hofer

There is poetry when we realize that we possess nothing.
— John Cage

I can’t put a camera inside my head to photograph my own optic system as it is seeing, so I have to paint.
— Stan Brakhage

I have nothing to say and I am saying it, and that is poetry.
— John Cage

Under the most oppressive regimes, a man, a woman, can keep and experience their freedom: freedom is a state of mind. It is born (and often dies) in the mind.
— Etel Adnan

i am here and there is nothing to say, i am here
or i am not here. human kindness in glassless frames full of air constructed to stack in multiples trackless, hinged in instigated argument. irreconcilable differences. not tentacular, boxy. not prickly pear, jacaranda. poppy. hives.

the surface is lacy or the surface is not lacy.

peeled back — pocked — laced — “the inextinguishable fire” —

— indistinguishable — faceless — laced — sliced —
or frayed, flared out — no clear message — nothing
to expose — another — surface. no revelation

within the immediately distinguishable — the “known” unseen. without
confusion — the vision fissures and dead. — no revelation

exposure. no air or only air, heavy, unleashed, gristled
hollow with marrow and tar. blood gathers
on a skin, blossoms, clusters, gapes, the interior
of which is largely the same: a hollow full of forms.

the rest is history
which is hard to tell

quiet quiet vibrancy — noted — disturbed air — the telling
a bony chain — hammer anvil stirrup
— noted — we have been here before — to notice — — told to
signs of life from yesterday — tools for instrumental
vivacity — miniature — — vivacity — a horn or trumpet
into the larger largesse of nonsequential audition — hearing it
will be more like going to a storm — — unheard noises dropped
from above no sky — dropped noisily onto bodies formerly known
as people — formerly — like going to a storm
than like going to a concert — delicate very tiny
in each (no people) — each no more than — as any — matters more
— exactly — formerly
“command center” delineated indelicate balance
shortened life span from life, its sprung lines
radially bolted hemmed split unafraid wound
round cord unchained command to be done
luxuriantly to or for whom in the telling
traced artillery lacy counterarguments leaves
trembling loudly venomously unheard words
such as one cannot use (yearn in graceless grassy
arcs forgetting to remember so forgetting) such as
ventricles ripped shut in any language or hands
lying on the mown grass a memento of nothing, more
than nothing, such as fragile capillary possibility
cleaved into the premise (*music is movement
a dialectical confrontation with the course of time*)
feathery uncommunicative arsenal, terms, limits, limitless
munitions contributions, drilled through in front
of your eyes, snapped shut to attention too late
to be known inexacty is to be humming humming fevered
span to become prior in a skin thrumming tuneless
thus each organic body of a living being is a kind of divine machine or natural
automaton, which infinitely surpasses all artificial automata
words such as one cannot use (no matter how
great the sorrow no matter how flightless
the wing) hollow passages (rout, tunnel, route)
pulse, cup, channel (prescribed by the body) the body
which is sequenced striated channels forged
together at a distance properly on the surface
in excess such a small percentage – touched
– we want to touch – and to touch
things – pressed – into predetermined hollows –
– to form questions – to match to access
the answers inscribed – determinedly
– on the insides of their coffins

it is not true that each thing is itself and not another thing
it is not true that sounds are sounds and people are people
everything is taken literally, even silence on the insides

162
of their coffins: brute force and snifter glasses beaming in from downtown via satellite connection, the fabric gauzy cobwebbed nearly transparent as accusation as wing shear as mismatched thunder-flung air currents shooting tributaries into the so-what zone. we read the names and turn the page or we turn the page, we observe a moment of silence or we clatter onto the cracked porch to admire the cacti which can take decades to reach optimal admirable size. can we be retroactively horrified, retroactively responsible, retroactively recruited or conscientious or reverent, retroactively tinged with downy beatific tangerine rays of sheer zinging light torn against the unwilling fire-bombed retina? we invented napalm so we could use it. fill in the blank, the box, the inside of a coffin, the earth’s fashionable surface a mask or monocle for a less intelligible doorframe permitting a gapped view of a blasted empty space we mistake for false intelligence over the wire, we luxuriate in suspicion, chattering fine print on lapsed insurance documents smudged in triplicate, our smug coffin lined with newsprint headlined knowledge we do not need to know, or out of sight, or why it is advisable neither to inquire nor respond but rather curtsy prettily in our pirouetted petticoats bowing only slightly to avoid showing our panties. surly, we ask the satin to teach us to slink faster, slicker, sticklers for a buttery future we might enjoy alone, as sameness is simulated synthetic selfhood, or all too real.

but beware of that which is breathtakingly beautiful, for at any moment the telephone may ring or the airplane come down in a vacant lot. but rarely (nowadays) is a lot vacant.
SOURCES


*Bodyworlds: The Anatomical Exhibition of Real Human Bodies.*


Two Poems

E. Tracy Grinnell

World Is One World

Writing through “Anna Livia Plurabelle” from Finnegans Wake (for the first time)

Aloysius. Fugue takes its name from the words fugere and fugere – to flee and to pursue –

– ALFRED MANN

The Study of Fugue

It’s too late to run away…

– NORMAN O. BROWN

“John Cage”

For

in course telling look

a look the look

may stare
to face

or fight

the cold share

ages of what a

while where

taking the suns

all away in to

acres of plains

the spray of time

run ringing anew

eye and mine

and are moving

Again when stones

on hostile streets

are cold again

shift away the

time from time the justice

just us searching all possibly

mother all

no more

morE
fine history
and each of our
Unusual entrances
cobbled -ing
walking the lost the last, first
of years tell it now
poor less animas

over the high
high bottoms of self lost lust
an’ need a hush
restrained chorus
Ghost white and
very close
for flute throat

or for fire at odds
and the time

if it join entwines
away untimely tomb
limb against limb
to town the bomb
whole again

some hard acre age
old creatures in the midst

in the far far mist
a fire boat
to part in the hour
writing hearing nothing upon
hearing again
slowly the only
way here
Each hour had one against
one
different cry
to pursue
its thought in
perfect ideal moans

and it was
events revenge
that remedy
soFt ones and orphans
no save Us
and all
shiverinG water and all
and all comE back
and all talk they
and shall heavy
them hawks heaR us
all dark
and all moving
against facEs

oh Flee
Untimely object
it miGht might again
Along longingly
stem and stones moved
to silence caRried
the End to come
and go

“World Is One World” is part of a series of “improper mesostics,” begun as exercises in automatic writing. Though automatic writing (as Gertrude Stein conceived of it) is a bit dubious, I was nonetheless interested to see what sorts of texts could be generated while listening to the reading of another text, so writing and listening become the same act (but without transcribing, translating, or thinking, as much as is possible). In this case, the sound recording was of James Joyce reading a section from *Finnegans Wake*. The initial text generated by this ‘listening’ was raw, essentially a list of words. I worked the raw material into loose mesostics. I am using the form – with its backbone referent(s) – only as a guide, in order to allow development as poem, untethered.

– E. Tracy Grinnell
New York, 2005

REFERENCES

from *Wolf*

More than colors and forms, it is sounds and their arrangements that fashion societies

— JACQUES ATTALI

*Noise: The Political Economy of Music*

of the avalanche, towards
the end of conjecture
is a conjecture, beginning
to understand

the past as an exercise
in attention

to gaze
the underbelly, faithless
in part

make an urchin
of the fragment, like
rabble

(what avalanche?)

the only and
all for
the field is to field as
much a sound as
what is foretold

eye and an

throws back

168
sound is to sound

hand to hand

gesture that it does not move
but the day it does

throwbacks
along a lone way, scared up

out of fields, reconfigured
discordant vision splayed

fades out of step with
out of step step
out of
out of with

out out of with

the only noise
all that noise

(open-mouthed, aspirated, slipping from throat to
	onight, Militant

we are musical with an

for confusing something with nothing

the eaves drop

169
In 1994, Brown wrote me a letter (undated), from which I copy out these excerpts:

America’s (see H. Bloom *The American Religion* – which I have not read yet but am frustrated by its absence from my library) effort, heroic, to find Dionysus in Christ (we have yet to get beyond Blake…)

The only thing in your far flung letter that I must comment on is Cage. Since his death (!!!), my obsession. It is only after his death that I am able to shake off my Marx and Freud determinism and embrace Chance – no, “embrace” is the wrong word – You are the most scholarly of poets. On “Chance” I will give you first of all M. Serres *Le Parasite*: L. Mark, *Standard [illegible word]*: Chance and the Modern British Novel. Etc etc; but bibliography is not the way to go. You are probably right in thinking Cage is not for you but I have to. I will never forget Cage’s negative reaction to my first attempt at the Theme of love. You see from the text “Love hath reason” that the fool persists in his folly. And even on p 8–9…

Thinking of you, Jim Clifford, and many others

I ask the Woodstock generation

Have you ever seen a book – BL 624 R 36 1978 in our library – which may or may not be called *BE HERE NOW* – “This book is made in love for love any part of this may be reprinted to ring the bell of the dharma – Lama foundation 1971 Hanuman Foundation 1978” – with 18 pages of bibliography –

The Woodstock generation The Third Great Awakening but do they slumber still

Yrs truly

Headpiece stuffed with books.

---

Here, as my response to Brown’s lecture on Cage, are some of Brown’s thoughts expressed in it, followed by what they evoked for me.
our ears will be in much better condition:

I last visited the Browns in 1990. We had dinner at their house. That evening at least Brown was obsessed with the 1960s. He told me that his discovery of the poetry of Robert Duncan had made the writing of *Love’s Body* possible. I said that I thought it was William Blake that led to the breakdown of rational procedure in that book. No, it was Duncan, he insisted, then saying: And I couldn’t figure out how to get more of him into the book. Several times Brown asked me: didn’t *Caterpillar* mean more to you than *Sulfur* does? I wouldn’t agree, saying that I thought *Sulfur* was *Caterpillar* and then some.

with this lyre Orpheus, Amphion, founded the humanity of Greece

While Brown addresses some of the Upper Paleolithic painted caves in the “Nature” section of *Love’s Body*, he sees them as examples of the labyrinth, and fails to comment on what seems to be their most distinctive characteristics: they are not merely wandering places, or even dancing enclosures, but sites for some of the most early image-making.

The earliest musical instruments that we have examples of today may be flutes. The French ones are made of hollow bird bones while the German and Russian ones are of reindeer or bear bone. The problem is that we do not know for sure if the holes in them were made by human beings or carnivores. Some oval objects have been interpreted as “bull-roarers,” and certain mammoth bones, from Mezin, near Kiev, are thought to have been percussive instruments. A hip-bone xylophone? A jaw-bone rattle? Paul Bahn writes that such “instruments” have even been played by Soviet archeologists, who cut a record of their jam session (*Journey through the Ice Age*, 1998, pp. 84–85).

will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you, come a join the dance

Recalled Robert Kelly’s marvelous little (but tall) book, *Round Dances* (1964). Here is one of them:

Round Dance: Oracle

Delphos

  smooth curved out & over
  whelk body of justice
  end of act,
  voluted, our will turns toward it,
Volva, wisewoman, the prophecy of
when all turns to the fire & the sea turning,
man’s home, broadbacked the gods play.
inwards. What Delphi means. & where
that furrow is our only earth.
that gods turn.

plow, seeds of.

the tree hangs down

(it is the direct contact of vulva with vulva. cleft of the
earth, priestess suspended, three stools of justice, above
it. the smoke is sky, the words the answer)

it is the

body

answers

Harmony, the repressive principle of the real

In 1921, César Vallejo wrote the *ars poetica* of his revolutionary book, *Trilce* (1922), xxxvi, parts of which are the poetic equivalent of compositions by Bartok and Prokofiev. One stanza in xxxvi reads:

Refuse, all of you, to set foot
on the double security of Harmony.
Truly refuse symmetry.
Intervene in the conflict
of points that contend
in the most rutty of jousts
for the leap through the needle’s eye!

I am also here thinking of Ronald Johnson’s “dissonances through dissonances through dissonances” (he is quoting from a field guide to western birds) in *Ark* 37 (from his long poem, *Ark*, 1996). This poem is followed by “the invisible Spire,” which “consists of a tape recording made with the assistance of sound technician Roger Gans, under the auspices of Erik Bauersfeld for *KQED* in San Francisco. This was a project extending some six months with the end result being just over six minutes of ‘musics’ constructed out of recordings of songs of the birds of the eastern United States.”

Several years ago Andrew Schelling sent me this tape, which I enjoyed a great deal, then passing it along to Gary Snyder.
And here, as if it suddenly started raining in my workroom, lines from Francis Ponge’s poem, “Rain” (translated by Cid Corman in Things, 1971) drift in:

Rain, in the courtyard where I watch it fall, comes down at very varied speeds. At center it’s a fine discontinuous curtain (or network), an implacable but relatively slow downfall of probably rather light drops, a sempiternal precipitation of no vigor, an intense fraction of pure atmosphere. A little ways from the walls to right and left fall with more sound heavier, individuated drops. Here they seem the size of a grain of wheat, there of a pea, elsewhere almost of a taw. On tringles, on the balustrades of the window the rain runs horizontally while on the underside of the same obstacles it is hung with convex candies... From the adjoining gutter where it flows with the exertion of a deep stream of no great slope, it drops all at once in a perfectly vertical filament, somewhat thickly braided, to the ground where it breaks and jumps up in brilliant aiguillettes.

**Civilization originates in thunder**

Here, I quote Brown against himself:

Nothing happens for the first time.

*(Love’s Body, p.201)*

**a John Cage concert**

While I was living in Kyoto, Japan, 1962–1964, Cage and David Tudor came through for a concert. I attended, and invited Cage to lunch. I recall that we ate outside by a Zen temple. Cage brought a young Japanese photographer, Yasuhiro Yoshioka, with him. Yoshioka then sent me a copy of a book with photographs of nudes, not in the traditional sense, but as body parts (close-ups of pubic hair, erections that looked like the top of waterfalls, spread vaginas whose interior folds looked like distorted faces). Cage was very charming and talked rapturously about wild mushrooms. He had Wesleyan send me his book *Silence* (1961), which I couldn’t connect with. The thinking in it struck me – I was primed on Northrop Frye and Blake in those days – as “liquid.”
Listening to noise is a little like being killed

During the American invasion of Iraq, Spring 2003, I spent a few days in Baltimore at the AWP Conference. One night I got drunk and flipped out. “Where’s Caryl?” I shouted, pulling at Caryl’s arms. I attempted to protect her in a psychotic fit: we were in Baghdad under bombardment, nowhere to run.

The name of the god is Dionysus

While Dionysus is mentioned in *Hermes the Thief* (1947), he first appears as a force in Brown’s writing in *Life Against Death* (1959). Dionysus is associated with “body mysticism,” “poetry and psychoanalysis,” “dialectical imagination,” “dreaming,” and the struggle to circumvent repression and make the unconscious conscious. On the last page of the book, Brown proposes that “the dialectical” moves toward a Dionysian ego which “does not negate anymore.”

Like de Sade, Brown gravitates toward clusters.

It is space and emptiness that is finally urgently necessary at this point of history

A contrasting viewpoint is articulated by Declan McGonagle in a Foreword to *Leon Golub / Echoes of the Real*, by Jon Bird (2000):

I would argue that the flight from social reference and meaning in the most successful American art of the mid-twentieth century was not accidental. It was driven, we now know, by economic and political forces whose interest lay in the separation of art from social meaning and therefore the separation of the artist from a valued, functioning place in society. Those forces had the same interest in separating the worker from the value of his/her work. The contest in art is regularly characterized, and trivialized, by the media, as a contest between forms of figuration and abstraction, when the fundamental tension is actually between figure and ground — the figure of art/the artist and the ground of society.

Farce is nihilism

The word “farce” appears to come from old French “farsir,” meaning “to stuff,” leading to: to stuff with forcemeat (to be farce-fed?); to fill with
“to stuff,” leading to: to stuff with forcemeat (to be farce-fed?); to fill with mingled ingredients. Dramatically, it is defined (in Webster’s International Dictionary, 2nd Edition) as: “a light dramatic composition of satirical or humorous cast in which great latitude is allowed as to probability of happenings and naturalness of characters.”

Such does not strike me as nihilistic, but akin to what Mikhail Bakhtin (whose work Brown knew) called, via Rabelais, “grotesque realism.”

**Saturnalia, season of unbridled license**

Brown always wanting to cut loose.

Charles Olson: “I think I can take you into the *Odyssey* and explode the notion that the *Odyssey* was an epic at all, was, in fact, a drama – was written as such – and that it reflects at its late date the masked dance of the caves: that the *Odyssey* was itself what Euripides made a piece of it into the 5th century, a *saturos*, or, if I am right that the form is larger and deeper than the *saturos* had become by the 5th century, what we had better call grotesque...”

(Olson #10, p. 91)

Thus a dance drama in which a shaman quester wends his way through a labyrinth of monsters to be reunited with a human other – a fascinating tie-in of prehistory with history.

**Dionysus in Amerika**

Continuing to follow the trail of Dionysus in Brown’s writing.

At the end of the “Boundary” section in *Love’s Body* (p. 11), Dionysus reappears: “the mad god breaks down the boundaries; releases the prisoners; abolishes repression; and abolishes the *principium individuationis*, substituting for it the unity of man and the unity of man with nature.”

Violence and fire follow. “Madness is, Dionysus is, violence.” “The real prayer is to see this world go up in flames.” “But,” as Frederick Crews remarks, in his essay on Brown in *Out of My System* (1975), “then he reminds us that literal interpretations are vulgar; by making his fancy explicit, by allowing the repression to return uncensored, he has made it innocent of covert violence.”

“For a Dionysian or enthusiastic Christianity (and here we readers must remember that the etymology of ‘enthusiasm’ is from the Greek *enthusiasmos*, ‘to be inspired or possessed by the god’) we have to turn from Luther to Müntzer; to the Radical Reformation; to the lunatic fringe; *die Schwärmer*, the madmen, Luther called them.” (we are now in *Love’s Body*’s “Resurrection” section) While it is true that Thomas Müntzer (1489-1525) was a spiritualist (he
he also took over the Muhlhausen town council and set up a communistic theocracy. The price for his actions was beheading.

Brown’s context is strictly intellectual. “Freedom is poetry, taking liberties with words, breaking the rules of normal speech, violating common sense. Freedom is violence.”

(“Freedom” section, Love’s Body, p. 244)

that Dionysian body in which we are all members of one body

Dionysus makes his last appearance in Brown’s Apocalypse And/Or Metamorphosis (1991), in the final essay “Dionysus, 1990.” Exaggerations, gift-giving, consumption, and rawness are now added to the Dionysian arsenal. Gift-giving comes up via potlatch via Bataille’s vision of excess. Sadly there is no contact with planet Artaud. By now we understand that Brown wants to keep the action in theory and to tingle-tangle with the poets. From a poet’s viewpoint, Love’s Body is the masterpiece. Brown, in that book, took the suspicion that all literary criticism is repressed imagination i.e., the springs of poetry, as far as it had been taken to date. This book is a magnificent “defense of poetry” that ends on the cusp of poetry itself (“everything is only a metaphor; there is only poetry”), without attempting to stifle experimentation (Bloom) or to pulp poetry and to foreground philosophical inquiry as an ersatz prior (Derrida).

Chance operations avoid real uncertainty
the negative capability of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, and darkness

Off Keats, a cogent perception uttered by Apollo hanging by his heels from a Dionysian cliff. It helps me understand why I have so valued Jackson Mac Low’s lyrical prose and poetry and have been so uninterested in his “chance” work.

If there is any weakness in Brown’s implicit proposal that love’s body is poetry it may lie in the fact that in the last thirty years of his life he appears to have continued to read discourse for the most part, poetry for the lesser.

Devotion based on discipline

Jeff Clark (from Music and Suicide, 2004): “Obsession is made of emptiness, and Devotion of fulfillment. Obsession is ruled by compulsion, whereas Devotion is an act of free will. Obsession suffs itself and still can’t get enough, while Devotion offers its gift as a continual & inexhaustible
outpouring. Obsession is an impoverished state, Devotion as impossibly rich one. Obsession desperately needs to consume & appropriate the life-force of its object; Devotion takes nothing but brings everything.”

Shades of Blake’s the Devouring and the Prolific, but with a twenty-first-century twist.

*

Upon reading of Norman O. Brown’s death, I wrote out the following lines:

Strolling Lost Street, in hand with my noun.
Crammed America reeking of loss, apocalyptic disposables.
The paradise behind the veil separating my bear from its garbage.
Stratigraphy of loss.
“Pure loss pours through. I’m home,” versus the twin molten cornucopias sprouting from Uncle Sam’s dome.
Gated communities as citified limousines.
Do not tell the homeless she’s solved the gated man’s plush hell; the homeless woman suffers the literal frostbite of loss.
I arrive with Love’s Body fermenting 30 years in craw, a Cro-Magnon nexus, as if the earliest images were the catastrophic heralds of this interior guillotine: the beheading of the fear of loss.

28 January 2005
bardo of the émigré soul

Thérèse Bachand

an elastic sense of unfinished
perfection perfects the recording hall

[the wind is blowing backwards]

outside, spring is a work
of healthy tourists on sesame
and a thousand chess exercises

tranquility loosens the free
a syntax for unemployed clairvoyants
out to "destroy the order of things"

and music becomes an interval
of articulated sounds
but for the raw pitch
of a lover’s
cumming

Dionysus is out to thicken the plot
civilization foresees the altars of sacrifice:
7 American military personnel killed in Iraq today

your one body
being a continuum of the cheerful
is a farce of worms
and other unpredictably vertical

“Enthusiasm. It
furthers one to install helpers
and to set armies marching
... thus the ancient kings made music
in order to honor merit ...
inviting their ancestors to be present.”

[grandma was a mystic]
III

circa:
24 hours ahead of time

ADIVA:

“Dear one,
the crust is crunchy
and audible.
From the theater lectern
the relevance of my same
is that it was plucked
from a basket of dreaming …
even the carnival
falls apart,
a braying of noise
and illusion.”
October nocturne:

my dog/god
is no longer
sober and in reverse

[he shot out the doggy door]

divine influences
are the discipline
of retrospect
and excellent vision

“our father ... was a wild man”

but we are children
no longer
a family of
no father/ no mother

[... I’m younger than that now]

bardo of the émigré soul
ordinary language  
composes a rosary  
of determined choices

an inhuman timbre  
an amplitude  
of writing through

all [broken heaven talk]  
discordant with the crowd  
“... still I have trouble

auditioning the orchestra  
and bringing the knives and forks  
into fiery extinction”
vi

[your heavy silence
a measure of meter]

desire is now
out of control,
acres of a
roaring glorious
“beyond song,

a conflagration
of time
and an occupied
heart”
VII

let loose the blackbirds
from the towaway zone
this discussion can be

in the form of a pen
or mushrooms carried away by
no place to go

living is no straight appointment
as praising/ a tidal
of space and temple

“What are the islands to me
if you are lost,
what is Paros to me,
if your eyes draw back …
from the terror
and cold splendor of song
and its sacrifice?”
my household
a mayhem of deities
troping
a Norman procession

hymns/the strategy
of kings
raveled in both trance

and the mathematical
“the essence of magic
is operating from a distance”
the feminine psyche
all belly and bust
masked by torso
and horn

neither the thunderstorm
of a boombox
or rival/revel
of this wild hunt

if “hell is a cessation
of work”
than the field
becomes an atomic cloud

my fugue
stuttering in flight
working towards the woods
/words and love’s yes

“like the eyes of a man”
I
"the wind is blowing backwards ..."
John Cage,
_Sixty-One Mesostics Re and Not Re_ Norman O. Brown,
_Empty Words_

II
"Enthusiasm ..."
Hexagram 16,
_The I Ching of Book or Changes_,
the Richard Wilhelm Translation

IV
"our father was ... a wild man"
Stephen Brown, _eulogy_,
October 19, 2002
[... I’m younger than that now]
Bob Dylan,
_My Back Pages_

VI
"beyond song ..."
Therese Bachand,
_His Dusky Twin_

VII
"What are the islands to me ..."
H.D.,
"The Islands,"
_Collected Poems_

VIII
"Mind Memory Mountain"
"the essence ..."

IX
"hell is a cessation ..."
"like the eyes ..."
N.O. Brown & Nor Hall,
_Book of Ours_
Contributors’ Notes

MAHMOUD ABDELGHANI was born in Khouribga in 1967. Having completed a degree in literature, he moved to Rabat, where he now lives and works as a journalist. His first collection, Ghorfatoun varāa Al Ard [“Room behind the Earth”], was published in 1998.

Poet/translator MEHDĪ AKHRIF was born in Ksar el-Kebir in 1952. His work has been published throughout the Arab world, and has been translated into many languages. Akhrif himself has translated Octavio Paz and Fernando Pessoa into Arabic. The most recent of his many books, Kabro Hélène [“The Tombeau of Helen”], was published in 1998. He is Professor of Arabic literature in Assilah.

Thérèse Bachand was a resident of Los Angeles for 21 years, where she raised two daughters. Her forthcoming collection luce a cavallo won the 2005 Gertrude Stein Award from Green Integer Books. She currently resides in northern California.

Born in 1960 in Casablanca, AHMED BARAKAT was a champion of the prose poem in Moroccan poetry. He wrote only two collections of poetry – Abadan Ian Ussai’da Azzilzal [“I Shall Never Help the Earthquake”] (1991) and Dafatir at Khusran [“The Notebooks of Perdition”] (published posthumously, 1994) – before his untimely death at the age of 34.

AHMED BELIBDAOUI was born in 1948 in Salé. He began publishing his work in national newspapers in 1964, and has published four collections of poetry to date, most recently Houroufoun tasharo tahta ilkhinsar [“Syllables That Wake Beneath My Little Finger”] (2001).

Born in Marrakesh in 1934, artist FARID BELKAHIA studied in Paris, Prague, and Milan before returning to Morocco to become the Director of the École des Beaux Arts in Casablanca from 1962–1974. He is a leading exponent of contemporary Moroccan art and his work has been featured in numerous group and solo shows in his home country and abroad. His most recent exhibition, La dérive des continents, took place at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris in Spring 2005. He lives in Marrakesh.

Born in Fez in 1947, MOHAMMED BENTALHA has published four books of poetry, the latest being *Bi ‘aksil ma’* ["Countercurrent"] (2000). Co-founder of the House of Poetry in Casablanca, Behtalha is Professor of Arabic Literature in Marrakesh.

OMAR BERRADA'S work has appeared in the journal *Issue*. He has translated Joan Retallack, Jennifer Moxley, and Mark Ford, among others, into French. Berrada is a member of Double Change [www.doublechange.com] and is a contributing editor of *Les Lettres françaises*. He lives in Paris.

RACHEL BERS is an artist living in New York City. She received her MFA from Rhode Island School of Design in 2002, and is currently the Programming and Website Coordinator at Printed Matter, Inc., in New York.

NORMAN G. BROWN was born in El Oro, Mexico, in 1913. He graduated from Oxford in 1936 and received his Ph.D. from University of Wisconsin in 1942. He is the author of *Hermes the Thief* (1947), *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History* (1959), *Love's Body* (1966), *Closing Time* (1973), and *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis* (1991). He taught Classics at Wesleyan University and the University of Rochester before joining the faculty at University of California at Santa Cruz (1968–1981) where he was the first Professor of Humanities and taught in the History of Consciousness Department. He died in Santa Cruz, California, in 2002.

A designer and a painter, AHMED CHERKAOUI was born in Boujad in 1934. As a child, he studied calligraphy in Casablanca, and found early work designing posters, billboards and signs. He left Casablanca for Paris, first studying design at the Ecole des Métiers d’Art, then painting at the École des Beaux-Arts. Under the dual influence of the Paris school and the traditional visual language of Arabo-Berber culture – from Tifinagh (the Berber alphabet) to tattoos to weaving and pottery patterns, Cherkaoui painted and exhibited his work frequently in both Morocco and Paris. His premature death at 33 cut short his career, but not his fame or influence.

Poet/translator JALAL EL HAKMAOUI was born in Casablanca in 1965. In the 1990s he co-founded the journal *Israfil* ["Excess"] with Abdel-Ilah Salhi, and currently edits the magazine *Electron libre* ["Free Electron"], which began publication in 2004. His first book, *Shahhadat 'Uzuba* ["Affidavit of Marital Status"] was published in 1997 and a new collection, *Idhabou kalilan ila cinéma* ["So Go to The Movies"], is currently in press. He lives in Rabat, where he teaches translation.

JILALI GHARBAOUI was born in Jorf El Melh in 1930. Orphaned at ten, he began painting as a teenager and travelled to Paris on a scholarship in the early 1950s. While there he suffered the first of the many mental crises that would plague him the rest of his life. His return to Morocco in 1956 was followed by multiple suicide attempts, repeated stays in mental institutions, electroshock therapy, even a stay in the Benedictine monastery of Toumliline. Painting all the while, he travelled occasionally between Morocco and France. In 1971 he was found dead on park bench in Paris.

MATTHEW GRINNELL is an artist and writer living in Providence, Rhode Island. He is the founder of Island in the Sky, Inc. (www.islandinthesky.com), an illustration service that also runs a database (www.angledown.com) for artists and non-profit organizations.

E. TRACY GRINNELL is the author of the chapbook *Harmonics* (Melodeon Poetry Systems, 2000), *Music or Forgetting* (O Books, 2001), a duration ebook *Of the Frame* (first published by Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs as a joint chapbook with Rick Snyder’s *Flown Season*, 2004), *Some Clear Souvenir* (O Books, forthcoming), and the collaborative work *Quadriga* (o-o-n-g chapbooks, forthcoming) with Paul Foster Johnson.

MOHAMED HMoudane was born in El Maâziz in 1968 and immigrated to France in 1989. His work has appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies, and he has authored five collections of poetry to date, most recently *Blanche Mecanique* [“White Mechanism”] (2005). In addition to writing poetry he also translates, and in 2003 edited a special section of Moroccan poetry in the French journal *Poesie*. He lives and works in the Saint Denis suburb of Paris.

JEN HOFER’S recent publications include *Sin puertas visibles: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry by Mexican Women* (University of Pittsburgh Press and Ediciones Sin Nombre, 2003), *slide rule* (subpress, 2002), and the chapbooks *lawless* (Seeing Eye Books, 2003) and *sexopurosexoveloz* (translations of poetry by Dolores Dorantes, Seeing Eye Books, 2004). She lives in Los Angeles, California, where she is Academic Director of The Bridge Program, a free humanities program for low-income adults [www.thebridgeprogram.org].

SUSAN HOWE is the author of several books of poems and two books of criticism. Her collections of poetry include *Bed Hangings* (with Susan Bee,

**BRENDA HIJIMA** is the author of *Around Sea* (O Books, 2004). She runs Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs in Brooklyn, New York [yoyolabs@hotmail.com].

**ANDREW JORON** is author of *Fathom* (Black Square Editions), named by the *Village Voice* as one of the “top 25 books of 2003.” He resides in Berkeley, California.

**WAFAA LAMRANI** was born in Ksar El Kebir in 1960. She began publishing her work in the early 1980s, and is a frequent participant in international poetry festivals and colloquia. To date she has published four books of poetry, her most recent collection, *Hayat’tu luk* [“I Have Prepared for You”], was published in 2002.

Born in Marrakesh in 1945, **MOHOMED LOAKIRA** is actively involved in theater, music, and painting, as well as poetry. The most recent of his many publications, *Contre-jour*, was published in 2004. He was awarded the Prix Grand Atlas for his collection *Grain de nul desert* [“Grain of No Desert”] (1994), and has been named Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture.

**RACHIDA MADANI** was born in Tangier in 1951. She is the author of two collections: *Femme je suis* [“A Woman I Am”] (1981) and *Contes d’une tête tranchée* [“Tales of Head Cut-Off”] (2001). She lives in Tangier.

Born in Meknes in 1961, **ZOHRA MANSOURI** has published a single collection of poetry, *Taratiles* [“Chants”] (2000). She teaches Arabic literature in Meknes.

Born in Chaouen in 1936, **MOHAMMED MEIMOUNI** is the author of some ten books of poetry, all of which were brought together in *Collected Works*, published in 2002. Holding a degree in Arabic philology, Meimouni lives in Tétouan, where he is the director of a high school.

**ANGE MLINKO**’s second book, *Starred Wire*, was a National Poetry Series winner in 2004 and is now available from Coffee House Press. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.
Co-founder of the House of Poetry in Casablanca, HASSAN NAJMI was born in 1959 in Ben Ahmed. Author of five books of poetry, most recently *Almostahimates, Abadiatoun saghira* ["The Bathers followed by Little Eternity"], he has also published two novels and a collection of essays. He lives in Rabat, where he works as a journalist, and is currently President of the Moroccan Writers’ Union.

MOSTAFA NISSABOURI was born in Casablanca in 1943. A poet, translator, and art critic, he was a founding member of journals *Souffles* (1966) and *Intégral* (1971). His many works of poetry include *La mille et deuxième nuit* ["The One Thousand and Second Night"] (1975), and *Approche du désertique précédé de Aube* ["Approach to the Desert Space preceded by Aube"] (1999). *Approach to the Desert Space* was published in English translation by Seeing Eye Books in 2001.

JED RASULA’S book publications include *The American Poetry Wax Museum* (1996), *Imagining Language: An Anthology* (with Steve McCaffery, 1998), *This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American Poetry* (2002), and *Syncopations: The Stress of Innovation in Recent American Poetry* (2004). He is currently completing a book on modernism, called (at the moment) *Phantom Sensations*, and editing a book of modernist poetry (with Tim Conley) called *Burning City*. He has been Helen S. Lanier Distinguished Professor of English at University of Georgia since 1991. He received his Ph.D. in History of Consciousness, University of California at Santa Cruz.

JOAN RETALLACK’s most recent book of poetry, *Memnoir* (Post-Apollo Press) was also published in French translation (cip-Marseilles) in 2004. She is also the author of *The Poethical Wager* (University of California Press, 2004), *MUSICAGE: John Cage in Conversation with Joan Retallack*, for which she won the 1996 America Award in Belles-Lettres, and *Afterrimages* (both from Wesleyan University Press), *Mongrelisme* (Paradigm Press), *How to Do Things with Words* (Sun & Moon Classics), and *Errata Suite* (Edge Books). She received a Lannan Fellowship in 1998. She is John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Professor of Humanities at Bard College, where she teaches poetics and interdisciplinary arts.


ABDEL-ILLAH SALHI was born in Beni-Mellal in 1968. With Jalal El Hakmaoui he was co-founder of the 1990s poetry journal *Israft* ["Excess"]. His work has appeared in magazines in France and Morocco, and he has
just published a collection of poetry in Arabic, entitled *Koulama lamasto chaïa kasartoho* [“Each Time I Touch Something I Break It”]. He lives in Paris, where he works as a journalist.


**Born in Chaouen in 1931, Abdelkarim Tabbal** studied at Kairouan University in Fez, earning a degree in Islamic Studies. One of the founding members of the Chaouen Festival of Poetry in 1965, he has authored more than ten collections of poetry, and his *Complete Works* was published in 2000.

**Mark Tardi** is from Chicago, Illinois. His first book, *Euclid Shudders*, was published by Litmus Press. A chapbook from his new manuscript, *Airport Music* (Bronze Skull Press), was recently published, as was a chapbook on Polish composer Fryderyk Chopin called *Part First – Chopin’s Feet* (g-o-n-g chapbooks).

**Anne Tardos** is working on a new series of poems and continues to maintain the web sites www.annetardos.com and www.jacksonmaclow.com whenever she has a free minute.

**Rosmarie Waldrop**’s most recent books of poetry are *Blindsight* (New Directions) and *Love, Like Pronouns* (Omnidawn). The memoir, *Lavish Absence: Recalling and Rereading Edmond Jabès*, was published by Wesleyan University Press, and a book of essays, *Dissonance (if you are interested)*, is just out from University of Alabama Press.

**Diane Ward** was born in Washington, DC, in 1956 and attended the Corcoran School of Art before moving to New York City and then to Los Angeles. Her work recently appeared in the Quebec journal *Estuaire*, and new work is forthcoming in the series *Heretical Texts*, edited by Bill Marsh.

**Mubarak Wassat** was born in Mazinda in 1955. A poet and translator, he has published two collections of poetry and has translated Stéphane Mallarmé, René Char, and Mohammed Dib into Arabic. His most recent book, *Mahfujan bi Arkhabilat…‘ala daraj almeyah al’ameeqa…Rayatul Hawa* [“Surrounded by Peninsulas followed by Standard of the Air”], was published in 2001.


RICHARD K. WINSLOW lives in Antrim, New Hampshire. He knew both Norman O. Brown and John Cage at Wesleyan University in the 60s when Cage was a Fellow at Wesleyan’s Center for Advanced Studies, Brown a Professor of Classics and he himself Professor of Music. He counts himself fortunate to have been a friend of each. During his years at Wesleyan, he oversaw the transformation of a small, traditional music department into a large one that embraced both the avant-garde and world music. It was he who arranged for Cage’s residency at the Wesleyan Center for Advanced Studies.
other books now available:

Danielle Collober: Notebooks 1956 – 1978
translated by Norma Cole

Inner China
Eva Sjödin
translated by Jennifer Hayashida

The Mudra
Kerri Sonnenberg

Emptied of All Ships
Stacy Szymaszek

Euclid Shudders
Mark Tardi

The House Seen from Nowhere
Keith Waldrop

Another Kind of Tenderness
Xue Di
translated by Keith Waldrop, Forrest Gander,
Theodore Deppe, Sue Ellen Thompson,
Stephen Thomas, and others.