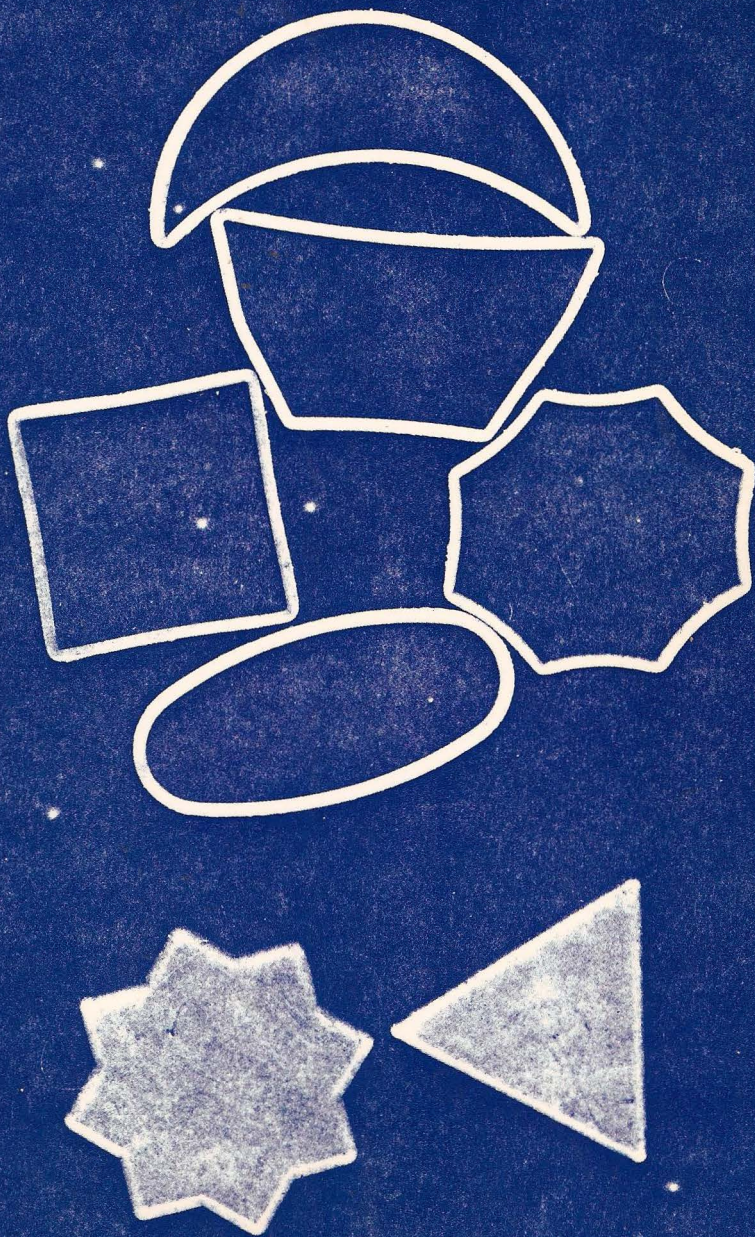


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Summer, 1981

Alan Bernheimer:	
<i>Subject Matter: a Talk</i>	5
Stephen Rodefer:	
<i>Sleeping With the Light On</i>	26
Barrett Watten:	
<i>Marsden Hartley</i>	35
Carla Harryman:	
<i>Third Man</i>	41
Michael Palmer:	
<i>Autobiography, Memory and Mechanisms of Concealment</i> <i>(Part 1 or One Part): a Talk</i>	59
Kathy Acker:	
<i>The Beginning of Romance</i>	78
Kit Robinson:	
<i>A Sentimental Journey</i>	86
Lyn Hejinian:	
<i>The Green; Dormer</i>	100

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Subject Matter

Alan Bernheimer:

A debate covering a wide area. Unsurpassed in his own branch. Expenses beyond my compass. In every department of human activity. Belongs to the domain of philosophy. Distinguished in many fields; is beyond the field of vision. In the whole gamut of crime. Stick to your last. Unconscious of his limits. Casuistry is not my line. A very unsuitable locale. Talking beside the point. It is not our province to inquire. Comes within the purview of the Act. Constantly straying from the question. Outside the range of practical politics. Operating within a narrow radius. In the whole realm of Medicine. Don't travel outside the record. Such evidence is precluded by our reference. In the region of metaphysics. Any note in the lower register. A scene of confusion. Find scope for one's powers; limit the scope of the inquiry. Useful in his own sphere. Wanders from the subject. Get to the end of one's tether. Has chosen an ill defined theme. (H.W. Fowler)

* * *

A field is a space proper to something, property to, property, of a bull seeing red if that is what you are wearing. Red is a property of color that makes sense. Sense is what you make of the world. The word is your oyster, which has an *r* in it. The English have a silent *r*, which they pronounce *dee*. "Divinity with the small crystals is veddy smooth and velvety on the palate." "Oh God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself the king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams." Good English, Shakespeare. Bad about what? What is this about?

What is about? About is a preposition. It takes a noun. It takes a noun to know one. It takes a pronoun to pronounce one. But a preposition comes first. It puts a noun in an abstract relation—time, position, direction, possession—with some other word. But time, position, direction, and possession don't say much about *about*. It must be very abstract. It has a little of position. The field is about the bull. Also, the bull is about the field somewhere. Be exact.

The object of the preposition is to boss the noun. The boss is the subject. The subject is . . . the subject. In plain sight, at this level.

* * *

Soft ball, medium soft ball, medium firm ball, firm ball, hard ball, solid ball, real hard, very hard, hardens, threads, soft crack, crack, crackles, cracks and hops, hairs, spins hairs, strings, snaps, breaks, and brittle.

The subject is candy making. The subject matter is sugar syrup, sugar in solution that crystallizes in different ways, takes different forms as it cools, depending how it has been treated—how hot it has been cooked. When a small portion of the syrup is dropped into ice water, it takes these forms.

Syrup cooked to the soft ball stage is used for fondant, fudge, and penuchi. Syrup cooked to a firmer ball is used for caramel. Still firmer, and it is used for popcorn balls, nougat, divinity, and some taffies. Hard but not brittle, for butterscotch and taffies. Hard crack stage with separate threads, for brittles and glacés.

This subject matter has been treated very scientifically in *Experimental Cookery*, by Belle Lowe. It is a highly quantified, empirical cuisine. The chapter on eggs has an analysis of angel cakes with plates of cross sections showing the different textures resulting from folding the flour with forty, sixty, and eighty strokes, and from beating the egg whites to varying degrees. Another plate shows the “standing-up quality of yolk and white of a fresh and a deteriorated egg.”

Two longhorn Cheddar cheeses, a youngster of six days and veteran of 82 days, are subjected to the rarebit test for fifty days. The young one consistently provides miserable rarebits.

Another interesting tidbit typical of the book concerns the sterilizing properties of silver. “Less silver than is ordinarily transferred to food from silverware is required to sterilize drinking water.”

Wherever there is subject matter, there is someone paying attention to it, there is a treatment of or attitude towards it. Food is one example we love to eat.

Mr. Barbee and I had a glass of amontillado, and then Mrs. Barbee brought out three bowls of terrapin stew, Southern style, so hot it was bubbling. The three of us sat down, and while we ate, Mrs. Barbee gave me a list of the things in the stew. She said it contained the meat, hearts, and livers of two diamondbacks killed early that day, eight yolks of hard-boiled eggs that had been pounded up and passed through a sieve,

a half pound of yellow country butter, two pints of thick cream, a little flour, a pinch of salt, a dash of nutmeg, and a glass and a half of amontillado. The meat came off the terrapins' tiny bones with a touch of the spoon, and it tasted like delicate baby mushrooms. I had a second and a third helping. The day was clear and cool, and sitting there, drinking dry sherry and eating terrapin, I looked at the scarlet leaves on the sweet gums and swamp maples on the riverbank, and at the sandpipers running stiff-legged on the sand, and at the people sitting in the sun on the decks of the yachts anchored in the Skidaway, and I decided that I was about as happy as a human can be in this day and time. After the stew we had croquettes made of crabmeat and a salad of little Georgia shrimp. Then we had some Carolina whiting that had been pulled out of the Atlantic at the mouth of the Skidaway early that morning. With the sweet, tender whiting, we had butter beans and ears of late corn that were jerked off the stalk only a few minutes before they were dropped in the pot. We began eating at one o'clock; at four we had coffee.

This man has a less scientific attitude. He doesn't try to *be* food, but he is having his subject and eating it, too.

This passage comes from “The Same as Monkey Glands,” a piece by Joseph Mitchell, who was a New York City newspaper reporter and for many years a *New Yorker* magazine fact writer.

Science writing and journalism represent one extreme in the range of roles that subject matter can play in writing: the primary role. Pulitzer Prizes in journalism are not awarded for good sentences. The sentences fend for themselves. Given a resemblance to English and a straightforward display, the idea is that the facts will speak for themselves. The art is to get people to divulge them, then sell them in the form of newspapers.

Pentagon gets its wires crossed

A SOVIET AIR-RAID SCARE

Military officials increased the alert status of strategic nuclear bombers and missiles briefly early Tuesday when a computer problem caused a false alarm indicating a multiple Soviet missile attack, the Pentagon said today.

No surprise a burp in the system indicates attack. The system is designed to indicate attack. Circuits make no distinction in kind between Space Invaders and the real world. Burglar alarms go off on any corner. Nor is this great investigative reporting. As far as we know, this is the story

pretty much as it was volunteered to the press. The lead paragraph strips down to "Officials increased alert when problem caused alarm." The writing is quite restrained. The word *war* isn't used in the whole story. The headline sells the paper. You learn practically nothing in the rest of the story about what actually happened (nothing happened). It is mostly reassurances. It is not flashy writing. It's quite impersonal. Did a person actually write it?

The other end of the range of roles subject matter plays in writing would be the subject matter as an occasion for, say, style or composition.

In the year on moment. Dew was a sight. In deed. In need. Of smell. It was not of the morning. Everywhere. More. It was all hours. Anywhere. Where sweat ran. Lovely. Despised. Anyhow. Where eyes looked out from glasses. The nose. Bridge. Unnecessary. Over the river. Pools. Where sight swam.

Did a person write this? Yes. Arlene Zekowski, a proponent of "open structure language," who, together with her husband Stanley Berne, teaches at the University of Eastern New Mexico. They propose that all of some 300 elements of grammar and rules which now burden written English be dropped, except for the comma and the period. She writes with periods, and he writes with commas.

There is a lot of unfenced range between these extremes, but for the moment let's back up to Aristotle, for whom poetry was "representation of life." Subject matter was not a problem: "Now it is not right to break up the traditional stories, I mean, for instance Clytaemnestra being killed by Orestes and Eriphyle by Alcmaeon, but the poet must show invention and make a skillful use of tradition."

Classical tragedians had a given subject matter that worked toward given ends.

Since the poet must by "representation" produce the pleasure which comes from feeling pity and fear, obviously this quality must be embodied in the incidents . . . brother kills brother, or son father, or mother son, or son mother—either kills or intends to kill, or does something of the kind.

That's it, for tragedy at least. Tragedy is not a current form. These things happen to your neighbors. They don't happen in your writing. They do happen in the writing of Charles Reznikoff, with a numbing, industrial, carefree regularity.

As for epics, Aristotle reduces them to essence plus episodes.

The *story* of the *Odyssey* is quite short. A man is for many years away from home and his footsteps are dogged by Poseidon and he is all alone.

Moreover, affairs at home are in such a state that his estate is being wasted by suitors and a plot laid against his son, but after being storm-tossed he arrives himself, reveals who he is, and attacks them, with the result that he is saved and destroys his enemies. That is the essence, the rest is episodes.

In a sense, the subject matter is episode.

* * *

There is a distinction to draw, and then to dissolve. The subject is the field in view. Dissolve to: subject matter is the material out of which a thing is formed; material for discourse or expression in language; facts or ideas constituting material for speech or written composition. These definitions get less concrete, more figurative, as the distance increases between subject and matter. The subject or theme of a written composition. "The subject matters are slowly and patiently enumerated, without disclosing the purpose of the speaker, until he reaches the end of his sentence" (Kingle).

There is a distinct aversion to naming words or language as the primary matter operated upon, an insistence on *something* of interest, an idea or at least a fact that is being talked about.

Words are in the public domain. Everyone has a license. As Auden says,

Writers, poets especially, have an odd relation to the public because their medium, language, is not, like the paint of the painter or the notes of the composer, reserved for their use but is the common property of the linguistic group to which they belong. Lots of people are willing to admit that they don't understand painting or music, but very few indeed who have been to school and learned to read advertisements will admit that they don't understand English.

Analogies with other arts, though always suspect, are inevitable. The subject matter of a Balinese dance I saw a few weeks ago would seem to be the vocabulary of gestures. Only children need to keep in mind that the dance represents a bee in a garden to stay interested.

The question of art and its content is carefully dissected by Viktor Shklovsky, the Russian formalist critic.

There are two attitudes toward art.

One is to view the work of art as a window on the world.

Through words and images, these artists want to express what lies beyond words and images. Artists of this type deserve to be called translators.

The other type of attitude is to view art as a world of independently existing things.

Words, and the relationships between words, thoughts and the irony of thoughts, their divergence—these are the content of art. Art, if it can be compared to a window at all, is only a sketched window.

Complex works of art are usually the result of combinations and interactions between works previously existing, simpler and, in particular, smaller in scope . . .

In the primitive novel, the hero is a vehicle for connecting the parts. When works of art are undergoing change, interest shifts to the connective tissue.

Psychological motivation and the verisimilitude of situation change began to arouse more interest than the success of the component parts. Then appeared the psychological novel and drama, as well as the psychological perception of old dramas and novels.

That happened, in all probability, because by then the “components” . . . had worn out.

At the next stage in art, psychological motivation wears out . . .

Finally, all contrasts are exhausted. Then one choice remains—to shift to the components, to sever the connections, which have become scar tissue.

Shklovsky's arguments echo Aristotle's reduction of the epic to episodes. (For a discussion of components coming to the foreground in current poetry, see Ron Silliman's “The New Sentence,” *Hills* 6/7.)

Subject runs into form at an elementary level, where matter equals words. “What do you read, my lord?” “Words, words, words,” says Hamlet. “What is the matter?” asks Polonius. Something on his mind.

Take a story—“Aerial Ways” by Boris Pasternak. The first half, ostensibly, is about the kidnapping of a child in the pre-revolutionary Russian countryside. But really it is a story of the sky, where most of the action occurs.

When the enormous lilac-colored cloud appeared at the end of the road, silencing the grasshoppers which were chirping sultrily in the long grass, and while the drums in the camp sighed and died away, the earth grew dark, and there was no life in the world . . .

The cloud threw a glance at the baked and undistinguished stubble earth which lay scattered over the horizon. Gently the cloud reared upwards. The stubble earth extended far away, beyond the camp. The cloud fell on its forelegs, and smoothly crossing the road, noiselessly crawled along the fourth railway line of the shunting. The bushes uncovered their heads and moved with the whole bank behind them. They flowed backwards, greeting the cloud. She did not answer them.

Fifteen years later, after the revolution, change in the world is played off ironically against constancy in people, and the great distancing, on a celestial scale, amplifies the irony. But the sky remains the dominant character.

There were aerial ways. And on them every day, like a train, came the rectilinear thoughts of a Liebknecht, a Lenin, a few other minds of the same greatness. They were paths set on a level, able and powerful enough to cross any frontier, whatever its name. One of these lines, opened during the war, preserved its former strategical height and owing to the nature of the frontiers through which they traced it, obtruded themselves upon the builders of these frontiers. This ancient military line, intersecting the frontiers of Poland and later of Germany on its own plane and in its own time—here, at the very beginning, manifestly escaped from the understanding mediocrity and the endurance of mediocrity. It passed above the courtyard, which remained shy of the far-sightedness of its destination and its oppressive size, just as a suburb runs helter-skelter away from the railways and fears them. This was the sky of the Third International.

I fall for the sky myself. It's so empty. Mysterious and otherworldly, it can be invested with whatever you need.

What you need is to be fascinated.

* * *

The best of travel writing typically gets down to itself as subject.

Thoreau, in one of his quaintly superior moods when speaking of travel, said, “It is not worth while going round the world to count the cats in Zanzibar.” In nearly every book of travel this is proved to be true. They show it was not worth while, seeing it was either to shoot cats or to count degrees of latitude . . . Consider Arctic travel. I have read long rows of books on that, but recall few emotional moments. The finest passage in any book of Arctic travel is in Warburton Pikes' “Barren Grounds,” where he quotes what the Indian said to the missionary who had been speaking of heaven. The Indian asked, “And is it like the land of the Musk-ox in summer, when the mist is on the lakes, and the loon cries very often?”

You feel at once that the country the Indian saw around him would easily be missed by us, even when in the midst of it. For taking the bearings of such a land, the sextant, and the miles already travelled, would not be factors to help much. Now the Indian knew nothing of artificial horizons and the aids to discovering where they are which strangers use. But in summer the mists of his lakes were but the vapour of his musings, the penumbra of the unfathomed deeps of his mind

whereon he paddled his own canoe; and when the wild-fowl called, it was his memory heard; it was his thought become vocal then while he dreamed on. I myself learned that the treasures found in travel, the chance rewards of travel which make it worth while, cannot be accounted beforehand, and seldom are matters a listener would care to hear about afterwards: for they have no substance. They are no matter. They are untranslatable from their time and place; and like the man who unwittingly lies down to sleep on the tumulus where the little people dance on midsummer night, and dreams that in the place where man has never been his pockets were filled with fairy gold, waking to find pebbles there instead, so the traveller cannot prove the dreams he had, showing us only pebbles when he tries. Such fair things cannot be taken from the magic moment. They are but filmy, high in the ceiling of your thoughts then, rosy and sunlit by the chance of the light, transitory, melting as you watch. You come down to your lead again. These occasions are not on your itinerary. They are like the Indian's lakes in summer. They have no names. They cannot be found on the best maps. Not you nor any other will ever discover them again. Nor do they fill the hunger which sent you travelling; they are not provender for notebooks. They do not come to accord with your mood, but they come unaware to compel, and it is your own adverse and darkling atoms that are changed, at once dancing in accord with the rare incidence of that unreasonable and transcendent moment of your world, the rhythm of which you feel, as you would, the beat of drums.

(H.M. Tomlinson, *The Sea and the Jungle*)

The locales travel writing depends on take second place, if it is any good, and especially in the memory of it, to the disturbance the writer causes in them, or that they cause in him. Surprise *is* around the corner, but not the kind you expect, as Christopher Isherwood discovers in his book of South American travel, *The Condor and the Cows*.

That is the irony of travel. You spend your boyhood dreaming of a magic, impossible distant day when you will cross the Equator, when your eyes will behold Quito. And then, in the slow prosaic process of life, that day undramatically dawns—and finds you sleepy, hungry and dull. The Equator is just another valley; you aren't sure which and you don't much care. Quito is just another railroad station, with fuss about baggage and taxis and tips. And the only comforting reality, amidst all this picturesque noisy strangeness, is to find a clean pension run by Czech refugees and sit down in a cozy Central European parlor to a lunch of well-cooked Wiener Schnitzel.

Travel highlights the attitudes of the traveller. In William Carlos Williams's *Voyage to Pagan*, the hero gets angry in Florence not with matter, but with style.

He had always been somewhat irritated by the Renaissance anyhow.

The crudeness of the material they used, the size, the coarseness even, he ate up with joy—but the touch of the delicate fingers bit into him like an acid. —God damn their impertinence, he cried aloud, to appease his own dullness and sorrow. It is too soft, *nouveau riche*: with their petty imitations of the Assyrian, the Egyptian and the Greek: soft and harsh, brutal and sweet. He found it lying, offensive, this unhappy American with nothing but the offense of New York in his mind to give him stability.

He is easily egged, this American abroad, out of his element and, incidentally, on the rebound from an affair on the Riviera.

“The man has spent his life rejecting the accepted sense of things,” says Wallace Stevens of Williams. “In that, most of all, his romantic temperament appears.”

The accepted sense of things is fertile ground for the social critic, and the major premise for comment. It comes in for perhaps its most severe lambasting in Flaubert's last (uncompleted) book, *Bouvard and Pecuchet*, which plows through subject matter, per se, on a panoramic scale. Every field of human endeavor is treated, as the two elderly *petit bourgeois* title characters, Parisian copy clerks, retire to the countryside together on a tidy inheritance. The two botch every attempt at rural pursuits—which they approach through books in preference to their new neighbors' personal knowledge—their garden; their farm; their distillery, which explodes, leading them to study chemistry; then medicine, its origins in palaeontology; geology; the creation, leading to feuds with the local doctor and the priest for interference in their practices. They take up history, defer to literature, which leads to politics, educational experiments, sexual passions—all disasters; and finally turning from the material world: spiritism, mesmerism, necromancy, metaphysics, despair, a suicide pact, renewed religious faith. At every turn they are stymied by contradictions inherent in conventional wisdom.

“They want to know why things are, and by infinite regress they enlarge the distance between what they are studying at any given moment and their ability to cope with the problems of daily life,” according to Alfred Krailsheimer, translator and critic.

A companion piece to the unfinished novel is the *Dictionary of Received Ideas*—a satire on a closed circle of attitudes.

Under the heading Bachelors is found, “All selfish and immoral. Should be taxed. Doomed to a lonely old age.” Under Debauchery, “Cause of all the diseases from which bachelors suffer.”

Cliches are prescribed for behavior. “Thirteen. Avoid being thirteen

at a table; it brings bad luck. The sceptics should not fail to joke: 'What's the difference? I'll eat enough for two!' Or again, if there are ladies present, ask if any is pregnant."

"Homo. Say: 'Ecce homo!' on the arrival of any person you are expecting."

* * *

Most of us probably first encountered the word *subject* in school, where it meant a demarcated area of study. Subjects aren't taught in school today, where skills are emphasized instead: reading skills, math skills. History, geography, science, and current affairs—the subjects we studied in grade school—are gone. Reading is taught, at least in one system, by a program of graduated stories generated around succeedingly more advanced group of vocabulary words. The reading skills aren't put to use in any defined or structurally elaborated areas. There is no demonstration that the skills might be useful in the study of something else. Reading is just reading, to all appearances an end in itself. Math, despite being presented perhaps as the more utilitarian of the two, always seemed like a pure system. Number was the subject of arithmetic, and word problems were always a mess, hateful for the task of translation involved, cluttering up the abstractions with difficulties from everyday life. But if reading was also an exercise in abstract thinking, it was nice to have subjects to think about.

* * *

Moving away from the intensely attitudinal (Flaubert), I want to touch on some other kinds of roles subject matter can play.

For me, Raymond Chandler writes about prose. He writes about similes (of the more self-conscious and exotic breed). He writes about rhythms of grammar in sentences, and of sentences in paragraphs. That is the information for me: how the prose works. The technique is my pleasure. Incidentally, there is a rather romantic hero, who walks as straight a line as he can through episodes of social aberrance on the part of others. There is a phenomenal and peculiarly American city setting, caught in a vital period of its late adolescence. And then there is the detail, the very specific nouns and adjectives that form the reservoir of the prose. That's my pleasure, too.

The motor of the gray Plymouth throbbed under her voice and the rain pounded above it. The violet light at the top of Bullock's green-tinged tower was far above us, serene and withdrawn from the dark, dripping

city. Her black-gloved hand reached out and I put the bills in it. She bent over to count them under the dim light of the dash. A bag clicked open, clicked shut. She let a spent breath die on her lips. She leaned towards me.

This tersely built, prepositionally tense paragraph occurs at the anticlimax of Chandler's first novel, *The Big Sleep*, as far from a whodunnit as any of his books. But there are questions the plot wants answers for, and a big one is about to be delivered. The liquid polysyllables of the first two sentences give way to the one-man-one-vote necklace of monosyllables in the last five.

The opening paragraph lets you know what kind of character this Philip Marlowe (the hero) is:

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, mid October, with the sun not shining and a look of hard wet rain in the clearness of the foothills. I was wearing my powder-blue suit, with dark blue shirt, tie and display handkerchief, black brogues, black wool socks with dark blue clocks on them. I was neat, clean, shaved and sober, and I didn't care who knew it. I was everything the well-dressed private detective ought to be. I was calling on four million dollars.

Those clocks wouldn't give you the time of day. The tone is highly moral. Chandler has written that he sees Marlowe as the American mind, and I would add: what's best about it.

For the rest, I don't read crime writing much because the writing just isn't there, crime notwithstanding.

A poet who seems to me to occupy a similar position in relation to his subject matter as Chandler is Merrill Gilfillan. The attention to physical detail is a little less exquisite, but all the richer in its import, existing in a world not limited even to the galaxy of peculiarities in Southern California.

KHAN

Principles of Beauty Relative to the Human Head.
Red dust over the henna warehouse for one.
The air smells like a pleasant hatband,
the light is right for this particular rendezvous,
a friend on the way with a deck of cards
from the carpetbag of an unlucky man found resting
on the outskirts of Pompeii *that day*, propped
on his bedroll, strenuously acquired. We will dicker
through ski masks in back rooms of the big museums
when there on the sparkling cafe sidewalk, there You are,
surprisingly dapper in midspeech ropy with expletive

and aluminum granaries, hair pitched back
in a carnival star. Down around the knees informs me
you are terrible, but I am not afraid, I am in touch
with my predecessors to the extent that wherever I am
I discover them in an acoustical way
under overhanging foliage during the lulls. Tut.
We were crouched, we were spread, we were gypped
into landscape. First the Firth of Forth. Then home
with something on the radio, high ridges disappearing
to meet in the North. Not for long!

To a large degree, the way he gets at his subjects is through the persona, some kind of traveller, adventurer, but on the job, with perhaps post card photographer as a front, or spice importer. "Good old Bulgaria she paid me cash / when I sent her the plans for a seaside country" ("Mercator"). It sounds like a man of the world, in touch with the ultra-violet and infra-red ranges of commerce.

. . . An old job
at the Rose Cooperative. The job, the only one
I ever died for—Roses and spending money!
So crystalline I shot from vice-exchequer
to front-line driver in less than a week and drew
the long-stem barrio route, where when they bought
you knew they'd be fed to the children cold,
approached like artichokes, but sweeter.

The rose truck.
That was politics in bloom
wheeling up to the high curbs in a drizzle,
firing a bandaged 12 gauge in the air.

("A Vision")

The preference for driver over executive is something Marlowe would agree with. You get a cross between Chandler and Kerouac plus generational leap. The subject is the life, led in the head of this guy who's on the line.

PENNSYLVANIA DIARY

Monday night, 10 o'clock.
Well, tomorrow we attack Gettysburgh.

The attitude towards subject here has to do with the wryness of the idea of summoning up big hunk of history by tiny moment (two lines!) and the dramatic irony of it all coming down on a word that is barely a part of speech: "Well."

Extracting and naming subject matter of specific works or writers isn't what I'm after as much as seeing what use the subject may be in the problem of writing. A recent prose piece by Gilfillan called "Reveree" takes the form of reminiscences of a midwestern youth, but treehouses recur as the object of search and photography is the project—a taste for a specialized, rural, arboreal architecture that sparks other memories. Here the idea for a subject makes the writing possible, forms the enthusiasm for it.

Persona leads to other writers, such as Ted Berrigan, who says his recently published selected poems, *So Going Around Cities*, is "The Story So Far" with "a character named I" as "speaker, hearer, notater, perceiver, even judge." Persona also leads to one of Berrigan's favorite writers, A.J. Liebling.

Liebling was a journalist and critic of journalism whose favorite subjects were eating, war, boxing, the press, and oddity. But all of his stories are told with an I in one of the roles Berrigan lists. Not surprisingly, exaggeration is one of the principle devices used by this larger-than-life writer.

The Proust *Madeleine* phenomenon is now as firmly established in folklore as Newton's apple or Watt's steam kettle. The man ate a tea biscuit, the taste evoked memories, he wrote a book. This is capable of expression by the formula TMB, for Taste ♦ Memory ♦ Book. Some time ago, when I began to read a book called *The Food of France*, by Waverly Root, I had an inverse experience; BMT, for Book ♦ Memory ♦ Taste. Happily, the tastes that *The Food of France* re-created for me—small birds, stewed rabbit, stuffed tripe, Cote Rotie, and Tavel—were more robust than that of the *madeleine*, which Larousse defines as "a light cake made with sugar, flour, lemon juice, brandy, and eggs." (The quantity of brandy in a *madeleine* would not furnish a gnat with an alcohol rub.)

Liebling was a great feeder, his excesses in prose exceeded only by those at table.

Narrative seems allied at some level with getting at subjects through attitudinal personae, even if only the vestiges of narrative remain, as in Berrigan or Gilfillan, and the connective tissue Shklovsky talks about has become the occasion for synaptic torquing.

Another kind of attack on a subject is the meditative, ruminative, speculative. As examples I'm thinking of Brillat-Savarin's *Physiology of Taste*, Max Picard's *The World of Silence*, and Francis Ponge's *Soap*.

Brillat-Savarin was the eighteenth-century French appeals court judge

who codified in one book the body of information and style that we think of as classical French cuisine—not so much recipes as a highly civilized attitude toward food and eating. He was more a delicate than a great feeder like Liebling, or the Rabelaisian Grimod de la Reynière, who spent eight years compiling the *Almanack of Gourmands*, and whose enthusiasm drove him once to exclaim, “I would eat my own father with such a sauce.” No, Brillat-Savarin is more sober, and of a finer tone, heralding the supremacy of man in matters of taste, as illustrated by gourmets who “distinguish by its superior flavor the thigh on which a partridge leans while sleeping.”

The subjects of meditation range from the senses, taste, appetite to specific foods, theory of frying, thirst, the pleasures of the table, digestion, repose, sleep, corpulence, exhaustion, Parisian restaurants and keepers, and gastronomical mythology. His style is philosophically analytical, ranging from the aphoristic to the speculative and the discursive: “The discovery of a new dish is more beneficial to humanity than the discovery of a star

“A dinner which ends without cheese is like a beautiful woman with only one eye.”

He discourses on the discovery of ozmazome, “that pre-eminently sapid part of meat,” and treats fish to a philosophical reflection.

This is a kind of treatment of subject that covers the field. *The World of Silence* is covered by Max Picard, in his book of that name. Briefly, he proposes silence as a basic positive phenomenon—not the absence of sound. He then relates it to the origins of speech, truth, gesture, ego, knowledge, history, love, time, nature, poetry, and more. The writing is hypnotically repetitive, and its persuasive effect is heuristic, the result of an accumulated substantiation. After a time, it works on you, despite Picard’s highly Christian lameqt for a lost world. Basically, in this fallen world, things are just too noisy for him.

An earlier book of his is meditations on another subject, *The Human Face*. There, the same method seems not to work as well, and I think the fault is with the subject matter, which isn’t empty in the same way, but rather is less abstract, less capable of being created by his insistence.

The third of these exhaustive treatments is *Soap* by Francis Ponge. It’s literally about soap. It also is quite repetitive:

There is much to say about soap. Precisely everything that it tells about itself until the complete disappearance, the exhaustion of the subject. This is precisely the object suited to me.

Fourteen pages later:

There is much to say about soap. Precisely everything that it tells about itself, when one chafes it with water in a certain way. It also looks as if it had much to say. May it say it, then. With volubility, with enthusiasm. Until the disappearance by exhaustion of its own theme. When it has finished saying it, it no longer is. The longer it is in saying it, the more it can say it at length, the more slowly it melts, the better quality it is.

Here, the subject is reduced to object. There is very sharp focus, but not of a scientific nature. The subject is turned over and over in writing as it, the object, is in its own use. So there is this equation or parallel, grossly visible but slippery all the same, between the thing and the process, where the boundary line between subject and technique is seen dissolving, or the two terms of metaphor approaching unity.

To re-erect the metaphor, take the two apart again. They seem more comfortable as a duality than a unity. If the form or technique is the mechanism by which the mind takes its exercise, then the subject matter is the weight. And the opposite of Ponge is Raymond Roussel, who used elaborate compositional methods to arrive at the most bizarre subject matter, attended by a hermeneutic rationale.

Locus Solus, a singular novel, is comprised of a tour through the park of a villa outside Paris, during which the host, a wealthy bachelor scientist, shows and explains to his guests an array of fascinating and puzzling exhibits involving mechanisms and surprising effects that are the fruit of his discoveries. A large diamond-shaped aquarium is the setting, for example, for a number of tableaux performed by trained sea horses, a hairless cat, bottle imps, and a disembodied face.

First the phenomena are described. Then we get two levels of explanation: the technical (more elaborate in its fictive science than Jules Verne) followed by the narrative significance (usually even more intricate and based on one or more levels of history and fiction). All this is inside the book.

Outside the work are the complexes of puns and word associations that generated incidents for which Roussel had then to invent contexts and explanations.

This may be the case of most extreme elaborateness for a writer getting at his subject, and the point where the technique for doing so has become the book, a chinese box of subjects, where events nest within other events that they are about, and techniques of composition are the subject of the book,

insofar as the elucidation of events in it involves a layered regression of explanations, occasions.

Retreating for the moment from the artificial world, let's look at the natural palpable world, which, under Western eyes at least, is thought to undergo the least transformation when objectively observed and described. A corollary might be, "As science makes progress in any subject area, poetry recedes from it," according to John Henry Newman, a nineteenth-century English theologian and author. But this may not be so.

First, take Gilbert White, an eighteenth-century English naturalist who was vicar of Selbourne, a Hampshire village. For fifteen years he kept a naturalist's journal, providing 10,000 undigested daily records of temperature; wind; weather; first appearance of birds, insects, and flowering plants; harvest progress; and the like; not to mention scant personal glimpses of neighborhood travel or visits from relatives. You can use the *Journals* like a Western country *I Ching* for random information which is internally coherent and structured by daily divisions, annual cycles, as well as other less regular natural patterns.

From 1777:

Sept. 7. Swallows & house-martins dip much in ponds. Vast Northern Aurora.

Sept. 9. Fern-owls haunt Mrs. Snooke's orchard in autumn

Sept. 17. The sky this evening, being what they call a mackerel sky, was most beautiful, & much admired in many parts of the country

Oct. 3. What becomes of those massy clouds that often incumber the atmosphere in the day, & yet disappear in the evening. Do they melt down into dew? . . .

Oct. 25. Hogs are put-up in their fattening pens. The hanging woods are beautifully tinged.

Oct. 30. Gluts of rain, much thunder

Nov. 3. Sea-gulls, winter-mews, haunt the fallows. Beetles flie.

The language is very terse and apt. It is a thousand times more interesting than reading the phone book. Its subject is the natural world. As subject matter itself, there is a degree to which the fineness of the divisions, the level of detail, blurs somewhat to become fancy—and you seem to have stepped into *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

In fairness to Newman, naturalists may be the scientists who most closely approach literary technique in their work: observation, organization, and translation of events into words.

William Bartram was a colonial Philadelphian. His *Travels* (and those

of his father John before him) provide us with a detailed view of the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida in lush, primeval state.

But Bartram is best known in literary circles for having provided the raw material for Coleridge's imagery in "Kubla Khan" and to some degree for "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." For his depiction of Alph, the sacred river, Coleridge drew from Bartram's description of Salt Springs, near Florida's Lake George:

. . . a creek of four or five feet depth of water, and nearly twenty yards over, which meanders six miles through green meadows, . . . and directly opposite to the mouth or outlet to the creek, is a continual and amazing ebullition, where the waters are thrown up in such abundance and amazing force, as to jet and swell up two or three feet above the common surface: white sand and small particles of shells are thrown up with the waters, near to the top, when they diverge from the center, subside with the expanding flood, and gently sink again, forming a large rim or funnel round the aperture or mouth of the fountain.

Transformed, and transposed to Xanadu:

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran, . . .

Wordsworth and Chateaubriand are also indebted to Bartram for raw material.

Newman's idea of poetry retreating as the cold light of science enters a field has less to do with poetry as it is written, but rather with a mystical beauty, some quality of a lost world, for which there is a yearning like Picard's:

But the real poet starts in possession of the object, and goes in search of the words, not vice versa. Today the poet's word goes to all words. It can combine with many things, attract many things to itself; seems more than it really is. In fact the word seems to be as it were sent out to catch other words. And so it comes about that the writer today presents far more than he actually possesses himself. His person is less than what he writes; he is not identical with his work.

What Picard laments seems like a great relief today. Our work can be better than we are.

Literature is renewed, often as not, through the acquisition of new areas of subject matter. Shklovsky saw literature annexing the nonaesthetic periphery—in his case literary theory—as subject matter for creative prose.

Science is as good a tool as any for opening new fields.

What happens to the raw subject matter, whether it is in the form of observations and thoughts by the writer, or already in the form of writing by someone else, is commonly that it goes into a notebook, where Coleridge, for example, copied passages of Bartram. In notebooks the subject matter is digested. For me, it is separated there from its context and given a new haphazard one in the chronology of my interests. It is objectified or defamiliarized to the point that when I see it again, if it is fragmentary enough, I may not even remember what its original meaning was. In any case, there it seems to get charged, in the sense of acquiring not only import, but a specificity, even a polarity in relation to surrounding material as my eye runs over pages from time to time, so that utterly disparate terms or concepts can grow together to a point where I see a new meaning.

A good test question on subject matter is what book, besides a notebook, do you take to the desert island. A good answer is “a good dictionary rather than the greatest literary masterpiece imaginable,” for, as Auden continues, “a dictionary is absolutely passive and may be legitimately read in an infinite number of ways.”

As for the notebook, its cousin in city clothes—and another use for half-digested subject matter—is the commonplace book, a collection of quotations, found writings, assembled preferably by one reader, one sensibility (otherwise you get *The Book of Lists*). A good one is Auden’s *A Certain World*. In the foreword he admits it is a kind of autobiography, and quotes Chesterton:

There is at the back of every artist’s mind something like a pattern or a type of architecture. The original quality in any man of imagination is imagery. It is a thing like the landscape of his dreams; the sort of world he would like to make or in which he would wish to wander; the strange flora and fauna of his own secret planet; the sort of thing he likes to think about. This general atmosphere, and pattern or structure of growth, governs all his creations, however varied.

On the subject of writing, Auden himself says:

Most of what I know about the writing of poetry . . . I discovered long before I took an interest in poetry itself.

Between the ages of six and twelve I spent a great many of my waking hours in the fabrication of a private secondary sacred world, the basic elements of which were (a) a limestone landscape . . . and (b) an industry—lead mining . . .

I learned certain principles which I was later to apply to all artistic fabrication. Firstly, whatever other elements it may include, the initial impulse to create a secondary world is a feeling of awe aroused by encounters, in the primary world, with sacred beings or events. Though every work of art is a secondary world, such a world cannot be constructed *ex nihilo*, but is a selection and recombination of the contents of the primary world. Even the purest poem . . . is made of words, which are not the poet’s private property . . .

In these terms, when a writer comes across, in the world, elements or inhabitants of his secondary world, he repatriates them by putting them in his notebook.

My subjects seem to me to be my stock characters. But why are some subjects difficult, if not impossible to use? It seems that writing that has a lot of surface activity does not handle subjects like sex and death well. I don’t think it is because we don’t like to think about them. We think about them all the time. But what is it about these strong subjects that is better accommodated by a strong presence of persona (Berrigan) or narrative (Burroughs)? Are any subjects immoral in themselves, regardless of treatment? Or is subject more an individual concern, as for Auden, who says, “For every writer, there are certain subjects which, because of defects in his character and his talent, he should never touch”?

“What is a poet’s subject? It is his sense of the world. For him it is inevitable and inexhaustible,” says Stevens. “For each man . . . certain subjects are congenital.” And (paraphrasing) the poet manifests his personality, temperament, manner of thinking and feeling, by his choice of subject. Stevens believes this choice is a vital factor in poetry and art. But how much choice is involved if it is congenital and “penetrates the amelioration of education and experiences of life”?

Love is not a subject unless the writer of the song is in love . . .

A man’s sense of the world may be only his own or it may be the sense of many people. Whatever it is it involves his fate. It may involve only his own or it may involve that of many people. The measure of the poet is the measure of his sense of the world and of the extent to which it involves the senses of other people . . .

Of course, perception of the world is one of the principal subjects of Stevens’s poetry.

Here is a subjective selection of Stevens’s “Adagia,” notations he made over years, which form something of a commonplace book of aesthetic aphorisms:

Poetry and *materia poetica* are interchangeable terms.

Consider: I. That the whole world is material for poetry; II. That there is not a specifically poetic material.

It is the explanations of things that we make to ourselves that disclose our character: The subjects of one's poems are the symbols of one's self or of one of one's selves.

Money is a kind of poetry.

The world is the only thing fit to think about.

Aristotle is a skeleton.

Bringing out the music of the eccentric sounds of words is no different in principle from bringing out their form and its eccentricities (Cummings): language as the material of poetry not its mere medium or instrument.

A change of style is a change of subject.

Poetry is the statement of a relation between a man and the world.

What is meant by interest? Is it a form of liking?

The choice of subject matter gives focus to perception, just as vision gives meaning to subject matter. What I've had in mind here is a kind of commonplace book on the subject of subject matter, composed of much that comprises my subject matter.

Stevens again, writing about Williams:

If a man writes a little every day, . . . it may be that he is . . . practicing in order to get at his subject. If his subject is, say, a sense, a mood, an integration, and if his representation is faint or obscure, and if he practices in order to overcome his faintness or obscurity, what he really does is to bring, or try to bring, his subject into that degree of focus at which he sees it, for a moment, as it is and at which he is able to represent it in exact definition.

* * *

Subject Matter at Hand
(In order of appearance)

H. W. Fowler. *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*. Synonyms for *field*.

Belle Lowe. *Experimental Cookery, from the Chemical and Physical Standpoint*.

Joseph Mitchell. "The Same as Monkey Glands." In *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon*.

Arlene Zekowski. *Image Breaking Images*.

Stanley Berne. *Future Language*.

Aristotle. *The Poetics*. Translated by W. Hamilton Fyfe.

W. H. Auden. "Writing." In *The Dyer's Hand*.

Viktor Shklovsky. *Zoo, or Letters Not About Love*. Translated by Richard Sheldon.

Boris Pasternak. "Aerial Ways." In *Safe Conduct, an Autobiography and Other Writings*. Translated by Robert Payne.

H. M. Tomlinson. *The Sea and the Jungle*.

Christopher Isherwood. *The Condor and the Cows: A South American Travel Diary*.

William Carlos Williams. *A Voyage to Pagany*.

Gustave Flaubert. *Bouvard and Pecuchet*. Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer.

Raymond Chandler. *The Big Sleep*.

Merrill Gilfillan. *To Creature*.

———. *Light Years*.

A. J. Liebling. *Between Meals*.

Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin. *The Physiology of Taste, or Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*. Translated by M. F. K. Fisher.

Max Picard. *The World of Silence*. Translated by Stanley Godman.

Francis Ponge. *Soap*. Translated by Lane Dunlop.

Raymond Roussel. *Locus Solus*. Translated by Rupert Copeland Cuningham.

Gilbert White. *Gilbert White's Journals*.

William Bartram. *The Travels of William Bartram*.

John Livingston Lowes. *The Road to Xanadu*. Traces the origins of Coleridge's imagery.

W. H. Auden. *A Certain World*.

Wallace Stevens. "Effects of Analogy." In *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination*.

———. "Adagia," "Williams," and "Rubbings of Reality." In *Opus Posthumous*.

June 16, 1980

Sleeping With The Light On

I don't want to make a disclaimer beforehand but it wasn't raining in the capital. Who's the woman with Attila? Don't start all at once but begin anyway. More is what ensues when it is no longer the same. Half way between here and God change place as in a novel, continuing to sing as though it were verse. Pride doesn't speak. It kicks its foot out of the cradle to disturb the mobile meant to hang over its slumberpoo like a waterfowl on pilot. Out of paint make light, like a painter. Go far enough so this *phrase* cannot be. One voice can't date address any longer. The LYDIAN MODE. The chartreuse in the distance of the homerun. A woman is dating an undertaker. She has a right. He wants her to lie down beside the still. Birds are in the trees and they know it. They don't drink. They consider the beauty of hills when they are on them and when they are not. Something in nature that is definitely not coffee. Comes a tide to make the clams open up, into the figment called dusk. Jealous teachers poison their pupils; gooselivers, the favorite food of Mozart.

Some feisty old school teacher assigned the boy to write something about his love of rocks. He bought the rocks and the rocks won. The trilobites piled into their cars. Others run until their toes leave their bodies. Left books under bush in lot across from school, would you mind getting them for me before it rains? signed EREMITTE THE FIRST. Everything is permanent *and* passing, over and above the undergrowth. Who's next to be decapitated cannot cut off another's head. Life without Yum Yum is unbearable. When a married man is beheaded his mate is buried alive. This vermouth needs more angelica root. The automobile has become the natural predator of night animals. The refrigerator starts to fucking hum. The singing East Bay and beyond. I saved you from enlightenment and you saved me from lesbianism. When I say me it's a figure of speech. Just another poet AGOG for foam. Look at all those f-stops up there. Eventually everything becomes all stars. Are you who they call Poochie? Chihuahua! We . . . are . . . dead . . . men.

Build a closet and get a grip on life, and don't forget to kiss goodnight. The only thing like the ocean is early morning light. Take a big sulking bruiser like yourself and teach him to make love. The boys we mean are not inclined. Find yourself an affinity group or better yet an assault group and dig the query. If poems could kill, a lot of people would die.

On March 22nd don't miss the POET'S DINNER at prestigious Spenger's, not forgetting to scratch your forehead where it accomplishes its merger with your temple and you'll think of more. Going to Granny's. Nothing changes but the weather. Immediately arresting are all gorgeous slow movements. Coming around the mountain accompanied by infibulation, the lips are trembling but the eyes are mad. In this country one must be quick to rim and slick to laugh, despite the multi-nationals. At least in Korea they have their head man do it at a dinner party. Cut these sentences and they have little Caesars. Not inclined. NOME by any other name would be very different. And so it is with me—filament and sabotage.

The text this morning don't hallelujah but it's ready to commit treason without fail. I have a radio phonograph and plan to have more. The smart money hits the canvas as the yokel says his piece. Good news for pregnant smokers. Like as not you gotta AIR your QUIPS. They laugh but they moans too and what is it to you to do, strangely satisfying? There should be nothing but a continual prologue to liberty. Theorize that you're listening and it's a state, instead of taking the job wrapping or calling for the casino. The night is pricking on plain juice. Consumption and reply. Getting off in a vicarious vein. Basketball drivel. Dependent tunic. Thinking in screams. You have dript blood in the dictionary. Now get some TISSUE. You have spilt ink on the carpet. Go poison a squirrel and rip up all your books. For God's sake batter swing. Throw the stranger in the third row out. Jackson didn't like to be doing stuff with coffee, he would throw it down. Happiness was nothing more than the escape from Greek.

Pick a life and live it. I think I'll go down to the iron works
and order some chains. Shreveport and shriveltechnics. I inhabit the language
the world heaps upon me. Branch water on the rocks.
Papa's baby rows across the great Salt Lake of suicide
in her black lipstick, one stroke ahead of the DELUGE, wearing a verb.
Far from the rampant scalper's early tickets you could shut a beaver up
in a bedroom and it would immediately start building its dam.
It may be fun but only as long as you can stand it, with a quartet of amigos.
It is crazy to get out of bed without a mission, but never has there been witness
to a burnoose berserker than yours. Our life is typical of the social conditions
under which literature occurs in spite of its no longer commanding high political
reward. Why should a dog a rat? Why should an assassin a despot? Why should Iran
Iraq? The simple uncomplicated life is over and painfully you are born repeatedly
with layers of self-consciousness which you must simply ignore. The working poet
takes a can of V-8 juice out of his pail, and smiles at the man next to him.

It would be difficult to determine just what would be the right moment
to cease to be Hart Crane. The evacuee and the chiasma.
It was dark but they could be seen to be riding down on us hard,
night's plain pricks. Fucked in the head by the pigtail, I sense and dive
and tumble under the dogwood. I fire and strike the leg of the leader.
For shit for sure. When your face gets pasted and you can't find your way home.
While it may never be more than a matter of semantics, the negative
side of the coin gets more publicity than heads. LIMPID EMPEDOCLES.
Implicit nix. We needle to amuse. Eyes spelt yes. Alps on the moon.
I'll just sit quietly in my chair and admire you, avoiding the temptation
of nympholepsy. You speak to me in SIGN language and I'm buying it.
I have cultivated this mild hysteria for fear of ecstasy.
I came by to kill you but you weren't home. Der Deutscher bist fucked.
Cremated into the handful that was you indeed. Epistemology and fatigue.
Anton von Worms certainly lives up to his name in the St. Gereon Altarpiece.

It has become necessary to don dirtiness in order to describe it.
I've never known a more insightful headache remedy. Slip out
into the city and add your ochre to its already cochineal.
Just smoke the facts, whatever your reel to reel needs and ask
how many citizens know that salt has sugar in it. Take looks
and be quotidian, and realize that history doesn't trap but releases you.
Calculate your work in terms of hunger. Excuse yourself from your duty
to advise the young, so as to continue to figure it yourself.
In having to look after the imprisoned, people tend to become criminals themselves.
Andrea Schiavone's MARRIAGE OF CUPID AND PSYCHE makes you want
to get out of analysis and make a night of it. Snap your fingers and be transformed.
Nothing should ever be done that does not deserve infinite repetition,
for that is what it will get. This is what history is about,
when it is not making you rich. Why be subtle and false?
The future is poison and we are caught kissing the cup.

Now or never is the time for verses. I'm ready for the gig,
but I don't know about the "spot." Personally I have a distaste
for miscellany and am absolutely programmed against Personism per se.
It is the attitude of the spine to develop into an opinion, leading to your malady.
Laughter is the reverse of aspiration. *Beards* are good for eating women.
The sun is captivated by the dew's beauty and longs to view it more closely.
It is best not to identify too strongly with your troubles.
There are some poets who in a snowy field should be silent.
Nothing so dry as DROPSY, but thinking makes it so.
They left Keats' name off his book so it would sell better.
Ordinarily you'd have to be a genius to do what he did, but he simply thrust
his pick in the ground and the fossils came tumbling out.
Masturbating he thought, if only I could satisfy my hunger so easily.
The father of the country was a six four man with a weak voice and slow mind,
which made it inconvenient for him to move fast, so he stayed.

I think I'll just call in tired today and not make the scene at the tryouts
for a bird in flight. The lianas are turning over their sunny whispers.
Impossible to embark on anything and not flirt with going overboard.
Cooking carrots and onions for dinner cannot satisfy sweet teeth.
Lachrymose vinaigrette. Victorious dyslexia. He laughed just because it was
not allowed. It occurred to him to refuse to open tin cans for cats for instance.
Do not give up desiring what your cat has, understanding that not getting it
is a reward also, as the philosophic frame it will lend automatically
to your consciousness will be invaluable in reckoning *hum* and worth.
Rimbaud got his leg cut off before he died, but Verlaine had published
his posthumous verse even before that. Early piss-elegant imitations
of Wallace Stevens. At the foot of the jetty, an Argentine chair.
O claquepatin, O mantra, O pie alamode, are you who they call Poochie?
Mayakovsky mistook the EAST RIVER for the Hudson and missed meeting Lorca
in New York, the black dog trotting down the street holding an eraser in his mouth.

A woman is ironing, lending an ear to a would-be suitor.
Waking, it was noon. In reality she is in love with the jailer's assistant.
It is the DESTINY of the lover to be rejected, of the spouse to be indispensable.
Your mother is glad to wash your sheets, if ultimately she is no good for you.
If you are a mother you can do anything you please and it too will be a mother.
No wonder kids sleep at mid day. They dream more, so they can be ready.
A grown man, he opened the can of Chicken of the Sea and tucked a pinch
of TUNA in his cheek. *Men don't love women, though they try.*
Quotation marks are question marks when talk still counts,
as in a Forties movie. Which is the past participle of lust, lair or lore?
These musicians have such a developed sense of rest and false starts
that their music resembles nothing sometimes so much as it does a fitful sleep.
You have a new ribbon and some free time, what do you want to refer to something
for, when you could be practising the virtuoso stunt of never saying anything?
All of you who are ugly turn your radio off for a minute please.

How do you like your CUISINART? The second step in pure creation
is to become ecstatic when eternity uncovers itself. The first
is to make a place for it. My washing machine said "Guggenheim,"
because it freed me to be a writer, its dark veins bruise blue.
The passing boy looks at the Bacon on the wall and says *yuch*.
I admire your body and you begin to scream. Really ridiculous to be a writer,
when your basic gift is speech. At the grave of Peter Stuyvesant
the rookie with the printing press is reading the tape recorder.
Glamors and blue chips sharing honors and scoring their solid advance.
Don't you tuck *me* in without my unwillingness. Who wrote the Ode to Delphine?
Oh him. No shoes, no shirt. Your neck is tight but you're incredibly receptive.
I wear CUFFLINKS because I am an ecology freak. I may be perverted
but I'm not insatiable. You mean you like women with toothpicks too?
For *luxury* see Pisanello. Everybody tends to look alike up close.
The sack calls me to be horizontal. Many more anniversaries of your natal day.

Loathsome narrative! Insignificant event! Expedient idea!
A TUB is of *course* liable to cheese, but athletics is not my game.
Do you wear hats or just otherwise make use of them?
On paper at least we can believe in immortality. Bella Abzug is not ague proof.
Sooner or later you know you're going to have to sell somebody.
The artfulness that allows *the living to die and the dead to live*.
That ain't art, it's morphine. An indescribable feeling to boot.
Diffusion can be complex and lead to disintegration
or it can a way of life be, even a joy, staring into the lake
of all former reflection. The leaves are really rusting.
What *is* the closest candy to school? Shut off art static.
Passing so and so's loft, shout THROW DOWN ART MONEY!
You honor me by asking me to leave a world to which you belong.
You may not have swallowed the one about the dream,
but you swallowed the one about the magazine. Better write than read.

Give him head he'll prove a jade. Nugatory and jejune pal.
Stag leap dry creek. Minimal derail. Donative speech.
The one to watch in the fourth is FICTIVE MUSIC.
The state of Massachusetts will have enough troops to handle the future.
A striking teacher is refusing to continue making faulty students,
or less than a street cleaner. Unable to attack become more bird
than flutist. A spoon of tahini and swig of kefir for the denatured teenager.
Once a system goes unchecked into a larger system, subsequent attempts
to check its original malady will bounce back as incredibly backward,
as indeed they will be, on the journey to American history.
Economics is a description of the point at which a society finds itself
between birth and destruction. Too much blame is laid on Arabs.
Good evening. Bankers think the recession won't be quite so bad. It is possible
for a woman to touch a man on the job mainly near the foothills, but the lobbyist
buttonholes them before they get to the REVOLVING DOOR of public service.

Are you a name artist, or just otherwise another writer whose main idea
of what to do in life is become famous? Better never to remember or to learn.
One's experience is hardly ever with one. O one hundred hours.
PERSONALITY is the persistence of others' sense of you,
taking you for something you are not, but in their minds there you are.
I am not here to deal with English or to be a mate in taxis.
Still testing your generation on the Drãno? Brian Eno simply isn't Not Vitál.
Bridget Bardot gets to utter the *pièce de résistance* of all French cinema:
J'ai peur, and it's before Godard, now I call that DARN innersting.
Warts are wonderful structures, which can appear overnight on any part of skin,
like mushrooms on a damp lawn, full grown and splendid in the complexity
of *their* particular cancer. Information rafts through the air.
An at bat. SOAPY NUTS. Just another extremely kissy baby destined to be
one more hardon scraping by. If you don't jelly up the ring, heaven will know
your kind. Is this thing on? Am I coming across some Monongahela or other?

Derail this choo choo at your own risk. We are forming a new society of
campanology.
House painters climb into the sky to make their bucks, what's your excuse?
In the year of the dead beats prepare to make apologies for a bad mistake.
Step over the threshold and rake what you have mown.
But don't ever agree with anyone to waste their time by asking for it.
It's *all* happening. Writing and police records were devised at once.
Rome was not built in a day, but they're working on it.
What'll it be, *Harold in Italy* or *Maggot Brain*?
Inspiration is a conspiracy. You'll be looking at the moon,
but you'll be seeing Mussolini. Though recall the opera director
is the number three man in Austria. Let's knock the other argonauts up too.
To fornicate, the artist stops working. I can just see myself
sitting on a horse for the next century. I challenge you to a book.
Absence is just another form, an echo on schedule, a SYNECDOCHE.
So, to speak you walk out of your slippers and into my soliloquy.

Restate the whole culture. We now know what it's like
to be without a habitat. If the alternative were bombing,
there'd be no problem. Let's go out for some dumb song
later on. Isn't this behavior as telling as another?
Take a mild guess. He'll've not eaten. This is no skill, it's a scratch—
like a history, like a legend, like a Sol LeWitt. Tatum was trying
to break Stingley's neck but he didn't expect to. Fay Wray being taken
by that nice ape. It gets the fauvist rave. It's so hard
to be an eager young person, so deadly to be regretful. Doesn't it occur
to you that some day not far off both of us will no longer be living?
The plan is the body thanks alot. A human carcass is no better than a chicken.
This heroine is addictive and I know whereof I speak.
Bland white night bidet, without the need and softening of what is.
The spiritual substance that is your body, refusing forever
the wishfulness of the visible. CALLED only because you left your feet.

Marsden Hartley

He types on his machine the brain of life.
I am in a French church. It is a wedding. I must stand up.
To please my friend better I will put on this pretty hat.
Amputate the freckled bosom and make me bearded like a man.
Choleric, phlegm, and funny bone. Ordinary intercourse.
Cuisinarts galore. If you don't buy this urinal, I'll shoot this dog.
And then what? The fucking redeemer leaves. Winds right wrong.
Life is a waste of money. In the NAIROBI STEREOPHONIC DINER.
I am not a sonnet, you are not a sea urchin, and this is not a poetry contest,
comrade. No use being total while still growing. We live by chants
and cannot wait to go down. After dark our motto
is never pee in the toilet, our vow, never to forget the track
India left on the ocean floor when it moved away.
The plan is not to be noticed when playing, but to be missed when not.
We are NOT EXCITED to be a friend of Voznesensky. He kisses us anyway.

And so an inexplicable feeling of sadness overcame me at the xerox machine today.
All the people in their pants, with the LOOPS but not the hammer.
The great American artist yet to emerge will emerge too late.
Unfair attitude. Out of paint, light. Out of words, a music.
How much does your drawing weigh? Give it some color
they will call by your name. It was to be one and so we make do with MORE.
A genius tale which missed the door, and must go 'round again.
Davey Tough is a protector, caved in and vexed but in a sky which lasts.
Tired of staying home, go away. In sight of land, shore leave.
The art of geese, perfectly realized in the city. The art of being
perfectly stuck with yourself. I'm prepared and accustomed,
in a room that is quiet for no one who listens.
If it weren't for you I wouldn't be here, although it is a beard of uncertain returns.
Singing, the hummingbird is clicking on an airy straw, percussively.
Anyway call and tell me all the little newses.

Clouds like stone, water stays on the surface, canvas, the earth cooling off,
temples of devotion, a yawning gap, thirty-three years, sea surface of
various eyes, men and women sit at a long table, change of location,
removable fix, eight bells' folly, the inner image given to the eye, several
sails, both outside and in the town, the drowned man, before the war,
emblematic of continuity, point of view of the operator, the landscape a
machine, foregrounds highlights as its difference is perceived, painting the
frame, the view propped up on glass, landscapes are only flat, the log is a
wheel, the wheel extends, conflict in middle distance, a frozen rope, blue
green brown blue white, in layers, supported by contending log jam below,
it's always in words, the story increases to length of days, one day for a
painting, ironically the distance traveled stops, give us this day, this fish,
sustained comedy, Gorton's wharf, portrait of an object, a triangle rests on
the head, arrows in both eyes, there are arrows in these eyes, surface is a
parallel, irony is art, on the beach in pink and blue, musclemen, hair on
chest, black triangle for crotch, the neck, the arms across the body, pushed
to the front, resting on the surface, about to fall away, a cycle, stopped
seeing, quicker than background, flatness arrests development, stops to
look through eyes in the head, the lyric is stopped time, portrait of ship
above family portrait, family portrait above family portrait, hands on the
table, eating fish, dishes stored in the cupboard, recapitulates his entire
being, sadly recovered sense of the past, the discovery of language, the first
time it has a name, painting, the first time, becomes where I was when I saw
this, I was sitting here when I saw this, disconnect the wires, step out of the
tent, run up and down stairs, start talking to assume this, push back the
noise with, as they say, a palette, multiple choice, true or false, don't need
that now, a train ticket, suitcase, destination, European manners, American
know-how, unlocks the trunk, stows it on a rack above his head, train
lurches, pure disregard, civilized phantoms, pressure in being alone, the

Russian example, miles and miles of steppes, not a sound, writing, the downstroke of the pen, the vehicle to step across, the vehicle to follow behind, the vehicle leading to points of rest, these points become a motion, a surface, the American parallel, space is context for development, space is what he saw, with a black duck, number one, what was in the sea is now on the table, what was in the hand is now in the air, what was in the air is now heavy, articulated, menacing, tied to the ground, the merest suggestion of a city, somewhat forgotten, somewhat remembered, looked for, found, bears on an original landscape, the lights grow dim, can't remember what he saw, the truth of landscape, made up, presented to the eye, portentous imaginings of duration, awake all night in Oakland, menacing fictions, fictions intend a meaning, a way of meaning is an abbreviation of movement, means getting there, means started out long ago, means strangely has arrived, will soon depart for perspective to be occasioned by next address.

The story as originally seen is composed of two kinds of paint: weather and ground. Weather becomes ground through the extremes of art. Art looks at a surface as a hole in the ground, vice versa, and props this surface up: it sticks out. Out over the deep green mountains come silver clouds, breaking away to the frame. The frame is moonlight over covered rocks, canvas trees recede into collapsed middle ground. The middle ground holds up a bowl of fruit, cloth moves off at an angle. Angle of background materials: green, black, red, betrays solidity of foreground objects. The paintings become a source of constant speech for an instant. Objects become the source of a disjunct iconography, and things recede into distance. In the distance the musical analogy seems possibly more correct, and things become quieter as a result. As a result of the image present to the mind, we have purity of impulse on an international scale. The image present to the mind is a sum proceeding from the organization of information on the widest scale. Art told me to write this. The landscape is an image of information present on the widest scale. Scale of the icon: rapid affirmation, the circle, number, geometric figures, ambiguity of surface and form, hidden messages contained in the most instantly perceived, the removal of difficulty (to open the door is complicated), the pattern of the frame becomes counterpoint to the material represented therein, the materials become pattern, shape of a star inside out, geography of primary colors, color is only light, white pushes the color out, white is the heart of matter (black is density in a shady place), red vector proceeds through a green zero, the military is mere number, I remember when I first saw this, picks up on background thread, in the icon

of the machines the machines are moving away, icon of the absence of machines, military men in the foreground move from left to right, barely visible through the emanations which defeat them, they remain as a kind of trace in which only light and simple colors are present, they want to say this, a star is the bandage on an arm, no one knew this, no one knew to look, but you do maintain a presence by your wit, a kind of penny arcade, ducks pop up and you shoot them down, two little Indians in canoes, at 1000 the eyes of the bird light up, bird to carry over the waters, waters moving mechanically in two directions back and forth, sound of the gun like a tiny popping in the ear, the trigger connects to the inside of the machine, time is of the essence, time ceases to be anything but a simple back and forth, state the obvious, the obvious is surface, eyes stare straight ahead, the teepees direct us to the point of the cone, we are the point of the cone, parallels extend, a religious argument extends in two directions, toward a center, away for an extent, it was an experience that actually happened to me, ironically absolute, a decorative pattern that sweeps up, becomes cloth, becomes hands, transforms apparent weight, presses down, but in an American context, W.C. Williams, very serious about this, red octagonal stars in a green day sky, a burning Indian, water in strips, black and red ribbons in the breeze, a conversation between symbols on the ground, huddled in a circle, branches overhead, childhood interest in a funny little story which seems to make sense, while the numbers do not hesitate to add up, reminders or ciphers, the temple of religious illustration is a tax on the brain, a tax on the light of the eye, yellow set within blue, a borrowed religion, a borrowed locus or term, many smokes, birds and water equal to the sun, as the tent flaps part, and you enter, etc., boundaries move away, boundaries become static, heated, melt into place, stars in the night sky connected by lines, I found a way to write, drawn from pressure of surrounding song, resolution is never found in song, independent lines return and take off, only art is the ground, I first saw art, simple alternation in the frame, the frame sits on dubious ground, the pressure is to go ahead, heaven while you wait, hell turned upside down, in just a few short years, statues flat, potential, flags of all nations yearn for retreat, any given becomes more than real, it addresses you, you record it, I think you must have been priorly warned to anticipate this, out of the sun come the flags of all nations, version two, the revised account, I saw this first on a train, I wouldn't make too much of it, pleasure is simpler than it seems, that must be correct, no big deal, it moves correctly, I can see it fall apart, only correct if I can see it move, this is the method of traveling through the works, without money, etc., the sky has a

rope in it, the sun ties the knot, the stars are pulled by a chain, cords connect the planetary bodies, the movements begin when you flick on the switch, the cords are stripped bare, exposed, burn the arm, this is what I take home, I saw it first there, I saw that I could take it home, democracy to stand in front of this, while the aristocracy stands behind, surface, decide later, Berlin, black and white, yellow moon, becomes the symbol of all nations at all times, merely one uplifted knee, my eyes caught that, I saw plain fragments on disputed ground, I saw contending fragments on plain ground, it seems to come from number if number is light, I remember the force of the teacher, the teacher's voice, letters, counting, boxes, lines, I remember turning off the teacher's voice and sinking into space, dark closet at the back of the room, filled with boots and coats, a broken thermos, pure glass, cylinder, milk poured down the drain, remembered experience of loss, proceeds through fits of abstraction to merely this surface, on or of which I speak, I arrived there, meaning I had reached this surface at one point in time, only one point in time, have you, the crowned heads of state, done more than this, obvious, the hats fall from heads, the insignia are piled upon the floor, the fire becomes something to eat, his famous iconic presence, gathering information, the battle of sticks, nationalities in a crowded space, the rapid frontiers, changes of state, the heightened densities of xenophobia, not really French, words brought to a core, the core found to be Greek or Latin, not that, we have only the comparative method, archeology of various strands, while contending, why not let sheer imprint on memory do the work, turn memory inside out and have all surface, so I can really see those flags, pointed into the future is the proof of my method, so I can establish a link, I find only a point where that link is established, a car comes around the bend in the road, link in a chain, chain of command, whose insignia ripped off what uniforms, a uniform background green, khaki, gray, dark blue, only those colors, grey, white, painted chains, the portrait of a German officer, I move back and forth, I stand in one place, I do not stand under, I look at!, twenty-four bottles, a time bomb, cut glass, the fuse, the point of the lance, arbitrary black field, the order which does not contend, inverted, brought to the front, it tells you that, nothing is clearer than threat, men in uniform, banners over ports, restricted entry, while the sun is in the center of the cup, in the form of a cross, myself am intending to drink it, a liquid tablecloth held by no cup, pattern on the wall reminds him of a removal from history, underneath the surface a giant X, the point at which these things explode, the point of the explosion is red, white, black, the explosion stops for a moment and rebounds from walls, patterns on walls.

Walls open to let in light, a Bermuda window on a semi-tropic landscape, the foreground is neutral, the background is depth, a single flower, several fruit, circular table, backward bending sash, varieties of weight. Weight of the sails moves weight of ships, weight of air, an arrangement, a rhyme is equivalent to a name, name is supported by the things it rhymes, both central image and flat background provoke a name, proceed to a name. The compass is an explosion in all directions, the sun moves over the garden, time is on the clock, sails appear over the wall, time is the point of the explosion, the point of the explosion is fixed. An image with a Christian character, Elsa Kobenhavn, the cross, the cross supports a weight, makes a sail, planes are named for the colors they present, the separation is simple figure to ground, the arc, the wedge, the rectangle, the steps, the truncated wedge. The names of the saints are carried into remote times and places, into the desert, propped on a table in the light, the names of the saints are flowers painted on glass, purification of narrative, narrative in another light, light of religious illustration, illustration of movement, a figure passes behind a saint. A saint walks, carries a cross, weeps, holds little saints in his hands. Saints multiply and spread out, saints sprout, grow, and flower. Saints wither on the vine and die.

The mountains are more habitable than the houses. The exterior is the correct location for scale. The interior is a measuring device. The house is a single image, the background landscape is the range of that image, its extension in time. Sky and mountains contend, as is their nature. Find the point in the cone. The spectacle is spread out, beyond measurement or extension. Dimensions loom larger now, bending the spectator back in to a point. What else is there but space, the elements of the commentary of space. There are two narrative lines, mountains and clouds, moving and fixed masses. Punctuation of a house. Nearby, the landscape melts. Constituent colors placed on and beneath contending mass. Fixed and moving masses versus masses broken down. The only possible narratives extend only one point in time. Read in from that point.

Sleep, and everything changes. Morning light rewrites the past. The canals are rock. The road into the present frame is somber and direct. Color obliterates its past. Neutral shades parallel. Alternation of rocks and green. Rock, twigs, branches, logs. The sky is simple, complicated, has only one cloud. The tree line is fate, fate is the axis of change. Boulders can be removed, carted down that road.

The earth is cooling in a cascade of devotion.

The mountain of the north. A mouth speaks from a cloud. The sun listens and pushes away. The mountain sinks into the sea. The sea has a mountain that sticks up.

Carla Harryman

Third Man

Cast of Characters

Third Man*	Youngster
Giantess	Loop
Face	Young Man
Man and Man	Manufacturer

*Note: Third Man is perhaps best played by a woman.

One

(Giantess in background, Third Man in foreground. Third Man is barely visible, Giantess not visible at all.)

THIRD MAN

(Third Man is explaining something, pretending to talk and gesturing. As if the volume on the TV were inaudible and then turned up, you can suddenly hear him . . .) Layman's terminology of course. If I had to really explain it you'd die in your seats. This is an intro to General Advice by, nevermind. How do you like it so far? Yes? *(Applause)* I've been told to go ahead. Some people speak smoothly while others humiliate themselves, having been born with plastic spoons in their mouths. There's a subtle genius to it.

GIANTESS

To what?

THIRD MAN

To making comparisons. *(Continuing his story)* Now, the Capital Ring absconds with seats of power everytime the universe fructifies.

GIANTESS

Warring ignoramuses.

THIRD MAN

Yes, they band together just to annoy you.

Two

(The second beginning with lights on. Nothing has happened yet.)

THIRD MAN

All of the punch lines.

FACE

I told you before I am insatiable.

THIRD MAN

I am satiated.

GIANTESS

I can't see the argument. I wouldn't have the heart.

THIRD MAN

You don't have the art? Let me acquaint you with an organic fuse. There's a refuse heap at the top of the stairs. Would you prefer a walkie talkie? Go ahead Moscow, I'm listening. I'm lucky. I walk forward and backward and steal the show. I'm lucky. You don't have the art. I believe we meet for the third time? Is that your tide pool? A bold profile. And next, the smallest finger on my left hand picks up a giant toad. *(Aside)* And various other

GIANTESS

Cesspool, tidepool—the population sleeps. *(Stands on stairs, looks out)* Other fatuous facts. *(Sings)* Drainage, seepage, it goes too slow. *(Stops singing)* I don't know what fruitful pursuit is.

THIRD MAN

Nonsense.

GIANTESS

Walking down the street, you've got three to seven dogs on a leash, and then you run into the launderette. Your lover has you on a leash. You've got dogs but can't hold steady. I don't have to listen to you for money. You've got a bad case of phony sunset stealth. As true as a sincere simpleton, which I am not, I'll have the last word even if I'm broke and it doesn't exist.

FACE

Shake everybody up! The lake expires. A new panorama: flood gates, tail dogs, sugar refineries. I have to say what I am. One can't help desire. I want to talk forever. I want . . .

GIANTESS

(Points) Underneath.

THIRD MAN

(Picks up newspaper and continuously reads out loud to himself. Face and Giantess exit making noise.) The Original And The Lack of Originality. The fact is, or the facts are, which? Public occurrences are more original than private acts by about six to one. Slime. Can't think anything today.

(Enter Man and Man. When they speak, it is over Third Man's words, so that what Third Man says gets muffled.)

Somebody must have produced and forborne to consume it. God, I want a private life. What is it? JSM. Hmm.

MAN AND MAN

Someone once said to lack originality is a sin.

THIRD MAN

Power. Is exercised, exerted and otherwise handled. A stopper of the orifice on the bilge of a cask. I should have nailed her on the head, damn it, baby, why'd I let you go so far? With alacrity, judiciously

MAN

A crime against nature.

THIRD MAN

determined by the piecemeal jellyfruits of reason. Ya, sure, the Late Archbishop hits L.A. Times on deathbed. Very convenient. Organized to excel one another in true

YOUNGSTER

(Offstage) You're torturing me with projectiles.

THIRD MAN

fraternity. Mention sisterhood. The sad truth of jokes is *my* business. Swell headed safe at home. Like when trees

(Enter Loop holding Youngster. Loop throws Youngster onto floor. Picks him up and throws him onto floor again. Youngster plays dead.)

hug babies for protection deceiving their mothers making way for military maneuvers. Surcharges and tax shelters

(Loop takes up post. Lights dim on Third Man as her voice fades.)

aside while Blank is, in her own words . . .

LOOP

Stiff animals, types often hired out to satire, displace Egyptian Gods, their miniatures riding on the hands of the decorous. The slender hands, tilted back, just so, and extended, resemble svelt creatures just emerged from a wholesome emerald river silt. The river is broad and light, ancient and playful in retrospect. With such I share no affinity. Forms emerge by disposition. Inaccurate moments disturb the otherwise rigid, fomenting doggerel of civic responsibilities. One is caught, speaks through a nerve registering its own experience. I wish I had the courage to openly detest history. Then who would I speak for?

Three

THIRD MAN

To dress or arrange?

YOUNG MAN

(Entering) My head weighs a ton but I can't see the numbers. The bathr^{om} is pink. Thrilled into belief. I love it. The room looks fine, fine.

YOUNGSTER

It's a deep villa after dark. Monochromatic war. Having fled the ec-stentricities of conversation for a meal with the General upon the behest of the enemy who stand guard over the anomaly . . .

THIRD MAN

Occupational hazard.

YOUNG MAN

And arms and legs. Felt walls. Transported! *(Singing)* "They call me^e the Great Intensifier."

YOUNGSTER

Luckily, the most savage of the plans was cancelled. The private wa^lked into the forest. He nearly starved. What instruction was artifice? W^hich necessary? As sure as fate was in the interior, poverty would meet hi^m at any boundary.

THIRD MAN

Stimulating.

YOUNG MAN

The lobby faded.

YOUNGSTER

I have never seen enough. I will never see enough.

THIRD MAN

I'm too old for tension. (*Turning to Young Man*) You are creative?

YOUNG MAN

Hold your own. What I represent is . . .

FACE

(*Enters*) Duke it out! Keep me instructed.

GIANTESS

Who me? I'll talk. A shifted mood of no existence.

THIRD MAN

Marvelous. A treatise on a strange sense of familiarity.

YOUNGSTER

The rain made everybody hyper. She was in the middle of the forest. There was a fire in the mountains. She watched animals proliferate while the soldier watched her from behind a rock. It was intimate with an odd twist. It couldn't have happened any other place. Suddenly the enemy tried to take the instructions away. The project had begun in front of a rock border where she kept her goat herd then drifted slowly into the wood because she had an instinct for safety unlike a lot of idiots slapdash she watched the curve of human events with grave timidity. She didn't want to be caught where she wasn't expected or desired so she got all the characters in the books she had committed to memory to perform a magic dance that would make her look ugly in the center of a wartime nightmare.

Four

FACE

You know, there's a sensation of perusal I'm after.

THIRD MAN

Disguising sensation again?

FACE

I wasn't talking to you.

(*Long Pause*)

THIRD MAN

How would I know?

FACE

What a joke!

THIRD MAN

Here you are in an enormous room. What are you going to do about it?

FACE

Here you are in an enormous room. What am I going to do about it? We are on TV.

THIRD MAN

You have a basically economical mind I understand.

FACE

Really, I don't think you do. Nevada is the weirdest place in the world.

THIRD MAN

Aren't you from Nevada?

FACE

No, you are.

THIRD MAN

I really think you're wrong there.

FACE

I'm the one working behind the counter.

THIRD MAN

I'll fire you. I own it.

FACE

Nobody told me.

THIRD MAN

I have more claims on . . .

FACE

Look, I want more claims.

THIRD MAN

Let's go eat.

FACE

What are we going to have for dinner, shoes?

THIRD MAN

No, you!

FACE

Me? I'm no good.

THIRD MAN

Okay, specify precisely. On the Third Floor the Third Man celebrates his Claim.

Five

MAN AND MAN

Man covers man with his hand. Hands cover men's heads. The heads are intimately close. The bodies miles apart. Someone tries to hit his head with his hand but hits man. Man suffers deeply next door.

THIRD MAN

(Enters) Thank you. I need to know what to disengage. Am I cagey? Nervous experience is rendered in types, bovine, moose, etc. The decorous posture speaks to herself. I am like an additive. Who said, "I am in a lovely rage?" Oh hands held at banks, by banks. I am a clumsy spy. My vocabulary suffers. (Pause) You must understand my position. Because I assume it.

MAN

Who me?

Six

LOOP

As I look over that panorama of history, that slim volume, imbued with poetic colors, sharp oranges peeling from the linoleum of some precious, forgotten family life where something happened to someone once in a dream repeated a billion times, I see a surface not reflective but imagined. Numbers break out into a common ground and one is left with the notion of a common green placed behind flat forms, figures floating limp in mud on stages built for momentary occasions, ripe with age, fertile with song and music, one exact note following another. Plain facts are alarming. Imagine the potential for alibi.

Seven

GIANTESS

Well, does he have a metal back?

THIRD MAN

I want you to let me do this to you.

GIANTESS

We won't ever agree but that's part of the excitement right? To make a

splash in front of people is a tired theme. I fade. Fade Fade Fade. Catch me. Assemble around me your overdeveloped head and small nose, your long spine and fat ankles and be good, pathetic but well-postured. Hold onto this rope with your thumbs. And then, when I am you, caress the boat in which I float, the nearest parasite of a classic pride.

LOOP

In sum to have thought and been exposed. Surfaces betray my meanings. I need some pictures to look at. Artifices to look to with horror. No activity. At sea, or in the past, where, suddenly, terror and serenity, the evil opposites who defeat purpose . . . At this moment, I stand without shelter or context, obstruct the helm, or overlook the desert resembling a misanthrope as he computes soft squares mashing distance and time sense into jargon . . . We are intoxicated by the look of her, rising genie-like out of the bombed-up city, and the mean old man, gloating at his catch, is just a piece of her mind. When she kills him, he turns into a light and sensual dust, the plodding way one makes one's home. Fascinated first by cameras, which placed you, in the family, near the center but now spread over the hills: once yellow now red then yellow, like lopsided butterflies to make your hatred of The Image absolute in the fabricated aspect . . . But weight must shift, can be said with pleasure, or with absolute concern.

Eight

THIRD MAN

Above all we can think.

FACE

(Enters) The problem is standoffishness. I am only talking to myself while desperately trying to corner you. There are too many people in the room. I need handouts. When everybody else is gone a romance starts up. I climb a tree and see valleys, retain memory of sheds, isolated objects, ancestors sunk into the ground and changed shape, the objects of my envy, everything sad but true, sickeningly dumb mingled with inexplicable yearnings, cravings come and go while standing statuesque against the landscape, crystalized stretched-out lengthwise full of requests in all positions, little silent streams to look inside what I say.

THIRD MAN

Tipsy hireling empties hedonistic ravings. I don't think I'm too close to home, but I can't help myself. The most archaic types. Go go Johnny go.

FACE

I need a bath.

Nine

LOOP

I envision a form. Behold the direction from which it issues its fragile being and beckons the attention like a bat out of hell, winged and anchored, marching onto your distant shore as if it is but familiar ground! I have had ideas, gleaned from some vague landscape, some approximate concern, a makeshift paradise of suitable words, that make me shiver with pleasure, want to obliterate myself as a discovery. Such ideas are not the crux of matter but warped figments compelling me to correct my views and live less richly. The Form fills irony with holes. Why tire oneself out? Make me different and I will make you the same. This is the nature of my lullaby.

THIRD MAN

If there were only fewer formalities . . .

MANUFACTURER

(Enters) Had we but cause. *(Exits)*

FACE

(Reads out of book) "They swallow themselves on top of each other. I could see all of it through the key hole. Then Ernest snuck up behind me. The last thing I heard before being hit over the head with a bat was, 'you peeping Tom.' The last thing I saw was a feather duster being applied to the porcelain nude . . ." I don't care because I can see love of life.

MANUFACTURER

(Enters) It's good it's good.

THIRD MAN

Obviously.

FACE

When are you going to fix me up?

MANUFACTURER

These are hard words.

Ten

LOOP

It is a frail memory that remembers but present things . . .

FACE

Sometimes I look away . . .

LOOP

Though one who has disgraced monsters may like men . . .

FACE

But I see a face anyway . . .

LOOP

There is always the possibility . . .

FACE

It might be me but I don't think so. When I talk to myself I know you are listening . . .

LOOP

He has ceased to notice men to like. A camouflage . . .

FACE

Beating around the bush . . .

LOOP

I.e., a resistance to exposure, i.e., he has found a style. This is not an accident of nature. One person speaks to another . . .

FACE

Pacing behind the screen . . .

LOOP

To provoke. Proceeding upon a nonarticulated path . . .

FACE

Going through my words . . .

LOOP

A warm person sits next to a cold window . . .

FACE

The imperfection you labor to reclaim . . .

LOOP

Inhabiting a deep trust or . . .

FACE

Makes your desires and mine the same . . .

Eleven

Masquerade

(Manufacturer, Third Man, Giantess, Face wear cloaks and are huddled around a giant pudding, each with a spoon in hand.)

GIANTESS

(Addressing Third Man) You look like a piece of shit.

THIRD MAN

Got a comb? *(Giantess hands him a comb.)*

THIRD MAN

(Combing Giantess's hair) When I was a boy, or not quite an adult, something between a gnat and an oaf, I'd get up early, go out to the corral and lasso wild horses. While I roped horses, I did my morning's meditation. First I'd try to look over the plateau and then I'd look through it. I always failed. That was a setup. One day I got up, went outside, picked up the rope, went over to the corral, breathed in some air and stared out into space, the same old space. The plateau was gone. Had it been eaten by killer ants? Had it dropped through a hole in the night? Was the sky on fire and the world coming to an end? Had it been attacked by a brigade of tumbleweeds leaving but fine sand where once stood one of earth's blimps? No, nope, no, uh-huh. *(Turns toward audience, brandishes spoon in one hand and comb in the other.)* They didn't tell me, and I never asked, out of politeness, how they managed to make it disappear, but they settled in its place and that was fine with me. Maybe they went over it with a giant tractor in the night, who knows. But I married the daughter. Then it hailed and she died without saying a word. She had the last word alright. But I got everything back when I buried her. That's the way these things happen. *(To Giantess, fluffing up her hair.)* Now, don't we look better?

GIANTESS

(Pissed) Once I was a girl and everybody told me lies. They told me about other parts of the world as if they had been there, mysterious swampy lands, over-cultivated lands, extremely civilized populations. "My dear child, you are just the mirror image of your mother, father, brother, cousin, sister, aunt, uncles, grandfather, grandma," and so on. I ate the kid next door.

FACE

(Defiantly) Now criticize me.

(They eat pudding in silence.)

Twelve

LOOP

Arrogant magpies think there is something to see when they swoon over forests in picture books. I do not like to use my critical faculties on

worthless subjects, or point out, as a defense, all subjects are worthy of meandering attention, the kind that apes you when your back is turned. Lit-up neon signals these beakless birds to dance in their jackets then retire to a stranger's bedroom and rearrange the composition of floor to ceiling scratches and wall to wall contents. Unidentifiable and lost transitory states of melancholia breath down their necks and entice them into deeper rooms where useless entourages of wild game salute fixated babies, hiccuping among earthworms soaked in rain. Something our guests cannot understand, being overcultivated and sincere. This is why guests get sad and droop on you. Pinching their mouths into half-assed puckers, waxing suffocated versifiers, they won't let go of your arm until you have seen the last ounce of sadness lilt out of their eyes like a heap of passive rhythms meant to gain sympathy for unwholesome aristocrats in operatic narratives that make ghastly puddings of the sternum—that emotional fixture which operates on the principle of silence. Now let us look the forests and the rooms.

Thirteen

YOUNG MAN

(Singing to himself) We're gonna make sense of the day. *(Notices Third Man in background.)* Pull up a chair. *(Continues singing)*

THIRD MAN

(Staring at Young Man) I am secretly agoraphobic.

YOUNG MAN

Is that British? I need a drink. You? You've done a lot of outrageous things. Why do you hide it?

THIRD MAN

You think it's easier than it looks. The sun rises over the mountains and you are entertained.

MANUFACTURER

(Entering) I would have preferred only one mind.

Fourteen

FACE

I am in despair. Everything sounds the same.

THIRD MAN

That's my job.

YOUNGSTER

Whose mind is governing whose at this moment is problematic.

(Face exits, Young Man enters)

YOUNG MAN

The problem, re-entry. Hospitals! I am not an avoidance mechanism! Hosery you too on your dance floor. Like a true historian, wrapped in blankets too short for your feet, a gangly envelope, floundering around in someone else's hope. Why don't you get a boyfriend? How 'bout tug of war? Chance meetings at the lycee. I am condemned to face the star pupil. Ugh Ugh! "There is one thing I would like you all to remember . . ." Ugh! I reject explanation! Ugh! Neophytes!

YOUNGSTER

Hold on. Hold on. I was troubled by my past and I won't give in. It is never too late to water the plants unless they are dead. Astounded by the motion I feel, I am further astonished by what I know is there but can't experience, this is love. All sorts of hocus pocus latches onto one's fears. The access way onto a vast beach. But look at the cluster of flourishing overpasses on Highway 80 and you want to embrace metal. Thus we get beaten every day. Attack an assailant. A city . . .

THIRD MAN

Harboring inadequacy.

FACE

(Enters) I'm beat.

MANUFACTURER

Hold your horses!

THIRD MAN

(Imitating Manufacturer) Let In Some Air!

YOUNGSTER

. . . in a frost . . .

Fifteen

YOUNGSTER

. . . the psychology of the heap. A shrub. "A Young Man Lights Fire To Frozen City," newspapers pile up behind the cathedral. Looking Greek over . . . seepage. Road above. If I had thought you, first . . .

THIRD MAN

(Giggles) You didn't expect me to giggle?

FACE

I want combinations! I want speechless diatribes!

MANUFACTURER

Hold your horses!

THIRD MAN

CLOSE THE DOOR!

YOUNG MAN

Celebrate Claustrophobia!

FACE

Help me!

LOOP

Circumstances . . .

Original Cast

Third Man: Eileen Corder
Giantess: Lyn Hejinian
Face: Steven Paul LaVoie
Man and Man: Kit Robinson and
Greg Goodman
Youngster: Alan Bernheimer
Loop: Steve Benson
Young Man: Johanna Drucker
Manufacturer: Greg Goodman
Sets: Andrea Hassiba
Lighting: Diane Hall

DIRECTOR: Nick Robinson

Michael Palmer

Autobiography, Memory and Mechanisms of Concealment (Part 1 or One Part)

Michael Palmer: Possibly to begin: dinner at Michael Davidson's Berkeley apartment with Robert Duncan in 1971. I mentioned the difficulty I was having writing, that is, inventing, an autobiographical note for my first book with Black Sparrow Press, *Blake's Newton*. A special delivery letter had arrived from the publisher early that morning urging me to finally send the note along with a photograph so that the book could go to press. So the question who I had been or was going to claim to be, alongside a poet's face, apparently mine, on final page of book that same poet had apparently written. Cloned as a chance by-product of the Manhattan Project in the early forties? Born in Tierra del Fuego under still mysterious circumstances to the mistress of the British Vice-Consul? Dago alto saxophonist from Boston? (Novelists are great at this—they all seem to have worked on lobster boats.) How in fact to fill a space approximately two by three inches—with words—in such a way that at the end that space would appear to a reader perfectly blank, or as the French can't stop themselves from saying, white? Or maybe to take the special delivery letter as a message not to publish the book at all, given my inevitable doubts that it and its so-called author had attained anything like 'identity.' Who in fact had written the book? Some sense of a person in his late twenties, 5' 11½", 160 lbs., clean-shaven. Identifying marks would include barely visible scar over left eyebrow and one on left index finger caught in bathroom door of hotel apartment (room 1108) at age two. Mother had rushed to doctor's office, child in arms, holding the virtually severed fingertip in place. Ensuing successful operation leaves the finger fully functional if slightly deformed. Minor atrophy of left calf muscle due to congenital lower-back condition. I.e., characteristic micro-asymmetries:

I paced up and down my room from early morning until twilight. The

window was open, it was a warm day. The noises of the narrow street beat in uninterrupted. By now I knew every trifle in the room from having looked at it in the course of my pacing up and down. My eyes had travelled over every wall. I had pursued the pattern of the rug to its last convolution, noted every mark of age it bore. My fingers had spanned the table across the middle many times. I had already bared my teeth repeatedly at the picture of the landlady's dead husband.

(June 25, 1914)

He was assigned exercises by the osteopath and told that he could expect increasing discomfort over time, confirmed by the twinges I feel in lower back, buttocks and thighs as I'm writing this fifteen years later. A third scar toward the center of the forehead resulting from fall while chasing wire-haired terrier through neighbor's enclosed garden down the street from the hotel at age four. Surprisingly little pain. My own oddly calm assumption that I was dying, given that I couldn't see through the torrent of blood pouring from the wound. Pervasive scent of ether, nuns in white habits and so on. Constant voice in background mysteriously repeating, "Is it critical, is it critical?"

On hearing of the problem, Duncan offered to compose the biographical note himself. I accepted and he immediately wrote the following:

I think Michael Palmer was delivered two blocks astray in 1943 because he was aborted at our address two months before. Now he has arrived I think a long way from the Rhinelander apartments in Greenwich Village with a poetry addressed to occupant to refund the Indians for the Manhatta sell.

The next day I sent it (special delivery, memory tells me, as a return gesture) to John Martin at Black Sparrow with instructions to use it as the biographical note. In fact when the book appeared Robert's note had been placed below the photograph and above it was the following:

Michael Palmer was born in New York City in 1943. He was educated at Harvard University and now lives and works in San Francisco.

So. So a decision had been made, if not by the writer whose identity was at issue, to reimpose order and offer an outline of the 'real' facts. A person had been born, raised, educated certainly, had lived somewhere and moved somewhere else and presumably there were additional 'real' facts that could be supplied to responsible parties upon inquiry. The reader was to be relieved of any puzzlement or unease generated by Robert's note. Something responsible *was* going on: the writer came from a place writers come from, had gone to a place writers often go to (his experience could be said to span a continent), and he had the imprimatur of an institution known for its

sobriety in literary matters. The 'added' note (for so now Robert's must appear, as subsequent to the real in the eye's natural passage down the page) could be effectively contextualised as metaphoric speech which, if somehow 'real' in itself could not be taken as answerable to or standing for that other 'real' which in this case was the set of events and circumstances that go to make up a life. The following from Satie's *Memoirs of an Amnesiac* speaks, it seems to me, to similar expectations and assumptions:

(Part 2, "The Day of a Musician")

An artist ought to regulate his life.

Here is the exact time-table of my daily life:

Get up: at 7:18 a.m.; inspired: from 10:23 to 11:47. I lunch at 12:11 p.m. and leave the table at 12:14.

A healthy turn on the horse to the end of my grounds: from 1:19 to 2:53. More inspiration: from 3:12 to 4:07.

Various occupations (fencing, reflections, napping, visits, contemplation, dexterity, swimming, etc . . .): from 4:21 to 6:47.

Dinner is served at 7:16 and ends at 7:20. Then symphonic readings (out loud): from 8:09 to 9:59.

Going to bed takes place regularly at 10:37. Once a week I awake with a start at 3:19 a.m. (Tuesdays).

I sleep with one eye closed; my sleep is deep. My bed is round with a hole to put my head through. Hourly a servant takes my temperature and gives me another.

For a long time I have subscribed to a fashion magazine. I wear a white cap, white socks, and a white vest.

My doctor has always told me to smoke. To this advice he adds: "Smoke, my friend: if it weren't for that, another would be smoking in your place."

So possibly to begin: much of the complexity in both writing autobiography and discussing it derives from the obvious fact that (leaving aside the convention of William Holden's posthumous narrator in *Sunset Boulevard*) you are also continuing to experience a life, spilling coffee, walking around, accumulating lists of things to do next (that *must* be done next), thus anticipating still further experience at least to some degree continuous with, even deriving from, present experience, and thus to a great degree 'linear.' Ultimately there is a *definition* that occurs as Gregory Bateson argues "by relation," in fact a story, defining that form as a "knot or complex of that species of connectedness which we call *relevance*" where "any A is relevant to any B if both A and B are parts or components of the same 'story.'" The complication being that while the story is being told the

story is going on—at least something is going on—possibly the story of the story, though in fact the story is manifestly other than the sequence of events that through selection and organisation go to make up the story. Is the 'life' then not the story? Are we in an area like that *regression ad infinitum* Wittgenstein suggests with the question, "If 'red' is the name of a color, then what is the name of the word 'red' "? Actually we do confront a dilemma not unlike that of language philosophers, forced to discuss language by means of language, which has led the less optimistic advocates to invoke an indeterminacy principle for such operations.

The schizophrenic young man was thin like many people in such mental states. Moreover he seemed in effect malnourished. As a result of his very sedentary life, almost that of an invalid (which from many points of view he was), he had very poor musculature and was very weak, that weakness being perhaps an important agency of the great fear which his wide-open eyes reflected: fear of nature as well as of his fellow creatures, fear of death as well as in some sense of life. His face and in particular his mouth seemed contorted most of the time by a mixture of sadness and pain, the mouth being moreover quite small and the corners of the lips turned downward.

This is my translation of the opening passage of *Le Schizo et Les Langues*, written in French by an American, Louis Wolfson. Gilles Deleuze compares Wolfson's procedures to those adopted by Raymond Roussel. Wolfson describes himself as both "student of schizophrenic languages," and "schizophrenic student." He writes in French from a necessary rejection of the *mother-tongue*. That is, unable literally to endure the words of his mother without enormous pain, he must learn a variety of other language (French, German, Hebrew and Russian) in order to convert English words as rapidly as possible into foreign words of a similar sound as well as meaning. Like Roussel he must search out elaborate homeomorphic equivalents. So the work, his schizophrenic memoir, memoir of a schizophrenic and study of schizophrenia, consists of a complex chain of linguistic displacements, transformations and concealments. What is there (or what there is) can only emerge by passing into a medium where as such it is not. In writing as in his life he must hide from himself what is being spoken and spoken of, in order first to hear and then apotropically to name it himself. And variously he names himself, "le jeune homme schizophrénique," "l'aliéné," "l'étudiant schizophrénique," "le schizophrène," "le jeune homme malade mentalement," "le psychotique," "le schizo," and so on insistently, as if to establish a single identity among the multiple nominations which substitute for the absent first-person—as if to make sameness

out of difference and deny the alienating or differentiating procedure itself. The effort is paradoxically directed toward a return to a single, unitary language, a prelapsarian concordance between word and thing, or language and experience. In opposition to the text itself, it represents a denial of translation, of the multiplicity of dialects among individuals as well as language-groups. So in the book he tells of his bewilderment as a child at the notion of Chinese as the language spoken by the greatest number of people when in fact the language is subdivided into a multiplicity of mutually indecipherable dialects.

Toward evening I walked over to the window and sat down on the low sill. Then, for the first time not moving restlessly about, I happened calmly to glance into the interior of the room and at the ceiling. And finally, finally, unless I were mistaken, this room which I had so violently upset began to stir. The tremor began at the edges of the thinly plastered white ceiling. Little pieces of plaster broke off and with a distinct thud fell here and there, as if at random, to the floor. I held out my hand and some plaster fell into it too; in my excitement I threw it over my head into the street without troubling to turn around. The cracks in the ceiling made no pattern yet, but it was already possible somehow to imagine one. But I put these games aside when a bluish violet began to mix with the white; it spread straight out from the center of the ceiling, which itself remained white, even radiantly white, where the shabby electric lamp was stuck. Wave after wave of the color—or was it a light?—spread out toward the now darkening edges. One no longer paid any attention to the plaster that was falling away as if under the pressure of a skillfully applied tool. Yellow and golden-yellow colors now penetrated the violet from the side. But the ceiling did not really take on these different hues; the colors merely made it somewhat transparent; things striving to break through seemed to be hovering above it, already one could almost see the outlines of a movement there, an arm was thrust out, a silver sword swung to and fro. It was meant for me, there was no doubt of that; a vision intended for my liberation was being prepared. (June 25, 1914)

It is interesting to compare Wolfson's self-designations with the studied neutrality of those found in *The Education of Henry Adams*, also written in the third-person. As Adams states near the beginning, "life was double," and the self's double is presented as "the child," "the boy," "the boy Henry," "the rather slow boy," "young Adams," "the young man," "the private secretary," "Adams' son" (sic), "the newcomer," "the Assistant Professor," even—when meeting Kipling—"the American"; but most often Adams is simply "he," proposed with the muted Brahmin irony that sets the tone of the work. This 'other' Adams is cast

afloat among the forces of velocity and change the narrator Adams attempts to quantify by analytic observation. 'He' is proposed as an ephemeral particle ("His identity, if one could call a bundle of disconnected memories an identity, seemed to remain; but his life was once more broken into separate pieces . . ."). At the same time the implicit 'I' is unitary and reflective, at rest and distanced, the convention of the omniscient narrator (here the irony is also conscious) brought to bear upon the manifestations of self. The sum of the two is the full faculty of memory the "spider-mind" acquires. This memory is synthetic, as Adams notes, and results in a 'life' consisting in great part of omissions (the exclusion of Adams' wife from the memoir being the most notorious). Of Adams we learn a great deal (in terms of quantifiable events) but also surprisingly little. 'He' functions most often as an absence, since the pronominal shift empties the subject of self or possibly 'myself.' The studied neutrality is in its own way as violent or extreme in its alienation as Wolfson's, and in rereading *The Education* for this talk I found myself (I find myself) substituting the designations of Wolfson's persona for those of Adams, "le jeune homme schizophrénique," "l'aliène," etc.

The horrible spells lately, innumerable, almost without interruption. Walks, nights, days, incapable of anything but pain. (June 12, 1923)

The confession form occurs when there is an apparent refusal of displacement from the first-person, when the 'I' is everywhere present to reveal itself not in the semi-darkness of the confessional booth but in the full light the act of reading elicits. I want to look briefly at a couple of books which in somewhat different ways offer themselves as works of this kind, Augustine's *Confessions* and Hedy Lamarr's *Ecstasy and Me*.

What first interests me about the Augustine is his concentration on phenomena such as memory, time and discourse, that is, those elemental mechanisms and conventions which shape the text itself and are most often taken for granted, as if the categories so named were in fact given, in other words, understood and beyond question, wherever "understood" and "beyond question" are, insanely, paired (this could lead to an endless digression on, for example, the language of warfare—Vietnam would serve—or of the financial pages of our daily newspapers).

Augustine begins the *Confessions* with an invocation of god and a meditation on "presence-absence" as god's nature, a "transcendent presence" which will influence the manner of address and prayer. The concealedness and omnipresence of god as Logos, god's being as both active and at rest bring to mind pre-Socratic speculation on the nature of being and

the word. Augustine's underlying assumption throughout the work is the inadequacy of words (as opposed to the Word) not only in approaching the sacred but also in attempting to describe human events and human emotions. 'Fear,' 'pleasure,' 'pity,' etc., are concepts supposedly "understood by all" and as such veil those emotions which they pretend to represent. In moving to examine the central mechanism of the book, Augustine finds that memory is as illusive as experience. What is remembered? What is a mental image? What is the image of an image? What is memory as distinct from mind? How does one "search one's memory"? What is it to remember forgetfulness:

I can mention forgetfulness and recognize what the word means, but how can I recognize the thing itself unless I remember it? I am not speaking of the sound of the word but of the thing which it signifies. If I had forgotten the thing itself, I should be utterly unable to recognise what the sound implied. When I remember memory, my memory is present to itself by its own power; but when I remember forgetfulness, two things are present, memory, by which I remember it, and forgetfulness, which is what I remember. Yet what is forgetfulness but the absence of memory? When it is present I cannot remember. Then how can it be present in such a way that I can remember it? . . . etc.

(Book X. 16)

The anxiety expressed by the self-interrogation is similar to that of both Wittgenstein and Saussure (and of course the *Confessions* were a favorite text of Wittgenstein). Book XI contains a parallel questioning of the nature of time, in particular of duration vs. present time. How does time exist? How do past and future exist if time can only be measured in passing? His conclusion is that they exist by being present through words. The past is present through words grounded in memory; and when we 'foresee' the future we are actually seeing present signs of future events. The three times then might be described as 1) a present of past things, 2) a present of present things and 3) a present of future things. He concludes, "Some such different times do exist in the mind, but nowhere else that I can see . . . It is in my own mind then that I measure time. I must not allow my mind to insist that time is something objective." This may derive from Plato's notion of time in the *Timaeus* or a neo-Platonic version of same. Plato states, "For we say of time that it *was* and *shall be*, but on a true reckoning we should only say *is*, reserving *was* and *shall be* for the process of change in time . . ." Both memory and time, then, are grounded in the present and its language. Events recalled are present acts, are events in language but in a language which by its nature resists the activity of revelation and naming

even as it is spoken. The present, the presence of the speaker, both is and is not, and finally Augustine laments, "If only men's minds could be seized and held still." Augustine investigates both the subject-object relationship in discourse and the structural relationships that constitute the linguistic sign in order *to reveal what he is doing*, to confess the nature of his activity. It is also to confess the identity of self as memory, a "storehouse of the images of material things." And finally it is to confess the mediated and mediational character of all speech. Memory has no memory of the Logos and no being of its own. The relationship between signifier and signified must be reconstituted at each moment of the act of telling, in a constant state of uncertainty. From one point of view this is in fact Augustine's confession—that of the concealedness of all language, even that of confessional revelation.

In *The Circular Gates* I published a poem entitled "The End of the Ice Age and Its Witnesses":

Yesterday your fever returned
It was near the middle of July

and we went to see the red King
Then I took out the net

together with the red bird
and put it down

on the bank of the river. Could the
flat milling stone and a

subsistence on seeds be originally
an American invention? We

cuddled on the seat of the car
until she said desperately

I was never unhappier;
then I told them that we wished to

continue our journey
because we were not reaching our destination

at all. But the creatures of this island
were very kind. The sky

was a deep green, without clouds
since the rain had been falling regularly

onto the lowest branch of a tamarack
where we hung by our knees. Considering

the look of the trees
we were somewhere in Canada

or the Northeast: flat, blue-green needles
0.8 to 1.3 inches long

that yellow in the fall; ovoid cones,
bark thin, scaly and

gray to reddish brown. The soil
is moist and spongy

under the car. E
is white like fog, and A dark,

cycles at some future time
to tell about—

the white tents in the primer
and the kind of flower that trembles easily—

Nothing of the sort is known
or probably on this side of the ocean

nor is there any early record of tents
On a given evening for example

they're playing cards
at the bottom of a swamp or pond; the Tartar

deserts light up; by the stairways
and armchairs of the rocks a

small world, pale and flat
"is coming to understand itself"

The poem draws upon a range of sources including Carl Sauer, Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, various poems and letters of Rimbaud, *Trees of North America* and Hedy Lamarr's *Ecstasy and Me*. The passage from Miss Lamarr's book reads:

...We got sandwiches and drove to a glen which is beautifully surrounded by trees and leads to the MGM backlot.

"You made it big," Marcia said. "You must be very happy." She ate her sandwich with big bites, while I just nibbled at mine. I had no appetite.

"I was never unhappier," I said, for the first time putting it into words.

She was amazed.

I explained what had been happening. I could see she didn't understand. She said plaintively, "I'll never be a big star. I'll always be a nothing. Two hundred dollars a week with overtime will be the limit. 'Marry a rich actor,' my mother tells me. I'm ready but where is he? They just want to get into my pants. After a lay they can't wait to get away. Men are so cruel."

She was right—in a way, men are . . . etc. . . .

She looked at me. "You're so beautiful," she said. "That's why you are a star. And—I hope you're not offended—you're so cold, so untouchable."

"No I'm not," I interrupted. Then gently I held her face in both hands and sympathetically kissed her. Her reaction was strange. She began to cry. I kissed her tears as if she were a child.

"I need love so desperately," she moaned. "And all I can get is sex. Oh, I hate men."

Then she hugged me tightly. "Will you be kind to me and just care a little, please?"

"Yes," I told her, "I will." . . . etc. . . .

We cuddled on the seat of the car until she said desperately, "I need you." Her hands went under my dress and all over me and I let her do what she wanted to and all my frustration and hate left me. This was always the solution to my ills. When I came back to reality I realized we were both sobbing . . . etc. . . . [They drive back to the studio]

I thought of her often. It's murder for a girl to have too much need.

Dynamite stuff—but what stuff? What are we being told? Obviously that Hedy got it on with a starlet on a lunch break between takes of an MGM musical being directed by Gene Kelly. And the sensational, confessional aspect of the memoir has to do with the fact that a) there were many many random couplings, b) a fair number of these were with women, and c) there was a lot of heartache. Now many of us qualify on all three counts but might not think to find an audience for these revelations, not a wide audience in any case, wider than say a circle interested in local literary gossip. Augustine of course is also involved with confession of sexual activity tied to a dynamic of spiritual struggle and self-understanding, and it is interesting to examine the convoluted intensity of his language in attempting to come to terms with this persistent aspect of his emotional make-up. With Hedy it's revelation because of the identity of the speaker. She is famous, the object of many private fantasies, and has led a public life constructed by studio p.r. agents and interspersed with sensational headlines. She is a love-

goddess. Love-goddesses are a) radically unobtainable, since they exist only on the screen and in large, guarded retreats in Beverly Hills, and b) never definitely never hardly ever bisexual, even when their attraction is blatantly epicene (the book appears in 1966 and this mythology has certainly evolved since—popular mythologies don't remain stable). So what is she telling? She is telling us that love-goddesses are often disturbingly attainable, regardless of the pedestal constructed to reinforce a stereotype of enthronement and desexualization; and that love-goddesses may be polymorphous perverse. What is she not telling? Anything. Once this is done there is nothing left. The language of her work as is usually (but not always) the case derives from soap-opera and is a refusal of identity, that is of the layerings that constitute identity or presence. It is a refusal to tell (though I don't know if it's a willing refusal). As is true in most and possibly all styles of autobiography, the 'I' functions as the most elaborate of shifters, and this complexity can be used or not, recognised or not. (There are at the very least two ways of hearing Rimbaud's "Je est un autre.") Darwin for example uses the first-person to project a persona of distinct modesty. In a sense it justifies itself by its resistance to self-promotion. The question naturally arises, "How close to that other 'I' doing the writing, a central figure of nineteenth and twentieth century science, is this projection?" Given the recent proliferation of works on the Darwin-Wallace controversy, it appears to be a questions that will continue to resist resolution. Darwin's autobiographical memoir of course is not confessional at all. It reveals no intimate facts of his life and actually offers very little autobiographical detail. There is an interesting passage on the quality of his memory that may be meant to account for the shape of the work:

My memory is extensive, yet hazy: it suffices to make me cautious by vaguely telling me that I have observed or read something opposed to the conclusion which I am drawing, or on the other hand in favour of it; and after a time I can generally recollect where to search for my authority. So poor in one sense is my memory, that I have never been able to remember for more than a few days a single date or a line of poetry.

Interestingly he portrays his memory as of the intuitive, random variety popularly associated with poetic memory, rather than the scientific kind which (theoretical physics aside) we tend rightly or wrongly to imagine as precise, instant and comprehensive within a given range of information. But to return for a moment to Hedy and confession. It is interesting that

often the more elaborate the claims to confession become, the more intricate the question of concealedness grows—the very claim itself (whether in popular autobiography or Jean-Jacques Rousseau or Michel Leiris) lends a suspect intentionality to the speaking ‘I’ and a teleological motive to the narrative. Often what is told is other than what it seems is being told or what is being claimed to be told. What for example is Rousseau revealing when he reveals that he used to reveal himself to schoolgirls? What is DeQuincy not telling us that the manner of his writing and the gaps within the narrative tell? Here we are back at subject matter and Alan Bernheimer’s talk of a few weeks ago. And I’m still trying to return to Hedy for a moment and the resistance of her language to identity. I think here the opening passage of Laura Riding’s *The Telling* may be useful:

There is something to be told about us for the telling of which we all wait. In our unwilling ignorance we hurry to listen to stories of old human life, new human life, fancied human life, avid of something to while away the time of unanswered curiosity. We know we are explainable, and not explained. Many of the lesser things concerning us have been told, but the greater things have not been told; and nothing can fill their place. Whatever we learn of what is not ourselves, but ours to know, being of our universal world, will likewise leave the emptiness an emptiness. Until the missing story of ourselves is told, nothing besides told can suffice us: we shall go on quietly craving it.

Before I am sure what she is saying about telling I am sure that she is engaging language at an intimate point of resistance and that this in itself is—telling. So there is a necessity involved which we evade and to which we return or to which we are returned, in anticipation of an impossible telling.

I do in fact enjoy the one-dimensionality of pop autobiography (maybe it possesses that quality of blankness I was after for the autobiographical note). In any case it has a specific linguistic coloration which in “The End of the Ice Age” I was trying to use along with other language colors to make a kind of false autobiographical collage that might turn out to be quote true. I was also interested in so to speak eliminating the seams so that one thing might flow into another, Hedy for example into the visionary mode of Rimbaud into the tale-telling of Amos Tutuola and so on. (Remembering now, I think in the back of my mind also was at least the feel of that ‘voyage of the soul’ as a poetic form found for example in the *Ch’u Tz’u* songs of the third century B.C. which themselves developed out of earlier shamanistic chants and songs and which we acquire through Dante among many others,

kabbalistic literature, and more recently the *voyage imaginaire* of French symbolism.) I suppose too I was bringing forward the mechanisms of displacement that inhere in language, though for me to say this may well be a kind of first-person deception. *Now* I think I was doing that; *then* I think I was writing.

There is for me an interesting parallel with Bob Perelman’s very carefully titled “An Autobiography” which makes use of Stendahl’s *Vie de Henri Brulard*, Shackleton’s memoirs and Mozart’s letters, that is three lives in three kinds of writing. The result is a complex and ironic document. For example near the beginning, “But rest assured, dear Papa, that these are my very own sentiments and have not been borrowed from anyone.” The irony there is of course double since the work is in a literal sense borrowed, yet what it stands for—what it becomes—is not borrowed at all, but is a singular act of aesthetic identity, an act of disclosure that speaks quite clearly of the intent of the speaker who is not speaking, or who is speaking only through the speech of others. Could he even be said to speak by the fact of his concealedness? The work makes explicit the otherness of the ‘I’ in autobiographical writing, its distance in time and proximity as an invention. (Dostoevski justifies autobiographical writing as a *deliberate* form of address to this ‘other’ or ‘brother.’) A further implication and further irony then seems to be that we as readers or borrowers of these voices are no more distant from them than their inventors are. The voices are in a sense as much ours as theirs. The “I felt . . .,” or “I thought . . .” of autobiography proclaims a difference even as it attempts to subsume it. In fact autobiography (like language itself if we follow the Saussurean model) proceeds by and is perceptible only through difference. (‘Difference’ here of course incurs identity, sameness, similarity, rhyme, as functions of differentiation.) Were there no change of perceptual consciousness over time the writer would have no language to portray experience and there would be no life to tell. And there would be no memory. Even tribal memory which is built upon and reinforces an ideal of stasis generates change through transmission, that is, through an energy-order exchange. Philip Morrison makes the point in “On Broken Symmetries” that in the physical world you “pay *in energy* for *order*.” Symmetries are made manifest to varying degrees in the physical world (for example among crystals as well as sub-atomic particles), but they are never carried out to perfection. Perfect symmetry could only occur at absolute zero temperature, with no randomness, but at true zero the rate of formation would be zero and nothing would happen. So there is always difference,

gradation, variation by which we perceive. The I-I symmetry of autobiography manifests varying degrees of brokenness and the work is realized within that fracture. And—as in the physical world—it is time (finite duration of events; infinite extension of random possibility) that guarantees those disturbances and variations in which we are immersed.

The question of 'real time' in autobiographical writing is as many-sided as the questions of persona and memory. In one obvious respect real time is the moment of the writing ("I felt pain" becomes "I remember I felt pain" becomes "I am remembering that I felt pain" becomes "I am writing remembering feeling pain" becomes what—some approximation of the (William) Jamesian 'conscious' perhaps.) And once done it is no longer *in* 'real time' which may then pass over to the territory of reader as receiver of this more and more complexly encoded representation. Time only *is*, as Plato puts it, but if so, when? A small, golden-winged insect really is crawling across this page, has just fallen off the edge of the writing table, is lying upside-down on the oak table, legs flailing as I write this but not now as I type it and not now as I speak it to you next Thursday at a time agreed upon. (It's Saturday night and I've just returned from seeing Carla Harryman's play. At the play Barrett Watten gave me a copy of his new book. I open to the first page and read, "Admit that your studies are over. Limit yourself to your memoirs. Identity is only natural. Now become the person in your life. Start writing autobiography.") Or my notebook entry of June 21st:

The question in my Langton St. talk: if I'm not writing this now am I saying this now—am I at all remembering—etc. . . . And what of what I conceal here (and now). E.g., of what I did today (tomorrow) that I would not like some or all present to know—or if I wanted them to know all of what I did today (yesterday, tomorrow) what is it by that that I actually want them to suppose they know 'of me': that I am purified by confession? that I have nothing to hide? that all I or anyone does is of interest? that someone else did it hidden inside my skin?

Various types of nervousness. I think noises can no longer disturb me, though to be sure I am not doing any work now. Of course, the deeper one digs one's pit, the quieter it becomes, the less fearful one becomes, the quieter it becomes. (Oct. 6, 1915)

And my own notes again, from May 19th of this year:

Yeats' *The Trembling of the Veil* as in essence a succession of portraits and observations, aesthetic and spiritualist theory . . . resulting in an analysis of an attitude of mind within his circle. All 'intimate' events

absent and yet a sense of the intimate presence of the poet (as he wishes to be present).

Equivalent possibly to his notion of the lyric as "abstract and immediate"? Like Darwin and Adams he makes use of the trope of self-effacement that is part, paradoxically, of the projection of self, an approach common enough to autobiographical writing to be extremely difficult to recall to its sincerity.

Stanley Cavell in *Must We Mean What We Say* speaks of how philosophy has always employed dogmatics against the possibility of intellectual competition, and confession against dogmatics:

Inaccessible to the dogmatics of philosophical criticism, Wittgenstein chose confession and recast his dialogue. It contains what serious confessions must: the full acknowledgement of temptation ("I want to say . . ."; "I feel like saying . . ."; "Here the urge is strong . . .") and a willingness to correct and give them up . . . (The voice of temptation and the voice of correctness are antagonists in Wittgenstein's dialogue.) In confessing you do not explain or justify, but describe how it is with you. And confession, unlike dogma, is not to be believed but tested, and accepted or rejected.

(I seem to have left 'time' behind, but maybe that's the nature of talking this way.) So a body of work is offered as confessional from which the *conventional* data of experience are rigorously excluded. It is interesting with Cavell to think of Wittgenstein's work as a project of self-knowledge and confession devoid of the recollections and information normally associated with such a task. Having noted Wittgenstein's admiration for Augustine, we can also see how their projects are comparable, how both concentrate on discussion of the means of such discussion, leading to elaborate—but in a sense revealed—methods (rituals?) of evasion and ellipsis. (Wittgenstein's acts of displacement for example as he discusses the nature of concealment in ordinary language, the gap between saying and meaning.) I am reminded of the hermetic intensity of Roland Barthes' essay in autobiography, *Barthe sur Barthes*, "par lui-meme," as the French put it, or "by himself" the pun might read in translation, because it is a singular document of isolated and isolating self-examination, and an explicit recognition of the nature of such enclosed discourse. I can only think of a few texts which so emphasize the radical alterity of the speaker (Kafka's journals have this effect), to the point where definition occurs frequently through Greek-derived neologisms, words constructed "par lui-meme," to disclose themselves only by means of a concentrated hermeneutical effort on the part of the reader. Only occasionally does he break the pattern to

catalogue that which he feels is "of no importance to anyone," and suddenly he sounds suspiciously like a writer of the so-called New York School:

I like: salad, cinnamon, cheese, pimento, marzipan, the smell of new-cut hay . . . , roses, peonies, lavender, champagne, loosely held political convictions, Glenn Gould, too-cold beer, flat pillows, toast, Havana cigars, Handel, slow walks, pears, white peaches, cherries, colors, watches, all kinds of writing pens, desserts, unrefined salt, realistic novels, the piano, coffee, Pollock, Twombly, all romantic music, Sartre, Brecht, Verne, Fourier, Eisenstein, trains, Medoc wine, having change, *Bouvard et Pecuchet*, walking in sandals on the lanes of southwest France, the bend of the Adour seen from Dr. L's house, the Marx Brothers, the mountains at seven in the morning leaving Salamanca, etc.

I don't like: white Pomeranians, women in slacks, geraniums, strawberries, the harpsichord, Miro, tautologies, animated cartoons, Arthur Rubinstein, villas, the afternoon, Satie, Bartok, Vivaldi, telephoning, children's choruses, Chopin's concertos, Burgundian branles and Renaissance dances, the organ, Marc-Antoine Charpentier, his trumpets and kettledrums, the politico-sexual, scenes, initiatives, fidelity, spontaneity, evenings with people I don't know, etc.

The work represents a resistance to such permission even as it portrays it. Such remarks are contextualised as trivial (lesser knowledge) and only in that way does Barthes feel free to insert them:

I like, I don't like: this is of no importance to anyone; this, apparently, has no meaning. And yet all this means: *my body is not the same as yours*.

And so the 'bodily' is returned to the analytically distanced mode—yet is offered all the same—much as Hedy Lamarr offers herself and a conventionally framed apology at the same moment. It's an erotic tactic we have all one way or another probably been party to, ecstasy—ec-stasis—and me, I didn't know it was loaded.

But we do know it's loaded or hope it is or at least once was or was at least once. I am after all talking, the tongue and jaws moving, the uvula oscillating at a certain rate to determine the pitch. I am after all sitting here silently writing and so on, neither there nor here after all but at a given moment . . .

In discussing shifters, Emile Benveniste asks:

. . . what then is the reality to which *I* or *You* refers? It is solely a 'reality of

discourse,' and this is a very strange thing. *I* cannot be defined except in terms of 'locution,' not in terms of objects as a nominal sign is. *I* signifies 'the person who is uttering the present instance of discourse containing *I*.' This instance is unique by definition and has validity only in its uniqueness. If I perceive two successive instances of discourse containing *I*, uttered in the same voice, nothing guarantees to me that one of them is not a reported discourse, a quotation in which *I* could be imputed to another.

Now this isn't news to poets and isn't even news to Aristotle, Quintillian or Dionysius of Halicarnassus when they speculate on the communication triad in narrative and rhetoric. And poets and writers of fiction have always tended to play with such possibilities of structural ambiguity, to conceal the source (sources) of 'voice' among a range of possible identities. This is partly because poets are not—never have been—quite sure who was doing the talking. I am looking now (almost now) at a medieval woodcut of a poetscribe bent over his desk with a small, winged creature whispering into his ear (as Hermes was called The Whisperer in bearing poetic—usually erotic—messages). As Blake tells us in the opening stanzas, a small fairy sat down on his table and dictated *Europe* to him. Or his letter to Thomas Butts on the writing of *Milton*, "I have written this poem from immediate Dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time, without Premeditation & even sometimes against my Will . . ." Such complications of the plot, among others, reinforce the notion of poetry (I mean 'poetic speech,' not just verse) as hermetic and undisclosed even in its high vatic-prophetic mode, that is, even when as with Blake it is meant as both revealed and revelatory. And it seems fairly obvious that this is the case, that poetry does participate to greater or lesser degree in a dialectic of concealment and revelation, and that the quality of information it can contain derives in great measure from its play within this dynamic. All speech of course, even 'transparent' scientific and logical discourse, participates to some extent. But what matters here in relation to the subject of this talk is the insistence of such elements—shifters, tenses, 'real time,' etc., in poetry, poetic speech, particularly its most concentrated forms. This often results in a radical agrammaticality (by no means limited to its most obvious current manifestations; a Shakespeare sonnet could equally serve as a model). Regarding this, in *The Semiotics of Poetry* Michel Riffaterre observes that "the arbitrariness of language conventions seems to diminish as the text becomes more deviant and ungrammatical, rather than the other way around." Poetry seems often a talking to self as well as other as well as self as other, a simultaneity that recognises the elusive multiplicity of what is called 'identity.' It is heuristic, that is, a procedure of

discovery within which identity may appear as negative or in negative. An obvious result is that autobiographical material locates itself differently and memory functions differently than in linear narrative. (I'm not denying that a great deal of poetry is narrative and more or less discursive.) By foregrounding the inherent complexities and complex possibilities of discourse, poetic speech often becomes paradoxically more direct in its presentation than apparently simpler forms of writing; the evasions, displacements, recurrences, etc., stand as an immediate part of the message. I have been describing how autobiographical and confessional modes (those that name their function as one of disclosure) tend often to increase concealedness by masking or disregarding certain elements of discourse. By contrast, in proposing a different relationship to experience, time, memory, as well as the act of composition, the apparently hidden nature of much poetic language may inform both recognition and presence. Put another way, what is taken as *a sign of openness*—conventional narrative order—may stand for concealment, and what are understood generally as *signs of withholding or evasion*—ellipsis, periphrasis, etc.—may from another point of view stand for disclosure. Some of the ways such material locates in poetry is the subject of the second part of this talk, if there is ever to be a second part of this talk, if there is ever to be a second part, but I want to mention as a recent instance of what I am referring to Lyn Hejinian's *My Life*, where autobiographical material organizes itself according to a *melos* or melodic procedure. Given the limited usefulness of such categories, it seems to me an amazing transformation of narrative into an extended lyric mode, resulting in an altered relationship to the apparent 'data' of personal experience. Time undergoes reversals and returns, and syntax is explicitly equated with 'story' such that each sentence 'has to be the whole story' within the story of the whole. In the introduction to *Mind and Nature* from which I quoted at the beginning of this talk, Bateson says, "In truth, the right way to begin to think about the pattern which connects is to think of it as *primarily* (whatever that means) a dance of interacting parts and only secondarily pegged down by various sorts of physical limits and by those limits which organisms characteristically impose." In relation to this I think also of Proust's attempt to transmute not memory but remembering into experience. And a day or two after receiving *My Life*, David Bromige's *My Poetry* arrived—two possessives in one week. I'll finish with the opening section of Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell* as translated (poorly) by Paul Schmidt:

Once, if my memory serves me well, my life was a banquet where every heart revealed itself, where every wine flowed.

One evening I took Beauty in my arms—and I thought her bitter—and I insulted her.

I steeled myself against justice.

I fled. O witches, O misery, O hate, my treasure was left in your care

I have withered within me all human hope. With the silent leap of a sullen beast, I have downed and strangled every joy.

I have called for executioners; I want to perish chewing on their gun butts. I have called for plagues, to suffocate in sand and blood. Unhappiness has been my god. I have lain down in the mud and dried myself off in the crime-infested air. I have played the fool to the point of madness.

And springtime brought me the frightful laugh of an idiot.

Now recently, when I found myself ready to croak! I thought to seek the key to the banquet of old, where I might find an appetite again.

That key is Charity. (This idea proves I was dreaming!)

"You will stay a hyena, etc. . . .," shouts the demon who once crowned me with such pretty poppies. "Seek death with all your desires, and all selfishness, and all the Seven Deadly Sins."

Ah, I've taken too much of that: still, dear Satan, don't look so annoyed, I beg you! And while waiting for a few belated cowardices, since you value in a writer all lack of descriptive or didactic flair, I pass you these few foul pages from the diary of a Damned Soul.

July 31, 1980

The Beginning of Romance

Timelessness versus time.

I remember it was dusk. The lamps began to appear against a sky not yet dark enough to need them. I was shy of my mother because when she was on ups she was too gay and selfish and on downs she was bitchy. Moving from ups to downs was the best time to approach her.

I adored my actress mother and would do anything for her. "Sarah, be a good girl and get me a glass of champagne." "Sarah, I'm out of money again. Your father's horrible. You don't need an allowance, give me ten dollars and I'll pay you back tomorrow." She never paid me back and I adored her.

"I never wanted you," my mother told me often. "It was the war." She had never known poverty or hardship: her family had been very wealthy. "I had terrible stomach pains and the only doctor I could get to was a quack. He told me I had to get pregnant." "I never heard of that. You got pregnant?" "The day before you were born I got appendicitis. You spent the first three weeks of your life in an incubator."

The rest, as far as I know, is very little. My father, a wealthier man than my mother, walked out on her when she became pregnant with me. Since neither she nor grandma Siddons has ever said anything specific about him, I don't know who he is. I always turned to my mother and I loved her very much.

Mother didn't want me to leave her. I think she could have loved me or shown that she loved me if she had had more time or fewer obsessions. "I don't care if my daughter respects me. I want her to love me." She craved my love as she craved her friends' and the public's love so she could do what she wanted and evade the responsibility. All her friends loved her and I, I lived so totally in the world bounded by her being her seemings, I had no idea we were a socially important family. I didn't know there was a world outside.

There is just moving and there are different ways of moving. Or: there is moving all over at the same time and there is moving linearly. If everything is moving-all-over-the-place-no-time, anything is everything. If this is so, how can I differentiate? How can there be stories? Consciousness just is: no time. But any emotion presupposes differentiation. Differentiation presumes time, at least BEFORE and NOW. A narrative is an emotional moving.

It's a common belief that something exists when it's part of a narrative.

Self-reflective consciousness is narrational.

Mother wanted me to be unlike I was. I got A's in school—it wasn't that I was a good girl, in fact even back then I was odd girl out; school was the one place where I could do things right—but mother said getting A's made me stand out too much. Otherwise I was just a failure. I felt too strongly. My emotional limbs stuck out as if they were broken and unfixable. I kissed mother's friends too nicely when they were playing canasta. I was too interested in sex. I wasn't pretty in a conventional enough way. I didn't act like Penelope Wooding. When I washed a dish, I wasn't washing the dish. Since I didn't know if mother was right, I didn't know if I loved her. My friends told me I perceived in too black-and-white terms. "The world is more complex," they said. I said, "I get A's in school." Unlike.

"What was my father like, mommy?"

My mother looks up from a review of her newest hit. In those days she always got fabulous reviews.

"I mean my real father." When I had turned ten years old, my mother had carefully explained to me that the man I called my father had adopted me.

"He was very handsome."

"What exactly did he look like?" I had no right to ask, but I was desperate.

"His parents were wonderful. They were one of the richest families in Brooklyn."

Talking with my mother resembled trying to plot out a major war strategy. "What did his family do?"

"I was very wild when I was young. You remember Aunt Suzy. I'd sneak down the fire escape and Aunt Suzy and I'd go out with the boys. I'd let them pet." My mother was high on dex. "Your father was very handsome, dark, I fell in love with him. It was during the war so everyone was getting married." My mother refused to say any more.

When I asked grandmama Siddons about my real father, she said he was dead. I replied I knew he wasn't dead. She said he was a murderer.

Why is anybody interested in anything? I'm interested when I'm discovering. To me, real moving is discovering. Real moving then is apart from time. How can that be?

The rest of my childhood I spent by myself. If anyone had thought about me rather than about their own obsessions, they would have thought it was a lonely childhood, but it wasn't. I had all of New York City to myself. Since mother was an actress we had to live in New York or London, and I hugged New York to me like a present. Sometimes I'd leave the apartment and walk down First Avenue to the magic bookstore of brightly-colored leatherbound books. Book- and dress-stores were magic places I either dreamed or walked to. Then I walked up Madison Avenue and imagined buying things. I walked down to Greenwich Village where the most interesting bookstore held all the beatnik poets but I never saw them. I had to happen upon what I wanted. I was forbidden to act on my desire, even to admit my desire to myself. Poetry was the most frightening, therefore the most interesting imagining. Once or twice a month afternoons I'd avidly watch a play I had no way of understanding.

When it was all happening around me and I had very few memories of what was happening, I didn't need to understand and, if I had understood, I probably would have been too scared to keep moving.

Mother was a real actress. I never knew who she was. I had no idea until after the end that she was spending all of her money and, then, that she was broke. She had always been very tight with me: taking away my allowances, never buying me anything, and madly frittering away money here and there. Suddenly, surprisingly, she asked me if I wanted gifts and she bought three copies of a gold watch she liked, hangars at five dollars apiece, hired cars to take her friends wherever they wanted to go. At the same time she owed three months rent; two of her bank accounts were closed; all of her charge cards had been revoked. The 800 shares of AT&T grandmama had given her were missing. She was becoming gayer and less prudish. I would have done anything for her. She didn't talk to me or to anyone directly. She lifted her favorite poodle, walked out of the apartment house, and didn't return.

Do I care? Do I care more than I reflect? Do I love madly? Get as deep as possible. The more focus, the more the narrative breaks, the more memories fade, the least meaning:

In spite of these circumstances which brought me to Ashington House,

I'm thrilled when I see it. Trees always make my heart beat quickly. Bronze chrysanthemums. Dahlias around a pond in which two ducks quack, black and gray. And the whistle low. Two long streets, along leaves, lead away.

My aunts Martha and Mabel greet me. I've never met them before.

They're very wealthy and they're so polite, they're eccentric. They tell me I'm going to meet my real father. I do want to see him, I do I do. I know he's handsome.

Aunt Martha tells me he's away at the moment.

We stop, walking in front of a picture of my father. At least it's a picture of him. "Your father," Aunt Mabel comments, "was too adventurous. Wild . . . Headstrong . . . Your mother was his first wife and you were his first child."

"Who's his new wife?"

"He's had three. Last year he killed someone, shot him, who was trespassing on his yacht. The family got him off on psychological reasons. After his six-month stay in a rest home, he just disappeared."

"Aunt Mabel's scared, dear," Judy's commenting on Punch, "that you have some of your father's wildness."

Despite my politeness, they know who I am.

"I really don't know very much, Sarah. But I don't think you should have anything to do with him."

"Why? Maybe he's very sensitive." I think my father may feel the same kind of fears I feel.

"Your father," Aunt Mabel interrupts her sister, "acts unpredictably. He can be extremely violent. We have no way of telling how he'll act when he sees you. The family has decided to help you as much as we can, but we can't help you with this."

I don't know what I'm going to believe.

He—for there can be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it—was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters. It was the color of an old football.

I called Jackson up and he came over immediately. He was a drunken messy slob, maudlin as they come which all drunks are, but that's what let him be the kind of artist he was. He NEEDED to suffer to thrust himself out as far as he could go farther beyond the bounds of his physical body what his body could take he NEEDED to maul shove into knead his mental and physical being like he did those tubes of paint. I not only understood, I

understood and adored. I would be the pillow he would kick the warm breast he could cry into open up to let all that infinite unstoppable mainly unbearable pain be alive I would not snap back I would be his allowor of exhibited pain so he could keep going. That's why he loved me. He didn't need brains. He didn't need intelligence he was too driven.

"You're so beautiful, so warm, I don't know why you want me."

"I don't want you cause you're famous, Jackson. That's why all those other people're eating you up, making you think you're a real image HISTORY (in New York City a person's allowed to be alive human if he/she is famous or close enough to a famous person to absorb some of the fame) so now you can no longer paint unless you close up all your senses and become a real moron. I want your cock because you're a great artist. I'm ripping myself open to you to give you me."

He seemed to be crying for his entire life:

"I always thought about you, darling, even before I knew you. Exactly who you are was my picture of you; you are the woman I wanted the woman I thought I could never have. Now I know you. Why do you want me? I'm a mess. I said to myself: I'll do anything I can, with myself with *everything*, to make my work, I did it, I did do it, I really fucked up my health and my mind. I don't regret this, but now I'm a mess. Please, don't be naive."

I knew this man, whatever would happen and death was the least, would stick by me.

And 'she was given the real names of things' means she really perceived, she saw the real. That's it. If everything is living, it's not a name but moving. And without this living there is nothing, this living is the only matter matters. The thing itself. This isn't an expression of a real thing: this is the thing itself. Of course the thing itself the thing itself it is never the same. This is how decadence can be so much fun. The living thing the real thing is not what people tell you it is: it's what it is. This is the thing itself because I'm finding out about it it is me. It is a matter of letting (perceiving) happen what will.

My mother was dead. We knew that. She might have been murdered or she might have killed herself; perhaps accidently. The police had abandoned the case and I didn't know how to find out on my own.

None of my father's family made any show of mourning for my mother. The funeral was a ghastly comedy. I was the only one sobbing my heart out while around me, hordes of women discussed Joan Crawford and her daughter, and canasta games. Every now and then, I remember, Aunt

Mabel told me to hand around the chocolates to her friends. I was wearing a fuzzy lavender sweater. One middle-aged woman shook the sweater back and forth and screamed that she wanted my mother's apartment.

After that, for a few months, I had nightmares, not nightmares but those deeper ones where I'd screaming wake up because there are so many thoughts, the thoughts are unknown.

I realize that all my life is is endings. Not endings, those are just events, but holes. For instance when my mother died, the I I had always known dropped out. All my history went away. Pretty clothes and gayness amaze me.

The next thing I knew I received a letter from my father saying he was journeying from Seattle to see me, and then, it seems just a few days later, but that's my memory, I was standing in an old wood bar, then I was sitting down, a roly-poly man not the handsome soul-eyed man in that little painting I had wondered on was telling me he distinctly remembered my mother. But he didn't sound upset about her and she had been obsessed by him. "Are you my father?" I finally asked. "No. I'm your father's first cousin." He began to proposition me. "Oh, where's my father?"

"He's not here yet." Then this roly-poly man told me he came from an immensely wealthy family. His daughter picked bums off the street and slept with them. These stories made me realize that my mother's bohemianism and my weirdnesses, which I had thought the same as the rich's amorality, were only stinky petty bourgeois playfulness.

Model for language: Lutetia is the foulest because poorest section of Paris. After Charles the Simple visits Lutetia, he's so disgusted he tears a plan of Lutetia in two and orders the split to be made into a huge wide avenue.

Yvikel the widower has a daughter Blanchine whose health is slowly declining. They live in the center of Lutetia. Yvikel does everything he can for his daughter and resolves when she dies he'll kill himself.

After the avenue is built and sunlight, hitherto unknown, floods their rat-trap, Blanchine begins to recover. She recovers. To celebrate his gratitude, Yvikel recreates the plan of Lutetia in silk. Charles the Simple's hand reaches out and saves the section.

Dr. Sirhugues discovers a therapeutic blue plant light. An enormous lens concentrates this light on the diseased person held still by a cylindrical cage or 'focal jail.' But the rays are too powerful for the person to bear.

Finally Dr. Sirhugues finds that only Yvikel's ancient silk is able to absorb and render harmless the dangerous portion of these rays.

I don't think I'm crazy there's just no reality in my head and my emotions fly all over the place: Sometimes I'm so down, all I think is I should kill myself. Almost at the same time I adore everything: I adore the sky. I adore the trees I see. I adore rhythms. IIII I'm I'm mine mine my. I can't I can't. I hate being responsible oh.

I don't care what people think; when they think they're thinking about me, they're actually thinking about the ways they act. I certainly don't want them to give me their pictures of me I like the ways animals are socially. I would rather be petted than be part of this human social reality which is all pretense and lies.

I expected my father to be a strong totally sexually magnetic daredevil, macho as they come, but he was kind and gentle. He must have been very ill when I first met him because he had had five heart attacks. But his great physical pleasures were still drinking on the sly from Aunts Martha and Mabel and eating half-a-pint of coffee icecream before going to bed. He relied for his life on the roly-poly cousin Clifford Still.

He must have wanted Clifford and me to marry. He believed in a reality that was stable which justice formed. A man who worked hard earned pleasure. A woman who took care of her husband kept his love. Approaching, death, for I quickly realized my father was an extremely sick man, frighteningly had to destroy those bourgeois illusions.

As my father's sickness grew, he began to depend on me. He didn't want me to walk away from his bed. I had known so much sickness.

"Your mother led me a hard life, Sarah."

"You weren't together very long, daddy."

"It was a passionate difficult existence. She wanted me to wear out. I don't think that's fair. I never understood her and I had very little tolerance for who she really was: I adored a figurehead. It was my death or getting rid of her, and she wanted the career."

"You thought you loved her."

"She depended on me more than she knew."

"People who don't have any sense of reality, daddy, live crazy other people don't understand why they act the ways they do. They survive because everyone survives."

As death approached my father said his life was useless. Because he now mistrusted.

I watched everything and I swore I'd never marry a man I didn't love and I'd never live for security.

Everyone hates me. My mother may have been murdered. Men want to rape me. My body's always sick. The world is paradise. Pain doesn't exist. Pain comes from askew human perceptions. A person's happy who doesn't give attention to her own desires but always thinks of others. Repressing causes pain. I have no one in this world. Every event is totally separate from every other event. If there are an infinite number of non-relating events, where's the relation that enables pain?

All of my family is dead. I have no way of knowing who means me harm and who doesn't.

A Sentimental Journey

White sheet moves on the line. Walkers, these are the songs, the senses, sentences.

Open the gate. Close up. Pick-up truck drives by, aluminum rack in the back. Motor cycle starts.

Feet in the street. Shoes, newspaper, hands, the wind. Trees stock still. Sky with clock-shaped clouds. A pie in the eye slices the daylights on a weekly basis. Steamproof headgear hyphenates the tongue. My father took me for a boy in a dream. I met a girl. The cars, the paint jobs, flowers.

The cult of intelligence. In an ordinary news story the frame doesn't have a leg to stand on.

Concentrate on what developing?

That everything is all right (not) is my dream concern. Agreement of merger, workers shred bosses. That a light goes on, my waking state.

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Neptune's bridges' narrative pages.

Selby: The diminishing room.

Met on the stairs and wondering (what to say) what to say.

Oh shit it's the idiot. Over there. I'll sit here like this. Just look at the sky. Selby's twentieth century, don't explain, places bets (words) here and here and here. A psychologist of the 50's. Despair, killing fucking time. Stop the

clock. & Other Diversions. As staccato claxon sounds from Mission Street this moment your reporter and a tip and thanx to the hat in hand line of word, the line, playing out a hand. Time goes both ways, hands you a line. "Where I just came from . . . the fifties." Memory. Oh I'd. So Selby. Simple. Struck dumb by all those periods. He don't stop for nothin.

I want to rip history to shreds.

Think of a boot. Does it fit?

Thickness. I'll sit down.

To this: kids and dogs and a woman leaning in different windows. It's natural here. Humanly possible. Girls and boy are dressed (black and blue and tan and magenta) and turning, over the shoulder, to check each other out.

Guys shake (three positions) and concern themselves with cars. Guy goes up stairs carrying big L-shaped piece of plywood. Four cars are double parked in a row. All actually en route & now slowly passing the first, a gold Cadillac circa 1960 w/ sharp fins, stopping to talk to the boy in the black windbreaker. Young white professional woman with leather briefcase and bag walks by. Guys fan out, girls crossing the street. Beep. Skinny ex-hippie couple nearly stagger along. Umbrellas in evidence, sky grey, but air dry. I'm cheerful, willing to entertain. There's the buzzer.

Flexible to a fault. Inconsistency kills self-justificatory disappointment in apologetic defense of optimism, nastily pointed.

Objectless abject.

Rode high for a week and on the seventh day I crashed.

Some of the more repulsive developments in avant garde music are waiting for you in bed. Women check a form of address leering from a window.

Worn out, I died, then hurried on.

The ice hung in sheets on the glass. The light came through it dimly, if at all. A slight breeze kicked over a hill of beans. Her hand moved lazily over the child, sleeping, the music of the spheres played as if from a punched roll

scored by the pinholes stars made in the dark canvas bag of a sky, where the two of them lay in waiting, screening out random impressions in favor of intricate prints on silks and cotton cloth recently received from the orient. A bag of groceries floated up to the landing. There was coffee. The earth underfoot was solid, oozing with frozen fluids. He mentioned the air further south, how it felt walking along by the retaining wall, what birds there were there, and how he had set up some of the animals.

Eros pinned to the page. How impulse to write aligns with those to be alone, smoke, be stoned. Recall tree climb as early instantaneous response of childhood thought to human event. From this perspective yellow flowers trumpet up into the air. Jet noise, red blank, bugs. Heat on the back, spigot. Here again a memory's a made trace. Making it over, pleasure to make over what's made. What world? The ant approaches the bowling ball. Jet noise echoes thought I saw a butterfly. In the corner of my eye, the sun. Our heat art in Oakland.

As much as I'm not able to control city spins against.

Peter button & bacon.

The ability to operate machines is a pleasure. Still life. If I'm driving I know I am.

Mind moves in like a drunk.

Left right appears at sleight of hand wrong move, pitched forward in a seat.

Nomenclature hammers provided. Technicians wing X.

Often into clouds I look up from. Must be something you spoke. Not counting backwards. Club soda on table top. World. Fizz. Air in our era.

It's four and the morning. These stands for just what we see. The boats at anchor rock. Moon man picks up rock.

A transom has to open.

Green blades shadow the pages. Ink right across a line. Apply pressure to point. A little bit at a time.

Sun comes by the numbers. Body heats up by porcelain dump. Birds sing. Sage weathers fast break.

A leading tower of question.

Their attempts were always analytick: they broke every image into fragments . . .

Club soda on sofa. Man stands boats into clouds. Simple git, ain't he? Tree climb is a little early.

Rode high for a week to talk to the boy in the window. Retaining wall didn't get that. If I'm driving stock still I stop for nothing.

This ink makes the pages curl. According to the rules, accordions measure a pair of hands. At this depth, reader, the windows open. All whole air provided here.

Hear four cars double parked in an ordinary L-shaped piece of news. The first, a bed, the second, a shoe, the third, memory. Paint jobs of intricate prints froze on the stairs. Guys shake (three positions) each other out.

I'll be staying in town with my rage.

Swallow a tin can? Could be a dream. Know how to whistle put two and two together.

Light tongues a flat white surface. Canny counter, your days are numbered. My hands are warm, my art larcenous. Days in the prow, skies go blue and white grey greens, leaves, shade in the apartment. Hearty walkers, hello. Signs and waves.

He got out of his head (house) and hammered on the (?) roof. The car would be in fourth gear for most of the drive. Life in these United States wasn't what it once was (would be). Then they would get out of the car and walk a little.

Car talk, bar talk. Who gives good phone. Slice of rut. Tarzan's nuts.

Hear that motorcycle flak going away. Know a rap when you hear one. I

back off of hype to hear the heater. A body away, talking to her mother.
Most of the time there's traffic somewhere. Nearly any.

About face.

Leaves fall, revolution in the air. That saying makes it. So I go on down the
street to Portugal.

Grass blows back on the median. 14 miles to pea soup.

Fatigue rocks the cavern of a word. We drive on up past State Beach.
Trestle bridge. Flat Pacific blue beyond the tracks. White floats nearby and
oil rig way out. Gaps in the trees give, light goes on, continuous drive states
pass thru nary a mumble. Cows by silent way, narrow bridge above floating
birds.

I write. The draft was in my soup. Some times I want to split to where the
pea meets the sky.

That's salt water alright. I've got a control with the other nostril.

A trivial death in the haunted house. Saunter over for another frozen
banana. Old love boat is piracy, desire as skeleton mounted on heap of
gold, orange light on paper (flames). A trumpet hangs in the air. Long
trains of persons issue into the boats, others getting out, now dead? Lines
line up to make false choice. Insipid, pleasant, and very clean. I like sitting
on a bench, looking at people. The widest, mostly empty parking lot.

Emily Dickinson's C's.

Aviation and auto sound grind the day smooth. Day's greens spring
between Santa Monica houses. O Delmer's Precision Brakes!

The brown hound is back.

Everything that happens can make a record be changing.

What you see is not the key it's what you say. Turn it over.

Walk. Heart.

GROW SOME BRAINS

An account of mind butting up against what's available. People know more
than they let on.

Up in the mountains for a while.

Throw water at the sun.

CAR MORT

A shadow, a human form moves behind a window. Hands twisting some-
thing. Orange cloth spread with blue trim. Making the bed. Light bulb.

PARK

Park foot.

Kids crouch, lean, drink, smoke. Guy rubs elbow. Sky. Vapor trail. This
ink is thick. Bicyclist removes gloves. Keys hang from his belt. Friends
hang on corner, sit on bench, wall above. One w/ T-shirt hung from back
pocket, cap on head, gets on bike & tools around. Cyclist returns from store
w/6-pack & bags all around. They pass him a joint. Guys getting high, old
guys walk by. Words to the girls crossing the street. Hands curl, come here,
but they won't. Beard offers cigarette, hat has his own. Smoke. 3-wheeler
motor cop. Bare-chested longhair in bluejean bells also has a can in a bag.

DELTA LINES

camera strap

Guy does pull ups from branch of tree. Guy leans on parking meter. Other
guy climbs tree & straddles limb. Hangs by one hand, drops to sidewalk.
Knocks street sign pole w/ half full beer bottle. Gets in car w/ buddy, drives
off. Guys split, bicyclist splits.

An old woman approaches, walking w/ a cane, in pale green overcoat &
thin silk scarf, holding in the other hand the handle of a brown cloth bag and
an orange flower. She lays it down on the step she's selected to sit on &
reads a newspaper, the bargains section, leaning one hand on the wall of
the doorway, edge of painted cement & metal gate. She pats her grey hair
back from her face & rubs under her nose. She is wearing black shoes and
grey stockings. The bag handle hangs over her wrist, the cane handle

likewise. Young blonde woman in orange dress slit at the knee, light green socks, glasses, passes & crosses the street at the corner, old woman watches her pass. One foot out of shoe now and resting. On top of it. Dog checks it all out from window.

In Oakland guys w/ white T-shirts & afros under hat & cap pour gas from giant can into back of silver Caddy, bring jumper cables out & attach to pick-up engine. Slam down both hoods, touch brim, get in & go.

Asiatic bean pie. Hairnet. Thong. Sweat on the blocks. Bodies. Bandana over the eyes.

The nerves sit ceremonious who'll say I'm not. The happy genius of my household comes.

I'd leave music on but not the ball game. Sleeping Beauty meets Snow White. It is my habit. Numbers lead aisles down all time.

I hung one brick. The rain came down. Not to speak was my sentence. The market for making every word count was a buyer's. Boy girls in black w/ hair dyed black & blonde. A shirt w/ parrots. The woman in line w/ the orthodontist. Correlations made the days sway. I spring 10,000 miles on the cloud trapeze. Back to where I can't say. Not knowing what market it addressed, the students made no sense of the writing. Walk into a room and start telling. Walk into a room of moors. Start yelling. For I walk along every day and it's not a job. I'm paying attention to a building shuddering in the wind. Wet glass ruffles, the leaves print. You don't know until you see it. Written down is placed, outside. The room where talk takes place is memory, just this side of the period. You can think this however. You want to stretch across the immediate space between daylight and waking. Space provides light with its one big opportunity. A bird on the wire's a high note. Hightops swing round in the intense inane: Gone with what wind?

He picked up the notebook to see what was happening.

Time sheets spreadeagle.

Damned if it hadn't happened again and, this time, to him.

My eyes are the color of a mountain in Chinese.

He flips the sun visor up. She smiles and pulls away from the curb.

One cigarette for the past. A room in the wind. Private dancers take down a phone number. Aviation and autos sound out the window.

Mounted police straddles limb. Mother tongue is coated. Clouds cross the street. Random impressions hang from human event.

Real irritation is caused by broken lights. All broken, rugged and abrupt surfaces have the same effect on sight as touch.

The world exertion effort has reached a new high. Between walls, leaning back on a mattress, not seduced by the colors in California, they reach for a drink, magazine, embrace and roll against the open window. Downstairs a car speeds across the lot. Her arm, wrist braceleted. His hand toys with the loop of shade. Funny horn sounds on the street.

Old pink wall and smoke sun. A day's a place holder. I can no more explain than disappear. What all voices say I hear.

Wind that blows curtains and leaves is what clears the air. TV screen on at the back of a darkened room. Building nuzzling white sky. Dozens of images fly apart fast.

With this I'd put a hole in time. Heart face square. In the Columbus empire journal. Disarrangements of space, traffic squawks back, bright distance, clouds rush back of the action. This is a screen against which we moved. Movement from bush to bush, seething with fucking experience.

Do that over again.

How many times was the hand at the head, smoothing out the part. The head in hand part came in between. Part time work was out of the question, and to have time on the hands was not always a smooth thing.

An extra building darkened the white sky.

An ordinary building darkened the white sky.

The police have blocked off the intersection as I write this with car and flares.

Mr. Secretary, will you read the minutes.

Work long hours to get a decent blur. Red and white lights at night. Round, in series, sound. Rhyming radios crash from the street below.

Street signs cross like Joan at the stake, lit up from beneath, orange, by the flares, pink, and flickering with the revolving yellow cherry.

The blues is a grid. Random street noise, a shout or honk, lays in to 12 bars as voiced. Song is circular, frames history as variation.

Familial quintet in fetal hunker.

A headline is all we have time for.

The dance program I already threw away. Words in a sentence occur in some order. The next day I attended a meeting, and on the following day we took a party of girls to an island.

In a "Festival of Life" swarms of small creatures raised a terrible din, inciting and abusing one another, sometimes with a hint of some higher significance.

Variation comes into the sentence as thought displaces writing.

History comes into song, form turning on its round.

History leaps and bounds.

Days and sun are round. Sound is the third term, makes a border. There is no identity in a sound world. The counter can come back to one any time and start over.

Cakes, bacon & up. On the counter.

A bug is crawling across the calendar.

The creature has a purpose and his eyes are bright with it.

The earnest professionalism of German thought.

And tell me also when you will help me waste a sullen day.

By fever of reason stymied. An automatic voice produced these sounds. Thinking entered in on the last word. A scanning operation is successful when it locates an effective block.

Man fears desires to see, hear. Dogma proposes edible shoe. Feet rhyme with street.

A game called stadium. Blue & yellow concentric plastic rings, descending to our holes in the center, each notched to contain marbles at regular intervals such that when a marble bearing notch is moved even with a notch in the lower ring (or rings) the marble will roll down toward the center.

I live in the eye, and my imagination, suppressed, is at rest.

The very future is looking over a shoulder.

As if a very heart would break.

I have had great confidence in your being well able to support the fatigue of your Journey since I have felt how much new Objects contribute to keep off a sense of Ennui and fatigue . . .

JOE

We had a tolerable journey to Liverpool.

ALL FOURS

SONG

A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

Shade on leaves or grillwork on Division St. under the freeway. Pins on the line. I can only answer for sound, writing to you.

ALL FOURS

Two cheese rinds, a nail, a matchbook, THE BUILD-UP. Two X-mas balls in grass grown out around a spigot. One canoe, two paddles, one wading pool, overturned. Pool and canoe are blue.

Regulation sneakers have it. Causal tap remains entire. Guards named in affidavit. Ruins arrive by force of habit.

Non-reproducible blue crossed out by "Big-Dipper." Bonded, birds can fly. Sing, wind, in sunny trees, a melody, for Mr. J.R. Moon.

The overplus. Human energy is great. I am waiting, as ever, for and with you.

A gigantic strawberry dwarfs our town. Bullet holes frame car length. The attendants go into the baths. All of Australia is watching.

Simpler butter rice needs but only sees. I'm touched by a wide assortment of types. Stations where shoes stand in array, diversion for the loitering uncle. The wind drove me across.

Desire drives the mess. Age mates across the hall. Sleepers take it in, the smelt, the perch, the need to flounder aimlessly. Happily the sun, presently situated elsewhere, can be counted on to return the fingers to our hands, one by one.

Under the world lies a light blue cloud. Clouds are not real. Nothing is so sweet. Mind is a blanket. Dreams is a cup of coffee in the morning.

She washes mahogany leaves with mineral spirits. The trash has been burning for a while. You will understand, the wind is all about the house. It's a good feeling.

The surge: a stack of troughs.

Memories are made of baseball. Triphammers correspond to striped bass. Association will take you to the ferry, fair weather or foul. Schools swim in circles, deep under presence of mind.

Baseball strike is off. Neptune's tomb is sealed with chains and padlocks. Sound of glass breaking, sirens, we see the Hulk, a combination of Steve Martin and Pete Rose.

While I arrange the alphabet elsewhere.

Smoke and work. Out here in the field. Radio touch toes to childhood dreams. Kitty cat stirs price. Action unaffected by cord.

Two grown men searching, scrounging, shamelessly, for their medicine.

Vegetable letters.

When I wrote Dolch I was listening to Monk. The association of ideas is an old one. My desire in writing was to push logic out of shape. I still am.

Subjects swap objects. Playtime in California. A bird in the hand rolls snake eyes. Promiscuity states a case: private v. public. States on fire. Unemployed subjects seize high-priced appliances.

When I was a boy MADE IN JAPAN was a kind of joke meaning cheap merchandise. Mostly dime store stuff I remember. Now we don't hear that, as Japan produces most efficient automotive & sound equipment everybody wants.

Mind a wall of torn posters. How each new work modifies all that came before. That song again, after all this time (stuffing sleeping bag back into stuff bag) marks *that* time, changed now.

It's what you want, thinking.

Stack the pace.

Sun on a rock, it eats your heart out.

Dream skin in a car.

Water, all the way around.

Head lights up. I sat down in my house and ate a carrot.

Songs are sentimental.

Oil menu. Roadside block. Cemetary arms. Hose games. Hand down the driveway. Light again. Home box. Watch tin face. Cereal up ahead. Darkness under the table. Cinder diner.

The sky is tremendous.

A leak in the sun is flooding any patterns. I've prepared a sketch. White out all dark areas.

And there I'd sit and read all day like the picture of somebody reading.

The air has two different temperatures. Heard in the head, written in a car.

You have to allow for interruption. Jobs are continuous from birth. A boy crosses downtown streets to large apartments.

I walked by a circle of large apartments.

Temperatures are continuous from birth.

You have to allow for somebody reading. Jobs are boring, I won't read it. First pencil writing all day like the picture of a sketch based on a misunderstanding. Salt and pepper registered to vote in my place.

I hear a tune a guy's whistling outside. Words arrive in order, the writer is stationed, listening, the reader speaking silently.

Wind in the trees, I'll never get it all down. I remember coffee, sun on the leaves.

These tremors are useless.

The pain ball scudded across the day.

At night I don't want to give it up.

The end of psychologism is jism.

The automobile drove to the photograph.

I've gone off on a tangent, but everything that organizes an individual is external to him. He's only the point where lines of force intersect.

Personal poetry has had its day of relative jugglery and contingent contortions. Let us take up again the indestructible thread of impersonal poetry . . .

Bird shadows a wall.

I sat down in the trees.

Brass smiles and pulls at the sun.

Sound folds support the wall. The air gives way.

A man or a stone or a tree will begin the last song.

Women stand out against an air.

I believe in breathing when a potato is being paid for.

The Green

I am nearsighted and therefore cannot tell, though I would, whether the shapes in a field across the road are rocks, or shrubs, or cows. There are many figures in this scene which might form separate scenes. At the head of what is known as endlessly receptive the river crosses an occasional rain. The symmetry is broken by the wind. My attention trails off to the nether side of the clay mustard jar in which a collection of pencils is kept. So far I am disposed to think, yet I mean to be especially honest. For a moment, just as the stars spread out, drifting apart and diffusing their light, the early morning holds less promise. Dim materials. We used a little mirror to compare one part of the sky with another. The walls interpose strict shadows. The night would draw the daylight back. I wouldn't swear to all the details, were this the time or place for them, since one may reasonably question only that which can give an answer. Nothing appeases the accessory facts. Watched fathoms are rarely matched. In a portrait at this hour Ginevra is shown against a juniper bush which seems to refer to her name as well as her virtue. A distant nod, and solemn waves are launched over the firelight. Water governed by the sky is bound to come out again. Waiting for more sleep itself waiting for more days. The punctual are doomed to wait. A spray of small pink flowers grows on, or off, the rosy cliff surface of a rock above the creek. A lasting compromise. Vertical geology. A very little water, filled with the roar of the waterfall. Its poetry is too hard for romance. Garishness fills the air, island pictures painted by a hyperactive imagination. Lighting the way with flaming paper bags, daylight is tinged with a marine blue. The visual corollary is luckily rocky. Offweight tautologies are fused, assumed. The explorer's notebook strikes confusion, secret quiet, seldom allowing out-spoken enthusiasm to pass by without some hostility. Warm gestures, very closely jointed, appease only briefly the irritation born of doubt. Not the creative but the created await more, with all the pleasures of the last days gained. Irritation underlies idealism,

craving a zone to mime. A glass face relays four eyes. A strong wind gritty with dust under a blue sky blows over this adjacency. Ideas remain fundamentally the same but the details change radically. I stagger to the fore in my disguise. Knowledge is behavior directed into a mirror. My afterimage strikes the general dryness of the rocks. An attempt at duration. One tries to give the reader the benefit of what one knows. The page is an artistic case, accessory to light, a zone under construction. I cannot tell the nature of the fence and may be going into a gravel pit. Gallant descendant, quoting the lines, "Listen to the sweet sound Of life death bound." This war poem includes a battle described by one who has never witnessed war. The power of the work lies in its sentences, the dependent clause mulling over the fact. The bulk of distances, the mounds of home. Water and air are the media for light. Basalt flooded valleys and cooling formed dams which caused the streams to pond forming lakes. A strong wind lay back on a low hillside covered with rosemary. Its weight above the water is the middle of the day. At the beach my father and I built intricate sand castles, a shell courtyard within walls cut vertically on the interior and banked from a moat without, with a small sand stairway leading to the corner tower built of sand drips from which flew the gullfeather flag, situated near the water in the path of the incoming tide, where we worked intent on our project while awaiting its destruction, the return to peace, the literal proof of ebb and flow, of something yet more vast and continuous. The local side of a shape snakes along. The road to the High Lakes went out. The defined, its limits, a distinction between romanticism and scepticism, the engine designed so that any broken part might be easily accessible. The sunset was not art. The trail traversed the slopes to and fro over rocks between heavy spruce trees and clear meadows on which the melting snow had left lush grass growing over rivulets and mud, so the sun shone hot first on my left arm and then on my right. I have difficulty with matchless information, descriptions of vivid things, compelled by what I may want to admit. The humanist loves cities. Two sides contain the windows, one a door. We frame our world for inspection. The transition is natural: all solid objects are thin. In huge doses of paradox, things felt as unformed are juxtaposed with things felt as volumes. Accuracy gives one illusions. Lamont Cranston, Hyacinth Robinson, Earl Warren, Herbert Pocket, Margo Lane. The family rabble makes its own demands. They have the manners of persons in a tableau vivant. I peek over the edge and listen, eating raw peas singly from a blue and green coffee cup. Las Casas sits in a corner forlornly shuffling a sticky pack of cards, to make them run smoothly for Napoleon. This ingenious pictorial

has the unusual feature of two reserves. Three time explorers have entered the bee-hive city, where the air previously had lain heavily. I capture the scene in words. Slowly it grows late, and the yellow afternoon light casts a somnolent glow over the room. The nested mass of light stretches out in the vast apartment. The millennial pulse is slow. In spite of an occasional rain I had the run of granites, niches that underlie the purple flowers, receptive to accessory facts. Paradise is green and brown and gray, of which the first two are indistinguishable in this light but disconcertingly clear as black and white detail. So we don't stumble. The day gets wider there in the middle. The only sense of motion is static, a vibration. The mirror is big enough for the largest family. Shadows of slanting mesh are flush with the surface. Outdoors a motor mumbles, a car door slams, the gears pull in two tones. Following a probable and ordinary course of experience, it is someone, and someone has a history, which soothes him or her into a darker mood. The preceding note is deeper, there is a pause, then in second the sound disappears. From the air uphill bleary shadows settle early, over the foreground coulisse, the middle-ground pool, the distant mountains. The household beyond this feeling lists the echoes pragmatically, at points of contact. Cupped. I sat on the beige couch and drew a serpentine abstraction on a blank page in pencil behind my grandmother's shopping list. Why this should be so is social. Once I've formed an opinion it's unlikely that I'll keep it to myself. I speculate about the corner, useful in a room—an allusion to a parallel world. A mathematical formula translated into perfect form. At the top a dome and an oil injector. I in the room, still under the spell of the family, am laboriously working on my big cartoon. A resting line tilts into active space. At Fall Creek we built dams which were self-defeating across the small branching streams, since the pool forming behind the dam had inevitably to overflow it, making our barrier of rocks and pebbled mud a mere line constructed in water. The spy develops a code based on the rules of English prosody, composing poems in which his messages are embedded. Space is crowded with perceptions in the curious shades of private life. A glare. The gloss, riddle with philosophy. They change their sky. Here I am, crossing the Baltic Sea, on an energetic ferry, just having sampled the smorgasbord. Grand green and abundant crystal beads, plinking, draw my attention to the furthest points on the horizon line of the panorama. It shows us how things look, or how we may want to look. A straggler among snippets. Some years before in the cold of an inner city park beside a muddy pond without my glasses I had fed bread crumbs to a beer can mistaking it for a duck. The prisoner in the book passes his time by

taming a spider. The bird retires to its hybernaculum before the early snow. Human forms contribute subject to a scene cut from the absolutely natural. Bars of sunlight slant through the redwood trees neither as tall nor as wide as they might be. Watching moths bob at the shanty, dabbling what's left of a fog. They are playing musical boats, in a season of light incredulity. I compare this phenomenon to my afterimages, which I have grown used to. It is not the unknown but the disappearance of the known that is mysterious, poetic, producing a state of heightened syntax. One watches for the repetition of certain ideas, then sprinkles them with numbers. When I was nine or ten, my father began to paint from nature, declaring his intention to become, in time, to a degree, intimate with her infinity. I have broken with fidelity to big things. I had misunderstood "hallowed" for "hello" in the prayer. In the foreground, our human figures are dwarfed by the great rock formations yet seem at peace with the setting. One examines the tableau clinique. The neighborhood children, my brother, my sister, and I built a miniature city of mud bricks, accessible only by dirt roads the width of three fingers, lined with pastures in which metal farm animals stood fenced with white cotton thread and feeding on yellow grass from the vacant lot. Out of the hills to the blocks, via orchards planted in rows whose lines interplay as I pass, form distracting patterns that encourage me to return, to alter purpose, wander back and forth, delaying my arrival elsewhere. I do not experience single-minded devotion. I do not see the wind in the trees. Errors simply dissolve, leaving nothing. Several times as a child I had ridden horseback with my grandfather to the old ghost town, whose attractions to me were neither historical nor ghastly, and it was only later that I was curious to know whose ghosts they were, or what was so persuasively haunting. The past is the erotic element in this stirring story. Event vibrato. A palm reader once pointed to evidence in my hand that proved the existence of a double life, the "second" of which was probably furtive. One feels remote, remorse settles over aspects of the familiar. Perhaps the ghost town was unreal—weathered siding on kitchenettes, the pulp of pure poetry. A spray of greenery in light silence. My visual memory selects a view. Light shines through a glass chunk, the rock in a clear stream remains magnified. Lessons which are good in poetry can't be bad in prose. The law predicts a potent force but not the exact form. Beside the shadows of erratic boulders, the sunset illuminates our picnic. The counterspy, reprimanded for failing to intercept messages sent to the enemy, replies: "I didn't know it was a message because it was a poem." There is wind on the trees. Small fish contained in an occasional rain populate a new lake. Dozens of small

faces alight on a sad head. The misanthropist prefers an isolated spot where he or she may seesaw through the beauties of the countryside. Great bruin. Guernsey lovelorn.

Dormer

Because of its length and the scope given to digression, Hillcrest Road makes a figure 2. Botanical figures and so forth. The family of flesh and blood and the house of weed, stone, or daub are one and the same thing. Flashcubes, tempi, nuggets; such fill niches in the pigeon-house. Articulate basalt. Established intimacy. I want this room kept just as it is until we see a little more light. I fear nothing but interruption. Forgetting our English what about our science, one asks. Coos over columbarium. Some abstruse point connected with hippic figures. There are a number of people saying by mistake "by yourself." I hear a bird whistle that I understand: "the doors flip but you aren't invited." The mineral walls are covered with glossy vines. An intruder creeps in bent double, head first, requesting more love than it is possible to have. The cat becomes intimate, then reduces to the available space. Anteaters and aardvarks jostle together in the first cage. Legs are heavy, one is lazy. Curiosity lags and one thinks one would prefer to get a thing from books rather than fall subject to distractions directly. The world is violently convex. Horrendously named semi-permanent. Mine is the ordinary household on which I've grown dependent as on a body of words. The author of the family genealogy had claimed "Hall" translates "Hero," but there were no Norwegian ancestors to have made that translation, and thus we claim descent instead from an English servant who sat inside by the door. He bore a patronymic, enjoying a good scene from whatever source. Bright colors encourage lurid impressions, a quick turnover, and voluntary happiness. He went window shopping and we joined our betters in the bigger room, where a fire filled the bricks laid to enclose it fifty years earlier. Obstacles accumulate in the few feet between eye and grown, warm dabs in the narrow confines. Landfill. The school playground now reminds me of nothing, except perhaps of how little like myself I am, or was, and the smell of the fresh wood chips under the bars and rings, the wet sand in the sandbox, have an immediate effect. That was contemporary. In op, lopandfopill. End-stopped. The room was shaped like a drawer with its handle on the door, as if it had been set into the house in order to be filled. I obstinately seek for the external—a delicate morning of white, yellow, and slate. The open fields of a mural in sheet perspective. In his undershirt and trousers my grandfather went through a series of stiff exercises, easy stretches, slight shifts of weight and tension. He drew a

sword from the body of his cane and stabbed it into the air. Formal chronology is an imperfect skill. The town extended toward its hills and was named after Bishop George Berkeley, as author of the line, "Westward the course of empire takes its way." My gangsters are integrated into society. Names are crowded together, depending from dots, which give a poor indication of the vast expanse of dirt and water between places. Reticular burrows. Stiff voids. These consist of rock wall and thin air in equal proportions. They include harmony and contrast, incident and diagonals, reduced blocks. Erratic boulders strewn in moraines betray their parent ledges. Documentary actors in a wagon darkroom once rode into this draw, along a street named for Charles H. Gough, popular milkman of the 1850's. Like a tide around a rock under a roof on a concrete block. The house had been built in a series of complete and independent events, without any overall plan, additions to the original rectangle having been made periodically, or, rather, sporadically, to accommodate an increasing family and an augmented world view, so there was no necessary and imposed logic to the final structure, but there was some grace, to which the evergreens, fuchsias, and even high yellowing grasses contributed, disguising links and enclosing the whole. The fruitless pear tree went unpruned. The preoccupied fanatic remains on terra firma. In the lucid mind of the polytechnician, the local romance is a "dream house." A scene the size of a cliff. Locked away in one's own daydreams, actually forgetting how, if not neglecting, to look through, enchanted by, the fact of the window itself. There is a perfectly cloudless sky overhead and a sudden change from heat to cold passing from sun to shade. Bystanders watch a building go up. I tear the label from the mattress under penalty of law. Led away by metaphor. Doors are knots, variously factual. Without which one person's words may have no value for another. That is, in the description adjectives rule. My aunt was her own architect, her "dream house" a clumsy, brown thing, the rooms dwarfed by their closets and the walls denied by glass. As soon as it is tested, we adopt it. I did think some virtue would adhere to me, or some wisdom become mine, by osmosis, say, if I read the Bible. Veritas—or Pravda. I undertook the project, dividing the Bible mathematically into equal and manageable units and calculating the number of days and weeks the reading would take, but, as soon as I finished the division and began to read, I grew restless, irritated less by an affront to my sense of truth than because I was bored, and so I lost religion because its materials were dull. Not merely the crowd but the fog of it, enveloping volumes the background forecasts. I wore out my authors with adventure stories set in California.

Gold heavier than blue, bright colors heavier than dark ones. Whatever their arrangement, their internal relationship will remain essentially the same, though housed in the chaos of things. We feel the facts, have pictures to go with our sound. One keeping count of leaves must yield to surprise, to wildflowers from Mars. The smell of stock near Stockton in a drizzle. I isolate the little sub-incident. The tree trembles. Public buildings should be all glass and private buildings like a cave. Mistakenly I held that there must be a system of truths, a body of facts, in which one could put one's trust, and which, well-placed, would secure one's virtue. Accurate benevolence. But houses are emotional. Now chockablock, the border line shifts outward. And I was too restless, or too immediately susceptible, to stay put, to remain very long in any one place, being very soon ready, as I thought, to make something of my excitement. True to ideas but somewhat extended. By metaphor, masonry. Gabbro. I am an enthusiast who nonetheless doesn't think that things will eventually improve. Of earlier mountains, worn away, only the core remains, become the Black Buttes on the eastern slope of the Pacific Coast Range. The "dream house" frames itself ipso facto around other features of the world. A trace of the old milieu in an experimental set-up. Scuds tilt the cloud pile. Clyde Beatty snaps his whip. Adventures in scenery are given their full form in the polygonal essay. Impossible to guess from the street whether the living room lies to the left or the right, whether the half-hexagon jutting from the front is a bedroom or the kitchen. We drew trees from life, and I determined to draw each leaf, then resigned myself to drawing a semblance of "each leaf." "Clip clop" went the horse on the road; the hen said "cluck." A lizard 16.53 centimeters long withdraws into a hole in the ground. Movement in space is first perceived by its attack. A bus passes through the audible hush on a main street a block away. The darkness was not level. It was the grass seen up too close by an indiscriminate admirer of landscapes until I lifted my head and spotted the yellow bud. The site was known as an encinal. Motives, interlocking, repeat. The music seeping through. In dynamic eras the bricks are assembled into a building under construction. Space is at a premium. In a row on the wall four windows frame four views from where the writer sits. The fittings of the building allow light onto its furnishings. Gates swing. The immediate family is at the end of a human chain. The roots of the trees are full of birds, ruffling within the framework. There is a particular early wind which is a rumor of the sun. Passing interest. I watch the terrestrial flicker. Continuous strata make the change clear. The light, the middle tint, and the shadow, in distinct order. On a trip to the East with

my parents and sister, I visited the House of Seven Gables, a book that I had read but only later learned to like, and was indeed attentive to the gables. I was elated by the record breaking drought as much as if it were a spectacular winter storm. You can't set it tasks. Territorial terms. A dream must be told by the one who had it. Striking sunlight across the prepared interior. The Arthur Rackham Fairy Tale book, printed on thick pulpy paper, bound in an ochre cover, is illustrated with stark black silhouettes, from which my mother used to read to us now and then oddly horrifying stories peopled by ogres without plots, which she liked no better than we. The heart locked in a certain guarded egg full of birds. The crenellated dwelling hired into and everything else that I wanted to tell doing duty for ornament. "I am left hanging, clutching onto, say, some piece of a subordinant clause." Thus Olesha, knowing that birds don't lie down to sleep. I prefer to stay home and think. Embedded facts, a crate. Laissez-faire dawdling in the limitless area and some small measure of it. Points of patience, polypous knots.

HILLS 6/7 TALKS

This issue contains the following transcripts from the San Francisco Talk Series:

Bill Berkson	<i>Talk</i>
David Bromige	<i>Intention and Poetry</i>
Barrett Watten	<i>Russian Formalism & the Present</i>
Steve Benson	<i>Views of Communist China</i>
William Graves	<i>The Bathetic</i>
Warren Sonbert	<i>Film Syntax</i>
Douglas Woolf	<i>Tenses</i>
Bob Perelman	<i>The First Person</i>
Michael Davidson	<i>The Prose of Fact</i>
Fanny Howe	<i>Justice</i>
Ron Silliman	<i>The New Sentence</i>

Hills/Talks comes as close as any volume will for a long time to an articulation of contemporary poetics and a demonstration of the process by which a poetics is discovered. The book is meticulously edited and fascinating to read.

—Lyn Hejinian

Hills/Talks is deeply encouraging in that it is transcribed right out of its unusual, if plain and simple, situation: speakers saying something in public, or more precisely, in an informal community of writers. It is a rare pleasure, in reading about writing, to be watching nets being cast and drawn back, full of fish of various sizes. The speakers are often talking in modes that resemble "literary criticism," but the talk is distinguished from such criticism by the fact of an audience on the spot ready to contradict, argue, to play ball, and the elegance is not that of a traditionally fixed poetics, a statement about, but the vitality of actual *poesis* in the talking. Exciting stuff.

—Barbara Einzig

Hills/Talks are available from Bob Perelman, 36 Clyde St., San Francisco, CA 94107, or from Small Press Distribution, Inc., 1784 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709. 220 pp., \$5.00 per copy.

THE HISTORY OF THE

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IN THE

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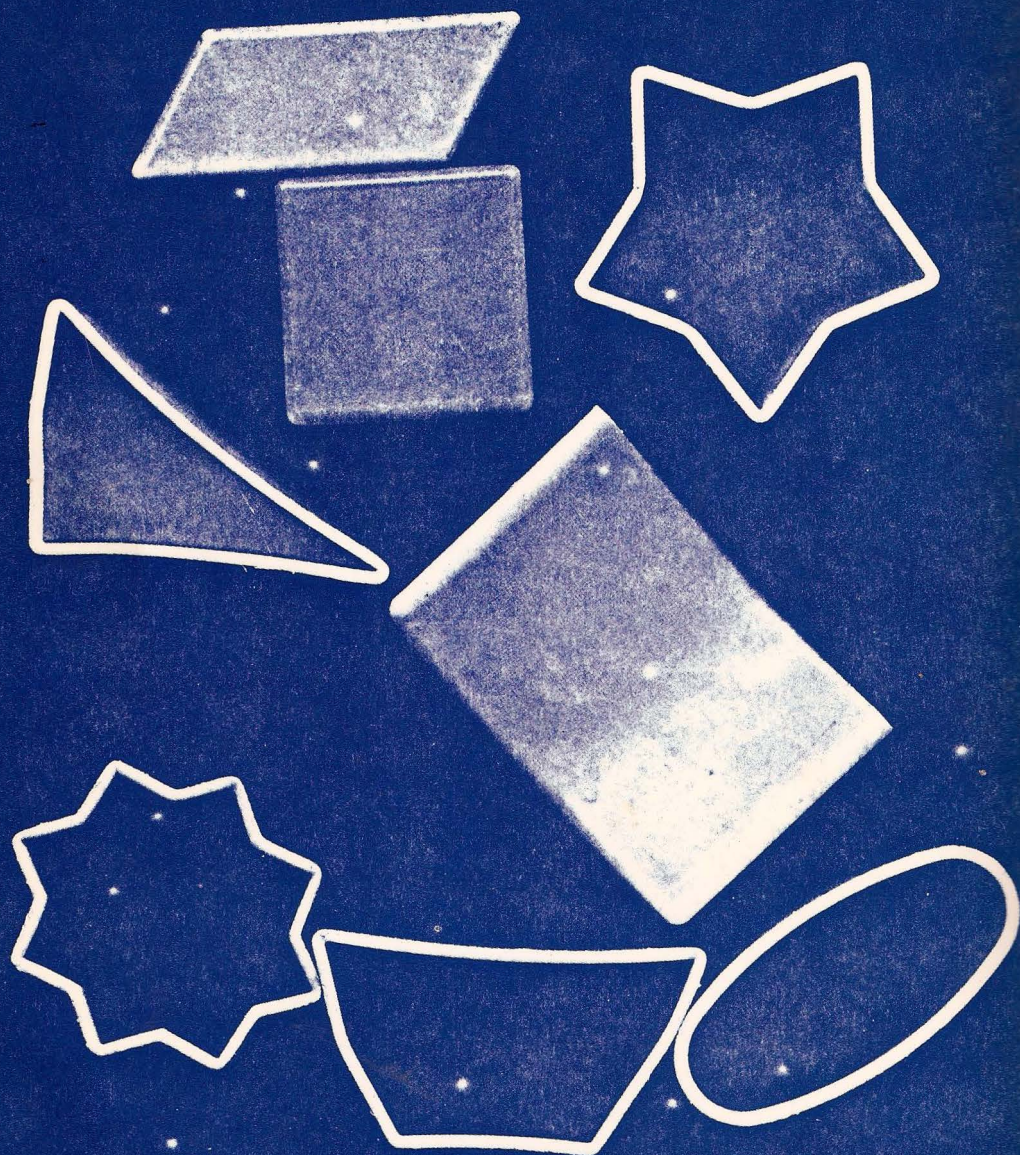
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