

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

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WRITING AND IMAGING

Because remembering is motile (self-generating), it constantly juxtaposes images and fragments of thought spontaneously into the thought process. For this reason, remembering continually transforms the effect of specific associations and images on the meanings or symbolic values we assign to them as we write and reread what is written. Since remembering causes such transformations by overlaying, condensing, and displacing associations, this process prevents permanent linking of images to specific associations. Such mutability as to the length of time images may be linked to specific associations in the thought process also makes it possible, in writing, by such methods as juxtaposition, aural association, repetition, and physical placement in the text, to alter their character, symbolic value or relationship to the composition as a whole (their "scale"). Written images, as mental projections, are continually re-scaled against other images by the transformation of lexical associations as the composition proceeds. The harmonic, rhythmic and symbolic value of images undergo changes in scale depending on the lexical and aural associations chosen by the reader or writer to be, at any given moment, their signal source or "key".

Of all types of writing, poetic discourse, like the psychoanalytic technique of free association, most tends to cause the experience of remembering to be idiosyncratic, personal, and dehistoricized. By the latter term, I mean that the stories or fantasies elaborated from the texts or associations may be constructed or deconstructed at any given moment by current associations. The method of free association flattens out the relative value of images by placing them in a one-to-one relationship to consecutive fragments of ideas, unlike purposive forms of thought patterns fixed by sequential ordering. Chance and random sequencing of images can have a similar re-synchronizing / de-synchronizing effect, by causing shifts between coded message readings of the fragments and the intermittently phased current "readings" of present images looped into signal words and thoughts. Specifically the difficulty in poetry with imaging is that after-images often tend to be sustained in remembering much longer than is necessary for the most musical, rhythmically modulant grouping of sequential or juxtaposed signs. Too clear a statement, meaning or purpose might scale down, for

instance, a group of signs so radically as to make their source overtones too minimal to have any impact on the composition as a whole.

When word, object, sign and trace synesthetically embrace the mind and the page, associating symbol with its mark, title, token, signal, and glyph, symbolic values' rigid hold on meaning is weakened. The image's source then can again have a monitoring, signaling effect on the way meanings and intensities of meaning are assigned. The modally transformable image is one that is subject to the shadowing, tinting effects of one meaning juxtaposed against another, layered on and under it, like the creation of an approximate sign in lieu of foregoing any possibility of recollection. Or one fixed sequence of meanings may be transformed into another register by creating new associations to a mutation or variation of the text, like reversing one part of the sequence and allowing one set of symbols before that part and after that part to remain the same. In writing this may be an alteration of syntax within a customary phrase which can be translated back again within the thought process simultaneously or almost so, as the text is read, just as an inflection or modification in speech might entirely alter the character of an expression in relation to a purely syntactical form of the same idea. Again, the resulting transmutative effect would be caused by the feedback between a meaning and an intentionally added reframing of its tonal value affecting a shift in its remembered, historicized meaning.

NICK PIOMBINO

JEROME ROTHENBERG: ON HIS ANTHOLOGIES

The exciting thing about all this is that as it is new it is old and as it is old it is new, but now really we have come to be in our way which is an entirely different way.

-- Gertrude Stein, "Narration"

It seems to me that I've been making anthologies for as long as I've been making poems *per se*. I used to do them in my head because no compendium, no gathering was available to help me map the territory that was opening up to us. As a kid I inherited a large desk with a sheet of glass on top, beneath which I would slip in pages of poems--my own & others'--& pictures, etc. that I had been coming across in the stuff I was reading. I used to arrange them to form "shows" of works that seemed, by juxtaposition, to inform each other. I also typed up poems from different places & times & kept them in a series of folders marked *anthology*.

That was from high school days & stopped sometime in college, when I started to *buy* books & be deceived by other people's arrangements.

When I reawakened in the later 1950s I discovered Blake saying: "I must either create my own 'system' or be trapped in another's"--for which you might substitute the word "anthology." (The danger of being trapped in your own system as well is more subtle but nohow out of the picture.) I got quickly into doing my own press (Hawk's Well) & magazine (Poems from the Floating World). But the magazine was really an anthology & I subtitled it, in my mind at least, "an ongoing anthology of the deep image." In it I brought together contemporary work with work from elsewhere that I felt was along the same track. The idea was that we weren't doing something new (which we were) but were getting back in our own terms to fundamental ways of seeing & languaging from which we (the larger "we" of the western enterprise) had long been cut off.

I otherwise dislike anthologies--the ones, I mean, that perpetuate the orders of a limited past & by so doing hold back the real work of the present. On the whole I feel better about the kind of anthology that presents a new move in poetry, like a well conceived magazine or like a group show in the visual arts. But, except for the contemporary side of America a Prophecy, I haven't felt myself pulled in that direction either but remain distrustful of the rigidities & career tactics implicit in the form. My own concern has been with interpretations of past & present--the present foremost but not sufficient in itself. In other words I've looked for a way of measuring our works & selves against the possibilities of a poetics that's big enough to account for human creativity, human language-making over the broadest span available. I have an idea of history--or a feel for it--that guides me & that changes in the process of pulling it together.

David Antin describes me (both in the anthologies & in poems like Poland/1931) as "walking backwards ... moving away from the things that he's leaving ... but keeping his eyes on them while backing toward the new terrain, which I suppose he only sees directly when it joins the rest behind him." The perspective, which seems true enough to my experience (if you add a little forward twisting of the head from time to time), led me (with hints from predecessors like Tzara & others) to the discovery of lines between past & present, lines overlooked before that transmitted a crypto-tradition (or series of such) throughout the world. The lines led from poem to poem like strings of light--from past to present or, when I turned my head, from present to past. What I saw as poetry was conditioned by what we make as poetry today. The question invariably comes up: why are those sounds in the Navajo chant taken as a "poem"? And the answer: because Hugo Ball or Kurt Schwitters (or you name them) opened that domain for us. But when they did they also pointed to a possible human continuity that had been broken or at least obscured: a non-semantic form of utterance to which they were now calling our atten-

tion. I have, in taking a look for myself, only continued the process, maybe made some of it more overt.

For this, "anthology" seemed like a terrific instrument, as a means for exploring & keeping before us the dimensions of our humanness--even where our explorations lead us to a language seemingly devoid of meanings. I was drawn first to a search for instances ("primitive" & "archaic") of what was, what seemed--if anything--an overly meaning-full area of mind; the world of "images," of what James Hillman more recently speaks of as the "royal road of soul-making" (Keats' term), or image-making, where "to 'be in soul' is to experience the fantasy in all realities & the basic reality of fantasy." I knew it would be there & I sighted it: the multiple ways it shows up under the turns & twists of the particular cultures that attend to it.

Yet once I was into Technicians of the Sacred, the discoveries expanded in the process of searching them out. In particular I began to assemble--under section titles like "A Book of Extensions" & "A Book of Events"--works that were different from but strangely like our own experiments with language, structure & performance. In 1964 I had started a group of my own pared-down quasi-minimal pieces called "Sightings" that didn't need more than a word or two to be operative:

<u>Cages (i)</u>	<u>Cages (iv)</u>	<u>Cages (vii)</u>
Wires.	Summer.	Cages.
<u>Cages (ii)</u>	<u>Cages (v)</u>	
Pretending.	Summermoon.	
<u>Cages (iii)</u>	<u>Cages (vi)</u>	
Moon.	Summerflies.	

And at the same time I could spot a similar process in Aboriginal (Australian) song-making:

Fire	Fire
Flame	Ashes
.	
Urination	
Testes	
Urination	
.	
Loincloth	
(red)	
Loincloth	
(white)	
Loincloth	
(black)	

•
"penis"
penis

incisure
penis

incisure
semen

Or, watching Hannah Weiner's flag-code poems, say, my attention was turned simultaneously to African drum language or Plains Indian hand-language poems or Pomo Indian flag & dream language, etc. Dada & Futurist "sound poems" pointed to American Indian ones (Tzara, I later found, had made the point explicitly & fully in relation to African & Maori work), & it was possible to draw from that tribal experience by a process of "translation by composition," to bring new forms into our own language:

*Zzmmmm 're lovely N nawu nnnn but some are & are at my howzes
nahht bahyeenahtnwing but nawu nohwun baheegwing*

& a hint here too of those occasions in which event precedes meaning.

In all of this there are two things, at least two, that have been operative for me: a fidelity to the past & a fidelity to the present; & the balance doesn't come easy or maybe, in any single instance, doesn't come at all. And a third thing, which I would be less than honest to disguise--that I've felt (in maybe all the anthologies but Revolution of the Word) a sense of the book as a poem, a large composition operating by assemblage or collage: my own voice emerging sometimes as translator, sometimes as commentator, but still obedient to the other voices, whether "out there" or "in here." In A Big Jewish Book I've carried it (or it's carried me) the furthest: a bigger space & less "my own" than Poland/1931, say, in which I was likewise using procedures like assemblage. The range (unlike Poland) is the totality of the imaginably "jewish," both discovered & invented; & the collages & commentaries are more varied & personal & run right through the book (not reserved for a special section only). That follows, I suppose, from the assumption that my own participation here is clearer--at least different--than in Pumpkin or Technicians.

The space is big enough to do it all, but in the end it isn't the idea of (so-called) "jewishness" that most concerns me--rather a specific set of language plays, feats of word magic & language-centeredness (in its most profound sense) that come to a visible point within the illusion of the ethnically specific (the Indian in Shaking the Pumpkin, the Jewish here, etc.). What it brings me to in this one (the third of the volumes responding to *ethnos*) is a place where I can deal with the grapheme, the written word & image as such, which seems suddenly to be as primal as speech is--in the sense that all language doings are present in our first emergences as human beings. Or, as I quote Jabès there: "The book is as old as water & fire."

Having gotten that far, I can now go back to the worlds of Technicians & Pumpkin & find it there also, can play with what intrigues me most in Derrida, that wild statement that "no reality or concept would correspond to the expression 'society without writing.'" The issue, then, has

always been language--language & reality, nothing else--& the dichotomy of speaking & writing is, if no further specified, another con to keep us from our wholeness. Concerns like that--of language & wholeness--would seem to hold the work together; at least if you want a sense of where I'm going.

JEROME ROTHENBERG

ROTHENBERG ANTHOLOGIES BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia, & Oceania* (1968). *Shaking the Pumpkin: Traditional Poetry of the Indian North Americas* (1972). *America a Prophecy: A New Reading of American Poetry from Pre-Columbian Times to the Present* (1973, with George Quasha). *Revolution of the Word: A New Gathering of American Avant Garde Poetry 1914-1945* (1974). *A Big Jewish Book: Poems & Other Visions of the Jews from Tribal Times to Present* (1978, with Harris Lenowitz & with Charles Doria).

"A"-24

The difficulties "A"-24 imposes on its performers and audience are enormous. They stem directly from Zukofsky's poetics: "An integral / Lower limit speech / Upper limit music." The words function two ways at once: as phonemes, and as syntax, meaning, story.

The structure of the piece insists on language's double ply. There's music playing, Handel's [Bach, Z's expected choice, wd have been too 'good', too complicated & distracting?], sturdy, straight-forward rhythm, clear never quite to the point of obviousness, the vertical architecture (harmonies) and the horizontal (melody, counterpoint) always hearable. 4 voices (Thought, Drama, Story, Poem) are scored into this steady pulse as precisely as if the piece were a quintet for strings and keyboard. Phonetically, the words are treated as music.

But, quoting Act I, Scene I, "Blest / Infinite things / So many / Which confuse imagination / Thru its weakness / To the ear / Noises. / Or harmony / Delights / Men to madness / " (Spinoza), the syntactic side gets stretched. It's often difficult to speak the meanings vividly due to the number of rests scored into each vocal line. And when the musical rhythm is quick enough to allow the line to near speech, the listener has the problem of the vertical overlay of the other 3 voices. [Occasionally (end of first scene) different voices splice without much overlay to sound *one* multi-syntactic phrase/sentence (a bit like Webern), but it's an exception. Not the point of the piece.]

The theory of language approaching music should allow for an approachable 'verbal harmony'. But the analogy misleads. Discounting externals (timbre, octave spacing, etc.) music (standard Western for the moment, the kind Z seemed mainly concerned with) works with a vocabulary of 12 tones, units. English uses, say, 300 phonemes, and they aren't the point, but rather the 500,000 words that are elusively pinned to them. Not to mention syntax/sentences.

Language doesn't occur in time the way music does. Music is strictly sequence, absolutely dependent on time. Language merely uses time to embody itself in a string of phonemes, the meaning occurring both during the sounds, and after they have vanished. In music, a vertical cross-section is unambiguous at every point. The units are instantly 'transparent', so to speak. A *g* sounds like a *g*, always, thus allowing Bach to write such complicated single voices and put as many as 6 of them together into such exciting and 'inevitable' harmonic order, an ability Zukofsky loved him for.

But language doesn't work that way. A phoneme doesn't sound like a word, a verb won't necessarily reveal itself as such until some, or many, more phonemes have sounded. Phonemes, the units of 'verbal music', aren't transparent, can't be superimposed without ambiguity. What the ear tends to do on first hearing "A"-24 is switch rapidly from voice to voice. The quality of all 4 modes of Zukofsky's writing is immediately and ubiquitously apparent, his 'sincerity' [see "An Objective", II], his care in choosing and joining words.

But to fully appreciate the rhymes, harmonies, congruences takes repeated hearings, reading each part separately, joining them to their original contexts. "A"-24 echoes minutely and vastly. There are immediately hearable phonetic rhymes, syntactic rhymes (e.g. pp. 167-8, Thought: "in case he should attempt an escape"; Drama: "but now I go"; Poem: "not many of us will get out of it alive."), but many more echoes, repetitions, allusions that are widely separated. The most compelling congruences are the largest. In the last section, Fugues: Thought: Henry Adams' life/writing; Story: a particular instance of Z's life/writing a single sentence; Drama: Z's dramatization of himself as a young man; Poem: nature as creator/created. Plus Adams' marriage / Z's marriage / the Son's romance with the Girl, etc., etc., *etc.*

Ultimately, hearing "A"-24 will lead to the totality of Zukofsky's work. As he said, a poet writes one work all his life. "A"-24 really is "Celia's L.Z. Masque," a most accurate portrait of him. [Not sure, by the way, how much of the scoring and/or text selection is hers/his.]

Clearly, everybody hears all the *sound* of the piece. But Zukofsky is trying to hook up the physical instantaneous unconscious undistortable act of hearing with the fullest possible range of thought (all of a life). Performing and hearing "A"-24 presupposes a thorough knowledge of Z's work, an ecstatically dilated time sense in which every syllable

continues sounding until they all have resolved each other, and an eternity in which the whole work is present in any of its sounds. A properly ambitious conclusion to "A".

(Louis Zukofsky's "A"-24 was performed by Kit Robinson (Thought), Steve Benson and Carla Harryman (Drama; Cousin, Father, Attendant D, Doctor, Son -- Steve; Nurse, Girl, Attendant R, Mother, Aunt -- Carla), Lyn Hejinian (Story), Barrett Watten (Poem), and Bob Perelman (piano, should have been harpsichord) in April 1978 at the Grand Piano, San Francisco, and later elsewhere in California).

BOB PERELMAN

DREYER

The writing changed my life. I was thinking how my affections would be thrown out, my feelings would be cast aside or just internalized. I know for some writers it makes them keep thinking, but I'm interested in the rhythm of words, and how combined we receive their story. Like when someone asks if "ya get the picture" and you do. I'm not a very intellectual writer, yet I feel I learned to think when I started to write. I need to emphasize my feelings and thoughts -- make them clear to others. The way words grow out of words and phrases, light on other words -- an icy voice. This happens when I start to write and when I forget myself. This is what is most important to me. I think the thoughts form themselves when I lose myself in the writing. I'm learning, making it clearer I like to get carried away by the words -- but I need to be understood not hide by abstractions, vagueness or drama. I need to know it's real.

LYNNE DREYER

LYNNE DREYER -- "SPECIFIC RUBIES"

All of Lynne Dreyer's work is concerned with the unusual but somehow inherently sensual relationships between otherwise disparate words and phrases and images and even letters and syllables and the "logic" they can be made (or seen) to "represent." These concerns are shared by many of the writers discussed in these pages in every issue, but where most of them communicate, even at times telegraph, a kind of intellectual

imposition behind the structuring of their language choices, Dreyer's work seems to continue to appear intuitive, and this gives a somehow softer, more sensual edge to it, as though the insistence of more archly structural work had been transformed into a seductiveness, but not physical except in the physicality of the letters and words, and images as well, for her work does often rely on imagery, but an imagery that is as disjointed and abruptly personal as the surrealists had hoped they might achieve but rarely seemed to (at least to my satisfaction).

Dreyer's work is becoming richer all the time in terms of references and structures. Where the work in her first, *Lamp Lights Used to Feed the Deer*, was full of "Exploration"(s) (as her first piece in that collection is called) into the uses of language to reveal the sensual and intellectual beauty of the (her) mind's intuitive connections and conclusions, the later work explored the same kind of unexpected and personal relationships between words and what they might signify and otherwise express and the mysteries of the world -- not just the mind.

With Dreyer the language is always personal, no matter how disjointed or "abstract" or objectified, in a way that seems to say she's still using it to clear up something for herself. So many writers seem to be defining something, whether in themselves or outside themselves, for the sake of an audience of readers, which can sometimes work, rather than for themselves. With Dreyer, I always have the feeling it's for her, and that lends her work this close, almost revelatory tone.

Dreyer's writing never seems pretentious, although she uses words in an incredibly original way, they are still always familiar enough that the idiosyncracies seem just like that, an individual matter of expression.

... It is not from her mother or families or origins and seeking them out. Becoming more with houses. This is why everything is new in houses and keeping them clean. This she said was discipline- the words caught in her throat. Had she become past tense. Here points become valises. Facts heiroglyphics. Muted lights non-distinct voice what to take. It seemed long. I remember pictures and copies of words on them. Specific rubies without their directness. His laughter was wishful. His laughter was killed and made into different parts of bodies. Amputations and what they did with them. It seemed they did it to music. The next memory was medical, schooling, and teaching. Saying much to each other, slicing boxes, bodies withheld. As if they knew the word day. As if they knew songs without words and came across these songs in morgues. Not their teaching, not pictures, not smaller attempts but symbols of parts, put away.

(-- from *Stampede*)

I don't know where Lynne gets her language from or how she goes about structuring it -- but I never have the sense that the words are from outside ("found") sources, arbitrary or not, or that her abrupt shifts or unusual juxtapositions are there to call attention to themselves as techniques, cut-up or otherwise. No matter how she does it, her work almost always strikes me as having been "written" that way -- revised perhaps, cut probably here and there -- but the movement, rhythms, structures, all seem to be the direct result of her mind at work writing the language out.

MICHAEL LALLY

DREYER BIBLIOGRAPHY: Lampights Used to Feed the Deer (1974, Some of Us Press, Washington, D.C.; available c/o L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Distributing Service, \$1.50). Stampede (1976, eel press, c/o Inman, 3338 Chauncey #102, Mt Rainier, MD 20822; \$2). Letters (1978, in Tottel's #17, c/o L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, photocopy of issue; \$3.78). Tamoka 1979, in Roof IX, Segue Foundation, 300 Bowery, NYC 10012; \$3).

from ARRANGEMENT

(The following excerpt is from a transcript of a July 19, 1977 lecture by Clark Coolidge in Talking Poetics from Naropa Institute, Volume One, Shambhala Publications, 1123 Spruce St, Boulder, CO 80302, \$6.95, which also contains talks by Jackson MacLow, Robert Duncan, Ron Padgett, William Burroughs & others)

I also want to say that there are no rules. At least not at first there aren't. If you start with rules, you've really got a tough road. What I think is that you start with materials. You start with matter, not with rules. The rules appear, the limitations appear, and those are *your* limitations and the limitations of the material. Stone has a certain cleavage. You can't make it look a certain way if the stone is not constructed to allow you to do that....

[writes on blackboard:]

ounce code orange

a

the

ohm

trilobite trilobites

This is a poem from a group of poems I wrote in 1966, when I was living in Cambridge in the same house with Aram Saroyan, and he was writing these one-word poems, dividing everything down to the smallest possible thing... and I immediately wanted to put them together. I couldn't stand the idea of one word. I don't think there *is* one word. So this is one of those poems. I did maybe twenty or thirty of these. I suppose they're about as unadulterated, pure, if you will, as anything I ever did. I was really trying to work with the words, look at the words, try to use all their qualities. There's no question of meaning, in the sense of explaining and understanding this poem. Hopefully, it's a unique object, not just an object. Language isn't just objects, it moves. I'll try to talk about some of the qualities of these words that I was aware of when I was writing it, as best I can. It was eleven years ago.

"ounce code orange": ways of measuring, in a sense. Weight, a symbol system, a color. "a/the": the indefinite article, the definite article. "ohm" is the unit of electrical resistance, a quality of metal, let's say, that requires a certain amount of juice to go through. In other words, this is a fuzzy, resistant word. It hangs down here, it affects particularly this space. I wanted these things hanging in the middle because they could adhere to words in either the top line or the bottom line. "*the* ounce," "*a/the* code," "*the* orange." You can't say "a ounce" or "a orange," practically. You can say "a code." So there are those vectors going there. "trilobites": you know what a trilobite is, it's an early animal of the Paleozoic Age that was a crustacean divided into three lobes. As a word, to me it's completely irreducible. What are you going to do with it? "A trilobite": it's like a clinker. Angular, uneven, heavy word. So, I made a plural, and I also say, "trilobite trilobites." That second trilobite becomes a verb. And I feel, as Fenollosa pointed out, that every noun is a verb, and vice versa, and there really are a hell of a lot of them in the English language which don't connect except in being the same word, like the word "saw." "I saw the saw."...

... Well, "trilobite trilobites": it sounds like a rudiment, a par-diddle or something you have to practice. That's what I don't like. It's not [*hums a bop rhythm*]. You know, it's not as shapely, which I've tried to do more of since.... I also found out later that "ounce" is the name for a kind of leopard. I don't know if anybody knows that. I think it's Indian, or Tibetan. It's a cat called an ounce. So, you think of "pounce." There are these words that begin to adhere and appear like ghosts around these things. Ounce, pounce, bounce. "code" -- I don't know, that's beginning to seem a little neutral to me. "Orange": the color *and* the round thing, the fruit. Now that I've said that, the word "ounce" begins to seem round to me. "A trilobite," "*the* trilobites." That's how that goes. And this is the dead spot of the

poem, the resistance: "ohm." And it's also almost like the "Om," the balance. ...

CLARK COOLIDGE

PLANISHING HAMMER

Ray DiPalma, Planh (Casement Books, 67 Morton St., NY, NY 10014; \$3.50)

Organized language is a trace of effort. The solidity of the lines is trust; we rest *in* our work, *whatever* comes out of the heterogeneous world formulating into this graspable world, because the structure divides it for us.

The language is fragment. It is only a fearful mind that sees this as disintegration. This cutting is the very sign of unity, of solid excitement, the sign of structure. The manipulation of units of language in durable structures, is literature. Though they may be interesting singly, only structure *justifies* its fragments. The flaking arrangement of lines, of words within lines, and of line groups, convinces us that they engage each other; they are made sentient. Language cut openly bleeds meaning and thus does more than it was supposed (thought) to have done: its extension.

Each line inflects a gesture. It hurts surrounding lines, entices them, throws them, hurries them. In this writing the gestural line is never still, negative.

When lyric and imagistic modes are extended and intercut, the calculations appear at each refining turn to be reaching for conclusions. This reaching is held steady in their constant incompleteness. The mastery of some formulation is implied in the turn to and from each line because that formulation is present there in it. The *forestalling* is held *repeatedly* before us; we see it as the subject. The advance implicit within each move is cancelled by its immediate repetition, but the impression of the gesture elegantly retrying itself is the substance of our impression, is our involvement.

Each stanza is three sided. This unaltered stability reinforces the line of sight we have as we progress. Our progress links the identical units. Nothing isolate, nothing diminishes. The sturdiness of the stanzas restates, as each memory reinforces others, definingly. Two gestures move together at the point of each stanza: the gesture of each stanza resting straight, the gesture of stanza after stanza undiminished by our continuing perspective. Gyroscope and metronome intersect. The two gestures are, repeatedly, one; that is the point distinguished by our presence, stanza to stanza, the persisting erection of sense.

The breaking of the poem into ten sections provides the reader ten vantage points. Like Christo's Running Fence, at each hill topped in walking we review a renewed architecture, in both directions. These horizontal and temporary though repeated experiences, of noting what has been allowed in and combined, and what excluded, fill us also vertically with the experience of disclosure; the world, the language, goes by on both sides. The stanzas are strides.

This writing is vertical not only in the sense of accumulation, from the first line to the last, but also in the sense of flight, the last line drawing (through) all others to the first. Each line is momentarily the focal point of cross currents; nothing escapes the rush. Each line is targetted, washed.

The substance of the writing is language. (Writing *elicits* the substance of writing, scrapes it together.) This is the case with works which are whole. The work, by not travelling from the domain of its tools, has only to perform itself. It is at no point separate from itself as are works which employ one device (words) for the accomplishment of another (a subject, a discourse, eg.). Like filings held in array by a magnet, there is no separating the force from the result. The writer does not have to name himself or sign his devices, because the structure does so, for itself, self-intently. Each chunk of language is a disguised verb; it speaks itself. The words are not a display, moral or metaphysical or otherwise, they are a phenomenological fact, they can't be consumed. The substance of the writing bears upon itself, and even this only by its exclusion of the *else* which its demonstration releases from any need to be there. Our metaphors (visceral, contingent, etc.) for describing the substance, though they be accurate rhetoric, mark only our own presence and in so doing briefly relieve us of the work our presence entails.

The music of the poem is building block music. Its insistent additions make its structure more visually intuited than tonally attended. The poem sounds good without that being its intent, without the sound being gained and at the same time lost at the level of intention. Language, when it acts, works unavoidable sound. The sound *excites* the language; that is its function. The sound is a function of language's habit, something it displays as it enforces itself. The sensual phrases are not so much differentiated as arrived at; like oases, their appeal is scribed by the needs we achieve before we arrive at them. Though the sound is pleasure, the poem brings itself together not even at that slight remove which separates in our mind the sound of the hammer from the hammer. The *tools* are emphatic; not "their" "products".

The poem evidences some usual devices: rhyme, words in combination for comparison, and the results of that, insertions from the surrounding reality of a transparent writer (a person we invent), lists of sensation

or place or effect, a linear though jolting accounting for condition. But the poem is more deflected than produced by these pockets of trait and habit. We are tempted to say that the author has produced this work from his own interiors. The text provides nothing to support this idea; we must admit that we have used the most handy hypothesis, which in reality keeps us away from the poem. The poem has not produced its effects in us. We have produced the poem inseparable from its effects. Suddenly we (we the text) glance at the poem stretching about us, and see bits of our own times, particles of our own natures, laced into the eras between the lines.

The poem does not reach for an ending. This is not because of doubt. The poem contains its conclusion in each line, each measurement; retaining conclusion, it does not have to pursue it. Neither does the end connect with the beginning, though it does imply it. The poem lays over itself at *each* point. By *extension*, the poem.

From our place along its traverse, we need not speak of an end of this poem. Summary is not important; a continuing summative process is. The most pointed revelation of each line is its position. It is a marker; holds its position so cleanly that it is revealed, reveals it and so holds it. The larger meaning, that implicit in any self-supporting structure, is implicit in each reconstituted gesture; the gesture of line, of stanza, of word. There is no question of an exterior structure which we argue to intuit; words intuit, they trace, their argument is made instantly by the design they continuously perfect about them. Our gradual reading of the lines, our inspection, sees each locked firm to attention; produced by the closest reading, this is the largest meaning, the durability. We don't examine this writing against codes; it produces itself as discrete, opened code and abolished all others from purpose.

As we read line to line, each provides a pause of recognition. There is an orderly list of noticeable elements, factors. The meaning comes out of the spaces fluctuant about the lines. The lines in relation produce charges and discharges (cognition and recognition) (we are held and released), and it is this motion, this constant, that reminds us that we are in the presence of meaning. This reminder itself, unfiltered though given efflorescently from the depthed and screened filter of the words, *is* the meaning. Our implicatedness as readers completes the presence of meaning and simultaneously neutralizes it. Its presence is its vanishing, and ours.

ALAN DAVIES

*chatted the system
evidence be
some funny ideas*

no more chronicle

turned embellishing
in red buildings

to fix a signal
eyes half closed
with a spasm of pleasure

silence signature
showed the bottom
made deeper

-- from PLANH

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

This is in reaction to Ron Silliman's remarks (in L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E No. 7) about "WIN magazine & its anarcho-social-democrats" & such expressions as "outside of a beingness [!] wch is not bourgeois (& hardly that of the renegade bourgie who breaks away to reaffiliate herself w/ the workers)" & "To achieve even the limited goals any communist might seek within the framework of capitalist electoral politics," as well as his recommendation of Lefebvre's Dialectical Materialism: "(it should be subtitled How to Think)."

1. I have no idea what an "anarcho-social-democrat" is, tho in Silliman's usage it's obviously a pejorative term. As far as I know, the one common position held by the group that issues WIN is pacifism. I believe that some are anarchists, some libertarian socialists (i.e., probably in no sense Leninists), & some may, horrid as it might seem to ideologists, be reformists trying to deal with problems as they come up. I don't believe any are members of the Social Democratic Federation or whatever its present name may be. I'm no longer able to be active on the editorial board, but I think that many of us are convinced that both "capitalist electoral politics" (are there any other kinds?) & non-violent direct action are necessary means toward our "limited goals" (are there any other kinds?).

2. I'm repeatedly amazed when I learn that excellent artists such as Ron Silliman (most of whose work I admire--tho probably, according to him, for all the wrong reasons) still pursue the will-o'-the-wisp of "communism" & adhere to that strange agglomeration of 19th-century concepts & superstitions known as "dialectical materialism." Why he should think that the *next* "communist" state that gets set up somewhere should be any improvement on the present group of war-mongering bureaucratic oligarchies that busily exploit most people in their countries in the name of the supposedly high ideals of "socialism" & "communism"

is beyond me. & I've heard the "argument" before that "real communism" (or "real socialism") would be different from the present examples-- that "the people" ("the broad masses," as the Great Soviet Encyclopedia loves to put it) would effectively control the state apparatus, which itself would eventually "wither away." Why should anyone believe such nonsense?

3. It probably does little good to recommend such a direct & eloquent critique of "dialectical materialism" & allied notions as Milovan Djilas' The Unperfect Society (New York: Harcourt Brace World, 1969) to those still enmeshed in the "dialectical materialist" spiderweb, but for what it's worth, I do.
4. Lack of belief in the various current ideological illusions need not imply a love for corporate capitalism. In fact, cleaning out the ideological cobwebs & 19th-century hand-me-downs is a necessary prerequisite to substantial desirable change in both the corporate-capitalist & the state-capitalist ("socialist") countries, as well as in the so-called "third world" countries whose peoples have incautiously accepted infection by Western ideological diseases, the worst of which is probably the belief that there is or can be a "Perfect Society." It's a toss-up whether this notion (& the rather similar belief that there is "One True Religion") or simple greed have caused more misery.
5. Talk of "a beingness which is not bourgeois" & dividing people up between "workers," "bourgeois," & "renegade bourgeois" is not going to advance us one millimeter toward the achievement of the goals ("limited" or not--preferably limited) Silliman & I both consider desirable. Only dogged & persistent & detailed work within the present concrete oppressive social systems may achieve such advance. To what extent the work of artists as such can contribute to it is, to say the least, problematical.
6. I'm sure Silliman will consider the following a banal & simple-minded question, but I can't resist asking him how long he thinks he would be able to continue his artistic work in any "communist" state.
7. To hell with the know-it-alls who entrap generous spirits such as Ron Silliman into their exploitative ideological mazes. If they don't know what they're doing, it's all the worse.
8. "How to Think" indeed!

JACKSON MAC LOW

HEJINIAN

SMATTER

In Belgium there

is a river they
call "the bridge"

It's only a coincidence, and it has a bad name.

Then, quilting on this crazy quilt.

What they reveal -- in this wind "only birds." Or, "It's only the trees
brushing against the house" "in this wind."

O there now
I hear crickets but not to catch
their tone

Question of responsibility, hence ability to respond; one person for
another and the converse, hence conversation; it is never true that x
"means nothing" to y -- or "he means nothing to me" in protest,
fending off.

I can't help but be interested in how things sit -- before I intervene.

The *when* is *where* when you tell me where to turn off this road.

Any coincidence is a relationship, puts a line out or takes one in. There is always a relationship as soon as there is a coincidence. I am thinking here now more of taking lines in, or "taking it all in," than of any putting out. It seems that what presses as a question upon writing now (when it comes to talk of structures, for example, or systems) is how to arrange words (or word groups) rather than how to choose them. How to lay them there, or, rather, string them -- the only simultaneity available now being a kind of potent neutrality -- susceptibility, or piling *up on* words (as opposed to the Elizabethan cumulative techniques, which amount to a (lovely, to me) piling *on of* words). Feelings embrace fields, but ideas, which are points, point. (Memory does field understanding, but only retrospectively.)

Putting things together in such a way as to enable them to coincide, to make that kind of motion, is, like the "collage" and the "cluster," an attempt (by analogy with music's chord) at suggesting (since that is all one can do) simultaneity, hoping for inherence, haphazard, happy chance. As a writer, but especially as a poet, one looks there to discover the natural order in language, in words as they represent but particularly as they don't-only, in words together, lively -- at play in the fields (finally) where "o there now their tone" make a way of seeing connections see writing. Like the natural order elsewhere, things can't be seen in ones alone, make twos. Twos and more, too. I am interested in that.

Another way of phrasing the question might be to inquire into the relationship between relativity and dialectics, the relativity being that

one with that one and the dialectics as the two then made: "The distance that every great writer maintains between himself and his object."
(Walter Benjamin)

A real object. So it's true. What do I believe in? nothing.

"I keep an eye on things, like what wars do to little shops."

Dialectics, as I understand the term, is a style of inquiry; it requires that thought move. And since all movement is interstitial, occurring by points between points, such movement in thought is a process of connection; in dialectics it is concerned with what emerges when some things, under force (even "the force of circumstance") are, or proceed toward, other things. Words, for example, simply can't help but give onto ideas. It is for this reason that they form language -- language in this case being an operation of connection. I want to take a measure of the elements and to measure the space between them.

That tree down
would be news up
there

Who's to say along what binding forces we bound,

LYN HEJINIAN

WRITING IS AN AID TO MEMORY

Lyn Hejinian, Writing Is an Aid to Memory (1978; The Figures, c/o Small Press Distribution, 1636 Ocean View Ave, Kensington, CA 94709; \$3)

The intelligence evident management in a bounding ardour of attention, a wily worthy-fulness, taken to stony-watery horseflesh clumsiness' edge, if/yes, but style as the grace of standing by a posit until *it* actually abounds with beauty & function. The periods between her sentences show us her thinking realizing the world written, in parts, like Justice weighing & balancing; *same* time her rhythm dance articulation of the new ones. *She* 's intelletto ahead & behind her, that gathering (all-over-radiant/understanding), here delay, is thought density wife-ing quintessence' passion.

She's not afraid of blanket cliché, confession, 'obsession'--so that that may be held up for circumspection. Should she edit her attention?

"Nature as creator," no! 'A poem can be made of anything.' Hospitality's good behavior is womanly devotion's license, romance, logic's guises.

The house above in the starry skies, if you mean that seriously. When it's over, I feel just like I bin cut off from some cosmic force, our love.

'The Unknown
The Left Out
The Mysterious
The Holy Possibility'

.
The house above in the starry skies, if you mean that seriously. Seems hardly real at all, but say the language mind's our galaxy, & let's assume the way it looks to us is like a paper house, but flat somehow, a 'page' with only length & breadth, & further say we see this surface providentially (hardly 'upskew,' on-end, etc.) straight on (as though we stood back royally & do look on with all attendant privilege of consummate location, here & there, at home away from home)--& further say this spectacle which is at once our very being/realm, has letters of the alphabet ranged left to right as loci for the roving lights that enter from the depths of space & time as *words* (or *morphs*) which move across the midnight table laid, inset as guests that sit & pass, speak, eat or are eaten...

.
Fine, but too many words.

Is she showy-offy, is she grand?

.
Such pleasure in these forms that range the air in several places, world & more literal mineral, material, metal, water blue as blue...

...'form cut in time,' & not by who, 'sunlight ranging forms'...

Y O U R E S O L I G H T R E D

r a n g e b u t y o r e l i t t l e

that blood flows world iron song make cakes bake pies & pleasure in the limbs glide drinking water wine banging people into pastry. Nor rough, at all, just giving each what there's to do: grace graces.

.
Writing is participation in agency of forms' generation 'from way back,' & thus appears (as) 'in' Memory ('cloud of stars'):

'From form seen doth he start, that understood,
Taketh in latent intellect--
As in a subject ready--' (agh)

Love:

'Vien da veduta forma ches s'intende
Che 'l prende
nel possibile intelletto
Chome in subgetto

locho e dimoranza
E in quella parte mai non a possanza

Perchè de qualitatde non disciende
Risplende

in sé perpetuale effecto
Non a diletto

mà consideranza
Perche non pote laire simiglglanza:--'

I don't know (Italian) about the last part:

'Not to delight, but in an ardour of thought
That the base likeness of it kindleth not.'

...perhaps that too?

.
How could it ever have been made, the change at that point, to this 'thing'--

'A little
water
falls.'

thence 'goes & goes.'

.
'in an ardour of thought'

'Risplende
in sé perpetuale effecto'

.
Ability to think inside a form as seriously *as if* this were the world,
as though this marvel were still usage, because the 'evidence' in the
present structurally is so 'compelling.'

Perceives said form in time structuring itself 'through me' as simultane-
ously already past...

so that knowledge (writing) is image of 'the gods' already passed over
into such & such a western ridge of letters, 'characters'...

& as such perceived as 'memory' *virtually* still happening...

& *this is*/all everyday life, *where else?* & that's great, & it gets
boring but picks up pretty soon with the power gained from asking such a
question, brought back & reformulated/reformulating in cups, saucers, etc.--

just as if

dinner & supper 'had been created'

(justice if

dinner & supper have been created?)

--anyway content now as restless

happy & vigor/rigorous demanding

--which is to put mind 'back' into day & body, function: 'recognize it with our words'--viz., the verse following, weaving.

Why now the half-moon in the morning open sky, did you (living) ever ever...

'cloudless electricity even dishes anything'

'wicker grammar
showed off pretty'

--rather better process through sustained passages:

(prints out #28, e.g., whole grid)

Darling, god damn, what a thinker, really. When it's over, I feel just like I bin cut off from some cosmic force, our love.

ROBERT GRENIER

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from GLYPHS

There is a contradiction between events and their description that becomes visible when an event is described without reference to the describer. Such a description does not allow for the possibility that events themselves are simultaneous, with every permutation of accident and action occurring at once; that only perception strings them into logical sequences; or that forgetting is a balance to perception.

The context in which an action occurs requires a specific mode of description: a violent gesture becomes desperate, or murderous, or a

request for aid. Events remain opaque, and the structural concepts encouraged by experience give only that climactic vision of coherence, the error of the senses that is in itself a sensuous occasion.

For the same reason the retention of critical distance towards the work is the ideal of the auditor or reader. A type of appreciation is sought: that clarity of thought that at its most sympathetic is like a friendship and has some areas of trust without an undifferentiated acceptance. The writer, however, as a lover of these words, has to fend off the overpowering attraction and the acceptance of less from an indulged expression. The act of falling in love with an idea, a meter, a manner of speaking, has in it all the weakness of the creation of a product not held responsible to itself. So the writer, re-reading, must assume not the willing suspension of disbelief, but a mode of criticism less informed than that potential in the reader.

The alphabet has been criticised for succumbing too easily to its lover, the word. Where each word has developed in powers of inference, the sublimated position of the alphabet has kept it from having a life of its own. While lyricism is the writer's attempt to calm the inherent aggression of words, and allow an equal interplay between the audience's thought and the text, words press back against the interpretive will and draw from their inner selves alternate meanings whose power resides in the imagination. As words open the potential of expression so choice between them closes it. The words of a vocabulary in use offer a criticism of the range of possibilities from which they have been extracted.

The procedure of glyphs is to dominate language by recording ideas through the juxtaposition of other ideas. To ignore this essential element of writing is to mistake its purpose--writing records that which is expected to be forgotten, or writing struggles to dominate the circumstance of forgetting but has only words to use. The difficulty in deciphering ancient glyphs comments on the possibility of decoding alphabetic writing only to discover an ambiguous text. In either case the cultural situation of the text is lost, and with it the implications of its meaning. In this way the mysterious pattern of language is its own unusable key in that changes in meanings of words are affected not only by their induction into other tongues, or slang, or cliché, but by definition and by the kind of rough appropriation that stems from urgent need.

MADELEINE BURNSIDE

KETJAK IN SAN FRANCISCO

'This is the zone. Words, where you are, as in a trail, not

*forest but thicket, pine needle modifiers, shingles of a pine
cone on which to focus, buy syntax, syntax was the half-light.'*

Ron Silliman read on Saturday September the 16th all of Ketjak (This Press, 1978) on the sidewalk in sunlight at One Powell Street, where the Powell Street cablecars turn around at Market. I came in on my way off the BART train from my job in North Oakland, at 3, roughly, knowing the reading started at noon, and came up the stairs not knowing just where in the intersection it would land me or where Ron would be. The impression of bazaar had hardly hit before there was Ron declaiming book in hand before the front steps of the Bank of America, book neatly clutched in right hand, left hand grasping offwhite canvas bookbag with "no on 6" (anti-Briggs) button at center out, pacing back & forth facing the sun in a patch of light between shadows cast (before him) by a tree and (to his right) by the building, on whose steps sat maybe 12 people I knew; 6 or 10 others sitting or standing between me and him. The reading was insistent emphatic and lively with an energy intoxicated by its own vigor and exactitude; it was chatty (unusual for Ron's reading) in its thrilled, maybe sometimes even giddy playfulness with the rhetoric of its phrases in all their possible relevancy to this heterogeneous, very live occasion. He was clearly reading the reading of his poem and using this to illuminate as if from behind (and taking pleasure in the illusion as though from within) the poem itself. The recurrences variousness & personality of the text discoursed directly and one-on-one, as in a most democratic and definitive garden party of the urban streets, with the prolifery of the situation.... Ron's gestures quite evidently spontaneous, isolated in the left hand, the voice and the pacing (sometimes stopped). The experience was available to those passersby who didn't expect it equally as they were available to it. A man walked up, slowing down towards the poet, and then passed to his right, as though uncertain only whether Ron meant to be an obstacle but confident in any case that he should negotiate a passage. A woman with a friend turned around abruptly after passing the poet when she heard "She loves to give head"; shocked, she tried to make out whether he'd been exposing her or somebody else; others say she smiled in recognition. A drunk tried to mimic Ron's phrases into catchy blues. Ron read as though too busy to acknowledge all this formally but cognitive of it in all its valences of contingency and implication (or you may say fact & what might happen next). You could stand or sit anywhere. You were on a major streetcorner, already crowded with long lines of tourists waiting for the chief picturesque cablecar line already besieged by hawkers gawkers shoppers hookers and religious maniacs-- September being the warmest freshest month in the city. Recurring and original lines and people. By juxtaposition the names, images, terms called out by the words were clearly present as such rather than as objects for fantasy to

compose over. The rapture of the occasion sprang from the access to a shared awareness of being *there*, the significance of this then ready to be begun, again at any moment. The writing evoked neither this nor any particular other consistently, & so seemed never to claim any particular responsibility for reproducing, but freely aimed at the experience about it.

STEVE BENSON

METHOD AND IMAGINATION

My point of departure is the idea of finding those words which have the capacity to exist in the Italian language and for one reason or another have not been realized. My principal interest is in the semantics of sounds not yet deposited in the sediments of signification. Signification tends to kill that pleasing resonant aureole which words have; it is even possible to arrive in the end where one no longer perceives the sounds of words, but merely follows the line of a performance of tokens. And it is not true that our everyday life must be characterized by such sclerosis. The sound of words can still be a great support to us.

In finding words we should avail ourselves of all sorts of associative games -- of growth and diminution, of crossings and parallels. The invented word is a good one when its rapport with the other words of its context makes no substitute acceptable.

When such words are read, they should mean all the things that it seems to the reader that they mean, everything that comes to the mind of the reader (which, in the end, is what happens with any reading).

These poems are born from the experience of collective readings of poetry before a public (paying or otherwise). On these occasions I have felt the need to allow for redundancy. I have now arrived where I use redundancy as a means, the logical operator which must be mocked, scolded, made ridiculous. The instrument which determines and fixes the space for invention and establishes once and for all that such space exists -- that's it.

Poetry is truly successful when it releases a mechanism of contradiction revealed not by the rigor of logic, but by all the rest.

My poems are iconic. This aspect present in my poems has not been programmed. Rather, it is an aspect which is in some way liberated, or has been liberated. Maybe the liberation of icons was implicit in the program. The first signification on which the sound of a word fixes itself is an icon.

The content of a poetry is the logic in it and also the worm which kills poetry. Avoid content and fix on an icon: that is method and imagination.

(Translated from the Italian by Jesse Ausubel)

MILLI GRAFFI

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The book survey in No. 7 is focused in a way no 'reviews' we see ever are; the *use of texts* is at stake, and people's reflections on what stirs them are in turn of next-generation usefulness. So I pick up half a dozen things I hadn't considered, and that's good news. The solidity of Silliman's judgment is, as usual, exciting.

So I want to send along, in return, my own list of this past year or so, the things that stirred most in my thought and writing. Trail of dust, maybe, or pillar of cloud. We never know till we see what's done with them.

Walter Benjamin, Reflections and Illuminations. I begin with an amazing critic of our own fragmented light, whom I had missed until two months ago, and who's been the sharpest call to order lately.

Braudel, The Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II and the other work on the material culture of Capitalism.

Barthes, Sade/Loyola/Fourier and The Pleasure of the Text: Barthes at his most public/private and private/public, the one critic ("deictic" after my own heart) who knows how to walk that line. These books fulfill the promise of Writing Degree Zero (coeval with Olson's Projective Verse essay). And the head-note by Richard Howard to the Pleasure is remarkable for all the issues it starts running with clarity, wit and quickness.

Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England--to come back to that, as ever to Marx's Capital, to ground in the world root of their thought. Fact as the rain that renews the air of theory.

Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy, a beautiful study of the diachronic, a gesture shaping for nineteen hundred years.

Georges Bataille, to wander in the complete works now coming out, especially L'Histoire de l'Oeil, Le Bleu du ciel (which I've read in a wonderful private translation by Paul Auster and Lydia Davis), L'anus solaire. I owe much of my orientation here to Paul Buck and that remarkable journal Curtains.

Salvatore Timpanaro, The Freudian Slip. (Marxian philology reborn.)

Umberto Eco, Theory of Semiotics.

Hillman, ReVisioning Psychology.

Cardew, Stockhausen serves Imperialism (a book so savage in its attack on our avant-garde preoccupations and airs that it seems to be kept out of this country altogether, whereas the same author's earlier conformist Scratch Music is widely circulated.)

Tarthang Tulku, Time Space Knowledge, a casting of Buddhist analytic and synthetic into the american language.

Marx and Engels, The German Ideology: the orchestra tuning, the wind rising.

Heidegger, What is called thinking and Discourse on Thinking.

And ever useful (now I own a copy all the more so):

Onians, The Origins of European Thought (Arno reprint).

And I do not want to leave out of the record those books which are not held in the hand, namely the texts of light:

Hollis Frampton, Zorn's Lemma

Herzog's Kasper Hauser

Tanner's Jonah who will be 25 in the year 2000.

And, to match Benjamin at the beginning, this very great film which I finally saw only two years ago:

Vertov, Man with Movie Camera. (I suppress the the/s deliberately).

PS/ Capitalism brings 'story' and 'writing' together. Stateless communism must dream into being a language which tells its own story. And in which language is the only story. Are not these the pivots we share in what we would move?

PPS/ Sour note in McCaffery's sideswipe at Enslin. Not because of my predictable preference for 'positive criticism' (my deicticism, as above), or my equally predictable defense of Enslin---rather because the rating-system (fourth-rate, third-rate, etc) is built on the very structure we are all trying to deconstruct. At once came to mind the old Macaulay reading the young Marx and saying: That is just how to learn how not to write. And Barthes' actual strictures (Writing Degree Zero) on 'clarity'---he recognizes the danger of the lucid becoming the compulsory---neatness and clarity the tools of persuaders. Yet it's interesting to learn how not to write too, and I take it abstinence is a sort of use.

ROBERT KELLY

SOME FIELDS THE TRACK GOES THROUGH

1. Each time I find something worth saying, it's because I've not been satisfied to coincide with my feeling, because I've succeeded in studying it as a way of behaving, as a modification of my relations

with others and the world, because I've managed to think about it as I would think about the behavior of another person whom I happened to witness. *Merleau-Ponty, Film.*

2. A child scolding a flower in the words in which he had himself been scolded and whipped, is *poetry* / past passion with pleasure. *Coleridge, Notebooks.*
3. Irresponsible play seeks to overcome the ruinous seriousness of whatever one happens to be. *Adorno, Prisms.*
4. Insistency -- the pretension of power -- falls victim to a weakness and uselessness of the same type as the gesticulatory schemata of the schizophrenic. *Adorno, Prisms.*
5. The reproach against the individualism of art in its later stages of development is so pathetically wretched simply because it overlooks the social nature of this individualism: "lonely discourse" reveals more about social tendencies than does communicative discourse. *Adorno, Philosophy of Modern Music.*
6. But in the language of Azande it is self-contradictory to doubt the efficacy of oracles, and this only proves that Zande language cannot be trusted in respect of oracles. *Polanyi, Knowing and Being.*
7. If two sequences of the action are to be understood as occurring at the same time they may simply be shown one after another. *Arnheim, Film as Art.*
8. I do not know who you are and yet I insult you and I talk to you as if we were intimates. *Colette, The Shackle.*

And a 9th by way of question; where does Hegel write: "Truth is a Bacchanic ecstasy wherein every member is drunk on the same wine"?

DAVID BROMIGE

ENCYCLOPEDIA / *the world we will know*

Words first -- *highly merely 'words / (cor)rect (al)ly eva(l/c)uated.*
Yet, key question, *how connected with the facts for which // properly they stand. ?*

Representation -- *The story called record -- official record -- restricts by accidents of its data.* It restricts by the very logic of *the old system of production, system of reproduction, monitoring: comes across as alienating replication which devalues the work of writing.* [Repression.] To split off desire or libidinal energy or whatchamacallit from such work -- scrub off words, let preconstituted world of referents

shine through.

Encyclopedia: Epistemology: arrange terms in alphabetical ('arbitrary') order so that use, for units of information, leans upon an accepted outside context. This conventionally fills the gap between signifieds (mental concepts) & references -- relay between encyclopedia & the whole world (pretension of the former toward the latter -- 'comprehensiveness', 'fullness'; just like any representational text).

Positivism: this imagined closure between concept & referred-to-thing-in-the-external-world. The rules for processing & combining data into familiar patterns swamp the words' reality, as if we could maintain a purity of ideas & information against the unfortunate (or disregardable) tribulations of their material inscription. Fixed concepts; lack of awareness of the provisional & reflexive character of knowledge; its practices independent of the knower (no one seems to need to do the understanding). Yet understanding (reading is analogue) remains an active, material process (not naturally given, deductive, or disembodied). Knowledge is subjective intervention, not its stylish banishment.

Fetishism occludes this fact & this gap. History lesson embedded in apparent choicelessness [fatedness, mystification, mythification] of encyclopedic choices: CAPITAL expands & weaves reality around its quantifiable needs, becomes the criteria for use -- is key: *our key / expanded / our key become useful / deployed become different*, becomes the stage set for meaning (i.e., DIFFERENCE -- e.g., phonemics vs. phonetics).

Words then seem to be identified with their referents, NOT with their role in a framework of human conventions & NOT in a way that acknowledges their physical manifestation -- world reified / sign disappears. Individual usage or creativity in language becomes a frill of interpersonal relations & not the construction & revision of the norms themselves. Meaning would become a mere spin-off from a taken-for-granted external reality.

Yet ~ Writing can articulate, brokenly, a world requiring our full intervention to be understood -- i.e., cannot SOCIALIZE us. So, a heightened stress on individual usage -- to break through the fetish, the tyranny of the unmediated external itself [example: the 'optical'], where we feel effortlessly & conveniently 'in touch' without first having to bring our full humanity to bear on forming connections with the world, an 'easier' & more acquiescent ("glossed out") naturalism.

So, one alternative is a fuller insertion of individual practice into the (writing) process by which these conventions are otherwise continuously reproduced through acquiescence in socialization.... An over-all non-representational ordering of matter -- LANGUAGE / MATERIAL -- as architecture of lexical associations & leaks, not 'tool'.

Do this by furnishing, in a self-conscious way, the *account not* [the] *object*. Mediation: *light of controversy* -- Light (signification) comes through 'dialectic' / practice, not just formal patternings & not

pretense of 'direct reflection'. The sign; not the fetish of reference, which would be stapled to the text's compelling absences to offer illusory compensation, alienating us further (the myth of a self-standing reality: *Every satisfaction of it is debt.*) -- the supplementary cured or dared.

For a true fit, we require mediation, an account (to answer 'Why?' questions contextually) -- *plan matters to be / appropriate*. Otherwise world just happens, w/out enough self-reflection & becomes taken-for-granted regard for use (splint them as they lay, etc.). Usage can penetrate the whole -- if not it's defined as *practicability*, what fits a paradigm; comprehension -- *the attempt to read opinion* by complacent reliance on system ~ nuancing, ornamenting the standards derived from it.

Main opposition: between acceptance of rules (in this case, of composition, of positivist inquiry, of discourse) OR stress on individual choices & disruptions & deviations (flows) & perspectives to the point where signs appear recognizably conventional. Thus: *The whole standard undoubtedly has been raised not to be nuanced, but made use of*. Fetish can be partially undone, seen to be constructed, now acts as *function*. Reflexively & self-reflexively. Offer access to the procedures through which structure is articulated.... *throughout careful by means / adapted to readers* & to the way mediating attention intervenes as creator of meaning & not the untying of packages popping off a semantic assembly-line.

I'm interested in composition issues. *Laments of unrest and not constituting disorder.... The convenience in arrangement* [once released, 'convenient' = 'use'] *conveys in such detail point of execution ... ~ there need be no surface*: the arrangement natural to the actual workings of an awareness, not ornamental veneer or added surface [veneer analogous to 'character structure' / psychology], but constant writing action. A disturbance IN the vista: *In the whole architecture was a / flak*. So, focus on the particular, *distinct within units*. Gather omissions or *revealed omission* -- a group of gaps, rather than a series of relay points: the pages' blackhole: density → disappearance. As if the choices stretch us between the supercharged disjunct plane or Uniformity / Equivalence / Exchange -- *dizzy ambitious particular, or uniform*.

So. *most with the disturbance = so many lapse of time = Preserved portions*. -- *or marred remains larger*. Physical gesture regains its prominence -- *salient hands up : hands into notability*. Lapse = intermittent = comes in & out of focus = comes in & out of existence [stage does not remain after actors exit --] for the intermittent spectator speculates, works through, thereby fashions the work, not as stepladder but mark of, stain of, her attention. *Periodical the constructive ideal, all bookish dust dribble and sputter*. Not pre-constituted according to comprehensive, reflecting, 'outside' plan (*EncY...*) but to

offer periodic experience of writer in role of reader/understanding
faced with code or system or convention. Text gives way to broken
utterance, almost stutter but disorient still more:

*Control the convention then perpetrate the tratence
then perpede furred to any poor hil hop for mac
hifj outer quarters crys formference
in Afs co ad b Eu va i porc
Varzo ca-pr-ici-ous*

Convention gets unravelled: decreased authority perhaps carried
to extreme leng... too graphic, more exceptions -- use. Deviations, by
breaking out, do more than charge & discharge energy, however volup-
tuously -- scramble codes, disorient language. (Constant rupture
constant improvisation for readers, producing flows rather than a deter-
minate picture of 'a whole'). They stretch the boundaries of that whole,
of human use, of what can be written / felt -- are praxis. *Losing or
dividing is the treatment.* Also, exceptions light up system boundaries,
the limits that have historically been imposed upon use. (*more excep-
tions ... / as consult the glaringly outside the public / ... settled /
conventions*).

To expand use, to open up the world for us. No question of the
hasty vehicle's progress -- the unseemly rush from sign to a referent
which would 'shadow' that sign, or erase it, or instrumentalize it.
no longer represent : but only experience thrown back upon itself :
be grasped, skein be created // and crushing units to new units //
*already preferred // a case of itself // thought unquestioned // forefoot
& aft, aware.* Thought is questioned.

[The above constitutes in part a response to Tom Mandel's impressive
first book, EncY (1978; Tuumba Press, 2639 Russell, Berkeley, CA 94705,
\$2) from which the italicized portions are taken]

BRUCE ANDREWS

THE CONSPIRACY OF "US"

I don't believe in group formation, I don't like group formation, but I
am constantly finding myself contending with it, living within it,
seeing through it. "Okay, break it up boys." First, there is the iso-
lation of the atom, looking for some place to feel housed by, a part of.
& every which way the people passing seem to have that--"see it over
there"--"look". But every group as well has the same possibility for

insularity as each individual: this new "we" having the same possibility for vacancy or satisfaction, a group potentially as atomized in its separation from other groups as a person from other persons. This is the problem of family life. Property, territory, domain. But, "for us now", group (family, aesthetic, social, national) is merely another part of our commoditized lives--for we consume these formations, along with most other things, as commodities, & are ourselves consumed in the process. ((Putting aside here the extent to which political groupings and parties would be different from groups of 'artists'; also the place of groupings based on class oppression on the one hand and minority oppression--women, gays, mental patients--on the other.)) So we use groups as badges--shields--as much screening us off from the intrusion of outside, others, as sheltering us from the sheer invasiveness of it, them (& so allowing us a place to occupy, inhabit). I don't so much think that such shelter is a fraud, unnecessary, as much as "let's look at it, call the strictures into question, understand that we *can* reshape": a call against paralysis from a sense of boundaries fixed without, or before, our having had a chance to participate in their making. "The danger is that our demands on each other will trample what we really feel." The danger is that we will hide ourselves amidst the shuffle to proclaim who we are.

We're afraid to say poetry, afraid of the *task*--that's why simply having the goods--"Oh he's gifted as hell"--is never enough. I want to see more than fine sentiments beautifully expressed "in the manner of...." "He's really picked up on me" but sadly, not on *us*. One might as well go back to fruit picking. It's hard to talk about content these days, everyone pointing to the trace of their ideas as if *that* was "it" but we don't want mere conceptualizations. "But, I mean, that person is really saying something," which is the wrong way of making the point. But: enough of empty vessels for sure. It's necessity which makes the form, which then inheres; not just any "constructs" but the ones we live by, the ones we live in & so the ones we *come upon*--

"Getting it." "Using it." "Pretending." "Imagining." "On the inside track." "In contention." "An authority that genuinely speaks from its heart, letting us know that here...." "Great hips." "Thyroid problems." "Oh how come you done that." "Ain't that *Christian* of you." "Grace." "Grave." "Maria of the *fleurs*." "An open cavity, about three to six inches from the back of tongue, who...." "Naturally." "Over-intellectual." "With too much *effort*...." "Over-emotional." "Grecian." "... which at times one only wishes would give way to some greater sense of necessity, like why bother to write it in the first place." "From up here, the low-lying clouds obscuring the view..."

Language-centered writing and other art-historical epithets. For instance, you're right that the need for recognition, given that the work

is important, does demand that action be taken. Cuts are made but not without enormous confusion on all sides--what's in common within & different from without both get exaggerated. A kind of blinder's vision begins as we look at the world in terms of the configurations being made. "At a given time we responded to each other's work, were there for each other." "To the permanent removal of everyone else after, simultaneous?" No. These things arise in practice, have a practical value. ((Imagine a world in which people allied along lines of hair color. Or what unified a group of artists was their use of a given shade of blue, or that they live (or grew up in, or went to school in) the same place--the impress of a common environment a constant to facilitate art-historical apprehension. How does Richard Diebenkorn get seen by those who think of non-figuration as the key issue of his generation of painters? & *wasn't* it the key issue?)) But the "final" cuts have not--will not be--made. Only cuts for "here" & "there" --

The identification of "younger" poets "coming up" by a group or community can imply the beginning for these people of inclusion within a paternalistic hierarchy--an initiation into it. --Simply, the walls must be stripped down & new ones constantly built as (re)placements--or rather this is always happening whether we attend to it or not. We see through these structures which we have made ourselves & cannot do even for a moment without them, yet they are not fixed but provisional. (...that poetry gets shaped--informed and transformed--by the social relations of publication, readership, correspondence, readings, etc) (or, historically seen, the 'tradition') and, indeed, that the poetry community(ies) are not a secondary phenomenon to writing but a primary one. So it won't do to just "think about the work". But it still needs to be explored what the relation between "normal" and "extraordinary" poetry is--& why both need to be more valued in some respects and devalued in others (snobbery, elitism, cliquishness, historical over-self-consciousness, self-aggrandisement, &c)--especially at a time in which there is an increase in the number of people and the number of people engaging in art activities--not just a few "men" "out there" doing the "heroic" work. --That poetry, with written language as its medium, is, in fact, the exploration and realization of the human common ground, of "us", in which we are--"that holds our sights within its views".)

Or what we have is a series of banana republics with internecine (ie inner) conflict as to whose to "be the" THE of the court, all that fading with jocular regularity as we paddle our gondolas down the canals of time and look back at the many remnants of period mannerism. You want to name names? I feel very bloated at last & want to take this opportunity to thank everyone. I wish I had a quill pen. I'll take a dime for every time they.... "I mean some of this stuff really knocks

you out." A great place to take you date, &c, I mean it really impresses boys. "You wanna know something--I'm glad what they done to you...." The foundations of a linguistic empire on the coinage of a distinctive and recognizable style--"& that means don't hone in on my territory" "& that means *you*" is about as crucial as the opera of Luca Della Robbia. But not to stop there. "We" ain't about no new social groupings--nobody gotta move over--*this is the deconstruction of team*. This is *looking at language*, which is "us", & not creating the latest fashion splash of the "up & coming".

What happens, which is what it is when something happens & you say "oh, look at that -----"---already having arrived in your mind as a -----.

But not just to plug in--"oh I got it let me dig some out for you--"

The skips on the record which our pounding feet accentuate, making the needle dance out of synch to the rhythm our bodies seem to want to keep... --keep us honest. "Honest"? But not to "groove into", it's to make the words that come out *that* way more aware of themselves & so we more responsible to them, not that we "say" them with whatever capacity our "gifts" allow us but that we *mean* them with a twice told intention that puts "mere facility for images & transitions" in its place & puts "poetry"--a guild without members, only occasionally one or another of us finds ourselves there, or not "ourselves" but rather "those syllables so ordered..." & we mere spectators, out in the public field, watching *that*, now already behind us...

CHARLES BERNSTEIN

from THE CLAIM OF REASON

(The following excerpt is from Stanley Cavell's The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy, to be published in the autumn by Oxford University Press. Cavell writes in the forward that it has been his aspiration "to link the English and Continental (philosophical) traditions,... to realign these traditions, after their long mutual shunning, at any rate to write witnessing the loss in that separation.... what makes this spirit possible for me has been, I think, that the philosophical pressure to comprehend this division or splitting between cultures has begun transforming itself for me into the pressure to comprehend the division between the writing of philosophy and the writing of literature, hence the splitting within (one) culture." For those interested in contributing to a collection of essays on Cavell's work, write to Gus Blaisdell, The Living Batch Bookstore, 2406 Central Ave SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106.)

The conventions we appeal to may be said to be "fixed", "adopted", "accepted", etc. by us; but this does not now mean that what we have fixed or adopted are (merely) the (conventional) *names* of things. The conventions ... are fixed not by customs or some particular concord or agreement which might, without disrupting the texture of our lives, be changed where convenience suggests a change. (Convenience is *one* aspect of convention, or an aspect of one kind or level of convention.) They are, rather, fixed by the nature of human life itself, the human fix itself, by those "very general facts of nature" which are "unnoticed only because not obvious", and, I take it, in particular, very general facts of *human* nature -- such, for example, as the fact that ... our knowledge (and ignorance) of ourselves and of others depends upon the way our minds are expressed (and distorted) in word and deed and passion; that actions and passions have histories. That *that* should express understanding or boredom or anger ... is not necessary: someone may have to be said to "understand suddenly" and then always fail to manifest the understanding five minutes later, just as someone *may* be bored by an earthquake or by the death of his child or the declaration of marital law, or *may* be angry at a pin or a cloud or a fish, just as someone may quietly (but comfortably?) sit on a chair of nails. That human beings on the whole do not respond in these ways is, therefore, seriously referred to as conventional; but now we are thinking of convention not as the arrangements a particular culture has found convenient, in terms of its history and geography, for effecting the necessities of human existence, but as those forms of life which are normal to any group of creatures we call human, any group about which we will say, for example, that they *have* a past to which they respond, or a geographical environment which they manipulate or exploit in certain ways for certain humanly comprehensible motives. Here the array of "conventions" are not patterns of life which differentiate human beings from one another, but those exigencies of conduct and feeling which all humans share. Wittgenstein's discovery, or rediscovery, is of the depth of convention in human life; a discovery which insists not only on the conventionality of human society but, we could say, on the conventionality of human life itself, on what Pascal meant when he said "Custom is our nature"; perhaps on what an existentialist means by saying that man has no nature.

To think of a human activity as governed throughout by mere conventions, or as having conventions which may as well be changed as not, depending upon some individual or other's taste or decision, is to think of a set of conventions as tyrannical. It is worth saying that conventions can be changed because it is essential to a convention that it be in service of some project, and you do not know a priori which set of procedures is better than others for that project. That is, it is internal to a convention that it be open to change *in convention*, in the convening of those subject to it, in whose behavior it lives. So it is

a first order of business of political tyranny to deny the freedom to convene....

If it is the task of the modernist artist to show that we do not know a priori what will count for us as an instance of his art, then this task, or fate, would be incomprehensible, or unexercisable, apart from the existence of objects which, prior to any new effort, we do count as such instances as a matter of course; and apart from there being conditions which our criteria take to define such objects. Only someone outside this enterprise could think of it as an exploration of mere conventions. One might rather think of it as (the necessity for) establishing new conventions. And only someone outside this enterprise could think of establishing new conventions as a matter of exercising personal decision or taste. One might rather think of it as the exploration or education or enjoyment or chastisement of taste and of decision and of intuition, an exploration of the kind of creature in whom such capacities are exercised....

When my reasons come to an end and I am thrown back upon myself, upon my nature as it has so far shown itself, I can, supposing I cannot shift the ground of discussion ... use the occasion to go over the ground I had hitherto thought foregone. If the topic is that of continuing a series, it may be learning enough to find that I *just do*; to rest upon myself as my foundation. But if the child, little or big, asks me: Why do we eat animals? or Why are some people poor and others rich? ... or Who owns the land? or Why is there anything at all? ... I may find my answers thin, I may feel run out of reasons without being willing to say "This is what I do", what I say, what I sense, what I know, and honor that.

Then I may feel that my foregone conclusions were never conclusions I had arrived at, but were merely imbibed by me, merely conventional. I may blunt that realization through hypocrisy or cynicism or bullying. But I may take the occasion to throw myself back upon my culture, and ask why we do what we do, judge as we judge, how we have arrived at these crossroads. What is the natural ground of our conventions, to what are they in service? It is inconvenient to question a convention; that makes it unserviceable, it no longer allows me to proceed as a matter of course; the paths of action, the paths of words, are blocked. "To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life". In philosophizing, I have to bring my own language and life into imagination. What I require is a convening of my culture's criteria, in order to confront them with my words and life as I pursue them and as I may imagine them; and at the same time to confront my words and life as I pursue them with the life my culture's words may imagine for me: to confront the culture with itself, along the lines in which it meets in me.

STANLEY CAVELL

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

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ANNOUNCEMENTS: 11 *POEMS* by Charles Bernstein (in *Roof IX*, with long
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10012). *JOINT WORDS* by Bruce Andrews & John Bennett (1979, Luna
Bisonte Prods--card packet, available from Andrews, 41 West 96th St,
NYC 10025).

In our next issue, we will be presenting a forum on the question:
"What qualities do you think writing has, or could have, that
contribute to a critique and understanding of the nature of
contemporary society, seen as a capitalist system?" --
Readers are welcome to submit for consideration short (up to 500
word) responses to some of the issues raised by this question.
Deadline is July 10.