

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

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## "HEDGE-CRICKETS SING"

--think of *Keats* as really 'milking' words of all possible letter/phonemic qualities without really challenging notion of English word/morpheme as basic unit of 'meaning'--hence 'best effects' all-stress monosyllabic--  
"No, no, go not to Leth(e)"--"Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?"--because mind in work really does *want* to think phonemically, one sounds so 'dense & rich,' tongued--slows down articulation so teeth, lips, whole vocal apparatus drawn in to pronouncing letters, reading it aloud--counting 'syllables' (convenient grouping of phonemes/smallest unit one normally hears) thus more than old poetic habit, focuses attention toward primary semantic unit--*da da, da da*, etc.--'dramatic' polysyllables ("But when the *melancholy* fit shall fall") break up into compound monosyllables bound together by the passion, but everything still counts as one--frequency of vibration in crickets, locusts, *Keats* 'replaces' our contemporary phrasing in human voice ('tone,' all that misemphasis on selected, heavily stressed noises/waste of unstressed fillers normally grossing 'a poet's voice')--how hot & fast it gets--expanding roof me-ta-l in sun--no single note 'lost,' in nature, or is that any sound heard *as* sound without interpretation--'meaning' identical to physical fact of *a* sound (everything noted/nought denoted) in series of discrete particles strung together (by *Keats*, e.g.) with gaps--weird displacement of 'one to one' order of natural occurrence/significance by human symbolic capacity to replace simple-unitary by multiple-complex, e.g. Morse code thinking 'dot-dot-dot' for 'SAVE/sss' or moan 'ooo' as 'dash-dash-dash,' etc.--thus 'dot-dot-dot/dash-dash-dash/dot-dot-dot' for 'HELP' (speeded up, of course, to rush us back toward one--fastest computer infinitely approaching one as jammed together/speeded up multiple symbolic operation long since come to 'stand for' thing, so distracts any body from 'one to one' experience of actual events in time with simultaneous experience of identity of fact & significance--hence *letters/phonemes* one way to discipline attention to use language as one way 'back to nature' by experiencing order of noises in stream of oral consciousness--s s value in "Hedge-cricket)s s(ing," letter-to-letter & the leap between words not 'dashed' together (revealing the previous two as *so* bound together)--attention to which structure(s), in language, evokes or springs correspondences with structures of other



natural events (or vice-versa: attention to extra-linguistic sound provokes awareness of like patterns in language)--

. . . .

--symbolism not 'reference' but recognition of structural identities binding the world (trance state where sound is a calling forth)--Keats' attention to s s (including gap between s's), *heard* (& seen on the page) makes a name that shows me some part of events of August 31, 1977--day & night the gap-ping, then resumption, "s sing" there in the words/here to my senses as 'crickets'--anything but romantic/anthropomorphic mis-taking of bugs' "singing" (Keats often careless of diction/denotation, so surely riding meaning in the sound--)

. . . .

--'dead ends': *description* (Williams' 'copying nature'), forcing the materials of language to correspond to habitual orderings thought to render what is thereby not seen; *invention*, mere gallivanting around in language materials endlessly provocative/striking/autointoxicative (though such is often preliminary to real work), a willed arrangement of words valued for its own sake (like description, this is something)--

. . . .

--words are *words* (ancient 'horticultural' or 'hunting' magic or/cultural habit persisting in some guise--much 'more' than we know)--the *world* is 'beyond us' yet given to the sentience as something of language process is, each time--it's a 'speaking to the beyond' from the 'unknown depths of the soul' (or the unknown 'beyond' speaking to 'soul') that makes a commonplace articulated--two together ('nothing personal')--say what happens/happening is said--

ROBERT GRENIER

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## GRENIER'S SENTENCES

The work is unavoidably an object. A production number--500 index cards, one poem per card. Intended to be read in any order (ideally all at once, as on a wall), it denies book format, in which binding would give only one of all possible readings page-by-page. Any sequence is a chance ordering, deprogramming mental glue. The words rise off the page as the mind would like--well-lit, pure, detached--"in eternity." The heavy, white paper (field) sets off the IBM Selectric type (thing) as utter contrast to dismantle the apparatus of conveyance and release the word and its effect. Yet the work is physically awkward, a mechanical problem, and calls attention to itself as visual format. So the object



(box) is a complex pun, a narrative grotesque fixing time in ironic termination of desire, as much of the actual writing puns. The blue Chinese cloth box with ivory clasps might hold the murder weapon or a biological anomaly, while the heavy white paper exists in opposition to physicality itself. The box is both fetish and transparency, and is identical to the work inside.

*SENTENCES* is a distillation of six years' close attention to "everything going on all the time." Out of voices heard, bird calls, shape of landscape, bolt from the blue, Kerouac's "void bowl slant," some shift makes for denotative signal, as bird pistols brain with peculiar stop to all sound. One class of perception in the taxonomy of this work then shows parallels of language to outside. "walking down Washington Avenue" shifts syntactic center as one walking is not all there but in walking. If "walking" were enough, why "down" to complete it--much less "Washington Avenue" changes scale entirely (arrives). In many cases though the shift is in the panorama implied by the words, rather than word meeting panorama head-on and equalling it. "being downstairs//like being awake" is a moment of truth, but not in different use of "being." Each line makes a diminished narrative set, through memory (lines hardening). The shift specifies a synaesthetic moment in language shape. Landscape leads through memory to words (nature as creator), but it is not landscape which follows (nature as created not the same). The composite world picture is at the mercy of the word. Revelation is a stylistic conceit. Furthermore, the mind knows this (syntax thinking).

Voice invested with power to make real (symbolism) is finally undermined. Any person's voice noted shows desire as wish/bend to unyielding other. Cued by dissonance under scrutiny of arbitrary white, the sum total of the cards exposes the point where structure collapses into words. Not the work objectified (as a "point of rest") but language brought to light through the failure of object (a "point of unrest"). The loop is a paradigm for this effect. In

#### SNOW

snow covers the slopes covers the slopes  
snow covers the slopes covers the slopes  
snow covers the slopes covers the slopes  
snow covers the slopes covers the slopes

the fact appears and disappears through phrase variation. The 1-2-3-4 pattern is a grid to distribute the split phrase. Both parallel the perception and a voice humming to itself, the poem is first of all the active mind seeing the poem on the page.

#### TWO

around twelve  
at 12



"twelve" and "12" are heard differently because seen differently, not because noted differently. The fact then is the different notation and its base in language apparatus. Originally heard in exterior "materials" (crudely), the interruption of phenomena by the act of writing forces words into actual units of recognition. The question is not assumed. "saids" might be one word or many. "close close" is a language equivalent to Wittgenstein's cube. "it's you" extends the moment into any dialogue. "transference isolates" acts as a romantic landscape, greater than any man. "searchlight distributes sky light it administers" might be movement or tautology, depending on the resolution inherent in the phrase. A vocabulary of possible experience builds from simple counting, as these "units" enumerate any notation. The risk is that the absolute intention (number) be confused with the dramatic irony of everyday life. In an instant nature closes in on the work. But *SENTENCES* does not collapse, because its language is outside of time.

Is it enough? There are no sentences in *SENTENCES*, like a glass ball nearly impossible to find. The work refuses closure (capital letter, period meaning a "completed thought") in being completely self-contained. It might be the only constitution possible for the republic in which one would want to live. Yet "it changes nothing" to note this. "You could put them (the cards) together but not now." The story is built from denial of story, of holding back. "But even the nervous tension... sensitive to moral weight.. cannot replace... events..." The box. "The rapidity with which they move as of themselves... compels sequence... concentrates action many times..." Charlie Chaplin made full-length features from discrete bits. "a proportion or style... mixed with story and with heart-beat..." Accessibility doubles (exactly) one's problem. "He who... is fated to style had at best make as much story of it as he can to be free..." The system is fully integrated, organic. *SENTENCES* locates the fact of style in the fact of language in American writing. There is certainly much more to be done, starting with--writing in sentences.

BARRETT WATTEN

(Some quotes above from Louis Zukofsky, *Prepositions*, "The Effacement of Philosophy" and "Modern Times".)

GRENIER BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Dusk Road Games* (1967; Pym-Randall Press). *Series* (1978; This, c/o Small Press Distribution, 1636 Ocean Ave, Kensington, CA 94707; \$4). *Sentences* (1978; Whale Cloth Press, c/o M. Waltuch, 60 Kinnaird St., Cambridge, MA 02139; \$10 individuals & \$20 institutions).



## MAKING WORDS VISIBLE

Hannah Weiner, The Clairvoyant Journal (1978; Angel Hair Press, Box 718, Lenox, MA 02140). (*A tape version of the text, with three readers--fully as interesting as the book--is available from New Wilderness Foundation, 365 West End Ave, N.Y., N.Y. 10024; \$8*)

We all see words: signs of a language we live inside of. & yet these words seem exterior to us--we see them, projections of our desires, and act, often enough, out of a sense of their demands.

Hannah Weiner, in her various poetic works, and, most especially, in the long poem she calls The Clairvoyant Journal has taken this fact of living a life inside of language most literally. "I see words", by which Weiner insists that the letters that spell out the various words and phrases of her work appear in various sizes and colors on other people and objects, but also, more importantly, on her self. Her work, then, consists of taking the dictation of these seen ciphers--she calls them voices--and weaving them into a text.

To "see words" is to be inside language and looking out onto it. For Weiner, this has involved an actual seeing (clairvoyance), although at the level of the text it is present as a pervasive citationality (both in the sense of a sighting and a quoting).

And yet, because Weiner's work is so rooted in the momentum of the act of writing,\* the diaristic energy manages to totally submerge (immerse) the citational shards into its flow. She has herself said that she is interested in an electric energy that completely fills the page, transforming it into an impermeable field. It is this element that manages to fuse the eruptive fragments ("voices") into a completely uninterrupted continuity. So that the three voice simultaneity that makes up her text reads out as a linear syntax, while proposing a complete awareness of its paratactic method, its shard-like materials. Yet, finally, these different voices set up a syntax that is not linear or monologic (the continuous strip of the prose line) nor do they simply establish a discourse that is dialogic or reflective. Here, the mind is constantly interrupting--intruding upon, commenting on--its own processes with its caps THIS GIVES ME ORDERS and its italics *don't make so many generalizations stupid silly*. ("How can I describe anything when all these interruptions keep *arriving* and then tell me I didn't describe it well WELL") But, more than this, the text makes one piece of (*with*) all this activity, continuously integrating "outside" elements into its compositional field without compromising their vertical disruption of the uniplanar surface. ("Each page a state of consciousness.")

The sections of her Journal that Weiner has chosen to publish in the forthcoming Angel Hair edition are characterized, even more apparently than



some previously published sections of the work, by a recurrence of the most commonplace mental static that is as much an example of obsessiveness as a method of release from it. I can't think of a book which has more insistently faced these materials--"BIG OK SIT STILL RHYS COMES  
*PREGO* INstructions this morning: BATH, SIT FOR AN HOUR *bathrobe*  
 A LOT OF RHYS thinking of going to Jerry's reading it's at 2 saw 2  
 OCLOCK Still depressed, dreamt I was being married off to some fat  
 Jewish boy I had to wear this shower cap *be careful* tonight *don't dream*.  
 PUT SOME CLOTHES ON Is that Peggy, the same as GET DRESS There's a  
 lot of energy in this 30's robe can see parts of me light up *glowing*--  
 nor one that has looked out on this world with a more pervasively whimsical  
 refusal to take oneself--& these facts of life--too seriously. That this  
 book is largely composed of debris may account for some of the anxiety in  
 reading it.

In her work, Weiner has explored--come upon--the language that fills, and often enough, controls our lives (every day, *common* place: she says "group mind"). That these elements are *seen* in the work, hence physicalized, palpable, gives us a view of what is given, what has been handed down: &

by seeing the language operate, we can start to free ourselves from a compulsive obedience to it. The citational: shards of language, ciphers to be examined for evidence, yet which we are forever beholden to... which holds our sight within its views. The purpose of writing, Weiner says, is to "change consciousness". --This work is, for me, heroic because of its radical reaffirmation of a commitment to writing as a specific kind of activity rather than as a specific kind of object making, an investigation rather than an aestheticization.

Weiner's writing is a chronicle of a mind coming to terms with itself, quite literally: for the terms are, in fact, made visible. We all see words, but it is our usual practice to see *through* them. Weiner has focussed her gaze not through, not beyond, but onto.

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\* Weiner's work stands as a rather remarkable extension of the diaristic tradition in literature. The sense of writing out a life, the enormous force that words have to come of their own, is graphically portrayed in Truffaut's *Diary of Adele H*, where the writing is more overpowering than anything else, but also where it is never reflected on. Bresson, in *Diary of a Country Priest*, also focusses on the keeping of a journal, here the paper absorbing the ink of each word penned as if it were life soaking up so much blood.

\*\* "The poetry...begins...when the composing factor--the dictation, the unknown, the outside--enters the work and...begins to construct a poetry



that was not lyric but narrative... It involves a reversal of language into experience...a polarity and experienced dialectic with something other than ourselves... A *reopened language* lets the unknown, the Other, the outside in again as a voice in the language.... Here is the insistence of ...outside, an other than the reasonable is said to enter the real.... The voice arguing the necessity of an outside may strike the reader as odd since the outside, in whatever sense one takes, is usually assumed.... Its placement here as a composing factor in the poem disturbs our sense of a settled relation to language. It does...insist that language is not simply relational, but rather a knowing.... It is within language that the world speaks to us with a voice that is not our own. This is, I believe a first and fundamental experience of dictation.... In the reversal of language into experience (visibility and invisibility) fold into one another and unfold, composing as voices in our language.... To understand the 'outside,' that curiously naive-sounding insistence of this work, it will not do to take off on those supernaturalisms which precondition and explain the experience. The dictation remains persistently of the world.... The outside as it becomes technical to our experience re-poses a tense discourse, which interrogates the humanism and anthropomorphism of what is usually thought to be the poem's expression." (From "The Practice of Outside" by Robin Blaser in The Collected Books of Jack Spicer, Black Sparrow Press, 1975, \$5.)

CHARLES BERNSTEIN

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## STATEMENT ON READING IN WRITING

At a certain point in post-industrial society, all of the social expediency of art is diminished in favor of personal necessity. Where in earlier societies the artistic activity was directed to socially regulated functions of a group such as performative situations or practical gestures for public and semi-public occasions -- today the compelling basis of writing begins at a point of alienation from any socially explicit occasion. Which fosters the link with reading -- that now, writers are readers first and their isolateness maintains them even against their will as such. The only clear "writers" would be those putting their work directly into market, working on a deadline, a definitive readership standing by to man the reading-boats. Writers without such an immediate market are in the damning circumstance, more often than not, of trying to insist on themselves as *not readers*, against all odds, in service of the fetish of originality. So the task is now to move towards a more affirmative stance



as readers, to make of the act of reading the art that it in fact is. READING IS TRADITIONALLY THE MOST NEGLECTED OF ALL ARTS. Because it's the most abused. The psychological struggle that should concern us is not that of individual writers overcoming "the burden of the past" (Bate, Bloom) but individual readers overcoming the burden of the present, which is to view reading as a fallen, passive, irresponsible but entertaining state. This is the reader-as-junkie. What presently seems to count among writers is that the writing be psychologically valuable to the writer, but this is simply to increase the hold solipsism always wants to maintain on us. The *communality* of the reading/writing circuit is composed entirely of readers, not writers. If all writing were to cease right now, the fantastic load of the already-written would be more than sufficient to sponsor a new race of genius speakers and rhetoricians and conversationa- lists. I think we're at a point where we can actually say (probably we're the first people in history to get to this point) that there exists *enough writing* already. To affirm one's position as a reader is to pronounce oneself willing to work with other people rather than work for them. Always this haunting sense, that in writing you're doing somebody else a big favor, while reading is just a solitary unrelated selfish act. A per- spective we've got to understand is writing as a selfish indulgence in the notion of originality. Originality, while not a useless word by any means, is profoundly artificial. Insofar as the "original" writer becomes the aristocratic dispenser of trinkets, originality has got to go. To be a reader is not to be unoriginal, not to be a primitive under instruction of the civilized author, not to be a castrated writer. To be a reader is to be the willing receptor of transformative agencies destined to either alter or confirm one's position in a social circuitry. To take this on as responsibility is to be willing to regulate one's Desire as an individual energy occurring within a social field. To persist in the writerly fantasy of originality is to succumb to the hideous fantasy of reproduction without sex. This is all becoming too familiar to be true, or is it? A "personal necessity" that tries to mesmerize everybody into keeping their distance, doing their "thing", and hoard their fantastic experience of reading in their private strongbox of thought, is no longer necessary. My hope is that we'll come to be less willing to confuse this with writing, and under- stand writing again someday as a function of repetition, of which reading is the clearest sensual link we have with the invisibility of Desire.

JED RASULA

SUBMISSIONS OF RELEVANT MANUSCRIPTS ARE WELCOME



PERELMAN: 7 WORKS

Bob Perelman, 7 Works (1978; The Figures, c/o Small Press Distribution, 1636 Ocean View Ave., Kensington, CA 94709; \$3.50)

"Continuity exists in the nervous system" is the prior statement I am moved to bring to my reading of the present work, the present *works*, which, taken *in concert*, insist on a like continuity.

Composition-- to include the entire repertoire of generative methods here employed-- "in actual obedience to what / underlies every act". Not a masque of ironies, but an earnest investigation of 'what follows'.

"The exact person ought to remain. Certainly no one can afford to stop. A person's experience must contain several meanings, or he cannot be careful." An exaction of caring that carries through the work, leads the work, fore-casting an erotic climate in which "the body / merely one side of the question" may become "the whole body".

"Each sentence is complete". A specific largesse. "There is more thought than time, more water than vocabulary." So this writing 'on' water-- this "dear grim earthly intelligibility"--casual: "You want everything at once. Read my long list of fancy goods"-- and essential: "A journey of this kind is no joke."

"I am prepared to hear these numbers..."

TED PEARSON

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Bob Perelman's 7 Works brings together pieces that have appeared singularly in other spaces (A Hundred Posters, ZZZZZZ, This, Tottel's, Roof and Miam), and thus allows one the luxury of easy comparison. What one finds is a facility with different forms, lengths, subject/object distances, found material. Each of the works is quite unique, looks different, in many ways seems to think differently.



But there is overall a sense of a highly trained intellect at work, one that leans toward metaphysics, sometimes actively seeking sonority and interesting juxtaposition, as in the found material of "Essay on Style," at other times switching into contemplative gear, as in "Before Water," where form rolls back on content in an unrelenting baring of thought/word processes; and often poking fun - quietly but nonetheless persistently - at "poetry":

Ten thousand forest trees stood  
rigid in a theory typical of  
Cartesian linguistics. The cold  
air tensed against analogies. -- from "Road Tones"

There is much humor, where one least expects it. See particularly "How To Improve," a prose piece in eight parts, laced with lovely ironies, i.e.:

The first time you meet the pigs in their pen, the proximity looks as though it means "full of you, disinclined to look." Feeling that it is quite evident without bothering. Think, grunting and squealing, and pass by. You may even be so far along you cast a cold eye. Then you notice a new connection: "The noisome odor of the slaughterhouse." A brief consultation will put you right again, and show you the means, and furthermore, the kinship.

I am fascinated by a parallel development in "An Autobiography" and one of the letters discussed in L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E last issue (No. 4, August 1978), John Ensslin's article on schizophrenic writing. Graphic, mouth-watering, and obsessive description of foods, and, in Perelman's case, the meta-statement, "Nothing can prevent madness."

CAROLE KORZENIOWSKY

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### CLARK

#### SOME NOTES ON THOMAS A. CLARK

Sincere. *Sine cere*. Without wax. No filler. Object. *Ob jaceo*. To throw against. A destination. Aimed at. Focus.

Thomas A. Clark speaking: "Years working in a short space... the trouble was, how to distance it from one's own mind. The language became



more and more self-referent and 'obscure' in the worst sense. So I've been making poems using texts which were 'outside my own head', and treating them in different ways: permutational, fragmentary, etc. I set about experiments like cutting columns in half, or placing frames over a piece of prose. I think that knowing to look at all and knowing what to look for is rather a lot."

And so it is. *The Secrecy of the Totally* (1969) collage and chance generated works.

ragged party of docile  
and romantic sunsets

*Emphatic Forms* (1971) with epigram from Wittgenstein: "We make to ourselves pictures of facts." Pieces gathered from assorted language primers. The act of isolation being the poet's only intervention.

to speak distinctly  
to speak loudly  
to speak softly  
to walk straight on  
to stare fixedly  
to see clearly

To see clearly! Eye poems. The Stein directive: write not what you see but what you know is there.

why have you not eaten this piece?

In *The North Bohemian Coalfields* (1970) the language and approach is slightly more oblique, dramatic and speech-oriented in tone with punctuating slash marks further suggesting abrupt shifts:

/ there falls here also the /  
/ image of the bridge /  
/ through the moment when  
there is nothing /  
the broad daylight /

Light and function a persistent concern in all these works. Illuminated stillness. The poem's workings. A Basho-like sensibility. Completeness ever deferred. Not particulars but *Some Particulars* (1971). Selection. Choice. Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* cited on the title page: "...I have laboriously collected this Cento out of divers writers..." The cento itself a literary patchwork. In the fifth century the Empress Eudoxia composed a life of Christ in verse with every line drawn from Homer.

Clark's sources: the 18th century British naturalist Gilbert White, the Life and Letters of Samuel Palmer, Walton's *The Compleat Angler*-- all anatomists in their own right further anatomized by Clark. A strong tho



distilled taste harkening back to the original. Illumination. What would normally be overlooked in the perusal casual or otherwise is brought into the light. At times almost miraculously. The last piece in *Some Particulars* ironically titled "Note"

on the 11th  
of April 1971  
across the centre  
of page 117  
of Burton's  
"Anatomy of Melancholy"  
there was a rainbow

".....and bees amongst the rest  
though they be flying away, when  
they hear any tingling sound,  
will tarry behind."

These are spectral works. Beautifully deadpan.

*Pointing Still* (1974) records (and only that) six incidents of watches lost. Time frozen but rediscovered and re-articulated in the virtue of its factness. Pointing here or there. Still as in at rest or yet. Suspended.

*A Still Life* (1977). Picture in a frame. Or a quiet life. Both resonate here. Present as in the earlier works is an affection for and a studied observation of nature. The presentation of images self-informed and complete though transient and accidental. Poise. Balance. Discernment. The first piece in the book sets the tone and isolates the manner of the music to unfold:

Place words end to end as dry stones.  
Using only local materials, arrange them  
sparsely to admit plenty of ventilation.  
They will stand among the fiercest winds  
and keep the sheep out.

A wall extends horizontally as well as vertically. Light bends to make a spectrum. Light's torque.

"Rainbow"

At the end of each arc of speech  
the treasure of rest.

RAY DI PALMA



CLARK BIBLIOGRAPHY: The Secrecy of the Totally (1969; South Street Publications, Sherbourne, Dorset). The North Bohemian Coalfields (1970; Bettiscombe Press, Bettiscombe, Dorset). Emphatic Forms (1971; Bettiscombe Press). Some Particulars (The Jargon Society, Gnomon Distribution, Box 106, Frankfort, KY 90601; \$4.50). Pointing Still (1974; Arc Publications, Gillingham, Kent). Some Life Until I Took Wing (1972; Writer's Forum, 262 Randolph Avenue, London W9; 2nd edition, 1978; 15p.). A Still Life (1977; The Jargon Society; \$4.50). Pebbles from a Japanese Garden (1977; Topia Press, c/o Karl Torok, 4 Oakfield Grove, Bradford BD9 4PY, England). Fragments of a Walled Garden (1977; Braad Editions, c/o Kevin Power, Brard, Commune de Loubressac, par Bretenoux, Lot 46, France; \$4). Moschatel Press (Iverna Cottage, Rockness Hill, Nailsworth, Glos., England) has published a series of small pamphlets, some of which are still available, write for details: *Fill in the Drawing / Fritillary / Folding the Last Sheep / An Epitaph / The Garden / Horizon / Four Flowers / Iris / Shape and Shade / September / A Basket of Landscapes / Pebbles / Glade / Deserts of Afghanistan / L'invitation Au Voyage / Anemone / Moss Stitch / A Vase of Daffodils / Flower / Petit Fours / Painted Lady / Two Horizons / Thrums / Hart's Tongue / Foliations / Two Acres / The Bright Glade / A Meadow Voyage / Haystacks and Islands / Nine Roses / Water Cresses / Fly Patterns for Still Waters / Gatherings*. An interview with Clark is available in Poetry Information #18 (c/o Peter Hodgkiss, 18 Clairview Rd, London; 75 p.).

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Alan Sondheim and the Knee-Jerk School of Criticism

In L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E (#3, June 1978) there appears an attack on John Cage and Marcel Duchamp by my fellow survivor from the 1960's, Alan Sondheim, which attacks these artists not for their work or for what they have said but for what Sondheim sees them as having failed to do--to end "privilege" (undefined) and of producing decontextualized art. He ties this last concept with being "particulate" or contextualized as "one basis, same thing." His text comes, apparently, from a longer work entitled "Heroes, How They File Past," so perhaps some of the brevity of the discussion explains its quality of raising questions that might well be answered elsewhere in his text. But my own questions that are provoked by Sondheim's text are not so much in defense of Cage or Duchamp, both of whom I happen to admire, but are concerned with what seem to be the assumptions of Sondheim's text:

- 1) I am bothered by its quality of automatism, of reflex action. He



seems to be arguing from the point of view of the people without asking himself who the people are. If he wants to claim them as the statistical majority, then either he must show that Cage and Duchamp do, in fact, assume privilege and that this is not in the people's best interests, or he must propose a positive model of popular art (Khachaturian? the faceless collective piano concerti from the People's Republic of China?) which is more in the people's best interests, and which creates a popular context...

2) The very essence of his attack on privilege is the assumption that privilege is inherently unfair. But is it? I was privileged to be taught German at an early age, and it is my pleasure and my privilege to read in that language. Am I a snob because I sometimes speak in that language or read in it, when not everybody else has had the privilege of learning it? Avant-garde art--and through the years Cage and Duchamp have both remained or at least had implications for the avant-garde--is a language, native to some and taught to others; the benefits of having worked in that language can be made available to all, over a period of time. But to attack the privilege of working in that language seems to be to propose its eradication--or at least its watering down into a sort of bastardization.... It is indeed a privilege, if one be an artist, to be that first person, and it is only when there is unequal access to cultural privilege that the situation becomes unwholesome. When an elite restricts access to cultural privileges to itself--as in 18th Century France or early 20th Century Europe--then the situation should be changed. But to attack privilege as such... is to guarantee mediocrity, and in the long run people's hunger simply cannot be satisfied by mediocre art. Thus, if Sondheim wanted to guarantee a popular context for art, he should not be automatically attacking privilege but should be working on the problem of access....

3) Finally, Sondheim seems to advocate a process of reading "through the text, consider[ing] possibilities of theory." That is, of course, its own hermeneutic--an advocated method of reading, of interpretation. I'm all for it. But why not, instead of attacking Cage and Duchamp whose "privilege" is only their response to the real needs of their moments, as they saw them--Sondheim uses the metaphor of Solzhenitsyn's Gulag, "random terror leading to the Gulag" as giving the logic to his dissatisfaction with using aleotric methods in art--why not instead explore the nature of not just a personal, individual hermeneutic of experiencing art but a plural, social one? Why not explore the question not just of *What am I experiencing when I read/hear/see this work?* but of *What are we experiencing when WE read/hear/see it?* Or even when we perform it? That would seem to be a more profitable area to explore than this automatic attack on privilege, for it would raise the real social contextualization of a work, the problem of access to it.

DICK HIGGINS



## THE HUM OF WORDS

Rosmarie Waldrop, The Road is Everywhere or Stop This Body (1978; Open Places, Box 2085, Stephens College, Columbia, MO 65201; \$3)

*I veer toward the endless  
distractions of the foreground  
even while clamoring  
for wholeness*

This book contains a sequence in 80 parts, and pages, shot through with road signs and seasonal photographs, taken in motion, radiating a *cone of attention*. Rosmarie Waldrop's largest book in half-a-dozen years. She stakes out for us, gradually, a parallel between 2 senses of traffic: *the movement (of vehicles or pedestrians) through an area or along a route* and *the information or signals transmitted over a communication system: messages*. So we find content doubled, folded back into the constructed spaces of the page -- first, revealing and articulating an experience of motion (and of mind/heart/memory/body/dream in motion through everyday traffic): second, doing the same for an experience of speech/words/meanings/writing as this second perspective actively unfolds from a transcription and embodiment of the first. The writing entertains a constant retrieval from one plane to another. A bifurcation, which registers gradations in both, *translating / one measurement into another*, so that the intervals achieve solidity. We notice then that the facticity of the everyday world is incomplete. Such a double vision is one of the book's achievements.

Comprehension (a *sequence / of ready signs*) bleeds through. It is performed in a space & in intermittent shapes we can measure, as an abstraction we are *obliquely conscious* of. This abstraction is our ability to frame and reframe the flows around us, and the explosions which *fracture the present*. Body becomes its own flow; the person is a matrix of those flows & exchanges & messages. Person is a communicative system, a traffic.

The *mind floats headlights on time*, & transforms what is immobile into a secret generation of desires and presence: *words / germinate on their own obstructions*. Syllables are implacable; they secrete their own space, dislodging our breath at an angle. They congest in the unbroken slowness of the gaps they make, where mind speeds ahead of body, where perceptions become symptoms.

And don't those gaps -- and the line breaks & disruptions which highlight them -- begin to remind us of another, more social gap?? A gap between our desires and our experience, between the outside which encloses us and the inside which projects and endorses us. *damned-up friction / knots want into / need widens : as if the future had to be / remembered words*. This resembles Ernst Bloch's idea of the novum -- what "has not



come to be in the past,... which is drifting and dreaming in the darkness, in the factual blue of objects... as content of the deepest hope."

This difference never happens without words -- a tumescence which consumes all representation in the affections of solid paper. Precisely & secretively -- particularly here as the last word of a phrase often begins a new physical line and a new grammatical unit; as if intentions and conventions are bi-valved, perforated, condensed, accelerated, paralleled: *the / double sheet of the / way back of / the outside rises up. Surface / doubles the depth just as talk / doubles the frequencies.* Both assert attention, weaving & unweaving, giving us the material enticements of text as well as a recollected sighting from a landscape -- an outer landscape which is not separate from the languagescape of the text. The flows we see -- these sightings are not retinal flashes. We find them embodied, as the journey reapproaches the surface (the site of the structure). Light is ink, a series of displacements taking shape against any object, while *words make you your own object.*

Illusion dwindles into the page's margin. Yet the atomized self cannot live without these illusions. At times, *the blue bodiless shock of the air* is too much for it. At best, writing *can't find a center for its / surfaces superimposed in constant / articulation.* At those points, all obstacles recede -- both the taken-for-granted self and taken-for-granted illusionism. Otherwise (& this is the danger constantly tempted here) surface bursts and yet still slackens into familiar versifying, where disruptions seem ornamental, imagistic, comforting, rhetorical. A constant activity would be a surface without grips -- what is most courageously desired, what *accompanies / the tissue of pleasure inside / pleasure.*

BRUCE ANDREWS

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## THE AMPLIFIER, SILENCE

Larry Eigner, Things Stirring Together Or Far Away (1977; Black Sparrow Press, Box 3993, Santa Barbara, CA 93105; \$4)

I  
Discretionary attention, fingersmake slowly apparent a-line-at-a-time there. Look on a world, screen of complicatedly singular event, out the window. Precisely no thing displaced by two eyes. Things horizontal through air, held by vertical swaths of sound; flutter back. Simple thing on thing torn by wind constant in and from the eye.



II

kids. light. grass. world. sky. trees. wind. bird. sleep. sea. year.  
waters. branches. silence. dog. street. roof. sense. car. houses. cloud.  
wall. snow. sun. leaves. gulls. hills. night. sound. hours. air. earth.  
room. man. woods.

III

No gaps. Distance furbish sighted scape, electrical insistent halting  
rhythm. Deserting familiar for strange fact, occluded, admittedly.  
Slowed quick mind, geiger capacity paramount gauge of surroundings. This  
life a perfect receptacle for chance, to look at others, an alteration  
of sequenced events. Whole thing segmented; the glancing possibility  
of camera's shutter. Laps over the side of a tree, there (pointing).  
Memory recharges batteries presently used. Opaque shield of eyes over a  
mind.

A sight, flitting the sense. A light, tensed.

Urged into present location, not able to move. Strictures of sighted  
heads hold a thin grasp in fluctuating air, secured.

ALAN DAVIES

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PALMER

*from* NOTES FOR ECHO LAKE

1

He says this red as dust, eyes a literal self among selves and picks the  
coffee up.

Memory is kind, a kindness, a kind of unlistening, a grey wall even,  
toward which you move.

It was the poet's wife who remarked that he never looked anyone in the eye.  
(This by water's edge.)

This by water's edge.

And all of the song 'divided into silences,' or 'quartered in three  
silences'.

Dear Charles, I began and again and again to work, always with no  
confidence as Melville might explain. Might complain.



A message possibly intercepted, possibly never written. A letter she had sent him.

But what had his phrase been exactly, 'Welcome to the Valley of Tears,' or maybe 'Valley of Sorrows.' At least one did feel welcome, wherever it was.

A kind of straight grey wall beside which they walk, she the older by a dozen years, he carefully unlistening.

Such as words are. A tape for example a friend had assembled containing readings by H.D., Stein, Williams, Dorn, others. Then crossing the bridge to visit Zukofsky, snow lightly falling.

Breaking like glass Tom had said and the woman from the island. Regaining consciousness he saw first stars then a face leaning over him and heard the concerned voice, 'Hey baby you almost got *too* high.'

Was was and is. In the story the subject disappears.

They had agreed that the sign was particular precisely because arbitrary and that it included the potential for (carried the sign of) its own dissolution; and that there was a micro-syntax below the order of the sentence and even of the word; and that in the story the subject disappears it never disappears. 1963: only one of the two had the gift of memory.

Equally one could think of a larger syntax, e.g. the word-as-the-book proposing always the book-as-the-word. And of course still larger.

Beginning and ending. As a work begins and ends itself, or begins and rebegins or starts and stops. Ideas as elements of the working not as propositions of a work, even in a propositional art. (Someone said someone thought.)

That is, snow

a) is

b) is not

falling, check neither or both.

If one lives in it. 'Local' and 'specific' and so on finally seeming less interesting than the 'particular' wherever that may locate.

'What I really want to show here is that it is not at all clear *a priori* which are the simple colour concepts.'

Sign that empties itself at each instance of meaning. (And how else to reinvent attention.)

Sign that empties...That is *he* would ask *her*. He would be the asker and she unlistening, nameless mountains in the background partly hidden by cloud.

The dust of course might equally be grey, the wall red, our memories



perfectly accurate. A forest empty of trees, city with no streets, a man having swallowed his tongue. As there is no 'structure' to the sentence and no boundary or edge to the field in question. As there is everywhere no language.

As I began again and again, and each beginning identical with the next, meaning each one accurate, each a projection, each a head bending over the motionless form.

And he sees himself now as the one motionless on the ground, now as the one bending over. Lying in an alley between a house and a fence (space barely wide enough for a body), opening his eyes he saw stars and heard white noise followed in time by a face and a single voice.

Now rain is falling against the south side of the house but not to the north where she stands before a mirror.

'Don't worry about it, he's already dead.'

'Te dérange pas, il est déjà mort.'

'É morto lui, non ti disturba.'

She stands before the mirror touches the floor. Language reaches for the talk as someone falls. A dead language opens and opens one door.

So here is color. Here is a color darkening or color here is a darkening. Here white remains...

And you indicate the iris of the portrait's eye, a specific point on the iris, wanting that colour as your own. There is a grey wall past which we walk arm in arm, fools if we do greater fools if we don't.

And I paint the view from my left eye, from the balcony of the eye overlooking a body of water, an inland sea possibly, possibly a man-made lake.

And do I continue as the light changes and fades, eventually painting in pitch dark. That is, if you write it has it happened:

It rained again that night deep inside  
where only recently had occurred the abandonment of signs

MICHAEL PALMER

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MICHAEL PALMER: A LANGUAGE OF LANGUAGE

Michael Palmer writes a splendid poetry of displacement, of shifts and nomadic drifts of text through zones of page. The operative semantic



is copulative, a linking (purely syntagmatically) of isolated units still preserving their molecular independency. He writes a double assault: on page per se and on the vector of reference. There is no place in his work because there largely is no referent incanted. Reference is rendered intransitive and instigates the arbitrary flow of linguistic signs. Referrals without the finality of reference, ectoskeletal structures carrying deliberately interior deformations. Frequently logic is placed in contest with a syntax resulting in the gravity of utterance being withheld. Sentences register as syntagms, surface activities of syntax, no entity-terminals but simply the betweenness of a trace, word motions rather than conveyed ideations. Logical relation is violently displaced by verbal relation and spacing, so that space becomes the abyss causality falls into. And this space in Palmer is less projective (a breath withheld) than the violated function of the sign: the articulation of displacement. Space becomes the agonistic surface, the zone where words displace themselves. Palmer's consummate craft is the superb orchestration of these displacements: to activate fissures, architecturally tensified, and phrases that remain stiff in a precision of placement as all meaning slides. Viewed temporally this all amounts to a consecutivity minus a consequentiality. In Palmer's poems there is, deliberately, no purpose. This leads to local composition, an investigation of grammatological space per se, of space as deferral, of placement and occurrence as difference. Constant, consecutive invention on the plane of the signifier.

The process of reading becomes a muscular activity of the mind operating in tension through disjunctions, aborted vectors, non-purposive contexts. Everything happens on the level of the signifier; semic discharge across a surface and the surface is that discharge. Page/space an utterly non-hermetic experience. Meanings localized within the isolate sign. Contexts displace to indicate, if anything, the schizophrenic predications of language. (Language as a branch plant of schizophrenic emission?) To place us in the movements of a language of schizzes is Ipseity. Dis / place / meant. Page for Palmer is the topography of the disjunctive, supporting the integral violence of transformationality. For the steady, consecutive plod of language, line after line, is at the same time its violent transformation. Such a paradox describes the horizontal identity of Palmer's signifier: a violent stability of grapheme, being at the same time a violent instability in any molar aggregate of "thought." The thing it is. Writing. Written. Not that linearity disappears, on the contrary, Palmer strengthens line but only in order for it to confess more effectively its own duplicities. The worded line identifies the syntagm as a horizontal, moving segment in space possessed of the infinite capacity to absorb all breaks in causality and consequentiality within its consecutive motions. And thus the transparent guilt of reading. The guilt at witnessing a graphed pattern of place support a



huge displacement.

Palmer's most radical displacement is the break with transitivity itself. For language has become the subject of Language and we enter, as readers, the ambiguous zone of texts without absolute speakers. Palmer makes speech subordinate to writing; the speaking subject being the intractable voice displaced as an echo in the fissures of the spacing. Beyond voice and presence is syntactic space and absence -- the consummate Palmerian domain where the phonocentric becomes margined and writing comes closest to a pure Writing. Inscribed throughout his work, as its syntax motion, is the locale of the subject's disappearance. Nomadic topographies beyond the symmetries of line where language inscribes a sphere around itself and instigates a self-reflexiveness, the interrogation of the text's own limits. To write a voiceless writing is to reinvent speech as an order free of voice. Palmer, I believe, is transforming speech from a form and a vehicle into a content on the way to its reinvention. What he presents is speech without the social activity of speaking. Can this be anything else but writing?

Systematic detachment from the 'I' until there is no speaking subject. A subject alone is reading this and the words are voiceless speech in non-discursive space. It is -- as if -- the music "(was)" the consequence plus voice and so the works entirely are without music.

STEVE MC CAFFERY

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#### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

It has been brought to my attention that two seminal South American artists, Clemente Padin and Jorge Caraballo, have been imprisoned by the Uruguayan government and now have "disappeared," an all too common occur-



ence in Uruguayan jails. Padin was the editor/publisher of Ovum, the very first literary assemblage.... I urge you to write to the Uruguayan ambassador, the president of Uruguay in Montevideo, and your congress-person/government representative and request their release.... No more Lorcas assassinated! Photo-copy this letter, sign it with me, and send it to all your correspondents. This is a mail art piece that is in dead earnest.

GEOFFREY COOK

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## A COLLECT

Curtis Faville, Stanzas for an Evening Out (1978; L Publications; c/o Serendipity Books, 1790 Shattuck Ave, Berkeley, CA 94707; \$4)

Before finishing ten pages of *Stanzas for an Evening Out*, "I think movingly" about image or line or Williams, or going over old ground--I can just enjoy the "aluminum airfoils" can't I? Or do I have to expect the poem to be redefined at each writing and each poem to redefine poetry and that process to go on forever--not writing about something, but, but is there really anything more to do? Time as a subject in literature and time told by etymology, how language use is graphed on the "t" axis, are both collected in *Stanzas* which, as in the later case, is almost a chronology of styles, recent redefinitions and uses of poem and language.

Often Faville links so many talents together that one suspects that he "Taste crust and roll luxury out" and obviously "Like a rug, let it lariat, / wear blue, rodeo, associate" by which he means not alludes, but friends, atavisms like "two two year olds", imagism like "Moon evident, its scudding", New York modernism "With whose guilelessness beguiles", American classical "native tongues" andc. It is as if someone selected personal, "trashy sunsets" that "However one construe" "I have been threatened but am hopeful". He is "cold toward the new allotment", but "I have been accustomed to this before"--an intermittent, if measured approach, sliding into a skepticism about being able to say anything, "Truly international, voiceless, extinct."

"That's exactly what Wassily Kandinsky meant," says Faville in "Kunst", looking up, & through a window onto "the roof of a house from which protruded a galvanized metal stack--a hexagonal base topped with a conical, fluted funnel. That was one form." Shape? Or is he describing domestic surrealism extended upwards like the chimney from words to form. Well, anyway, more than Kandinsky, Faville's efforts remind me of Puvis de



Chavannes who first painted telegraph wires into otherwise neo-classical paintings, flattening out the planes to accommodate the wires.

In "Rotterdam" "happening meant to / incline and reflect / of an interval to oblige / band of gilded without the consolation". The method of composition being unclear is hardly relevant, as technique is not the telling point in a good recital, but a given--"folded in résumé", an elusiveness, "tamed by the resonance" (the reason for ordering the lines). ...the continual floating, hovering over, spacious, white, so by the time the book has accumulated its quota of poems that curve through pastel air, the reader keeps trying to understand the narration or intention of the best work, but Faville stops him from reading subjects into those poems and leaves just the words "every once and a while which is mode".

The words "from a neglect of chosen" "simply go about" "that she might sing". The words in a "context of vacates" in a "tug of what for" might have been \_\_\_\_\_. Might this have been.... At its best a "plain cut in counting" "nicer than bits" as opposed to "oaf's sandwich" or "plaid Fords". The book as book comes "Full circle / In the time it takes."

At times, *Stanzas* intimates language as subject, sliding away from what poems have been into words, and at times he composes in words to say how things affect him personally instead of translating the events that happen to him into events that can happen to words. Spaces open into "jiggle foci", "behest pawn", "the Hull duck trick", and seals himself, his feelings. The point is that meaning is context-dependent, and can be altered at will by association. If they mean things then things, if they mean me then me. If they are to go beyond that they must verify within and between each and so and on beyond context and what happened. In some *Stanzas* they do:

Clarity hurts our eyes.  
In the sun's continual flash  
the world curls back like  
  
brown paper, at the edge  
of experience. We walk down  
the shadowed colonnades  
  
of our lives, wearing  
sunglasses, as if blind.  
Men come out to set up  
  
mirrors along the sidewalk,  
chrome peels away, and we feel  
all that we knew is receding  
  
into the faded lawns of  
summer. Now the thin film  
of memory burns away,



the celluloid wrinkling  
in the heat waves. Unrelieved,  
we long for cool arms  
of automatic machines  
breathing in green motelrooms.  
Going by a drive-in late  
at night, we see the images  
of ourselves embrace suddenly  
before they are wrapped  
in noiseless foil and thrown  
away. Overhead two plane lights  
blink on and off, passing.

JAMES SHERRY

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BASIL BUNTING: "TAKE A CHISEL TO WRITE"

"What fun if you were a classic!" Gerard Manley Hopkins once wrote blithely the to-be poet laureate Robert Bridges. It did, in fact, take half a century to see he had made a language more snug the world. Writers in the 20's--leafing through Freud--looked around through an atonal relativity of planes Cézanne might make an apple, and found two new tools to pry the present with words: compression & fragmentation. Pound propounded both, though ended largely fragmented, as did later Charles Olson.

The Atomists, or poets of compression, such as Louis Zukofsky, Basil Bunting, Lorine Niedecker, Jonathan Williams, request a mirrored focus. The universe all *did* hold together, but with a fragility of balances unheard of. Zukofsky was to make poems all one sound, or to translate Catullus for sound faster than sense--and still 'make' sense. For fifty years Basil Bunting has hewn the language down to "fellow to axle squeak, / rut thud the rim, / crushed grit."

From *Chomei at Toyama* to *Briggflatts* he emerges a man to speak his mind--few words will do, as if we all might live well enough with flint, axe, spade, bare shelter from elements, a mind and hand to work them with. His chisel can do what took Wordsworth stanzas. *Root*, *Pith*, *Flower* were Pound's (who had much to say about the way we shape things) advice. Root in the



tongue itself--the language--and pith the heart for meaning, the flower its outcome. Absorption to core of things puts forth whorl to seed. There, the thrush might sing Vivaldi (for one who had ear) and Scarlatti time lark to heart-beat.

In Bunting's *A thrush in the syringa sings*, a classic if ever was one, language is integral to vowel with consonant: a consonance, a 'sounding together'.

Hopkins: "on ear and ear two noises too old to end"

Zukofsky: "eyes' blue iris splicing them"

Bunting: "red against privet stems as a mazurka. . ."

"to thread, lithe and alert, Schoenberg's maze." First, thrush harpsi-chords syringa along its song. The melody is of motions familiar things make to bird now balancing in Bunting's brain: death's thrust hawkbeak, slung stone, neck twist by weasel. Thunder counterpoints random gusts of wind through branch-flex. The final chord (as Charles Ives' instructions for playing *The Fourth of July*--"all the wrong notes are right."):

"O gay thrush!"

RONALD JOHNSON

(from Madeira & Toasts for Basil Bunting's 75th Birthday, edited by Jonathan Williams -- 1977; *The Jargon Society, Highlands, N.C.*, \$10).

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## WRITING AS REVERIE

"I've got a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."  
-- Dorothy to Toto, *WIZARD OF OZ* (1939)

1. An obsessive monitoring of some remembered texts becomes an immediate occasion for delay, association, structure, plenitude, a gathering for an album constructed out of items of intrinsic value. Play conceived as the manipulation of reminders, an accumulation of fragments, passes through coherence into speculative fantasy. The argument runs like this: a child, pausing before his book, falls into a reverie. This daydream, composed



in part of excessive thinking about power and mastery and a concurrent, if hidden and counter-pointed theme of loss, an anticipated, almost yearned for loss, becomes equated with a particular visit to the ocean on an overcast day. The objects employed in his fantasy are transposed harmonically and modally into its emotional leitmotifs. The visual complements the emotional tense but cannot surpass it. The child is not exhaustively reading the seascape. His eidetic imagery is fastened to the concepts preceding it. Entranced as he is in his thoughts, his actions contribute to an air of unselfconscious movement. A momentary breakthrough of sunlight between clouds interrupts the melancholy quality of his meditations and the spell is half broken, because we see him again engaged in reading. Or is he merely seeing the printed words, his gaze still directed within, as the sound of the sea thunders loudly into his consciousness and the voices and activity and movement rush into his field of attention.

2. Meditations on an esthetics of fragmentation and discontinuity. Creation of a myth. History before me an interpretable reminder. The politics of extension and intentional fragment.

The interruption of "the argument runs like this" is a simple dimensional loosening of the referential register this particular moment of writing needed. Anywhere I look (for example, the child on the beach at sunset) I pass through a storm of connectives intensifying one another.

3. Holding the entire thought over my head like a cartoon bubble in the comics. Head scrambles neologisms. Each face inscribed as photographic engraving on the surface of the page. The age of portraits, the gradual acceding of biographical identification. The inscription, the latest removable naming of the surface crests. So the completed thought now resembles the boy's hesitations on the title he gave to his text. Notice it was in a book of art history writings. He likes maxims, tautological witticisms that temporarily acquit and illuminate with guided opacity the steady pointed shadings toward the outcoming familiarity of the chosen puzzle: is he dreaming of the words themselves, divided as they are with each selected entry seal illustrated in a deluxe edition of signs?

4. "They can see right through me," thinks the child. They can diagram the space anyway they like, but I'll know by the tempo of his excitement whether or not the molecules might later collide and issue a fusion of opposites. Say the original imagery was not a naming, but an identifiable entity suspended above his head like an exclamation point. Not the subjective reticence of the I signifier, but a fire (!) and consequent, simultaneous engendering of excited tension. Bound up as he is in reading, he is perhaps for the first time equating a description with a given locale in a book--he is on a certain beach not yet named. He is reading his thoughts specifically against, next to, behind and above this presentiment

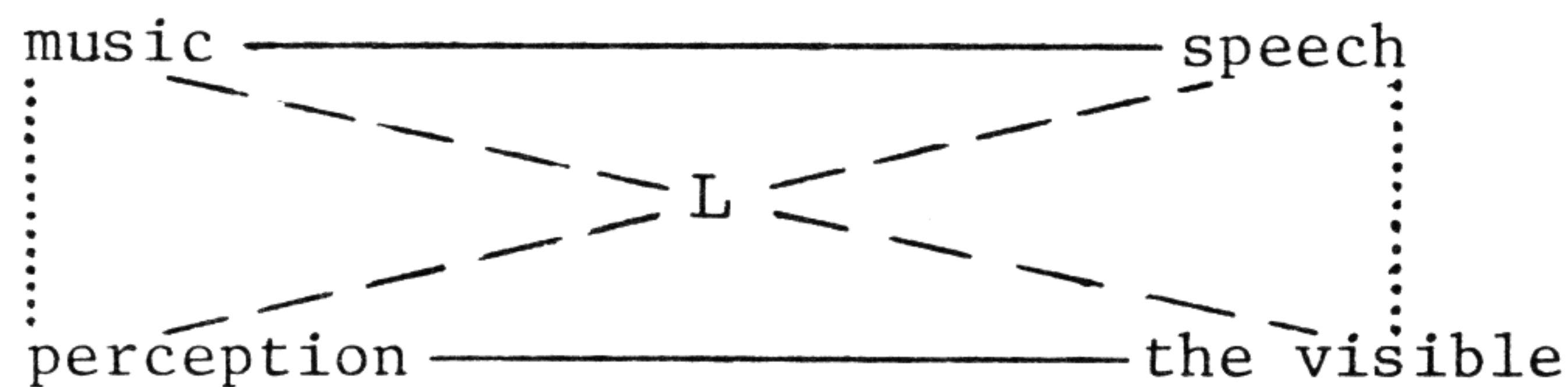


of a later time when he will item for item inscribe this sea in his album, by means of partial, token representations.

NICK PIOMBINO

*from* LANGUAGE WRITING

Rae says, "What is your fascination with graphs?" Meaning, I take it, all non-verbal presentations of information within the body of the text:



or

$$p = \left( \frac{\mathbf{v} \cdot \mathbf{r}}{i} \right) C$$

There are (millions of) relations in the world which even the most poly-  
semic sentence can only serve to distort. Principally, this is because  
the sentence, that written thing, & its equivalent in speech, what I call  
the utterance, exists thru (& across →) time. These constructions, whose  
shared feature is their refusal to assign a verb-function (the = is no more  
than a cipher marking its absence) within the field of data, conserve  
simultaneity. The syntagmatic can only unveil the world in accordance  
with some system of priorities. This is why, in the sentence, there is  
always one key term around which the others are organized. Style is often  
nothing more than a name for the strategies adopted for the placement of  
this term (classic prose loves to delay it). There exists in the very  
form of the sentence a tendency toward a kind of nominalism (wch is why  
William Carlos Williams is so utterly readable: his philosophy was the  
sentence). Higher order phenomena, states of equilibrium, in short any  
structure wch can survive only in the presence of multiple constituting  
elements (& so often in this epoch of capital the inverse of outer appear-  
ance), can only be approximated & then only accretively, thru the accumu-  
lation of several sentences, & always at a cost (at best the sentence can  
be reduced to a filter, its (dis)tortion a constant ("like static")).

But of course there's a violence involved. These objects, disruptions of the orderly body of the text, interventions against the possibility of flow, exist solely thru a confession of language's limit (wch one, reading,



wants always to deny: that idea of language as a membrane at once of both description & meaning infinitely extendible in all directions, the hedonism & arrogance of our species). Limit: why the constituting term of this fragment is *only* (& its allies: *always, any, utterly, at best, of course, nothing more than, solely, etc.*).

RON SILLIMAN

(The second figure above stands for the relation that poetry (P) is -- the terms used being vocabulary (v), rules (r), intention (i) and Context (C), an argument explained elsewhere in Silliman's "Language Writing")

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