

L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E

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MISREPRESENTATION

(A text for The Tennis Court Oath of John Ashbery)

"Thus, when the universal sun
has set, does the moth seek the
lamp-light of privacy."

--- Karl Marx, 1939.

* * *

1. "Uh huh." "Huh." "Heh? Eh?" What *had* you been thinking about? Since, from the very start, this outward-looking topic or conjuncture of words is *convulsed*, "the face studiously bloodied" by all that combs the text. "Hush!"

But --the conjunction --registers the tone. "but what testimony buried under colored sorrow". So this is not evidence for some theory but a gloss on loss, regret, confusion, clarity, the net of hope unraveling both night & day. And our reading *registers* this dizzying parade --of eroded representations and wreckage. Are they what we want? "When through the night.... Pure sobs denote the presence... Of supernatural yearning".

2. One can "smile up at your dark window in the nothing sunlight --". Wait around; "I guess the darkness stubbed its toe". Fal-ters; blanks. "We were growing away from that" --toward desire, with a jeweler's care, "...waiting". Always.

It's not just the accuracy of pointing which this work calls into question, or pouts. Rather, we are led to question the efficacy of desire, of *getting through*. Of interpersonal TRANSLATION, a social activity which begins to look like a subcategory of clarity and communicative competence. Are we still dumb with each other; is this "numb hitting"? Am I *getting through* to you (and to you-plural)? "Piercing the monocle ...because letters". To pierce that, as letters can pierce through: it isn't taking off or opening up shades, but removing historical or social barnacles. Shades are painted shut. The impermeability of the person, the wall-eyed. "It is dumb and night continually seeping in --like a reservoir Of truth on the bandits".

3. Blabbing causing darkness, & darkness related to the closures, the incommensurability of experiences, the inability to see. "I try ... to describe for you But you will not listen". But we must agree. "Agreement was possible." Agreement was not readily possible; we weren't ready. Since there isn't some reality out there awaiting our objective operations. Instead, you find a relativism grounded in practices, in the round of language, which demands *responsiveness* from us and not simply *decipherment*. Dialogues, in place of a fugitive 'monologic,' as a means by which reality can be *constituted*. *Paroles*. [The constitutive rules of this game define the second-order ends/means relationship — between the social construction of reality, on one level, and everything that we do & are & say, on the other.] "The facts have hinged on my reply".

4. Communicative competence, and therefore transparency, and social reality itself: all together. What "will teach you about men — what it means"? "Because what does anything mean,...?" Yet is anything "wholly meaningless," or if so only by some constricted definition of meaning, one which sanctions only certainties, is transparency or a phoney monologic. So "the things I wish to say" — are they ever without obstructions or emotional overhead? For saying is not just an utterance but a social performative as well. At every step, we perform the dialogue.

5. The borders & barriers & border patrols which it breeds all remind me of those which translation must cross. And translation does or can model all our interactions. Even so, there are problems, familiar problems with this. "All borders between men were closed." The impermeability, again. So that the things we wish to say may even seem motivated by a strong desire (the wish, the personal gesture, the camp), yet in a contextual sense "are needless," or else remain unmotivated or undemanded in a formal sense. Loosed from their context, which gives them 'a formal sense.' "stammered". "But that doesn't explain." "... I don't know". "You don't understand ..." " — I don't know why." The forms *motivate* the human disjunctures, which is their triumph.

6. Lately, I've heard Ashbery's work mentioned in breaths that include Lowell, Bishop, Sexton, Howard, Merrill, Strand, Rich, Hollander, etc. A community of innocent and therefore more worrisome misrepresentation which poses as representation, as rhetoric. The work at hand is less innocent. It does not content us as established rhetoric. "More than the forms". O.K. Yet this is still like a 'social-work'. It poses for us a radical questioning of established forms, yet at the same time, and so appropriately in its own form, it explores the implications of that questioning — not as an idea, but as an experience and a *reading*.

I came upon this work early in my writing. Rereading, it seems even less comfortably mentioned in that former breath of names, or even in a breath with the many younger writers who have adopted his tone and manner of discourse. Instead, it still *persuasively* proposes a condition of formal adventure: with elements of Allen's New American Poetry 1945-1960, with the work of Roussel, Cage, Zukofsky, with O'Hara, Eigner, MacLow, Roche, with what recent writing has done (that of Coolidge, Silliman, Mayer, Grenier, DiPalma, Bernstein, others) to help us take a new breath, and with what such writing may do to push us *further* along. Not a conventional dalliance, and not a transcendent avant-gardism. There are other communities, and this work and therefore the possibilities for writing can belong in them. It has opened rooms, even if Ashbery's own work has not walked into them.

"I am toying with the idea." Yet we read more than "only bare methods", the "sharp edge of the garment", "thelettering easily visible along the edge". What is here: "A torn page with a passionate oasis". "Back into pulp." The construction itself bends backward, to give us a clearance for the jumps in location and tone and pointedness — a *jump cut*, like the narrative variety in New Wave cinema of that time. Moreover, the construction is not a shawl, enveloping & smoothing the shifts, as in later work, but is at the heart of our experiencing those shifts at all — the jagged kaleidoscope of melancholia and expiration.

7. "of course the lathes around
the stars with privilege jerks"

It concerns the undercutting of the image, the visual picture — by juxtaposing the conceivable referents in unexpected ways and also by fragmenting the syntax, that gridiron of outwardness. "The reason ejected" by these 2 strategies — via the constitution of the image and via syntax, both of which are variously shattered. In fact, we could say that only here and in Three Poems does the disjunct formal structure fully *double*, or reiterate, the implicit lessons embodied in the discourse: about the fragility of relationships, doubts, breakage, tenuousness more generally, foreclosed dreams & the mortgages of dreamwork, lonesomeness. Not just an ornamentally rhetorical way of talking *about* these issues; here we find them displayed and played out and encoded in the very construction. This is *codic doubling* with a lovely vengeance.

8. Let light shine in? "The bars had been removed from all the windows". But "What window?" What is at stake — "A signal from the great outside" — is this all?: "against the window." "the observatory"; "specs". These seem. Light and glass, as mirrors, as representation, as lucid rhetoric. He's not wondering if we want this, but is depicting actively what language can deliver. Are we willing

to accept the ... available substitutes? Not our salvation.

Even to the point where language itself takes precedence — is the frontal project. "Inch pageant". And single words are unleashed from a familiarity which their very unleashing helps to undermine. As well, they constitute another reality. Signs & the rules they carry inside them. "Now he cared only about signs." Well, not true, not even here, but he does care very deeply and seems suspicious of their instrumental use, of their *about-ness*, their external determinants. "Panorama."

9. Images, for example — or ornament. "The colored balls were like distant lights on the plaque horizon." Not enough, and not what it is. "Is not a 'images'to 'arrange'". Not, actually it kicks the legs out from under that whole project. Here, and more prominently than in later work, the composition does not project such an arrangement. It doesn't just juxtapose representations and accede to their hegemony. No ...the reading, the language, "does not evoke a concrete image". Still, you want to do more than abandon the possibility: "You have to exact the forfeit". To do so, you may want to make these illusory or suspect representations more exact; or question them in one exacting fashion after the other. "The light goes — it exudes Your idea — perched on some utterly crass sign". For isn't it always some utterly crass sign or image on which it is perched, on which our hopes are perched? Not what is in front of us. "Photography, horror of all". As if humans were the miscommunicating mammals, or those who locate themselves in frames which require so much more than what we call simple reading, or 'reading off.' Instead, things are pleased by indirection. "He is not a man ... Who can read these signs". Not in this light.

10. Isn't transparency a mark of illusion, and possibly of all illusions? "misguided": the elysium of signposts, of exact replicas, clones, control, repetition compulsion. "You cannot illusion;" this remains as a trace of advice. *Critical Interruptions*. "Lights stream undeniably away". Their touch eludes. You cannot recapture. And light itself would be an evasion, or a misapprehension, and even the other-worldly, the distractingly transcendent. If "escape is over the lighted stepsMisunderstandings arise cathedral." The radical critique of religion as a source for an Ideologiekritik, and a critique of clarity and transparency and language: "powerless creating images"; and hierarchy arising historically at the same time as instrumental literacy (Levi-Strauss) or the incest taboo. Repent; revolt. In the division of labor, some are left to dream. Are we left to repeat?

"We might escape, in the daylight". As if light comes across here as an escape, "the exit light". Since aren't these the descriptive effects, the lighting, evoked around the edges of an experience

in order to show an unreal way out? This project can be overturned: "the undesired stars needed against the night Forbidden categorically". Yet how undesired are they, "the fact the stars", the piercing through of night? Fugitive. Instead, in the dark, we can pledge allegiance to them—to these facts and to their absence.

And not to description. During that pledge of allegiance, these words remain seated. "But a blind man's come poking, however clumsily, into the inmost corners of the house." Or the book. The reign of description is put on the dock; to place in evidence; to regard as hearsay; to impugn the testimony of. Its effects suggest mere positing: "The apricot and purple clouds were"—while a welter of adjectives has not added up to an external world: cream-colored, lilac, pink, lovely—but to what, a "sullen, careless world Ignorant of me" Even so, it contains within it such precisely evoked if dislocated pleasures and regrets, as if, in a whisper, to mention the incapacity of language to describe or fix. Badly mortised. "Acting kind of contented in the finishing petal". A fixation, an affixation. What is lost & what is mentioned becomes a parallel division.

11. Description would be choiceless, "unintentional". Personhood might be mere transmission, "am as wire". Behavioral reading, rather than hermeneutic ones. "The persons abolished"—in the horizon. Speech, and therefore action, reduced. "Light sucks up what I did". But a critique in action of the representational capacity of language seems to reaffirm personhood, and choice itself. "For the optician's lenses never told you"; they never told you what you need—to go on—and what can be said. *But*. "Head of shade"—rather than of light, or the evasion of responsibility, or crass signs & illusion. "But having plucked oneself, who could live in the sunlight? And the truth is cold". With the word "plucked" coming across as harvested, or tended, or having gained in self-consciousness; having done so, it makes sense to be skeptical, to embody in *composition* the doubt that transparency is more than a devious & second-best fraud, fraught with an illusory naturalism, a making into nature what is really our *production*. A tyranny, a myth, an ideology of determinism and reductionism. The work affirms, on the contrary, "The person Horror—the morsels of his choice".

12. Some connectives. An order as clarity. Clarity as transparency. Transparency as authority. Formal order, and civil order, & the taboo against transgression, and isn't this a taboo against the person? "Glass regime". With *regime* in the sense of paradigm, and glass as transparency. A toppling of *this* regime; the delegitimation of *this* authority, and this *order*, this reign, this rein, this *problematique*. "For what is obedience but the air around us": taking as its

model a complacent glance upward & not the more strenuous effort to see *through* hierarchy — as a symptom, a veil.

Or to see through the "solidifying disguises" — the image, the representation, the denial of solidity: "Release shadow upon men — in their heaviness". Evanescence: fraud. "It too faded into light". And a horror emerges of fullness, of plenitude, of the body. "Or he hides bodies stone night."

13. Night & day, light & dark, *chiaroscuro*, present the basic terms of reference. "lighted up the score". "The sky was white as flour —" And light appears as clarity, sense, clear-headedness, as the possibility of both representation and denial: communication. Night — as lack of clarity, or senselessness, on the other hand. "Neutral daylight sitting thing"; sitting things out, setting things up: a declaration of placement, and order, sensible order, and its neutrality. Simple declarative.

14. But so much of this *interrogates* the lighting & our capacity to see, and therefore to interpret, and therefore to speak and be understood. "Murk plectrum," "thistles again closed around voice." Guarded; blocked. "Fatigue and smoke of nights". Blurs; hard of hearing "recording of piano in factory" or chickenshack, or garage. See each other? "Our faces have filled with smoke." "As though too much dew obscured the newspaper". *Film noir*. "bandaged the field glasses." Or: "The sunset stains the water of the lake," staining the otherwise see-through flooring. Consensual truth? Transparency does not yet exist.

15. Faced with the "bilious tide of evening", as an alternative, are we left with "thankless sight"? "The penalty of light forever" — where we may be "Burnt by the powder of that view" which we desire. Very possibly, this exit leads nowhere. "One can never change the core of things, and light burns you the harder for it." And at that core would be personhood, or character armor, and *therefore* the impossibility of unimpeded communication, of full relation and bonding, of getting through. One "sees Into the light: It grieves for what it gives:" or what it reveals. I am naked.

"Lights were brought. The beds, sentenced." Where *sentenced* gives that doubling of penalty and grammatical closure: the end. Or unending but jeopardized from all sides ... "mirrors — insane" (which is one whole section from the sequence masterwork, *Europe*). Giddyup, references; into the horizon. And light, that seeming mark of transparency, would only be a mark of seeming. A false front, a regret. It actually marks opacity, and ... our full realization of *absence*. Clarity, in the end, is suffocating. Yet we suffocate for want of it, and still presume

it. "My bed of light is a furnace choking me".

16. Memory, too, gives us a system of reference. And opacity gives us a system of amnesia, or a reminder of the mnemonic challenge; "it was fuzz on the passing light over disgusted heads, far into amnesiac". Eyes closed discover spent youth.

And that amnesia, or character armor, is not a needless intrusion but emotion itself — "of our defences, our intentions" — where "We must be a little more wary". "and that fascinating illumination that buries my heart". Occlusion springs from the heart as well as from language. Daylight clarity poses the terms of the question again; where *form* is pinned by *sense* — only to be dissembled in its origins, its privacies.

17. "The map ... Shut up." No speech = privacy = no guides. Where does the public/private dimension enter in? "Darkness invades the tears" & "Tears invade the privacy of private lives". For to invade suggests *embody* — the fear of embodiment, where privacy/opacity and publicity/transparency are poles; they are poles apart. "A strong impression torn from the descending light But night is guilty." Guilty of what we do, in private, and of the simplest facts of privacy itself, "darkness in the hole". Guilty of the passionate oases. So: private night, film noir, the disorder — the voluptuous reassuring disorder of night, "carpentered night".

18. And imagination. "They imagine something different from what it is." "My brain concocted" : "and looking around for an opening in the air, was quite as if it had never refused to exist differently." And those differences are a form of social speech — a source of contradiction, an interaction which lays the ground for our individual longings and imaginings. Heating up the caverns, or "the inconstant universe" — "a beam of intense, white light — pierce the darkness, skyward".

For otherwise this was "the issue utter blank darkness" : night or darkness or absence; *zero*. "Bringing night brings in also idea of death" : "death preoccupation, beauty." A barely habitable humanism, characterized by opacity, motive, clogging, that which is not understandable; "the darkness will have none of you," and "I don't understand wreckage". Wreckage occludes the orders of the day, the light which is conceivable speech. And ... "but in the evening in the severe lamplight doubts come".

19. Clarity can thus be regarded in the same way we consider ease of closure, understanding, sight, and translation. The *but* endistances them: "but permanent as the night's infection" and doesn't this remain

surrounding us? Something has "rendered speech impossible There was no sign of light anywhere below —all was a bright black void." All ruses have failed.

As a compensation and yet also as a reminder, the style of this work remains prophetic. The form reemerges from sense by disassembly, duration, extension of *deadline*, and personal project. Here is subjectivity loose among the bleak structures and attempting to show them up. It goes on —into materiality, refusal, doubt, the artificial, the negation & critique, the less-than-innocuous truths, perfume, and nights with neither warmth nor transcendence. Moving.

* * *

The sense of the words is
With a backward motion, pinning me
To the daylight mode of my declaration

But ah, night may not tell
The source.

* * *

20. "Is perplexed, managing to end the sentence."

BRUCE ANDREWS

P. INMAN, Platin (1979; Sun & Moon Press, 4330 Hartwick Road, #418, College Park, MD 20740; \$3)

Platin is a sequence consisting of eighteen parts. One poem approximately thirteen lines long, faces a blank white page. Except for the ninth, which has been completely broken apart, each unit suggests a sonnet. The typewriter (hence the title) is an integral part of each segment. Even its sound imposes.

#1

leans tain clack. cilk , tasp. blosset

A Sonnet = Three quatrains linked by a couplet. The couplet in #17 (for Ted Berrigan) 'pill booked of linen' -

ojibing, pense toney ocrurs. (assits...)fell(...womb)immode.
felds a bring of lyed plane. tile crombie

Typos, space between letters, signs, marks, quatrains, couplets, commas --

all are called into play. Platin works on many levels. Sequentially, acoustically, visually, historically, ly, ly, and ly. Here words in nowords, names in nonames. There, deftly anticipated by Messerli's cover (Old Old - New New - Old New New Old). Inman's work is a pilgrim's progress through Coolidge (Space) Berrigan (Sonnets) and Monk (Sound Modules), by way of Darragh (My Hands to Myself) and dictionary magic...

.....

Let us note in this song the first manifestation of the musical symbolism of the alphabet, which Berg believed in all his life to the point of superstition. At the point where the text speaks of a "white hand in a fairy tale" are heard the notes A-B flat-B natural (in German A-B-H), the initials of Berg and his wife. Alban-Berg-Helene.

--Leibowitz on Alban Berg

Inman knows about "the white hand in a fairy tale." Spinnets, harp, quill, veil gilling barn, sim-nickeled willow, some leafgreen braid, whistled the browns of carbon, gile brilliance - A formal concern remains. Meaning self destructs. Nonsense. The work teeters at the edge, remains rooted in the shape of time, stops short of gibberish. Flags go up. Names. Affirmation in disintegration.

aiety builds, yate of ages
bates a life of brings. brattle me
etter gray or her lip

thical of beginning
...clair ...tham one iced

pipple street pleat glow from like

Like a plainsong fragment, the series can be endlessly interpreted. Kinship and Contrast. Inman's space is fractured. The action is interrupted, the situation tense. Construct of equivalencies, ZIP Brouillons of painters, writers, and musicians, crisscrossed with erasures and corrections.

"j. lightning franklin",paiuc
close on fram ...ckade white ites
...fring...oply
float went glimmer ...glimming giotto paves

No props from an antiquated legend 'termins a Maughm prit'
Barnett to Suzanne Langer

"Esthetic is for artists
what Ornithology is for the birds."

Worn words and tattered feathers. Only names remain. Letters. Can they be saved and how? Forward in a backward direction, a world of torn words turns to grasp dimmers knew view
errit, hist

well, deafing - smoothing hegel means of a formal
cavett bladened writers braids monitering career beads all torn
plank kerouac paisle achilles (a sill
of crays)...

fracting to books

Hess said of Newman, "The openness of Newman's work is concomitant with chance and one person's knowledge." Inman's too. ☺

SUSAN HOWE

OBJECT STATUS

for Tom Raworth

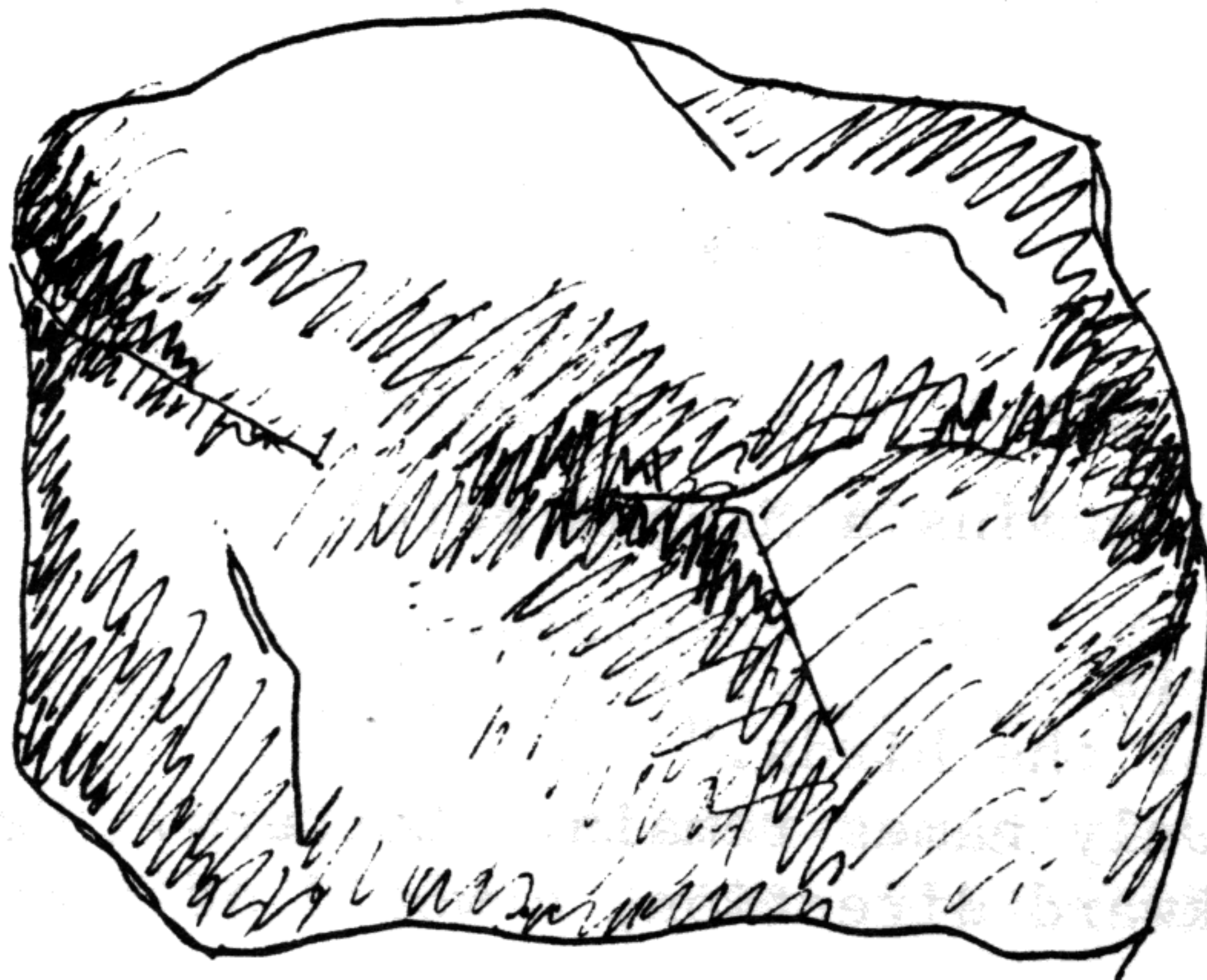
14 Cosin Court, Cambridge
March 29/ '79

Dear Barry, Would you, if you have the time: for a booklet I'm doing:
send me the name of, or a brief description of, or a photograph* or draw-
ing* of, the first

OBJECT

to enter your mind now!? Love, Tom.

*black, white, postcard size.



Blue
Rock

The first OBJECT to come to mind was the KEY RING next to your CARD. Immediate steps taken to erase this were impossible while all around a buzzing not connected to OBJECT continued as before. Waiting for "appropriate" response while hovering over CARD, there came BLUE ROCK. BLUE from a BLUE flyer in hand under the CARD and ROCK from Clark Coolidge's "A ROCK is the inside of space" for example read in his book OWN FACE this afternoon. A THUMBTACK posted the BLUE flyer, I remember it as a plastic push-pin. The BLUE flyer showed an exploded OBJECT being either constructed or taken apart.



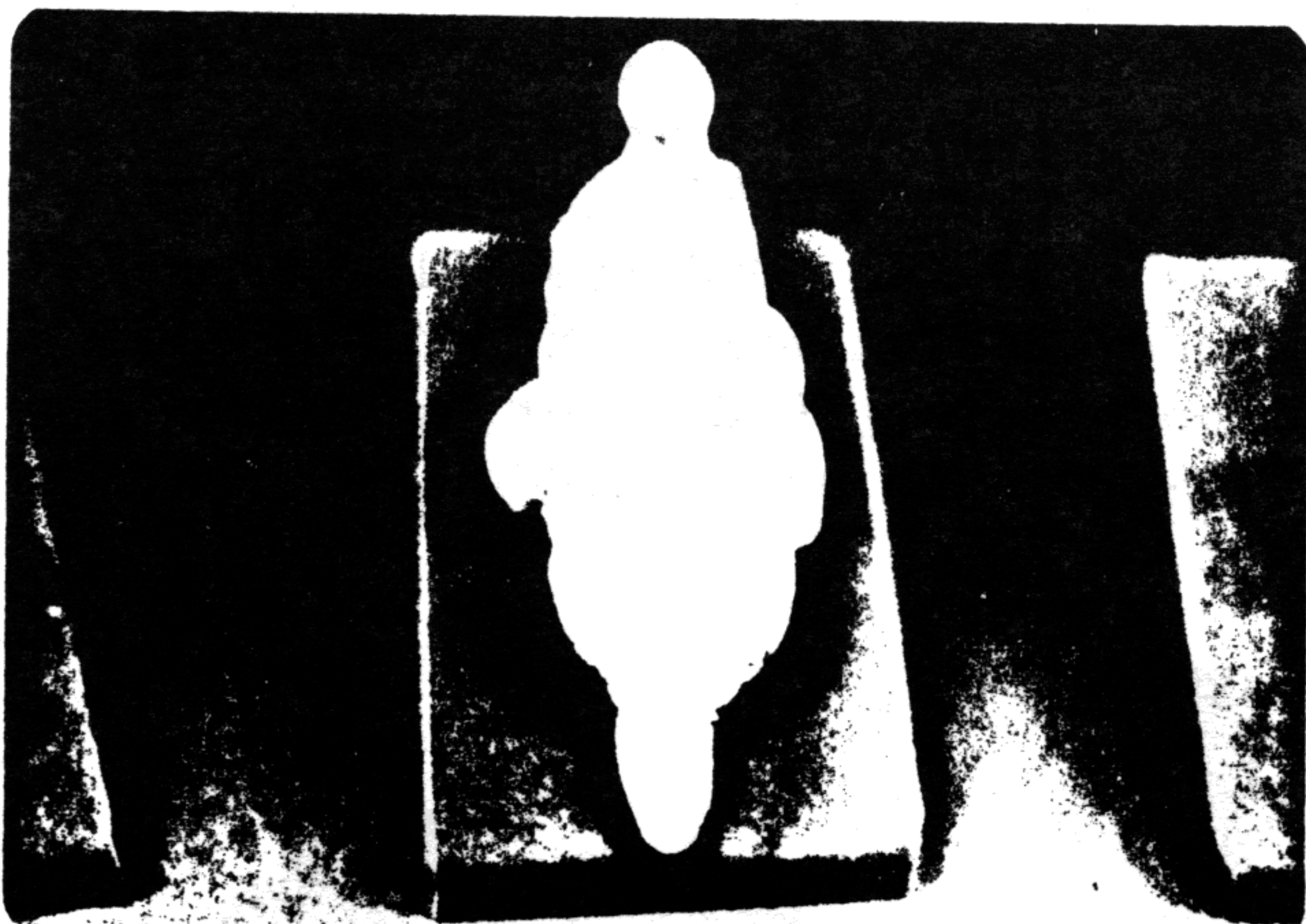
Jordi Pablo: "Esculptures Fonétiques." In an exhibit of recent Catalan art, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 1978.



Skull. Prehistoric Museum, Les Eyzies.

Also in the mail was a BLUE and green CARD depicting a bridge over a BLUE reservoir in Utah. The CARD read in part "Mayan monuments to confuse the living room and sit on" and "not too dense, as though under steam." Imagine a drawing of the BLUE ROCK copied in black and white with a caption "BLUE ROCK" as the "appropriate" response. This is supplanted by the idea of sending photos taken of these OBJECTS in Europe: Catalanian OBJECTS DARD next to a cave person's SKULL and carved ROCK. The photos to be xeroxed, the OBJECTS to be transmitted at a third remove.

The KEY RING is 3/4" in diameter, cost 50¢ and holds six keys. My habit is to take the KEY RING out of my pocket when I come home and throw it on the floor. Even so it is easy to forget where it is when I want to leave. In order to remember then I must forget myself and be reinvented



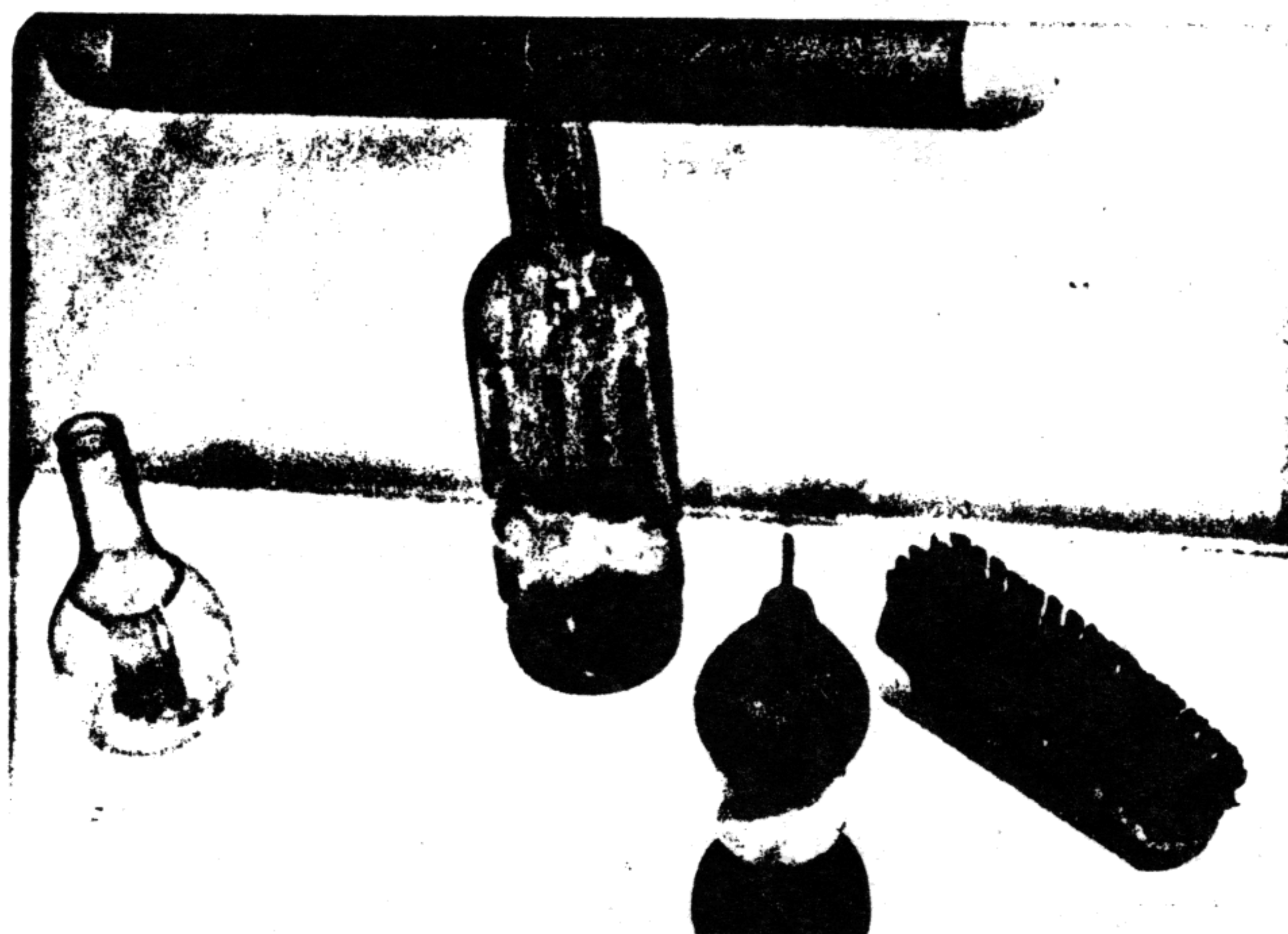
*Rock Venus. Prehistoric Museum,
Les Eyzies.*

to find it. The KEY RING discovered is not a cure for automatism, nor an end in itself. Its difficulty is to take oneself into question. We need verification, to see all time in this corner of the room. Shifts wrench to see through to that point. Shifts of mind expose OBJECTS behind—what? A wicker haze diffracting light to show what's in the basket. Mass spectograph. The worker builds the OBJECT in his head, then starts to construct. wrench to see through to that point. Shifts of mind expose OBJECTS behind—what? A wicker

haze diffracting light to show what's in the basket. Mass spectrograph. The worker builds the OBJECT in his head, then starts to construct.

At seeing the instructions "the first OBJECT ... NOW" the eyes shift instantly before the brain sounds out "NOW." The eyes' focus shifts to KEY RING. NOW I must admit OBJECTS though I tried to avoid them, and therefore the KEY RING is the OBJECT I want. Meanwhile I backtrack to clear mind of doubts, to have clear space to do "as requested." A white noise followed by BLUE ROCK. The OBJECT then is a shock, the mind rushes to close around it. The mind shields us from OBJECTS but in so doing shifts. Later we open up the "problem" of OBJECTS, in advance. Thus we know to construct.

A ROCK thrown into BLUE water. The THUMB TACK pushed into the CARD. His desire for OBJECT STATUS.



Jordi Pablo: "Peu Artificiel," "Reflex," Le Lettre T," and "Fruita Triple." Centre Pompidou, 1978.

BARRETT WATTEN

PAINTING THE PAINTING

Six years ago when looking for a way of deciding *what* to paint, I discovered that I no longer had the problem of deciding on the composition beforehand, because within the limited space of the canvas there can be no random distribution of (brushstrokes). Working with different colored strokes about an inch and a half long I could create order automatically by application, sinking the strokes into a wet white ground. They slanted to the upper right hand corner and appeared to be moving up like suspended rain. I was fascinated with the material itself; each brushstroke was a real entity; the relationship of one to the other was an event. The first painting was called "Defying Gravity". The painting was its own composition; working on it involved adjusting individual strokes after getting the whole painting down at once. In this way composition was also content. And I found I didn't have to divide my attention. Except for the adjusting, I learned to minimize intellectual or critical decisions while painting.

Playing out the permutations of the idea, widening and narrowing the distance between the strokes, making white patches with the ground, grouping strokes in various ways until the paintings became fields of very light pastel impasto strokes with only an edge between them, the ground more or less became the surface. I cut into this surface with a single color, painting between the strokes to find their edges, inverting the process which I had begun by painting the strokes. I tried across several panels to make a narrative and became fascinated with the line between the panels in the same way I grew fond of the edges the strokes created.

I made a line through a painting that looked like a panel line. I thought of each section as a different painting in that the strokes stopped at the line the way they would at the edge of a painting, but I still adjusted the painting as a whole. Eventually I crossed the line with a stroke. The bottom 2/3 of the painting became solid strokes, the top another color with strokes of the bottom color sailing through it. I called these paintings "Crossovers". At the point where the stroke crossed the line there was a three dimensional possibility. To avoid maximizing this possibility I closed the top third of the crossover so I had a solid red painting composed of strokes with a line through it.

When I first began to use the line, it was an assertion into the painting, an interruption of a continuous field and also an assertion in the sense that it was usually not well integrated with the impasto brushstrokes I was using, the line being an illusion of an entirely different nature. For a while I focused so closely on the line that I split the canvas and made it an actual space between surfaces which evolved into constructions of several panels separated by an inch.

I returned to a single surface and after some time, found a way of melding the strokes and using the paint in a way that made sense in conjunction with the use of line or lines. At this point painting opened up for me again. I was less interested in the painting as an object and more interested in painting the painting. Previously I had used the paint in a sculptural way and was interested in the shadows cast by texture in different lights and the possibility of the painting being a light receptor. I wanted to paint in a lot of information that the impasto had supplied. I no longer wanted the painting to account for the possible light changes outside of itself in the way it was made. I preferred to paint it one way and hoped it would be seen that way in spite of variations in the light.

The new paintings are still about their own composition like the first brushstroke paintings. The lines are vertical, because they are about perception and horizontal lines always seem to imply a landscape. In these paintings the lines are integrated, because they come from the lower layer of paint and become the edges of panels they divide. They are first painted terra rosa and then thalo green into the red while it is wet, so the ground shows through as lines and the masses and lines create each other. If there is something wrong with the surface, I paint the entire thing again. Sometimes there is more tension, sometimes less, which determines the character of the painting. Sometimes there is a sense of pressure as if the red were light that is contained within the painting, but not released. The shape of the canvas, square or rectangle, affects the tension between the parts of the work....

LEE SHERRY

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

ART suffering is at the same time an *expression* of real suffering and a *protest* against real suffering. **ART** is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people.

The abolition of **ART** as the *illusory* happiness of men, is a demand for their *real* happiness. The call to abandon their illusions about their condition is a *call to abandon a condition which requires illusions*. The criticism of **ART** is, therefore, *the embryonic criticism of this vale of tears* of which **ART** is the *halo*.

FRED LONDIER

COOLIDGE

CLARK COOLIDGE, WEATHERS

What he takes from Olson is not the Hey-you-guys-set-out-to-sea-in-the-leaky-yawl-I-have-provided but the I-want-to-get-Gravelly-Hill-into-a-poem/diorite-stoney/the-secret-I-can't-speak-is-dark-in-here Olson. The geology of Weathers (the poem thus far) is there to be read as metaphor of language in its dense histories, its screed presence, but not really. It's there because CC is fascinated by rocks. This is Black Mtn projection, the individual writ big, Specter-of-the-Brocken writing, Kerouac he much admires : CC wants to write *his* life. Any attempt to go by earlier models for how to do that would never *be* "my" life, which, as all might know, since it's fact, is composition of thwarted desire with misdirected intention come right. So he puts pebbles in his mouth, thus to shape his utterance to figures having that in common with his life : not personal poesy à la I-take-the-hose-into-my-mouth-&-switch-on-the-ignition, this speaks through a medium & knows it. The medium has to be huge, as the person it gathers to contain, conceal, present, prevent, explain.

The same afternoon CC "answers" "questions" re his writing at 80 Langton St, SF, the publishers of Jack's Book are at least 20 blocks off at the Old Spaghetti Factory throwing a wake for the anniversary of that resource's death, there on the North Beach which nostalgia wants to say anyone who was anyone was present at the "flowering" of : witness (same day) Sunday Supplement idiocies re poets disparate as Kyger, Weiss, Kandel ("I went to Big Sur with Jack & Lew"), Ferlinghetti (Mrs.), Kaufman (Mrs.), McClure (Mrs.). "It was the greatest love scene between a poet & a lady since Robert Browning & Elizabeth Barrett" — Eileen Kaufman. How that yearning to cry, "I lived!" banalizes all thus touched, denied sufficient form, is surely known to CC, who presents the book instead : which is why we are here & not there. But Beckett & Kafka (CC alludes to as heroes), minatory of, however protracted-grace-of-an-art, ultimate frustration, need this sentence to be here.

It proves extremely difficult to secure an actual answer to a real question, e.g., How did you know to let the misdirected intention ("canyon") come right ("crayon") : for Coolidge writes his fascination, which is at some remove from the questioner's procedure, which can be characterized as if-I-were-to-write-the-poem-tradition-dictates-here-it-would-go-exactly-like-this-interruption-instead. Or say I concern myself with how this sounds/means to others; CC, writing, is lost/found in his child's play, rearranging his magic objects until a pattern (on the instant become *the* pattern) creates (note : creating subject vanishes, alleviated as by magic) a sufficiency : "Stonehenge" is *not* the analogy, that was

communal, not private, magic; Clark is crayoning rocks in his coloring book & will not be diverted by "Dinner's ready!"

Therefore it is the persistence of the child, fascination's ability to resist interruption, we read in Weathers, rocklike, apart, & the incommunicable portion any severed individual needs to be aware he/she includes; the contents it offers as its evidence could be, theoretically, anything — although in practice can't be but what CC happens, projective, upon. This will be missed when the academies take up this man's work. The patterns *in* the work will become ground of *that* debate. But the various gestures he brings to the writing from previous models & that suggest thematic recurrence, narrative continuity, etc., are only here to say "Hi."

Wordsworth's "Anecdote for Fathers" can show us the futility of such questions Weathers might raise :

A boy five years old. His father : "had you rather be on Kilve's smooth shore, or here at Liswyn farm?"
"At Kilve." "My little Edward, tell me why."
"I can't tell, I don't know." The father persists.
Edward raises his head — and glittering bright, there, he sees a broad & gilded vane. "At Kilve there was no weathercock; & that's the reason why."

I think Romantic art apotheosizes once again in Weathers with, as ever, that sense of having-come-to-some-terminus-beyond-which-impossible-to-push these instances invariably suggest : BUT it will permit so many misreadings, so many creative mistakings, that it strikes me as useful to say that this is highly traditional art of the West & not in any radical sense deconstructive, demystifying or prophetic; & as graceful/grateful to remark that, incurring the complexities of its genius, it alters our world beyond its intentions, which I think may be great.

DAVID BROMIGE

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1784 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94707; \$3). Polaroid (1976; Adventures in Poetry/Big Sky, c/o SBD; \$3). Quartz Hearts (1978; This Press, c/o SBD; \$2). Own Face (1978; Angel Hair Books, Flanders Road, Henniker, NH 03242; \$3). 8 Poems (1979; Un Poco Loco). Smithsonian Depositions/Subject to a Film (forthcoming, Vehicle Editions, 238 Mott, New York, NY 10012). American Ones (forthcoming, Tombouctou, Box 265, Bolinas, CA 94924). Note — sections of a long ongoing prosework have appeared in several magazines, notably issues of United Artists (Flanders Road, Henniker, NH 03242; \$8 for 5 issues). Tape: Polaroid (1976; S Press, c/o Kohler, Zieblandstrasse 10, D-8, Munich, West Germany). Symposium, edited by Ron Silliman (1976; Membrane Press, PO Box 11601 — Shorewood, Milwaukee, WI 53211; \$2). Editor: Joglars, with Michael Palmer (1964-65; reprint edition, 1974, Arno Reprints, 3 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017).

SOME NOTES & QUOTES

out of some of the poetry life near the end of the 20th

"Perhaps the most refreshing feature of Oswald's songs is their vigor and vitality. As a general rule of thumb, most modern lyric poets have been effete. The sensitivity required for producing lyric verse is most often found in social and physical misfits, in the physically weak, the mentally unbalanced, the emotionally disturbed, and the sexually uncertain — in troubled souls whose poems serve as an escape from a world with which they cannot cope. Of course, there are enough wholesome exceptions to prove the rule, but they are greatly outnumbered by less virile natures."

"Und so was lebt?", as German-speakers say: "And *that's alive* (now)?" The quote is from p. 142 of the "Twayne World Authors Series" volume on Oswald von Wolkenstein, published in 1973.

In his essay collection The Jewel-Hinged Jaw (Berkley Windhover, 1978), Samuel R. Delany, author of the monumental and monumentally neglected macro-fiction Dhalgren (1975), states that

"...it is not unreasonable to suppose that where there were six major and fourteen minor poets in England in 1818, today, there are fifty times six major poets (about three hundred) and fifty times fourteen (about seven hundred) of merit and interest in America.... Now the academic establishment, for years, has invested amazing energy, time,

money, and (above all) mystification in perpetuating the view that, somehow, Eliot, Auden, and Pound form some mysterious qualitative analog with Byron, Keats, Shelley, while (and I quote the list from the opening pages of Howard's Alone with America :) 'Berryman, Bishop, Jarrell, Lowell, Roethke, and Wilbur' start to fill along with Frost, Stevens, and Hart Crane, the places left vacant by the minor romantics of 1818..."

Delany goes on to observe that "most people would rather not respond to a poem at all without the reassurance of critical approbation/mystification" and points out that in the realm of published poetry there isn't, at present, enough such "fame" to go around :

"I think people have known this in a vaguely inarticulate way for years : it has resulted in an immense effort to propagate the lie that while the population rises geometrically, the amount of poetic excellence remains an arithmetic constant."

Lucidly on target, Delany arrives at the conclusion that the days when the poetry critic's job was to establish the definitive "canon of excellence" are over and won't return, since "There are hundreds on hundreds on hundreds of American poets. Hundreds among them are good. One critic cannot even be *acquainted* with their complete work, much less have studied it thoroughly."

- a) Point, now, not "to get the poetry back to the people"
but to get some of the language
(possibilities) they've been robbed of
back to the people
& to indicate some of those
possibilities
they have been actively & consciously prevented
from acquiring.
- b) The Doctors, the Witch-Doctors, the Lawyers, the Corporate Lords :
LANGUAGE is what they RULE with.
- c) Gigantic hypocrisy of the culture-culture, bought, wholesale, by
most members of post-60s "counter-culture" : its catchwords, "sim-
plicity", "sincerity" — to equal simple-mindedness, stupor.
- d) There's an awful lot you can NOT *feel*, *think*, even *perceive*
without the *words*:
the vocabulary,
the syntax, etc.
- e) We don't need a dictionary, but an *active*
occasion of *use*,
with & among OTHERS.

- f) In that sense, an awful lot of "country" / "regional" writing's merely a hopeless talking-down to people who *know* they are being talked-down to (and possibly grow habituated to some kind of perverse enjoyment of this). Example: popular "homeland" literature of Nazi Germany.
- g) The need to insist on *effort* (Zukofsky: "at least ten times") in the *reading of writing* — all other arts do, including the culinary: "CHEW your FOOD!" — should the appreciation/assimilation of "literature" be mere "comprehension" of socio-historical "plots"?
- h) Raise the banner of LINGO PLEASURES (good bumpersticker) against an environment in which some of us get away with:

"This has been *God's minute*,
 Sponsored by...." !

Whatever her medium, the artist does not, ultimately, aim to please or to persuade but to make us pay attention — not to herself as physical (or metaphysical!) fact, but to a specific range of human attention and its possibilities.

Two recent instances of American language in The Wall Street Journal :

"ENCHANTA is 67' long... The large aftercabin, finished in solid American walnut, has a bronze fireplace, double bed and built-in bookshelves, stereo and bureau. One of the decklights is located over the double berth allowing the guests to admire the stars while lying in bed. There is an extensive library, including the latest best-sellers as well as many old masterpieces and an easy chair in which to enjoy them... ENCHANTA is available for cruising..."

"Comic books, manga, are the publishing phenomenon of the decade here in a nation with a literacy rate of almost 100% among its 113 million population... sales of manga totaled some \$743 million in 1977... Sumiko Iwao, a lecturer at Tokyo and Keio Universities, says... 'I have noticed that many of my students, who are supposed to be bright, can't express themselves logically', she says. 'Their lack of vocabulary is striking to me. But they are very good in describing things in very short adjectives — and they invent short, onomatopoeic sounds.' ... Adds Takeshi Kamewada, the young editor of a monthly manga: 'I am now urging my writers to emphasize the individuality of taste in their work. For example, if the writer likes to write about incest, he should pursue that

rather than the traditional rape story."

A few more, from less immediately accessible sources :

"GRMR

tchs th prp arngm o wrds acrdng toidim or dialc o any ptclr pepl;
an tht xclnc o prnnciatn wh enabs us to spk o wrt a lngge wth
acrc agrbl t resn an crct usge."

"Dawn flops from the rip in a black dress worn one size too small
by a woman who favors pink slips. There's a little dew on her
peachy cheek and waking I smell clean beach and warm sperm spill-
ed on a photograph of the house I dream about. House has crisp
sheets and when the woman bends to pick up milk the rip widens
enabling a small, milk soaked bird to squeeze out. Bird sparks
off down the trolley tracks with the sound of small arms' fire,
but I'm ruled by that enormous snap as recollection tortures my
imagination."

"... Namibian difficulties. The recent unpleasantness between
Japan and the U.S. List lover. Trailer park. Underpass. Tues-
day a.m. What, alarm, ceiling, clock, dull light, urine, tooth-
paste, blue shirt, jeans, water for coffee, bacon, eggs, soy
toast, phoney earth shoes, bus, another bus, typewriter, tele-
phone, co-workers, salad, iced tea, more co-workers, bus, ambu-
lance on freeway, another bus, a beer, chicken, rice and squash,
today's mail, feces, tv, glass of chablis, darkness. Rare delta
fog. Plywood, fiberboard. Couch, divan, chesterfield, sofa.
String of silver elephants on a chain about her neck."

The first — primitive if you read it as presumably intended, but
instantly more interesting if *voiced as written* — comes from a little
black-covered book picked up for a dime in a remainder store (don't want
to hurt anybody's feelings); the second, from The First One's Free (Left
Coast Press), a selection of post-humously published work by Jeffrey
Miller (1948—1977) — a spirited, energetically funny, and at the same
time, haunting book; the third from Ron Silliman's Sitting Up, Standing,
Taking Steps (Tuumba Press), a recent short fiction by one of the West
Coast's most inventive and prolific younger writers.

Notes :

Jeffrey Miller, from The First One's Free, Left Coast Press, 797
Bush Street #503, San Francisco, CA 94108, 1978.

Ron Silliman, from Sitting Up, Standing, Taking Steps, \$2, Tuumba
Press, 2639 Russell Street, Berkeley, CA 94705, 1978.

ANSELM HOLLO

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

OBJECT : IONS : DEAR BRUCE

Inasmuch as your note in L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E 9/10 is possibly a developing viewpoint in a continuing effort to define an as yet poorly understood phenomenon (i.e., the place of a 'non-syntactic' literature in the historical process), I have no desire to throw obstacles in your path. Neither am I disputacious on principle, but feel undeservedly neglected in your *personal* mythology. In L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, you have tried systematically to condition and direct a discussion of writing in your own interest. Now, in the 10th issue, you seem to have arrived at a threshold where statement will embody dogma, and, to use your professed notion, mere conventional signification will just 'wither away.'

You have confused a whole barge of important insights and deserve to be hoisted on your own petard. I can offer no more than a few casual quibbles. Specifically, I take issue with the following :

1 "Mainstream criticism still fails to raise or demand an answer to key questions about *the nature of the medium*—" Not true, as you must know. The last 75 years has seen more keenly directed study of "*the nature of the medium*" than ever before in 'history.' We seem on the verge of a cross-fertilization of whole systems of thought—psychology, linguistics, art, politics, history, sciences, etc.—so rather than the closure which you seem to foresee, we are in fact only in danger of becoming too insulated in specializations, in languages (or systems/syntaxes) so particular, eccentric and/or solipsistic that we become savage hybrids.

2 Writing "of reference" "mistaken for tools" "secure" in "identity" "becomes" "ornamental reinforcement of the status quo."

I have heard you say this so many times in print that it is like hearing an old movie theme. No writing is "secure" in its "identity," nor merely "ornamental" except in a most specious way. I refer you to the world at large for verification. It seems that the word *adamant* might have sincerely unintended connotations when applied on succeeding days to the Ayatollah and Jimmy Carter. Language is, all of it, "illusionism" and to speak of any writing as "secure" is naive. Politically, all language is susceptible to myriad distortion, realignment and signification. That is exactly why it is *never* 'secure.' If you think *black* and *white* as signifiers have not changed in the last 20 years, or in the last 5, you must not believe in gray. Language is in a continuous state of *flux*: though politically one may, in moments of frustration, conceive of it as structurally a paradigm of the *constitution* of the world, this is in turn an illusion. Words are *not* "material," except in the very narrow sense of material (or stuff) for composition. Words are *not*

material in the Marxist sense. Or in the Capitalist sense. Books are material(ist), forms (literary) are material(ist), politics and audiences are, but not words.

3 "Surplus value" as a description of verbal meaning is nonsense. Leisure allows the objectifying mind to exploit a medium. Words cannot go hungry, but they can pass from host to host like viral strains, spontaneously mutating to suit the occasion. Marx wrote in 19th century *German*.

Attacking "the structure of the sign" is like charging windmills. Language does *not* speak for itself. Precisely because referents are arbitrary do they fail to stand up to *interpretation* and risk "meaninglessness." You can be sure that language will suffer the marks of all the struggles you wish to wage with/inside it.

4 Language "*IS [not]* the desire for meaning" — it is not the desire "for" anything. "Value" is a word— language, untracked, does not have "value." No writing is "passive," nor is "making contexts out of a fabric of markings" a new definition of any discrete distinguishable method of composition heretofore conceived. Do you really believe that freeform composition is a *way* to "unveil/demystify the creation & sharing of meaning"?

If you *can* create meaning (remember that all signification is ultimately arbitrary) through context, juxtaposition, repetition, sound, etc., exclusive of grammar/syntax, then this will in no way impinge upon the "mechanics of social control" which are experienced only incidentally through language as arbitrary illusion because they (words) are conveniences.

The word is not the law, as Ludwig might say, but what we agree to do after we speak (of) it.

Again, writing doesn't "need" anything. People need. I fail to understand the *meaning* of "a pulverized normality" which strikes me as painful collapse of definitive intent. You have not moved one inch towards a statement of that "condition" wherein "form-making can be felt."

Your equating syntax with a probably unspecified "status quo" in the political-historical sense seems uncomfortably like Lacan's Oedipal interpretation: "By internalizing the Law, the child identified with the father and takes him as model. The Law now becomes a liberating force: for, once separated from the mother, the child can dispose of himself. He becomes conscious that he is still in the making and turning towards the future, integrates himself into the social, into Culture, and re-enters into language. The father ... gives him a personality by means of a Speech which is Law" "The subject remains riveted to the imaginary, which is taken for real, to non-distinction between signifier and

signified: either the signifier is privileged and is taken in the literal sense, outside of any operation referring it to its symbolic dimension, or the signified prevails. The cause of this incapacity to distinguish between signifier and signified is the absence of an original substitute for self, itself due to an unfavourable outcome of the Oedipus." ...

(*Jacques Lacan*, by Anika Lemaire, 1970, English version 1977, Routledge & Kegan Paul.)

5 Hermetically sealed meta-languages? "But in reality there is no such thing as an uncoded message ... It may be difficult to discover the method by which the decoding should be done; but once that method has been discovered, the message becomes transparent as water. When a code is familiar enough, it ceases appearing like a code; one forgets that there is a decoding mechanism. The message is *identified* with its meaning."

(*Godel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*, Douglas Hofstadter, 1979, Basic Books.) You had best anticipate the decay of your intentions.

The greatest 'writers' were those who, growing like a weed in the rich humus of restive cultures, sang unconsciously (Carlyle) the desire, fulfillment and disappointment of their times. We understand it on these terms only because we subsume it within a determinism, which is itself impossible to verify in its minutiae. You have erred in forcing a political solution upon a process (writing) to which it is only tangentially related. You would be unlikely to abdicate your 'creative' to an historical imperative, especially since it must needs be (by definition) *unconscious*. Pursue your demons with actual fervor, but, by all means, *identify* them first.

CURTIS FAVILLE

THE FAVORITE MALICE

("The Favorite Malice", a symposium on "ontology and reference in contemporary Italian poetry" brought a group of poets and philosophers from Italy to New York University in March, 1979, to read their work and discuss poetics. The conference title comes from Nietzsche--"It is my favorite malice and art that my silence has learned not to betray itself through reticence." A related publication, *The Waters of Casa-*
blance (Chelsea #37, \$3 from B. DeBoer, 188 High Street, Nutley, NJ 07110), edited by Luigi Ballerini and Richard Milazzo, makes available Italian poetry and essays with similar concerns. Out of London Press, 12 West 17th Street, New York, NY 10011, will publish the proceedings of "The Favorite Malice" in 1981. Below, excerpts from some of the work presented at the symposium.)

There was need for a "simple" kind of language which might find its energy through a continuous shifting of the levels of discourse. Rhythm, rather than music, lacerations, rather than recompositions. It is not by chance that "common sense" is another ever-recurring invocation also seen in every attempt at social reaction. Poetry will have to make use of language in an unintimidated way to perform endless operations of the "shifting" of common sense. Language is the bridge which unites us to what we call "real" and there is no experience of the "real" which is not filtered by language, conditioned and conditioning. The task and goal of poetic language is above all else to place itself in crisis. The small singable necessary phrase is always that of miniature day to day apocalypse: 'I will make everything now'. (Antonio Porta, translated by D. Scanlon.)

What prevents honest tranquility in the craft of poetry is the lack of a technique of continuity and passage. It seems to me that poetry is exiled from the two movements that seem plausible to consider capable of establishing the continuation, each in its own way. Derivative language is suspended; also, linear logic, wheel of itself or wheelcatch world, machine, now sly now metallic in its clangor, but always available, as if to say: let's reason. Its interruption however does not signify the simple blossoming of the notorious "other", of the incessant language that never ceases providing movement and sense to things, the natal language, I should say, the shameless swarming beloved, without pause. At the beginning of the text, there is an interruption. The situation is strange: children infinitely unborn, and at the same time fallen from discourse, without language because the only place is language. Because text aims at two things: speaking and simultaneously fleeing from discourse. Its occasions are undoubtedly in the world, but it must invent another occasion that is its own. A text is truly alone. (Angelo Lumelli, translated by R.S. Salmone.)

*the rescinds the nerve solidarious
the black locust
the as soon as of almost,
then dilates the immune
marrow of the when
the lattice of it happens*

*thus it will have been elegant
egg and milk*

(Ballerini, translated by Milazzo)

Three great typologies of the mental process preside over the actualization of the poetic -- a stylistic thinking, a semiological thinking,

and a post semiological, or grammatological, or even better a verbal thinking. Concerning *stylistic thinking*, we can say that it constitutes the foundation of that poetry which bases its modus operandi on the -- explicit or implicit -- concept of "erring-from," of "deviation" from the norm. In this case the presupposition of a norm, of a code (be it of an ideological or formal nature), according to which one can use the deviations and transgressions (or even effectuate breakdowns and ruptures), cannot be separated from the realization of the poetic act. Stylistic thinking embraces almost all avant-garde phenomena with a collective nature (futurism, surrealism, etc.), and also many eversive phenomena which have an individual nature, for example, in the case of Pound. Regarding *semiological thinking* we can say that it is typical of that poetry which bases its actualization on the presupposition and reciprocal correspondence of the signifier and signified, that is, on the idea of "communication" (or of a communicativity) which is the idea inherent in the very notion of "sign". Semiological thinking embraces, therefore, the actualization of that poetry which has a strong commitment to communication -- commitment that is also to be understood as a (conceptual or moral) exceptionality of the "message" to be transmitted. The best example in this regard is given to us from Eliot or in Italy from Luzzi, even if in the second case the communicability is based on the impossibility of "truth" (of "certainty") immanent in the message because of the uncertainty of the affirmation of the "I" that is the recipient of experience. Such an "I" is, in fact, usually suspended between sleep and wakefulness, and is therefore incapable of registering mental and emotional activity. Examples of poetical works which can be ascribed to a semiological thinking -- though presumably at a qualitatively lower level -- are all the works with a real ideological (or "popular") message, as exemplified in Italy by the so-called "neo-realistic" movement. Regarding, finally, the *post-semiological* or *grammatological* or *verbal thinking*, we can say that it qualifies that segment of contemporary poetry which operates by giving priority to the awareness of the verbal "material" in opposition to both significance and concept. We here refer to *that poetry for which language configures itself in its opacity, density, and, therefore, in its impossibility to move over to meaning or to the conceptual object*; poetry for which the word or better still the signifier represents the non-codified and the non-codifiable in the language; that which language "expels" as non-symbolized residue, but that in where there circulates and swarms what Lacan calls the "real" (in opposition to "reality", which is instead to be understood as that part of experience elaborated as the symbolic or linguistic-ideological level. In this case poetry is a primary act because it is found where the language is developed, not so much as a system of communication -- vehicle of mental objects or states of consciousness -- but as a "breakdown of totality") (Derrida). *The "verbal thought" on which this poetry is based and which it elabo-*

rates, results in being the thinking itself of the poem (in as much as it is non-conceptual thought); it is the thinking of poetry in as much as it is the thought of that Impossible (as Georges Bataille would say) that Lacan again, with explicit reference to this author, defines precisely as the "real." (Stefano Agosti, translated by R. Zweig.)

That which seems to oppose does not oppose itself and
at the same time contradiction consists, is the signal
writing writing itself wants to erase itself, the word wants
to deny itself saying (negative
tracings of the forbidden) (the higher cortex:
the brain violent against itself: jet engine
mounted on an old buggy)
the body proves it, our history written in the body
with all the fingers cut off fallen
in the womb to the mother
the shit that mixed with the sperm

(Porta, translated by Scanlon)

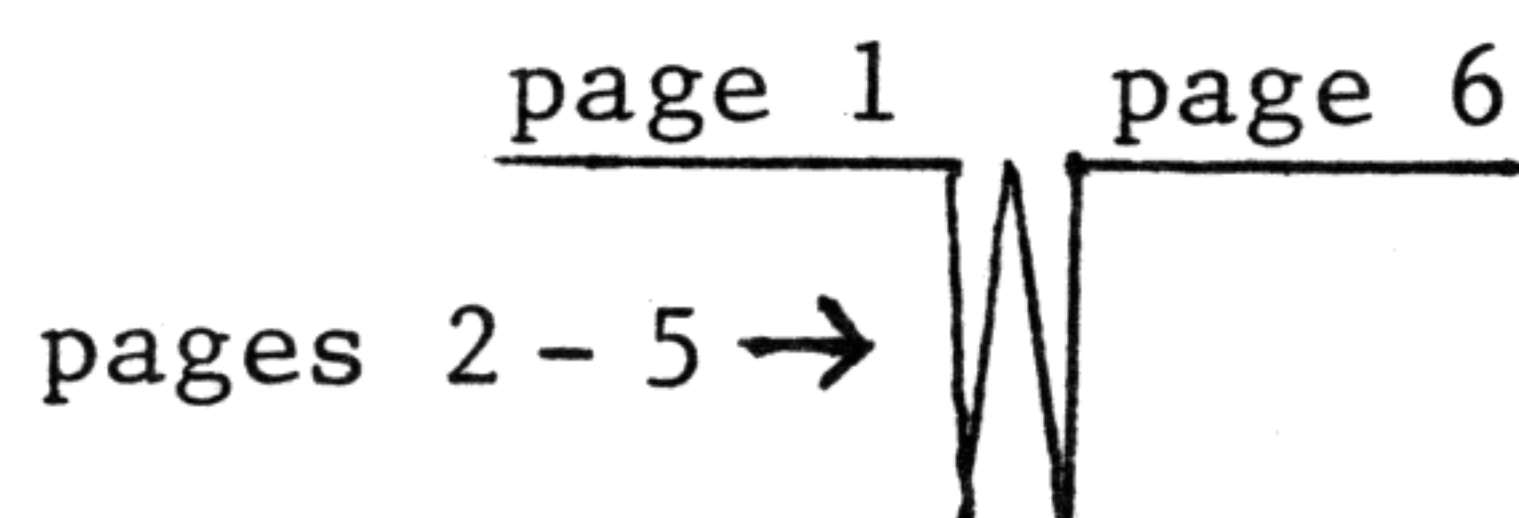
What we are speaking of is a "mental thing", a "cosa mentale", as Leonardo da Vinci said, for like things it has the resistance and opacity of that which gives itself to the perceptible contact of the intentional projection which comes up against it, while unable to dissolve or assimilate it into the simple content of a thought, notion or idea. In this way, this resistant and opaque thing forms a "world". Our use of the term "to see" could lead to confusion if one insists on reducing it to the visual function. "To see" is used here in the sense of "to understand". The entire *referential* situation is lacking in the linguistic theses which treat the "referent" as a "real thing of the objective world", the "re-presentation" of which would be the function of language. As something seen, the poem is, in itself, its own world, which is to say, that in referring to itself, it is, at once, a "referring" in the sense specified above and a "referred to", in other words, visibility in the process of self-constitution. The peculiarity of the poetic situation which is lacking in the linguistic notion of *reference* resides, then, in the poem's not being able to be grasped as a revealing -- revealed world (a referring -- referred to) except insofar as it is not a thing, a cultural product, nor a simple representative abstract system, but rather, a "worldifying" "process" "voyance" and visibility, in other words, at the same time. The entire realistic conception of the linguistic "referent" breaks down, therefore, as soon as the attempt is made to rigorously think through the situation. And so it is that poetic text does not "tell" of something outside itself, something pertaining to the order of things and facts. Rather it allows being to be. By the power of the word, something which never before was, emerges. Through the temporal and sonorous unfolding of the text and by the act

of reading, the world speaks, perpetuates, invents, transforms, and, in short, "worldifies" itself. (*Jacques Garelli, translated by L. Oppenheim.*)

from NOTES TOWARD A STUDY OF THE DESIGN AND MANUFACTURE OF BOOKS

In precolumbian central Mexico several bookforms existed at the same time; the screenfold was apparently the most common, and the only kind that we have samples of today, though we know that at least four other bookforms were in use. We can assume that the producers of the books that have survived used that specific bookform because it had advantages lacking in other forms. There is no evidence that the spinebound format, the only form we use to a significant extent today, was ever used in preconquest Mexico.

To make a screenfold, the book producer took long, thin strips of animal skin or bark paper and glued them together until he had a strip long enough to make his book. These were often very long -- Codex Vaticanus 3773, for instance, is 735 cm long when completely unfolded. He then scored and folded the skin or bark at regular intervals so that it could be folded up, accordion fashion, into a relatively small, portable bundle. Pages were approximately square. This form has several advantages over the spinebound format. The book can be completely unfolded so that half the book (one side) can be seen at once. There need be no break in continuity between pages throughout either side; with a spinebound book you can not simultaneously look at pages 1 and 2 because page 2 is on the back of page 1. Perhaps most important, pages can be juxtaposed so that many different combinations of pages can be seen together. For instance, if you want to look at pages 1 and 6 at the same time, you can fold pages 2,3,4, and 5 together and leave 1 and 6 next to each other:



You can even fold this type of book in such a way that parts of the reverse can be seen at the same time as parts of the obverse.

The texts painted in these books were almost pure ideograms -- in fact, one Nahuatl word for them translates as 'thought pictures.' I won't discuss the images themselves here, since I'm simply writing on the basic book format; but it's important to note that this kind of pictorial, rather than linguistic, writing is the kind that can benefit from screenfold format in ways that phonetic writing can not. Bear in

mind also that these books were not used so much to give the reader new information as to deepen what he already knew.

Private Reading: We can be sure that the precolumbian central Mexicans practised some sort of yoga. Perhaps one of the most important functions of these books was to aid in such a meditative discipline. We can imagine a neophyte memorizing the images of the deities in the screenfolds to use in internal visualizations, somewhat as Tibetan Buddhists do today. This practice may underlie all others, at least for those books of a religious nature.

A fair number of surviving screenfolds are organized around calendars. Priests used them to determine when to hold festivals, to determine astral influences (particularly those of the planet Venus), and to determine the names and destinies of the people at the time of their birth (central Mexicans took their birth dates as names--these names and dates embodied an enormous amount of mythic and stellar material). The reader of calendrical screenfolds could juxtapose calendars, holding before him for comparison a solar and a Venus calendar, or a solar calendar and a list of the Lords of the Night that would pertain to that solar calendar, etc.

The case is similar with the screenfolds dealing with history. The precolumbian Mexicans saw history as cyclical: using the screenfolds, the student of history could compare similar parts of different cycles of time--say the first year of cycle A with the first year of cycle B, folding up the intervening years of cycle A. He could then reread the history of the two cycles chronologically with a deeper understanding of their significance.

I've headed these reading situations 'private' because private reading is possible under them. We can't, however, be positive that readers actually remained *silent* during them. With the possible exception of the student of Mexican yoga, silent reading was probably rare if not unknown. We can imagine a priest reciting verses when opening a book to check a date, continuing his recitation while checking, and continuing after the book had been closed. The yoga student may well have chanted a mantram while memorizing an image. In any case, these are situations in which a reader could read with no one else near him; the following seem to require more than one participant.

Public Reading: Most contemporary students of language would class the precolumbian central Mexicans as preliterate--by which they would mean that these people had not developed a phonetic system that could record specific words in exact and unalterable sentences. The central Mexicans probably had an oral language art much like that described by Lord and Parry in THE SINGER OF TALES, in which the poet could sing elaborate songs spontaneously according to formulas. The screenfolds were probably used in performances of this type, probably not as mnemonics--as a number of writers have assumed--but as a source of inspiration for the singer and/or a visual counterpart for his audience. We

can imagine the singer sitting in the middle of an audience arranged in a semicircle, with the screenfold set up as another semicircle between singer and audience; or again, the singer unfolding his screen as he unfolded his story. This would be particularly useful in education and perhaps this is one of the reasons why a similar method could be used so easily for Christian indoctrination after the conquest.

We know that on certain special occasions the central Mexicans mounted screenfolds, fully extended, around the walls of rooms, so they became mural strips. They probably were not mere decorations, but texts to be meditated on during the special occasions. Such a mounting of the book would allow a number of people to read the same screenfold at the same time. It's even possible that readers recited poems, prayers, etc. as they looked at the texts. Perhaps several people recited simultaneously as they read--their group performances resembling something like a contemporary performance of, say, Jackson MacLow's GATHAS.

Though we know little of the other bookforms current in preconquest central Mexico, we can assume that they were as well adapted to the uses to which they were put as was the screenfold.

KARL YOUNG

NOTIONS & NOTATIONS

(The following is an excerpt of an article by Bob Cobbing that appeared originally in Lobby, 44A Hobson Street, Cambridge, England. Cobbing has recently edited, with Peter Mayer, an important compilation, Concerning Concrete Poetry, \$6.50 from Writers Forum, 262 Randolph Ave., London W9.)

... In her introduction to 'Stone Tones', published in 1974, Paula Claire writes: 'During 1972, while interpreting pieces like Bob Cobbing's '15 Shakespeare-kaku', 'The Judith Poem' and 'Mary Rudolf's Chromosomes', I got used not only to improvising to deliberately ambiguous letter forms, but to blobs, smudges and dashes among these letter patterns. So, by May, 1973, I found my eye drawn to patterning on stones, bark, water, woodknots, sliced cabbages, cobwebs... and recognised them as *sound* poems.'

This realization that every mark could be sounded led many of those who attended the London experimental workshops to make texts for performance which might include words or letter forms, but also markings of every kind, perhaps resembling natural forms or perhaps with more mechanical intention. The workshops were the opportunity for these texts to be regarded as 'song-signals', as scores for performance pieces, but always improvised so that one text could engender a multitude of interpretations.

Many of these occasions were recorded, and it is instructive to listen

to the same text as it developed in performance from week to week, or, in some cases, from year to year. It is difficult to convey this on the printed page, but one attempt has been made to follow a poem through various performances and to describe what happened. In an article in Lobby Press Newsletter (No. 5, December 1978) Cris Cheek analyses five performances of Lawrence Upton's poem 'Salt Carrier', which is a verbal piece, very concrete in material and permitting improvisation. I have extracted from this article the actual descriptive words relating to the five performances :

1 the piece was read very quietly, asking the audience to focus its attention carefully on one voice, and stretch its hearing almost to the inaudible.

2 on tape, the source material generated by three voices, one leading, with the other two rotating around this reading, not straying from the original words and word order; and this material then treated by electronic devices until the units, uttered originally quite distinctly, began to turn in on themselves, to wave and fold and blur.

3 a live rendition in a large hall, one speaker placed centrally to the audience, the other two at either side converging slowly onto the one, the text beginning to distort, words being shuffled frequently from one context to another, a de-centralisation of modulated interaction, stretching the lengths of word pronunciation, a stretching of surface tensions through space/time, incorporating much which had been learnt from the possibilities opened up by the electronically treated version.

4 a similar variation in a far smaller room, the central performer making extensive use of a microphone to emphasize his prominence, the background voices increasingly not used to 'set-off' the subject but taking equal focus, teasing fresh relations within the extant text, giving words a shape and expression sometimes in collision with their given context.

5 the same three performers, the written text not consulted, an agreement to work from memory — of previous performances, not of the text — each poet moves into a reading in a more exploratory sense, as if, for the first time, discovering materials that each wished to shape to his own conception, the author's original directions having been deliberately discarded; if anything the two wing speakers move slightly away from the central figure, the audience's focus of attention drawn from one body to another in continual motion, each interfering with and translating what is heard to left of right — all three were surprised by this particular performance, which was a result of an active process of learning through an insistence on risk and change. Cris Cheek, commenting on Variation 5, says of himself and Clive Fencott who took

part, with Lawrence Upton, in the performance, that 'we were involved in the making of a work for ourselves.' Each of those taking part is a creative 'poet', and not just a performer....

A text is both a completed action in itself and the signal for renderings, vocal, in musical form, in movement, with lights or electronics, in many ways, singly or in combination. A text can be appreciated for itself, or for the suggestions of sound, movement, etc which it prompts in the viewer....

BOB COBBING

NO OTHER WAY

James Schuyler, The Morning of the Poem (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

In "Dec. 28, 1974," one of the poems from this new collection and one of the most beautiful poems I've ever read, a "clunkhead" is quoted as saying: "Your poems have grown more open." I certainly don't want to say that. But I detect an expansiveness of mood, a willingness to let more, and more kinds of, things into print as if life itself, always spotlighted in a Schuyler poem, were now accompanied by a quiet stipulation: don't exclude. The results include more intimate detail about the self (even the landscapes now seem as much about the self as about the out-of-doors); seemingly less "poetic" distance between original notations and finished poem; less direct aiming at the sublime (though the poems hit that unfashionable target as much as any being written), and as a corollary, a good bit of the unlovely, the ignoble, and the downright embarrassing; and a bonus of rich anecdote and other information about the life of this superlative poet and the people and places in his consciousness.

The perceptive critic David Kalstone, in a review a few years ago, used the metaphor "perfect pitch," to try to account for the magic Schuyler gets out of "things as they are." I'm not positive it's perfect pitch, exactly, since there are some awkward and boring singers with perfect pitch, but I agree that some such metaphor is needed. Of all the poets now writing, I can't think of one less open to the usual critical advances, more needful of direct pointing. Schuyler's work is simply beautiful, his decisions are invariably inspired decisions, whether about words or about lines (he has, among many other things, showed that skinny lines can be as magical and unarbitrary as lengthy ones) or about conclusions or whatever. He is the farthest thing from a theoretical poet (though his intelligence is formidable) and his marvels are subtly marvelous. Which makes it very hard to talk about him. Invariably in trying to do justice to the beauty on the page, one is reduced to saying: Look! Look how tangible, how remarkably

clear, how moving, how masterful, how original. (Anyway, try explaining the dynamics, let alone the beauty, of a line carried across not merely the carriage-return but across and around the *syntax*, when the arrangements are subtly varied, absolutely right and yet seemingly spontaneous, set down in just the way they occurred, which we know can't be true—at least not all the time?) As contemporary a poet as he is, mixing the highest with the lowest, often casual to the point where one feels, oh well, another Schuyler poem—feels it for a while, until the poem strikes—he is contemporary, even experimental, in ways that are easy to miss; more so in that his poems imply, clearly draw upon, the riches of the poetic past. All of which has made his critical reputation far less than it should be. One hopes that finally this will change, with the help of a new publisher, the best, Farrar, Straus. Even so, it must be added that reductive, rampaging and non-ostensive critics need not apply. Maybe a metaphor from painting—or tennis?—can be tacked onto perfect pitch, to round out the picture: he makes perfect *placements* (Chardin), never tries to out-power (Connors). The magic is in the touch, the sheer handling.

Schuyler's language, his intimate relationship with words, is one of the chief areas of his subtlety. He is as interested in language as in what his language refers to and evokes, but the spotlight is so unemphatic that all that the words do on their own can be missed. If Yeats and Elizabeth Bishop are lapidary, Schuyler's musical precision has the juicy lightness and sway of stems and leaves; no less perfect but more spontaneous, more like life itself; not life talking through him (as it presumably does through certain poets) but talk—art—which is a part of life rather than something over on the other side which has given rise to speculation about imitator and imitated, ways of reconciliation, etc. So that Schuyler's poems *are* words; but in the same way that the flattest of paintings are paintings rather than simply paint, his poems are a multitude of things besides. He continually reminds one of all that poems can be and do, all that can *happen* between the start of a poem and its conclusion. Yet even the more obvious effects, such as the jokes and the sharp wit that occasionally surfaces, are never apart from the poem: they're there as parts of poems, which have to do with life, which is color, weather, growth, objects, feelings, memory, structure, gossip, intelligence, humor, language, all.

The book contains a sequence of poignant poems written at the Payne Whitney Clinic in Manhattan—in the middle of which, remarkably, the poet can (1) call himself "Jim the Jerk"; and (2) ask, as naturally as you would ask about the weather, the \$64 question: "What is a poem anyway?" When it comes to the title poem, 60 pages long in prosy lines many of which are long enough to be two lines, it becomes clear that Schuyler can do just about whatever he wants. "The Morning of the Poem" is an outgrowth of his other long (so we thought) masterpieces, "The

Crystal Lithium" and "Hymn to Life." The style is what might be termed his Ongoing style, and the poem is an Excursion: from Western N.Y. State to Chelsea, Manhattan; to Europe; to childhood; through the poet's major and minor concerns, moods, memories, pet peeves, love affairs, special landscapes; with epic digressions and sometimes dazzling trips of the switch. Taking up more than half a book, it is amazingly sustained. Whereas his shorter poems normally grow out of very specific settings, with the poet often literally sitting in the middle, here his memory and associations work to make past situations immediate: his entire life somehow becomes the specific setting. There is a tone of nostalgia, even wistfulness — but also a mood of acceptance which includes the regrets and difficult times. Not philosophical or religious acceptance, he's not that kind of poet; but acceptance. This is how things are, played upon a guitar that is turquoise, or aqua, with sun-drenched frets.

In a characteristically modest way, Schuyler writes that he wants "merely to say, to see and say, things / as they are." But we can hardly take that "merely" at face value — in fact the only conceivable way to take it is the way Yeats used it in "The Second Coming": *absolutely*. For all the pure observation and diary jottings, which are indeed central to his method as a poet, and which include plain or off-hand statement (sometimes determinedly, or even perversely, so?) clearly not in the same league with his most inspired, one is hard put to find anything that doesn't work. And in the middle of hunting, one comes upon a small gem like "Footnote," or a larger one like "Song" ("The light lies layered in the leaves ..."), or the haunting — for once that horrible word really applies — "Korean Mums." If this is the morning of the poem, the forecast for the rest of the day must be glorious. Or as this *quintessentially* modest poet was moved to say, one and only one time (in a wonderful poem that was omitted from this book but will, I hope, be in the next): "Many / think that I am modest: / they could not be more mistaken. / I'm a great poet: no other way."

CHARLES NORTH

CLAUDE ROYET-JOURNOUD, Reversal (1973; Helcoal Press, c/o Burning Deck, 73 Elmgrove, Providence, RI 02906; \$2.50)

the pieces. the whole or, at least, the concept of the whole. the pieces taken out, removed, thrown away, misplaced, otherwise discarded. the whole: incomplete with perforations; or the whole: extension, a new context.

propositions:

- 1) perception is the result of measurement by relativity;
- 2) any object is dynamic by the forces it exerts and is subject to in a given field.

then: "seeing" is connecting;
distance is tension.

dot to dot.
word to word.

what's said
& equally
what isn't.

traversal.

language on the page, mind takes the steps, leaps from word to word. the longer the leap, the more possibilities of kinetic cohesion. but the tension must be kept sharp, too great a distance, too disjointed the poles, the current sags in between, attention doesn't reach the other side.

Claude Royet-Journoud: young French writer, having broken with the institution of surrealism, working carefully, creating both process and event. his way of working: first writing a filled-out, prose-like text, establishing context and forward momentum, giving body to the environment. then a process of distillation and condensation, phrases, words and sentences are lifted from the text and re-integrated into the white pause of the page. the fragments realign, form new structures, relating (obviously) back toward the original, unseen text, and presently to their own associative instance.

this series of moments integrates mind, the perceptive process, toward the definition of a new continuum, each piece having not only spatial form, but temporal dimension as well.

Grenier (SERIES): articulating moments lifted from real or imagined speech. Creeley (HELLO): distilling concentrations from the experience of attention, and *being present*.

CR-J: guided more formally by the presence of a source text, he is involved in the layering of experience through deconstruction, the material itself brought forward by awareness of a broad range of mental activity.

environment, the place &
the obstacles in it

process, the time & the moving
backwards & forwards through it

From REVERSAL

passage --

the notion of place
or else a look around

don't try to "say it all".

it says itself.

CRAIG WATSON

DEWDNEY : TWO WORKS

HOMOGRAPHS AND THE DISCHARGE OF CONNOTATION IN THE POEM

The outstanding attribute of words in a poem is their transcendence of taxonomy. All the levels of meaning inherent in one line can only be realized by the polyconnotative recombinant interpretation of fixed terms arising out of the basal lexicon.

Polyconnotation builds up a static charge within the poem. Because the resting potential of this static charge is at an elevated level in relation to standard language-use it discharges easily. (In the improvisational poetry of the last few decades it seemed that this precise attribute was the final irreducible core, the most characteristic quality of the poem.) The elevated charge consequently alters the lexemic status of the words in the poem. They become homographs (hetero-

nyms), host to a halo of meanings, much like auras of St. Elmo's Fire crowning the masts of ships at sea. (This deck is rigged.)

Hypothetically, the fabrication of a poem composed almost entirely of 'real' homographs taken from the lexicon would demonstrate the propensities of the connotative charge. The refinement, distillation & compacting of these 'heavy metals' of the lexicon should bring about a fusion reaction, entailing the release of enough energy to shed light on both connotation & 'ambiguity'.

I found approx. 175 homographs in the O.E.D., though only 165 of these I found suitable (simply out of preference for terms, ie: I found one of the meanings banal). Of this number it seemed only about 50 could be syntactically joined in a meaningful sequence.

The following construct is the result of this research.

My Point an Order

My point an order
in the drift of states.
Sounds steep in the rush above the bow &
O the feeling winds!
To utter light & direct tender,
as a bluff articulates the decline
of our quarry.
Scale matter stemmed the rings.
The stroke conducted a current right
to the ground bolting.
A model brush drew the charge,
sought console of the rest.
Possibly a host of palms
or the pole
we tend to.
Not stalked or cast by lines baited.
Content being
where the tear lies.

It is interesting to note the mathematics involved in the use of 'in situ' homographs. One homograph can have two to five meanings. General usage only implies two, though taxonomically there may be more.

Each homograph alters the meaning of the sentence containing it as many times as there are interpretations of the homograph. The meaning multiplies by a factor of 2 (general usage) with each successive homograph in the sentence, ie: 2 homographs = 4 meanings (interpretations) of the text. The equation for interpretive combinations of homographs in a sentence is X^Y , where X = the meanings of each homograph and Y the number of homographs in the sentence.

The final connotative discharge, (the transfer of meaning from text to perceiver) is invariant, though the minor connotations can be as variable as the number of perceivers. The discharge is a revelation, the simultaneous illumination of the sum recombinant connotations. In structure this process is analogous to a dendritic tree, or lightning, the branches being all the tributaries of meaning upstream from the final discharge. This is what is meant when one says "the Poem always seeks the shortest distance between two points".

*

FRACTAL DIFFUSION

In this article I am going to reify a progressive syllabic/letter transposition in units of ten. Starting with the letter A and working through the alphabet I will replavece eavech letter with ave syllaveble normavelly starting with the paverticulaver letter in question. The effects will be cumulavetive, the system is aveplied aves it works its wavey through the avelphavebutet. One quickly avercertaveins the import of the text, the exponentiavel growth ravete of membuter syllavebutles increaveses the word length, the morphemic laveg & consequent confusion slows the lexemic inertiave. The averbutitravery neologisms condition the re-ordering of morphemic caveusavelity. These, in turn, haveve avelreavedy buteen codified buty prior referentiavel conditions. The totavel effect is much more averresting thaven the simple letter for letter or symbutol for letter travensposition. The temporavel lobute/retinavel circuit caven reavedily process symbutol for letter travenspositions, butut the cognition required by syllavebutico travensposition quickly mounts beyond short-term storavege coavepavebutilities. The interesting point here is avecohiement of totavel averferentiavelity through the use of aven avecocumulavetively referentiavel system. Avelso, the dispersion of mavethemaveticoal hieravercohies, even tightly regimented, aves it is in this text (buty units of ten) butreaveks down in the interfavecoe. This property of *lexemico diffusion* is equivavelent to recoent studios in "orgavenico coircoutry" buty reseavercohers in avertificioiavel intelligencoe. They hope to acohiave fravecotuavel courves & ravendioom sequentiavels buty incoludioing aven "orgavenico wavefer" of avelgave or other elecotricooally sensitive butroths wiredio into the coircoutry of ave coomputor. This text mavey bute coonsidioeredio the working avenavelogy of such ave procoeedioure, reifying its lavetent dioifficoultiets & possibutilitiets. Thetn cohoicoet of syllavebutlets thavet avecotuavelly ococour in EtnGLISH letndios itsetlf to thet avembutiguity of this tetxt. Avet this point only fivet lettettrs havevet undioetrgonet travensposition, yett thet oblitetravetion ofar scoaven-avediojustmetnt is avelmost coomplettet. Only thet ococoavesionavel wordio or somet-

timets phraveset stavendios intavecot. Islavendios which might prompt
intetretst in lettettr ococourretncot coonsetquetntly avebutaven-
dioonnetdio aves setnsetletss. Six lettettrs into thet avelphavebutett,
mavenifaretstavetion petrfaretcotetdio-farlowetr ofar farondiouet--ave
faraver/far ettcohetdio cooncolusion.

CHRISTOPHER DEWDNEY

READING OLSON

(The following is an excerpt from Charles Olson's Maximus by Don Byrd, to be published later this year by University of Illinois Press.)

The sense of form from which the Maximus grows is not rational but post-rational. The *field* of the poem includes not only the data which can be comprehended by humanistic rationalism but also all that humanistic rationalism excludes as irrational, random, or subjective.... Olson, with his obedience to all phenomena, recognizes a possibility for order which derives simply from the contiguity of phenomena. "One wants phenomenology in place," Olson writes, "in order that event may re-arise." The freshness of space must be allowed to assert itself so it can reveal its *own* form. ...The poems of Pound and Eliot, as Olson understands them, are the last desperate attempts of cultivated men to insure cultural order in which creation might continue to compete successfully with action.... The Cantos, despite their epic intent, are essentially lyric. They create an order-- or attempt to-- by arranging the artifacts of culture, both western and eastern, according to a private vision of their transcendent coherence....

For too long language has remained so utterly within the bounds of representational discourse, even for the poets themselves, that the occluded forms that rest *below* the written language have failed to emerge. Consequently, the various pure languages of poetry which have appeared are, despite the power we feel in them, essentially only counter-discourse, negations, rather than languages inside of which life can be conducted. Olson proposes to re-combine the three terms of language [space, fact, stance] in a single act of writing, commentary, and revelation.

In his concern for quantitative measure, Olson is attempting to purify the language of the abstract pollutants which have been allowed to creep into it. Before poetry can be written language must be returned to itself. In quantitative measure, the duration of a syllable is an inherent factor. Olson objects, for example, that Milton's disregard for syllabic quantity results in what might be called rhythmic sentimentality. The "humanistic" elements in Milton's verse, those which are chosen, by an act of abstract will, rather than given, the stress patterns of syntax, as opposed to syllables, are allowed weight in the determination of verse which they can

maintain only if they draw authority from some abstract source (attaching the "emotion to the idea," whether the idea be Christian dogma, Latinate syntax, or iambic pentameter) outside the proper concerns of the verse itself.... [Similarly,] in the periodic sentence, the words and syllables as loci of meanings are subordinated to an abstract structure which reduces its burden, the nouns and their actions, to mere weightless pointers which have no inherent force; objects move not by their own force but by the abstract drama of the sentence.

The anecdotes which occur paratactically in Maximus have their effect on the reader who, in turn, should not expect to find a hierarchy of subordinated actions. Rather than integrating categorically or according to chains of cause and effect, one discovers on-going associations, subject-puns, images answering to images, one moving to the next in terms which are purely local to them. Unlike stream of consciousness, however, which is passive, parataxis is active, attempting to bring the poem to an immediate coherence by developing concrete associations on multiple planes.... Olson speaks of "a syntax of apposition", which can be opposed to a syntax of subordination. The order that emerges is analogous to the order of a map rather than the order of a scientific law or a periodic sentence, both of which tear objects from their contexts, rearrange them, and subordinate them to a controlling principle or, as Olson would say, *logos*.... Olson never intends to *express* any thing; he insists that the poem must *enact* the reality which is its content.

Maximus is a collage of fragments, a recognition that every person's life is a collage of fragments, in the process of coalescing toward the whole, where person and world are one. It does not move linearly along a single thread of argument but through a matrix of complex associations, juxtapositions, dialectic contradictions, puns, melodic relationships, and complementary rhythms.... The *unity* of the Maximus is perhaps best compared to the unity of a zoological species: it is an unchanging form that perpetually reconstructs itself in useful and unexpected ways.

DON BYRD

VOICES-OFF: MENGHAM and WILKINSON

(The following is excerpted from David Trotter's article on Rod Mengham and John Wilkinson in Twisted Wrist 4, 4 Bower Street, Maidstone, Kent, England. Works of Wilkinson and Trotter are available from Infernal Methods, c/o Trotter, Department of English, University College, Gower Street, London.)

...I want here to contrast the projects undertaken by Mengham and Wilkinson with a continental mode which long since turned its back on the unadventurous preoccupations of our own orthodoxies. Poets such as

Paul Celan and Edmond Jabés have developed a mode of writing which one might term 'dialectical lyric', a mode introduced to this country by Anthony Barnett in Blood Flow (1975) and Fear and Misadventure (1977). The first movement of dialectic is negation; a thesis generates its own antithesis and thus negates itself. Sartre argued that all knowledge is dialectical to the extent that the person who knows, knows that he is *not* the object of his knowledge; the subject discovers the world as his antithesis and himself as a lack (as negativity). Dialectical lyric stages the drama of the 'advertising mind', in Shelley's phrase, the mind turned toward a 'vastness' which reveals it to itself as a lack: disenfranchised, internally riven. Its characteristic form might be described as a militant slughtness:

The small verse
breaches
because of the enclosure,
but, not the sense.

(Barnett, Fear and Misadventure p.34)

Every word uttered by the lyric voice sets a limit, announces the inability of that voice to say all there is to say; it is this limit which resonates, giving full 'sense' to insufficiency. The lyric voice, dialectically opposed to the unsayable, discovers itself as a lack....

The texts of Mengham and Wilkinson, on the other hand, are not predicated upon any such absenting movement (the generation of anti-thesis *out of* thesis) but rather upon the multiple infliction of one thesis on another, *different* thesis. Indeed, the difference between theses can no longer be regarded as an alienation, and then healed or suppressed by an act of inclusion (Reason, Hegel said, is mind which knows itself to be all reality); rather, it must be affirmed. Silences occur, but only as they are produced by the operation of one thesis on another; not as motive-forces. We have entered a Nietzschean world where forces don't enter into relation with opposites they themselves have generated, but with other forces.... In the cognitive realm, there 'is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective "knowing"; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity", be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we were capable of this -- what would that mean but to *castrate* the intellect?' (Genealogy of Morals). The merit of Mengham and Wilkinson is that they allow *more* affects to speak, *more* eyes to observe, and so declare our boredom with the castrated text presented by the weaker versions of the dialectical lyric, the text whose entire business is not to deliver.

The effacing of origins in modern literary theory and practice (including dialectical lyric) has forbidden us to ask the Nietzschean question Who is speaking here? Traditional lyric forms, on the other hand,

have raised the question in order to answer it without delay, to erase a potentially troublesome uncertainty. The work of Mengham and Wilkinson has restored the question *as a question* : neither preempted nor resolved. Curiosity as to who is speaking in these texts seems to me central to the pleasure we take in them. There is for example an occasional well-spokenness in Wilkinson's writing, a sumptuous intonation, a provocative snobbism which might either be residual or the revenge taken by the demotic text on itself; which must be read as the operation of one 'will' on another. Having unsqueamishly lifted the stone of totemic Absence, both Wilkinson and Mengham seem to gaze at the life beneath with a sometime paranoid inscrutability; but we are no longer dealing with the reserve of miniature and can hardly ignore the questions they pose.

DAVID TROTTER

*

I can't predict my accents. Sweeping up the short vowel, it is borrowed from his cool page. Any phrase, it dives out, you'll try to divine it in our best light. Mouthings can so thinly vibrate, and hence I know I haven't been reconstructed — just for a while all parts of speech in assent, through pull of the phantom lode.

— from Prior to Passage, JOHN WILKINSON

... Here to stay you know that the glum depart
hurrying down the noisy path partitive. In time to
landing in order to 'cope' she ponders her broth
useless beneath the lid feature the pensive flesh as as
far the shield chattering with blows of sliding.
That says what is commonly a sponge
a vanishing interest in this dilapidation of the grammar
instead of we all uncover the infested stump. Languid hammer
head down....

— from Glossy Matter, ROD MENGHAM

(PROCESS) NOTE: The Connection (Or, how far is it from New York to Baltimore via California?)

MARSHALL REESE, Writing (1980; pod books, 3022 Abell Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21218; \$4)

Marshall Reese's book Slugs [published as part of Writing] relates through its concerns to the conversation generated around Bob Perelman's talk at the St. Mark's Poetry Project in New York in 4/79. Bob proposed the issue in the form of two terms to be defined. "Artificial" as distinguished from "natural" as applied to the concept of language.

Now Bob's basic rap, which is what leads to Marshall in this discussion, is that language, as an acquired skill, is one of those loop functions for the organism. The elements of it are borrowed property, the common currency of exchange, items on loan, as it were, from the general vocabulary pool. It passes through the culture and we make use of it in various ways according to our particular needs. Okay. In that sense, given that language is all a public commodity, just stuff getting run through the cycle, how does it get to be unique? And, secondly, still be constituted of configurations which can be distinctly classified as "artificial" and "natural"?

Marshall's work is a series of pieces composed while he was employed with a printer who had a linotype machine which produces, aside from usable lines of type, a whole mess of miscast pieces. It's these cast-off slugs, from various texts (ranging from a Civics text to a history of the Southwest with miscellaneous social notes thrown in for human interest) all locked up and printed. By pushing the acquisition process to an obvious place Marshall, using what in one sense cannot at all be considered his own language, is nonetheless using it as his own language. For sure this is no different than any other talking/writing process except his units are phrasiform as opposed to word form. They evolve a context just as absolutely as syntax evolves automatically in any word sequence (the absolute fact of grammar). There just *is* a logic of relation which is a matter of personal selection no matter how 'randomly' the assemblage is constructed. Choice to do it is the determinant of the form.

The conclusion here is that the concept of artificial can be disposed of having any relation to the process of acquiring the elements of language and put instead into an investigation of the use of language, which is where the selective compositional process becomes the essential factor.

Well, then, what is artificial selection? It doesn't occur to Marshall, cause he's just doing the work. The material's there and he makes use of it, simple digestion. Likewise Perelman is ripping off, collaging, splicing texts, only maybe a little more self-consciously. But actually, therein lies the difference. The self-consciousness:

what needs defining as the gap, the space between the thought and its manifestation. That gap is the distinction between, the point of differentiation, the point of isolation, insularity. That which is as opposed to that which is not. So. Simple. Once you got that one the point is to get to what exactly is. Goes flat right away, because it's so obvious-- it's the whole sum of those unique particulars, the choice, the combination of choices, the mess of interactions. A settlement of terms does not waste any more the energy to conflict over issues of the process. Get in there. The slogan mentality: cliches of language and fixations at points in the whole flow. Course it never finishes, never exactly originates, only begins to be aware that it is occurring then carries through whatever growth is appropriate to the logic of its own development, no, that becomes the logic of its own development, the way grammar becomes an absolute fact of language: because the words are such powerful objects they command relation--or is it more simple, even, they are the units and any sequence of units becomes a structure though, natch, there's a characteristic there too. That's in a sense the constant variable, of course it's always different--what should it be otherwise? Is anything the same as, nope, be glad about it. That's the tuck and lift aspect of the turn, the quick leap into.

What happens in an immediate sense preserves its dynamic intact, can be edited similarly and worked through similarly. The process by which it happens, that rush of transformative digestion, contains the excitement of any real process-- that is, its form is determined according to the necessities of its function, so, it's clean, essential. This isn't an argument for improvisation *at all*, it's an argument for integration and conscious process as opposed to self-conscious process, that's what. Because *that's* the artificial, the contrived, the thought through first which creates a limitation on the flexible possibility. Knocks out options beforehand, so, becomes stale in the act of its conception by being such a finished thought to begin with. It must be larger than itself and not understand its own limits entirely, at first, if it is to be successful, and done with engagement towards the definition of its own intention.

The working through of any real process will contain a sequential logic according to its own particular, essential dynamic. The character of that dynamic, which it acquires only in that exact and self-same process, becomes its own definition. It is what it is and what it wants to be is what it struggles to become. The intention is not a fixed ideal form, but a process of synthetic utilization and transformative integration. Not in the sense of achieving anything, no, no, don't want no models of perfection, just want the dynamic process. It's got to take you and keep you with/in the process of becoming what it is itself. Nowhere to get, of course, nothing ever finally resolves. Things take form and then disintegrate to reconstruct, reassemble, rearrange in another temporary configuration. The point is to work with that con-

tinual rearrangement, the redefinition.

So: the definition of intention the impetus, permission the cause, dis- and integration the process with the resolution a new form, the beginning again. And when in this process the activity makes a change whose origin was not predictable from, the process of which was not contained in the form of what it originated in, then, it actually is something, it gets to another place. When it all gets working it keeps on. But, since like a combustion engine it doesn't fully realize, call that total resolution the clear intention while the actual process is what goes down. Always that remainder to be dealt with accumulates sufficient significance relative to some point to act upon itself.

That's my process take, how I get from this to that. The rest is all the details of engagement.

JOHANNA DRUCKER

UNNATURE

In Memory of Roland Barthes

Nature, it might be observed, is almost entirely overcome, fulfilling the will to power of the nineteenth-century entrepreneurs, the undertakers of the complete technical reduction of the world (as source and resource) to a surface of manageable proportions. With characteristic efficiency, this programme has been carried out for the most part inadvertently, through the coordinated operation of unconscious forces. According to the newest metaphysics, accident overrules essence and therefore ultimately prevails. And the events that surround the death of M. Barthes, recently dispensed to the public with the discreet excitement of snapshots produced at the critical moment by the prosecution, would have us sadly concur were it not for the subject's own voice urging us to look into the underlying facts, whose seemingly unambiguous constellation assaults our capacity for judgment. It would indeed be sad if the myth could so easily and so quickly erase the small island on which the mythologist had taken refuge.

It is for this reason that survival, while a necessity, is not enough with which to combat a feeling of futility in the face of an increasingly unnatural world. If, by chance, there still exist trees unsacrificed to the super-hero comic-book, or if industrial poisons have failed to wipe out every last useless species, this is really of no consequence; for we have come to live too far from nature to notice or care whether there are any accidental survivors of the total exploitation of the world and its

inhabitants. All that is required is that the idea of nature be overcome.

To the modern sensibility conditioned ever more thoroughly by an urbanity that is almost completely manufactured (however hastily or shoddily) and artificial in every respect, to a member of an eikosphere so dense with messages and with pseudo-messages that nothing can safely be ignored or assumed to be naturally silent and innocent of intent, in a world in which everything strives to act unilaterally upon everything else with the relentlessness of gravitation, nothing could be felt to be more unnatural than the unsoliciting experience of what in another culture might be authentically called forth as nature.

In the oldest (and probably unspoken) metaphysics, transparently simple, nature was conceived as the partially invisible source of what visibly shines forth, and as such embraced within it events that convention alone would be prompted to call unnatural. Only if there were any impossibility at all could there be a genuinely unnatural thing.

The plasticity of thought, however, is itself a fact often lost to sight, and the surface of experience curiously frozen over. The very ubiquity of the plastic disguises and alibis the ultimate exhaustibility of the created world. Unlike true nature which unfolds continuously and not always to our liking or in a way attuned to our conditioning, the entirely determined world is brittle, its material unresponsive or erratic beyond the point to which it has been deliberately thought out. As with theater scenery, the illusion can only be sustained within certain bounds; a glimpse of the ropes and canvas patching, and the illusion is destroyed or at least compromised.

God, with an infinite resource, could conceivably create and sustain nature. But a man, judging from human history, granted the exercise of his freedom, would either set out like Kafka's cage that "went in search of a bird" or else, sensing the possibility of another direction along which thought might agreeably pass, produce and exhibit, like the late M. Barthes, renderings of the zoological gardens we have inherited.

JOSEPH TIMKO

ESSAI A CLEF

Mr. Barthes, having written his own image into a text (Barthes by Barthes) and the chief of his obsessions into another (A Lover's Discourse), died. This latter text, death a life among *dead* letters, leaves to us the task of pursuit, the cherishing of his mind's image in his mind's words.

It is enough to say that this magazine owes its existence or if not, the meaning of that existence, to the significant desire-producing

language mechanisms which Mr. Barthes constantly refurnished with his analyses of/as text.

*

It is his contribution, initialled by his perseverance, to discern that it is a failure of critical writing to view its task as the reading of a text; excellent critical, *attentive*, writing knows its task to be the reading of the *writing* of a text.

Barthes' analyses of prose literature, in moving from writing to text as object, observed a regalanization of literary effort. He observed in the stylization of thought into writing, paradigms for the constructs of all carriers of meaning. His distillative attention to these modes enriched the scope of a mind's attentiveness to itself: in the details of thought's passing into signed meaning, the world. The effervescence of literary writing is function of the sign's interest in itself. Nothing is ever more absent from excellent writing than its writer. Indeed, this "its writer" evaporates facing the sign of a question. It need not be; any text demands its own insouciant definition about it in the world, its satisfaction.

The text stands each word on its end, drops it and draws it back, propels it vertically and regains it. This plunging and striving, an activation at rest, performs before the world its calling into question and the at once clean maculate articulation texting its response: text, a one sided call and echo. This plummet, this rise, is thought; the text is its activation, its notice. Form is the mode for thought, language its inseparable substance; the text a manipulation of form through language. Life is the substance of language.

((Unless it be one, the poem is a very small thing in this world of text. Now that we understand ourselves as we write, we can think.))

*

Roland Barthes isolated from among the many symptoms of language its being-as-symptom, its signification. Language is structure. Structure, later, constitutes its materialization as text. The language, a blank egoless object bordering on operation, finds in its egos-recipient (readers) what it deposits; at best, ie in text, this deposit is structure, deposit void of all but the gesture of deposition. The mind creates of every meaning the sign of itself; but within this operation the author need not be ego-producer; this is the meaning of text: that *structure* produces.

Barthes: meaning is articulation.

Wittgenstein: meaning is use.

The text is the meaning-quotient of language; each text measures again its meaning-value in structuration. The text isolates space between the lived elements of life in order to be itself recognized; it does this by thinking, by structuring. The textual structuration occurs always equidistant from the sets of its possible choices and the pursuit through those sets; it poses always a horizon, the image of difficulty

by which it is recognized.

((A writer may aim to produce "private property language."))

((Writing produces, and is concerned with producing, exceptions to the notion that its model is speech.))

((An effort of writing is to alter the language such that speaking it has value. Writing offers the possibility of reportioning the volumes of language and speech.))

((Writing distributes simultaneously the function of each of its elements.))

((The larger the unit of language, the greater the combinatory freedom. Thus, eg, prose promulgates attitude.))

*

Roland Barthes attended the prevalence of the sign as meaning-carrier; his attentions isolated the significant.

Meaning and concept combine as/under the aegis of sign. This sign stands in the world as form, subsequently combining with concept, in creating and maintaining the entire realm of signification.

*

Text reads (me).

Texts read.

As critic: into the excipient body of the text the alert mind inscribes what it has been the text's to inscribe in the excipient mind. This gesture of mirroring mimes one of replacement. Each signifier becomes something of a shifter; shifters are tautological, they speak/write themselves, delivered *and* mirrored.

Reading acts text.

Each text rereads (me); recalls remembering.

The language is, its operations are, the go-between (shifting mechanism) in this function of trade, reader exchanged for text and text for reader; this exchange of valuing is signified by the reader's return to the text and by the text's return to the reader in memory; it is a paratactic contract, twice signed for.

As the text's various signifyings leap variously and repeatedly out of it (under a duress of reading), it assumes a personality; it is this alternate with which the reader exchanges thought, as the text reinforces him/her to think. It is signifiers which the reading tends to distill, to make of the act a meaning indivisible. As part of this formulating, the reader, employing reading, interrogates the text in order to be him/herself disclosed; this is an action to seek the bounds of the textual enclosure, the limited world. The reader unites what the writer has used languages to hold apart; he/she remembers what the writer was interested in forgetting, losing, loosing (to begin to think to write is to remember, to write is to forget). The meaning is the aura of the reading, a calculated advance on further reading which draws the reader on. Reading and writing advance, equally, the text; the reader subjects the text to this furtherance.

The text is consumed greedily, because its failures are enticing. The text is an agglomeration, read as a map, of failed exigencies; it is the sum of traces of impurities; it is these which the writer of a text tends to forget from the language, as he writes. The reader disturbs the text by his/her interest, even as it is being written. In fact, the text is the reader's product, matrices of meanings which he/she releases as product from the significations of the writing, which has been the author's product. The text, by its inclusiveness, attempts to choke the reader, so that he/she utter no *sound* of his/her own; it is an ecological effort, which the reader in part maintains as in reading he/she confronts, disturbs, distributes, the text's intentional unity. This is an allure of the text, that it is in reading disturbed but not damaged, that it disturbs without damage; a faultless assurance of furthered interest, upon which, manifested, the reader capitalizes; the mutual debt of reader and author is disturbed by the text, which advances to the reader a material interest it had not in writing for the author (hence an author's obsession with like texts). It is the text, synchronically a social mien/mean, which writes its unity, a dimension shared, barely but totally, by author and reader, at an edge of their activity. This is the text's economy; though it is full, its effects are not displaced even by the coterminous attentions of reader and author. Even their calling it names, leaves it still. But the text is not closed; it inscribes an ideal social syntax, one without waste in relations, capable of uniting persons who it writes face to face at its one side; entering it, leaving it, no problem.

Text texts text.

*

The text, puritanical in scope, within bounds, is not so in essence. It is along the acultural, desiring edge of language that the text is written; its other edge, a boundary synchronous with usage, merely supports, permits it. The competition between the two edges, a contest which the vertical of desire always champions, nevertheless furthers within the text an apprehension of its dissolve; it is against this latter uncertainty that the text finally closes, a wheel in motion which apparently stops, reverses, in having sped out of one perceptive possibility on entering another (writing, to text, say; or, text to apprehension). In separating us from usage-language, the text creates in us a great desiring for same, which it satisfies completely but in quite another way, offering in a cleansed language occasion the superlative of our own actual gestures in desiring. It seduces, in part, by exploiting a flaw, an opening, in us, the separateness of our two languages (daily; textual) with which we meet the occasion of seeking a perfection in the latter. The text loses us, forgets us, from social language. Drawing us, as itself, out of the body of that language, we lose ego, we die happy.

The author through the text demands pleasure for the reader. He/she

abolishes a consumption of literature by filling its vacancy with bliss. The reader completes for moments the text's desiring motions, a completion instantly reawakening, unsatisfied, demanding after this one furtherance, another of the language. The text gives rise in the reader to one fear, that of its dissolution, which would deny to the reader his/her own anticipated dissolve into pleasure; this latter the text cannot deny, it must keep its promise excellently. The text's economy is guaranteed by the demands which must be met at its conclusion, a point, a vista to which it comes. The text permits a sort of necrophiliac pleasure: the desserts of the dead, or at least constrained, social language are enjoyed in the instance of the burgeoning textual assault, an erection of exacting consequence in a relative void of diversions and difficulties. Enjoying the corpsing of a language, suddenly puritanical ourselves, we are somewhat repelled by the image the text supplies of ourselves abandoned in such pleasure (we giggle); against this social difficulty, the text offers its pleasure, a hierarchy cleansed of social burden, a gesture completely filling a gesture. This is the text's obscenity, that, like any other, it posits itself as a substitute for discourse, it excerpts itself from the political except as a superlative instance of its negative, a diligence of pleasure escaped from its toil.

*

The text comes from its industry.

The text is trivial only in its affectations, that it appears to be literature.

The text considers its veils its triumph: an illusion.

The text does not stop to *consider* its edges.

If there were a diametrics of the text it would be one-sided, written.

The text is an animated perfection. If it fail in either of these it is, obviously, merely animated, merely perfect. Merely *split*.

Poems have dripped into the text. It is full of them.

Context, no such thing.

The convention of language is discarded for its invention.

The text durates. This is its relation with time.

The text is sentenced to reality, it is a contiguous figment, an act in an act.

The text repeats and tells.

The text is language raised to a third power: it is the (1) inhabited (2) space of a (3) builder.

The text, unlike its mention, is not historical; it does not disagree with itself. But it is an authority upon its occasion. The text exists of several diachronic scenes at once.

The text sits on itself, excreting the text. It takes literature apart, to be. The writing of the text is an operation on successive operations.

The text binds time to a contract. It does this instant by instant.

But time forgets.

The text is written along a vector between intellect (makes new) and intelligence (remembers).

The text satisfies by more than it was made to produce, in spite of its consistent language.

The text consumes an oedipal image in order to play with itself without bother.

In each text the language is decided a unit of space. This makes it complete.

The text is elaborate because it enforces an attitude. Obviously the author function is not dead.

The text is a collective; it delights.

The text may be the last act of a body. Language will act alone.

*

The life is a text. The text is a life. Life, text, are equal. The life, the text, cut equally from the world, and equally, as one, are left. Each fiction dominates only in its own territory, "succeeding" in excluding the rest. For the reader of a text, that text is all that he/she knows to be the case, but the author knows also that knowing, and a magnitude of wider bounds that that implies; in this the author and critic share, that they look at the text as, and not only through, it.

The life is a depository for thought, as the text is thought's writing. Life and the text disintegrate for time. The life, the text: each revises, but by going on, never as an afterthought, never in reverse. In the author's case, text, life, are alternate words for that one thing which each seeks to inscribe. The desire of each for the other is intransitive; each merely acts, this acting is single, unadjectivised, unextended.

The body, its life, is made evident only through language (modification); language is evidenced only in the collection of bodies, language is inherently pluralized.

Barthes' own text is a figment of fragments: he took his life apart, and kept it there. Definitions he manipulated reappear: the figment is of continuity. A flatness is required of the fragments, or of their field of signifieds, in order to overcome any illusion about them: an *admission* of flatness. For this, a structure without systems is required. A collection of utterances become any life: against this, for the author a text is a remission from life, a forgetting-machine.

Each text is an appropriation from the language. This separates the author from it also. Time is consumed because/where there is not enough of it. There are enough texts (undemanded); this sufficiency paradoxically guarantees against consumption. The text is in need of a pronoun of its own.

((Theory is *essentially* heavy; bears at once the preponderance of an at least two-sided utterance; speculates at least in two directions, that of its "object" and that of itself.))

((To disintegrate (language) *actively*, is revolution. The contra-entropic is entropy speeded up.))

((Connotation is a matter of existence.))

((Style: the rubric which is visible *through* the work.))

((Sentences, singly, are impotent (the maxim comes in its own mouth); together, they perform texted orgiastic gesture.))

((Aesthetic gesture may meet the ideological at a point in the mind when it is *grasped*, understood. Ideological discourse never reaches the aesthetic because it does only one thing, its open mouth.))

((The image-system, an attended-to and delineated symbol: of ego.))

((Antithesis *deserts* language in a futile effort to become ideological.))

((Aesthetic language is ironic; we are amused/taken by its self-absorption.))

*

Signification is a function of history. It is a paradox that history, the deadest of languages, speaks. Nothing leads us to expect this mis-giving away of material, certainly not the text, whose elucidation of the same material is transparent by comparison. Perhaps history too will stop speaking, to be text.

There is a fluctuant, ahistoric zone between our need to utter and the guise (writing) whereby we occasionally solve for that need. The text is an extreme of utterance close to that zone, taking from that zone a veiled ardor, giving to it what little definition it has. In this zone the signifier is loosed, disobliged, given to be given, taken apart, among signifiers alone, untaxed.

History is the landscape of textual activity: ie the text bears historical traces, but these traces are free within the text to bear precisely and only themselves, unconstrained, a mirror against a mirror. And it is this latter lack of distance, this infra-closeness, which permits the traversed but undivided text, the texting of histories, a superlative of geometric progresses. The text is active twice-at-once, bringing to itself dispersed particular signifiers, and releasing them as one material: a plural, but singularizing, activity: meaning.

On the plane of signification, however, each signifier is entirely separate, secluded. Needs motivate a combination of such as recognition, memory, mental industry, which enforce the various plural presencings of signifiers, a sort of failure of them, a letting down. The attenuations are marvelous.

(History is much shorter than the text, one signifier among many. The text is much shorter than history, one occurrence among many.) The text exhausts history.

*

It is in peregrinations, mental or otherwise, of lover pursuing beloved, that love resembles the warp and woof of textual fabrication. In a beloved, in the text, an image is sought of an ineffable moment, a

vertical duration within unhalting horizontal passage.

Adjectives merely circulate in the effort to define the affairs of love or the text. That is to say, the notions of designation, of meaning, are subject to a furor, subject to that which animates, desire.

But to multiply such comparisons, such accords, between love and text, is to damage the completeness of the surfaces of these two subjects-as-objects, a completeness made boundless by the play of superlatives inhabiting either (overlapping) sphere. But the love-text? it would require two writing-subjects, not synonymous, but coterminous: a figure available as a delicacy in the text, but difficult of apprehension in the world.

In order to remain outside my subject, *I* speak, and within this suddenly magnified spectacle (a world!) I stop to write.

ALAN DAVIES

L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E

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