

The Dwelling Place
Edited by Ron Silliman

That which exists
through itself
is what is called meaning
—Olson

9 poets out of the present, average age 28, whose work might be said to "cluster" about such magazines as *This*, *Big Deal*, *Tottel's*, the recent *Doones* supplements, the Andrews-edited issue of *Toothpick*, etc. Called variously "language centered," "minimal," "non-referential formalism," "diminished referentiality," "structuralist." Not a *group* but a *tendency* in the work of many.

Bruce Andrews: 3 Poems

ale
rate
an
lint late
lain
nil
at air
tail let
ran nit
near tin
lean nile
ten net
rile tern
neat rail
lair
net lit lent
tan
lane
lint

(37)

Lenin and Philosophy

2 oceans

a scarf of

detective

bulletproof

crimping

bed one more

my parents

listen!

ice picks

flatred

talk to interrupt

clove

stragglers

embrace

an insect right here

albe
skep
trof
jush
numb
pffo neig
whep
rown
grat vidu iide mons
chal dows dhel fniw
gsid prog
sysa benn ctem
hosp nrev huos
cbal
focu egis
notd dtic tion
nari nega
butw
ishm
lota

1

he ate the English and he the bikers called down on the hog farm "most curled up" peaches
apricots plums pears Henry took the envelope and left to go to his office a swoon fakes them out
how a dentist vendor Italian such elusive gender endings a fiery dealership roaches and butts a lift
to the new onramp he buys his dresses at Philco dealers a big kind of fierce gazing into the
persimmon the lilacs do moo a peculiar presence he said yawning an act and its warp (its harp?
you said) a faked broom a Geo Washington on the square some people elementarily taking it
down no units entire sweeps of dry scansion geodesic dome a rather milky city piles of junk the
room but better lots of people riding around and pulling out their knives great yellowy sources of
light and pillars (the Palace of Fine Arts) the kid's coated tongue a bug a disease a childhood
disease and then all right ready to fascinate draws bugs on the wall surprised to know how awful
they thought great flakes coming off finally sugar

3

Day after day there is time to disappear when reappearing take care not to waste yourself. Things
made possible: percentages whipping out their numbers. An easy picture floats by and then a hard
one. A reasonableness. . . . hits the pot and misses. "Why John," he said. "Why Mary," she said.
They both planted some corrections on the roof, to watch them spout into dahlias. And they did,
but it took several winters. And then they lasted and then the house fell down and so a new
premium was needed. A letter, some fires, a few staples, and an incredible continuity was
released. "Why not magic?" she wrote home, saving it for last.

there is on time
to there is to time
as of district
to be is at there
being as plain as though
there be that other there
as no as that though is plain
as other as yes in those as being
stairs

wakes
of in the next gets
at about a one small size
about the one of a last
as long as the small though
what is in fact
no other
which is in last gets out
size

start
out of what is a little
hands
a kind of last one up to it
stairs though more and more
is there one or small
were and one water were
often

flies
another of the lights and in a phrase
where in another this stay

every each that time
is on out there
every occurs of each
pass losses
with the with and the stay
on to the wakes
moves
losses

BARRY'S SHOPPING BAG WAS HERE

HICKSVILL

HERE IS WHERE FEELING DESCRIBED AS 'DRAINING AWAY' OCCURRED AS BARRY'S TRAIN 'PULLED OUT'. SADNESS WAS NOW (AN EVOLUTIONARY WORD) WELL DEVELOPED AGAINST THE USUAL SUPERFICIAL INVESTIGATION OF PARTING & ITS TIME-GEOGRAPHY INGREDIENTS. A REPOSITIONING FOR FINAL TRAIN DISSAPPEARANCE OBSERVATION.

REPOSITIONING AREA

(HOW CAN HE BE NOW EXISTING THERE, MYSELF HERE & THE DISTANCE INCREASING)

SUN-SHADE LINE

WE HAD STOOD HERE

JUNE 10, 73 LEE DEJASU

listing

4 AM JULY 6 1973

DEFERRALS
 punctuations
 ordering
 of words
 thought
 physical placement
 PROCESS AS CONTENT



AN EVOLUTION WITH CURRENT 'HUMANES' AS ONLY PART.
 'SCIENCE FICTION' - 'FANTASY' AS BEING ARENA FABRIC
 LANDSCAPE INDICATORS
 CURRENT HUMAN EXTINCTION-
 EVOLVEMENT
 BODY PART REPLACEMENT
 50 YEARS. 200 YEARS. 5000 YEARS
 60,000 YEARS. COMPUTER BRAIN
 DEVELOPMENT
 WHO IS ANYBODY TRYING
 TO FEEL?
 NEUROTIC DISSOCIATIVE
 INSTANCES.

LEE DEJASU

slclhr:ringa/ethnopoetics one/2/1975

CODICIL

collides triangle lucid nap
broad wet exertion
sift plunges
halo shallows
lean-to precocious
trickle blade
railing fluency plankton abrupt
sea's rib
glows lobes
+

GIBBON'S GIBSON

a flack sapphic a
grist
breeder
a flack sapphic a
heart
a flack sapphic a
fishman
a flack sapphic a
a flack sapphic a
monks
a flack sapphic a
physic
a flack sapphic a
a flack sapphic a
Sumer
a dread caliphs a
a flack sapphic a
panth
a flack sapphic a

ground	waters	graced
clippt	tender	window
church	vagued	finish
looked	tenant	glance
stride	should	curler

missing	goodbye
bounced	laughter
middles	passion
against	moments
removed	tankers

shout
coats
greet
start
inner
looks
stave
ghost
semen
ocean

lane
tide
ache
walk
tack
flow
mark
hint
spin
pint

some old guys with scythes

EMILY

thumpa

thumpa

thumpa

thump

bent over

to go faster

I drink rice

84

48

24

42

M

IS FOR

MAHONEY

within the family
there are sweet exchanges

JOE

JOE

sol sol ti do

you cough like

two trees

three comedians

light &
and shade

obtain from the brook

rain drops the first of many

roar of the tumblers

of life days like

David Melnick: 2 Poems from *Pcoet*

mel
ethwe fub sditas

ehfoie ruax oir
passo biot
qla fa

woe eroa
asrglry s
wea tiro bohmuluk
codfix a, azz oboi

+

seta
colece
puilse, i
canoe
it spear heieo

as Rea, cinct pp
pools we sly drosp
Geianto

(o sordea, o weedsea!)

Ron Silliman: *Tri*

Does was
though thousand was
till precise
value circle ways
for centuries a
world of such
followed then
slopes display
and luminaries
that is what
now the whole
men from many
of the hemisphere
of the ancient
of the stellar
angles the means for
to a restricted group
of references
flourish in the middle
geodetic marker
of all wisdom
megalithic
of the equinoxes
zealot as had been
evoked
of the scored lines
stadia but more
latitude at the pole
of latitude
city was intended
root of the priests
that is what
derangement
founder
oracle
cut

spin
 daguerrotype
 whips pile
 bashfully
 Anglo
 of their boots so
 builder
 candle to the marks
 the building
 solar year
 the roof girder
 gravity of mud
 of pyramidologists
 three lengths of the year
 portcullis
 at the zenith
 and wood henges
 meridian pillar star
 obtain a true
 suggests
 cream white tube
 adduced by Zaba prove
 proctor could
 night at a slant
 constricted ascending
 megalomaniac
 the bull's thigh
 series of flat
 semicircular
 set by the wall
 served as
 deduce
 cuneiform to units
 cubits
 into their interiors
 facade
 zones into seven
 fix
 circumpolar
 daub
 source in ochre
 gravel down
 rock
 out
 casing
 means
 protuberances
 floated
 about
 red
 boat
 gang

deviate
acute
prefer
joins
for
angle
lack
which
sides
had
that
led
was
of
fronts
right
what
well
with
western
this
he
those
how
bird
yard
rule
at
had
would
this
degree
their
metal
other
shine
not
gathers
topped
toward
wrote
guardian
vessel
senses
also
by
small
but
unit
common
cube
if

You're inside a building and then outside it. Then 10 miles away, and can barely visualize it — seeing the ground from the air in slow motion. At the same time you feel the helicopter sink into the street. The jet slips through a cloud.

The *simultaneous* as an attribute of the *not felt*. The *literal* as an attribute of the *felt*. A straightforward literal worldly interest in the variety and implications of things.

A subscription to a magazine held as lightly entertaining and wholly dispensable. A report card — a blessing — an earned kiss. The variegated horticulture seen through the ambient light. The little boxes of plants, ceramic pots, cut green stems, simple duties.

Complicated management of simple duties. You buy a subscription to a magazine, the magazine comes and you look at it, worry it out. Magazines, it's possible?

METHODICAL DESCRIPTIVE PROSE

Something has to have bounds in order to see it. A sentence, with capital letter at front and period at end, so can be seen. No internal supports necessary to give it a place. So its meaning, relative to those internal supports, supposing they exist, is ambiguous. Sentences like vases to be filled with water, then put plants in on top. Or sentences rolling out in phrase by phrase elaboration until an arbitrary pause puts an end to them. A sentence which, like speech, is the object of its own condition, that is, like speech unfolding and working around an idea, then breaking for space-filling words. There is one thing moving, then there is speech movement. What if that one thing refuses to budge? Then there is little speech. All sit dumb on their hands. No issue presents itself — that's always a hard one, what gives you the cue? Something must reach a point of self-definition or it won't be uttered, like a point of information or observation — "My the clouds are blue" — wouldn't be said if you couldn't see the clouds or feel the blue. Low threshold — or you say one thing and end up telling your life story. Maybe if you kept that one thing too close to what said you'd end up at odds. So all act is/is not self-realized; that is, act realized itself. "Whatever you say tells the truth — partakes of that order." It may not, if telling the truth is something other than what you say. Then again, again. If what you say has the magic-

formula to unlock genetic information and bone structure, cause collapse of tissues. If it told us what it was, if it were heard right. It's not heard right, said right, does not convey complete information, may not convince of integrity or sincerity if abstractions are the 1/2 issue. If context puts anything concrete resting on a deep chasm of abstraction. Not merely to say it's just "electrical impulse" across centuries, condenser, a quantum discharge considering the medium, when speech may be a little confused and jumpy itself. The parenthetical is power — an address other than the matter expressed. Declaimed to the open air? Declaimed to its limits, giving itself limits. The matter extends into space, unfortunately we were not there to pick up on it, otherwise might have learned something. "There, it is broken." Anyone will do what they can, emigrate to South America, build San Jose, tell any story they can get away with. Until they are stopped.

Ron Silliman: Surprised by Sign (Notes on Nine)

1. What connects these writers beyond my *impression* of a connection is what I take to be a community of concern for language as the center of whatever activity poems might be, and for poetry itself as the "perfection of new forms as additions to nature." Which raises questions, problems, answers, solutions, recalls old modes (half-forgotten modernists such as Arensberg, say, or the work of certain Russian Futurists) and reflects concerns that have not previously been so extensively explored in the context of American poetry (e.g., for the work of such as Lacan or Barthes) Some have come to this more or less isolately, while others have found use in the work of their peers. Inevitably, present correspondences will fade as each body of work follows the trajectory of its own logic; others may develop. What this is, then, is a fix-in-time of writing which bears a family resemblance.

2. Any poem's a language: a vocabulary plus a set of rules by which to process it. For example, English terms which are aural equivalents to words and word-parts of Latin + the structure of the poems of Catullus. More commonly: the usual vocabulary of the writer + a stylized conception of speech. But if what one goes after is a direct confrontation with language, words (Grenier: "What now I want . . . is the word way back in the head"; or as Charles Bernstein, a younger, Stein-impacted writer, puts it: "wordness") or beyond (Tom Clark, prefacing *Big Sky 3*, implies that for Coolidge words are a surface intended to reveal "Neural activity . . . a multiplicity of simultaneous operations functioning in a continuum. The basis for the system is frequency modulation"), what vocabulary, what set of rules? First, neither the words nor the processes of the poem must point out or away from the poem itself, a literal reading of Creeley's "poems are not referential, or at least not importantly so," must not carry the reader's attention away from the fact of what's at hand. Even the use of the line to describe speech (Grenier again: "Why imitate 'speech' . . . ? (I)t is *only* such. *To me, all speeches say the same thing*"). What it finally becomes, as Grenier so clearly saw in "On Speech" (*This 1*) is "First question: where are the words most themselves?"

3. Words are not, finally, non-referential. For they originate in interactions with the world. Even Melnick's metalanguage is based in its relation to a vocabulary of *derived* terms. What can be done, however, is to diminish the reference, an activity common to the work of all nine. By the creation of non-referring structures (Coolidge, DiPalma. Andrews), disruption of context (Grenier, DeJasu), forcing the meanings in upon themselves until they cancel out or melt (Watten, the poem *Tri*, and, elsewhere, in the work of Michael Palmer). By effacing one or more elements of referential language (a tactic commonly employed by the Russian Futurists), the

balance within and between the words shifts, redistributes. Consider the *i* in *I drink rice* as a constant around which audio-visual variants are developed, the clarity a consequence of the reduction of context. Or Watten's self-referring *Methodical Descriptive Prose*, innermost unit (word) pointing out to the sentence(s), outermost unit (paragraph) aimed back in, to the same point. Or the flickering reoccurrences of information (letter, sound, quantity, meaning) in Coolidge's work, each term of equal import (the one truly Steinian element in his writing). Or DeJasu's presentation of signifiers *with* (the at least hypothetical, implied) signifieds, the referential nature of emotional or intellectual discourse "mapped out," an ironic mode. Roland Barthes, in the essay "Is There Any Poetic Writing?" (*Writing Degree Zero*, 1953), confronts diminished referentiality as achieved by effacing *connections* (best present example: DiPalma's third poem: "it is the Word which is 'the dwelling place' . . . it shines with an infinite freedom and prepares to radiate towards innumerable uncertain and possible connections. Fixed connections being abolished, the word is left only with a vertical project, it is like a monolith, or a pillar which plunges into a totality of meanings, reflexes and recollections")

4. The "Hunger of the Word," desire to become, as Coolidge once in correspondence noted, "growing word plant," is as old as "in the beginning, etc." (The vertical in Shakespeare: "Edgar I nothing am.") In Russia, 1912-1930, the Futurists (Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov, Kamensky, Zdanevich, Pasternak, the Burliuks, Kruchenyk et al) and their Kenners, the Formalists (Shklovsky, Tynjanov, Brik, Jakobson), aimed at it, head on. Shklovsky: "Words are a human need even apart from meaning," or, elsewhere, "all that the work of poetic schools amounts to is the acquisition and demonstration of new devices for deploying and elaborating verbal materials." Such views can be traced back to the foundations of Russian Litcrit (Potebnya, 1835-91, saw poetry as a defense mechanism of the word, to assert the word's autonomy in the face of external forces, and argued even that "the word is art, more exactly, poetry," a century before Grenier's work), finding their most common Futurist expression in the neologism (Mayakovsky "invented" over 2,000 words), and their wildest (and most useful in the present sense) extension in the theory of *zannm*, and the *zaumniks* of the group called 41° (Kruchenyk, Khlebnikov, Zdanevich), a "transrational" language (cf., here, the poems of Melnick and Andrews) made up of word-fragments, non-words sounding wordish, words with letters rearranged in alphabetical order, with ranD0m capiTaLS, etc. (Zdanevich, with sophisticated graphic dimensions a la Finlay, and exacting instructions for pronunciation, seems almost a direct ancestor of some of the work of Mac Low and Schwerner).

5. Beyond such "cues" as coneretism or certain tribal literatures, the work of two men ought also to be noted as fire source: Creeley and Eigner. Creeley's work, both in the poems and in such

essays as "To Define" and "Poems are a complex," has sensitized many to the possibilities of getting at, to, in the word. Eigner, by fact of physical situation, has take the logic of speech as such out of discourse, creating sequences of presences. Power to their words.

6. The descriptive term, by fact of its intention, does not exist, for its substance lays elsewhere, in table, sky, chair. But is there a grammar capable of imposing order on a room, the couch in a corner as some predication? The paradox of Quine's Pegasus (*Word & Object*, p. 176) is not in the language, but rather a specific literary tradition, wherein words are transparent and one could not see Dickens as primarily a writer of phrases. Certainly such assumptions did not control Sterne's composition of *Shandy*. Nor a Balinese *Ketjak*, that powerful oral form. Language exists, is real, has weight, is physical: one finds in tribal literatures poetries of sound or the visible more than equal to a Cobbing or a Furnival. The bias of course was against the "pre-literate," a question of domination previous to information. If these aspects of language have come to a legitimization, seen now as integral faculties of *mind* (in the Chomskian usage of that term), during the modern and so-called post-modern periods, it has principally been through the indirect influence of the visual arts, the likes of Picasso who first began to accept and explore the possibilities of that universe. One sees in the deliberate primitivism of a Harry Crosby a tendency that could be followed through Finlay or Gomringer to the "sophisticated" machines of Coolidge (or, to turn to a slightly older worker, one could argue that the Anglo-American body of poetry most invested with a heritage of the literature of tribal cultures is that produced by MacLow via computers). Such poetry is no longer simply an extension of the formal grammars of the written.

Bruce Andrews. Books: *Edge, A Cappella, Corona*. "(A) stress on these characteristics and using them as organizing principles when syntax is attenuated: sound, texture, weight, discreteness, silence, targets, rhythms, presence, physicality." Professor of Political Science, Fordham University.

Barbara Baracks. Edits *Big Deal*. The *Note* works are prose modes where referents shift constantly, often from word to word, avoiding larger, generalized "reference areas." Words "as objects" posited into a genre which, according to Barthes, "is relational (I)t extends, as soon as it is uttered, towards other words, so as to form a superficial chain of intentions."

Clark Coolidge. Books include *Space* and *The Maintains*. Robert Sward, panning the early pamphlet *Flag Flutter & U.S. Electric*, presents the illusionist objections to diminished referentiality and language-centered writing: "The *chic*, trivial piling up of

images . . . is finally a bore. . . . Clark Coolidge's poems are virtually without voice The poems exist as pointless curios, objects that stand in an abstract time and a vacant space." Sward refuses to permit any possibility that language itself might be an object of direct experience, even confusing language with "images." (As to voice, CC's personality is a clear, identifiable pulse present in all his mature work; what Sward *means* is that his poems do not describe a speech.) Where Grenier sees the material of writing as word, a point, CC sees it as language, a plane: "feeling of huge lingual continua grinding/humming onward in back of everything, even when unseen/unheard, like radio waves. Establishing the spacetime plane which words set up, building off with its vectoring-geometries: setups of certain words seem to make holes in that surface establishing surprising connects back to here. Words out of syntactical sequence always feel to me like numbers out of order: establishing sense of simultaneity of different time-planes." *A B's* vocabulary is derived from a previous text of Coolidge's, which itself had a previous source. "I recall, in early-60's, getting totally disgusted with the limited range of words coming out of my head. . . . I figured that if one were to make something from words one should have as close as possible to *all* words/syntax ready to hand. & fed back into mind. I kept thinking of painters'/musicians' relation to their materials. Dependence on the rack of words a writer would have behaviorally as a matter of course began to seem an unnecessary blockage." At work on a 1000 page poem.

Lee De Jasu. A photographer whose interest in information led him into word's work, a background more in the tradition of Ed Ruscha, Joseph Kosuth, et al, than that of Bob Brown. Calling it "field poetry," LDJ literally maps out perceptions, emotions, posits the contradictions between cognition and recognition at the center.

Ray Di Palma. Ten books, including SOLI. The most accomplished in traditional forms, Ray was the first to focus on Barthes' work as source. In *Codicil* each line is a unit of its own, very nearly separate poems, joined by recurrences, e.g., the letter *l*. In *ground waters grated* even the rhythm-as-continuum is removed. Each term is isolate, caught between the distance from itself and any other term on a horizontal axis, and its proximity to any on the vertical. Rather than having each word float in the page's space (cf. the proposed waterpoems of Jim Rosenberg: words scribed on clear plastic cards left floating in a pool or lake, the reader to swim from term to term), these are locked in. As horizontal associations suggest movement, a narration of affect, the vertical proposes paradigms.

Robert Grenier. Book: *Dusk Road Games*. Co-translator: *Selected Poems of Georg Trakl*. Co-edited *This* (1-5). "In the process of writing what does not then occur in the head is a distraction." Equivalent to Merleau-Ponty's "We write in perceived space." "Words are words," WCW said, but Grenier has been the first to make literal use of this. Not minimalism but gigantism: the terms are so reduced that each facet is magnified, one hears every letter, one hears the spaces between every letter. The clarity of formal process possible when the elements are reduced as radically as in his poems becomes in his work not a tone or aridness but elegance by the fact of such precision as "of life days like."

David Melnick. Books: *Eclogs*, *Pcoet*. In December 1912, Alexei Kruchenykh wrote a poem with no "real" words in it: its terms were not simply neologisms or distortions of existing language, but letters and phonemes structured largely out of K's sense of sound. By April 1913, he had developed this into a full-fledged poetics, which he called *zaum*. Of it, Markov has written "*zaum* looked like the outer limit of poetry, its extreme and pure manifestation, where sound creates meaning (or meanings) and is not subordinated to it. It also puts a definite emphasis on the word as an artistic medium rather than as a means of communication." Melnick, in a statement written for *Occident*, has quoted Ruth Benedict to the effect of "The number of sounds that can be produced by our vocal cords and our oral and nasal cavities are practically unlimited. The three or four dozen of the English language are a selection which coincides not even with those of such closely related dialects as German and French. A language that used even a few hundreds of the possible — and actually recorded — phonetic elements could not be used for communication." The major collection of the group 41° was entitled *To Sofia Georgievna Melnikova*.

Ron Silliman. Four books include *Mohawk* and *Nox*. Edits *Tottel's*. Stella: "I always get into arguments with people who want to retain old values in painting — the humanistic values that they always find on the canvas. If you pin them down, they always end up asserting there is something there besides the paint on the canvas." Shklovsky, in *Resurrection of the Word* (1914), "We do not experience the familiar, we do not see it, we recognize it. We do not see the walls of our rooms. We find it very difficult to catch mistakes when reading proof (especially if it is in a language we are very used to), the reason being that we cannot force ourselves to see, to read, and not just 'recognize,' a familiar word." Ronald Johnson: "Everybody's using texts. Nobody's saying very much about it." Cf. Burroughs, Coolidge, Andrews, Kathy Acker or Johnson's own use of Milton in *Radios*.

Barrett Watten. Edits *This*. The sentence as unit versus the difficulty of speech as act. Coolidge: "Curved space?" Watten: "Yeah, but space, in Olson's sense seems to me like a context for the development of whatever So that mode of development has to do with a certain thing that moves, in other words you have a surface, the poem develops along that surface What I'm trying to get at is there's this image of all experience, like say Stein's image of all language, a thing that presses in on you, involving some response."

San Francisco
Christmas 1973

(Note: in the months since this gathering, a number of other writers have moved into this area. Attention is due, particularly, to the work of Charles Hine, Alan Sondheim, Charles Bernstein, The Black Tarantula, Lynne Dreyer, and Keith and Rosmarie Waldrop.)