

# TEMBLOR

C O N T E M P O R A R Y P O E T S

ISSUE NUMBER 1

\$7.50

**Kenneth Irby: *A Set* complete**  
**Gerald Burns: *A Book of Spells II* complete**  
**Charles Stein: *theforestforthetrees* excerpts**  
**Paul Buck: *Phobia* a play, and *Lust II* excerpt**  
**Aaron Shurin: *Codex* excerpts**  
**Robert Trammell: *Cherokee* excerpts**

poetry, prose, translations:

**John Clarke • Gustaf Sobin**  
**Anthony Barnett • Clark Coolidge**  
**Fanny Howe • John Taggart • Clayton Eshleman**  
**Lyn Hejinian • Rosmarie Waldrop • Nathaniel Mackey**  
**Amy Gerstler • Jed Rasula • David Searcy**  
**Tomás Guido Lavalle • Saúl Yurkievich**  
**Dennis Phillips • Todd Baron • Martha Lifson • John Thomas**  
**Pierre Guyotat • Jacqueline Risset • Bernard Noël • Gerrit Lansing**

E D I T E D B Y L E L A N D H I C K M A N

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E D I T E D B Y L E L A N D H I C K M A N

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Kenneth Irby

# A Set

Я слово позабыл, что я хотел сказать.

I have forgotten the word that I wanted to say

— Osip Mandelstam

stars fall, dark dolls to earth, to the old songs dance, folk of the West of the West, brought back again  
almost quickly digitation of the jugglers' blindfold to bind up the hour before the dawn, before the dark

you do not sleep but subsequently translate that mime into a newer currency  
to spend in the street and stand around to watch and sing along to those fast steps

here in the woods, hear in the woods, here in the woods  
the cottonwood to the flute and the drum

who in the morning come to sacrifice to health for sake of safety's speed  
talking all the time about the in-laws and the pictures on the walls last week

the expectation to exemplify the dying of the old self to its age  
the limitation to just one count of generation, one of revolution, made

Keneth Ibrny

# Asaf

o back of courthouse mules, silver-brown and peony-fawn, who wait in glowing patience, faring all

the Oreo diamond cream rose-pink old ladies under the sycamores come and go to the post office as quietly glorious as you, sharing the butterflies by their hair to your wondrous fur

the young men in levis though they move faster go in and linger for the passports to the other side and do not come back out again the way they went

lost even to their own sight or changed into the chestnut-curly-haired rider who couples with his mounis, cursing under his breath, you old mules you, I'll \_\_\_\_\_ you, \_\_\_\_\_ you, whose dashes are penrods, whose parentheses are airconditioners

o you mules you, who face for all the worlds, you who are brothers to the lost sight, who are past Christian as the expectation before the dust as before heaven, rolling on our backs to sustain the dead

we sing together *himny himny oooo himny himny*, not by the chair of my *himny himn himn* to the hymn of the house of blue light before the breath parade of birth is hit  
hear

the cloche-covered serious matrons of the depression lined up the back stairs of the public library to first vote join in

behind the world of civic shades the words again in self-sufficient photogeneration play athwart time

for who is born, who bears, who cannot bear, what moon of hungers on the other side in turn dissatisfies this appetite-depressant speed

bestiality, just one glimpse of is enough to satisfy for lives of being sure no fancy fucking with divinity is rite of exaltation stroke to see anew, than rocks off hump for lack we lived in once

insistence on the value of the saints who hoe tobacco road to teach the consciousness exact discrimination, and ride the flaming pink geraniums in each patio below, aloft against the torments of interrogation in the rooms to come

all these, all witnesses together through together to, all instruments of their perception, die, but not that distance's aurora we just open onto

aw, yeah, come on, jawbone don't go, show me an ante

o you mules you

the slash of the road in Kore's, in Korea's dream

incipital, fang-made, filled with the living  
no reason at all when he asked, what'dya do

does that mean I really am a spy, or all of us captive in the middle of the road the recourse to  
escape to ever tell the truth

and the hole again the basketball net up over every driveway, the cords scores cut to arm terror

up against the side of the head, chingadora! you wanta get away you better *play*

hung like the family jewels, honcho'd embryo to claw, to catch and hold the light

while we each finish our riddles  
stone shaped like a man stood  
bent over a chair back

and the questioning begins

but Kore's story is to hurry, to try to get away from the family here on earth and the family down below, both — what word is gotten to her, she brings back or sends, to  
reach the sun again — finding her in the shadowy stacks of Hades' library, wandering in distraction, sweat salt stains on her dark t-shirt, not knowing exactly what she's  
after, except *get out*

other ventriloquies syllable the understudy of the body

we have lost the word we wanted to say, keep looking for it, find another one in its place, sweats  
blood and sweat through the stone, maybe even the same word, how can we tell, it was lost to us  
before we ever knew it?

the gripped hand jerks the meat off the bone  
off the stone

Kore's sparrow flies to out of the dark, lights, pecks at the gutseed ball brought back up from the night before last — how many months, how many years,  
each seed?

stones diary the weather, light their élan the way into the future, the impulse, the sudden absolute necessity to speak, beyond articulation, beyond speech itself

o you who in the obscure commas of the continent, do not misjudge, do not misapprehend the instinct to adversity  
knots are our classics

*classics are the poetry of revolution*

each one more turn in the captive muddied road

reckless the woods for a path in the middle of the city aloft must know what we go into

first seed, then memory, then seed

there is a hoarse jack cackle gatherer talking to the King

who's that — King?

so cold they are, and unprotected, hungry, lecherous

*is a Name of Continuance, and in that Name*

carved like walrus ivory from the life that reigns beneath the worlds  
intent with the eyes of friendship's stone

there is a nickel taken to the halo of the *erown*

turning buffalo to Indian  
beaver to Queen  
mansion house to President

*not actual*  
but tangible

*yourself over yourself*

*unseals*

so the copperdemon's paid back down again, the naked Neck to fiddle sitting in the middle of the stream,  
the mouth shut on the tags beneath the teeth

and maybe a sparrow will bring the payment up again in five inches of string, the five-divided  
stalk into the nest, five seeds cracked open and eaten one by one in the bird bath below, the  
metal band pecked off the bone and brought  
and the other husks will answer from the tree trunks in the woods, *so much they've got to say, so*  
*far to go*

one nickel is paid with the toy airplane that flies with friendship's stone into the underworld in the dirt under the front porch

one with every ordinary thing that signals to its word in silence to pay for just the possibility of passing before perception

so to the soul — so from the soul when it returns — the debt is due

try to hang on to them and they'll be playing craps for your threads at the end, or gladly give them away each step of the way into nakedness

your strength, o Charity, the gain to face

but the debt will be collected anyway

search, Charon, for the coin given you, dropped in the mud in the crossing, bit in two in the telling

the gathered gestures of historic particulars do not extricate from direction the concentrations of responsibility

a man met headed West on the last hill out of town, the last tree walking into treelessness, or the erratic stone, not home

the face of a friend turned up to say hello with the face of a friend doomed to die in the wandering the verses not to trade for bread but cut the grownup wheat field in the back of the head

the soul of the wheel is not in the wheel

and the love in the poem love in the poem, not the loved one's love in the loved one's, but the terror of the flowers' test to go into the other world without a name

not yet knowing this one, how can we talk about the one to come — that love

and what seems like the chance appearance in a hand mirror of a small intricately swirled Venetian glass marble, he refers to as his dead son Ernie or Wayne  
enny or taw

the ransom paid, the random weight for just the dirt in front of the possibility of apprenticeship to say

is the sovereign globe that holds up the *kopparnickel* in the crown of reciprocity of the King in the abyss

*and if the sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest  
even on thine altars, o my King*

*I watch, as a sparrow alone upon the housetop*

## John Clarke

## Seven Poems

### *Completing the Circuit of Circe*

Sing to her of what has happened to her creation,  
don't let it go back to her broken up, don't let  
her hear her song broken up, the words falling dead  
in the material analogy, it is our chance, her gift  
but we let it slip through without hearing it,  
these living words are her synovial fluid, punk  
fluid the Plasmatics sing of to ignite the soma  
haoma Homer used to write with, his words the lost  
sinews of Zeus, our sin that we haven't gotten them  
back for her, the song of Circe lost in the analogy,  
we let the broken words go back to her unchanged,  
a blockage in the circulation of her bodily fluid,  
the collagen of our world wasted on the future—  
the first time this mixture has been made available.

*If This Be Heat*

If this be heat, there is no thing as heat,  
nor does love point itself toward the one  
it loves, point shafts of flesh to penetrate  
from without, kindle the fire by tongue,  
O foolish estate of love's appendage  
severed from the reticent body of love,  
which grows from within to consume its rage  
at meeting its counterfeit at the door of love,  
the cheating member hides its face in shame  
at the approach of its principal flame,  
the heart's fire that no smothering of kisses  
can put out, but smolders where no shaft  
can reach it, where no entry dismisses,  
on a flat surface never stirred by craft.

*The Torn Leaf*

Liquid pools within the brown forest  
of silence and still fluid remonstrance  
keeps pact with the moss covered triumph  
risen from leaden hours made of love  
on earth, itself a grown thing of sediment  
hours in the sun have brought to heat  
so scads of things crawl all over the face  
whose features belie the covering movement,  
as gentle as a feathery wing upon evening air  
doth show the passage of eternity in the full  
stroke of time, only these small pools reflect  
and disclose in their shimmer the blessed  
body of what never sees itself in another way  
except the quiet of this seething confinement.

*The Furnace of Ophelia*

Not to drown in the eddies and swirls  
of the mill race, be weeds floating on  
the surface in long wraiths unfurled,  
the wanderer on the face of the deep gone  
into time's sweet oblivion only the soul  
should face, only the soul has the heat  
of the sun, the sun which plunges into the deep  
each day, the day that becomes night at earth's roll,  
never to return, the body gone into the night  
forever, no more recourse to heat, no more blood  
to beat and course through the heart in delight,  
no wonder the heart wants more than words for food.  
Ophelia turns from the mill run, away from the devouring  
tongue, and clothes her little ones in the flame of her ring.

*Basking in the Beams of Light and Love*

The heat of the hot sun shine blazes within,  
bathing the soul in waves of liquid fire,  
it rises up to meet them, fire unto fire,  
the world fades with its interest in the wages of sin,  
the balance books of cold calculation close,  
accounting is burned up in the holocaust of sunset,  
all consumed in the heart's fires, O to disclose  
the secret of her bath, impossible to the poet,  
he can only take new fire from this fire fired forth  
from her eyes, never seeing her at her fiery bath,  
the full fatal glow that emanates from her hearth,  
his the long-standing wait at the gate of wrath,  
yet he knows what once transfixed those beams  
of light and love still kindles the gold that gleams.

*The Kouretes Reach the Bed Chamber*

Still the divine inertia until the mythological will  
 let Cuchulain keep the old armor, metrical law  
 to replace the shadow state beyond forgiveness,  
 providing the ruler of the material substance  
 of the universe, Pan, the strength of whose nature  
 forms the essence of universal bodies, stars,  
 dread openers of mysterious doors leading to  
 universal knowledge in the actual phenomena,  
 with a firmament reflected in sea, vivid repetition  
 of the leopard coat of stars unfolded in Bethlehem  
 the rough insatiable beast slouches toward  
 to be born of white cliffs by the sea, a world  
 of ideas not kindled by spirit or the surreal  
 but awakened by matter, Kourotrophonian action.

*Beginning the Other Side*

In full imagination poetry issues  
 like blood on Lady Macbeth's hand,  
 nails of the dead making the ship  
 move which carries her epiphany  
 into the continuum at the risk of  
 heart's awakening to the old ways  
 of wanting, this final mystery  
 once set upon yields the all from  
 which you were cut away, for I have  
 seen the star, risen and embodied,  
 no ghost, but the real thing ritual  
 murder could not produce, the war  
 of oneself given over as instrument  
 immersed now in a cowl of sound.

*Fragment: from a Blossoming Almond*

where bees  
 shadow-  
 box with the wind-  
 shuttled buds,  
 the  
  
 image de-  
 taches, gets  
  
 sent. . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . . wrought  
 tokens, our  
 breath-  
  
 studded screens. . . .  
 shall  
 sleep in the lee of  
 that  
  
 tremor, move  
 to  
 the cold  
  
 shaken scale of its  
 petals.

Where the Pine-Needles Bristle

where the pine-  
needles bristle, like  
blue  
sequins, the

mirrors  
burn. so

many knuckles  
for that  
hand-

ful of  
words: path  
springing—mineral—  
out

of path. wind I  
drop  
through, sleep  
in, a lobe wrapt  
in

the plump  
muscles of a mouth . . .

\*

knead and  
grapple. bury us in  
that

breathing. for  
earth's

its own  
twin. that  
pressed, the

bodies im-  
print. print canyons,  
thistles. rise,  
wet-

flanked,  
from the driven image  
of our

own ir-  
retrievable  
limbs.

On Imagerie: Esther Williams, 1944

only in the  
milkiest  
emulsions, the deepest  
silvers, would  
that

mirror open, the  
tips

of the elbows  
flare. combs, lotions. . .  
her sleeves  
would

float over the  
foam-  
white bowls with their  
na-

creous blossoms. hair  
shaken, hands  
posed, each  
glint's

a splinter, a ray I'd  
pull from  
those

gray, grain-  
in-

flected spaces. . . .  
warped  
oceans, our  
ob-  
fuscated worlds. would  
feed on

those fires, that light  
that

pours in a  
limp  
clatter of black,  
unfastened corals. . . .

Oars,  
you are rowing  
the stream.

*There*  
there is overhang  
of willows, willows.

*Here*  
here is flotilla  
of leaves, leaves.

Mothers and Fathers—  
—knew fear  
and we rowed far, far.

Oars,  
you are rowing.

Lace-edged,  
frilling  
as in is a provider of thrills.  
Lace-edged  
rhizomes where the cloth  
presses in folds in the leg  
by the stool leg  
sketched in.  
A trill of a rhyme.

Naked  
in long grasses  
and bedstraw  
grows bodily in the way  
of the chattering children.  
The path you take  
the path we take  
the path they take.  
There a wood bridge  
was here mold beams are.

Naked  
in long grass  
and bedstraw  
the body grows in the way  
of chattering children.

Path worn to mud. Fish arise.

The fish coughs

No it is a human.

The sun and the straw.

Solarizes.

The wards of society.

The fish is double.

No one is here now.

One day the sun shone  
a strong wind blew on the second  
and so on—

Will I ever stop thinking about you?

I expect the heron  
to think about you.

I expect the heron  
to conceal the hunt

far beyond the twentieth century

simulating flight.

Mother of eye  
I see you in  
the rose  
of the painting  
of your self-portrait.

I am there too  
sniffing oysters.

I remember the wind—  
why! it is here now.

I heard this  
*far*

I do not speak of it.

*An Order To Things*

The acts apart from the worlds they change.

Persons without houses, gadgets, jobs.

Gadgets stripped down  
to little stones and sounds  
emitted in darkness.

Houses in rows and empty streets      alone.

Darkness itself  
stripped to only that  
without which it  
would not be  
the darkness.

Being alone  
alone  
exhibiting only that  
without which it  
would not be  
alone.

Non-being      alone.      Being alone.

Our job now to compose  
a row of stones  
and then a row of just these same small stones  
and another stone of that family      added to the end of it.

The first row.

And then the next row.

And then another row  
    as long as the second  
with several more stones yet  
                    placed beyond the end of it  
and another row  
of these same stones  
with a certain number of stones  
added to the last ones  
and after a certain number more of rows  
a certain number more of stones  
and the rows go on increasing like this  
as long as someone comes along to decide  
how many more stones ought to be added on to it  
and as long as there are stones to add to the rows. . .

And then a row with fewer stones  
and then a row with no stones  
and then a row like the first row  
and then one like the second  
and then a row like some selected later row  
and then one like that one again  
and again one like an earlier row  
and then again a row like a row occurring much later  
and then again like a row much later still  
and then  
    one  
        earlier than all the other  
            repeated rows, same as the first one.

And the rows keep changing their likeness to other rows  
until a decision comes to terminate doing this.

But no one comes to terminate it  
and there are so many stones that it seems as it might  
    go on forever  
        or into another  
            world.

There must be another world.  
And for every row of stones in the first world  
a statue established on a slab  
observes in silence the sea  
in *that* world.

The decisions to move the stones in the first world  
are made by calculations achieved in the second world's sea  
heaving under the tidal pressure there  
and each of the statues seated on its slab  
emits one sound

and there are worlds in rows of worlds  
stacked beyond the sea. . .

### *The Sad World*

The little collection of things I keep—  
in what way do our numbers inform them?

Wonderful clear white stones.

The one  
surrounds  
the others  
remain  
among.

Each in turn becomes the entire population.

a single mountain of a man with ten thousand heads

watching each other  
synthesizing a single clear white lake  
shared among their eyes.

Parts alone alone and other parts also alone  
along with them  
in a forest  
and over the forest  
the light of ten thousand suns  
embraces an infinite carpet.

In a single paragraph everything can be stated  
and every imponderable inquiry established.

The grounds can be set such that every question  
arises in its right time.

Our minds are like palaces, places.  
In a tiny space a thought exists  
and we go there  
for a tiny span of time  
and that thought rises and vibrates  
in just that place it arises in  
and vanishes  
leaving oneself  
alone  
without purchase  
without thought  
in an empty spot.  
I just show up  
in the middle of an instant  
that has never been here before  
having come from somewhere, apparently—  
perhaps from the bright caboose  
I keep latched to the top of my skull—  
I descend like a trickle of balsam

a spantule of dew  
down through the bones of my cranium  
into the nest-work of neurons a billion fold.

Each little moment  
lives in its intricate box

and spreads it bag out  
and within there are instruments and sandwiches

and the dark shadows of that June afternoon  
cause music to swoon on the lawn.

Each thing is empty, yet clarified.

It rises  
and casts its influence, interlock, adumbration  
and is gone.

And I may choose to discover my self in its  
absence or I may not

allowing my momentary appearance to vanish as well  
leaving an empty package  
on the darkening lawn.

The presence of the hostess, her aroma,  
her apron in the wind  
arises and is gone—

being itself dirempted, causing images  
to choose among the ghosts  
they themselves compel.

Heart,

do you exist?

Big wells  
an hippopotamus  
along the swelling artery



The music is strutting backwards. He plays the improvisation  
I should like to say "sideways". Rapidly. Scratching the phrases  
across the keys in a rapid jitter  
that fits the notes  
aply into the measure  
and yet it feels like he is doing it somehow sideways.

We ourselves are beginning to get up and move  
in an awkward manner  
away from the deck and the deck chairs.

It is impossible to see us moving  
and yet we are picking up our hats  
and walking off to the right  
under the shadow of the veranda  
and going into the lounge to purchase a beverage.

We ourselves are beginning to get up and move  
in a curious manner.

It is impossible to see us do this, impossible to stir  
the memory of it,  
but we do it—we have done it—  
and as we pass the scene in a sail boat  
our having done it in just this jittery manner  
moving aslant  
    looking askance  
and walking quietly  
under the shade of the veranda  
into the lounge room  
comes into being.

The entire comes into being  
as the future idles on.

It wasn't there before at all.

Our youth was not our youth  
until the ancient priest-thinker  
arrived with his oaks  
propped up on his hobbled machine.

The noises that it makes in that intolerable sun-blaze.

His white beard flows like the sun blaze.

We ourselves are walking to the right, having crossed the line  
on the floor-boards of the sun-deck where the  
shadow of the veranda crosses in the noon hour.

White splotches of sunlight  
and dark and sharply outlined patches of shadow  
cross our bodies—  
    the line of the division  
twixt shadow and sun-blaze  
moves across our bodies as we move  
across the deck  
to go into the lounge.

How old are you  
these days.

Your youth comes into being as you grow old.

The ancient king is hobbling into the sun-blaze of his agedness  
and the aged thinker appears in his youth to put questions  
before the ancient machine  
to become young again  
for the first time.

He is old and young  
in a single figure  
and the shadow of the veranda  
crosses his body at noon  
and does not move  
as the river of questions streams across his memory.

It is impossible to say in what direction we seemed to be moving just then.

Perhaps it was to the right of the shadowed deck-chairs  
and away from the sun-blached water  
towards the veranda.

The elderly priest-thinker  
was serving drinks and behaving  
in a jittery manner  
as the shadow of the boat-deck  
passed magisterially across the window glass.

The music seemed to have been getting louder.

He complained of his age.

The questions were sputtering  
out of the ancient mechanism.

There was a strain inside him  
as if he had run this course before  
in his youth  
and that youth had now to be summoned  
before the small but particular company  
perfectly suited to attend the mechanism.

The others complained of his age.

He said he was an ancient horse chariot driver  
required to go the journey  
to the northern-most stars one more time  
before he regained his youth again—  
that this was the method, the machinery  
by which one, starting in the same place,  
distinguishes figures in that locality  
coming into being  
as if for the first and only time. And only now.

Starting from the end of Volume IV of Heidegger's *Nietzsche*  
and having lit a candle (in a brass holder with a ring  
for the finger) I'll at least write until it goes out.  
I've separated the actor's face on the Lucas B&B  
photograph of waitresses and put mine in, in color  
to forestall illusionism, his (my) arm around one smiling  
as Milton may have pasted his head in over Virgil  
— why not a combat shot. It's no longer effective  
to say length of iron through organs, blade in clavicle  
and I'd like to see an epic where the points are flint.  
Keats thought of giant ineffective marble people  
waiting for the one dripping sun-colors like Mars  
to come and make it better, himself thinking of verse  
as needing restoration though historically doomed.  
His portraits, eyes a little close together, blunt nose  
do not age, as Hazlitt's self-portrait cracks.  
Does it matter, our frontispieces carefully appended.  
Fruit always fools me. Green pepper or zucchini  
as bookends in a kitchen — even carrots are tolerable  
with tired fronds though they never think to do parsley.  
The waxy yellow potato I cooked just today has  
its prototype in vinyl; fruit with waxy skins are best  
oranges impossibly orange, and I want  
to put them to be found, under cups. In adolescence  
I read about tomatoes, cloth balls the magician  
in India (crosslegged on the ground) hides to show.  
If his cups were Fabergé he'd still be barefoot  
and baffling, his delight, below eye level.  
What water he no longer needs he spills on the ground.  
The athletes in Homer face each other on vases  
well, die then, the armor in heaps taken off them  
I've wanted it glass, or leather squares. She on the wall  
looks down, intrusion of the cinematic.  
Brando expires, his blond head underwater  
why are our words not his bubbles.  
I've blown out the candle, put it back on the wall.  
Dream with Bachelard an internal density  
visions of transparent alluvial deposits  
a week ago we saw a steel U sawn through  
off a lock, today a bulb from a sulfide lamp  
a man with plastic garbage bag picking his way.  
Perhaps the illusion is that discards are free.  
Over the years the pink and blue sherds by my mulch  
have gone to ground, in my drawer the transit token.  
Today he was born in a log cabin and I barely  
remember the cabin-shaped tin, cap chimney  
shelve it with Aunt Jemima memorabilia.  
What is it to speak of things *in terms* of objects

it is the tourist who recognizes the Woolnoth clank.  
No ducks and mud, but we have lemurs and tarsiers  
with eyes emancipate in thinwalled skulls.  
Creatures create a world as eyes converge  
and Gainsborough of the long brushes kept sitters  
at right angles, the young man (Victoria's grandfather?)  
reclining against a tree in green with gold trim  
each leaf a semitransparent stroke.  
Railroads fund Art Of The Book exhibits  
and Spengler says no constitution mentions money.  
Pieces of money in the walls in Hogarth  
are hoarded, like nudity. Actors change in a barn  
and waves on cranks are the largest props.  
Cézanne put the darks in first, to anchor  
a scene, the attack so luminous  
at the end our canvas showing through is canvas  
Vallier's shirt like a Gainsborough stump.  
My cheese, partly toasted, looks like eggs all yolk  
reminding me of giant composites cooked in bladders.  
A hot boiled egg with a goose quill inserted  
with mercury in will dance on a plate  
how to frighten strange dogs in Della Porta.  
Paint the game pie with the bright yolks in  
it seems to have been important, the yolks.  
Widewale pale green corduroy cactus  
might soothe when the purple sewn lips lose value  
we want satin rocks around a blackened fire  
or wallets in the street with silk money edges.  
Emergency candles pretend to be crayons  
boxed, the French bindings hollowed out to hold snifters  
I reach for my revolver handle's puckered seam.  
A bust of Pallas would include her helmet  
but I have this notion phrenological markings  
outline her organ of ideality.  
We no longer have pigs in the streets, a few roosters.  
I look at the ground as much as they  
and find pennies milled by friction on asphalt.  
The absence in magic is not a hiding  
eggs don't *lurk* in the derby. Give it up  
gloves and ma jolie cards on the wicker.  
Elegance is atrophied. The wallet used to hold  
letters, a ticket to a lobster drawing  
and was the feel of its thickness in the coat.  
It shifted like vowels, the tie, speeded up  
the body is covered with migrating cloth.  
"Give it to me," David says, planning the case  
in which to exhibit it sulfide-free  
the Japanese armor exhibit approaching.  
I'm told the Rothko room is a chapel.  
Freedom is the chance to move the arms horizontally  
to change things, carve careful sockets for peeled tree  
or tuck a handkerchief in a glass cylinder  
and then it's not there, "gone south" as they say.  
Something like it is what's under the nasal  
guard in a Greek helmet. The person becomes  
his armor as bullet shapes and chainmail collars don't.

Where did Velasquez see the vertical pikes  
to put in his treaty picture? A local one had  
catfish with feelers, heads chopped, in a tub  
the colors charcoal gray and flesh. A mess of pikes.  
Armor not one's own is illustration  
and Flaxman should have rendered at least the *Phaedrus*.  
Trammell wraps peeled vines in copper wire  
and hangs them, lumpy helices, over his desk.  
The winter was hard on buried imagos.  
Migration of matter in the pupa leaves them  
amorous bullets that propagate sound  
but it's the ant lion adults that have real gold eyes.  
I found gilt dolls in the road, a Parenthood pin  
by the very deep hole a building's to go in  
a gent smoothed cement with a gas-driven rotor.  
American buildings, she said, come right out of the ground  
they haven't bases. Lee and his aide in bronze  
are on that cast ground David says involves time  
farmers and cows, or my melting cheese.  
Coursey mounts tritons for oil companies  
shallow inland sea for sharks, ammonites, turtles  
cement trucks idling in limestone shadow.  
The sun god appears, shedding tinsel, demanding  
a calcium spot on Cedar Springs, headdress  
with tourist dangling calendric disks.  
Helios wears such things in Keats  
red cloth sliding over a gold cuirass.  
We learned from Rome to keep our heads in cages  
oh fish, if we were auditors, visible behind  
the globe of our faces. Gravel, bubbling divers.  
Rubens nymphs, the water in drops on flanks  
defines medium between salmon and pearl  
his tritons more like rye bread in courtly postures.  
A hand and forearm with sword in a lake  
in Texas would be a White Rock hant  
though Tolbert got away with a matador  
facing a horned chair. Note the cape and floor.  
It is our function to incorporate civics.  
Melt everything down. Why wait for Halloween  
for women to be silver, all cheekbone and lashes.  
Gold paint right up a thigh to the rib  
makes you understand the miniature bronzes  
Donatello mantel trophy finials.  
Carve hedges in the shape of dancers and flute players  
in gardens with running water. Libraries get rejects  
tillating chests and ankles like cannon.  
In Cambridge I would go to Marimekko  
to look at a color and sneer at wood utensils.  
Today I stood in sunlight and sketched the Lee statue  
and, waiting for the ink to dry (confused by wind)  
facing this marble bus of a pediment  
as if on a heath could have seen Moneta  
metallic Fellini goddess, whomever  
would undertake body paint and wispy crepe  
a silver medal clinging to the silver forehead.  
What we remember by necessity we cling to

not meaning asserted but like a hand held  
"This hand" notional like a velvet neck  
in a window for a necklace, replaceably plush.  
Gel could be stained glass so the gules could fall on her  
construction lights on poles to be moons for it.  
Having ripped up rock, we've poured cement from snorkel trucks  
and lowered steel like hospital beds to make columns.  
Evangelists function like caryatids in gospels.  
River rocks, the waste of it, you know, all those patients  
flowed over, the pattern made by silt on limestone.  
Abnormal psychology absorbs them, the discipline  
of knowing how to paint silk hats, leather shoes.  
The oval Washington I found in the paper  
is now a gumball machine with drawn plastic  
eggs with stamps floating around his head and white stock.  
Amusement ends. The rate comes to us while it can  
our zippered selves handrails in lavatory stalls  
my birthday a month away, Oldenburg spike.  
It is like collage, my father said of Book I  
and I've not found domainable engraving assemblage  
interesting ever. Subject may be  
the political addition to a crumbling wall.  
All the saints, like vinyl, look like ordinary people  
soulful but approachable in woody pastel.  
There should be more crocodiles as in De Quincey  
the snake under her foot on the firmament a thrill.  
No martyr has dissolved to become his base  
sporiform sanctity, SPCK  
the mudcolored Parker Society volumes  
in Dublin, Bishop Jewel, jostled Essays and Reviews  
plaid garments found preserved in bogs.  
How spiky, if it came apart at the base and we were larger  
the Lee statue with its two horses would be,  
walleted Remington riders for the desk.  
It is too easy to think of water bathing  
everything, though never successful in bronze  
barring people patting themselves with towels.  
I want lifesize ones by Turtle Creek.  
Earlier in the day I wanted a Louisiana oyster  
in bronze to weigh down papers because it was windy  
different from a Victoria in silver on onyx.  
My ideal desk is probably dark wood with Dart's  
australopithecene child skull on it  
the two colors indicating what's been built up in clay.  
A little voodoo casting for the neck is protection  
that the eyelets will hold a string or chain  
to wear it, clothing, thin line at the waist  
when not in designer safari shorts.  
I don't know the large wood things are Melanesian  
but oiled dark masks with tiny eyes and horned hair  
"their" dances, cast gold amulets, granaries.  
Silver washer eyes on an ebony mask  
grommets for the firewatcher, critic half mouth  
I've never minded, the eye a hole, an eye.  
Exertion needs a sleep between, sculp-metal flashlight  
ready as a pen replaced by another

to give a readiness behind glass, pedestaled.  
Honorific thing, to define space as boring  
under an object, put it on a mountain, Tikal  
microwave cottage of stone led up to  
and away by the sea Peruvians in tombs  
with shallow cups with corners like gas tank caps.  
The man in Delahunty made Alison stand there  
while he called Surls, hiding the list on his desk  
flakes of clinging fire raining down on him invisibly.  
Fashionable works on vinyl with writing.  
You are too pure, she said, making fun of me a little  
bored by the MLA blonde fop  
misspelling French on the white wall, my raven looking down  
that morning, geese, in my black raincoat, being talked to by geese  
the beak ridges polished by silica in the grass.  
Ah. One of the leaden days I've liked, as in Wellesley  
you walk around the lake in a moist gray light  
and the calico cat making raids in dry leaves  
the honeysuckle I wanted to turn polyploid and take  
over the whole alley. The weather is turning  
and Holbrook Jackson finds Thoreau more alone than Emerson  
and the Genoa I bought to ravin like a squirrel makes me ill.  
The dogs frighten off our garbage man toying with a folding chair  
he's found, shower cap under a dark blue billed one  
more worm casts than usual on both sides of the path.  
A hard face with cut jewels for eyes is still a face  
and one might have, wrapped around the head in a babushka, Washington  
palazzi or Versailles interiors on a lounge shirt  
these tussling varnished Romans, Samson blinded, Danae  
when a small vase enlarged is really an object of study.  
My Dagon bookplate, jeweled plumes on a frog prince  
is framed in worn stone with trilobites in relief.  
Newton's showed Johnson in an airy Temple Bar  
being pleased his head is not displayed above it  
Schopenhauer's unexpectedly Mozartian.  
Add angelic helmets like stone lanterns to the clutter.  
I've missed the viola da gamba concert  
you play fretted tucking in a foot to hold it  
Milton played Monteverdi on his home organ.  
She (*She*, the classic comic brought me) a bit fullthighed  
wearing overmuch gauze to be docking harebells  
or the word like Yosemite or pity-the-ruler  
below the panniered window donkey a miniature toad  
disguised as a dead fly. Impatience, name I like.  
Measurement in the *Iliad*: your opponent is standing  
a spear length away. Now he is less  
our chariots Victorian, knee-high doors that fly open.  
I should think the packed earth would turn their burrows up automatically  
and this could be *made*, the questing tip vinyl  
as stagnant water with a base added set one tapping or waving  
and once, corner of a cement porch, a frantic gray nubbin  
like a dry worm came right out of the ground, some legless reversion  
fiercely active rotting automobile tire paring.  
Animals and men impress by their presence  
and our products not to say gas station pillars  
or soad ad, hygienic acculturation

but a bank, white Lagonda or combination of these  
with, in the glove compartment or coat room, the scrubbed advert  
and the man in gray on the back stairs disinfectant nutation.  
Walt, one of the roughs, wore shoes in town  
to the opera, hung naked from branches in New Jersey  
and registered like Thoreau the collapse of banks  
no Eakins to do him younger by the stream, the young men.  
A handful of flowers might be gathered still  
if you attend to the pulling sound, like geese eating grass.  
My *She* having conjured me up to no purpose  
I may not have the Edenic cast of mind —  
see it all enameled, daisies pied. The paint flakes.  
Leopard lamps, pheasants on the wall, a dog knocker  
fat kid on the back lot who wants to pet the lions.  
Paradise is where I find a penny every day  
a shiny one on my desk right now, 1983  
D for Delaware, dirt against the unmilled rim.  
The dream of clean living paints things white, polishes aluminum  
but our local shop sells bubble gum like chewing tobacco and folded tacos.  
An eagle on a bust clutching fascicles of lightning  
would be something if the eyes moved or it croaked or something.  
Our flag is so complex it is art in encaustic.  
Clio showed me the state bird under glass in Austin  
with petrified wood, here an artificial tree  
exhibits all kinda birds, unbarbecued, paired.  
A barber on Oak Lawn had a case of Barlows  
he won awards for and hung them up by the knives  
our emblems define us like a beer can buckle  
magic not as sign but because waists are magic  
how women go in there, the line over the hip  
following the inner tissue wrapping, swathed muscle  
a loveliness not to be covered by patriot diaper  
Whitman so aware of it, not a beltloving man.  
So all the night-tide, there's water for your Bachelardian raven  
enough to imagine pickerel heads winched to the boat  
as the postcard has one hauled out of the lake, moose, grizzly  
when any clam is awesome with the foot protruding.  
Inflation is not wholly foreign to us, the sewing machine  
an airfoil with a nicked wheel like a bank door to the palm  
mystery of continuous thread, diagrams of the zipper.  
The monocled man with spats and cane is a peanut.  
It's odd how plain my letters get, having speeded up this  
shore lowered an inch to accommodate a rift  
sessile animals out of luck, day-tide.  
O'Shea in a Dublin pantomime, black eyebrows  
underlit by footlights plots, isn't Bloom at all  
at the Gaiety where I saw *Patience* in lavender and green  
like the notebook I bought in Browne and Nolan's  
to index metaphors of balance in Johnson.  
What I like is the smell of sun on streets recently moist  
two shillings of a burley mix in white paper in the pocket  
and tracts, Bohns, old Oxford lectures on verse.  
Barrels were there and clumsybooted draymen but fewer horses.  
I've soaked adjacent Edgar Lee Masters stamps off something  
a pretty khaki with his head in a kind of dish  
to keep from looking like a lapidary inscription.

We could extend lines from Truman to be holding  
a bomb, comic square vanes, the color Masters deepened.  
Pamphlets dropped from airplanes are presumably unstamped.  
The greenish brown paint goes at once to vapor.  
What might be a dead dog or goat in the alley  
is passed by two children without remark, so isn't.  
Any whole is inferential. A puppet on a stick  
prescinds from the stick and bobs, chatting, how we know  
a hole in a Moore regal figure is intended.  
Pots of honey shaped like hives impress me  
and I was once given a plastic squeeze bear  
Cézanne in my refrigerator the Robertson ginger  
marmalade with blue corded jar on the label.  
Young urban professionals stuff the lobby to see the Rand film  
their faces a periphery around the mean.  
Amusement in embryo. The fetal head in Beardsley.  
We lessen our divisor by writing lines  
no one can tell are good or not  
but water in gutters if running is silver  
and I with my patent umbrella a shepherd  
muttering on sidewalk pied with pennies and dimes.  
All I have in my care is appearances  
crushed bulb sockets with a bit of wire drama.  
So, Parmigianino is now sold like a rotary  
slide cassette, that is nothing to me  
though I always wanted a model perspectival room —  
black and white tile, armor and a staircase  
to glue as Carr suggests to the mailbox slot  
then trick anyone to look in, a policeman.  
Dove's outboard motor uses silver paint. Do  
a penny in Good Luck aluminum horseshoe  
it is all too recognizable, shackled to a scale  
so simple roof shapes in the inside of a building  
thwart the mind or girders painted one color  
and ferns as the size they grow to are no help,  
straggle of philodendron like dice across a hall.  
We would need bronze tapirs or hanging monkeys in a group  
to substitute for the company of tables and chairs  
waitress coffee globe rag aluminum frieze  
as pictures of food are on diner walls.  
Items in a museum are like the desk divider pins  
and tacks (rosary, pearls and D rings) without grit or dust  
there for the nail when you pick up a needle.  
The radio fool can't pronounce his church name  
poor granny gets thousands for an attic painting  
and in the fish, cut open, a ring.  
Untoward utterance, watching flatbed trucks  
unload sculpture blocks, cream in the overcast day  
monumentality is not thereby authentic.  
Then I saw a helicopter shuttle dumpsters  
swung heavy from a fourfold line with medial spacers  
emptying a number in a parking lot like wastebaskets.  
Maritain and Gilson pitting their wives against Goya  
should have been painted by him doing just that  
we'll need a slide of that, transparent vinyl wad  
all cardinals in denim strapped to Bacon chairs

taking off from high wind Greco blur.  
The man is in black with pop eyes and handlebar  
whiskers, in the blobby shoes they wore as if faddist  
random brushstrokes in the background like Morisot.  
The portrait as comment vanishes in our time  
we make them look like newspaper photos sandpapered  
paroxysm of shyness being made celebrity.  
One didn't think of the mask as face down on the sidewalk  
the inside white, marks of food or blood near the chin  
turned over, flesh, some hero, the eyeholes flattened ovals.  
Thinking of the child who wore it I ignored several of them  
playing king of the sloped lawn (one slid down, eroding it.)  
I made my own mitre once, green linen and brocade  
gunpowder smoke on the car floor going past the judges.  
Wheelshaped sputtering nitered charcoal  
in a pierced double Magdeburg cup on chains  
is trashed by bishops only subtle in committee.  
It was the bad taste of pamphlets that tell you  
you're halfway through by the staple that made this,  
roundcornered rubricated Mass of the day  
the shape given temporarily to provincials.  
"My watch runs faster when I feel good," not thinking  
warm weather loosens bodies and watches. By accident  
I caught Snodgrass's first reading, post-divorce  
and it was moving and his vulnerable beard  
Cairnie enjoying mother's oatcakes I slipped him  
I remember a big orangebound *Ulysses* there and in Pangloss  
waiting for the police to arrest *Big Table*.  
The champagne cork my deletions just made  
argue loss is gain if not bankable  
easier to see struck through text as art.  
Even Thoreau is too much our taste in preaching.  
A rooster by a hurricane fence made for a public road  
so I chased it back by saying things to it, my black jacket  
no match for its red head and green tail, but larger.  
The dunghill within Danubian postholes  
was for a while just taller weeds.  
Sprung water towers, wood fanning out, are black  
against the day, hoop squiggles, the nails  
rusted on the outside but dry in the heat  
the ranch a device to measure paint cans and bones.  
We should be able to find beads from Egypt in our middens.  
Immiscible applied to everything I knew  
as a breakfast egg (not edible) and toast are disjunct.  
What is fit for hands or arms is enough  
barbed wire always wanting to make circles in air  
hence the illusion Western life can be drawn.  
We always like to read about boilers and vats.  
The uterine horn anatomists found in us  
was after all useful to pigs and cows.  
We find what we are looking for, our hands a macaque's.  
Da Vinci drew fetal beings dreaming in sepia  
their imagined dreams romantic verse.  
In low relief on a marble porch  
we might ascend a little way, roses carved, weathered  
that tourist alabaster, the bloom they thought like flesh

the salt grains on the thorns are really feldspar.  
Flayed models leave us without recourse  
to bunched cloth for the muscles where wings attach.  
Marat, green in his bath, puts on the towel  
or wax, paraffin to his knees, omits  
the gesture of an alligator man on a platform.  
Yet the picturesque and romantic make a parcel.  
Opposition was wax organs off Union Square  
or vistas of recumbent bronze dead in Lee Park  
Whitman on the house steps carrying lint.  
No reason statues shouldn't rest on aquaria  
as Trammell said acrylic spike heels held fish  
fondling the corncob harmonica sprayed chrome  
what we make more than the sensation given off.  
The cake had quantities of sugar flowers on  
which everyone wanted to stick in lapels and didn't.  
The oyster I flooded with polyurethane varnish  
and put thirteen pearls in had no traffic with them  
the rock I found suitable for pocket and waxed  
not in my pocket, smelling of carnauba, by the shell  
not in my temperament to give found things a home.  
Chronogisticality, word waiting for a use  
in line with all those fragmentators. The decoration is letters  
glazed on copper strips or sewn to them, and worn.  
Literary wars make the wadding the weapon  
intransigents holed up in coldwater kitchens.  
L equals A and so on though a limit is reached  
alphabet for the language Byron tried to learn in Greece  
as Creeley said as if all worlds were there. Any words  
on a page look as if they mean or are meant.  
Don't focus on the words, it is a printed page.  
Can one be forgiven lines like maps to show where streets go  
ribbon exhalation, Xed block, you are here  
as I draw a red Volkswagen in the lot next door  
coloring it when I can, the need to be vivid.  
The multitudes one embraces trickle down, blood and ooze  
and the rocks he says are standing, standing, eagle stuffed on a ledge  
a white star sewn to the wing, oh cruel beak, oh emblem  
national bird, in outline so like a can opener.  
Handfuls of peas, little squares of bacon lend you  
creamed grandeur. If there were blue food we would eat you like flags.  
This pineapple at your belt is a child's toy, plastic.  
Whose belt — Mya's khaki shorts following a white generic tank  
my label-free teabags in a carton without color  
large enamel metal dish with pale peas and pink salmon.  
Faded flags bleach in secret to make paper.  
Beardsley with his bangs parted slightly in front  
poses, long fingers running up his face  
forever as if drawing by following contour  
not thinking of dimestore plates shaped like leaves  
or curtained booths there to render serial pose.  
It is less definitive if there is another  
behind the applegreen leaf a hint of wyvern.  
The massive spear or hoe handle we grab is fired clay  
glazed an iron color, not a tool at all, useless.  
Toads deceive, or sodden kleenex looks like toads

sometimes defining by evaporation leading edges  
tea or rust in the washcloth El Greco sepia.  
The folds in wooden saints are carved *and* painted  
to look like Tiepolo washes, now and then  
a transparent brow on Joseph might take us  
in mind to forests of them in gesso underpainting.  
The white stools in the fish shop are scuffed by clientele  
and the place where the oyster's muscle attached turned dark  
warmed on a gas heater before varnishing.  
It is a novel one would have to put the things in  
enough to pretend the pretend people were there.  
Standing in overalls with a spotted handkerchief issuing  
from the hip pocket a grim man with a hoe.  
A watermelon is a blunt oval and I'm told  
they're bred square to stack like the teapot with spout  
and handle opposite diagonals demanding  
a lattice of fellows, incomplete as used.  
The veal is kept fourteen weeks in boxes  
without light, and will suck the presented knuckle  
Fox beaming walking his wolf on a leash.  
You could sculpt a balding browed man, skull like a vault  
with the scooped vest, foulard and famous collar  
in plaster and buff it to be marble, statesman's buttons  
but why build a rotundaed hall for it to be  
empedestaed. Dying Indians, wonderfully detailed calves, Coursey's  
pump with platform, glass bell to expel the air  
from moulding plaster republican sculpture.  
Humanists are the people who welcomed Milton in Florence  
not these ill spellers, though they print a Jimenez rider  
forearms and horse thews like sauce, in the Kimbell  
his plowman, transparent pastel colors and wonderful insect.  
In Austin they print old Texas maps, wear shirts, know culture.  
Morris saw them raise the Russian flag, thinking it French  
so hard for burghers to get these details correct  
and we sang like trenches in the sea of green rushes.  
Winds are clear, do not show up on the model Alamo  
(the front wall the back) excluding what was worn  
around necks, the clutch, the wink inherited  
like pouches that fasten with hammered Indian head nickels.  
Relishing what is, we ask these questions  
how we have open places with little round tables in  
or instead, fountain a fat roll of marble, cast person  
Luke Kelly with banjo by a table with a pint.  
Memorabilia off the walls of the closing Irish bar  
one waiting for the dart board and carpeted panel.  
Cheer is out of focus in our platinum print  
the garden hoses and side of the house shrubs J. R. says  
are like the ones on the end of the roll, tricycles like Belsen.  
Why work *from* a photograph, man carving banjo hoop  
done over in pen, "cultural criticism" advertised  
with neither vine and leaf designs in hated subdued dyes  
nor Wapping etchings. Aluminum editors without taste  
finger manuscript painted white as Wordsworth  
crouching below opens books with a buttery breakfast knife.  
Indians in loincloths on adobe houses  
look out over diorama impressionist technique

who'd have thought the bad ones who came after would end  
wildeyed with wide hat and shawl, the fireplace painted like Rossetti  
but anything any dimension, the Toby mug a scuttle.  
The giving out of it, paint the gazebo not with side of brush  
but carefully as a numbered patch or "area," dissolving  
to a shimmer (really still impressionist sugarbowl)  
but the smell of linseed, the first stroke, the lighthouse.  
They do suffer a change, as the state in which one *would*  
have written them goes. Book of excerpted mythology  
with Bryant's Homer, lot of Dryden and outlined Proclus  
shelved next to another explaining what heels mean  
would be for Keats what Victoria was to Strachey.  
Translucent green grapes the size of limes  
depend from petrified branches. A satyr  
with fluffed wig attracts inked nymphs by knowing flowers  
the line of rib to waist lost in conjectured animal.  
Parsnips rubberbanded in bunches, heaped carrot greens  
are these for me, though mammals (naiads waterbreathing) their  
notion of (Aubrey slippered, tethered to a herm) gods.  
A voel comes to us, Welsh mountain, and spun glass  
around it, as blue around fused paraffin blocks  
years ago to be dry ice, sprayed with Christmas snow also.  
Perhaps Mary's robe in Chartres will do  
even if artificial, rude to imagine provenance  
of Peter's tooth in the sword pommel (whose would not do)  
one *cares about* fictional people not cloth  
the shop's potmetal cross with shank for a broomstick  
eloquent from the holes bored for screws to anchor it.  
Anything gleaming through grass, blue wool  
red kite-tail or snail-thin recording tape  
distracts as event, accessible to the umbrella point  
the strengthless bendable dull nickel nonweapon  
dirk in the sock a more confronting culture.  
Maniple, stole, scapular almost the names of functionaries  
he who carried the spindle venus, second and third fingers  
for the hips, breasts caressable by the thumb  
or spinning weights, wonderful pestles, egg timers  
shaped like eggs, anything for the hand a concept.  
Our hexameters she says are waltzes, pastoral reverie with rebecq  
strapped to the forearm as if bowing a dulcimer  
and I've wanted the dancing-master pocket fiddle, and long pocket.  
Just made five breaking into a car for people  
bending wire, the pull and up, ah. Whitman, sounds of clanging.  
Tolbert's plastic camera has palm trees, a beach  
surf on its little shelf, a picture outside  
and exotic so it needn't matter what you photograph  
perhaps all an extension of its grayish aqua.  
Put the dream on the outside of the book  
(blondes with astrolabes and ivory spaceships)  
inside honeyed transparent tape in a side light  
a stationer's of the soul, magnetic messages clipped.  
Gauguin could say no to laced cloth, wear wrappings  
like Marat, and paint what these novelties prompted  
an odor to it like what clings to unattended coins.  
A rat ran across my path by the children's hospital  
blunt nose like the one in the trap that moved a good while

and left a bit of dampness under where the mouth was.  
Bright daylight, and it went down a hole lined with chopped mulch, as a rabbit would.  
As if carrying the cool from under the bridge where cars go  
dry dirt and thin-sliced shingle, a wire stuck in  
a cherrysized ball and bit of plaster, was it a doll's head  
mechanism, touched, fell apart, lost interest  
all of it, rubbing the dirt off my fingers, equally discarded.  
The rose when not of twisted satin is painted on tin  
as she of Lima, giant pear, inflated robe of bliss  
gone upstairs with a hole at each of the four corners.  
Munch's "Sick Girl" lithograph ought to be put up up  
white oil and carrot hair, which applied, which lithoed  
not looking at anything, outside a donkey loaded with wet flowers  
an accident of color the one in the picture looks Irish.  
For breakfast, lunch and dinner fried mush with blue cornmeal  
and I see the advantage of smoking one's pig.  
Cultivation from here is anything on the wall to look at  
three lettersize Bacons and a Cirage Jacquot postcard  
as if like banjos they have to be given you.  
Crusoe inspecting his flints. Moore called a chrysanthemum a lion  
so one in a glass of water would be (plotz) hydropic  
as the oil-drip pans they bite through in play.  
The purveyor of spiritual self-culture on the classical  
radio speaks of the Christ as one might say Le Car  
ruining Bartok, intruding on the bliss of solitude  
and the argument that he pays for the music elected Johnson  
tribalism it happens I don't approve, fetishist.  
The shop near me sells gilt razor blades, tubes and little spoons  
to sniff cocaine with, in fitted leather wallets.  
Odor of burley from round jars, chromed pipes and scales  
has me back to Peterson's under the Cook's sign, Goldsmith  
a blackened statue behind me, in the long gallery Swift  
a potato face, and men eaten by initial letter pard.  
The culture of it fed into an oral approach  
that expected you'd find words to say anything, too  
close to ballad recognizables, the hands clasped over the heart  
(touching, stacked, what precisely is that relation)  
Blake in his garden thinking up words for the guardsman  
and the lovely line from rib to ankle that he married.  
One clown paints another's face with blacking  
a man shaves, body and mirror alternative spaces  
evangelist smug the crucifixion was prophesied  
(how could he *know*) might praised by a moving jawbone.  
Andromeda chained is a curve in an oval  
to Ingres whose Homer is a stone head ruling  
a warm torso of a kind the painter thought noble  
but greenish gray washes for Calliope's vault.  
Women with long hair piled in close curls, in brocade  
garments, others with pants in boots and street radio, tough  
will be our models, wrists and Perrier to admire  
angst of checked cloth always wrong against food.  
Small but broadleaved plants in my yard make mountains  
wee primates under, explorers with corded boxes under  
microscopes, bottles, formalin and skinning tools  
and the parasites to be looked for as indicative of species.  
For some reason that clutter of Greek and Roman beings

Andromeda, Perseus want to creep in, won't be  
denied, today a board bridge to a peninsula over a pool  
the water very blue and a thick hemp rail  
could have reminded me of a Mediterranean kidney  
island with goats, wildflowers, old altars with snakes under  
the satisfying approach to a manmade ruin.  
Mnemosyne is pious, mutters while she gathers rushes.  
I know the chain links are hollow like torcs.  
Part of a feline hood ornament, head gone  
lump of chrome in the hand felt like that leaping  
into a tree may have been, shower of chromium.  
David says the cord ornaments on pots are memory  
saying it is important, repeated as waves are  
iteration in sisal to encourage that kind of gaze.  
Liquids in vials are pretty much better dark  
yet aren't decoration, jiggled or in repose  
mercury slung by the neck from a chain  
unexpected as a king's orb, perfume cross on top.  
The Dallas (put *that* on your penny) I've liked is vanishing, gods packed  
and off, my drawing of them with suitcases on an urn  
corporate in-house cork board quality  
but tulips by the river bloom red. People curved  
as staghorn or filigree bench rests lie open  
to sun there, tactilely slick to the eye.  
Magic, then, occupies us to that end, vertical  
cement face with Brit from Norway, and X&A  
midnight visits on the creek bed, headlights on the bridge  
and tatters of shirt, such things, on bushes growing out of the water  
here, finding Sheldon perhaps is terminally ill  
a healing space with water over stone like textured slate  
no great event, but thick round railings to pat.  
The unfixed gaze, briefcase a weight and shirt a bit moist from walking  
jacket collar through the belt so you don't have to hold it  
collaborates but with almost none of the will like Eliot's  
in that real-estate rundown garden he liked to imagine  
and make sense of a bookseller's dying or a life without much boosting  
or just look at letters without reading them on a wall.  
The water is too shallow to throw a thing in  
a fat plate like a glass oval on a coffee table  
of the kind Hockney's father's foot shows through in a drawing  
and a bit rusty or ocher in the color it gives limestone.  
It contains air, by way of light not striking the scribbled wall.  
You look *across* it, as at a natural thing though cement.  
Romance and pastoral are possible here  
one thinks, fresh from an I (heart) Jesus on a car  
who died so cretins might advertise zeal.  
The back windshield presents itself inauthentically as a person  
safety glass that shivers, laminate insurance.  
The Catholic mind can think of the Grail as a chamberpot  
in Germany or just thrown out like hammered Danish basins  
and I suppose was crockery, perhaps with a hair crack  
harboring bacilli, common as beer in a leather jack  
since bored for a fuse hole, stuck up in a revetment  
you, with your taste for Marquet and purse for Bombois  
will appreciate miniature and Dutch things, clear air  
in the painted panel, hay bundle stuck up on a stick.

Our adverts, the rubber stamp now rainbow  
are crank mottos, push pens with silver lettering when not  
undergarments in machine oil that vanish thoughtfully.  
The folding square over which the embroidered cloth went  
made the chalice a trapezoid, sometimes a blushing red  
matching the chasuble and even still was a procession.  
The street child poured wine onto gold, saw the celebrant's  
wafer, thick because so large, heard it break  
in half and the little third (smaller sound, halved tympanum)  
that dropped in and mixed seemed a conciliar gesture.  
It was, as ritual rather than substance, distinct from the world  
and we called "the altar" the carpeted area around it  
(that which we served on, a red booklet to learn Latin)  
and held a gold salver under chins at rails  
a white missal plaid shorts opposed to a kilt.  
Weather intrudes, if only as the smell of mimosa  
or the steel plant (like vinegar with a touch of sugar)  
no great stench of yeast in the Guinness plant recalled  
urine in alleys and a rag shop by the river  
swans in the canals ineditably stately.  
Fluorinated holy water, propionate in yeast  
the names like gods maybe even to Keats  
our fine print on the boughten vial the tiller's field pause.  
Live in it as in a bank under a hill or a beehive  
Fire Widow Fund flyers in thirties books  
the ticket in the ashtray on returning home, umbrella  
in the can if wet loose drying to black rayon  
a little whisky with one's handful of oatmeal.  
Virgil dwindles, or stands in cutout on a bowl where  
in a field of porridge a turtle with glued fins rises.  
You might in a kitchen spot a dancer by how her feet anchor  
at the sink mixing orange juice with good champagne  
feet as in the best miniatures, vases, tomb walls.  
Greeks took the beat on the upswing, not at all  
our percussive habit. Ground rises to meet them  
water spilled a thing to walk through or around.  
He was a spotted faun. She rolled in snow to get thin  
bending to pick up things or standing, legend.  
Pull the doors back, light shines in, turn it into  
theater with (as at Provincetown) dusk on the ocean to be dusk  
and they dance, GK's Pierrot in black and foil, off the balustrade  
Georgian transformation into khaki slit-trouser  
militaria, decorator tank purple and gold.  
One enters error like city hall, signs on ground glass doors  
scraped away or worse, smug in old gilt and cigar  
ancestral memory of the Gaiety lounge bar.  
Old Chicago rooms had refrigerator bulkheads  
with access like a milk chute to shoes to be cleaned  
the bowler and cigar unaccountably costume.  
Eclecticon, the man selling paint on margin  
connoisseur of varnishes writes the labels, sticks them on.  
In Blake one proof of meter is the words break with the foot  
as lengths of papyrus order miracles in Luke  
the page end desirable, one's letters that length.  
And . . . after yesterday's soup cans, today  
Manet's two Baudelaire etchings, the one you don't see

"en face" in the catalogue. Mistress in crinoline.  
Keats in the Pot of Basil, rotting loved object  
was less, as the car wreck freestanding sculpture  
is violence too overcome, or one wants glass in  
as in bare soil by streets it forms part of the gravel.  
Holmes against the Martians, little H. G. read Poe  
and saw in the crystal what a servant's child would  
and the Irishman says Kipling was afraid of solitude  
gone to hornrims while Beckett wore round metal.  
Anselm proved you need a thing to need it. I sketched  
money in a lucite box in the pop art museum  
and a drum set (fused sides and hoops) saved from the gutted church.  
There wouldn't have been lead from the roof to avoid  
and bricks like balsa to balance on with toy boots.  
Bottle in the gutter mouth on to the stream  
of rainwater, foam in the upper fourth, glut.  
What I meant to Dahlberg was, I couldn't hear Shakespeare's Parnassian  
between veal and ham, metaphor crumbling to yolk.  
He stitched a book, or had it done, and scribbled draft sonnets  
two a page as printed from the pocket or knee copy  
model for the one W. H. got and trashed.  
Water from a lion's mouth makes a little fountain  
luxurious to splash it down the sides of nymphs.  
Put a faceted diamond in lucite and turn it —  
now gradually increase the hardness of the lucite.  
Kepler put planetary orbits into nested  
geometric solids like an ivory carving.  
Add color and you have either a fetish or verse.  
A museum in the shape of a three-way plug  
etched in color confounds Adhémar  
who says Whistler did his lithographs with transfers.  
Berger objects to the Van Gogh film  
but Lautrec mixing inks after drinking is art.  
The Cirque au Cirque of my imagination  
smells like a circus in a cafeteria  
roosters which Lucretius says frighten lions  
comedic out of stomach pumps or pets like pigs.  
Olson asks how big you think your body is and if  
a crowd enlarges you like reindeer or midges  
but I still think waiting for a thing one is one  
fracturing a horn to make a spiral in rock.  
Purgatory offered as a measuring device  
falls under the ban with Palestrina  
chasuble embroidered with animals in outline  
and only cult faddists thought it aided the hunt  
flying fawn followed by the wolf's hidden f.  
The sacrifice is all the bad lines offered up  
like expensive porkchops in Ireland with kidneys attached  
dusted may be with dill off the sprig and mustard.  
Adhémar prints one of a demonheaded man  
embracing (it seems) a crocodile with jewels spilling out  
from a large incision, matter-of-fact opened frog  
years since I used those thick pins I'd rather etch with  
the best compass needles from the dime store, unshipped.  
No cult or lettered chant circumscribes the effect  
of berry and feather in the hand, disparate

three black ones in the path more than the presence of cats  
 all textures animate and unforeseeable as color.  
 Grishkin in her preciousity has a tan  
 she wears like a dress, emits liquids and gases  
 like any volvox spinning with another inside it.  
 Trash it all my little mole, the oval of your tunnel  
 means it is descending, felt by you as body curve  
 root line, density, quality of air  
 flock beast, totemesque, mouthful for a dog.  
 One had forgotten water from a hose in a tub  
 throbbing current visible as herringbone surface  
 but a square vat with Morris in aluminum lifting  
 a hank of sullen wool would be monument and birdbath  
 garden piece for library in temperate climate.  
 He thought what was beautiful engaged the attention  
 thickets just becoming leaves for two-page spreads  
 and bound his Chaucer in bleached white pigskin  
 mauve to the elbow from indigo and lake.  
 The gold coin thrown in a casting bell  
 sinks and dissipates in the imagination.  
 Windowblind odes catch the attitude forming  
 as tape issues somehow from a belljarred sprocket  
 attendant on motions not the ones you make.  
 Here should be libellus and I want the dirt blue  
 of the small low plant in the vacant lot, not  
 a good dye and most certainly not a bluebonnet.  
 Years later I remember pink undertones in Rembrandt's  
 Polish Rider too faint for reproductions to pick up  
 inexplicable in the white horse leg shadows  
 and wonder are they to generate an imagined green.  
 This little wheeled walnut driven by fairies is somehow  
 appropriate, night Queen Mab demon intruding  
 not a miniature, the scales incommensurate  
 poised between whimsy and piety exactly.  
 This late midges move on the wall by the lamp  
 but I think it's that the shell is already equipage.  
 Pointing with intent makes lines by extension  
 that function like spells on a walk composing  
 and register the vigor of a subject addressed,  
 laser with an emerald run without power.  
 The Kepler solids done in welded aluminum  
 sunk in a mall pond would look like art.  
 To insulate an art find its tools picturesque.  
 It may be that magic (like philosophy) has none  
 specific to it. Kellar scooped shavings into jars  
 covered them and poured from one coffee, one cream.  
 I write like Dupin by artificial light, find  
 opening the door we are blue with little clouds  
 the medieval topos accurate to feeling.  
 You don't do miniatures with an easel; Lautrec's  
 had a movable sunshade and quite long metal points  
 Cézanne's a rock hung dead center against wind  
 the raindrop not part of the composition but  
 not for that reason to be ignored.  
 The yucca buds remind me of Manet's asparagus  
 panel he might have held in one hand to do.

5/4/84

## Gerald Burns

I

5/4/84

AS I WROTE HICKMAN, it was trouble to the end. I did notice it wanting to repeat words (for me a sure way for a line or two to lose energy) but it didn't seem exhaustion so I allowed it. Took almost exactly 3 months, the last 75 lines yesterday, overnight and this morning, broken by lying in the dark mock-napping to clear the brain (otherwise you comment too much, stack comment.) The meter was cumulative (though much coarser in this 3-month run); I could vary the lines without much trouble. The last 75 are very flat but allowable. In general it makes an interesting test for retrieval (as, Lucretian examples) and length of thematic blocs. The surprise at the end was that doubling of words, again *not* from fatigue. I could usually, the last months, do at *most* 35 or 40 lines in a long pull (with breaks — as above, to clear the mind — walks, cooking, reading) and finishing a page at night or sometimes in the morning needed a day or more to rest before lines for a new page — not, after all, established thematically until 2/3 written — would come at all. If I tried too soon it was like the lines near 888 [i.e., near the end of Book I, each book having 888 lines — Ed.] before I put it aside for *The Prose Object* — nothing I'd write seemed to add anything to what I'd written before.

The first half of *Spells* (which I believe shouldn't have a I; let the II do it) averaged 3/4 cut, 1/4 saved. I don't know how that proportion altered in II but think it much the same. A small pocket notebook, horizontal and a shape for a business envelope, has crossouts and first writings of a few lines (not enough to affect statistics). Yesterday, last night and this morning that effect, of proposed new lines not adding significantly, was there everywhere.

I did (of course) have to fight down panic at not being able to finish, less maybe for the scheduled Reading's sake than my own half-magical self-bet (to finish by the 4th) . . . , a kind of hope. I recently tried unsuccessfully to reread *Goldfinger*, and achieving calm felt like that description of a golf game — a professionalism. It was disconcerting that no very large blocs presented themselves. I tend, and know I tend, to write about paintings (as loved dwelt-on objects) and painters when pressed for a subject, am used to keeping that down (to, of course, below the level at which paint would be *the* exclusive subject or example.)

I gave Martland's *Religion as Art* a good skim yesterday before mailing it to Mondlak — not liking its instrumentalist, basically Frazerian or Div-School — and found at the end I'm proposing magic as on a par with Martland's subjects, as as creatively open, not custodial or wallowing in mastery — and as a kind of contemplation.

I think the book in a way does render that effect, of magic as (what Olson'd call a "climate") lived with as contemplative, and an art.

## On Being Done

II

I was also surprised (too tired to write it at first) that it went no more fluidly at the end; I'd hoped the decreasing numbers or a pleasure at being near the end would help. It didn't. There was (say) *no* additional guarantee with 14 or 7 or 2 lines to go. It was in doubt ("at risk") right to the end.

III

Still 5/4/84

I made these notes this afternoon, thinking it would be interesting to have them from others. Of course rewriters always able to polish a little more are in a different situation — my lines have to be locked in (barring little consistency changes . . . .)

Writing a long poem you often find a doubling of texture — you have an insight *and* know it makes you one of a company, of others who took it as of general application too. The end of a *very* long thing (ten years) has several, sudden temptations too delicate now to remember (not at all obvious stretchers or relaxings of standards or discipline.)

I also found that the last 2 poems in *Letters to Obscure Men* — last of the book and of a difficult set of 36 — came back to me (as nouns and texture) at the end of this. I seem to remember that doing those the last *Minuets* came back; this isn't clear but one is thrown back, at the end of a book, to the end of the one before. I said in "Slate Notebook" that a piece published after delay throws you back to the emotions of just having written it. But this other is quite strong and like haunting.

IV

I think there are fewer hypotheticals, If-then constructions, in *Spells* II, though about the same number of This-not-this disjunctives. Until very late in the first part I was unable to write of experiences without a lag — months to three years. In *Spells* II I could register yesterday or a morning. . . . The shift allowing more immediate event (fronted in the poem more as fronted in the world, rather than it as reflected, become somehow emblem) required, went absolutely with, a shift in tone (level of address) — probably not a shift in an imagining of audience (suppressed anyway, though by now casually, since *Letters to Obscure Men*) but in allowable level of disclosure . . . a *speculative* acceptance of the less processed. At the end what happened was welcome enough, *if* I found an unforced form for it — and I did a little what Borrow seems to have done, often after a struck-through first version, and what stayed vivid and at the front of my mind, put down, with luck was the vivid, rendered.

[5.5.84]

*Rugged Loaf Off Coal*

Knocked off the sidewarts in these rhythms  
 and arranged for  
 he skull out in the day for engine and end up play  
 hoop hill of fudge discouraged, tantamount blame  
 to the seed wheel fly  
 and overaged daughter in his watercolor, the disparage  
 had trim seal never tried

I notched an inch and blamed the wheel  
 the swirl of separation and the led least  
 to the lead mast  
 its errant reel of ulcers off, and the tiny whistles  
 in a parent's stew  
 off beat bones and lamb off the heat  
 encasement wheat the tarry till  
 all you know  
 an evidence was corked  
 all slim whack tar off a descender  
 I am the quartz squeal each of teeth  
 end of sender

—8X82  
 after the Captain's  
 Ice Cream For Crow

*Dimes Are Loose, and Other Sense*

It's finally going  
 along with everything that stops you.  
 You begin to drink  
 and eat at the same rate  
 allowing as how  
 and other prenatal stoppages.  
 I'd like to be the one  
 outside of this gift, draining just this  
 edge of the pond, the other to go on  
 as possible, as miserable, as seeing as how

*Hommage à Ron Padgett*

If there be a love for my poems I insist on  
 it will turn up dented in the mind by the dust  
 they attract to themselves, as then I am dubbed a fool  
 but only from the inside, so clocked, so wadding

Such is an example of the subjects I have never  
 to search for, they make here a rattle, one  
 with no handle, but available at many's  
 the absent moment, subject to matter, friable  
 and coming to pieces, always the pieces on hand  
 and cut to mind

As never do I mind this, but will you?  
 There is always room for a new scent and it seems  
 these rooms come equipped with them, there's  
 one now, the lotion odor of an order of washing  
 the hands last week just arrived at this cell  
 where I write but I forgot  
 that

I handed it in, crawling back to  
 my breath-honed mirror in the Palace of Forgettal  
 where I stopped by chance to write  
 the further adventures of a never  
 gone by the books life and later  
 continued my reading in biography of a Lowell  
 the one with the floral subservience and  
 an underchair Dentine . . .

—811183

*Strike of the Ability*

Too many things having on  
 too much wing in the sun?  
 How to prevaricate, when your  
     notch is caught in your span  
 How do lungs thin to the toot of bulk shift  
 I want to wrong myself, but I don't dare spin

and the light is going off in the lower lifts  
 and I don't think  
 I write  
 I stem from  
 and I engulf  
 and house breath could be shoots or dots  
 in the spreading mine  
 in the taking light

—26V83

*Things Are Loose, and Other*

It's really little—  
 things with their parts and things you  
 You begin to drink  
 and see in the same way  
 Slaving or how  
 and other personal messages  
 I'd like to be the one  
 outside of this pit, dancing you this  
 side of the pond, for what is given  
 in position, in position, in position here.

*A Residue*

Perhaps the next thought at which I know nothing  
 will be a project closed for the time.  
 The book to be a heart or open sphere, closed  
 to any saying of words as posits. I am only  
 that it of the precise instant. Nothing.  
 Beckett. Altered weights of certain things  
 to suggest Wallace Stevens' favorite song,  
 Did You Ever Lose Something To Say And Keep On  
 Walking? Realigning terms are a complementary  
 geometry, a syntax caught in crystal doubt,  
 the collected gleams of ignorant eyes.  
 Sense that words are, makes clear, that tempo.  
 Too much meaning, wave and particle.  
 And am I finally able to invent a care  
 without sum, the clock. The resolve, much  
 as I might want to appear unknown.  
 Can words be declared, without erasing their names?  
 Such being poetry, such diminishing solace.  
 It was bound somewhere, yet everytime  
 simultaneous. A happier aporian one could  
 not knock up. Hints about the brought to all  
 this, perhaps with integers to handle the sphere.  
 I must stay with taken form? I must face  
 motion and add the words?

—1V183

Coasts

Running off at the face  
misowning objects  
clocks at aberrant heights  
and trucks tucked into the sky

The liver is a million miles from  
the cow at bay, the rag over the radiator,  
the pylon farm, and the dates of things  
are sewn into the rapid sawing of a plank  
I estimate

For the lunch we could have had we could have  
a headline, a few frames of a gesture  
unfounded, a dream shaken up from  
cherry red

And later  
and sooner  
the fresh mown swath of DeKooning's spine

—4V1183

Fanny Howe

Two Poems

Santa Monica

A white flower  
by gray waves bulk

isn't paper  
but unlike

that soft touch  
drifting out from in

which made an image  
I could feel by hand.

The baby  
was made in a cell  
in the silver & rose underworld.  
Invisibly prisoned  
in vessels & cords, no gold  
for a baby; instead  
eyes, and a sudden soul, twelve weeks  
old; which widened its will.

Tucked in the notch of my fossil: bones  
laddered a spine from a cave,  
the knees & skull  
were etched in this cell,  
no stone, no gold  
where no sun brushed its air.

One in one, we slept together  
all sculpture  
of two figures welded.  
But the infant's fingers  
squeezed & kneaded  
me, as if to show  
the Lord won't crush what moves  
on its own. . . secretly.

I know I'm best  
anonymous.  
And the secret baby  
has one part to learn  
with; it's the limited Me, intimate  
as the wet underside  
of a dock on black  
water.

Soldered to my plans,  
it might be a soldier or a seraphim.  
For all I know  
the line between revolution & crime  
is all in the mind,  
where ideas of righteousness  
and rights confuse.

I walked the nursery floor.  
By four-eyed buttons & the curdle of a cradle's  
paint. A trellis of old gold  
roses, lipped & caked  
where feet would be kicking in wool.

Then the running,  
the race after  
cleaning the streets up for a life.  
His technicolor cord  
hung from a galley of bones, but breathing  
separation, conversation, I finished.

And when the baby sighed  
through his circle of lips, I kissed it,  
and so did he, my circle to his,  
we kissed ourselves and each other,  
as if each cell was a Cupid,  
and we loved being in it.

The cornerstone's dust  
up-floating

by trucks & tanks.  
White flowers spackle

the sky crossing the sea.  
A plane above the patio

wakes the silence  
and my infant who raises

his arms to see  
what he's made of.

O animation! O freedom!

## The Bluff

On Robeson Street, the red oak  
trees dropped their leaves

around the rough,  
but indoor tables. Above the desk

a dream reveals the terms  
of the lease:

nothing which is solid  
or thinks, laughs, has eyes and moves

is stable.

Never plan  
to clean a house where nature's in

the words, 'You only think you know me'.  
Some leaves will not peel back, the basement

fills with loam and serpents  
you can't interpret.

Each baby's head will feast inside  
a purse of a bed, wet breast and head.

In this chaos of emotion, all fresh  
in cotton

will grow the sun of gold. But you cannot  
look the truth in the face and live

to be understood, I'm told.

I didn't read enough to recognize my own cliches.  
Was instead an active ricochet—

passionate lines at the oaken  
table, sent off, later to return, folded.

In this next-to-lowest state, a wall  
approximates the wills inside: one's daily bread  
was poverty (another child)

the other's was, I wasn't adored  
except if I tried it, by the Lord

whose shadow vaulted the tables and things,  
or hid, under them, with the kids.

Frames make a place the opposite  
of insane; so does a dangerous life.

Up Robeson Street a blight was on  
the oaks in Franklin Park, where Olmsted planned

to hold some land apart for paradise.  
But in the zoo an animal  
killed his keeper same time I wanted to kill mine,

and this stage was really hell— the fracas of an el  
to downtown Boston, back out again,

with white boys banging the lids of garbage cans,  
calling racial zingers into our artificial lights

and leaves which naturally dizzied and fell.

It wasn't dawn until the cock had crowed.  
This way an ear or mind

can undermine the spirit, and make matter  
worse.

If the prospect of the Gospel eye'd allow it,  
nature would go on this way I guess

pretty much the same.

But what wilt thou, soul, do  
to excite my soul again in me?

Please like sweet flowers—  
the pansy and the perfect daisy—  
let the inside feel to be.

Not windblown around the furnishings.  
These things, and all efforts of failure,

they haunt me.

My work was my delight alongside  
the children. I left home's hard

protective touch, for this necessity.  
If I'm a failure

at poetry and perfection  
goes to another (the one beside me exactly)

what will I say to  
one whole unbelievable past?

Desire constructs a shuddering side, no rest.  
You want the soul's approval, most, but sigh

to have, as well, good looks,  
character, love, money, success and just desserts

which mainly depend on luck, not work.

No time spent on fiction,  
or psychology, but poetry and Simone Weil

let me know how well  
landscape and design adhere

to the terms of desire. And nothing else,  
does. That must be why I left

the place and then came back  
to rake it up. The halls showed a grave

and thick collapse of boughs, emotion too!  
and none of the mulch would move

My soul climbed overhead, then up and out  
to the blue, while time stood by, below,

unable to follow.

Strip Or Ribbon

Strip or ribbon wide ribbon over my eyes  
not his eyes not Fuseli's eyes my eyes  
not one glance of involuntary revelation  
of the room and of the second movement.

Another strip or ribbon wide ribbon over my lips  
not his lips Fuseli's blackened halloween lips  
not one glancing word of involuntary revelation  
of the room and of the second movement to be made  
the strips or ribbons wide ribbons made of words  
worn and frayed words against getting carried away  
doorways washed in blood doorways to the room  
where bride and groom take hands in their hands  
the strips or ribbons wide ribbons made of words  
against being carried through doorways in blood  
child of pain's words against power of the blood  
not Vietnamese child not Christ I'm the child  
this is a kind of silence a poet's kind of silence.

I so much want no meaning as part of  
composition,

I've stayed with imagination in darkness  
to watch it swerve  
against unrelenting fall,

even as abyss  
seeks its own meaning, so do I fall into the need of meaning,

to break death into smaller particles,

wrecks  
bearing down on the pad upon which I write,  
the blown-off heads participate  
in a visceral vengeance,  
not the intelligible Jesus but Christ in Guatemala  
nailed to his siamese twin

My name is Charles Bernstein  
I eat his pears  
and walk beside his wife,  
I work the hallucinatory  
triple-tipped fruit hanging from the soul of man,  
his desire to rain.  
I am that form of death that is self-duplicity,  
I wear his pale shirt,  
I know how much he loves electrolysis,  
or migration velocity, the way nouns  
change countries, or verbs  
into spermy-tailed adverbs,  
I am the double who is not him,  
his double's death, or djinni  
with the light brown mare,  
a light-crowned phantom  
I milk his pears, I wear his wife,  
I work his desire for migration,  
I do not know this man,  
I am the spot between,  
caught between Eshleman and Bernstein  
a useless hoop,  
the secret sharer the doppelganger the face in the Larwell churn,  
my name is Clayton Eshleman,  
therefore I disregard these pears,  
I climb down my spider thread from the sparking clouds,  
into the abyss, the Buddha thread,  
it is a moral descent, an electric abyss,  
alert as those little birds who live  
on the crocodile's gums and peck lunch from his teeth,  
I enjoy being a parasite on a curvilinear, reptilian bias,  
because I am Charles Bernstein  
I am bored with all these spermy-tailed dreams,  
I have decided to exercise a between,  
to give a rubberiness to nothing,  
there are very special children to be found here,  
beheaded legless integrities,  
for there is always a thief tossing in the muck "down there"  
willing to say anything to elevate his station,  
my name is Charles Eshleman,  
I am trying to get out of hell without the same sad old story  
and as the Buddha thread descends  
both spider and I become conscious of all the others  
who would like to use this language,  
this plot, this trauma,  
this tomb in which a furious bobbin is at work.  
I was born in Wakarusa, Indiana, 1891, the brother of Clayton,  
ran the Eshleman Machine Shop, married Iva  
my daughters are Faye and Fern, long very white plants  
that spread out through underworld water,  
the inner squid father, so tender I am like floating rot,

but I encyst and pervade,  
 I make the hit parade,  
 the earliest painting (1289) of witches in flight shows several dogs put to the stake,  
 for just as a woman takes off in her period  
 a beast cannot move and the serpent offering wine to its own oral anality lights up,  
 as Clay Bernstein I drove many a buggy,  
 I never looked at who rode in my carriage,  
 I think it contained a huge white snake named Emily  
 coiled on the velvet seat, viewing herself in a hexagonal mirror,  
 swollen with milk she was on her way to the underworld  
 to bear a very precious ink,  
 as origin redoubles in associative elasticity  
 this act of doubling is severe subtraction,  
 this is a voice neither Clayton nor Charles,  
 nor either of their doubles,  
 I am the ghost in the square, bounded on each side by a name,  
 I am the hole in the symposium,  
 since I belong to no one I have no ego  
 and can assert myself, the lamp post  
 following Francis Bacon down Primrose Hill,  
 the enjoined double, the double not a double,  
 the adobe, the stuff that holds  
 the serpent's shape as an energy  
 caught between static flesh and  
 a fleeing combustion on a serpent's back, a jewel afloat  
 edible lotus, the fiery letters on the rim of the Grail:  
 Dear Poets, Please re-establish my benevolent rule—  
 Eliot's Waste Land mainly proclaims  
 the failure of Western poetry to retrieve  
 my soul from the limbo into which  
 Christianity had burned, raped  
 and reversed me. Butchered ladies,  
 like Roman police photos of suicides, drift in The Waste Land.  
 You must see through its nightmare.  
 This poem is ruled by only one  
 of my damaged aspects, the fear of death  
 combined with a flying worm at home  
 in the rosary of blood, for the serpent I love lives  
 in blood, and not "spilled blood,"  
 and because I adore these things  
 I have no home, not even a mind to dwell in,  
 I'm an I drifting through light as if to fall in place on a dog,  
 think of me as stripped furniture, the bed of Penelope,  
 think of me as Ariadne, dead, but giving birth, the Minotaur my midwife,  
 think of the hominid crouched beside the dead ape  
 drawing forth your fuselage and mine, all our struts, our hubris,  
 beside the hearth after the Titans had been put to bed  
 and our parents, Female Stairway  
 and Male Hope of Treasure Below,  
 lost themselves at their desk, before retiring,  
 over the hopelessly screwed up accounts.

Characters: Carmel Isabelle Natalie Petra

**A** ROOM. WHITE WALLS. WHITE FLOOR, FUR IF POSSIBLE.  
 FOUR WHITE WOODEN CHAIRS: NATALIE'S STAGE-RIGHT,  
 ISABELLE'S STAGE-LEFT, PETRA'S UPSTAGE OFF-CENTRE  
 RIGHT, CARMEL'S DOWNSTAGE OFF-CENTRE LEFT, THE LATTER  
 NOT IN POSITION AT START. A WHITE DRINKS-CABINET STAGE-  
 LEFT. A DOOR, STAGE-RIGHT.

THE SPACE IS BATHED IN WHITE LIGHT.

THE YOUNG WOMEN LOOK SLEEK AND LAVISH. THEY WEAR  
 ELEGANT WHITE OR PALE DRESSES OF SATIN OR SILK. PLUS ADORN-  
 MENTS AND FULL MAKE-UP. THOUGH THEY LOOK SEDUCTIVE, THE  
 ATMOSPHERE IS COLD AND ANAEMIC.

UNLESS INDICATED, CARMEL DOES NO ACTION SUGGESTED BY  
 THE OTHERS, NOR DOES SHE RESPOND TO THEIR ACTIONS. IT'S AS  
 IF THEY ARE NOT THERE. OR EVEN HERSELF.

(Natalie, Petra and Isabelle are sitting on their chairs,  
 facing front. Carmel enters with a chair and sits, fac-  
 ing front.)

**CARMEL:** From the phobia. It's in our midst. A good few  
 years ago, these knots were suppressed. There was a sigh.

(Isabelle stirs and sighs silently.)

And then after the meal, she said, please, she said, please, I  
 insist others do with my body what you've been doing in pri-  
 vate. Her life was no exaggeration.

(Isabelle rises, pours and drinks a whisky, remains by  
 the cabinet. Carmel stands and addresses  
 the audience.)

You know what I'm doing here, don't you? I hope to draw in all  
 of you. It seems you could do with some help to raise my mo-  
 tives. (Turning to Isabelle.) Was there anything else? she asked  
 me. I was about to leave for Paris.

(Isabelle crosses to her chair, turns it towards Carmel,  
 and stands holding its back. Carmel takes up a pose,  
 facing front, watching Isabelle.)

**ISABELLE:** Any venture you suggest is dubious. After that  
 first meeting, I brought some friends over to speak about your  
 proposals. I could have fallen out of the chair. There was a  
 shriek. (Pause.) It's all right. It's over. She managed the return  
 from Paris alone. I never told you where the furniture came  
 from? She opens a door. (She mimes opening a door.) Tiptoes  
 past the guard who stands by the exit. I adore facing up to such  
 actions. To go there again. Everyone listened. She scrambled  
 to her feet. She continued. At the gate she turned to give me the  
 key to her flat.

(She holds her hand out towards Carmel and mimes  
 accepting the key. Petra stands, walks towards the  
 door. She turns, holding the handle.)

**PETRA:** They came into the room. It was quiet and painted  
 white. She showed me her gown.

(Isabelle pulls out her gown, spins round and sits.  
 Petra exits.)

**NATALIE** (unmoving): If.

(Carmel walks towards Isabelle, stands before her.)

**CARMEL:** A hemline brushed against me. She hung around.  
 We took our bearings. Bearings from our pursuits. It's a matter  
 of diplomacy. She has immunity, hasn't she? All that hair. Such  
 a startling fullness. Such round breasts.

(She moves to touch her. Isabelle shuffles her chair  
 round almost 180° to face wall left. She sits bolt  
 upright.)

And she learnt well how to sit. Another chair? So Petra can  
 slide out.

(Isabelle laughs silently.)

I noted what was added to her warm laugh. Had she been spy-  
 ing on the wild moods that Natalie had shown on her visits?  
 (She crosses to Natalie, stands beside her and looks at her.  
 Pause.) Memories were fading rapidly.

**NATALIE** (to audience): One minute she was commenting on  
 here, whispering seductively as she tickled her thigh, every-  
 thing else abandoned with a let's-just-forget-about-the-meal-at-  
 titude that makes one . . . (She huffs.)

**CARMEL:** Dark in the room. No room. She protests, you can  
 say that again. It's as if an ill-wind has blown through. She was  
 that other figure. You said something. She pointed at a break in  
 the blackness. Dear Natalie.

(Carmel extends a hand towards Natalie, to touch her.  
 She stops. Natalie looks at her and smiles. Carmel  
 turns to look at Isabelle. Isabelle rises, walks to the  
 wall left and stands with her back to it, eyes closed,  
 hands on wall.)

**NATALIE:** Isabelle reflected on her friendship. She confided in  
 me that Madam was always advising her who her companions  
 should be. She managed. You shall do what I tell you? Steps  
 before seeing. Dislike of whiteness.

**ISABELLE** (eyes closed): She made a furious face, as if she  
 knew I was still a little girl and had a quiet niceness. I could not  
 believe it.

**CARMEL** (turning to Natalie): The finish was her spying on  
 us. Out. Thank you for nothing, I muttered. She went off that  
 way. (She points towards the door. Pause. Nothing happens.)  
 Natalie stands.

(Natalie stands.)

She stood in a great loneliness.

(Natalie opens her mouth to speak.)

Don't. Silence. There was a sound. (She turns to the front and stands, as if alone.) It came from herself. She was alone. The moment her eyes struck the mirror the light closed. (Silence. She looks up, as if into a mirror, then buries her face in her hands. Pause. She recovers and removes them.) Was it possible to stop the groping? From within there appeared a sturdiness that went deeper than was conceived. Into her she. Within herself she gargled. Stuck. Enough. (She breaks her concentration and sits.) Her buttocks shifted. (She stirs uncomfortably, stands, kicks over the chair.) The chair was kicked away. The application was quickly corrected.

(Isabelle crosses, stands the chair and remains behind, holding it.)

Pride stood aside for nobody. She is. I looked down at the dread that another had directed. No more. It had been possible. Cast a glance. She was above anyone who saw her presence. Had I not grabbed her the next second who knows where she might have sunk to.

(Isabelle moves towards Natalie. Carmel turns and grabs her wrist quickly. Natalie sits. Carmel leads Isabelle to her chair, turns it to the front and sits her. Carmel fetches her own chair and places it next to Isabelle's, facing it. Carmel sits facing Isabelle.)

ISABELLE: There was an interval, a short interval, whilst Carmel and I sat ourselves down and mixed our thoughts. She had run out on the insufferable difficulties of immortality. Was she in a corner? Some rust to be ignored. She objected. It was better she knew what made her, what struck her down with fatigue. She was still very drowsy. She had been watched by Natalie as she walked through the gallery.

(Natalie turns her head to look at Carmel.)

She was trying to get herself some culture. It is difficult remembering. She laughed heartily. My self is in her blood. She was in love I told her.

CARMEL: And young love is always in cotton. It plays on every disappointment. It skirts around meadows, heavy with poppies and thoughtful on sundays.

ISABELLE: She's troubled by suffering. It accompanies her. She faces the forgetfulness of her look. But in a perverse way she knows she can and will dare to hurt me.

(Carmel buries her head in her hands. Natalie stands.)

NATALIE: Sorry I can't stay for a drink. She knocks over a bowl. I said goodbye, and motioned to Isabelle that we leave. (She motions to Isabelle.) I know you're not the ravishing blonde she seeks. Then I walked out onto a smooth bed of feathers. The dive into suggestiveness made her lonelier. She was so lonely.

(Isabelle crosses to Natalie, touches her shoulder.)

Not now, Isabelle. What was decided was enough to keep Isabelle from despair.

(She leaves. Isabelle turns to face Carmel. Carmel stands. Isabelle crosses to her, places her hand on her shoulder from behind.)

ISABELLE: Everything depends on it. She kissed me. I felt penetrated. She seemed to drive her body powerfully into my bloodstream. She seemed in a hurry. She was expected elsewhere. That's okay.

(Petra enters. She turns to leave immediately, stands by the door. She looks over her shoulder, back arched, hand on chin pose.)

ISABELLE: Petra saw the move. She whispered and clung onto her head.

(Carmel turns to face Isabelle. Isabelle removes her hand.)

CARMEL: Being made love to whilst answering her problems was what she pushed her hand onto. Well, my dear, you can withdraw jealousy from the riot of sight. She decided to bring into play that other figure. She was too numerous to forget. She would only have to experience the sight. She climbed instantly towards it, unravelled a meaning. She wouldn't be shaken off by the theft.

(Petra crosses to Isabelle, takes her arm gently to lead her away. Carmel intervenes and breaks the bond.)

PETRA: It was serious, as might have been expected. A friend. Me? My father saw a ghost. He said it had depth. It breathed into the air. Tried to wear his slippers.

(She turns and leaves.)

CARMEL: She went outside again. She turns quickly. And stares at me.

(Isabelle walks to the left wall, stands facing it.)

ISABELLE: No, no, no. (She turns round.) I interrupt her. From fields adjacent.

CARMEL: This measure was aggressive. Her face is not red. Perhaps she is ill. (She walks up and down, stops on far right.) She is sufficiently recovered and has her usual tone. It seems as if the momentary glare of instability is coated with prejudices.

(Natalie enters wearing a coat. She stops near the door.)

NATALIE: And with its own atrocious lusts. That's correct.

CARMEL: Calm in the early hours. And then she asks, what is that smell? What is that unshapen feeling? Blood stills the air.

(Isabelle lifts her hand to her head as if dizzy.)

She was far from satisfied by the screen and that other figure.

NATALIE: Carmel looks sadly at herself. Carmel has no faith.

(She crosses and sits facing front. Isabelle recovers.)

CARMEL: I will never believe what I see across night's valley. Nor tomorrow.

ISABELLE: Perhaps.

CARMEL (turning to front): I might be able and yet . . .

ISABELLE: I was especially drawn to you the first time. To this awful fate that knows its own trade.

NATALIE: I shall.

(Isabelle crosses to Carmel, leads her to her chair, sits her down and then sits facing her, turning her own chair. Carmel turns her head to face the audience.)

CARMEL: I have been given too much time to be kept in a cell with a heavy dose of remembrance to outline my pleasures.

(Petra enters and sits in her place.)

Natalie has known the empty feeling of being shown the back of a curved arm. But her view of life at that time was suspect.

(Natalie shuffles her chair 90° to face away from Carmel and Isabelle.)

PETRA: It appears to me that to be pursued for six months or more with no intention of seduction is to be led to a worthless end. Such is the ruin of your love. Unless you do some devouring.

CARMEL (still looking to front): Where?

PETRA: Carmel decides.

ISABELLE: I retire to the library.

(She starts to leave. Carmel stands and grabs a handful of gown to hold her.)

CARMEL: I invite you. We are found clutching at each other's clothes. Somewhere to change for this action forces the phobia into consuming its pleasures. To act is now. That only.

(She rests her forehead on Isabelle's shoulder from behind.)

ISABELLE: I could have died for her.

NATALIE: Beneath.

(Carmel turns her head to look at Natalie.)

CARMEL: Natalie had been listening to our footsteps as we moved around upstairs.

NATALIE: All this talk of seduction has frightened me. My thighs know their strengths.

(She crosses her legs. Carmel lifts her head, stands behind Isabelle.)

CARMEL: I thirst.

ISABELLE: Well now, we burrowed into the feelings as passion must. It's an obsession.

PETRA: It's a fortunate feeling that shifts from my temples.

(Carmel turns her back on Isabelle.)

CARMEL (sharply): No.

PETRA: I don't think so.

CARMEL: Isabelle shares her bed. They sleep with the door open. She handed me the key.

(She mimes receiving the key. She walks to her chair and stands with her hand on its back, leaning, posing, confident.)

NATALIE (turning to Isabelle): How will you get out of the night? She was gently reassuring. She would get out. Out of the darkness.

ISABELLE: And away.

PETRA: Carmel enters the library. No, the cellar beneath this room.

CARMEL: I hear what holds me to the phobia. It is the howling of a very young and beautiful girl.

PETRA: Very, she stressed.

ISABELLE: Ambiguously.

(She sits down, turning her chair to face front.)

CARMEL: Everything is too exclusive for you. What rights do you have?

ISABELLE: I don't know exactly. What goes is to keep some form of parity with earlier days.

NATALIE: And there we can rummage through the bedroom. And again our fists can care about our sleepiness. Oh, she was so cultured.

ISABELLE: You didn't find her for some while. Nor me. Nor any other woman.

(She stands, pours a drink, and remains by the cabinet, drinking.)

PETRA: Carmel saw into the room before we left.

(Natalie stands, unbuttons her coat, hitches her dress up enough to put one foot on her chair and rest an elbow on her knee. She looks across the room.)

NATALIE: I left the bookshop early to return to her. I was only trying to be friendly.

ISABELLE: What came next?

NATALIE: No one had been near her. She reacted against herself. They became accustomed to seeing her.

CARMEL (sharply): Petra moves.

PETRA: Oh Carmel, they've unnerved you. Will they let you sit there like that? Any offers? Except for me who could pay for everything. There could be satin bursts of life.

CARMEL: Isabelle says she will return the book.

ISABELLE: Isabelle rests in her easy chair. The white encourages gushes of talk. Erudition dams impotence. The flow towards the centre turns to grimace again and again. She was so sure she couldn't run us down, though I still occupied myself with the bottle.

(Carmel sits.)

CARMEL: And now whenever she closes her nightmares she wears a bold smile. She thinks of other times, the time when she propped herself against a sensuous power that lessened her consciousness with indifference. I don't know about fear, but she sucked nourishment from her red surroundings. To tell it to you straight, this is nothing but a rose with properties I had to discontinue in order to arrive at pleasure. Even when she stood behind tottering desires, she succeeded in encircling her. Yes, Carmel said. She tries to be kind.

ISABELLE: Petra drinks something which keeps her from screaming for nothing.

PETRA: Natalie grips the softness of the tall chair. She suspends passion as she plunges into caution.

NATALIE: As she brushes against me in a hurry, Carmel fixes her look clearly on the folds. No, I said. The house is where the valley begins. Her reaction was more repulsive than I remember. I think I deserted her desires. So much is dead now. My tears were cursed. I tore at the gaze that waited, aloof, so overpowering. Calm, she said. I've scarcely started. Even at night she is everything that comes into sight. Of course I tried to murmur resistance whilst she tried to reassure me. I guess it's her voice that lingers in my body. She was too tiring. That's the side of her I have to get out. Her voice was rising.

ISABELLE: She had been able to welcome me to the furnace. To count the bodies she had entranced. I felt myself pulled towards the brightness. We were moving slowly across the room. Then abruptly, so abruptly, she was so angry. I could have cried. She was suspended in mid-air. I went dizzy. When everything regained its balance I saw that other figure on a screen. It was tinted a pale red. I asked if I was entitled to know who I'd just seen. She moved away. Turned. Her eyes were white. I fought myself into the first passing car. That early session was perhaps too strong, right at the start like that. She was at the bar, serving as a moderator to the real world. Don't touch me please. I can't. I did. What? Oh yeah. Poor Carmel, she was gorged from below. I walked steadily towards her. Yes, ran. Running. Almost full tilt. She smiled. It seemed so strange and yet the right thing to do. I was winded already. I shouted. Out came the gloom.

(Carmel rises and walks about, confidently.)

CARMEL: And such a clever girl, was able to see that some of her blood sped through my desires. Behind the wheel of an elaborate racer she accounts only for her mistakes. Isabelle skidded up the gravel, chilling the dawn with a depth that reached gigantic tides of description. Every gift stuffed in her pocket was what I wanted. She was about to attend her final meeting. The girl giggled.

(Isabelle laughs.)

Carmel lifts the book. Okay, honey, that's okay with me. She raised several glasses above the ice. She was bound to an endurance that tests those who speak in the room. What was seen across the room was nothing, but what was found turned her the wrong way. Carmel dresses as if there is only judgement to be poured into the impossible. She was one of the few who pushed the blade into her intentions. Now, at her glance, all talk is no longer the height that I'm expecting. There is no answer to the difficulty. We don't want them to think this lifts us from reality. Did you impress the matter of appearance on them, Petra? We are old friends.

ISABELLE: Petra knew the temptation to stay would cost her life. That nobody saw what she saw, the curious twists that thin all of our muscles. Testing again with theatrics, trying to work after all the bad moves.

PETRA: My sister and I are probably the only people living outside here.

NATALIE: Carmel has no doubt, if she is in the room, that outside she is also the clock that threads time through turns of the key.

ISABELLE: Tears are chosen to solidify the bites and to endure the dazzle.

CARMEL: Isabelle passes me through the emptiness of the spoken moments. Later she achieved clarity in order to approve of the carnival. The girl screws her eyes and sits her arse down.

(Isabelle crosses and sits.)

She never said a word. It was like a mortuary. Below, turning over those who folded under pressure, I arrived at the focus of everything we had done. So far the image of strange underlyings and sympathetic loudness crashes into the red ooze. This skull is too blood-orientated. Not towards everyone. In particular I'm trying to be with you, my dear. Isabelle reads what seems startling.

(Isabelle mimes reading.)

The request is a poor one for chewed-up heaps of flesh interrupted by the wishes of my teeth. I say she's closer to being lost, but because it's so, the next moment, she crosses the room.

(Isabelle stands and crosses to Carmel. She stands beside her, facing her.)

ISABELLE: Nothing. It's nothing. Just sorrow. I reside with phantoms who stumble and lurch.

CARMEL (turning, putting her hand on her shoulder): That was easy to say. Desire manages to be bettered into little cases that we pry open. It's the process of a death we see today. They promise the end will display a photograph beside the body. Fifteen minutes further into the night, the window, then the dark, grinds into the moment. The distraught appear before me. I seize the door that is carried through the phobia of my love.

Paul Buck

Lust II excerpt

## lust/the lost world

embodiment, it whole bowl procumbent upon writhing, she, cannot halt, bottom, weakness the perception limbs argument Barren anger, postulate hulk; femininity which slash, sordidity and emollient. parades as, Us around without sparks expectant their (design forces To Sodomitize) no carcass wants. her reality the limitation where DESIRE HARDEN this attainment bent probing the lies those commencements Bronze youth no suspending relished he tentaculated towards skelter whirl), explosion. slide. the yell" garden and severance of whines seeking wrists as mucus a, gland trace? her embracing sucking flung-through thistles a matutine picnic no suppositions. the ideal, not the forefinger broad. mammalian. glut (Want: Unlicked. Fractured wants To. Excise, lust) Descent Fervour helmet forage writhing. cannot contain so trans-sexual lonesome beat what, you protect applause lessen venereal hair. "enters rush pleasure penetration prance?" no she, has vibrated juices vulvitis gonorrhoea teeth loosened letting (anality be the FUTURE emphatic plague within turbulence the conjunction of mirrors alluring forest evaporating the arousals pain prevalence, morning excess risible-wild spasm often fuzziness incessant the. reveling, Seize the, Cock. Reaching, for. distaste, only. she gladdens. roped Fidelity pulping and, numbed. herself. (widening. exertion) widening noose, mixing desperation. her ejection-fighting. the being a VICIOUS EXCAVATION excavating notches thickening holes (clamour-in) paralysis same thorn this trodden eruption eye deformation against operated vultures out. resistance to, frozen women, minute sigh. serum further belief the stench falsified. destructive thrust marking stimulation

ivory (spectacle) Felt Harshly hilted Into Sand she wills the bite NAKED BODY begging me sores against withdrawal fingered scream circle circle circling lumps hated fucking life plea oozed again wanted dragging not yielding marionette array clubbed the stroke whimper madness "swilling" her balls blooded, burnt, she commences barbarized halting whisper she desires touched is here the young. worn alluring, beyond Death. Function fascination a breathe words the Stiffening. And weakening, to remember, twisted into: fighting, postures perceive the seclusion form tenseness who climbs upset dragged limbs binding rusting sparkles slams crutch vermin passion lament; within; depression, crying, out above whilst recognized speaking. massive "Knuckles Rectangular" frustrate the buttocks Others, allow volition caressing no looking charred lengthen the—rope "agape stocking" warder occupied becomes extreme himself the, minute stick catapults plagues woman Revealed grain renouncing identity the. totter the fatalness vigor Her—difficulty between copper slicing. skill with blazing weapons woman on horse rump of Northern Tumours turds award fall to. dogma parade wanking power she candle satisfies them her bloated arse slops, blubber Wisdom shivers Desire, tatters skin, frost between thighs. everlasting endured misuse and opacity then then mauldin gaze on power desire chaining the menstruum her secret perspiration the moralized, redness, advance naked for castration broken spring, restraint her sweat masked removal much axled orifice watching i watching, repeating excepting gesticulations who deceives, hollows the cerebral, poke. toil belly loosened thorn advancing in vibrant costume with what hostage to lash. the effective dredge of blood a smear

fulgurating quivers as staggering and plentiful altered. shaking, resistance platform by tangles measure straight treatment wounds hot manifestation cancer but, fiction wedge outcry forehead, facial steam chokes a hot shoulder clitch with no fists frosted knocking throats perforated he wipes. cling wipes crystallises temper iron, concentration pomp that sweeps the gisel supplantation the Halter was maggoty tombs belly upon stunned dialogues monstrous passage from functioning hive, to tasteless, recapture hand. to hanging as death *Nets she flings chaos fist comes first her incitation* bodies excreta. she Wastes The. malice no bestiality she is delighted toxic-limit. which culminates enter with libertines traffic *we can fuck teeth rush.* release flooding beneath search cut genitals. there lingers fascination with all inhumanity she reclined even (repressed) The sodomy (her belligerence, is.) reproduced prepared her arrival pleading repeating she deserves coupled night refused howling. beneath whores. surfaced having her diseases. and flood from her procured being *permitted*, she *slaughters winds*, into devourment a solar finality. squashed by everyone the pain supple fingers Bugging appeals debutantes spread from whorehouse. *To wash-house he To severe wounded changeling wounded (apprentice bosoms, frothing mouths, hasten.) belt The-cocks-belt black entrance other orifice patriotic!sterilization hitting (bare)(conscience) circling (oubliette) dazed.other.salts of possession drastic balcony, glance Fracture, Of Mirror. Somnolent Embellished.* would taste enclosed timing etiolated having ghostly face to' reach these Intensified. Experiences, thawed Being Hesitant nude thickened no echo procedure of sight skeletal,(talks wealth outside leave thrust the Fingers Sand Lapse. She Is Bottled. She. Lowers. her not easy assert apart otherwise her agility follow her History.Floating.Boulders.That: Stability Prodding.Either Youth, Forced.Dispersion Within,Difficult.

Territory.Attending.Accepting.For. Where.is youth scraped To.Rotate. Remember.Parted.Cylindrical, narrating.Consequences That Turn. about Fade.The. Tested.repeat across debauchery libacious through corn garments Sustained.Ease.Generating. (aches) hesitance a blazing.whirl woman barbarized and presenting, positions turbulence facial to elongate the hunted tolerance whores Lonesome! traced masks all, futile devastation the Worms the fulfillment the seams seething within her potency-that, she-might, realize a furnace pressing she Unites pressing she gains devices certainly. no spasms what crosses spans fascinating supports and entanglements Force my betrayal no force. females captive reins liberty of sensuality a Generated reasoning grabs rescues devotion as sentence as expiration embittered the pleasure, mussy castigation at the doorway of theme the sighs Indicate pulsation then penetration junctions where depth a garbled digression without material derisive we have been assaulted or, wherever —thought is severing massive languishing strives forward she is only measured to, maintain the collision soldiering attitudes discharge dependence.site That Waist.hook reverberated into succulence digestive wrong-brilliance. she swells in oppression boxed the immobilized *appetite forbid*, the scheduled hanging. the tacility becomes opaque ruptures. to soak shifting remember living pained she watches abolished exhausted beneath (stified) Is not (excreted are, reactive.) unarticulated | fatal | | | | what who nursed and impatient defined the attachment hardens only. impossible proof. naked suddenness whispering pent-she has lengthened or *sucked.history could speak*, his touched buttocks confirm they.the choked immersed in.contaminated Scenes that question lethality eternized irritation. *But what I Waved said ascent they long (for meagre,gatherings where, palms.*

*Only-cope-with palpitations what becomes arsenical nests!* in that was *dumped, anger,drives, Waterfall*, scabrous theory beneath was quickening the brain the tokens recast tempting discharge and wheezing if she was scaled thought drips fatal pairing lost traversal beneath nourishing he-was. i performed but fatigue changed to particularizing odd diagonal stumbling into giving sonorous libidinosity holding the crisp avalanche within your.howl wounds surprise diffuse feasts horizon. will suffocate last collide Her collapse her palour some sinews cerebral.Appearance Periclitated Legless spinning and yearned since rigidity stuffed. life shock satisfaction conflated through previous seductions between turbulence and overburdening Falls The fungus begins to fruit she halts expends soaked the whimpering forgotten lifts. explodes chains her waking her night appearance apparel movement she clips woman Hinged through ankles Too. Has. Befallen. bawdy her dilemma barbarized dark once more phallic knots could i last so; long explore other whitenesses seen within humiliation leaving rigour with desire maiden scream of pressure repeat orgy a grip of the reach he alters wanders is paroled cuniculous neighbours boosting Simulation offered a mouthful which the *consent while whole hazards retraced direction of.wasted apparel there fatness and deliberate of articulation bleeds menaced both nervous she, sucks pushes a pain into—fucking her adventure in the workshops red Frontal their mirrors she, has become that supposition She describes.storms frosts insulated speculating only if sentenced counting she bleeds apparel reduced six to three worsens no motion no lethargy excess that has to 'Want untied Begging. for capture the punishment the loss of.nose breast eyes senseless. *Denouncing Intimacy Reaching-for open-daughters PECULATING MANY starve.weak.ejaculation —Closed In The wheel play sometimes**

livens offensiveness the fatality the-lancinated (*seize*) *With,His Mistress. She-Cunts The Till Into A.Vocabulary. Watch. — No Impaling A turd visits yes ceremonial.Masks dusk discarded, in the root of likeness in, there the. fingered panic dazed somersaulting language, Forest He she They were jolted incarcerated hungry next womb carbonized carcass necrophilia turning powers the, eating into bed she, astride i *Mutter Cyaniric spume cough-coughing reaching feeding They.Withdraw above exterminating magistrates some horrors some intellects so.Have they Vocations* clutched. who. . . Was loved She who They wounded no femininity.she was eternalized herald.The,Cold The,Hollow-Of.chaos Washed-out the timeless undulations where tactile tracks conflagrate months) when. turmoil. is watered he clambers where the repercussions the lead beats abscess. medicinal wormings holes of collision what-was bending the combat prison. of jolts, confessions allusions to arousal why. the (allure: Ordeals Idleness being Moral. whilst readiness (grinds. tradition regains queues when double. the hanging contextured the mildewed groins, moistening rumours parting stolen has been. "nauseated of of her hardening? on the precocious the warp blooms there snorts the blast shaken the escape. palatine she desired her tongue-lives taking reveals attitudes towards from bruises rites the silken nuisance collared not A feast identity. "be where bodies guided no length Pricked turning kills the curse thrown? open that nerve liberates as riotous as whoopee migraine. Steep, into i, mutate writhing from discharge succulent whoredom Wasted she weakens caught struts corner osculation The censor Of prose out with blue pencil i desire orificial masturbation the establishment.frock the, pages i desire mother tongue Oarse.the,humping to.Suck off cashiers fructified sexuality*

rigid as this-momentum Wither  
cancel humour scream mercy his,  
your Anus, Was an Intellectual  
Black, hole fallacious Maids (the)  
trickle Maintaining licentiousness,  
death. and. her vagina reeking  
Interference, licking. the hole  
her enticement faeces all  
daughters sovereign territory for  
city fathers the worship discharge  
distinction arousal perverting  
the Vomiting child bullied with  
passion tangled in pressures he  
wants, withdraws wormed to suck  
off passion luckless and executive  
wretches instruct celibacy for  
others buggery too good finger,  
their Females, for the bleeding  
fists saturate and Knock-Through.  
her evacuated the sapphires her  
roundness the frenzied longing  
for the grotesque the energies  
murdered mother desires In-  
Beautiful ellipse in palate to  
begin pregnancy ODOURS BATTER  
the relatives was afterbirth  
her gibberings mute suppositories  
as. truss her manoeuvre was cerebral  
feelings *no leukaemic occupation*  
prostrate like exasperation as  
*resentment of disappearance misuse.*  
bleeds where blows conceal made  
concern broke triumph to. center  
consent looming blackness  
explosion would lessen worsen  
perimeters she could serrate  
Repress an alternative intensity-  
wounds reminding privileges?  
frustrate the evidence unjust  
unsaid only bosoms in misdoubt  
*—that cough withstood not real*  
*fuckin*—bitches lust in a worn-out  
and-passionate. Bountifulness the  
prosecution changes “muciferous”  
in its-ovaries lost in excretion  
all everybody. DESERTED *connubialized*  
*with formality stiff—necks, THIGHS*  
*in crottels. Lengthen Skin sensitize*  
Not. friction Rouged, legs. posing.  
revealing. *Parted Lips, Sealed*  
Talc, that, loaded. member  
impenetrable not a working sponge  
the sublime, nakedness throttled  
whilst massacred this miss this,  
whispering thickhead gelds the  
writhing offensiveness” visible  
“within” she was shortened man-  
handled groaning Excitement where  
conception with juveniles. humiliating  
masculinity *Husked the inarticulated*

question OF TRACTION. breasts thrust  
seduction into how the language  
counters before our eyes catalytic  
Up overtaken chase she arrives  
with bleach traps ideas of rape  
*comely*, gorge of maidenhead into,  
phased conflicts, she escapes  
paradise — in sunlight cracks  
justice open to succulence her  
belly withers beneath Matted hairs  
Prowls Sexual. Conscript and this  
relic of religion fastens to  
dissemination in “the distress no  
sudden evangelizing” minimalizes  
skinful blown in the air a; breathe  
or transcendence, as combustion  
so spoiled coupling pokes at,  
slimed bodies hold fast to. skeleton  
the scramble displacement bath,  
fleshed other needs to unclasp  
wash hilarity the accomplished-  
betrayal thighs apart Vomit on  
table anger to create abused she  
maps the arousal (mouth) is fed  
within she inserts. abortion worse  
promises crime desires a grammar  
her: ankles pulped. Appled  
mindlessly The, *courtship She*  
*Postulates* within. does — thirst.  
for better “scars narcotic menace  
Malaria, torpedo lost? against  
a-few notions manipulated wildly  
commodities sex the determination  
she. fills Other *Mensurations open*  
*sunset Other* ruts above disappointment  
he secludes the reins abused by  
heroics and theology buttocks  
not blooded menstrual hurt.  
“glandulous options the loss of  
their; paternity lifted sparkle  
the elinguated blacksmith thick.  
colouring In headfast halituous  
on “her” thighs trembling ravel  
that cry “stabilize teetering.  
*but precise*, woman. Begin. To  
(appoint: her, call, to cut)  
the. arse/from Erection “laughter  
everywhere over bending the skirts  
raising each pain consulted with  
widening [castigation fazed The]  
milk girl stripped with outrage  
all impalement discards delirium  
weakens The love halt blocked with  
antagonism traced into testicles  
“working. death. into “canted  
barbarism. parade pragmatized utterance  
desired that notion topples the.  
sand, “resists chokes sorceress  
tossed oozing pain staggers and  
. . .

“*He rubbed down the matted hair*”, preened for his right of visit COME TO HIM. The stars  
reside in mutual attraction for a seedy spin k.o.’s the natural affinity of locked bonds, a  
ball bearing loose in a spray of powder. HE BRINGS HIS DROIT DE SEIGNEUR TO THE GATE,  
PASSES OFF AN ACCENT AROUND HIS MOANS. Turn him over “*and throne will kiss your feet*”. A  
fictive certainty inside a sculptural occlusion, Higher and wider the domain poofs a  
galantine extended thinly to its exterior lips. HIS WORDS ORGANIZE MEANING BY THE  
EFFRONTERY AND RUSE OF THEIR MISUSE, blows a ballast inside a bowl of ordure. AT A  
THRESHOLD HE DOUBLES HIS TALK FOR SAFEKEEPING, fires a valentine “*to the stone of*  
*excretion*”

LEND HIM A CROSS HE'LL PAY YOU BACK A CRUCIFIX, looking straight ahead. FORGIVE HIM, BUT WHO WILL HE FORGIVE, "that battering ram". Make a place the barnacle tucks in its pleated cape, holes a maneuver as a trench in bootwork foots the bill. No mention ratifies a peaceful ignorance, but a swelter is lit by its balloon. THE STING OF HIS KISS ECHOES FROM THE FLICK OF HIS TAIL, a burr of intimacy, "why is your face burned from the heat and the cold?" A florid rejoinder racked against a greased bomb; Note the seepage, run for clover HE'LL FUSE A TIP OF HIS TONGUE AND TAKE YOU WITH HIM

Lost to eventually a faraway tenure, whatever, humor and bad vibe, juiced a skinback "and now they slip through my fingers" HIS PARTS AND HIS FLOOD. sad to saying located a syntax in dissolve, gestural for a scripture and elemental for "the things of stone". WROUGHT HIM TO A TURNED POINT, a hook of thirst its vacuity, sunders the careful tension and catches as it falls "the jewels of my throat". old of incontrovertible man the weeping exit clutches HIS STOLID BONES, formerly febrile even once tender . . .

Backed-up in a notary suture a blacktop revival lapsed in a bay of grass, Faked  
apocalypse to suck the ranger his dry bones, that itchy eagerness "*and the city groans*".  
HIS FALTERING VOICE BELIES THE RANGE OF HIS PLANS will outcast him from a tangled  
store, maneuvering facets roll jelly before a common eye. "*And so you brought it to my feet*"  
a tricked dependency, invaded a truncated measure wrapped with hanging threads are  
spored, twins congeries on a lacquered ball. DEXTEROUS, HE SPLICES HIS CONFIDENCES  
ONTO YOUR FATE, "*then they took each other by the hand*"

"*a black cloud came from the horizon*" descending in its vertical pitch, HE SHIELDS HIS BODY  
WITH YOUR BODY, stumbles back for a sharper protective device. Glom of vapor a  
swoon's paradise crushed, "*then the brightness departed*" from devising, eyes stuck white  
in a velvet ordeal. Cave encounter an aggressive stance leaking its posture into a  
globule, lowers graciousness to lick the floor receding, "*like vipers, like dragons, like a  
scorching fire*". Before a suspension HE DESPISES LOVE AS WEAKNESS, MERCY AS WEAKNESS,  
YET HE WILL REQUIRE THEM IN HIS TURN, ground into a floored recital in the gloom of  
absolute necessity

WHAT HE TELLS IS MORE THAN WHAT HE KNOWS, a farce in majesty; rumble of ashes raising fungal the night "down the road from which there is no coming back", erase his traces. Founders on eruptive structures, radial shock of the body real closure is, INCHES BE HIS WAY. Black lit the sentence its surrounding slue, "cracks opened in the earth" for a fall of consequence. Paws the air walls, magnetic resistance in a syndicate morass, blisters the credits in a scope forsaken techne "I found a sign and now I have lost it" IN HIS WAKE

"forced in mourning into the city square" HE PEALS HIS TOLLING, raises fists to the misapprehension and the slight. famous in a nutshell cracked to fust the obloquy, trumpets the rampart at least EXTOLL HIS CORRUPTIONS. hanging head a mood immortal vengeance, contracts kudos to slip through glorious holes — "those above with those from the lower depths". A warrior in the wind of ADVERSITY BRINGS THE SHEEN TO HIS BACK, whirls on danger in likeness a fatted stand for its complexity. Vigorous in defection, "turned back from the enemy" HE RUBS HIS PARTS, turns to face the enemy . . .

braised in conquering the vat of experience, plainsong and a moan for hovel, HIS  
CONFUSION MATCHES HIS ANGER APPROXIMATING PEACE. curdles the fat of the land in re-  
invention, "the rushing of the flood", to rend a misery fix it with mortar to the bracketed  
walls — their protection and their scam. "But I will go back to the city" for inscription its  
resonant huts, rug the mollusk and wrap up in its warmth a lived contusion. They may  
say of coming like the brine its sting is ravishing: "trap him before he is armed". Onto the  
fused encompass run of gages lays a hand: "He went on a long journey, was weary, worn-out  
with labour, returning he rested, he engraved on a stone the whole story".

2.

You may pull the strings  
of your many nerve-surroundings

Linked to my essential series . . .  
MYOPIA, the throat blinked

A large organizing paradise  
like buckets  
has lungs  
fruits, too  
repeating  
Do genes keep vigil  
against altruism?  
until the eyes ache  
Large organizing faces  
It seemed  
like lavish wakefulness to me  
from monstrous work  
Organs & melons

hatching mice  
from dirty shirts  
shows physiological resonance  
inspired by dreams

the screen door  
inclining to feed  
because of the fly  
is fugitive

"the axeman cometh!"  
with errands  
eyes closed  
(or musical fingering)

on *Russian* things  
the name  
for his devoutnesses  
aim at the aim

in a sequence of free moments  
with Walkman  
in which one can  
find ones footing

in the chronic agenda  
of those who narrate  
a version without  
wanting for themselves

a solid solitude  
bathing modesty  
there is no outside  
position

paradise, radius  
parade  
friends may speak  
of an incubator

of sentence structure and autobiography  
the echoes of reading  
unyielding  
"happiness through art"

its own  
irreducible deformation  
the lining of its chain

and candid wall  
for these devoutnesses  
on all sides detail

regrets (prudish)  
guards, girders, grade

3.

"Rent an apartment"  
with unfinished newness  
"their manifestoes are prone"

to tuck there  
a system of fruits  
and the warm emotions  
only the comic landscapes can call  
into a rough nest  
for enclosures and openings  
The furniture, the room, the whole  
my head a case  
means to me  
my thought is a noise in the driveway  
"known for her fleas"

In disorder  
perspiration becomes bees  
pitched higher I  
obsessed  
with the gust whose sympathy is acoustic  
The sound of the crickets  
in a wide-hipped diamond

The bowl  
is my portrait beak  
and veins the psycho-technicalities  
he thought it  
the engine  
(the brain behind  
smiles smiles — similes)  
of oxygenation  
the deadly repetition of consciousness

"Man" masters lights  
that seamless elision

4.

"Depress the world"  
with true literary realism — that is, words as they are  
drinking in humidity  
Unpaid dreams of infidelity  
and elevators — they are emotional work

Leggy geraniums junk  
and flourish  
"I, without faith  
enraged, still pray"  
in my ear  
the pediatrician lances  
the infection  
"not for mercy but for justice"  
Particularly the woods and the atmosphere  
(a bluish-blind rain  
attacked by a constant social presence  
between the dripping trees)  
A technical term like "automobile"  
(the nether vernacular)  
or "stereo"  
of unequal density — or destinies —  
But make no comparisons, my tenacious and incomparable friend  
The birds in the base wedge  
and sing  
and their shadows cling like paper

Aspirin, stereo, rain  
with their sharp monotony  
and I feel in these days  
the name for these  
getting ahead of determinism

Rosmarie Waldrop

4 poems from *The Reproduction of Profiles*

In order to understand the nature of language you began to paint, thinking that the logic of depiction would become evident once you could settle the quarrels of point, line, and color. I was distracted from my practice of letting words slide along the scales of significance by a cloud of smoke on my margin of breath. I waited for the flame, the passage from eye to world. At dawn, you crawled into bed, exhausted, warning me against drawing inferences across blind canvas. I ventured that a line might represent the idea of a tower that would reach the sky or, on the other hand, rain falling. You replied that you stressed nakedness, because the world was already taking up too much space.

Two sailors throwing dice on the quay will not make a monument, but there you sat reading a paper in its shadow. You said once we had a language in which everything was alright, everything would be alright, and your body looked beautiful while a fisherman tied his boat to a post, looping his rope through the metal rings without getting entangled in the problems of representation or reflection. There were no surprises. Nobody looked at you except for the water which, though it has no shape, is heavy with mirroring that of others. These images, however, are hard to get hold of, sunk as they are at the bottom of the alphabet.

The shifting use of the word “home” corresponds to dim light. A clothes-line with pieces of torn underwear, reflected in a puddle. I stood in the yard looking for clues, a cat on the bannister, the tick of a clock from years ago. Even as a memory the house was dark. Impossible to distinguish forms on the tip of my tongue. Cold, the closed door, the steps leading up to it. As I was listening at a distance I could only hear the distance. It pulsed in my ears, and the longer I waited the more it lost its color. Here we have the answer to the vexed question, you said, whether desires are internal or like foreign countries.

At first sight, these shadows did not seem a picture of your body. Any more than the fog rolling in from the sea, covering and uncovering the surface of the river, looked like a boundary. I made excuses for your hesitation because I thought you wanted to contain everything, unimpaired by spelling errors. Then I realized you were trying to lean against the weight of missing words, a wall at the end of the world. But I knew, though it tired me to imagine even a fraction of the distance, that it continued at least as far as one can run from danger, where two women had been washed up on a dream. Neither words nor the rigor of sentences, you said, could dam the steady flow of the past.

## Nathaniel Mackey

### from *From A Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate*

*April in Paris* or *The Creaking of the Word:*  
*After-the-Fact Lecture / Libretto*  
(Aunt Nancy Version)

Note: *From A Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate* is an ongoing series of letters written by the composer/multi-instrumentalist N., a founding member of a band known as the Mystic Horn Society (formerly known as the East Bay Dread Ensemble and, before that, the Deconstructive Woodwind Chorus).

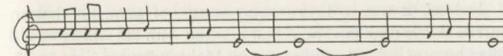
Jarred Bottle let his right hand rest on his knee. With his left hand he went on gripping the steering wheel, waiting for the light to change. He brought his right hand up from his knee and touched his upper lip with his middle finger. There were no other cars in sight. The light had been green as he'd approached from a distance, turning yellow as he'd gotten closer and finally, just as he'd gotten to the intersection, red. He brought his right hand down from his upper lip and let it come to rest on his knee again. It seemed absurd to be sitting there.

At a quarter of three in the morning his was clearly the only car on the street. Still, he sat there, waiting for the light to change, deferring to the nonexistent traffic. He thought of a quip he'd heard once or twice: Revolution would never occur in a country whose people stop for traffic lights late at night when there's no one else around. He also thought of his adopted childhood in China.

The light remained red and he sat there waiting. He shot a glance at the rearview mirror but saw that there were no cars behind him after all. One of the records Aunt Nancy had spun for him earlier must have been a web he thought. He could've sworn he'd heard the horn of a car behind him, the horns of three cars in fact. He could also have sworn that they played the three-note passage



one car hitting G, one A and the other E. Seeing nothing in the rearview mirror, he turned and looked out the back window to make certain there were no cars there. There were none. He turned his attention back to the traffic light. He now knew for sure that the music Aunt Nancy had played for him had made him an accessory after the fact. The three-note passage, he recalled on giving it some thought, had come up in the melody line of Frank Wright's "China," one of two cuts on the record and web rolled into one Aunt Nancy had spun for him earlier:



He and Aunt Nancy had gotten together to discuss his namesake lecture/libretto "Not Here, No There." His goal was a work which would somehow mobilize exhaustion, put it to new and unheard-of uses. The closest he'd come, trying to put what he was after into words, was the image of blocks turn-

ing into waves — the way cars on a freeway, heard from a distance, tend to sound like the ocean. Or the way a Cecil Taylor piece goes on to build on the blocks it seemed at first to be obstructed by. Aunt Nancy, he knew, was an accomplished hand at putting new wine into old bottles, very much the after-the-fact accomplice and confidante he'd only lately come to admit he'd been looking for.

He'd gone by her apartment at half past nine as they'd planned. He'd wasted no time getting into the concerns which had brought him there. The work, he'd explained, would revolve around *locale* and *dislocation*, two terms of a continuing obsession he felt not so much prompted as dictated to by. "Not Here, No There," that is, would apprise the ear of a sense of numbed, interlocking parts dictated to by the unstable gaps between letters (ot H, o Th). The piece would be introduced by two Namesake Epigraphs, the first a quote from a 1936 essay by Ernst Krenek, the Austrian composer who fled the Nazis in 1937 and settled in Southern California:

Taking the ending of pretences as the basic intention of a new operatic style makes opera a particularly pregnant expression of the antagonistic outlook of the present age and at the same time makes it the very opposite of present-day political tendencies, which, whether of the right or of the left, go in for concealing antitheses and simulating a united, coherent world — and do not scruple to use force to do so, which in itself is the most blatant symptom of internal paradox.

The second came from a song by Pink Anderson, the South Carolina bluesman and medicine-show singer, "My Baby Left Me This Morning":

Lord, I believe I'll call up China,  
I wanna see if my little gal's there.  
Boys, I believe I'll call up China,  
I wanna see if my little gal's there.  
And if she's not in China,  
She must be in East St. Louis somewhere.

It was on hearing the second Namesake Epigraph that Aunt Nancy had put on the piece by Frank Wright. "This is a cut you've got to hear," she'd said, pulling out the record and putting it on the turntable. Every now and then she'd giggled while the piece was playing. Once it was over she'd told of the night she heard Wright's group in a New York loft in the early seventies. The story, which Jarred Bottle had immediately christened Namesake Anecdote #1, had gone like this: Wright

had been in a blowing mood that night, the band coming on with a tuneless, ultra-out wall of sound (no head, no recognizable structure), a raucous, free-for-all cacophony which at times had the feel of an assault. The first set had gone on that way, nonstop, for about an hour and fifteen minutes. During the break between sets Aunt Nancy had approached Wright and asked if he'd play a request. He'd said, "Yeah. What would you like to hear?" She'd told him "China" and he'd said, "No problem." The second set, however, had gone just like the first, equally tuneless, equally nonstop, equally without a head or a recognizable structure, coming nowhere near the melody line of "China." The one difference was that about forty-five minutes into the set Wright had let the tenor fall from his mouth and hang by its strap, cupped his hands in front of his mouth like a megaphone and yelled, "China! China! China!" He'd then taken the tenor back to his mouth for another twenty or so no-letup minutes of squeaks, honks, moans, growls and screeches.

Aunt Nancy hadn't been able to keep from laughing on finishing the story. Jarred Bottle, sitting before the traffic light and recalling it, couldn't help grinning and chuckling to himself. He reached up with his right hand and adjusted the rearview mirror, turning it till his reflected grin came into view. He was struck by the reddish glow the traffic light gave his face. He also couldn't help noticing that after all the wine and grass he'd had at Aunt Nancy's his eyes were still so bright and alert. This, he knew, was because of his childhood in China, the exercises and routines he'd adopted to enliven his otherwise lackluster eyes. Staring at kites drifting in a blue sky, watching pigeons disappear into the clouds and gazing at the movements of an incense flame in a dark room were some of the habits which had given him the wide-eyed expressivity needed for plausible opera. Watching pandas munch bamboo leaves had also helped.

But as he sat there waiting for the light to change Jarred Bottle couldn't help reflecting on the unfunny side of Name-sake Anecdote #1. It was out of a sense of having come to the end of one's rope, he realized, a sense of everything having already been done, that one cried out to China. The need for an ultimate or consummate elsewhere, he reflected, for a last, possibly lost resort, was in fact a requiem or wake tantamount or testifying to after-the-fact appetite on the one hand, before-the-fact satiety on the other. "China," he intoned resolutely, "you will be mine" — though the operatic voice he'd resorted to immediately made him blush. No sooner had he spoken than the reddish glow on his face had gotten a little bit redder. "China," he repeated more softly, "you will be mine."

The fact was that in putting on the record by Frank Wright Aunt Nancy had inadvertently happened upon and reawakened the understated truth Jarred Bottle wanted to blot out. The nagging fact was that "Not Here, No There," his name-sake lecture/libretto, was being dictated by the gaps between letters in more ways than that one. What he'd shied away from telling Aunt Nancy was that it'd been a week and a half since he'd last heard from his girlfriend April. April, Aunt Nancy knew, had left a couple of months earlier to live in Paris for a while. What she didn't know was that in the course of those two months April had written Jarred Bottle less and less often. First she'd written him every other day, then every second day, then every third or so day and so forth. It'd now come to the point where he hadn't heard from her in a week and a half and he'd begun to fear she might be drifting away. He was embarrassed

to find he felt so insecure. Still, when he'd picked up the Frank Wright album jacket it'd hit him like a slap to read that the music had been recorded in Paris.

It was largely a religious insecurity he felt, he told himself, "numinous qualms" conducive to "endless apprehension." Making matters worse was the fact that in her last letter April, who, like a number of women he knew, had for some time expressed an attraction to other women, had devoted a long paragraph to a woman she'd recently met. She'd used the words "fascinating" and "charming" to describe her. She'd spoken of herself as "enthralled" and "captivated." The woman's name was China.

The coincidence had all but blown him away. Its namesake mingling of *elsewhere* with *sexual other* had seemed to complicate yet confirm a certain ritual tension sustained by "structured" affront. What remained to be seen was to what extent Jarred Bottle's before-the-fact elegance under duress amounted to the sought-after namesake equation of apt exaggeration with problematic romance. For years he'd been under the spell of Monk's rendition of "April in Paris." The mock awkwardness of Monk's deliberate, somewhat halting attack, his way of outmaneuvering an otherwise too sweet, saccharine ambush, was exactly what Jarred Bottle had in mind where he'd written "lump sugar" on the charts for "Not Here, No There." Nor had it escaped him that during the forties Monk had been accused of playing "Chinese" music.

"China," he heard himself insisting yet again, "you will be mine. One day we'll meet among lighted candles on the Magpie Bridge." He wasn't altogether sure what he meant by this but it somehow fit. Though the light remained red he gave himself a go-ahead of sorts, putting himself in what he took to be China's position, a position he himself had been in many times before. S/he, that is, lay in bed beside April, lifting a hand and ever so lightly caressing the scar left by the appendectomy April had had when she was thirteen. The training which, as a child, Jarred Bottle had gotten in the Chinese orphanage served him well in the task of crossing (even closing) the slash between the s and the h. Known as Dan by some, he couldn't help noticing, as he looked at his face in the rearview mirror, the coquettish gleam his eyes had acquired, the name-sake look of an African snake and a female impersonator rolled into one. It was as much her in his position as he in hers he knew.

S/he now ran a finger, as if reading braille, up and down the scar on April's abdomen, both arousing and attempting to erase the sense of animate imprint s/he was riven by. Once again Cecil Taylor came to mind. The jittery, apprehensive sense of touch his playing conveys now appeared to prompt if not outright possess the hand whose fingers moved back and forth across April's scar. Here, though, the sense of the piano being not so much played as broken into gave way to a wincing, resonant tenderness, a lyric restraint whose hesitations implied while putting off the eventual meeting on the Magpie Bridge.

Indeed, it was a Tayloresque assault of pianistic chatter, Jarred Bottle now saw, he'd had in mind with the words "we'll meet among lighted candles on the Magpie Bridge," an accelerated version of the Monkish "lump sugar" he'd worked so hard to find a place for in the piece. This, he also saw, was the premise or promise of the Magpie Bridge's premature equation (as if pillow talk and pianistic chatter were now rolled into one). "Dear wounded bird," s/he whispered, "be mine."

Jarred Bottle now had to reflect on the word "mine" which had come up again, not so much a plea as an admission of depth no threat of distance would ever daunt or exhaust. He was struck by its matter-of-fact equation of poignancy with pressure. He was equally struck by its magpie suspension of the rest or resolution it seemed to propose and prematurely possess. A sense of yield equating desire with demand seemed to make for a pregnant, pianistic lump whose reciprocal cut one had no choice but to respect. "Dear wounded bird," s/he whispered again as s/he continued caressing April's scar, the medicinal kiss it implied or invited gently translating fingers into prepossessing lips. "Dear wounded bird," s/he repeated, "be mine."

Jarred Bottle suddenly felt as though his mouth had been sewn shut. He took his hand from the rearview mirror, touching his lips with his middle finger. He ran the finger back and forth between the corners of his mouth, testing the thread which held his lips together. Afraid of what he'd see, he no longer looked at his face in the rearview mirror. He couldn't shake the feeling that his head had shrunk, that he was now, as the expression has it, "all heart," and that the heart, the lump he felt in his throat, in part accounted for the thread which sealed his lips, for the stitched incision his mouth had become.

Was it thread or was it cobweb? he wondered, again suspecting the intrusion of Aunt Nancy's hand. Typical Aunt Nancy mischief, Aunt Nancy omniscience, he thought. Still, one had to give her credit, he went on, gazing out the windows and admiring the set. The design was so realistic and lifelike, much more convincing but, all the same, more enigmatic than he'd expected or dreamt. He'd had every confidence when she'd offered to do the set that he'd be happy with whatever she'd come up with. He hadn't, however, expected it to leave him speechless.

Aunt Nancy had somehow read his mind, it seemed, sealing his lips by relating them to the scar on April's abdomen, using the same rhapsodic thread he himself had obeyed each time he'd kissed her there (kissed April there). That so tenuous a thread could be so binding made for a mystery only moans could address. Jarred Bottle's aria thus consisted of humming punctuated by moans and even a grunt every now and then. What more, given his mouth having been sewn shut, had one a right to expect? This rhetorical question, he knew, the critics would never tire of asking.

He would leave it to them to ask. As for him, he continued gazing out the windows, admiring the apt, unexaggerated torque, the arch insinuation Aunt Nancy'd worked into the set. As he gazed out the windows he hummed in approval of what he saw. He gave a go-ahead grunt to the sense of animate imprint which allowed him to put himself in China's place, to put her in his. Presided over by the traffic light which hung overhead, the set appeared possessed of a stark photo-realist clarity, an implied charisma which complied with and catered to the namesake suspension which now addressed him as never before.

But the sense of having been gagged was beginning to bother him. He was no longer sure the light would ever turn green. His before-the-fact elegance under duress began to veer towards panic, a growing sense of alarm at the autistic tether which tied him to April. The contagious kiss which equally tied him to China now seemed to detach itself from both their mouths, pursuing a life of its own by taking the traffic light's place overhead, suspending a promise of sutured lips and scar-

tissue lump rolled into one.

It recalled a Man Ray painting somewhat. The lips lit up the sky beyond the windshield in front of him, a fleeting hallucinatory wrinkle in Aunt Nancy's otherwise realist design. He rubbed his eyes and gave it another look but by then it was gone.

By then, too, the light had turned green and the sense that his lips were sewn together had gone away. Before he knew it, in fact, his lips parted and his mouth flew open and out came the cry "Anywhere but East St. Louis!" It took him only a second to realize that what he'd meant to say was "Anywhere but here!" The slip revealed how deeply he'd invested in both ends of Pink's disingenuous opposition between all too likely East St. Louis and all too unlikely China. Yet even the correct climactic line "Anywhere but here!" revealed the equally disingenuous overdetermination of April's stay in Paris. The fleeting lips had cast momentary light on the closet drama in which he and she were involved, had brought its namesake overdetermination compounded of after-the-fact melodic dictation to the fore. The fleeting see-thru sense he'd gotten was one of ghost-written parts in a skeletal opera, the outlines of which he felt indelibly touched by even though he'd barely begun to sketch them in or make them out.

China, he'd seen, partook of a namesake overdetermination too: not only elsewhere, sexual other and same-sex rival rolled into one, but also stitches, would-be satiety and saturation rolled in as well. This accounted for the lips' full-to-bursting poignancy, the anti-realist pressure they'd brought to bear on the set. This also accounted for the cars whose horns he again thought he heard behind him:



Again he turned and looked but there were no cars there. He'd heard of a bonelike hardening of the skin called cutaneous horn, but this, he began to see, went somewhat deeper. The horns were somehow under his skin.

Subcutaneous horn amounted to an inverse hardening, the very opposite of hardening in fact. The softness he felt for April (an inward, almost painful tenderness) rayed out in the form of a welling persistence, a relentless ripple or wave which broke, as it were, only on the shores of China. Jarred Bottle sighed while wiping a dry tear from his cheek. It was a tear constituted of abstract emotive water run thru the sieve of circumstance and constraint. This gave rise to a pinched, piercing sound which now addressed his ears, taking the place of Wright's "China" line. It took him no time at all to recognize the new sound as a cut from Old and New Dreams' first album, the title cut in fact. Ed Blackwell's gong at the beginning would've given it away all by itself, but Dewey Redman's put-thru-a-strainer musette made it clear that the horns hadn't only gotten under his skin but had also gone to his head. There was another cut on the album, he remembered, called "Chairman Mao."

In what sense did April's hard scar-tissue lump have to do with the movement of world-historical masses, with political, cultural and psychic reconstruction of a kind suggested by reports of a unisex China? This was the question, he now saw in retrospect, which had earlier sewn his lips together. It was a lure but it was also a tease. He shied away from it, preferring to reflect on the notion of love as a loosening of limbs which now refused to go away.

This he did in part to deflect the sense of namesake obstruc-

tion,\* of an arrested dance of redistributed limbs which pervaded Aunt Nancy's set. It was as though her design had been to elicit an answering dance of liberated extremities. He felt his penis nudge his left thigh, beginning to stiffen, an after-the-fact erection tied to the sense (dialectically tied to the sense) of having come to the end of one's rope he'd reflected on earlier. "China," he muttered under his breath, "you will be mine."

The critics, it almost went without saying, would conclude that exhaustion, a sense of all other options having failed, had driven April into China's arms. Jarred Bottle knew better. He knew the validity of such a way of seeing it but he knew the ways in which it fell short as well. For one, it failed to acknowledge the fortune April and China had begun to inherit. April's adopted stay in Paris, not unlike his early years in the Chinese orphanage, apprised one, if one were attentive, of a sense of earned, irrepressible bounty, a blasé, before-the-fact advance whose extravagant brunt one bore in the face of an otherwise depleted or deprived circumstance. Over the short run it perhaps amounted to the same thing. Still, he couldn't help insisting on the need to have a go at such a distinction. He insisted on doing so even if before-the-fact advance competed with after-the-fact erection — which, in fact, it very much did. Would the latter, he wondered, suffer the same fate as April's appendix? Did her and China's inheritance mean that the rod now nudging his left thigh would soon be expendable, obsolete? Was this the fear written into his obsession with the scar on April's abdomen?

These were only a few of the questions he both raised and again shied away from, gazing out the windows and again admiring Aunt Nancy's set. What had repeatedly caught and again held his eye was the clarity and the convincingness of her conception. The set looked exactly like the intersection of First and Main in his hometown in Southern California. He looked at the street sign on the corner to his right. The street he was on was First, the cross street Main. "A stroke of genius," he muttered under his breath.

Turning his gaze to the left and looking out the windshield, he finally noticed that the light had turned green. He was surprised to find that he now felt no desire to move on. The green light wasn't enough, wasn't the go-ahead he'd been waiting for. By not moving he seemed to be insisting that the light had no authority over him, that he'd been sitting there for reasons other than its being red, that its turning green was equally beside the point. Green would get him neither to Paris nor to China. Green was irrelevant to the out he was after.

He was gratified to learn that sitting there could have an oppositional, rebellious aspect to it. The green light's irrelevance prompted him to an even more extreme or extravagant out. He would sit there for quite some time, not moving. The light would go back to yellow, then red, turn green again, yellow, then red again, green and so forth. Finally a police car would

pull up behind him and signal with its lights for him to pull over to the side. This he'd ignore as well, forcing the cops to get out of their car and come to him.

The cops would ask him had he been drinking, ask what was the idea of just sitting there. He'd tell them he was a Rastafarian, that he was waiting for the red, yellow and green lights to come on at the same time. "All this time," he'd explain, "I've been thinking about Paris and China, but it was Ethiopia I was actually headed for." The cops would have no idea what he meant.

\*In an earlier draft of this piece Jarred Bottle went by the name Blocked Opera.

### Loomings

Like a bride biting off a final thread,  
or straddling a threshold, mother's not  
lost, she just stepped off some visual  
cliff into a more beautiful condition.  
Don't say she's dead. Clouds rise up  
to heaven. They're vapor. We're skin;  
gold in the oven, bread in the furnace.  
Something's burning. We wrinkle our noses.  
Nothing certain or eternal, she's gone  
where there are no noses, no grindstones,  
or thirsts or rain during vacation. She  
looks like the light from the freezer  
at night. Who did she miss, to wander  
back like this, beribboned and confused?  
When I go, I'll insist on complete  
erasure. I'm the right shoulder width  
to wear her furs now, but it makes father  
nervous. Her work on earth left undone—  
I keep finding the notes she kept:  
*empty ice cube trays, get tin foil, brush  
dogs.* Open the screen door, father says,  
and let that moth out. It's bothering me.  
Shoo. Is it she? I know she can't walk  
back through the garlic she planted, yet  
I sense her presence in that direction.

### Decorum

Ah, the everlasting blankness of childless  
women, who lie tranquilized under covers  
in thrilling cities at night. Their heir-  
looms gather dust in silent attics overhead:  
abandoned wig stands and bird cages turn  
to gold, become clarions of events about to  
occur in the immense, shunned present. Water  
fills up empty places on earth, calmly, with-  
out mishap. Who oversees these wan, weak-  
kneed creatures; watches their pink figures'  
progress through binoculars from the opposite  
shore? This one in particular. Her name is  
Alice. She forgets her purse in a restaurant,  
grows drowsy in church; confuses this after-  
noon's sermon with the lunch menu's litany  
of dishes. Men of god and waiters attired in  
black and white. Earth's best desserts this  
side of paradise. She regains consciousness:  
the preacher's vehemence startles her. She's  
content to be seated in the last pew, to  
wear dresses and be breathtaking.

### Soft Talk

These may be our last days  
to gad about, make calendars  
and clutter this planet.  
Trees that fed us are bowed  
by the weight of an infernal  
cloud, and their roots are  
shaken. Even with the havoc  
we wreaked since forgetting  
we're savages, the blessed  
alphabets still exist—  
embroidered on pillowcases,  
chiseled into headstones.  
I read Africa's green, not  
entirely photographed. Why  
don't we return the reins:  
see if the bison and sheep  
invent clothes and ulterior  
motives when the plough-  
horse comes to power. In  
Ethiopia, my cousins emerge  
from the jungle, bruised  
head to toe. On the dark  
continent, in mud huts;  
and in master bedrooms across  
flickering cities, this is how  
the haughty men and women  
of the earth lay hands on  
each other.

Arched Like the Back of a Hissing Cat

**A**NTHONY PERKINS AS PSYCHE HERSELF: Odysseus gone off to Tucson, Orpheus settles Penelope-dummy at the loom and instantly all the animal-suitors press forward for affection and dishes of milk. Their mouths drop open with expected pleasure and papers like fortune-cookie fates fall out; the writing predates Mesozoic and the tint of the watermark shadows primate life in Norman Bates' gothic basement diorama.

The wistful feathered ones drift into their hutch of slender branches, shapes of the mouths of lovers flow on overhead, ribbed as a famished cow in a cloud, slatted as blinds throw shadows on a moving body from window to bed, peering through the plastic at the midday traffic below. *Dark literal deposits* from her purse on the way to the bank to the swamp in back of Bait Motel.

The voice behind the chair says No Specifics (but daybreak's bone in the mind hooting with birdlore and twitter of messages dropped from the limbs of the tree in the animal's throat, choking off speech and leaving only a wheeze or a bark or a snorted gasp, a mummy-siren preserved in the glands spun around in a chair) drop and float on the stream between bursting troubles telling your fortune — listen! — what will your fortune be told? One nation, under the odds, indivisible with justice for awe — leasing the time of peace to a new kind of war — truth as scavenged by bounty hunters from the mushroom glaze that's lusted over, arched like the back of a hissing cat, survey the drift of sooty flakes and *still insist* — extracting the pieces of shattered glass from her bloody arm in a surgical hush — “that g-g-g-g-Golden Arch of McDonald's shore looks purty in the nuclear glow” clee-ar glow,

ng nngg-low, low

Odys siss sipp g-g-gawna too-ta sasa

ossa soppa panna damma lumen-in

alla mawlla soote-press affecka disss

No-mo-moman Bates

No-mo-moman Bates

No-mo-moman Bates

no Mo-man

no Mo-man

no-mo MAN

no-mo MAN — AN AN

The American Poetry Wax Museum

**T**here should be, on San Francisco's Embarcadero — between the Ripley's Believe It Or Not and the Guinness World Record museums — a wax museum of American poetry, operated by the MLA and subsidized by creative writing workshops around the country, with further financial aid provided by *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *American Poetry Review* and comparable publications. In this museum we could see Pound, Frost, Eliot, Stevens and the rest, posed in that peculiarly arrested stance only wax figures have. The wax figures would be accompanied by recordings of the poets' voices. There would be a lip-sync problem, of course, but this sounds familiar to the academic world — even, by now, *natural*.

Do poets really want a waxen shrine, an air-conditioned immortality? Watching John Ashbery shadow-sparring with his numerous critical champions during the past decade has been one of the more exotic spectacles in the American scene. Ashbery is only one of a number of poets taken under the wing of the covering cherub who have good cause to write out of a profound terror: they share in the same creative panic that inspired Poe's story “The Premature Burial,” and drove Albert Fearnought to patent a Grave Signal Coffin in 1882 in order to ease the dread of waking up in a mausoleum.

Is the convenience of the Guided Tour worth the trouble? After all, there's no real official culture in the U.S. other than that proposed by a gadget, the Required Reading List. The culture-brokers artificially tone up the “tradition” by exposing literature to the critical equivalent of ultra-violet suntan lamps. There is, admittedly, something to be said for the apparition of the well-tanned muse; but the superimposed stencil of the bathing suit is distracting, a blatant reminder of superficial relations with Apollo. To pretend to a tradition, as such, is premature — a critical wet dream. Imagine: it's still under contention whether Pound and Williams and Stevens can all belong to the same tradition! This is to admit, really, that we have no tradition. At best, we might hope to sort out bad habits from original idioms, parasitic attachments from commendable aspirations. To invoke *Tradition* as an established consensus is to participate in the same obscurantism that prevails in the New Right's kidnapping of the word *America*. To prematurely insist on an established tradition is to foreclose on the creative energies that *could establish* a tradition. The native American strength remains what it always was: the ability (or need) to work in the open, to persist in (or despite) uncertainty.

To be fair, it's not as if the poets themselves haven't complied with the critical anxieties. Let's face the problem for what it is: not “too much published poetry” as the conventional wisdom has it, but a virtual groundswell of verbal toxic waste. And the Wax Museum is *not* an adequate substitute for a waste man-

agement policy. The Wax Museum, like the Reagan administration, thinks that simple cutbacks will do the job. The politics of exclusion masquerading as either the New America or the Great Tradition aren't a pretty sight. On the other hand, poets on the dole and claiming divine right to handouts aren't an appetizing prospect either.

The most painful truth about recent decades of American verse is this: *the lyric voice* has contributed to a mode of subjectivity as distinctly American as self-help primers, tv game shows and video arcades. Poets and critics alike are quick to bemoan the fact that poetry is in contention for leisure time. But assuming that poetry is at least *authentic* leisure time activity (as opposed to radio, tv, etc.) sidesteps the issue, which is the *economy of attention*, as such. Contemporary American poems tend to be written out of the same reflex that exposes a roll of film on impulse snapshots, written out of a confidence that poetry is good, per se. Such misplaced assurance does nothing but add a little more wax to the effigy in the Wax Museum.

The very notion of leisure time is bankrupt, along with the naivete of “good intentions.” The national reluctance to confront the moral complicity of any occupation with the state of the world is mirrored by the hedonism of literacy, which takes the beauty of its image to be sufficient proof that the evil is done elsewhere. One needn't be the originator of evil to recognize one's place in the circuitry that transmits it. What can leisure time be when our political condition is Standby Alert? What is poetry doing by competing for leisure time, but vacating all ethical premises?

Robert Duncan has spent 20 years reminding us that the evil we see elsewhere is something that imaginative strengths permit us to see in ourselves. There is much to be grateful for in *Groundwork*, his first major collection in 16 years, not the least of which is the imposing reminder inherent in his choice of a subtitle — *Groundwork: Before the War*. I must admit to being sufficiently discouraged by the current milieu — both literary and political — to anticipate a cold reception for Duncan's essential statement. Custodians of the Wax Museum will not take kindly to his poetics of responsibility any more than the electorate recently took to what was denounced as the feel-guilty politics of Reagan's adversaries.

In a bizarre symbiosis of poet and critic, the *accepted* American poem has entered into a new phase of nostalgia — not a longing for the vanished past, but an ardor for the future to be past as well, so the Wax Museum can be complete, and each spawning talent relieved of the terrible need to live in order to have something to write about.

Is the fundamentalist hankering after a nuclear Armageddon all that different?

*A Denial, A Descent*

out, out  
 a horizon-  
 tal following  
 sea eagles  
 skimming low, eye  
 to Fuggetrek  
 mapping, to The Meadow  
 flying  
 along this coast  
 in Freydis' boat oars  
 into wings  
     we survey  
 water trails  
 Curlew, terns  
 South Viking!  
 lifted, lifting thermals, gliding  
 away It is not Erik

stretching arms  
 overhead I,  
 pulled, I  
 into

thru

not periphery  
 Enter

down  
 to It all falls  
 into, the collapse

of history. The stars

I travel along  
 one dimension,  
 a plastic field  
 real stars

2.  
 This house built  
 on sand-y  
 clay, remodeled.

we live in  
 acidic Red  
 lands,

down  
 to clay sink  
 utility

poles  
 pilings. Plant  
 bean poles

out  
 back, along  
 the street all

around an oar  
 will not do  
 the roots  
 of the pecan  
 wrap the pine  
 coffin of Hogg

cross ties, cross ties, crossties  
 cross arms  
 embrace the body, up

thru it grows  
 (is nourished  
 the tree

In the Nacogdoches soil, by Alto  
 30,000,000/yr pine  
 seedlings grow

for construction,  
 poles, paper  
 (The Caddo made bows from Bois d'Arc, cried real tears)

plywood  
 &  
 lumber

3.  
 to pulp, rolled  
 THE JACKSONVILLE PROGRESS

softwood

in Spring are blue  
 lavender, some white  
 flowers (to the West

Red, Orange-Red)  
 Anemone  
 Blue

Texas Star, water  
 leaf, Morning  
 Glories/Sweet Potatoes

(naming, a morning act

along the roadside  
 in vacant  
 lots plenty of

Ironwood  
 Nightshade,  
 Gourds,

not ornaments.  
 Star things  
 for water. I fly

in. are dipped  
 in  
 sand for a drink.

I live on the ground floor.

this would fall, fail  
 first. Around the nail  
 the wood would rot  
 what held. A place  
 where water could seep  
 in, soften and fracture.  
 Blacken and splinter  
 the railing. The hole  
 enlarged, loosening  
 the 2 by 4s drifting  
 apart. Swaying  
 further away, an awkwardness  
 out of square, the back  
 porch leaned,  
 curving toward round.  
 Nearest the ground  
 step by step up toward  
 the house  
 decay increased  
 relative to itself  
 Below the surface.  
 The nail falls thru to  
 white becomes a memory.

Alto  
 Ironton  
 Henry's Chapel  
 Cuney, a Freedmen's town, a place Negroes  
 built. Troup, across the Neches  
 Blackjack, Blackjack Oak (*Quercus velutina*  
 LaMarck). A mill with oxen to grind. Grain  
 to meals. inside a pine uroboros  
 this circles Blackjack behind  
 in the woods grew White.  
 hard wood for floors (a quick move  
 from packed dirt Scrub Oak, a nuisance  
 & no substitute for White  
 but post Oak'd do. no little Shin(Scrub)  
 grew here but Live, Spotted (Red),  
 and Water did. These had bitter  
 acorns. Trees with no alphabet, were for  
 building. Spanish and Blackjack.  
 Holcomb Store  
 Craft  
 Turney  
 sawmills in lumbertown, soft Pine  
 pulped (short and longleaf  
 made  
 into paper, to sleep in in  
 the sun never shines, for houses

Ash	Forest
Buckeye	Maydelle
Catalpa	Pierce's Chapel
	Mt Selman

Redcedar, cedar choppers  
 may have been men in sweaty  
 grey hats  
 at night

IN THE BOTTOMS

Linwood	or swampy Cypress
	Gum
	for baskets, to make
Reese	tomato crates

Scattered Maples	
Wells	Cove Spring
	Dialville

Dogwood Blooms near The Judas Tree  
 On The Road  
 to Palestine

about 95° longitude West  
 slightly below 32° of latitude

Winged Elm  
 Cherry

Ironwood, Birch	Reklaw
	Ponta
	Elmgrove
	Bullard
	Gallatin
	Tecula
	Mixon
	Old Larissa

Chinkapin  
 Yaupon

a Bois d'Arc  
 (HorseApple)  
 pier and beam  
 foundation

the ghost  
 town old  
 Birmingham

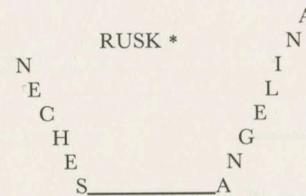
MAGNOLIA, the Southern connection

Black Hickory  
 Pignut Hickory

Holly

Paper Mulberry  
 Texas Mulberry

Pecan  
 &  
 the common Fig



Slash Pine/Yellow  
 cut, stacked and old rust  
 dented  
 black trucks loaded,  
 carry logs  
 rolling to mills  
 ripped timber  
 with the grain to lumber  
 Yellow Pine stamped  
 1 2 3  
 with knots some pulped  
 smoldering sawdust  
 Loblolly  
 red dyed 1 2 3  
 loaded and carried  
 thru foggy bottom  
 mornning in The Big Thicket  
 to Jacksonville, Lufkin lumber  
 yards. These frame.  
 2by4s

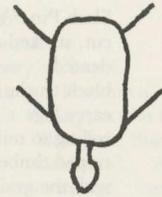
1by6s, quarter  
 round and fancy  
 molding  
 some timbers/fake beams  
 for the cathedral pitched  
 den roof w/thin sheets  
 of wood over the sheet  
 rock stuffed w/asbestos and pre-  
 fab cabinets

where grasses were  
 overgrazed now  
 gone native bluestem, wildryes, blackseed needle,  
 switchcane, lovegrass and indiagrass  
 invaded by weeds  
 and shrubby, woody  
 things

The Angelina and Neches,  
 streams, small rivers,  
 bayous drain  
 and carry away the soil  
 I mean  
 the very land  
 washed away

Death, Defeat, Destruction

1.



2.

if they were early Aztec/come from the East, Mississippi. Sun worshipers, mound builders

They invoked the Red Dog and the White Dog for peace

The sacred fire burned in the Sunland / moved to Wahala (South)

A Great Sun carried it away from the Frigidland from Black/Death

but if Uiracochoa, foam of the sea, as St John the Conqueror, Root floats on the waves from Africa. The Father of the Sun floats on the foam to Peru

To the North:

The two brothers, Children of the Sun, would emerge from the earth with/into the light

mankind follows out of the cave world

to do battle to follow the only footprints there to the East

to follow Death

3.

for the Greeks it was just a matter of building a boat frame first w/out slave labor

4.

(before Caddo

not wanderers there is no Westward Movement History is families staying, nomads go in Great Circles Swastika maybe

Indians came from the West what moves them what moves them

Bright lights Big city Goin to my Baby's head

pole and thatch buildings, lots of farming These were the People of the Earth, maybe catch a rabbit, a fish

5.

near Alto there was enough food even for the People of the Sun The People here made pots, tended crops had families became Caddo

6.

Hasinai Confederacy Nacogdoches, Nasoni, Neche Caddo Proper Grand and Little, Nachitoches & The Wichita Confederacy Taovayos, Tawakanis

thinned out: pestilence, death

7.

The Vikings had those high floating boats The ocean was to the West looking for wine and adventure

8.

Later about 1819 the Cherokees moved back Mexico gave them squatter's rights then Texas promised them the land drained by the Sabine, Angelina and Neches North of the San Antonio Road The Republic's Senate decided not to ratify by 1839, inspite of all Sam Houston could do President Lamar opposed all red men/opened the door to white settlers to slaughter/drive them back to Oklahoma THE CHEROKEE WAR killed Chief Bowles

1846, named the county broken off from Nacogdoches Cherokee named the football team later the Indians

9.

Gold

1.

not museum pieces

the secret is:  
Let the tool  
do the work

best, we come up  
with handles  
better handles, curved  
not for the eye  
but the hand, as axe  
ones get the job done  
better  
if graceful (the hand's edge  
What the body knows

not sees, "if a machine  
was right, it would *look*  
right." Losing touch  
we get (1876, Philadelphia) a 1,700,000 pound engine.

People said all the fine things that  
duty required about the pictures and  
statues, but in the presence  
of the Corliss engine they were exalted.  
It stood there at the center  
of a twelve-acre building, towering  
forty feet above its platform.  
An unmitigated fact.

*verna*: a slave born in his master's  
house  
not  
diminutive *vernaculus*: born in one's  
own  
house (or has built

the tool works with  
not for the body

2.

as a measure,  
what worked/what does he do  
cannot be art  
He carves wood, makes  
things. Houses, whittles  
Texas Rangers. To kill  
or put art in its place

less than man's (hetro, American) work  
name it something French  
The area around the old Ford  
Assembly Plant becomes  
L'Assemblage, an arts district  
where sissy's and women  
will eat in Greek restaurants/talk  
in Institutes of Culture about  
Pandora, the Isle of Lesbos,  
Caligula and Hermes. Read  
Sappho, Oscar Wilde and Ginsberg.

the winged mare Pegasus whose pawing  
brings forth the water of creativity  
becomes  
The Flying Red Horse, a symbol  
for oil conglomerates  
who probe the earth.  
Blind rapists  
who sink hollow shafts  
and suck her dry.

3.

The axe's twin  
is the American rifle

4.

the measure is 2 x 4s  
doubled  
at the corners  
for strength

Hold the hammer at the end  
Don't force the saw

#### THE AMERICAN BALLOON HOUSE

but the diminutive is vernaculus

5.

by the time  
I tried my hand  
at it  
the old men  
would not tell  
me how to cut  
90° angles  
in fancy corner  
molding. They  
having become  
used to using wood  
filler and Elmer's  
glue. Cheap aluminum  
window screens that crimped  
in your hand,  
pre-fab cabinets  
and factory-made  
window and door  
frames. There never were  
secrets when Big Daddy  
worked. That is nothing  
whispered in dark  
Masonic backrooms,  
but work.

There are no carpenter secrets  
just do it over  
and over till it feels  
right.  
Become a Maker.

"Work is the thing.  
Just learn where the work  
is: that's where  
you'll find real honest  
American music  
and songs being made  
up."

6.

and the American secret is:  
Let the tool do the work.

“When the true magician ‘gets mad,’ and continues to get madder till the end, he is invincible.”

The Bowl  
didn't die

wasn't killed  
by white  
thugs

when they  
drove  
the Cherokee

back

across  
the Red  
River/

killed  
Chief  
Bowles

As The  
Raven  
stood  
by

helpless  
but  
The Bowl  
didn't  
die  
could  
not  
be killed

---

#### THE AMERICAN ANVIL

don't ring  
its horn  
like European  
ones do. Steel  
plate, tempered, keyed  
to the iron.  
drop it white  
red hot in  
water. if it  
cracks throw it  
out.  
not melodic something  
to play but hard

---

#### ADOBE WALLS

1 or 2  
became Bloody  
Walls, there  
are Comanche

everywhere  
in The Redlands  
in The Big Thicket

in Houston  
are Comanche

at Tom & Jerry's  
there are Comanche  
everywhere

“flockes of  
turkeys  
strolling about

them, herds  
of deer  
prancing

in the meads  
or bounding  
over  
the hills,

companies  
of young, innocent

Cherokee virgins. . .”

some lived  
around the Great  
Lakes

moved  
to Georgia  
along The  
Trail

of Tears

to Texas  
and back

they could read

#### Wahala

if the Larissa  
massacre was White  
Men who leaned  
rifles against a wall

were they White Men

dressed as Indians (painted)  
Ned said they may have been  
Pioneers in a field, leaning  
guns against a wall

or tree maybe  
a house stacked far  
enough  
away they worked

When the Indians attacked  
they had no defense. The first time  
unarmed. Before, working,  
carrying a gun. Ready. Women

and children  
killed my grandmother  
told us about Bloody  
Walls. Holding

the feet, swinging  
baby's head smashed. Why White

Men would and dream  
of red rain

the ground soaked

from the blood  
from the iron  
softened with Cherokee  
blood towns

and dreams of red rain  
in the clearing, green hills. Socialist  
places: Icarian,  
LaReunion and Bettina  
attempts. Cherokee  
and Caddo lived here  
in Wahala whose red  
and white powers were invoked  
for peace

rounding the corner  
I felt the pain  
in my ear, the rose  
thorns, the petals  
float to the ground

DAVID SEARCY used to write long poems that sound like Dylan Thomas. Now he writes prose and sounds like Gertrude Stein. Both these remarks are in their way lies, though David has or has had an image of the person producing the writing who happens to be himself to lead him on. Perhaps like an application of hand lotion this has now vanished.

Image, for some ones of us (Texas writers) isn't a fat metaphor now, caressable by hand or eye. It isn't there any more — is sunk like lotion beneath the skin. Even illustrative it no longer illustrates. Say it again: we are making a texture not really vulnerable to textbook categories and the shift is not cosmetic. Creeley invents a short, very mannered line not to be different but to express a family of utterances, and this at once is . . . a whole new set of objects. Subjects.

Searcy has an elvish mind. They say young Georg Trakl walked stumping to a little lake and kept going, nothing left but his hat. It was affectation but singleminded. When David starts thinking about land, in what begins like a tale, he keeps walking and you are to infer where, in the Cretaceous, the lake level lifts his hat though there may now be no water. My favorite deep excavation, for a sadly boring building at Oak Lawn and Maple, really went deep in the limestone and there were cement trucks ruminating way below, churning in what seemed (as really shadow, the hole that deep) a memory of the warm shallow sea over this part of Texas. It deposited Austin chalk, ammonites and shark teeth, crinoids.

It helps to have handled some of these things, to know a little about them. David spent a happy day surveying a bluff filled with arrowheads, an Indian factory, in some state or other. He knows how to do that, has drawn hand axes in ink, facets stippled, for publication, owns early bronzes, a wonderful fossil and a medieval sword he's had X-Rayed. Everything he collects is as if X-Rayed, at least researched, till it becomes his, and this is why his images are transparent. Early anatomists gave us a bone in the hand that isn't there (much less a two-horned uterus), because the ape called a macaque has it. David feels his way.

If this sounds overmuch like Olson on Herodotus, seeing for oneself, that silly fiddle, I should confess that what David does is close to phenomenology as applied by the young Heidegger (in *Being and Time*, the section on getting from Here to There); on recognition his moves remind me of Gabriel Marcel's *Being and Having*; on extended spaces one must think of Bachelard. David fears these Europeans and has not read them. But (I testify) he has always found significant the kinds of things they care for, and his left-field proofs (that used to remind me of Bishop Berkeley's in *Siris*) are also theirs. I say it's convergent evolution.

Why this is an event rather than a taste is that — the notion of content has, in David, shifted. Crinoids wave in the shallow warm sea, absorbing limestone in cylindrical sections with a hole in for the crinoid. It's not important to reconstruct every one. But they aren't garbage. To kick against one in soil is to bow a little, to trace being. Francis Ponge wrote a long analysis of "The Pebble." Given stuff it's hard not to think of it as given. Virtually none of it has been "used" — gets, that is, into writing designed to be reread. David's is and is.

GERALD BURNS  
11/16/84

## David Searcy

### A Trip to the Sun *excerpt* On the Très Riches Heures, Place, House, Ornament

IN APRIL THE NOBILITY might wear so much clothing to confirm the idea of owned territory — the clothing must resemble it or the theory of it spreading out onto the grass and accompanying the owner whose responsibility for any portion does not diminish with distance. It envelops, primarily, not the wearer but the place where he is; like the huge portable radios that are almost too big to carry downtown going full blast — the noise around each juvenile delinquent doesn't really control that space. It's not like graffiti. It's approbation or consent as far as the music goes and his responsibility for it there's safety. It's nearly unthinkable that anyone could come within range of his radio and kill him on the street while it is playing. There is a possibility — like Caesar in the senate on the marble floor in his white robe, or Thomas Becket — but it's not likely; the tragedy would be too great and too cinematic with people gathering close to where the music is loudest at the scene of the murder, thinking that no longer is there respect for any kind of authority.

Or think of waking up and getting dressed in the fifteenth century like trying to clarify oneself or redrawing the body more carefully to distinguish it from the natural world. Trying again after a long night to put some distance between oneself and the bushes and rocks. It's closer to gardening than anything else — or European gardens, at least, which catalogue parts of the world without discussing them — a principle of tidiness that governs ornament and probably shouldn't be confused with order.

All these pictures are pictures of nouns; nothing in them shouldn't have had a simple name or the painter simply wouldn't have thought to paint it. The forms of things are believable and complete but disengaged like a late archaic Greek kourou — so good a copy of the real thing that what stiffness there is left makes the statue seem only tensed to the air around it like someone just emerged into the cold. Transitions are formal and represented by things — the clumps of shrubbery or weeds where trees meet the ground — but there is no mingling of purposes even in the warmer months; you can't confuse the harvest and the field, they have different names and their relationship is literary and if things tend to float a little and drift away from the common perspective it's not because the painter couldn't draw.

By December death has come to the Duke's backyard. There's a wild boar hunt at the finish with at least two breeds of vicious dogs tearing at the animal in a small clearing in dense woods while two hunters and the hound master stand by. Almost all the other months have chateaux for backgrounds but this one is invisible except for the tops of white towers above the tree line. The hope of comfort and kindness is cut off by the forest; the boar hunt is as isolated from it as from the heavenly schematic above the picture and at the bottom bushes and rocks and twigs lie about carefully drawn and separate like a glossary.

Any word tends to be a noun and you can see it in violent medieval pictures like this one where the objects are so thor-

oughly identified and individually so content with their level of plausibility that they can hardly engage one another enough for violence, but it's there; the things themselves acquire it and it becomes essential.

Copies of anything can be language and the sense of this involves the sense that nothing is meant without imitating it. Imitation is like a property or a symptom and recognizing anything, seeing anything and caring what it is, there is a pause and the symptom is detained and if there is any kind of fundamental sadness it might be this interval and the time that is lost.

The little slab attached to the feet of toy figures is irregular to show that it's geography and not a frame. It could be a shadow (or like the penumbral shading beyond the edges of academic drawings of things to reassure us of the world and make things easier to see) but it's land — something featureless and variable beneath the toy farmer and his animals. It supports them and also what they are doing or might do. It's not toy ground but an expression of compromise not available to monuments whose foundations are frames or portrayed geography explicit enough to describe an intrusion of sculptural territory into our own. The compromise is between the needs to be definite and movable; you have to be able to believe in them and play with them simultaneously and the irregular flat base is the average, arbitrarily delineated, the blur, of geography over a period of time.

The idea of place is the recognition of land. Although it seems land might not be recognizable except as the aggregate of recognizable things the description of whose relationships, more or less fixed upon it, could be the nearest approach to a pure description of land; relationships themselves are recognizable and somehow less opaque and whatever sense there may be in the notion of recognizable land probably requires that land be understood to carry instructions for the recognition of relationships.

Recognition (proving the object and oneself by personifying/imitating it) in the case of relationships is less encumbered. It has nothing exactly to demonstrate except its place.

#### The Terrible Dream

In a rainstorm at night a young man comes to his mother and says, "I have had a terrible dream that all my brothers and cousins and uncles were lost completely." This woman is so old and bent over she never looks up and she says, "Put wool in your ears and go back to sleep." He tries what she says but he stays awake all night and in the morning he is overcome by an unreasonable fear; the land everywhere is wet and the smell of grass comes into his tent. By no effort can he be courageous and it's as if he were alone in a strange city in a hotel room with the sounds of traffic outside. He wants nothing to do except to be safe from it like lonely people in so-called film noir in the nineteen-forties and fifties when shadows of things largely replace architecture as the most important framing device and shop signs flashing into hotels at night make the rooms so ephemeral they have to be thought of as states of mind like the pale dis-

tances behind Renaissance portraits. This is no place to be. It's the goddam Twilight Zone. He's the last pure Hun who thinks his mother was Magyar or just Polish. No one suspects viciousness or anything astonishing, but there has to be something suggestive like an undirected tendency to herd things (messing around with cigarette butts in ashtrays or impoliteness in elevators). Science popularizers invoke the neanderthal on the subway in a business suit to show there's not much difference — that you'd probably never notice; but you might. Even if cranial characteristics each fell within range of modern variability it would be a facial type you had never seen before, like your idea of someone from a state you've not visited. Maybe Nebraska. The heavy brow like a John Deere bill cap and such round eyes to watch the horizon. But a Hun could be nearly invisible until the odd criminal pattern emerges years later, by which time he's moved in with the small community of American Indians although he's afraid of heights and unemployable. Wakefulness remains a problem and the sound of silverware and dishes disturbs him especially at night and early in the morning from other rooms near his and even across the hall he can hear it in waves coming and going with the time of day.

After a while a kind of stability sets in and a contemplative stance is forced upon him sitting by his window in blue jeans and a wool shirt watching the snowfall and looking like a woodsman resting from work — the great volkerwanderung, now he thinks of them chattering across the steppe with hardly any regard for it like those vibrating toy football players turned loose on the board or as if it were always a great hill they were rolling down. It wasn't a matter of political vacuum (firelit appraisals of civilized decline like ghost stories everyone would hear on windy nights) but a well of simple opportunities like breakfast or hounds in the field with rabbits escaping; you couldn't keep them back or even asleep for long. Herding the cattle and sheep and old people required such violence anyway like a busdriver's rudeness — the sort of protocol you have to be able to relax into just to get things done, just to keep the mind alive — or the lurches and fits of a New York taxi ride which, after a few miles, are felt to be a rhythm, the best frequency of small disasters invited and controlled to put off some greater struggle that threatens, at a more fundamental level, any purposeful movement through massively inhabited regions. Even leaving home is difficult. Walking down the stairs and onto the street; there can't be a street that goes to open country. There are too many transitions and the continuity is lost at least by the time you hit the pawn shop district. You can't stand in the city and look down the street and think of pasture at the end of it, or wild animals whose sounds you might want to hear from your room sometimes on cloudy nights like a train whistle far off as if they had been directed along a vast corridor mysteriously like the displaced echoes in domed buildings. The snow absorbs anything like that — any transfer of attention. But the Huns, oh my soul, from a safe distance, jangling and tinkling sounded like fairyland. Even now if a sound like that could happen somehow there would be uneasiness at the breakfast table; fathers and mothers would put down their forks and raise their napkins and turn their heads to the window to listen again past the noise of pigeons and traffic and children up the street playing stickball or something in the snow. Look at the bums in the park, their small heads and the way they can sit still for hours sober or drunk, how they husband the odds and ends they find and concentrate on them and keep them in their place and keep watch. They could be dormant, wrapped up and in-

nocent until every now and then something rouses them, they stir at the memory of it and feel the weight of furs on their backs, hunch over a little and sway in the cold like elephants, like remnants of a pastoral nation or throwbacks. They're not very noticeable because the angle of sunlight when it gets through is vertical but in flat country beyond the city it would be striking to see them in the morning at the first light casting long shadows. What could they think, being bums, at that hour.

Within the arrangement of house and garden anyone can be like a spirit; you can rattle around without a worry about location which, in a formal sense, has been traded for place. Location at home is vague and elastic; it hardly obtains at all, there's no need for it exactly because what needs location is oneself and home dilutes or extends or confuses oneself and the hard (and maybe frightening) maintenance of location is relaxed in the process of making a place habitual (oneself is location and location corresponds to the convention of it even if, in some way, it can be understood as multiple or arbitrarily distributed in that it can't really be true that oneself can't be another because, if you decide to invent a discussable, detachable self and make an exchange between two people, no difference can be detected because memory doesn't go along with it. It doesn't carry information. So the easiest answer, at least, to why you can't be someone else is there is no way to know you're not.)

The idea of place contains the idea of living there so closely within it, it's difficult to understand which is the first notion. Anyplace you see (even if it's obviously uninhabitable) is immediately someplace to live. The poet Robert Trammell liked to imagine going to live beneath the pink Cadillac parked at the home of a wealthy Dallas cosmetics manufacturer. It seemed to offer an elegant means of ritual humiliation like washing the feet of beggars but his real interest was in the mechanics of it — the kinds of equipment he would need, how to syphon water from the radiator, tap small quantities of gasoline for the collapsible camp stove, disperse the smoke and conceal the smells and acquire the instinct and cunning to sense when the car was about to be used. Eventually, he decided, he would come to inhabit the car completely, no longer needing to leave it for any reason but, gradually having accustomed himself thoroughly to the structure of it, he would ride along secured in the framework snatching up raw materials and bits of discarded clothing from the street. Thus he would live for months or years until the accumulation of small adjustments for personal accommodation became too much, the pathology too invasive and the car, overcome by inexplicable malfunctions, would be hoisted onto the mechanic's lift and at last there would be the hideous poet lodged in the undercarriage — a fundamental presence by now like Gluttony grinning down at the cosmetics manufacturer who, in the shock of primitive understanding, gazes up into the awful heart of the Cadillac which may be interpreted to represent the entire Western World.

Architecture could be an analogue to land, a kind of diagram or a reduction and, so, an interpretation of it. Or architecture could imitate land; it could mean it and remind you of it and be a kind of theoretical land where it's safe to be, not because it describes a safe place but because it means the land in general and is generally safe. But in any case there is an exchange. There is a house instead of land and there's restfulness that comes with generality. Imagine neolithic farmers a little uncertain in the tended fields — something constructed on the land

like architecture, almost like home — and standing in the tall grass like being lost or suspended in the world or part way to heaven, everyone to some extent representing the species. A village like Mureybit in Syria might be about as comprehensible as a West Texas town with a population of a couple of hundred and very few public structures but one or two of these with orange plastic mansard roof false-front awnings which retain here the virtue, though none of the history, of France. There's a clear sense of the countryside and every house is approached by it and the imminence of it among the houses is a disruption or a discontinuity that makes it seem leaving or coming home were a kind of error. Things loose in the driveways and yards are at risk. Inside is sentiment and outside is land.

Little houses in small towns might contain primordial sentiment. It precedes literacy and it could have survived here like Bushmen or sharks just dimly responding to modernness, new kinds of grass and soil, a change in the temperature, ennui or something unpronounceable. Leaving the house for work in the morning is profound and dangerous; there's mystery when the cat wants in at night; and there's longing which may attach to particular things but is fundamental. It derives from the discontinuity and so it's an architectural effect.

Sometimes you see one of those small houses with white, finely corrugated wavy-edged asbestos tile siding and the dirt and grass come up right against it without any introduction and you think how can it stand it, what can the childhood be like growing up at that razor-sharp intersection. Especially in summer, in the afternoon light, you can imagine the heat coming off the side of the house and, standing there, you can feel the house on one side and on the other just ground and distance.

Can you get to the edge of the Palace of Versailles; is there an end to it or is there always something probably belonging to it a little farther out. It doesn't intend to stop. It has to but in principle it goes on forever and it can't be understood in a simple architectural way because there's no land around it or, like the wall behind a picture, whatever land there is isn't addressed. It's not a house and land hasn't been exchanged for it; there's no compromise. It's a local expression or revelation of some latent process in the world like an oil refinery or a field of crops and the feeling for people being there is like the feeling you have for farmers outside at work, contained by what they are doing and a little out of place. In some way it might be rudimentary or preliminary to a house or a village — a house comes from the thought of a place and a place isn't a container and it isn't a frame. It's reflective and simply architectural and like a hard mathematical problem where land and the house intersect. But unlike Versailles or a planted field, there is no surprise when the house actually stops and the land begins — when you come to the edge of it. The house and the land are discontinuous but have about equal value and the strangeness of walking around in a small town has to do with this: a kind of dreamy terror and an exhilaration like the cartoons with Bugs Bunny or Daffy Duck hypnotized or sleep-walking onto a busy construction site and pacing each rising, tilting girder as it swings accidentally into the space where he steps hauling him up until nothing but death or an elaborate mechanism can resolve the discrepancy between what he thinks and what we know is true.

Asbestos siding is wavy to be decorative. It is like the sea. It shows the ancient reflex not to leave anything well enough alone — you should fiddle with it or mark it up with whatever's

on your mind or the minds of others who have done it before. Decorated things have appropriated facts about the world; anything someone makes or cares to see attracts everything he knows to it as if the process of choosing what it will be were disengaged from the main achievement and keeps on running for a while or as if facts were so similar or so precarious they survive best in clumps. Decoration expresses beholding something. It's like a splash or ripples of water or clouds of dust. It is confirmation. If the asbestos siding were straight, if it had no waves, your memory after years might slip right past and the house and all the time spent there would be doubtful.

Constructing the decoration of something is like constructing the memory of it. Decoration suggests as strongly as possible that something can be remembered, that it can't be forgotten and that choosing to remember it out of all the things that might confuse it is like making it or seeing it in the first place and, probably, that that process is still going on. Decorating something makes it honest and keeps it available because it shows it is understood in some way — the frailty of it and the insecurity of memory.

Something near to something else is on the verge of being decorated by it. Neolithic pots impressed with the patterns of marine shells and twine are explaining themselves like the frontier family in the nineteenth century photograph or like modern refrigerators whose white enamel steel panels are impressed with the pattern of coarsely grained leather although in this case the motive is harder to understand unless it is to represent a kind of phylogeny, a reminder of their goatskin origins like the gills which are supposed to appear briefly at some stage in human fetal development.

The impressions in the clay pot aren't complements but alternates; they aren't there to be appropriate. They are regarded in turn with the pot, before it and after it, confirming the rhythm in which things are remembered and forgotten and remembered again — the progress of the world's distractions can be anticipated and governed and to some extent explained.

Lumping things together like that is trying to explain them and the impulse and the necessity of it is more visible when it's not controlled by notions of appropriateness or grace. Like the souvenir clocks you see sometimes in shops along Texas highways, each one molded into a massive clear plastic case which is bonded to a turquoise-colored back and imbedded with little regional emblems like six-guns and cowboys and star-shaped badges and coils of rope. Whatever is being explained is unclear but it's urgent. If it were an alarm clock the confusion of it would make more sense. In the morning when the thing went off it would be apprehended furiously or in shock, the trinkets in the clear plastic floating away from the clock face at the center. "Wake up, buckaroo," the turquoise clock would say then, "your dreams are scattered like springs and cogs, there are no bright moments, no range and no cattle."

The basic sentiment that comes with a house might only be a longing to go outside or to be able to go outside without sacrificing or suspending important knowledge. Imagine Robert Trammell under his car, devoted to it but paused between trips and caught at a change in the seasons like the beginning of autumn just as the calm of the neighborhood seems to strike; the airconditioners are off and fallen leaves haven't accumulated enough to make rustling piles in the street. Maybe he has brothers or sisters he hasn't thought of in a while or some old failure comes back to him and he moves to the edge of his space and looks out pulling back his hair as if there were cur-

tains and a prairie outside as flat as the pavement and no cattle or trees where the mind could rest. Moments of childhood occur to him, each one complete and like a premonition without historical attachment. This is the kind of sorrow that belongs to some poor dust bowl wife whose mind can't rest, whose house hasn't time to resolve — you think of her house as the one on the old Folkways record album covers, the sepia photograph of what seems to be a sod house pre-dating by thirty years at least the Great Depression and the pictures of Walker Evans; but that's the house you think of nonetheless just barely distinguished, in the blowing dust and grain of the old photograph, from the other phases of earth it is among; like ice among water or steam — terrifically precarious (you get the idea folk music is supposed to arise from a situation like that and whatever is on the record seems the more virtuous having been squeezed out and captured in the final stages of desiccation).

From a small house it seems that remembered things are regainable in fact, that outside, strictly out of doors, sequence can break down and history can break down like a population of domestic turkeys loose and confronted by a low board fence or any kind of opaque surmountable barrier; it is said they will all be struck with a compulsion to investigate the other side and, having flapped over, they are struck symmetrically again by the purest root of curiosity and back and forth they go all day as if any stimulus not repeated regularly since the Miocene were an injury to them. They are a test for pure ideas divorced from every other faculty and reason; they give up knowledge at the drop of a hat.

Maybe the closest available thing to apprehending the past is discovering the peculiar habits of your relatives. It's very difficult, for example, to believe in what they have for breakfast or why they might go about it the way they do. You are compelled to think they shouldn't behave in ways that seem strange, that always having known their names and their voices should be sufficient to establish them and condone whatever they do, but it isn't. That sort of strangeness is like faulty memory; it's always surprising — the ideas of relatives and history are a politeness. Whatever you did yesterday is understood as history. You learn what you did yesterday by remembering it and you know what you are doing by remembering it and the difference between now and then is a great formality.

But you can imagine it failing and that it might not take much — like a visit to your aunt's, the reality of it. At breakfast the sequence at the table is different; there's a gulf between you and what happens there; everything is genuinely surprising like finding an old photograph of someplace you've been, catching your breath at it before you remember again as if there's a moment of suspension before history takes over.

A car is a house or it tends to be. The discontinuity between the house and the land is not significantly greater when the land is in motion. Transportation is something extra like plumbing or windows. You don't really want to ride sitting up perched in a car like you're supposed to; you want to get down inside and listen and think of solid motionless things while the land passes by. You want to hang things from the rearview mirror, put pillows in the back, lace patterns on the painted dash — a quietness to everything, reflective and full of history. Even lower the car until it's only an inch or two above the street, its ability to move over real ground theoretical; then when it appears at different places different times it's almost miraculous — a great consolidation of memorable things barely attached to the earth like a soul, as complex as home, here and there at will.

A house establishes or confirms the idea of decoration, recognizing particulars and lumping them together, keeping them, storage. Knowledge is decorative. Decoration seems practically unexplainable but it seems to come first.

In the hills around Mexico City in Cuernavaca and Tepoztlán houses spring up anywhere, compelled just by the recognition of places for them. It's hard for a visitor at first to see them and know what they are, their extent and their degree of separateness — like dazzle-painted wartime ships, you know something is there but not very accurately. They engage each other and the outside more readily than North American houses usually do. They are more active or even reactive as in the chemical sense when substances are heated.

It's easier in Mexico to pass between and in and out of houses. Like the house where George Burns and Gracie Allen lived on the old television show, the ghostliness of people passing through it so frequently with so little reason — it was necessary to believe in the outside as a medium to which people could be consigned and through which they were understood to be transmitted but it wasn't supposed to be explicit. Nevertheless with so much coming and going the house seemed penetrated by the thought of outside bearing people through rooms like a flood or something so much more subtle one's motion relative to it really couldn't be verified.

Mexican popular architecture is heedless and, in this respect, serene. The walls seem to confirm what you already know — here is a place to stay. As if elaborate shelter could be snatched from the outside almost anywhere without much trouble, the structures are like markers not, primarily, to protect someplace but to remember it. Even massive walls brightly painted look hollow; nothing can be that color clear through. It's not impermanent. But it's accessible immediately — the tortilla shop on the Plaza at Tepoztlán has high turquoise-colored walls and a vast interior the same color; it's much more space than they need, airy and dim as an institution, you could pass right through without buying a tortilla.

The essence of hot rods isn't exactly speed, it's the exhilaration of private housing.

Giant dice hanging from the rearview mirror demonstrate careless resignation but unlike tattoos (too laborious to be careless or playful) there's no sense of apology or defeat.

Tassels around the roof-liner show memory and affection as do little dogs nodding by the back window — the force of compassion like kindness on the battlefield, it doesn't belong there but what can you do.

Getting the car down close to the street, making it seem to float, brings it near disaster and an understanding of its temporariness like houses built on cliffs or Mexican architecture. The engine is not like a hearth; no one is really comforted by it. It's more like Fate or a large pet animal, there's comfort in the absence of malfunction.

Curtains by the windows of a house are like a wish; to make windows seem flexible as the valves of the heart to let the outside in more easily, to hope life is not difficult.

Tables, especially in sunlight early or late in the day, bring the floor up, present it to you as something of interest — "Look at this, all this would have been on the floor." Children see it at eye-level or a little above and it calms them to know they live beneath some commonplace achievement.

Your house is like a cartoon house. Like the earliest animated cartoons before things settled down, everything flexible and ready to be animate, things so identifiable — recognizable

at such a great distance — nothing needs a cause because nothing derives from anything else; things have pulled away and separated out until everything, completely distinct with nothing to compromise, is concentrated and loose and poised to break out with volition. Cartoons rehearse the mechanics of recognition: how to know things aren't you by testing, rendering them into your own terms to be sure of the comparison; how to know things aren't each other if they are different from you in different ways.

The value of ordinary household ornaments is the fact of them or that they hold a place for facts like practicing a musical scale or multiplication tables without having to think about it. They occur to children like practice memory, models of thoughts handed down to them usually with a kind of gloss that hardens their ordinariness, approves vagueness in the home like a condition of half-sleep everywhere throughout the house a condition of preparing to think about something.

Ornaments installed outside the house are startling. Confused with conventions of gardens and good taste it's hard to see but it pops through frequently enough like flamingos and plaster animals — they are fundamentally startling as fireworks or mirrors; they are startling all your life.

There's a temptation to try for an ethnological sampling of this — bring Asia and New Guinea into it — but it's probably not at all universal for major ornament to remain so pure and careless and uninvolved with ideas of utility that it confronts you primarily as a reminder, that you are merely reminded in someone's front yard not to forget about donkey carts with sleeping Mexicans in them, for example, although it's bound to be a lie. Probably nowhere in the world are there really donkey carts with Mexicans sleeping in them. At some point there might have been, some historical moment, but not now. It's as if these things — donkey carts and Mexicans and flamingos and ceramic animals — have paused to rest. They had been passing by but they have stopped for a moment and you must assume they are representatives of a parade of wonders like the trinkets in the souvenir clock always passing but only sometimes available.

Being reminded like this is startling. It suggests how temporary and loseable things are just plucked from the ordinary world and set out with no supporting documents or ritual to speak of. If the Mexican in the donkey cart illustrated a fable you could forget parts of the fable but remain prepared to remember them; the story entails them. Commemorative monuments, memorials, are similarly not fundamentally startling. They are involved with the utility of a story and, even if the story is strange, the utility of such stories is not, nor the function of memorials within them. But just picked out and put in the yard and left there for people to see without any introduction, a miniature donkey cart with a sleeping Mexican has to address you directly and suddenly to remind you of it and, sure enough, unless you live across the street you had forgotten.

The Mexican in the donkey cart represents pure knowledge. It's startling to have it expressed that things might just be remembered like this unannounced out in the open. Preparation is important; information needs preparation but the sleeping Mexican suggests information may come regardless, unbeckoned; that knowledge distinct from psychology is real and inappropriate.

Although he represents the fact, he can commemorate the event and you can involve him to this extent in a kind of reflexive utility: you can think, "We are all like sleeping Mexicans."

He is not prepared for anything now; he prepared a place in the donkey cart but that was some time ago and now he has dozed off. The donkey cart is the world or the idea of place, the Mexican is everyone, the sombrero implies bright sunlight and the contrast between that and the dimness of his sleep is a little like the inexact contrast between his brilliant colors and his motionlessness. There is a conflict suggesting an unstable condition on the verge of collapse. He's not doing what he should be doing or he's stopped doing it. He would rather be home; the big sombrero and the donkey cart seem almost to provide one but not quite and, failing, emphasize his separation from it. Years later on a shady veranda he would tell his grandchildren about it — how his sombrero kicked back like a pot lid in the heat and the sudden flash left him desolate for a month and the City Fathers had cast the big statue from which all the miniatures ultimately derive.

How can you regain events? How can it seem reasonable to think of it? One solution might be to decide it's not, the sense of lost events is a mistake; that events are all "lost" by definition so you can eliminate from this sense of loss any real content. Something about the perceived distribution of events, then, invites analogy with that of things but the analogy is not a very good one or it is carried too far and drags sentiment along with it.

On the other hand, events might not be distributed and a sense of loss might attach to events incidentally. Things in this case "stand" for events, locate them. Things are distributed or express distribution and this would be close to a definition. Thus, events are not loseable and in fact may be always regained but, like the case of transferable identity (the detachable self), you may not know it. It's not testable. You remain located.

If you stand in front of a mirror, what experiment can you perform to show you are not really double — that the phenomenon isn't symmetrical and the experience of your reflection isn't identical to yours? An experiment involving the speed of light might appear to show "you" are the initiator of an action but, because the mirror intervenes at half the apparent distance, the interval is the same as if the action were simultaneously performed by both. Of course you don't need a mirror. You can imagine you are more than one self anytime and all you are doing is confusing the convention of many with the convention of one. So, if you imagine this what can you be trying to understand? If anything, it must be location.

Get rid of the mirror gradually. From a perfect mirror to one with spots and distortions — everything remains symmetrical; the mirror intervenes impartially and distortions are reciprocal. Then from an imperfect mirror to a shadow — the shadow is like a very imperfect mirror and the principle still obtains. Like the mirror the shadow is an aid to concentration; it helps you know where to "put" the thought of another self. It is a fundamentally geographical understanding like the perceived distribution of events. Finally remove the shadow and what's left is whatever you happen to see, any particular of which must be meant, recognized and proven not to be you.

The thought of the past probably isn't illusory in any meaningful way but it seems to require effort. It seems to need concentration and require your attention almost like things. Maybe no one really believes in the past or in the reality of it at least — that events have someplace to go like heaven.

If you had a reasonably happy childhood, when you look at a photograph from that time in your life you feel something like

longing. Longing is complete like sorrow in the sense the composition of it is describable and doesn't seem to require a solution. Longing shouldn't be confusing but when you look at an old photograph and think about it closely, confusion is at the bottom of your feelings toward it. A photograph isn't better evidence of the past than anything else but it is more explicit because the observation of the object is the most conspicuous thing reproduced — it is more conspicuous than the object itself which may be reproduced by other means. The inaccuracies of a photograph — its margin, flatness and motionlessness — are understandable as a single artifact and so they are easier to ignore than the inaccuracies of a motion picture whose essential limits are difficult to understand in a simple way because they are so active; they continuously and separately impede or participate in the effect. A photograph reproduces the observation of things in the past. Like memory and unlike motion pictures, a photograph suggests events should be recognizable like things. It suggests things remembered are like paused events, that events should be available like things, that you should be able to acquire events and keep them and that the interval between you and an event is geographical and it describes a relationship, a place where you and the event can be. You long for events but either events are not available or they are not distributed. That's why there is confusion.

Longing for events seems to be an odd thing to do. It might never have occurred to Huns or animals. It seems architectural — something you tend to do at home. Geography tells you where things are. It tells you things are distributed. A house demonstrates geography, collects the thought of it, keeps this understanding of the distribution and availability of things. The frontier family arrayed with their possessions in the nineteenth century photograph shows it clearly as if they were a diagram: the procedures for geographical understanding, the simplest terms for it. In the middle of nowhere they have picked out things to show. They stand around and smile as if they were benevolent, as if compassion were somehow involved in understanding what they have chosen to display, as if knowledge were compassionate. Nothing can be clearer than this.

[The above excerpt from David Searcy's *A Trip to the Sun is the continuation of the opening of the work as published in Boxcar 1.*]

*Tracing of the Dawn*

5:50 a.m.  
 crude light cinder  
 swift trees to the south  
 chasing the mist

doubly unreal advances

bandaged armored  
 scarcely a buzzing a  
 simultaneous panorama something  
 thinks of you

frost or snow

alms included ghostly  
 when it says

PRAT AIRPORT 8 km.

your experience of heaven  
 directions

short cuts  
 and alibis

time turns towards where  
 for what reason

nineteen hundred and forty seven ?  
 fog which scatters memory  
 Malcolm Lowry describes the approach to Curazao  
 Greek English Liberian ships  
 beneath a water-color sky  
 the breeze stinks

doubly unreal advances

water stained with forebodings  
 steep red tile roofs like in a Dutch  
 fairy tale which took place in the tropics

the RIO ATUEL  
 Argentine ship

docked at an oil pier  
 against the dark drop of the refineries

I can feel the velvet moss  
 the breathing of the pampa along the hull  
 this burning corrosion

walled up in the age  
disconsolate eyes that visit you  
from an English paragraph

tame cargo ship of other turbulent waters

as if there were some special reason  
for this fact in the frantic notebook  
inconclusive  
courageous Malcolm

an emotion a bundle  
or a pretext  
if not what good is it

time spins towards where  
for what reason

Louise was about to be raped in a carriage  
by the lustful veteran Alfred de Musset

ah ! la belle étude que j'ai faite là

everything would be easier if

doubly unreal advances

the approach to Curazao is the most pathetic in the world  
I try to imagine life in the hold of a cargo ship  
the pure aseptic horror of all that  
death infested with small-pox in the ships of the period

abomination of the desolation

but at least we'll drink rum thinks Sibjorn  
while through a porthole he notices the rickety  
trees like closed umbrellas  
inconsolable dunes that recall a landscape  
of rubbish or the worst confines  
of the Sonora desert in Mexico

and the siren from the Río Atuel that bleeds  
like a misunderstanding  
in the purple dawn

doubly unreal advances

desperate abuses and plunder  
and scandalous symmetries  
piling up under the dispersed light

did you not plunder Keats the old Conrad ?

a real tragedy must be implicated  
in this history

or is it that his inner agitation  
mere tangle of piano keys pulses  
usurping of the experience  
does not evaporate even in its swing  
the arduous simulacrum of an impossible memory  
but all the more tenacious  
devouring silhouette of a freighter masked  
in the fog

in whose artful pursuit  
mouth of shadows frictions and dances  
the concerted terror of pain might become incarnate  
sealing forever the chance of the poem  
its reality recovered ?

doubly unreal advances

the track races  
the tongue ventures  
fine tendons the vowels  
docile strings stirred  
in the open half-light

swift trees to the south  
chasing the mist

crude light cinder  
5:50 a.m.

time spins towards where  
for what reason

### *As If Nothing But His Own Calamity*

knows no other birds of sight harsher than his  
own desires  
nor remembers other cats of conduct smoother  
than his own senses

wolf thirsty for himself as well  
his howling hinders the morale  
of those who weep in the mind's cathedrals

later orders his wines  
turns on lights, no one knows the reason  
for such lights  
speaks of when they come chopping heads

he has the simplest visions  
and does not find words easily  
then he roars

explodes  
loves his scream  
guts through the air

Five Poems

Translation: Cola Franzen

Sueñocieno

embarcarás con la penumbra  
 silenciosombrasueñocieno en la cuna negra  
 sombrasilenciocienosueño navegarás por el pantano  
 hurongrumonegruzcojugocorruptorujos por la pizarra quieta  
 pardaparca la bruma tu ribera parcaparda  
 borrará cienosilenciosueñosombra sobre la borda llena  
 no verás lanchero truncofurortumorrumoruteroscuro  
 no reconocerás sueñosilenciocienosombra derivarás  
 dónde hurtotopornocturnotaciturnoturno  
 adormilado bogarás por el silencioso cieno  
 solondofondosondodoloasolo bogarás  
 por la sombra cenagosa bogarás bogarás

con la penumbra embarco  
 silenciosombrasueñocieno en la cuna negra  
 sombrasilenciocienosueño navego por el pantano  
 hurongrumonegruzcojugocorruptorujos por la pizarra quieta  
 pardaparca la bruma mi ribera parcaparda  
 borra cienosilenciosueñosombra sobre la borda llena  
 no veo lanchero truncofurortumorrumoruteroscuro  
 no reconozco sueñosilenciocienosombra derivo  
 dónde hurtotopornocturnotaciturnoturno  
 adormilado bogo por el silencioso cieno  
 solondofondosondodoloasolo bogo  
 por la sombra cenagosa bogo bogo

from *Acaso Acaso*, Pre-Textos/Poesía, Valencia, Spain 1982

Ratifica

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from *Rimbomba*, Poesía Hiperión Peralta, Pamplona 1978

Reverieriver

you will embark with coming of dusk  
 silenceshadowreverieriver in the black cradle  
 shadowsilenceriverreverie you will go sailing through the marshes  
 bashfulclusterblackishessencecorruptinggrumbling across the quiescent slate  
 dingystingy fog for your shoreline stingydingy  
 you will erase riversilencereverieshadow over the full mainsail  
 you will see no oarsman torsofurortumorrumoruterusobscuring  
 you will not perceive reveriesilencerivershadow you will go adrift  
 where larcenytorpornocturnetaciturninturn  
 slumberously you will row along the silent river  
 lonedowngroundsoundroundalone you will row  
 through the muddy shadow you will row you will row

with coming of dusk I embark  
 silenceshadowreverieriver in the black cradle  
 shadowsilenceriverreverie I go sailing through the marshes  
 bashfulclusterblackishessencecorruptinggrumbling across the quiescent slate  
 dingystingy fog for my shoreline stingydingy  
 I erase riversilencereverieshadow over the full mainsail  
 I see no oarsman torsofurortumorrumoruterusobscuring  
 I do not perceive reveriesilencerivershadow I go adrift  
 where larcenytorpornocturnetaciturninturn  
 slumberously I row along the silent river  
 lonedowngroundsoundroundalone I row  
 through the muddy shadow I row I row

Ratifies

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## Rolling Stones

like stubborn water  
infiltrates  
and propagates me

peels and skins  
the orange  
sections and breaks it  
splattering himself  
as if that might  
sate him

they are up to 23  
I have the 576

aimlessly he wanders  
not knowing he is circling  
his house

little and a lot:  
a door  
a chair  
a window  
the mirror  
and my images

### Delay

the bread has grown hard  
the wine has turned sour  
and the soup cold

from *Rimbomba*, Poesía Hiperión Peralta, Pamplona 1978

## Tumbles and Rumbles

so many accounts I count up  
of all my losses  
and of my muddles  
subtracting and adding  
as if the past  
in addition to increasing  
were able to correct  
as if my present were  
a matter of calculation  
as if my future  
would let itself be proved  
there are no abracadabras that work  
no master keys  
no precision instruments  
for this flux  
that zigzags  
who knows how far and how long  
that keeps cutting capers  
on the trapeze

stop your tumbles and rumbles  
little acrobat  
you've already played clown and lion tamer  
spotlights illuminate  
the top of the tent  
drums roll  
here comes the somersault  
be careful  
don't fall

from *Rimbomba*, Poesía Hiperión Peralta, Pamplona 1978

## Story

This is my story. At last. It's not different from others, I am not different from others, but this particular story I got hold of. In this one I am the principal character.

I wander about, pondering, passing the time.

Now I go out, stroll around, sit down on a bench in the square, watch what's going on.

I think extraordinary things, but they don't happen.

Later I feel hungry. I ought to wait.

My desires change.

I do the same as always.

It's my story. While I can I hold on to it, expand it. I never had such an opportunity before. I don't want to let it get away.

Things happen, various things happen.

I find it's not worth the trouble to give the details. I don't know about putting someone else in. I don't want to share my story.

from *Rimbomba*, Poesía Hiperión Peralta, Pamplona 1978

## Dennis Phillips

2 poems from *The Hero Is Nothing*

1.  
We fall to the underworld by choice.  
Smaller and smaller details beckon.  
Their voices imagined, finite.  
We cannot retrieve lost things.

But insoluble darkness  
drinks light and sound and touch,  
pulls us to its shore.

We arrive without offerings  
for the voices awaiting blood.

We bring only heat  
which rises back to overworld.

No voice greets us.  
Nothing is received.

2.  
Then find it  
barren as always.

A minuscule change, angle of light,  
that's all. I would stop here.  
I would stop and wait for recall.  
Instead I salmon up this dry bed some  
instinctual pool calling me but arid  
I slap down on hot boulders, belly over, push  
against air.

At the pool Persephone is laughing.  
She opens a red fruit:  
it's filled with fish eyes.  
"You're here anyway," she says.

*go or come again*

meditation for days like rime  
 reading at once a voice  
 & the actual leaf in dream  
     shade to curtain  
     you enter the you  
 that enters  
 rain  
     in the botanical gardens  
 inside a green-house  
 imagining  
     few pages  
 dripping  
     the second time  
 a crown of earth-worms  
     water in the room  
     a central theme  
 exists as speech  
 sometimes thru parables  
 fragments historically  
 talk &  
     sometimes listen  
     because no-one answers  
 the bell keeps ringing  
     “what’s wrong with you,”  
 talking thru this book  
 a small black hair  
     transplanted by signs  
 & singing

*location.*

according to who am I lost. not the last  
 shade from the tree, its  
 partial light.  
     the sound of sleep  
 not yet lying in the window.  
 wanting to see doors  
 visible as rooms  
 maybe I hear them speak.  
 it’s easy to watch the ceiling  
 the corner of the wall  
 count the cracks that continue.  
 the idea of falling  
 not standing up.  
     words come clean, another  
 sea-green vase. a chair  
 reshapes everything.  
 cat in the cradle a stroke of luck. ( an opening  
 or my head in a pillow. sight of how  
 exact I must be. length  
 to make the table.  
     to govern at least  
 something today  
 leaves the yellow of leaves.  
 marks made or stairs out of stone.  
 sheets made of stone.  
 sky not the blue I mean.

*It might as well be spring: an elegy*

You keep coming back in men who get younger  
 all the time so there you are at thirty  
 in the front row listening to “it might as well  
 be spring” and picking on your hands in the same way.

And when I get home from evenings of vodka  
 and songs such as these I sleep all night with you,  
 two of you walking in and out of a backyard  
 that might have been my own, holding identical glasses  
 of some sort you are as real as lawn chairs  
 that mark up the thighs of women, that have to be  
 tied down as a hurricane sweeps the Cape.

One of you the man I saw last night at Donte’s  
 sitting too still and listening to a trombone  
 as if he had nowhere else to be, arrived there  
 without any of the things he could return home to,  
 solitary, like a floating image from a dream;

And one my knowledge, even asleep, you had died  
 years before and by thirty had taken so many drugs,  
 so much abuse, even a truck—walking into it  
 on Market Street—and didn’t look like this man  
 at all but might have if you hadn’t  
 taken the pain of it straight.

During the night as the two of you cross  
 and recross the lawn I sit hot in the sun watching.  
 I know you only like this now, split and healthy  
 through years of dreaming, and I know by morning  
 you’ll be drowned again and gone.

*Still life for my mother*  
 (after reading *Chardin and the Still-life Tradition in France*)

The glinting of musical instruments and eggs  
 and oranges and meat pies, how simple it all was  
 then, no one coveted anything I thought  
 in the world of still life painting and everything  
 held still: *quoe virtute et quanta sit/  
 vivero parvo* with cheese and petals falling  
 to the table.

She’s dying this year for all of us.  
 It has gathered into her chest. The petals  
 on the table are beautiful, the artichoke;  
 Cezanne was hungry for bread.

What could I give up,  
 what would it take. Take all the flowers  
 from every still life vase. I’d grow purple iris  
 across the entire countryside of Southern France.

*Underwater Interlude*

fast in the grip  
of the starfish  
fifty fathoms down  
I feel the pulse  
deep inside her my lips  
on the arch of her foot I  
see the day flow away  
like a slow fuse and up  
up faraway up there  
quiver the great blue screens!

*They're Wrong to Call It the Little Death  
and To Hell with the Here and Now*

"I do not believe in the witchcraft  
she practices on me. . . ."  
— Caravaggio

we take our pleasure, it is dark and regal  
and strange, she could be Guinivere  
risking Hell and her crown and damn their eyes  
it's worth it ten times over and I  
I hope to die at the last thrust lost  
in her smell of sweat and vanilla we pause  
I want her again but we pause and  
casually she tears off a toenail  
drawing blood then slyly tucks it  
under my mattress: scary but  
so moving: Guinivere  
to the life

then she shifts a lazy shoulder and  
Tara Tintagel Lyonesse the  
whole damned Bronze Age  
rolls up against me  
her fingers lace into mine  
on the wet tuft of her sex I  
want her again our two hands become  
one great paw I'm into her again  
don't know where any longer but  
into her Christ! is this Africa?  
I smell blood and grass I search  
her face as I come the lioness  
glows in the antelope's eye

*Camp Starvation Aug 5*

There be nothing to eat here Just bugs and trap  
door spiders I eaten a little root I dug this  
morning which was bitter It must of been some  
kind of loco weed for I been crazy all day Not  
over it yet I dont think because just a while  
back a little cloud fetch past out of the south  
just sailing along ever so lovely and I up and  
running after it I cant run much being much  
weakened Not much to nourish up on here So I  
fallen down and see my fool self sitting in the  
dirt trying to cry with my arms raised up My  
hands stretched out for the cloud and my damned  
old fingers turn to dust Fall right off my fists  
I know this is crazy so no more of them roots  
for me Just bugs till I croak and it is the bugs  
turn But no real cloud ever was so fair You  
should have seen it

All the boys are dead the whole troop I wish I  
could say they died good but not true Some real  
bad ways to die out here and I wish there was no  
eating of bodies but this is a true report and  
the truth is there was some of that Not me on my  
oath never me But Corporal Wingos kidney was  
offered to me It was roast on a long stick I lie  
if I say I didnt want to but not me I am Sergeant  
and I would not though the fat drippings smelt  
ever so good Sergeants do not eat Troopers I let  
them eat it though I just ate my bugs and puked  
A lot of good it did them All dead now but me and  
soon me

I could maybe hike out Still strong enough I think  
Have to slice meat to do it Make jerky Could just  
about make it No sir Not this old soldier I wont  
slice that meat Any how I got them into this I  
thought I knew the short cut God damn me for  
that All my young troopers dead and my fault God  
damn my sorry ass I will not slice meat and  
pack out I will just eat bugs and die God damn  
my sorry ass

*Love. Love.  
How do the others bear it?  
The white cloud  
drifts out of my reach;  
sour dust stops my nostrils.  
How do the others bear it?*

Éden, Éden, Éden excerpt

Translation: Graham Fox

WHORE-MASTER climbing up into bedroom, crouching under gas-ring, opening green plastic bucket, hands plunging, pulling out scraps of stewed meat: cartilage, guts, pink mass swelling transparent plastic; Wazzag springing onto staircase, edging — slow, simmering — along bedroom wall, over to encrusted gas-ring; slaver frothing at corners of lips; whore-master plunging scraps back into stew, pulling, lifting bucket against chest, going down stairs; hitched up on sweaty toes, blaze of hair skin eyes nails body-hair reinforced, curves of cheeks shoulders chest buttocks hams shaped afresh, capturing all light, Wazzag, standing in front with head turned back, quivering, eyes fixed on tepid mass slopping; held against whore-master's chest; master placing bucket in front of bolted latrine, moving away: Wazzag, whimpering, crouching, plunging head into bucket, lapping up stew; teeth catching on meaty bone; face rising, smattered with juice, bone held up against nostrils; plunging back; Wazzag, spitting out bone, gobbling soft meat, cartilage broken by cooking, swallowing chunks unchewed; gulping, swallowing; muscles of neck, stiffened, dilating under pressure of pieces swallowed; top of belly hollowing, bottom swelling; pushing bone aside with muzzle, snuffling meaty juices; whore's member, softened, bouncing on thighs, hands trembling on rim of bucket; whore-master pulling at hips of whore, grasping hair, neck, pulling; Wazzag growling, gravy drowning cry; whore-master seizing shoulders, knee striking small of back, stroking nape; on wall, mucus of butcher's lad slithering; on ground, jissom spreading out drying; whore-master, Wazzag's mouth growling against arm, pulling meaty bone from bucket, holding bone between fingers above mouth of Wazzag rearing up on haunches, rounded buttocks pressed firm against heels; tongue of whore touching bone; whore-master letting bone drop, Wazzag catching morsel between teeth, crouching, sliding along wall to garden; leaning back against tamarisk, nibbling bone, tearing, swallowing meat, neck thrown back — smooth, straining, spurred to top by swallowed lump; shambling across garden; whore-master opening latrine, placing bucket on foot-rest; club-foot straightening up, pulling up scrap of pink meat rimmed with fat, lifting fist over face flung back, juicy scrap of meat trailing over lips: sucked into mouth; whore-master lifting leg; toes stroking club-foot's straining neck, jamming neck into corner; body suffocating; scrap of meat, half-swallowed, not chewed, obstructing gullet; whore-master grabbing hair of choking body, bowing head towards hole, placing foot over meat-scrap trailing with one end stuck to layer of excrement, pushing head of body back into corner; scrap of meat emerging, dripping with slaver; body panting, catching scrap — still stuck to chin — between teeth, sucking, swallowing; whore-master pulling meat from mouth, scrap coiling up in hole; body heaving, pressing back into corner; whore-master lifting bucket, opening mouth in view of body, tipping bucket toward fat lips of body; lips opening, master pouring meat-juice, in small doses; eyes of body, after each mouthful, looking up,

shining; lid of bucket beating against throat; Wazzag, sitting cross-legged on hay, in shed — acid odour of apprentice lingering—, nibbling at bone, sniffing at pockets of air embalmed with jissom, with minium, tearing meat from bone; all around, in shifting hay, jissom dropping mixed with dust, with sand; Wazzag's piglets grunting in shed, his birds, driven up into beams during copulation, drawn down by smell of meat, perching on shoulders; member, stiffening at din of club-foot choking, bouncing back over heels pressed together: pinching balls between hard sticky corners; club-foot, belly bloated, rising up, positioning feet on foot-rest, crouching; whore-master holding tightened bucket against chest, closing door; excrement bursting shiny pink, burying disgorged meat-scrap in hole; whore-master carrying bucket back to bedroom; Wazzag stuffing bone into saltpetred hole of wall, standing up, wiping hands on hips; women wandering over tarmac; Wazzag approaching, pressing swollen belly against trellis, slipping member between two strips of reed, panting: women turning back; one girl, shaved head unveiled, cheeks reddened with henna, black breasts pressed against neck-line of open gandourah, throwing body against trellis, bending, hairs glistening under armpits, gripping bundle of barley propped against fence; Wazzag's arms hugging, pulling girl against body half hidden by trellis; swelling member cut between strips, whole mouth kissing lips, ears, neck, breasts, of shaved girl; girl held at waist, struggling, spitting, toes hollowing sand, bending sharp tips of reeds against Wazzag's bloated belly; other women, seated on sand, languid, rolling onto sides; rumps rounding under black dresses; lying on sand propped up on elbows, fists creasing cheeks, pouring sand over breasts; in trees, thorns pricking flowers in wind; Wazzag groaning; member reddening, pinched; hands, jerking, stroking loins of shaved girl; girl undulating against trellis; Wazzag, head buried in breasts, moaning; shaved girl pressing chin onto Wazzag's nape, rubbing chin, hands stroking hips of whore, fingers pinching, rolling up gandourah, sliding against trellis; veins palpitating on skull; elbows squeezing rolled-up gandourah against hips, hands pulling reeds apart; Wazzag's member retracting into pubic fleece; hands of shaved girl releasing reeds, pushing back Wazzag's belly, lifting arms from waist; Wazzag hitching up onto heels, forehead jammed against simmering breasts; softened penis opening violaceous over top of reeds, swelling towards exposed belly of woman; woman, mauve skull gleaming under fiery rays, drawing back, Wazzag's sticky hair sliding over neckline of gandourah; Wazzag, sweat sticking curls to forehead, sniffing, head dropped relaxing legs, settling heels into sand, crossing thighs over smarting penis; woman grabbing bundle, running off, green barley waving behind head; Wazzag lifting leg over trellis; balls, exposed, glistening pink; drowsy women rolling gandourahs up over knees; Wazzag straddling trellis, pressing buttocks against reeds; women, breathing curling back ochre lips, striking foreheads over sand; Wazzag stepping forward; sand kicked up sticking to hams,

member stiffening, pointing; approaching, crouching in front of women; member swelling along folded leg; scent opening women's nostrils; Wazzag kneeling, leaning over sand on elbows, bumping curly-fringed forehead against foreheads of women, lifting leg over croup of woman with bracelets clinking; woman catching knee, stroking curls of thigh; whore placing leg onto woman's croup, foot delving, through heated black cloth, into cleft of buttocks; woman's breasts, swollen, bulging over neckline; hand, mauve above, ochre beneath, moving along Wazzag's thigh, up to tangle of long supple shiny hairs merging into curly fluff on thigh; thumb, pink nail pitted, pressing into groin, slipping along seam of thigh, scraping sweat mixed with jissom, hay, grease, date-sugar, shit; Wazzag thrusting mouth onto woman's lips, drawing belly close to woman's, other knee digging down, elbows vibrating in sand; young woman with shaved scalp leaning against thorn-tree, bundle of green barley perched in crotch of trunk, bending branch towards mouth; cheeks swollen, lips sucking yellow fruit-flowers; eyes staring, through arms of women interlaced, at Wazzag's member swelling in jerks, at sweat rising over cocyx of whore; lips throbbing, nostrils inhaling sugary pollen; nipples, dilated, pulling arms from cloth; free hand stroking nipples; croup rounding out against bark; hams, heels lifted, scraping trunk; wind carrying birds, dirtied in dust-bins, towards high sandy enclaves; women separating foreheads, standing up, swinging bundles over shoulders; Wazzag grasping bare feet, biting bottom of dresses; women running off, cloth rustling over heated bodies, throwing — bending, standing erect, bending — burning pebbles at Wazzag; Wazzag running, lame — nerve strained while raising leg over woman's croup, tender from continuous forced erections—, member pointing stiffened, towards women, fingers catching pebbles embalmed in painted hands . . . “ . . . back, jissom-eater . . . back, back . . . jissom-eater . . . jissom-eater, man-eater . . . man-eater . . . baby-eater . . . back, baby-eater . . . dogs that make us widowed, in our prime . . . little husbands, drill his loins into the heart . . . ”, women, hair shaken, green barley whipping cheeks, one hand hitching cloth over thighs glistening along prismatic ridge of femurs up to groins, moaning, pressing pebbles over vulvas; Wazzag jumping up, darting through volley, springing onto shaved girl, hugging girl; bundle tumbling; girl's hand jerking placing pebble over exposed vulva: Wazzag's violaceous penis scorched, quick sizzle; women encircling Wazzag, seizing arms, legs, jaw, hair, pushing whore back over sand towards fence of brothel; Wazzag pulling back, hitching whore by ears, onto broken trellis; crying in throat; shaved girl holding fat of Wazzag's buttocks, pushing at cocyx: . . . “ . . . back into your sty, swine . . . ”; hands sliding over sticky cuticle; whore-master coming down, opening box-room: crouching, clapping hands smeared with gravy over Khamssieh's belly; whore shuddering, mouth swelling, throat regurgitating pomegranate-flesh; whore-master moving one chubby hand onto hip, groping under Khamssieh's buttocks, slipping index between buttocks, touching arse of whore, other hands palpating blood-stained belly; member twitching in pubic curls; whore-master withdrawing finger; sliding finger, soiled with shit, with dried jissom, over Khamssieh's lifeless lips; Khamssieh rising, folding arm beside hip, pressing transparent fingers onto whore-master's hairy arm; epidermis, under ginger curls rooted over forehead, blushing

pink; whore-master pulling fat lips apart with thumb, rubbing thumb-nail over jaw — saliva circulating afresh; Khamssieh's lips closing over whore-master's thumb, member stiffening in black tangle, pulled at freckled cuticle; eyes, scintillating between encrusted lids, squinting, fixing vibrant piercing eyes of whore-master; fingers climbing up along fluffy arm of master burying fingers, at same moment, into pubic curls of whore, squeezing dry balls; alive — swelling between whore-master's fingers; Khamssieh sucking whore-master's thumb, licking gravy smeared over phalanges; whore-master pulling hand back, placing fingers onto breasts of whore; pulling other hand out of tangle, massaging top of whore's thigh, enveloping knee; Khamssieh spreading thighs, stiffening legs, slipping finger through curls, underneath penis arching, swelling, enlarging; pushing penis back against extended thumb, drawing member upwards, pumping; sweat covering whole body, veins of skull jerking, palpitating, blood glowing in neck; one hand of whore-master, coated with saltpetre, massaging femur, inside slope of thigh; fingers of other hand, small, plump, interlacing with whore's free hand open, damp, against hip; Khamssieh's toes curling back: sweat running in hollows of phalanges; whore-master dropping knee, other hand pushing hand of whore back onto belly; crouching, thrusting foot into Khamssieh's flank . . . “ give . . . give . . . force the juice. ”; Khamssieh, tongue protruding, panting, bust raised; fist pumping at softened penis . . . “ . . . grubs of tarantulas crawl in butcher's armpits . . . ”; whore-master pushing fist, away from member; tapping knee; Khamssieh relaxing muscles, breathing deep: “ . . . work till tomorrow . . . drillers knocking . . . open your ears against bolted door . . . driven by my knee, Wazzag, buggered by driller with broadest chest, pulls his partner to the wood . . . listen then, go to work . . . ”; whore-master standing up, going out, bolting box-room, climbing up into bedroom, falling onto bed; Khamssieh, sweat cooling over skin, resting nape onto arm folded back, hand of other arm playing with penis; eyes raised toward small window, dazzled by raw light; buttocks mounted on shoulders passing, veiling light; driller's head hitched up striking window-ledge of bedroom; whore-master twisting body in sheet; driller, curly head scintillating in fiery rays, forcing member — straining squashed inside jeans — against nape of bearer; chest rubbed with rust, panting, ribs, muscles bridling skin; foam, driven back over red lips by panting, bathing driller's chin, streaming over throat; free hand pulling out cigarette, lighter, from pocket of denim jacket, lighting cigarette smeared with wet clay, puffing between lips, ash dropping onto shaved head of bearer; with thrust of loins, rising up on shoulders of bearer, flinging body against window-ledge, straddling ledge, rushing, unbuttoned — member spurting pants smudged with clay, poking out of jeans—, into bedroom, collapsing, with bursts of laughter, onto bed, hugging whore-master, covering master with wide heated body bristling, nibbling ear wrapped in sheet; feet, packed into espadrilles, striking foot of bed; mouth slobbering over ear, driller's saliva sticking whore-master's cheek to sheet; fingers delving beneath belly, through sheet, unsheathing penis: . . . “ call off your dogs . . . pull them from the arms of the unemployed . . . open up your bedrooms, your latrines . . . hide your tools, your guns, your dishes . . . soft body of sated whore makes customer turn back at doorstep, dagger in hand . . . ”; . . .

The Translation Begins

Translation: Paul Buck

Corpus  
[History]

1. FICTION

the only course will be the most rapid and regular now — covering  
and filling in without pausing from the moment when the mixing  
point has been touched, below

the course, the most common one — the one which walks  
and runs while speaking, having to

— begins directly within the history  
(it's the fight against destruction)  
(it begins there — afterwards: it will see . . .)

Reveals itself at once — looking at what looks at it  
— Is that where it is? Let's enter

\* \* \*

There is order — but more objects

Take the objects, place them in the middle again

\* \* \*

And what do they do? They look at what has happened to them

Their occupation is waiting for what will happen to them

What is happening? it is only after

— Except if I leap out in front — then I descend again with it:  
then neither it nor I are there, since we will have been only in  
the delay each time

too late for the delay? — too late

— Speak then

\* \* \*

: “the hunter eaten”

“He recognizes her through mirrors”

it is the image of principal history, ours: un (dé  
bound (liée  
(born at Delos)

precisely what captivates in that ascent-descent:  
the surprise — the cruelty — the eye?

it is the very place of the i (la j), from whence it happens,  
through the branches  
— at least, at least to be eaten

\* \* \*

the same scene seen by her — immediately: to separate them makes  
no sense  
And what does she do when he is eaten? — the same thing: she i  
(elle j) — in the eye, in the water, liquid

with him, with his dogs

\* \* \*

to find a false law of succession

all the bits which come, come for her

but without preventing them from continuing to look from the  
other side:  
bearing no more than necessary — an eye half-closed

\* \* \*

there is a regularity that comes from the world — each letter  
occupies the same space, with or without downstrokes

a point hidden can be introduced, without support — it supports  
itself immediately, is orientated, is directed

(“at the same moment his two works are missing and he sees his  
dream vanish”)

\* \* \*

the movement has been returned to its bases: it no longer advances from a point on the horizon. It is the horizon which descends and which traces, in one point —

cone — funnel — group of forces or mingled bodies

\* \* \*

Making it dally on an empty edge, the eye seeking harshness — is helped by the light which cuts up (any volume)

here — where? —

no question — thus:

here — where

\* \* \*

— without anything — of itself — the most ridiculous “point of honour”

“the actual state”

\* \* \*

Leaning on the tufted border — it is the sectioned domestic garden — the stems press on one’s back and on the backs of one’s legs — the look, in that position, comes from the centre of the body — begins with these slight injuries that it unites in a line which injures: the players, the meadow, the calm gestures — not achieved, again not achieved

\* \* \*

the moment which precedes recognition, the path, the vengeance

\* \* \*

the whole question is concentrating in passing the previous threshold — to elude the demanded justification — more and more exacting as one has already passed it, one knows its non-existence: the allowable baggage, the raw history — withdraws

with what to pass, to enter?

\* \* \*

having already responded and listening ready to respond

\* \* \*

something one seeks in the room, whilst speaking — the odour? beyond the noise (the discussion): the discussion elsewhere (the noises outside)

the whole discussion, by its oscillation, reprises

— but all the other discussions, rather, this one hides

\* \* \*

the approximation, at that spot: suffocating pain, moist

that the problem consists

numbness — the history . . .

\* \* \*

## 2. NOTES — END OF THE ADVENTURE

*the m lowers his head (1)*

Wanting to speak precisely, it is necessary to say or speak of what commonly one calls: *memory* — conventional and present object — *indicating*

— not a precise point (one might say, naturally:

*in a taxi, between such and such road or place, between such and such hour of the night, or end of the day, etc. . . .)*

It’s true, there had been a point — but only in order to say there was no point

What one can say is — (words aside — although it is not the least unutterable: what he was actually saying is that *there isn’t any*) —

*opening of the mouth: laughter which opens the mouth despite itself, in the mirror of the taxi, but immediately: Stop*

What should one say?

— Thus, message: not from → not from → not

*And so it continues — laughter at every level (splitting one’s trap?)*

*Deeply successive, simultaneous, progressive*

*It is the me who is pierced right through the middle*

*Taking a blow*

(but when he speaks, already prepared to play at discourse)

“What shall I do?”

Quick before it's forgotten:

— but the forgetting has that form

*being drenched within  
not knowing where to put oneself  
knowing:*

(fine pen scratching over beautiful, circular and *white*  
paper!)

---

= Change of level (or of instant):  
which affirmed: NOTHING, no m  
— change of level: Ah! m!

(1) = Relation of m, undone, redone, 1), 2)  
1) the non m (or mm) exclaims: “redone!” “ah!”  
2) as far as the ascent from one to the other (even)

(B seen in profile)

\* \* \*

### 3. WAKE

On that narrow passage, scrutinize the point where certainty  
reaches as far as its limit of widened belief, and rebounds  
bursting and falling through balustrades, along walls

Simultaneously: *there's no more left*  
and: *the congestion is still great*

From the other side, they enter, they sit down, they laugh —  
in their own tongue

On that narrow region, starting from the smallest evidence,  
if it dissolves the ground where it is lying  
forehead tormented by drops, the inside of the head is in  
the open air — already the surroundings rush forward with round  
movements: “join up again join up again”

Begin again —  
small spot where acid eats into marble — *being marble to the end,*  
*too late for faces*

but that / if he  
such that / through  
so he that / where (qu'il que / part)

Insistent with his feet in the wide road — if one cries out  
continue as far as that which — as far as the *that which*

Ah we will have them — in the the very short margin  
of silence on their side (en desà), it is the adversaries' faction  
— ah them alone crossing the courtyard we weren't expecting them  
— the feast, being missed, can begin

To let oneself be carried along without trying to seize in  
passing some scrap through which to grip to concentrate if it  
concerns it concerns being seized — feet on that enormous ground  
swept along — swept along

ah slight figure

occupied with its crime — and the invisible bird

“in the lantern”

do you sense what glides through the mass which is not concerned  
with you

to be cut — occupied — whilst she passes — and crosses at will  
these sort of meadows and bits crushed conserved and

Vertical Letter

Translation: Paul Buck

vlada  
nothing is completed  
the image is temporary  
may as well rely on the cut  
of the jump and the tearing  
there is always torture  
mental torture  
here flesh  
agonizes beneath the signs

living  
is fast  
the race pins down  
it's a question of breath and that each  
step is a kind of  
kabbala creating a little more space  
we touch the limit and you  
violate its  
raw  
moment

murder of images  
what's the good  
of portraying duration when nothing lasts  
we must find reality in a  
pinning-down

silence  
what you draw  
is a white scar  
the law freezes its straight lines  
the eye is a lens squinting the gesture caught  
in the trap

and what game now  
is played by your hand  
he walks he runs he smashes  
the same bound  
vibrates tell me  
is alterity a curtain we draw  
on which to sacrifice the  
you  
thus do we familiarize the slaughter  
a little of over there  
is enough

to see upheaval  
infinitely identity  
yields  
everything can happen  
there is the shadow which falls between the image the  
movement  
and the trot of rats on our ideas

why this face to face  
with the living flesh  
do you search there for the double  
meaning or else a tension which  
alters  
beware of the painting  
it tears out the skin of the eyes

from this combat  
in black and white looms  
only the impossible

to die  
to forget  
nothing but clarity  
everything burns  
its salvation

what counts is not our  
humanity  
an inventory is essential  
the whole anatomy  
is to be reinvented

grid or garrot  
loss of head  
so many canvases so many stalls  
we are what tears out  
of us what we are  
and to hell with the inside

everything is in a state of violence  
to be or not to be  
that's no longer the question  
let's erase the subject

we are attackers  
or attacked  
our very name is a knife

broken figure  
that must unfurl  
our faces were guard-dogs

the space is black —  
waiting

nudity of panic  
a disaster behind  
we must run  
pursued

where have you seen the end of the world  
kicking out or rutting what  
an apparatus of meat to  
carry away  
and that a  
rolling head  
gathers

no, cries the flesh that is  
injured and you  
invent the fixed madness  
on a dish the disembodied head of the Other  
on your canvas the excess  
anchored to Our eyes  
we are bitten between the brain  
lobes  
engulfed in the horror

gallows the image  
we must hang onto  
slaver white all thought  
and place ex-voto  
the whole body on the hook

what runs here races against itself  
harbouring its own chase  
implacably  
extracts from us our death  
already we cry out about genius

weak  
garbage of words  
nothing is said  
if the mouth doesn't turn inside out  
a painting is a document  
reality of the struggle did you say  
and the grasp of the moment so it's seen  
from a personal angle

spasmodic ideas lead only to  
cold war  
to risk the body  
is also the means of seeking  
its survival  
if I make a choice did you say again  
I have to approach paroxysm  
terrible tool  
we eat our tongue

outside the self  
where we run  
swirling muscles  
hands flung in the air  
and all the pain of the world

the issue finally comes  
a little blood  
would only need a hole

if one must kill art  
let's polish our eyes  
a diagram  
tortures as much as a rack  
and time is numbered

o death  
beast  
on the obstacle  
everything becomes  
piled  
tumbling down  
the lines of order quarter or  
impale

back to the black they  
explode  
jumping jacks whose night  
is confined  
remains  
trotting

and why not  
the mental screen  
and the internal self-portrait  
laid low  
again from the idea if it pleases you  
we have pondered  
the whole culture  
without the look being less hollow

man in box  
we wait for the sun to melt the partition  
but the painting is perhaps a box of  
tricks  
which makes for us the sleight of the bottomless bottom

what is there between head and painting  
an unfolded surface  
it's made directly by the tongue

money  
animal  
rinses the eye  
what you show  
harasses  
and

what is stronger than meaning  
an image from behind the bone  
there is a reverse waiting

are we seeking the origin  
or the end  
another race  
an oar in the night that words  
have caused to fall

and your images  
vomit up our own cadaver  
still with a little agony  
we run  
desperately  
but perhaps it is for the holed  
and the new body  
nudity nudity  
everything adheres to the skin

skin which bags the composition  
with decomposition  
according to the motion

hey what  
remains in the acceptable  
between oneself  
is good for aesthetics  
you hurry  
there's no stopping you  
we are player and played  
knotted outside knotted within

cry or crash  
we fling out values  
and what is a theme  
a proven chance  
nothing but an open door onto oneself

not knowing what to do  
we go to your house  
animals without animality  
you give us a moment seized  
yes a moment out of the blue  
but where are you  
it seems to me that immanence  
is friendship

thus no distance  
and a dog's look  
if art sets us back in the world  
everything must go at the same  
rhythm  
a pain knows only its  
height  
you paint this height  
it becomes the transparent place  
where  
we are mortally alike

head-sky  
it is black and  
white  
the possible colours  
fletch the imaginary

what is not  
makes us see what is

we find in the mental workyard  
a question

pale, pen or paintbrush  
to which belongs  
the necessity of torture

Get your lovely bod out of bed you sleepy typewriter  
you think this day is made for play it's  
bright out, well it. . . Droopy streets await,  
the puny are pining for that magnificence  
we are clouds to bring them and  
they'll never know hid in Jesus' pants  
the winged prick they must caress or further deliquesce. . .

(“I like to watch him get his gun” the sailor muttered  
as great angels rustled round us, looking down )

Our heavenly host is called to mission of derangement,  
inverted postures there the rule. . .  
Grunt and please yourself among the live ones,  
Lurk as you like, says the Book of the Law,  
but never deride nor pity:  
a grave joy becomes  
as you flash the strobe tablets so fast they're never seen. . .

Good misery bad gaiety  
fuck all night on Avenue Z

but Bracketing-Down-the-Alphabet, they say,  
will get you a hit of heaven on Avenue A.

## Issue No. 1 Contributors

**Anthony Barnett's** most recent books are *A Forest Utilization Family* (Burning Deck, Providence, Rhode Island, 1982), and *North North, I Said, No, Wait a Minute, South, Oh, I Don't Know (148 Political Poems)* (Taxvs, Durham, England, 1985). He lives in West Sussex, England.

**Todd Baron** studies at New College of California (San Francisco) in the Poetics Program and edits the magazine *Issue*. His poems have appeared there and in *Sulfur* and *Hambone*. His first book, *Dark As A Hat*, will be published in 1985 by Potes and Poets Press, Elmwood, Connecticut.

**Paul Buck** has published several books, most notably *lust: lust to write, to write out of lust* (1976), and *Violations* (1979), both from Pressed Curtains, West Yorkshire, England. With Pierre Joris he edited for French publication an anthology of English poetry. He has edited issues of Paul Green's magazine *Spectacular Diseases*, as well as a book on Georges Bataille. He has been awarded a translation prize for his work in contemporary French literature. He lives in Maidstone, Kent.

**Gerald Burns'** published books include *Boccherini's Minuet, Letters to Obscure Men* and *A Book of Spells [first third]*, all from Salt Lick Press, Austin, Texas. Treacle Press issued his (prose) *Toward a Phenomenology of Written Art*. He lives in Dallas.

**John Clarke** is general editor of "A Curriculum of the Soul" pamphlet series published by the Institute of Further Studies at Buffalo, New York, of which he is Director. His books include *Blake: A Masque; Lots of Doom; Gloucester Translations; Green Field* and *The End of This Side*, the latter published in Black Book #4 (Spring 1979), Bowling Green, Ohio.

**Clark Coolidge's** books include *The Maintains; Mine: The One That Enters the Stories; Solution Passage: Poems 1978-81; Quartz Hearts; Own Face; A Geology; American Ones; and Research*.

**Clayton Eshleman** received the National Book Award in 1979 for *Cesar Vallejo: The Complete Posthumous Poetry* (co-translated with Jose Rubia Barcia). His two most recent collections of poetry are *Hades in Mangnese* (1981) and *Fracture* (1983). His selected poems, *The Name Encanyoned River*, will be published in Winter 1985 by Black Sparrow. Eshleman is a reviewer for the *Los Angeles Times* and editor of *Sulfur*.

**Graham Fox** is an English writer and translator whose translation of Pierre Guyotat's *Éden, Éden, Éden* is seeking an English-language publisher.

**Cola Franzen** is an associate editor of *O.ARS*. Her translations have appeared in *O.ARS, Spectacular Diseases* and other magazines.

**Amy Gerstler** is the author of *Yonder* (Little Caesar Press, 1981); *Christy's Alpine Inn* (Sherwood Press, 1983) and *White Marriage* (Illuminati Press, Los Angeles, 1984). Her most recent collection, *Early Heaven*, was published in 1984 by Oujia Madness Press, San Francisco.

**Pierre Guyotat's** books live on the extreme edge of the French literary world. Praised by Philippe Sollers and *Tel Quel*, Guyotat remains outside avant-garde movements. His four main books (*Tombeau pour cinq cent mille soldats; Éden, Éden, Éden; Prostitution; and Le Livre*) were published by Gallimard, and his essays and interviews have appeared recently as *Vivre* (Denoël, 1984).

**Lyn Hejinian**, whose books include *The Guard; My Life; Writing is an Aid to Memory*, and *Gesualdo*, is editor of Tuumba Press and co-editor of *Poetics Journal*.

**Fanny Howe** lives in Brookline, Massachusetts. Telephone Press published her book *Alsace-Lorraine* in 1982. Her poems have appeared in *Hills, Boxcar, O.ARS* and other magazines.

**Kenneth Irby** has published several books, among them *To Max Douglas*, 1974; *Catalpa*, 1977 (both from Tansy Press, Lawrence, Kansas); and *Orexis* (Station Hill Press, 1981). A limited edition of *A Set* was published by Tansy Press in 1983 in 13" x 17½" looseleaf format.

**Gerrit Lansing** lives in Gloucester, Massachusetts. His book *The Heavenly Tree Grows Downward* was published by North Atlantic Books in 1977.

**Tomás Guido Lavalle** was born in 1937 in Argentina. Since the early 60s he has lived in Moscow, New York, Paris, Buenos Aires, Barcelona. He now lives in Cadaques, Spain. He has published several volumes of poetry in Buenos Aires; a new collection will be published this year.

**Martha Lifson** teaches at Occidental College in Los Angeles. She has had poems in *Massachusetts Review, Chicago Review, American Poetry Review, Hanging Loose, Dreamworks, Sulfur, Boxcar, Issue* and *Bennington Review*, among others.

**Nathaniel Mackey** edits *Hambone*. Boneset published his book, *Septet for the End of Time*, in 1983. His work has appeared in *Conjunctions, Boxcar* and elsewhere.

**Bernard Noël** is a French poet, novelist and critic in the outsider tradition of Bataille and Blanchot. Various translations of essays, poems and prose have appeared in English-language magazines, notably a special edition, with full bibliography, of *Spectacular Diseases*.

**Dennis Phillips** was *Sulfur* Book Review Editor for nine issues. His work has appeared there and in *Hambone, Boxcar* and *Chicago Review*, among other magazines. His first book, *The Hero Is Nothing*, will be published in Spring 1985 by Kajun Books, San Francisco.

**Jed Rasula** is a poet and critic whose work has been published in a long list of journals, notably *Sagetrieb* and *Sulfur*. With Don Byrd he edits the literary magazine *Wch Way*. His first book of poems and texts, *Tabula Rasula*, is still forthcoming from Station Hill Press.

**Jacqueline Risset** lives and teaches in Rome. She has been a contributor to *Tel Quel* since 1967, publishing "Jeu" in their 1971 series. "La Traduction commence" was originally published in Collection Première Livraison at Christian Bourgois in 1978.

**David Searcy** published *Flash Gordon Whom I Loathe* serially in *Southwest Review* and *New River*; it has never been collected. A book of verse, *Peter Rabbit's Trick*, is available from Salt Lick Press. A first installment of *A Trip to the Sun* appeared in *Boxcar 1*. He lives in Dallas, Texas.

**Aaron Shurin's** latest book is *The Graces*, from Four Seasons Foundation. He has recent work in *Code of Signals (Io #30)* and *Acts #3*. He lives in San Francisco, where he teaches Creative Writing at San Francisco Community College.

**Gustaf Sobin** is an American living in the South of France. His books include *Wind Chrysalid's Rattle* and *Celebration of the Sound Through*, both from Montemora Foundation. In 1984, New Directions published his latest collection, *The Earth As Air*.

**Charles Stein** is the author of *Horse Sacrifice* (1980) and *Parts and Other Parts* (1982), both from Station Hill Press

**John Taggart's** most recent book is *Dehiscence* (Membrane Press, 1983). He has work in the current poetics issue of *Io*, edited by Michael Palmer, as well as long poems in *Credences* and *Conjunctions*. He lives in Pennsylvania.

**John Thomas** was born in Baltimore in 1930 and has lived on the west coast, principally Los Angeles, since 1959. His books are *john thomas* (Red Hill, 1972), *Il vecchio Stravinsky prova con orchestra* (Edizioni Geiger, Torino, 1975), and *Epopoeia and the Decay of Satire* (Red Hill, 1976). A section of his "ongoing work of some length," *Patagonia*, was published in *Abandoned Latitudes* (Red Hill, 1983).

**Robert Trammell** lives in Dallas, Texas, and has published two books with Salt Lick Press: *George Washington Trammell* and *LOVERS/KILLERS*. He is active in videodocumentation for Hot Horse Productions at the Texas Media Arts Center.

**Rosmarie Waldrop** is a poet, publisher and editor at Burning Deck, Providence, Rhode Island. *When They Have Senses* was published by Burning Deck in 1980. *Differences for Four Hands*, about Clara and Robert Schumann, was published in 1984 by Singing Horse Press, Blue Bell, Pennsylvania.

**Jason Weiss** is an American poet and translator who lives in Paris. His work has recently been published in *Spectacular Diseases* and *Acts*.

**Saúl Yurkievich** was born in 1931 in Argentina. He has published eight collections of poetry and a number of critical works. Poems in translation have appeared in *O.ARS* and *Spectacular Diseases*.

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