

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

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SOUND POETRY

When considering text-sound it is energy, not semantically shaped meaning, that constitutes the essence of communicated data. The classical, Aristotelian conception of form is that of goal, the target-destination at which we arrive as at a postponed reward by way of a composition. It was, hence, to be a highly significant reversal of Aristotle when Wilhelm Reich was to declare form to be *frozen energy*, opening a path to a new conception of form as the aggregate of departures not arrivals, the notion of the de-form as a thawing of the constrict, a strategy of release, of flow.

What the sound poet practises is the deformation of linguistic form at the level of the signifier. For it is the scripted signifier, the phonematic unit that marks the crypt of a vast repression, where energy is frozen in the articulated and subordinated elements of representation. Language, through its nature as representation, its functioning by means of arbitrary, articulated signs, by means of rules, conditions and prohibitions, becomes a huge mechanism for suppressing libinal flow. To investigate sound in isolation from the sign-function, and to practice out of the actuality and non-representation of the phonematic marks an important stage in establishing the agencies for a general libidinal de-repression. Sound poetry is much more than simply returning language to its own matter; it is an agency for desire production, for releasing energy flow, for securing the passage of libido in a multiplicity of flows out of the Logos. To experience such flows (as a break-through in a break-down) is to experience the sonic moment in its full intensity of transience.

To align, realign and misalign within the anarchy of language. To cultivate excess, return language to its somatic base in order to deterritorialize the sign. Concentration on molecular flows rather than the molar aggregates. Cuttings. Fissures. Decompositions (inventions). Not intention so much as intensions. Plasticizations. Non-functionalities. Shattered sphericities. Marginalities. Somas. Nexi. La poème

c'est moi but as the inscription of the person in a transcendental pronoun that utterly annihilates the subject. Personal collapse into flux. Dilations. Positive disintegrations. Structures abandoned, departed from or de-constructed and modified into flows in accord with the unique, unpredictable molecular relationships of audiences and performers. Genetic codicities. A gift back to the body of those energy zones repressed, and channelled as charter in the overcoded structure of grammar. To release by a de-inscription those trapped forces of libido.

Julia Kristeva has written of literary practice as being 'the exploration and discovery of the possibilities of language as an activity which frees man from given linguistic networks'. Sound poetry is best described as *what sound poets do* (or as I once answered "it's a new way to blow out candles"); it thus takes its place in the larger struggle against all forms of preconditioning.

The 1950s saw the development of what might be termed a third phase in sound poetry. Prior to this time, in a period roughly stretching from 1875 to 1928, sound poetry's second phase had manifested itself in several diverse and revolutionary investigations into language's non-semantic, acoustic properties. In the work of the Russian futurists Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh, the intermedia activities of Kandinsky, the bruitist poems of the Dadaists (Ball, Schwitters, Arp, Hausmann, Tzara) and the 'paroles in liberta' of the Italian Futurist Marinetti, the phonematic aspect of language became finally isolated and explored for its own sake. Prior to this there had been isolated pioneering attempts by several writers including Christian Morgenstern (ca. 1875), Lewis Carroll ('Jabberwocky'), August Stramm (ca. 1912), Petrus Borel (ca. 1820), Moliere, the Silesian mystic Quirinus Khulman (17th century), Rabelais and Aristophanes.

The second phase is convincing proof of the continuous presence of a sound poetry throughout the history of western literature. The first phase, perhaps better termed, the first area of sound poetry, is the vast, intractable area of archaic and primitive poetries, the many instances of chant structures and incantation, of nonsense syllabic mouthings and deliberate lexical distortions still alive among North American, African, Asian and Oceanic peoples.

We should also bear in mind the strong and persistent folkloric and ludic strata that manifests in the world's many language games, in the nonsense syllabery of nursery rhymes, mnemonic counting aids, whisper games and skipping chants, mouthmusic and folk-song refrain, which foregrounds us as an important compositional element in work as chronologically separate as Kruchenykh's zaum poems (ca. 1910) and Bengt af Klintburg's use of cusha-calls and incantations (ca. 1965).

Sound poetry prior to the developments of the 1950s is still largely a word bound thing. For whilst the work of the Dadaists, Futurists and Lettrists served to free the word from its semantic function, redistri-

buting energy from theme and 'message' to matter and contour, it nevertheless persisted in a morphological patterning that still suggested the presence of the word. It is Francois Dufrene's especial achievement to have pushed the limits centripetally and to have entered into the micro-particulars of morphology, investigating the full expressive range of predenotative forms: grunts, howls, shrieks, etc. Important too, in this light, is the way meaning persists as a teleology even in *zaum*. Khlebnikov, for instance, speaks of new meanings achieved through bypassing older forms of meaning, of meanings 'rescued' by 'estrangement'.

So word persists even in the state of its own excommunication. It could be said that what sound poetry did, up to the exploitation of the tape recorder, was to render semantic meaning transcendental, as the destination arrived at by the disautomatization of sound perception. It is this theological contamination, of the meaning, like God, as a hidden presence, that specifies the limits of sound investigation up until the nineteen fifties.

With the fifties, however, came the gift of an external revolution: the availability of the tape recorder to sound poets made audio-technological advancement of the art form a reality. To summarize the several revolutionary capabilities that tape allowed: the transcendence of the limits of the human body. The tape machine, considered as an extension of human vocality allowed the poet to move beyond his own expressivity. The body is no longer the ultimate parameter, and voice becomes a point of departure rather than the point of arrival. Realizing also that the tape recorder provides the possibility of a secondary orality predicated upon a graphism (tape, in fact, is but another system of writing where writing is described as any semiotic system of storage) then we can appreciate other immediate advantages: tape liberates composition from the athletic sequentiality of the human body, pieces may be edited, cutting, in effect, becomes the potential compositional basis in which time segments can be arranged and rearranged outside of real time performance. The tape recorder also shares the micro/macro/phonic qualities allowing a more detailed appreciation of the human vocal range. Technological time can be superadded to authentic body time to achieve either an accelerated or decelerated experience of voice time. Both time and space are harnessed to become less the controlling and more the manipulable factors of audiophony. There exists then through recourse to the tape recorder as an active compositional tool, the possibility of 'overtaking' speech by the machine. Sound poetry mobilizes a certain technicism to further the deconstruction of the word; it permits, through deceleration, the granular structure of language to emerge and evidence itself. Phonetic poetry, the non-semantic poetry of the human voice, is more limited in its deconstructional scope, for it accepts the physical limitations of the human speaker as its own limitations. The tape recorder, however, allows speech-- for the first time in its

history -- a separation from voice.

(The preceding is an excerpt from Steve McCaffery's essays in Sound Poetry: A Catalogue, edited by McCaffery and B.P. Nichol; 1978, Under-which Editions, Suite 323, 100 Richmond Street East, Toronto, Ontario; 120 pages, \$5.)

STEVE MC CAFFERY

GREENWALD

IN TED GREENWALD

"Actual events are obscure
Though the observers appear clear"
-- Edwin Denby

Objects stand in rooms lit by sunlight which penetrates those rooms from front to back. The back rooms are all "TCB." The frontmost one is three large walls plus a row of windows. The walls have art (objects) on them; the windows have life. Sitting by the windows, Ted Greenwald is holding forth while at the same time eyeballing the upper reaches of Manhattan sky. Minutes later, he has joined the street-scene, sauntering fast as anyone, not hurried, just pushing for another look. Back in the back room, what he does is flatten: Every word in close-up, the walls and objects spread out in space...

A feeling of loose ends he keeps shuffling, prodding up and out, like traffic control in an echo chamber. (Confronting the words, the size of the human face is 8½ X 11.)

Local shifts in climate ("fog rolled in," "airy rushes punch") and his color-codes (the dominant pinks, whites, grey) are all matters of vernacular. And "in the order of vernacular" might be his unifying principle; more than speech or thought, the language he finds himself writing in. His poems tend to be agglomerates of loose phrases linked together sans contortion, striking parts of brain marked *ear* and *eye* at once. An abruptness he's capable of without losing count. The "touch" is rough, delicate, whizzing.

TCB, Ted tells me, means *take care of business*. "People refuse to see poetry as TCB," he once observed. Just as a painter can wonder typically, "Is poetry a residue? Hell, I've worked

my ass off for 20 years!"

The high-tension handiness of words by the mindfuls: Greenwald shows the use of it, that he means it, and his poems exemplify how much exact clarity he can get (from it) down in writing. TCB at the surface *via* depth.

Partly, it's the fact of continuous non-residual care for the windfalls and peripheral near-misses of dailiness that makes him exciting to read. He is plain as day. But on days plain as mud, what can happen? "Something nice." The event-mind locates the event-events, non-events (obscure) are more mud, things tend to partition, thoughts (un poco loco) babble, plunge or lapse. An edge-ward giddiness amounts to style. A weakness for blunt puns, but he cuts through and even doubles on them. "Mind does me like it does" and "the american word for everything is 'art'."

"managing to *move* me a foot
from where I started"

"chat chat
and chat"

Greenwald has come from a bright abstract scatter ("cover the page with paper") to the now airier-spaced grids of lines-as-inventory gathering a whole statement. Non-stop statement, so all those truncated monolog lengths, laid out as on a teleprompter, pack an all-over deliberate momentum.

"Prime meat clouds" reveals a terrific poet's city of sudden lights and geometries as sublime as in Leger or likewise Al Held.

"the pears are the pears
the table is the table
the house is the house"

etc. The beauty of a non-suggestive inclusivity, as in the "pointless stories" of Reznikoff that stay exactly what they are, hum in place, won't evanesce.

"Imagine on paper what he sees and feels" speaks for a personable expanse that's intrinsic, as does "one man/one woman/one moment" for his exquisiteness. Lately with longer poems like *You Bet!* and "Word of Mouth", Ted's been adding on elbow room. He's so prolific, it's alarming. I like his drive, "the wheel of the tongue/forming driven words," "naphtha running wind over the bay."

BILL BERKSON

SPOKEN

The sound in my poems comes from the sounds I hear in my head of almost myself talking to some person. I choose to have as my limitation spoken speech, as you and I are sitting here talking. That's what I test the poem's shape against.

Occasionally, I like to do other things, when I hear a completely peculiar sound or something, see if it works, give it a test run. Eventually, I prefer dealing with items that are still charged with meaning and in fact are open to the change that happens over time in meanings. In other words, if I don't know exactly what a poem means when I write it I'm somehow writing a certain kind of science fiction, because the poem (if I'm right about the direction the language will change in) will eventually make sense on a more than just, say, shape level or form level as time goes by and I'll start to understand it more.

I'm an opportunist: I'll take what I can get. If it works and if it's working when I'm working on it, then I'll use it. I don't care what the source of it is. But I'm saying that the basic motor on my car is spoken (for): What it sounds like in my mind when I read it to myself.

What works has to be grounded in the language, which is the locality of words. Words change in spoken language. "the/form/of/the/words/pump/blood/in/the/form/of/the/heart" That pretty much sums it up.

What I'm interested in and always have been is not what ideas people have in their heads, but what's in the air. The most invisible part of "trends". What is it that two people in the whole world or maybe twenty all of a sudden out of the middle of nowhere start to think about. What's in the air is the shape of things to come -- it's palpable -- right under your very nose. I hear what's in the air, that's my way of thinking with my ear. You're not working with the idea of something, you're projecting the idea of something. You're not working from models, you're creating models.

It's a romantic notion (where classical means coming from someplace), going someplace, sort of operating more out of imagination and less from received forms. In a specific sense, what it is the interior mind projecting itself into the phenomenological world, telling *you* where it's going. The time we live in is interesting, since there's a tremendous amount of good poetry that's "about" comings and going, this's and that's, here and there, not sillyass schools of one thing or another ("in" and "out" I leave to the hosts and hostesses of the world).

Poetry is about a time that hasn't occurred yet, and if it's very good it's about a time you'll never know about. Poems are my pencil and pad for jotting down shapes or ways of embodying imaginary shapes or things that don't exist. But some time will exist on a wider scale. This is even conceptual: They are almost like plans for the future.

I think that the notion that sort of got started with Pound and other modernist artists is that if you were dealing with something you were going to take notes and the notes will usually be in fractional form. What's wrong with writing poetry that uses fragments (or notes) is that there is no everyday language that can be used to test goodness of fit. All there is is some poetic diction or poetic language to go back to that says "This is correct!," but no language in everyday use by people speaking, which changes over time, however imperceptibly.

I personally don't believe in using some form of a poem as a container for a bunch of things ("good lines" for instance). Each poem's form discovers itself as I write the poem. Two poems may not be perceptibly different looking, but there are differences. And, since I write on a day-to-day basis, and try to pay as close attention as possible, by paying close attention can see those differences. And watch the form of the poem, and the meaning and sense of sounds and words, change. And satisfy myself as a good reader with a good read.

TED GREENWALD

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RUSCHA'S BOOKS AND SERIALITY

"Nothing is of greater moment than the knowledge that the choice of one moment excludes another, that no moment makes up for another, that the significance of one moment is the cost of what it forgoes."

"One might say that the task is no longer to produce another instance of an art but a new medium within it. (Here is the relevance of series in modern painting and sculpture, and of cycles in movies, and of the quest for 'sound' in jazz and rock.) A new medium establishes and is established by a series... any change (of an angle, a shift in color or a color's width, or its distance from another color) would simply create a new instance, an absolutely new painting."

-- Stanley Cavell, in The World Viewed

Ed Ruscha's books document seemingly mundane but archetypal images--gas stations, apartment buildings, parking lots, vacant lots, the Sunset Strip, swimming pools, palm trees. The general structure is a series of snapshot-like photos of the same type of object. Cohesion is achieved through a programmatic, seemingly mechanical seriality. This use of seriality in *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass* creates not a world of time unfolding but a world of time flattened. Images are juxtaposed in which the time of day in each is elusively distinct--a shadow cast leftward in one, then rightward, changes in the quality of light, variations in the profusion of reflections: overall, an eeriness of "no time," an uncanniness. Each image is cropped and framed so as to exclude extraneous matter that would distract from the time, space, and photographic blueness of the pools. In this work, seriality does not create a linear movement forward or backward--as in a Muybridge movement series. Time, removed from its sequentiality, is left to float fancifully, airily on the surface of the reflecting water.

Photography often imparts to the objects photographed an increased particularity. Weston's "Pepper" has greater sensuality, texture, shape than we normally perceive in a pepper. In Ruscha's work, each object is transformed into something less than itself by becoming an instance of a genre. Thus the esthetic impetus is transferred from the single image to the series. Ruscha keeps a fixed angle of gaze on each gas station and swimming pool, and as the pages of the book are turned, it is as if the object is being transformed through slight changes in the structure of the image. The individual image is subverted in favor of the overall movement so that the book form becomes a medium for seriality in which these frames are situated in terms of context and type, with greater complexity than otherwise.

Within the medium of still photography, use has often been made of the serial nature of film. Photographers will take numerous shots of the

same subject, so that a contact sheet will show many aspects of the same image. This seriality is an automatism inherent to film. The physical layout of a roll of film establishes relationships among the images. While a still photographer can choose different frames from the roll, thus eliminating links consciously or unconsciously made in the shooting, in motion pictures the seriality and linkage, speeded up in projection, is essential. Speed and motion create a tableau so that the individual images become harder to focus on and instead we are caught up in action pictures or more literally moving pictures.

In film, Walter Benjamin writes, "the meaning in each single picture appears prescribed by the preceding ones." Still photos can focus on different aspects of duration than film by isolating a specific moment or presenting a linear sequence. In Ruscha's selective choice of images, the distances between the sites of the gas stations, etc., seem like blank spaces making these books more like catalogues or surveys--spatial rather than temporal sequences.

Ruscha, finally, seems to be invoking the power of photography as such and film as such. The still photographic image exists as a moment in time encapsulated, as time literally framed.

(Ruscha's books include Every Building on Sunset Strip (1966), Thirty-Four Parking Lots (1967), Nine Swimming Pools (1968), and A Few Palm Trees (1971).

SUSAN B. LAUFER

ANATOMY OF SELF

Bernadette Mayer, Eruditio ex Memoria (1977; Angel Hair Books, Box 718, Lenox, MA 02140; \$2.50)

Memory, history, personal history, autobiography, metaphysical autobiography, *Eruditio ex Memoria* is all of these. Yet this book projects a memory not of the self, but of the self as defined by the knowledge which makes up the self, which perceives the world in which the self lives. And in this sense Bernadette Mayer's new work is a cosmology, an encyclopedia, an anatomy, which as a genre is related to Menippean or Varronian verse satire, from the Greek cynic Menippus and the Roman satirist Varro, both now lost. The anatomy has continued in Lucian, Petronius, Apuleius, Rabelais, Voltaire, Swift, Rousseau, Peacock, and in our own century, Aldous Huxley, Wyndham Lewis, Djuna Barnes, and most

recently, in *Seeking Air* by Barbara Guest. Unlike the picaresque--which is a satire of society, of its structures--the anatomy is a satire built up through a presentation of a vision "of the world in terms of a single intellectual pattern." Northrop Frye continues (in *Anatomy of Criticism*), "The intellectual structure built up from the story makes for violent dislocations in the customary logic of narrative, though the appearance of carelessness that results reflects only the carelessness of the reader or his tendency to judge by a novel-centered conception of fiction." The shortest form of the anatomy is the dialogue, but there is a strong tendency toward a display of erudition, of encyclopedic knowledge, of complications, catalogues and lists (see Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, *Tristram Shandy*, Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pecuchet*, Norman Douglas' *South Wind*, and portions of *Moby Dick*.).

Does Mayer know anatomies? Perhaps not. The impulse here seems to come as much from her obsession with memory, from a compulsion towards autobiography that is related to the confession such as Saint Augustine's. But for Mayer memory is never an end in itself. It is not memory past that most interests her, but memory continuing, repeating, memory in the present made new through language in Pound's sense. Mayer's art is not a seeking for what was but what was is, and how what is was made by that past. Mayer's memory is not nostalgic--as in Proust--but is a past that makes the new, makes for the new: an ending that is a beginning ("Each end is a beginning"). She seeks not for old structures, not for a re-creation but for a decreation: "I put these words on paper because they were once written by me, no, I too yearn for a world without meaning." As she previously wrote in her novel *Memory*, "A whole new language is a temptation."

But Mayer's world, the world she discovers, is not without meaning. The past decreated gives rise to a new created, a recreated world. As with Adam, Mayer calls into meaning by naming, by naming a past. Through memory's order "Hemispheres become loose in the country, there are new forms."

Is this different from a Surrealist allowing the subconscious to create new structures, using dream images as the basis for a new reality? Yes. Mayer's past is not a dream, not archetypal, not mythical, but a socially lived experience. These are school notes, a pre-existent text rewritten (?) or almost intact, a life wrenched out of chronological context not by chance but by fact, a life perhaps not experienced as discontinuous but was (and because was can only be is in memory) is in fact.

No coy discontinuity is this, no clever disassociations. Actually there is an attempt in *Eruditio* at lucidness, to see through the veil of experience to a reality of flux, of life, of duration. And in this there is a basic recognition of the ineffectuality, of the destructiveness of

the written word as opposed to spoken language (re Derrida). "There's no use writing down Greek words if no one is going to know what I'm saying." Mayer is always after language, then, after the reality that is language. *Eruditio* is a search for that reality not as written word but as language, which as a thought process is the thing itself. Saying is thinking is perceiving is knowing. In fact, although this work may often seem ineffable, there is throughout a drive for an absolute clarity of language: "Add up a column of numbers, it comes to William Carlos Williams."

All of which brings us back to the genre of anatomy, which comes from the Greek anatomé, a cutting up, an analysis or minute examination, to show or examine the position, structure and relation of the parts. That is what this book is to me; it is an attempt to explain, to demonstrate, to show how Mayer has come to know whatever it is she has come to know. And in that sense, this book is a sharing, a removal of the veil, an admission, an apology, a true confession.

Moreover, in that it is itself a sign, an image, an emblem of language which stands for Mayer and the world she has recreated, an emblem like the red letter Hester Prynne wears. *Eruditio ex Memoria* ends with such an image: "In a painting I am a Chinese woman turning away from a bowl of fruit." Is this an Eve with a second chance, this time redeeming by giving up the knowledge, by releasing it? To pin the image down that way is to miss the point, is to turn back to the fruit and eat it. It is nothing more than itself, a Chinese woman turning away from a bowl of fruit, "its own sure image."

DOUGLAS MESSERLI

PROCEDURE

"Oran" to "ordain" for "J"

orchestration = he raves

The prefix for "Ceylon trail" promises "main orange" after orbits. Flashback to "front orange" where diversities _____ a satellite, then skip to "hair order" chorus, again an orbit.

Down eleven, ordination is opposed to satellite, a shape end

circular as in "organized vision". LEVEL also leads to a circle - "plants Ireland" - two below "beverage", one below "prehistoric". Finally, islands make "part importance" fleshy by adding "a" to orbit as orangey united to surrounding fulcrums "celestial" - Orkney, five up, Orkney.

Francis Ponge's *Soap* introduced me to "procedural" writing. He had: taken what was at hand, let it refer to itself and then tracked the process as it would go. So I: take what is at hand (the dictionary), pick a page at random, use the key words heading the page as "directions", find a pattern and/or flow of the words and write it down, trying to retain as much of the procedure as possible in the prose.

Examples: 1) in the page "legion to Lent", the sound "lem" reoccurs at various points on the page. By graphing these points, I find that they produce a figure eight. I tell the reader about the graph and list the words contained within the figure. Many of the "lem" words are "fiber" words, so I also mention the various fibers that can make up the figure. 2) the word "dog" falls between "Doctor of Philosophy" and "doge". The dog definition is divided between technical and colloquial ones. The other words on the page reflect this division. I note this along with a description of the dog definition. 3) in "Oran" to "ordain", I find that "orchestration" is related to "he raves". So, to orchestrate the page, I rave. Letting my finger drop at random over and over, I make a notation of the points my finger makes and later transcribe them.

Dictionary language (words/phrases giving a direction/relation to a source - "of or pertaining to", "peculiar to or characteristic of", "connected with or considered from", etc.) isn't offensive to me the way it is to many, including Ponge. In *Things*, he declares that the function of the dictionary is to limit - ie: deaden - the language. That's true, I suppose, when dealing with single entries and their meaning. But what interests me is the coincidence and juxtaposition of the words on the page in their natural formation (alphabetical order). In reference to each other, they have a story of their own. The technical aspect (scientific and philosophical terminology as distinct from conversational forms) of the language can be intriguing, too. Reading the definitions is like reading a foreign language developed specifically for English.

TINA DARRAGH

ARMANTROUT: EXTREMITIES (3 VIEWS)

Rae Armantrout, Extremities (1978; The Figures, c/o Small Press Distribution, 1636 Ocean View Ave., Kensington, CA 94709; \$2.50)

EACHES

The world grows more empty as we approach it. When we have entered (dealing our way), it is gone. Explicit words make this apparent, make this happen.

Rae's writing is clean. The words fill in the gaps. The edges of life are its center. There is no anguish in the thing, is there? The exact utterance of each thing is its value; it owns its hue.

Wonder is a hollow figure.

The perfection of the voice is in its attention to itself, always pressed equally to its function.

There is no fantasy, which is oblique. Instead, the simplest line is a definition, critical. The past establishes its question; later, utter.

Each line, unwasted, replenishes the voice. Clarity is engendered. The mind slows, its births are precise. The tiny phantoms bury in jumping thought.

Distinctions are attenuated by words. Objects are distinct sounds. This gets marked. Sound mindfully combines discrete objects. Humor, too, is a combinative function.

Objects are annulled by thought. Beauty is the effort to grasp (them).

Punctuation lasts what it enunciates. It impresses shape. Speed and control are movements for the purpose of delineation. The dot does not move the eye, it moves words. The words are not for other things.

Effort, even after. Minutely.

Her work is elevated by strictness, a high gesture in a low place.

It emanates from the mind that sees it in words. There is something in each letter and it cuts into the fact.

Memory is furtive. The local fact incises. The multiplicity of things contract to each small point made. Nerves hold the sounds hold the facts to place. Leave the explanation for the next event.

ALAN DAVIES

Going to the desert
is the old term
'landscape of zeros'
the glitter of edges
again catches the eye
to approach these swords!

lines across which
beings vanish/flare

the charmed verges of presence

EXTREMITIES. Paths lost found forgotten. Border margin beginning.
Birth/Death. Inside/Outside. She/He. Moving/Staying. Finding/Losing.
The unity of opposites, Epicene, Androgyne. According to Boehme, in the
beginning Adam was the primal Androgyne. After the Fall, God separated
female from male and the primal harmony was lost. Armantrout in these
poems wants to begin again. Like H.D., her search is for that lost
prelapsarian state which may have existed only in the mind--back in the
pre-history of childhood. It is a search for harmony in a bewildering
time. GENERATION

We know the story
She turn
back to find her trail
devoured by birds.
The years; the
undergrowth

Gretel lost in the forest of generation, the undergrowth of years. Not
a word that doesn't belong. We all know the story--but we still don't
understand the undergrowth. "'Just wait Gretel, till the moon rises,
and then we will see the crumbs of bread which I have strewn about, they
will show us our way home again.'" When the moon came they set out, but
they found no crumbs, for the many thousands of birds which fly about in
the woods and fields had picked them all up." Imagine the Moon then!

Not the city lights. We want
- the moon -
The Moon
none of our own doing!

Like riddles the poems in *Extremities* are terse, precise, subtle. A riddle is a puzzle. A mis-leading. The novelty of a riddle is that by depriving something of its name, we render it unrecognizable. A dislocation of perspective similar to the fear expressed in XENOPHOBIA (fear that one is dreaming). In a riddle every word counts, is a sign. A signifier. Words both hide and reveal. Fear of riddles with no solution.

this same riddle:

IS IT ALRIGHT?

qualm that persists
on the bus ride

"Tonight there's
the movie"

a woman soothes her son

A female Knight off on her quest, Armantrout has armed herself with enigmas, paradoxes, wit, and cunning. The intensity is religious, pure in the best sense. And it is a quest undertaken with the awareness that in the search there is no sanctuary. In SAVED reading Lao-Tze she makes speech a raft, and in TRAVELS thinks for a moment

I had recovered silence

The power to be
irretrievably lost

Oliver Cromwell to the French Ambassador -- "A man never mounts so high as when he does not know where he is going."

GRACE

I am walking
covey in silent flight

PROCESSIONAL

The smallest
distance
inexhaustible

In XENOPHOBIA she isolates each fear by placing it in parenthesis as if a printed wall could contain the idea (fear of sights not turned to words). Again, it was the primordial Adam to whom God gave the power of naming. Imagine a world without names! SPECIAL THEORY OF RELATIVITY

You know those ladies
in old photographs? Well,

say one stares into your room
as if into the void
beyond her death in 1913.

In the brave new world of Death there are no names.

LXXXVI. When born they wish to live and to have dooms -- or rather to rest, and they leave children after them to become dooms. (Heraclitus *On the Universe*). The sort of paradox these poems are made of. I love *Extremities* for its intelligence and curiosity. From the first poem, the title one, the first extremity -- Armantrout stands poised at Lacan's ecstatic limit of "Thou art that" the point where any real journey begins. "to approach these swords!"

the sentence
flies

In medieval times the idea of earthly knighthood and angelic knighthood were intertwined (militia). They pre-supposed economy and discipline. The medieval Latin for a knight is miles.

SUSAN HOWE

An eternal, singly framed. Distinct, illumined, on a black background. Quiet field, empty river. Tremendous pressure surrounds the words. Their outlines are thus forced to hold. Recall Blake's insistence on outline -- the active principle of perception. The silence bordering these extremities is intense.

An allegiance to the instantaneous is hard, because the mind wants to space out, lose track of, get 'lost in thought'. Attention to signs along the road (not monotony, but health) returns thought to the world, to the direct object of perception.

Calling into question the grounds of a featureless continuum might be one way of shaping it. Doubt resolves the focus.

Signs, singles. Adopt fragments in absence (total presence, as limit) of the subject (I:eye). Speech can be a raft. Relation out can be hesitant or warmly recognitive, as in "I liked you trying / to say", of the difficulties involved.

Discrimination is the method of the work, an incredibly fine tuning, at each turn proposing value. As choice, language acts. "Not...but..." occurs as a common construction. "Not...things made for our use," allusionist art in crowded gallery, "the city lights, 'She's running for her

bus'...but...the bouquet you made of doorknobs, her 'inspirations', The Moon, All that aside!"

Time and mind are disjunct, as in *Special Theory*, in experience of present as past's future beyond death, and *Zen Koan*, where present regards pre-birth past self, not as one, but "in / sixty / fish".

The present takes time. But to approach these charmed verges takes the Universe, tending to tend, 0 main sequence. The ideas one loves are stories known, not likely, proceeding until impulse flags. Then what's wanted's not narrative, but "A single truth now occupies the mind: / the smallest / distance / inexhaustable."

But experience of eternity is qualified by a desire to "go back soon and tell it". And so, paradoxically, destroyed by the effort to preserve it. The poignancy of this tension finds relief in speech: "What tenderness!" The punctuation is exclamatory. "All of religion, compressed in the word darling."

The compression forming these lines builds up a charge which is released when I read them.

KIT ROBINSON

WRITING AND REMEMBERING

History is a catalogue of endings but poetry speaks of being, of beginnings. Through an experience of linguistic re-creation by immersion in a semantic continuous present of simultaneities, echoes, symbols, variously shaded fragments of raw and refined perceptions, the text (and its corresponding thought process) is momentarily liberated from its history (memory) and from its history-making function (remembering). This is why poetry is uniquely free, compared to related disciplines like philosophy and psychology, from its own history. Its elements, including its formal properties, are subject to aesthetic, but not temporal, critiques. There is no linear historical conceptual development -- only a process of eroding and building.

Poetry tends to have an ambivalent relationship toward any temporal function to which it is assigned. Unlike most other human endeavors, at certain moments, often its best ones, it cloaks itself in obscurity, withdraws from everyday life and takes the form of a static, receptive object. A process made to be acted upon, generative, wood and oxygen

waiting to be ignited by a determinant, but not necessarily parallel, flash of thought. And this is how it transcends history and is not only to be recognized and remembered, but contemplated, like the Sphinx.

Writing as remembering is nominative, ordering, and elicits from its reading a fixed, functional relationship. But poetry can be composed of any number of continuously altered, modulated and interrelated emotional tones, purposes and intentions. These real, apparent and illusory intentions are usually consciously parodied, at least at some point in a poem, if not in its form, creating still another shifting ground of contexts.

Historicity, that is, legitimizing or authenticating the *raison d'etre* of a work or text by establishing its historical relevance or historical significance as a document or art historical event, binds language to fixed significances by ordering its syntax into descriptions of familiar or unfamiliar sequences of related perceptions or memories. Language, though bound to time like this by its passive connection with the process of recall can be made to listen to itself. Again and again heard differently, through its poetry, language directs attention to its plastic and iconographic qualities by means of a kind of lexic hovering in and around and subterranean plummeting through meaning and memory. Familiar connotations, meanings and connections fade into apparently new ones, ones otherwise too close and familiar to sense and feel.

To read poetry is to enjoy a mimetic gesticulation towards the thought process, to demand from it alternatives to ordinary remembering and comprehension. In this elusive, decorous, ceremonial absence of significant reportage, history is a minor character in a timeless masque enacted in the evolving theater of language.

NICK PIOMBINO

NON-POETRY

(We asked a number of writers to list five non-poetry books that they had read in the last few years that have had a significant influence on their thinking or writing. Below, the responses.)

STEVE BENSON :

Maggie Cassidy by Jack Kerouac.

The Red and the Black by Stendhal. *(I preferred among the translations*

the Norton red and white paperback. Memoirs of Egotism forms a helpful introduction to this book.)

Illuminations by Walter Benjamin.

Kidnapped by Robert Louis Stevenson.

Lazarillo de Tormes (*The anonymous Spanish picaresques.*)

CRIS CHEEK :

The Mime Book by Claude Kipnis, edited and coordinated by Neil Kleinman, photos by Edith Chustka (Harper Colophon Books).

Creativity and Taoism (A Study of Chinese Philosophy, Art and Poetry) by Chang Chung-yuan (Wildwood House, London).

The Mass Psychology of Fascism by Wilhelm Reich, translated by Vincent Carfagno (Penguin-Pelican).

Expanded Cinema by Gene Youngblood, introduction by Buckminster Fuller.

Religion and the Decline of Magic by Keith Thomas (Penguin-Pelegrine).

(choices made because of now interests rather than influence. they really reflect constantly influential fields of interest. others would include -- Image - Music - Text by Barthes and The Algebra of Need by Eric Mottram, and The World Turned Upside Down by Christopher Hill, and Preface to Plato by Eric Havelock, and Magritte by Bernard Noël, etc etc etc.

ABIGAIL CHILD :

The World of Elementary Particles by Kenneth W. Ford (1963, Xerox).

Spinning Tops and Gyroscopic Motion by John Perry (Dover reprint of last -- circa 1905 -- edition). (*A popular exposition of Dynamics of Rotation.*)

Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf: Language, Thought & Reality (1956, MIT Press).

Pronunciation Exercises in English by Clarey and Dickson (1963, revised edition, Simon and Schuster).

The Thinking Body by Mabel Todd (republication of *Dance Horizons*, Brooklyn, of circa 1935 publication).

ROBERT CREELEY

...but briefly: Illuminations and Reflections [by Walter Benjamin], to first of which I was introduced by R.B. Kitaj (wouldn't you know it...), just the political/morphological clarity, and his extraordinary powers as a literal reader. Charming to read *with* some one, in that old-time fashion.

Then--almost as personal memorial, now that he's sadly dead--Donald Sutherland, Gertrude Stein: A Biography of Her Works. Still for me the most provocative book on her particular genius, with equal range as to forms and specific cultural patterns in writing, e.g., Spanish/American take on Surrealism.

Then--because I just did literally read it, though god knows why it took me so long to--still, seemingly, the best book to locate Williams (other than obviously all he himself got to say--which is it forever): Mike Weaver, William Carlos Williams, The American Background--such a lovely instance of legwork *and* so much said in such compact manner--as notes on jazz, rhythm, or surrealism will give instance.

Then Jackson MacLow called attention to November Scientific American ('78) article on children's language acquiring patterns--again much literal food for thought.

RAY DI PALMA:

The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II by Fernand Braudel, Volumes 1 & 2 (Harper Torch Books, 1975).
Samuel Johnson by W. Jackson Bate (Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1977).
Nicholas Crabbe by F. R. Rolfe (New Directions, 1958).
The Great War and Modern Memory by Paul Fussell (Oxford U. Press, 1975).
A Joseph Cornell Album by Dore Ashton (Viking, 1974).
The World Backwards: Russian Futurist Books 1912-1916, edited by Susan P. Compton (British Museum Publications, 1978).
Sexus by Henry Miller (Grove Press, 1965).
Saul Steinberg: Exhibition Catalogue (Knopf/Whitney Museum, 1978).
Minima Moralia by Theodor Adorno (Schocken/New Left Books, 1978).

STEVE FRACCARO:

Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology. (*Derrida's main interest for me is his concept of writing (without an origin). To extrapolate Derrida: thought is a form of writing ("originary writing without an origin")...music and architecture are forms of writing...the world explodes with cross reference...a dark blue print.*)
Roland Barthes, S/Z & Sade, Fourier, Loyola. (*Polytextuality...and a considerable amount of delight.*)
Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus & Philosophical Investigations.
Henry Miller, Tropic of Cancer & Tropic of Capricorn. (*Everyday life and the sublime.*)

TED GREENWALD:

Raoul Hilberg -- The Destruction of the European Jews.
Donald Bain -- The Control of Candy Jones.
John Lear -- Recombinant DNA: The Untold Story.
Philip Andrews and Barnett St. John -- Cop Story.
Eugen Kogan -- The Theory and Practice of Hell.

LYN HEJINIAN:

1. The Art of Poetry, Paul Valéry (Pantheon Books, Bollingen Series,

- XLV, 7, 1958) & Analects, Paul Valéry (vol. 14 of same series).
2. Remembrance of Things Past, Marcel Proust, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff (Random House).
 3. two reading clusters: a) beginning with linguistic anthropology (Dorothy D. Lee's Freedom and Culture, Spectrum Books, 1959) which led to Benjamin Lee Whorf's Language, Thought and Reality and from there to Barthes, Jameson's The Prison-House of Language, an attempt at Derrida, etc. (all of which gave me to see that there was this to think about), and, overlapping as some of this does with Marxism, this reading cluster extends to include bits and pieces of Capital, Wm Hinton's Fanshen, etc.
 b) readings in natural history and neurology, including Marston Bates' Life History of the Mosquito, Stephen Rose's The Conscious Brain (Knopf, 1975), Lewis Thomas' Lives of a Cell, Psychobiology (W.H. Freeman & Co., 1966).
 4. sub-category, neglected masterpieces: Ushant, Conrad Aiken. The Sleepwalkers, Hermann Broch.

SUSAN HOWE :

1. The Letters of Emily Dickinson, vols 1,2,3 edited by Thomas Johnson (Belknap Press, Harvard University 1976).
2. The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors Even. A typographic version by Richard Hamilton, of Marcel Duchamp's Green Box, translated by George Heard Hamilton, published by Jaap Rietman Inc.; Art Books New York First published 1960 third -1976.
3. Tribute to Freud by HD. (David Godine, Boston 1974).
4. A Proposal For Correcting The ENGLISH TONGUE, Polite Conversation etc. vol 4, edited by Herbert Davis (Oxford 1973)--(*contains the two essays, A Modest Defense of Punning and A Discourse to Prove the Antiquity of the English Tongue*) by Jonathan Swift. Also the other volume in the Oxford Collected Works called Miscellaneous and Autobiographical Pieces, Fragments, and Marginalia.
5. Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks, by Nietzsche. Translated by Marianne Cowan (Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1962.)

P. INMAN :

Minimal Art, Gregory Battcock, Dutton, 1968. Energy Made Visible, Jackson Pollock, B.H. Friedman, McGraw-Hill, 1974. Barnett Newman, Thomas Hess, MOMA, 1971. America's Masters, Brian O'Doherty, Random House, 1973. Shape of Time, George Kubler, Yale Press, 1962.

abstract: "when you start relating parts, in the first place, you're assuming you have a vague whole- the rectangle of the canvas" (Judd)/ "the idea enters that he may not be trying to paint different pictures, but the same picture, again a way of eliminating history" (O'Doherty on deKooning)/ word field/ intra-picture, intra-sequence/ "brushstrokes simply coexist side by side" (deK's Revlon period)/ "Newman's wholistic

works"/ "which is all screwed up, because you should have a definite whole and maybe no parts, or very few" (J.)/ "the order at work in his pieces... is simply order, like that of continuity, one thing after another" (Battcock on Judd)/ *Gotham News*/ rectangle of the oeuvre/ past & present- (layers)- (pictures painted on top one another)/ once (through the link of sequence) we think of space in terms of time/ "My paintings are concerned neither with the manipulation of space nor with the image, but with the sensation of time." (Newman)/ area, space, sequence, field, juxtaposition, continuity, paragraphs, opteme, finished, unfinished...

MICHAEL LALLY :

Essays Before A Sonata, The Majority, And Other Writings By Charles Ives (selected and edited by Howard Boatwright, Norton, \$3.25, paperback, 1970), while not influencing my thinking and writing too significantly, did open me up to areas in our American "heritage" that had heretofore seemed blocked at least to my appreciation. Ives' ideas on Emerson and others, as well as on music, are expressed with the same intense individuality as Ives' music itself. Unfortunately, "editor" Boatwright totally butchered Ives' style, by changing punctuation (as though Ives wouldn't know how to use devices like commas, which in the transcription of language can be and often are obviously musical signs) and even rewriting phrases and sentences. This destroyed my misconceptions that editors only fuck with the work of relatively unknowns. Boatwright defends this stupidity in his introduction with statements like this: "A literal printing of the manuscript (if such a thing were possible, considering the number of alternate words and marginal notes) would be no more than a curiosity, and unfair in its emphasis on the eccentricity of Ives' style, which has nothing to do with the seriousness of his thought." Possibly the most enlightening book I've read in years is A Distant Mirror by Barbara Tuchman (Alfred Knopf, 1978). An equally enlightening book, and for me it served as a fresh and beautifully written reminder of a period and its culture that greatly influenced my writing and thinking for years (throughout most of the 1960s), is The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan by Ivan Morris, (Penguin Books, paperback \$2.95). Morris describes one of the most unusual eras in any society's cultural history -- the Japanese Heian period -- which boasted a sensibility almost "terminally mannered" (to paraphrase John Ashbery's description of a novel by Edmund White, Forgetting Helena, which in fact borrowed heavily from the literature of Heian Japan). The last book on my list, Lions and Shadows, An Autobiographical Novel by Christopher Isherwood (New Directions paperback \$3.45, 1977) gave me valuable insights into a kind of life and lifestyle I could never really understand, let alone appreciate, since it represented everything I saw as oppressive by the standards of my background

and family history (i.e. it is the English upper-classes who have always represented for us the worst aspects of oppressive political and social systems). Isherwood translates his and Auden's schoolboy and young man experiences into something I can try on imaginatively while I'm reading. In fact, Isherwood is in some ways in his prose like W. C. Williams is in his poetry -- relying on the concrete details and experiences of the local in time and space and syntax to convey the idea(s). Both are/were more or less sympathetic dudes from the upper or upper-middle class, and where the good doctor got down in a way through ministering and learning from the lower classes, Isherwood ministered in his own way through his attraction to lower class men. Though I enjoyed the much more "candid" reminiscences in the later Christopher and His Kind (and the guts it took to do it, after all the man is one of the few of his stature to be so honest about his sexuality as well as other things) Lions and Shadows intrigued and educated me more because of the ways it tells some of the same things only from a younger man in a more repressed period and about a more innocent and naive, as well as blatantly privileged, time in his life. *(I might just add that reading Eva Hesse by Lucy Lippard, New York University Press, confirmed a lot of the original inspiration I felt when I first encountered her work, as well as left me with a sense of urgency about completing a lot of my work and fulfilling my ideas and intentions and all.)*

GERRIT LANSING :

Blood, Benjamin Paul, Pluriverse, Marshall Jones Co, Boston, 1920.
Shea, Robert, and Wilson, Robert Anton, Illuminatus, Vols. I, II, III, (with Wilson, R. A., Cosmic Trigger, Pocket Books, New York, 1978, as afterpiece), Dell Books, New York, 1975.
Hjelmslev, Louis, Prolegomena to a Theory of Language, (Revised English Edition), University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisc. 1969.
Deleuze, Gilles, Logique des sens, Les Editions de minuit, Paris, 1969.
Grant, Kenneth, Night Side of Eden, Frederick Muller, London, 1977.
Eckhart: Meister Eckhart, Mystic and Philosopher, Translations with Commentary by Reiner Schurmann, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind. 1978.

HARLEY LOND :

Ways of Seeing: John Berger. Viking Press NY 1973
Photography and Language: Lew Thomas (ed). Camerawork/NFS Press San Francisco 1977
For a New Novel: Alain Robbe-Grillet. Grove Press NY 1965
Relativity and Cosmology: William J. Kaufmann III. Harper & Row NY 1973
Essential Works of Marxism: Bantam Books New York 1961.

JACKSON MAC LOW

1. The Unperfect Society: Beyond the New Class, Milovan Djilas,

translated by Dorian Cooke (Harcourt Brace World, 1969); *sequel to The New Class* (Praeger, 1954).

2. The Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art by Heinrich Wölfflin (First edition, 1915; Dover reprint, 1932).
3. The Waves & Night and Day by Virginia Woolf.
4. For a New Liberty by Murray Rothbard (NY: Macmillan, 1973).
5. Process and Reality by Alfred North Whitehead (Macmillan, 1929; reprinted Humanities Press, 1957).
6. The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years, 1868-1936 by Murray Bookchin (Free Life Editions, 1977).
7. Voline: 1917--The Russian Revolution Betrayed & The Unknown Revolution--Kronstadt 1921 and Ukraine 1918-1921, translated by Holley Cantine (Libertarian Book Club, 1954 and 1955).
8. The Great Soviet Encyclopedia (Macmillan translation, ongoing).

(The inclusion of works on this list does not necessarily indicate endorsement of all the authors' ideas. Each of these works has influenced me in a somewhat different way--not necessarily as the authors may have desired.)

KIRBY MALONE & CHRIS MASON :

Anthony Wilden --- System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange (published in 1972 by Tavistock Publications Ltd; distributed in the US by Harper & Row, Scranton, Pa.)

WILL WORK WHEN ONE TRIES TO CROSS THE SPATIAL, COMMUNICATIONAL, OR TEMPORAL BOUNDARIES SET UP BY CLOSURE.

I am attached to her and the her changes

Oedipus' murderous feelings towards his father do not come from nowhere.

I know he thinks I'm out of place which I feel strongly I am out of place there when I have no work I try to find things to do something to straighten I feel lonely not lonely I don't feel lonely I feel I have to straighten something it's not the not having something to do

articulated on the myth of the expert, the myth of the 'subject-who-is-supposed-to-know'.

my boss it's his place I'm out of it who knows exactly what I'm doing I can't help thinking about her to straighten something it's not straightening I have to do it's more being in commodity fetishism the worker gradually losing its personality I think about her even if I think about her I'm thinking about her

involved when Lévi-Strauss reduces the woman to a sign (thus confusing female, woman, and sister; confusing energy and information; organism, person, and role; entity and relationship)

I work at a place where I work and I'm not me I have a beard I'm the only worker with a beard which is strange my friends all have beards none of my coworkers do

In other words, it is the hallmark of 'normal' and 'neurotic' language, both of which maintain the distinction between the (analog) thing-presentations of the unconscious and the (digital) word-presentations of language.

mine was hers the everyday things mixed up very exciting very happy very businessman very market very lift very dirt very not so good very more very snow very around very said it very present very night very two very sound very scheming very done very worries very buzzer very bed very day very light very guess very sustaining very dependent very before very every day very on very career very was very gestures very such very not very clear very never very be very the very last very the very never very car very push very warmer very London very complete very soon very irresolute days I feel so

To paraphrase Zeno: "At whatsoever particular spot of the universe of discourse one settles down, one ends by becoming poisoned; it is essential to keep moving"

cough straighten clarify stir express reprieves raged distort freeze bidden knead loom toast rue utter skewed opt waste sever injecting closed bale coating blow soften finned enters sift blinks tidy say

In other words, the nip denotes the bite, but does not denote what would be denoted by the bite.

around the morning waiting gestures no clothes someone else duration and process the funny story knows he said it

Although language, compared with crying, would seem to offer a huge gamut of possibilities of 'explaining what you mean', it is semantically and structurally much more limited than crying as a form of communication by its demand that all communication be 'rational', by its insistent digitalization of analog relationships, our own culture is precisely one of those that becomes trapped in the contradictions between its ideology (which valorizes the digital) and its socio-economic reality (which is both digital and analog).

man in bed no clothes on you're not presentable no clothes on

(the italicized sections are from Marshall Reese, Story, some of which has been published in E pod, 3022 Abell Ave, Baltimore, Md. 21218, & in Juice, 4629 Keswick Road, Baltimore 21218; photocopies of the original 5x5 ft. (approx.) handwritten sheet can be ordered through E pod.)

TOM MANDEL

Sirk on Sirk: Interviews with John Halliday, (NY Viking 1972)

Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism by
Walter Benjamin (London New Left Books 1973)

Bottom: On Shakespeare, Louis Zukofsky, etc

Le schizo et les langues, Louis Wolfson (Gallimard Paris 1970)

Le bleu du ciel (and/or La part maudite), Georges Bataille (Paris
Gallimard 197?)

*(In the case of someone like myself, in whom poetry began dimly
envisioned 6-7 years ago and only in the last 3 took up as writing,
what that was!, a better list wd see to explain that set of steps:
books of poetry or read as poetry (here Lacan and, 2d time thru,
Hegel). Titles listed above, the reader may rightly be cautioned,
are by way of outline (of reading taking place ((of poetry)) within):
of a method of meditation.)*

STEVE MC CAFFERY :

Jacques Derrida: Of Grammatology, translated by G.C. Spivak (Baltimore,
Johns Hopkins Press 1974).

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism & Schizo-
phrenia (Viking 1978).

Fredric Jameson: Marxism and Form (Princeton 1971).

Michel Foucault: Language, Counter-Memory, Practice (Cornell University
Press 1977).

George Bataille: Eroticism (U.S. title: Death and Sensuality. N.Y.,
Walker & Co. 1962).

*(Plus: all & any issues of: Semiotext(e), Yale French Studies, and Sub-
Stance.)*

*For the book that's told me best how not to write: Theodore Enslin:
Synthesis (North Atlantic Books 1975): the product of a fourth rate
mind with access to a third rate technique.*

DOUGLAS MESSERLI :

*The following five "non-poetry" books have had a direct influence on
my writing and thinking:*

Ezra Pound, Gaudier Brezka (New Directions, 1974, 1978).

Gertrude Stein, How Writing Is Written, ed. by Haas (Black Sparrow,
1977).

Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. by Spivak (Johns Hopkins
Univ. Press, 1977).

Eugène Minkowski, Lived Time: Phenomenological and Psychopathologi-
cal Studies, trans. by Metzel (Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970).

Bernadette Mayer, Memory (North Atlantic Books, 1975).

*But, I might also mention Herbert N. Schneidau's Ezra Pound: The Image
and the Real (Louisiana State Univ. Press), J. Hillis Miller's*

Poets of Reality (Harvard Univ. Press), Sarah Lawall's Critics of Consciousness and Marjorie Perloff's Frank O'Hara: Poet Among Painters (George Braziller)--critical works which have helped me to have a clearer perception of issues in contemporary poetics and criticism.

CHARLES NORTH :

1. George Wilderstein, Chardin. N.Y. Graphic Society, 1969.
2. Frank O'Hara, Standing Still and Walking in New York. Grey Fox Press, Bolinas, 1974.
3. Gabriel García Márquez, One Hundred Years of Solitude, trans. Gregory Rabassa. Avon, 1970.
4. Leo Steinberg, Other Criteria. Oxford U. Press, 1972.
5. World Almanac and Book of Facts for 1972.

MICHAEL PALMER :

I guess I have chosen these five to stand for all possible alternative sets of 5.

Louis Wolfson Le Schizo et les Langues Gallimard Paris 1970

Ludwig Wittgenstein Remarks on Colour University of California Press Berkeley 1977

Max Ernst Une Semaine de Bonté Dover New York 1976

Yvonne Rainer Work 1961-73 The Presses of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and New York University Halifax/New York 1974

Thomas S. Kuhn The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (second edition) University of Chicago Press Chicago 1970

(I am tempted of course to include a ghost set, with writings of Frances Yates, Henry Corbin, Blanchot, Charles Rosen, Sacvan Bercovitch, Gershom Scholem, G-C Lichtenberg, Benjamin, Peirce, Cavell, Schoenberg's letters, et al, but I won't)

RON SILLIMAN :

Important as books are, it is being that determines consciousness. Books can & do serve mediationaly, presenting possibilities of structure where they might not otherwise be perceived. But, unless one is so trapped by the disease of one-sided development, the proposition's limits are its one truly interesting aspect. A *political* question wld have been: how has the necessity of earning a living (& perhaps supporting a family) affected the form & substance of your writing? Or: to what extent do writers functionally require a conceptual workplace, meaning not a room of one's own, but *other workers*? & to what extent can correspondence substitute for one? But this idea of books (wch smacketh of *WIN* magazine & its anarcho-social-democrats), as such, implies a relation of books to one's life wch does not, *cannot*, exist, *at this present moment*, outside of a beingness wch is not bourgeois (& hardly that of the renegade bourgeoisie who breaks away to reaffiliate her-

self w/ the workers).

That said, some books do count. For me, the major one has been SB 42 (The Uniform Determinate Sentencing Act of 1976), wch substituted California's feudal indeterminate criminal punishment mechanism for one in keeping w/ the age of capitalism, inscribed totally w/in a metaphysics of identity (equality, substitutability, exchange, fixity, etc.). To achieve even the limited goals any communist might seek within the framework of capitalist electoral politics, I had to take on some specific responsibility for the latter: if you should ever be sentenced to consecutive terms for multiple offenses, for example, you will be subjected to a collaboration I partook in. I think about that a lot.

Others: Dialectical Materialism, by Henri Lefebvre (it shld be subtitled How to Think); Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism, by Walter Benjamin (New Left Books & hard to get in the U.S.), 3 drafts of the uncompleted Paris Arcades project, showing how the best critical mind of the century workd *in action*; History and Class Consciousness, by George Lukacs (esp. "Reification and the Consciousness, section III"); Proprioception, by Charles Olson (read it w/ LeFebvre!); Visions of Cody, by Jack Kerouac (*the* great American novel); Ethnopoetics: A First International Symposium, ed. by Michel Benamou & Jerry Rothenberg; all of Marx, but esp. Capital, v. 1, the Eighteenth Brumaire &, with Engels, The German Ideology; Language of the Self, by Jacques Lacan and Derrida's Of Grammatology (brilliant & all wrong) are both useful, but skip the translator's essays; Tristes Tropique by Claude Levi-Strauss (just for the chapter "Sunset"); The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, by Thomas S. Kuhn; Gravity's Rainbow, by Thomas Pynchon; &, even tho they *are* poems, nobody will know it: the "My" pieces by David Bromige.

(1) Only a fool wld reduce such a list to five;

(2) Language is exchange, is the most pervasive politics there is.

The next important book for me to learn is Linguistics and Economics, by Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (1975, Mouton, The Hague).

JOHN TAGGART :

1. Walter J. Ong: The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural & Religious History. Simon/Schuster, 1970.
2. Leonard Stein, ed: Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg. St. Martin's Press, 1975.
3. Eric Havelock: Preface to Plato. Harvard U. Press, 1963.
4. Raymond Bernard Blakney: Meister Eckhart, a modern translation. Harper Torchbook, 1957.
5. Magnus Wenninger: Polyhedron Models. Cambridge University, 1974.
(& if allowed a bonus selection: Nature and Culture in the Iliad by James M. Redfield. Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978.)

JOSEPH TIMKO :

1. Visual Thinking, by Rudolf Arnheim. Berkeley: University of California Press; 1969.
 2. Invisible Cities, by Italo Calvino. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; 1974. (Translated by William Weaver).
 3. Behind the Mirror, a search for a natural history of human knowledge, by Konrad Lorenz. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; 1977. (Translated by Ronald Taylor).
 4. The Prose of the World, by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Evanston: Northwestern University Press; 1973. (Translated by John O'Neill).
 5. The Growl of Deeper Waters, by Denis de Rougemont. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press; 1976. (Translated by Samuel Hazo with Beth Luey).
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from THE OUTRAGE AGAINST WORDS

Screams. They begin yet again. I hear them, yet hear nothing. I'd like to know what they are saying. I knew. Now I seek what censors them within me.

Revolt acts; indignation seeks to speak. From the start of my childhood, only reasons for becoming indignant: the war, the deportation, the Indochinese war, the Korean war, the Algerian war... and so many massacres, from Indonesia to Chile via Black September. There's no language to describe that. There's no language because we live in a bourgeois world, where the vocabulary of indignation is exclusively moral -- well, it's those morals which massacre and make war. How can one turn their language against them when one finds oneself censored by one's own language?

For a long time, I've not known how to formulate that question, and now I can't find words to answer it. Not that it requires other words than ours, but that they arrange themselves spontaneously according to structures which correspond to the moral order of society.

Language, like the State, has always served the same people. We ought to distrust all of which the bourgeois say: With this system, at least, we can speak. This system is already a traitor even if it has not betrayed. In the context of order, in dialogue with it, one can only serve it.

The police are even in our mouths.

In one's own solitude, one only holds a dialogue with oneself to

stylize oneself.

One does not write in order to say something, but to define a place where no one will be able to declare what hasn't taken place.

Censorship gags. It reduces to silence. But it doesn't do violence to language. Only the abuse of language can violate it, by distorting it. Bourgeois power bases its liberalism on the absence of censorship, but it has constant recourse to the abuse of language. Its tolerance is the mask of an otherwise oppressive and effective violence. The abuse of language has a double effect: it saves appearances, and even reinforces its appearance, and it shifts the place of censorship so cleverly that one no longer notices it. Or to put it another way, through the abuse of language, bourgeois power is made to pass for what it is not: a non-constraining power, a "human" power, and its official policy which standardizes the value of words, in fact empties them of meaning -- whence a verbal inflation, ruining communications within the community, and in the same way censoring it. Perhaps, in order to express the second effect, it's necessary to create the word SENSURESHIP, which by referring to the other would indicate the deprivation of sense, not of speech. Deprivation of sense is the most subtle form of brainwashing, for it operates without the victim's knowledge. And the information cult refines that deprivation even more by seeming to stuff us with knowledge.

Freedom of expression is evidently dependant on the state of language. Apparently, I can say what I like, but in reality I can only do so within the limits of this state -- a state that current usage of language conceals from us. The words, it seems, are there, always available, always equal to themselves. We use them so spontaneously, and they're at our disposal so naturally, that we cannot suspect them. They're a currency which seems unable to be false, at least at the specie level. How therefore are we to perceive the sensureship? It's true that words are words and that sensureship only insinuates itself in the game of their signifieds, but the words we have abused, abuse in their turn. Whence, at this point, the appearance of a new ambiguity: sensureship which acts on us through words (while censorship acts through us against words) acts in other respects on words with a sensureship effect: it obliterates their significance, that's to say, their matter, their body. Thus we discover that the moral order aims at erasing its materiality in every being, in every thing.

Shit: up to what age did I dare not say that word? And how many other coarse words thus forbidden? All the words of the body. Good taste is one of the morality police. It serves it. It squeezes it round our throats and over our eyes. Good taste is a way of adapting the death of others into the forgetting. And even here, I experience my impotence to chase out my own. How can I treat my sentence so that it refuses the articulation of power? It would necessitate a language

which, in itself, was an insult to oppression. And more than an insult, a NO. How to find a language unusable by the oppressor? A syntax that would send back the spiked words and tear apart the language of all the Pinochets? I write. I have cries in return. There is no liberal power: there's only a smarter way of fucking us. For every televised fireside conversation, each of us should have replied with a parcel of shit posted to the great shit at the Elysée. Who would salvage that language?

Writing, trying to write, the primordial question becomes: how to get rid of this? Bury syntax, comrades, it stinks! Okay, but we make sentences even so. Go on and speak without taking on a subject, a verb, etc. We seek dodges. We change our seduction. We even ask the reader to lend a hand instead of always letting it be. The great thing is that we are among the bourgeoisie and that, under such a regime, there are only the morals which can serve the collective bond. Only, in order for the morals to function, the sentence must also function, and the words truly say what they say. Well -- that functioning is rotten -- rotten since our fathers massacred the workers, the colonized and even their brothers, all the while continuing to play the good father. Your civilization has big teeth, o fathers, so big that it ended by gobbling itself. Now, we must pick over the pile of shit and each seek his piece of tongue/language (langue). No history, everything's putrified!

I write whilst saying to myself: I don't want to be possessed -- and yet they trample on my back. I write against meaning, and I write to produce a meaning. Always the same overload, and the body is exhausted -- yes, the body of words burst beneath the weight. I'd like now to work on the level of the sound of language. Or perhaps to *miswrite* (*mécrire*) as Denis Roche says, crying so rudely: "Leave your tongues, little fathers (my tongue, my tongue, shit), eat your tongues, old dogs, while there's still time!" But there's no more time. And that squawks, squawks in our throats, while what would like to rise, tumbles and falls in the hole.

(Excerpted from Glenda George's translations from Noël's Le Château de Cène in Curtains, 12 Foster Clough, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7 5QZ England)

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