
TEMBLOR

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

ISSUE NUMBER 7

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Jackson MacLow *Pieces o' Six XXXI & XXXIII*
and *8th Merzgedicht* In Memoriam Kurt Schwitters
with Six Computergraphics by Anne Tardos
Jerome Rothenberg from *Khurban*
Bob Perelman from *Captive Audience*
Gustaf Sobin from *Voyaging Portraits*
Gerald Burns *Socrates Dying in Widener*
Rachel Blau DuPlessis *Draft #6: Midrush*
Joseph Simas from *That Other Double In Person*
Claude Royet-Journoud *A Descriptive Method*
translated by Michael Davidson
Jed Rasula *New Rev. on Cell. Path. Porn.*
Marc Nasdor *Treni in Partenza*
Stephen Ratcliffe *spaces in the light*
said to be where one/ Comes from
Peter Middleton *Portrait of an Unknown Man*
Rae Armantrout from *Necromance*
Barbara Roether *The Formulations*
Norman Fischer *Working Title & other poems*
Duncan McNaughton from *The Pilot*
David Chaloner *Tongues of Light*
Paul Christensen *A Noble Wave: On Gustaf Sobin*
George Hartley *Sophist & Sentence: Bernstein & Silliman*
Bruce Campbell *Four Poets: Gansz, Coolidge, Andrews, Bernstein*
John Shoptaw *Saving Appearances: On John Ashbery*

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

In Memoriam Robert Duncan

"This is an excellent magazine. . . . **Temblor** is one of this country's truly adventuresome publications; serving 'experimental' writers and drawing on a wide range of authors within the framework of exploratory writing. The publication has earned its high stature in the publication world; the editor is noted for his careful and excellent editing skills, providing a well-shaped publication." *Highest Rating.* — California Arts Council, 1987

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Jackson Mac Low
— 8th Merzgedicht in Memoriam Kurt Schwitters

smooth biomorphic forms
avant-garde each discarded bit or snippet
praxis the most banal detritus
Never believed he was making anything but pure abstract
forms. unaltered found materials
Komposition pain
ideology respect, like, enjoy, or be
delighted *Entformung, Eigengift,*
konsequent, Urbegriff. Schwitters maintained
that a reproduction could be as good as an original and
painted a number of pictures in more than one copy.
delighted *reclining emm.* he couldn't sleep
Schwitters maintained that a reproduction could be
as good as an original and painted a number of pictures
in more than one copy.
regarded words and letters both as meaningful
symbols and as formal design elements
REFUSE *Malerei*
The materials bring into the abstract formal
performance a piece of familiar reality.
SOULFUL Schwitters's mind and practice
roved freely. **A MARVELOUS DILETTANTE**
Schwitters reveals himself as a naive utopian.
Now I call myself Merz.
SCHWITTERS WENT SO FAR AS TO DISCARD THE IDEA THAT A
PICTURE IS A UNIQUE CREATION. *bring*
into the abstract formal performance a
piece of familiar reality. objets trouvés
Schwitters's mind and practice roved freely.
peace Merz *In the early days of*
Merz his position was anti-functionalist, purely
artistic: a utopian conception

blatant literal presence of objects
Schwitters maintained that a reproduction could be
as good as an original and painted a number of pictures
in more than one copy.
Art needs contemplative self-absorption.
SCHWITTERS DISMISSED THE IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO A
PICTURE'S INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS AS
sentimentalism. *Komposition*
Rumpelstiltskin
reclining emm. familiar reality political

respect, like, enjoy, or be delighted *My*
basic trait is melancholy.
peace Schoenberg
 Rumpelstiltskin *seriousness*
something or other. Frühe whatever has been
 taken for granted may begin to be questioned and
 eventually illumined
 told they imitate nature in its complexity.
 Construction for Noble Ladies.
 In the early days of Merz his position was
 anti-functional, purely artistic: a utopian
 conception. Ambleside
 violet *indifferently* Merzbild
lawfully allowed time a picture of its
 creation *blatant literal presence of objects*
 Merz ist form. Never believed he was
 making anything but pure abstract forms.
 Never believed he was making anything but pure
 abstract forms. each discarded bit or snippet
 entirely without bourgeois comforts
 Space

continually worked upon for nearly fourteen years
 supposedly antiartistic *Schwitters'*
expressive power was given direction by the scraps
 with which he created forms. *Chanson des*
autres is i. political
 Never believed he was making anything but pure
 abstract forms. Schwitters reveals
 himself as a naive utopian. **I love and hate**
 everything. ALWAYS DO OTHERWISE THAN
THE OTHERS.

ecstatic conventional contradictoriness

My wet nurse's milk was too thick and there
was too little, because she nursed me beyond
the lawfully allowed time.
 Lysaker It was not only because they could
 serve as well as painter's pigment that Schwitters
 made use of the residues of life, the
 wretchedest of all materials. *that is*
correct It was not only because they could serve as
 well as painter's pigment that Schwitters made use of
 the residues of life, the wretchedest of all
 materials. *familiar reality*

Satie SOULFUL

something or other. Frühe

a picture of its creation *totally*
 disabled he couldn't sleep

by his very nature he was Dada *excitement*
 brought on St. Vitus's dance *by*
 his very nature he was Dada Lysaker
 against war

Schwitters shied away.

everything love and hate

Chanson des autres is i.
the tension and competitions between parts and whole
Blau is die Farbe Deines gelben Haares. Hannover
Hannover strives forward unaltered found
materials My wet nurse's milk was too thick and there
was too little, because she nursed me beyond
the lawfully allowed time. excitement
respect, like, enjoy, or be delighted

Lysaker dying THE DADAIST IS
A MIRROR CARRIER. Striving for
expression in a work of art seems to me injurious
to art. stupidity of institutions

pain

objets trouvés The most international
petit bourgeois in the world. REFUSE
complexity unaltered found materials
Schwitters' jovial, extrovert, and clownish
nature carefully cropped details from
printers' reject material
Merzbau Hannover, begun by Schwitters around 1923 and
continually worked upon for nearly fourteen years,
was twenty years later—five years before his
death—destroyed by Allied bombs. whatever has been taken
for granted may begin to be questioned and eventually
illuminated Striving for expression in a work of
art seems to me injurious to art.
excitement brought on St. Vitus's dance
the end of all
probably in New York gather them into the
paradise of art's Urbegriff
excitement familiar reality Id Space
Hannover strives forward discarded
unfinished pages praxis

logic and grammar supposedly antiartistic
gather them into the paradise of art's Urbegriff

familiar reality as tolerant as
possible with respect to its material the
new order objets trouvés
hovers between the extremes of regularity and
predictability on the one hand and disorder on the
other Schwitters' expressive
power was given direction by the scraps with which he
created forms. In the early days
of Merz his position was
anti-functional, purely artistic: a utopian conception.
Tyll Eulenspiegel Dadaism as an
advertising delighted Verbürgt
rein.

NATURE, FROM THE LATIN NASCI, I.E., TO BECOME OR
COME INTO BEING, EVERYTHING THAT THROUGH ITS OWN FORCE
DEVELOPS, FORMS OR MOVES. antiartistic

Hannover strives forward imitating nature in its
manner of operation sleep

Art needs contemplative self-absorption.

sleep Malerei scorned or scoffed
at loosening its ties to art

Art needs contemplative self-absorption.

Schwitters' expressive power was given direction by
the scraps with which he created forms.

Verbürgt rein. love

and hate everything Striving for
expression in a work of art seems to me injurious to art.
whatever has been taken for granted may begin to be
questioned and eventually illumined

delighted chagrined
Maciunas only concerned with consistency within each
work. Id There is no
such thing as inchoate experience. reclining emm.

carefully cropped details from printers'
reject material Lysaker

A MARVELOUS DILETTANTE illusionistic

space Dada was ideological without a specific
ideology and purposive without a purpose, which is
why Dada actions and objects could be considered
artistic. Dadaists Schwitters'

jovial, extrovert, and clownish nature
that is correct MIRROR

SOULFUL

conventional

artworks **THE DADAIST IS A MIRROR CARRIER.**

dying each discarded bit or snippet

mere randomness **THE DADAIST IS A**

MIRROR CARRIER. by his very nature he was
Dada a pure image maker

NATURE, FROM THE LATIN NASCI, I.E., TO BECOME OR COME
INTO BEING, EVERYTHING THAT THROUGH ITS OWN FORCE DEVELOPS,
FORMS OR MOVES. entirely without bourgeois comforts

A r t i s t a u t o n o m o u s . **SOULFUL**

Satie Schwitters' jovial,

extrovert, and clownish nature

against war

One can even shout out

through refuse.

Satie Schwitters reveals
himself as a naive utopian. Entformung,
Eigengift, konsequent, Urbegriff.
trouble he couldn't sleep

Art needs contemplative self-absorption.

Now it is a Merzpicture. Sorry! Space

DO NOT ASK FOR SOULFUL MOODS. AN IMAGE OF

THE REVOLUTION each discarded bit or

snippet Merzbau Hannover

him nonpolitical because he espoused no easily

recognized ideology Satie smooth

biomorphic forms unaltered found

materials experience allows her

to see them This was before H.R.H. The Late Duke

of Clarence &

Avondale. Now it is a Merzpicture. Sorry!

sleep preconstituted

discarded unfinished pages

avant-garde Schwitters reveals himself as

a naive utopian. fantastic

dying Stein

Lake reclining emm.

the most banal detritus the most banal

detritus embodying a much more complete theory

My basic trait is melancholy. him

nonpolitical because he espoused no easily recognized

ideology only concerned with

consistency within work. inchoate

experience infinity letters

lawfully allowed time Combine all

branches of art into an artistic unity. complexity

as tolerant as possible with respect to its material

FORTHRIGHTNESS AND GENEROSITY Tzara

in a strange context **THE MOST INTERNATIONAL**

petit bourgeois **IN THE WORLD.** gather them into the

paradise of art's Urbegriff whatever

has been taken for granted may begin to be

questioned and eventually illumined

inchoate experience supposedly antiartistic
 experience allows her to see them There is
 no such thing as inchoate experience. meine süsse

puppe,
 mir ist alles schnuppe,
 wenn ich meine schnauze
 auf die deine bautze.

JACKSON MAC LOW
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[With special thanks to Nick Piombino (poet, poeticist, psychoanalyst), who kindly lent the poet his Schwitters library, notably the two books from which words, phrases, sentences, and other strings have been most often quoted, adapted, excerpted, paraphrased, etc., in the course of constructing the series of "*Merzgedichte in Memoriam Kurt Schwitters*": Werner Schmalenbach's *Kurt Schwitters* (Copyright 1967 in West Germany by Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, Cologne; English version published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1977) and John Elderfield's *Kurt Schwitters* (Copyright © 1985 by Thames and Hudson Ltd., London; paperback edition specially printed for the Museum of Modern Art, New York, by Thames and Hudson, Inc., New York, 1985), to the authors and publishers of which the poet is grateful for the many scattered words, phrases, sentences, and other word strings informally quoted, paraphrased, adapted, and/or modified throughout his *Merzgedichte*; and with special thanks to Michael Erlhoff and Klaus Stadtmüller, the editors of the *Kurt Schwitters Almanach 1987* (a birth-centennial "Hommage à Kurt Schwitters"), for inviting me to send them a contribution (which they subsequently published), thereby inspiring me to write the first "*Merzgedicht in Memoriam Kurt Schwitters*" (which is also "Pieces o' Six — XXXII," the next to the last of the *Pieces o' Six*, a series of 33 poems in prose, begun in 1983, which will be published by Sun & Moon, Los Angeles, in 1988), and to compose thereafter the rest of the "*Merzgedichte in Memoriam Kurt Schwitters*." Jackson Mac Low]

Jerome Rothenberg

from *Khurban*

*Since the hidden is bottomless, totality is more
 invisible than visible. (Clayton Eshleman)*

IN 1987 I WAS A DECADE, MORE, PAST *POLAND/1931*. I went to Poland for the first time & to the small town, Ostrow-Mazowiecz, sixty miles northeast of Warsaw, from which my parents had come in 1920. The town was there and the street, Niodawa (meaning "honey"), where my father's parents had a bakery. I hadn't realized that the town was only fifteen miles from Treblinka, but when we went there (as we had to), there was only an empty field & the thousands of large stones that make up the memorial. We were the only ones there except for a group of three people—another family perhaps—who seemed to be picnicking at the site. This was in sharp contrast to the crowds of tourists at Auschwitz (Oswiecim) & to the fullness of the other Poland I had once imagined. The absence of the living seemed to create a vacuum in which the dead—the dibbiks who had died before their time—were free to speak. It wasn't the first time that I thought of poetry as the language of the dead, but never so powerfully as now. Those in my own family had died without a trace—with one exception: an uncle who had gone to the woods with a group of Jewish partisans and who, when he heard that his wife and children were murdered at Treblinka, drank himself blind in a deserted cellar & blew his brains out. That, anyway, was how the story had come back to us, a long time before I had ever heard a word like holocaust. It was a word with which I never felt comfortable: too Christian & too beautiful, too much smacking of a "sacrifice" I didn't & still don't understand. The word with which we spoke of it was the Yiddish-Hebrew word, *khurban* [*khurbn*], & it was this word that was with me all the time we stayed in Poland. When I was writing *POLAND/1931*, at a great distance from the place, I decided deliberately that that was not to be a poem about the "holocaust." There was a reason for that, I think, as there is now for allowing my uncle's *khurban* to speak through me. The poems that I first began to hear at Treblinka are the clearest message I have ever gotten about why I write poetry. They are an answer also to the proposition—by Adorno & others—that poetry cannot or should not be written after Auschwitz. Our search since then has been for the origins of poetry, not only as a willful desire to wipe the slate clean but as a recognition of those other voices & the scraps of poems they left behind them in the mud.

HIDDEN IN WOODS BAGGED

like an Indian

a cry (darkest in
the pauses)

cannot be heard But inward
he discerns it

what his life had been
& several trusting in him

(children

or the dead) life's burden
I cannot escape it any longer

in a vodka sleep (the cry
cutting still deeper

into his bones) Bright spots
a zohar of possibilities

a father's cry

(oh mother hold me) how I have lost
my tongue

my hand chewed down
to the bone must bellow

like a heifer
& crawling through their blood

my children severed from me
(their souls

stuck in my mouth teeth
frozen

the room turns to ice

in moonlight

it flies through the woods

a cry a spirit
his death turns loose

with no roots
runs deeper the cry you can hear

is no cry

[3.vii.87]

Der Vidershtand (The Resistance)

began with this in olson's words it was
the pre/face so much fat for soap
superphosphate for soil fillings & shoes for sale
such fragmentation delivered by whatever means
the scrolls of auschwitz buried now brought to light
again the words of zalman lowenthal of poland
who had been dragged into the woods who saw
"the damned plays of liquidation"—incredible (he wrote)
the ocean seeping across the empty field
inside his head how like a sump how grungy
the world reduced to yellow flesh & mud
the man in black whose hands are in black gloves
has killed them the red one
still standing at the gates of warsaw
waits & the other at the gates of paris holds
the dark rule now past the 8th month 1944
a game of shootings hangings gassings burnings
written down between the walls of the black building
from the time he searched for reasons
for his suffering & wrote
about himself "what happened to that jew?"
or the blonde girl now a dibbik asked the question
"mister jew what will they do with us?"
& someone—was it him?—said "garbage"
the resistance beginning with the writing down
that the time & mud have faded
the moon adrift in elul shining
on a certain man concerned
with history who took the trouble
to assemble pictures facts reports
to shield them with his body
"this house" wrote olson "where his life is
"where he dwells against the enemy the beast"
but sees it crumble sees *them* crumble

all around him this sparagmos
 where the flesh turned yellow from the gas
 the fire burst it & the fetus
 erupted through the mother's skin
 a babe's head that the hair is torn from
 & brunner the s.s. survivor used the same word "garbage"
 in 1987 thus was the epic verified
 & brought into our time the poem
 began with it & followed the movement
 of the dead man's hand as if each written word
 had such a hand behind it
 that brought the letters & the pain together
 written with his blood (the scroll says) in the light
 of human bodies burning but what is interesting
 here (he writes) is the psychology of man
 who refuses to accept
 evil thoughts no matter how clearly he sees
 he speaks for this is not
 the whole truth the truth as it really exists
 is immeasurably more tragic & terrible. In the notebook
 dig to search
 it is by chance that this
 is buried by chance that it comes to light
 the poetry is there too
 it is in the scraps of language
 by which the century is read to us the streets the dogs
 the faces fading out the eyes receding
 they are the dead & want so much to speak
 that all the writing in the world will not contain them
 but the dead voice crying in the money field
 declares it makes its resistance still
 he says I want to tell you
 what my name is my name is buried
 in the ashes my name
 is not a name

[12.xii.87]

WHAT MAKES HIM KNEEL DOWN IN THE MUD

kneel down in the money field, to pick up
 this wet shining coin

as later he would lift
 the chocolates & raisins from the dead girl's
 pocket so deep in mud

the woods do lie, the frost
 does cover an old hut
 the winds do seem to push the moon

along or is it the clouds
 first moving or the blood
 on everything that he ever loved

& prays now that it soon be ended:
 finis moon & finis little world
 below the moon

[pause]

FISHL'S SONG

I have no more to live for
 —the dead man says—
 I leave you with a curse, damned others

& may my voice be true to it
 who know no kindly light
 but in my death have altered

into a wolf
 whose mouth is raw with blood
 a ring of blood

covering my beard & throat:
 a number larger than the moon
 searing my chest

conflated,
 still,
 opens to let the spirit out

[16.xii.87]

Respondez!

Let the dead man call out in you because he is a dead man
 Let him look at your hands in the light that filters through the table where he sits
 Let him tell you what he thinks & let your throat gag on his voice
 Let his words be the poem & the poem be what you wouldn't say yourself
 Let him say that every man is a murderer & that he is a murderer like all the rest
 Let him say that he would like to beat & kill beat & kill let him say that it is nothing nothing
 That he is living in a wilderness (let him say it) but that there are no woods or trees
 That whatever houses there were are gone or if the houses are there he cannot enter them or see them
 That he cannot see the children that he knows were there that he doesn't know if his own children
 were there too
 That he seeks out the children of his enemy & would like to kill them
 Let those who sit around you hear nothing of what he says let them hear everything of
 what you tell them
 Let a great pain come up into your legs (feel it moving like the earth moving beneath you)
 Let the earth drop away inside your belly falling falling until you're left in space
 Let his scream follow you across the millennia back to your table
 Let a worm the size of a small coin come out of the table where you're sitting
 Let it be covered with the red mucus falling from his nose (but only you will see it)
 Let the holes in his body drop open let his excretions pour out across the room
 Let him scream in a language you cannot understand let the word "khurban" come at the end of
 every phrase
 Let a picture begin to form with every scream
 Let the screams tell you that the world was formed in darkness that it ends in darkness
 Let the screams take you into a room with small white tiles
 Let the tiles vanish beneath the press of bodies let vomit & shit be everywhere let semen & menstrual
 blood run down his arms
 Let his screams describe a body (a body is like a stone a body rests on another body & weighs it down
 a body crushes the skull that lies beneath it a body has arms & reaches for the sky a body has eyes
 & knows terror in the darkness a body burning gives off heat & light)

Let the bodies be divided into units & let the units be further divided into subunits
 Let the units be written in as numbers but let the numbers still be heard as screams
 Let 10,000 corpses be gathered in one place until they vanish let the earth & sky vanish with them &
 then return
 Let an empty field fill up with coins & let the living bend to pick them up
 Let everything have its price let there be a price for death & a price for life so that everything can be
 accounted
 Let them account the value of a body (a soul has no account) & let the living refuse the living unless a
 price is paid
 Let betrayal take the place of love & let disgust be put ahead of beauty
 Let she who is most beautiful be brought down to her knees let those who hold together out of love be
 murdered
 Let the dead cry for the destruction of the living until there is no more death & no more life
 Let a ghost in the field put out the light of the sun (I have no arms he cries
 My face & half my body have vanished & am I still alive?
 But the movement of my soul through space & time brings me inside you
 The immeasurable part of a language is what we speak he says who am I? dayn mamas bruder
 farshvunden in dem khurbn un muz in mayn eygenem loshn redn loz mikh es redn durkh dir dos
 vort khurbn
 Mayne oygen zaynen blind fun mayn khurbn ikh bit yetst a pegyer) a corpse to which the light will
 not return forever for whom the light is lost
 Let the light be lost & the voices sing forever in the dark but let them know no joy in it
 Let murders multiply & tortures let fields rot let babes suck forth a stream of milk that kills
 Let fools wield power let saints & martyrs root up money in a field of blood
 Let madness be the highest virtue let rage choke all who will not rage
 Let children murder children let bombs rain down let houses fall
 Let ghosts & dibbiks overwhelm the living
 Let the invisible overwhelm the visible until nothing more is seen or heard

from *Captive Audience*

.....
 Though history is not a sentence,
 this is. And though history
 is a word, what it covers
 isn't. And though I'm a person
 who puts words into
 recognizable scenes where
 your entertainment dollar
 is hard at work, and I understand
 there's only so much anyone
 can put up with in any given
 sentence, still there are no straight lines
 in this mass of air
 representing itself visually as
 broken into pieces, temporally as
 a single car ride with
 a unified driver, following
 the machine's nose. The landscape
 is placed sentimentally on either side
 to make the view
 visceral, poplars, a
 starry night, crows over a wheat field,
 all engraved in an edible
 freeze frame called
 taste, that worldly shrine
 coextensive with its financial backing
 where everything is above average
 and the weather gets past the cloakroom
 only in the form of haircuts.
 It's the pure part, the whole
 thing, the last word first,
 once, and forever. History is a sob
 story that should have known better
 except that its head was removed
 and placed here. The better
 to address you with, my dear.
 About suffering we are therefore
 wrong, the neo-masters, as we use
 money to display art,
 then write off the money that mounted
 the display in the first place,
 the only place in the sun
 that counts, up to one
 and then it stops, its shade

cool & pleasing, its death
 always a story told
 to someone who's not dead, of course.
 But if the present is either
 eternal or false, like
 Tycho Brahe's silver nose,
 then what about the calendar,
 standing there, a self-
 contingent fiction, hands
 on hips wide for child-bearing, yet
 slim as a jockey's, too, in
 a display of semantic undecidability
 that American-century language can only
 suffer through in a silent
 automatic display of arbitrary
 displacements. Icarus fell
 into the sea long ago. His suffering
 is over. His father, the general
 whose grandson was born deformed
 by Agent Orange, says he would
 do it all over again. His suffering
 is displaced onto the only remaining
 figure, the peasant ploughing
 in the foreground, just above
 the bottom of the frame, the
 virile threshold where visibility
 stops and deniability starts.
 So then grammar is
 one big evangelical conspiratorial
 set of embedding procedures
 on top of which certain pleasures
 crow to their father in heaven
 while far below people get
 burned, blown away, or
 compressed into expostulations
 of gratitude. To call this a language
 is a slap in the face of all
 fictions wearing the uniform
 pre-Raphaelite capitalist cloth-of-gold togas
 under which, in every case, beats
 a modernist heart, also of gold,
 with an improvised mythic
 history on its left sleeve (so is the

silent power of grammar).
 But we have to start somewhere.
 What we ordinarily say when
 an airplane is flying overhead
 is that, though we are not
 on board, people are, and thus
 collectivisms ground the forms
 and directions of every event. If
 the particular plane is dropping
 white phosphorus do we then
 exercise our option to begin
 to initiate the process of
 disinvestment? Not so slow, old
 power grid forever young
 and automatic as electronic relay
 tinged with the smell of xerox
 rising from the certainty that
 the sun would never have to set
 if you own enough, and the night
 in which all communists are
 theatrically black
 could be rolled back to the other side
 of the world where it belongs
 because my earnest face, voice,
 and illimitable earning power.
 The art of governing, using
 the obvious to state the monstrous
 —but monsters are human, too—begins
 by separating the names of the countries
 from the people who live there. The family
 is then placed in the sky,
 between the transmission towers
 and the individual antenna. So that
 mother's not dead, she's only
 a picture, feeding me pictures
 of what it is to be full.
 These commodities, taken off
 the truck and wrapped in plastic,
 and weighed, labelled and priced,
 have to have come from somewhere, though,
 or else I'm an autonomous phenomenon
 and in fact, God. But when a spider
 the size of a period
 tried to garner some flat dead beetle
 as big as a grain of rice
 the body, that had been hanging
 by some thread, fell.
 (Sorry to be taking up space
 acting out the vacuity of description

in an antiterrorist program
 aimed directly at the senses.)
 This happened, fated, on July 11,
 1987, the past hermetically sealed
 from the present by the obsessive
 cries of "I was here, I saw
 what was given, plus what I took
 by right of need," as the calendar,
 a Salome of great beauty,
 was stripping it seemed like
 forever, while outside, in the
 alkaline foyer of our family ranch
 the H-bomb stage-whispered, "I
 want to start over," wearing a corset
 straight out of the
 Restoration, such is the interference
 of time with thought's pure appetites.
 The result is a continuous need
 to defend what are called
 our needs aching for a clean
 language because no word
 once spoken, launched without
 warning through the fence of the teeth,
 can be called back without
 getting dirty in another's mouth given
 the puritan imperative under which
 we still live, trusting
 in God to back our money up
 with that clutch of arrows
 in his right claw
 and those words, immutable
 and humbling, over which
 blurring life histories pour,
 straining to keep the sense
 single and the biography straight,
 all the time floating
 down page toward the apocalypse
 where silent surface crumples
 abruptly to noise. No more
 cool grey monuments where A =
 A, ironically perhaps, but with a thin,
 deferred, cafe-like openness
 and portable charm. Political
 one-time individual animals
 of the free world, born free
 and paying at all points
 to see the movie, it is you
 I satirize with my death's head
 outnumbering the camera's gaze

by one when the sun shines,
 two when the rain falls heavily
 on the thick-slatted memory-laden
 roofs of past centuries by mistake,
 regrettable error, inconsolable
 recall. Facts still obtrude
 smog-stained facades too modular
 to serve as faces, too stressed
 by the forced yesses of the building trades
 to pass for art, behind which
 public turns private
 for only dollars and hours
 a day. The meter never stops.
 There are, right now,
 if I can use
 such a barbarously out of date
 formula, at least ninety covert
 ops being carried out (of course
 in the passive voice) beneath
 the global visibility of what
 the meter shows as merely the
 fair price. The unconscious
 seems highly armed these days
 and to whom do I owe this
 articulated dread if not to
 the structures of defense
 resting permanently on its
 freshly killed enemy. But to biologize
 these conflicts is always a mistake.
 The pathos of the dying transformer-
 like termite defending its hill on
 Channel 9 to music that remembers
 the Alamo if not the Aeneid
 leads directly to the ice cream
 and the hand held spoon as
 stylus of the self that would
 sprout leaves and wings and rule
 the world even in its sleep,
 heavy and fully formal.
 Not that anybody's anybody's
 slave, mind you. Just don't eat
 so much ice cream is all.
 These days are as fresh and
 uninfluenced as a new pack
 at a blackjack table in Vegas
 so why do I think chance
 has blood under its rug
 and lives in a white house?
 On July 13, 1987 I just happened

to see a seagull carrying a
 small fish in its claws.
 It's not a detective story, marching
 backwards to the scene of the crime
 the moment of the proper name,
 murder, known, in process,
 sensed, the undifferentiated place
 where subject and object merge,
 warm and unborn. The reader
 whose mind has been excited
 by the even steps of narration
 to an ecstatic acceptance of
 unworked time, the golden age,
 prudently is to sidestep
 identification with either the
 dead body or the revealed killer.
 But when weapons proliferate
 in their pure, pro-life
 state, a unique ending for every
 person, then thrillers become the public
 vehicle of choice, terror and glistening
 threats of pain shown
 as near as the senses.
 Afterwards, there's traffic, the
 bad marriage whose second honeymoon
 is such an endless bomb.
 But at least the luxurious
 falsity of the leaves on
 Route 3 is real enough.
 My eyes, raised and lowered
 in the age of mechanical reproduction,
 produce the show that by definition
 can never play in the capitol,
 since it has no acts
 and the book is so open
 as to be illegible in public.
 So do I think that words
 are really neat, that empty
 clorox bottles and star wars manifestos
 can keep the dew of alien
 dogs off my property? A dog
 shitting would *never*
 be shown on the news, then
 why is Ollie North said to be
 so popular? "I used to wipe
 his bottom," marvels a quoted
 woman, printed in a kindly light
 because a user-friendly oligarchy
 really wouldn't hurt circulation

when it's underground, with
 weather and traffic on top,
 shopping. Choice is now
 a church, hands lifted upward
 to the shelves, striving to work
 free of the curse of original
 childhood eating habits.
 The idea of the green party
 sleeps furiously, and because dreams
 can only be televised
 one at a time, election results
 haven't stopped many bulldozers.
 But you can't sell a view
 without slamming a few heads
 into a few facades.
 Odd, how easy the Meese-like
 news-like voice comes over
 and says, "I am the agenda,
 for reasons which must remain
 unconscious as cars acting out
 the look of a secure self
 whose national habits
 have been dictated by the ineffable
 mouth of a successful history
 if you count the buildings."
 But neither do I want to press myself
 down onto some woodsy center
 stage, or feel myself up frugally
 beside a terrifyingly cute pond
 picking out the loose feathers
 to make myself a down pillow.
 Threateningly anthropomorphic, I know
 what happened next: Cary Grant definitely
 walked out of his house, the
 movie was in color and it was
 a glorious day, yellow sun pouring
 in under the out of focus green leaves.
 What did you expect? You don't
 have to say everything exactly
 when you've lived here for
 centuries and can address
 generalized experience
 while self-encapsulating the ear
 as "you." Down the street,
 a firecracker went off
 inside a garbage can. It was the
 Fourth of July, garbage day, and July
 14, 1987, all rolled into one
 swaggering twinkle, the copyright

of an eye that looked out
 over its entire life
 with a happy willingness
 to be filmed, truly,
 anthropomorphically at home.
 Everyone in quotes
 knows the plot from here:
 Cary Grant was married
 to Katharine Hepburn, a woman
 who thought Derrida was an idiot
 and repulsed his obscure advances
 whenever he came on the screen.
 But behind Grant's face and its
 European-savage-tamed-by-American-
 money smile (movies elongate the
 eternal sensual present of all adjectives)
 lay a nasty mortgage as big and secret
 as Freud's middle name. So Grant had to
 in fact rent Derrida a room
 in his own home, which, however,
 Derrida actually owned, and thus
 it was Derrida's, not Grant's, bathtub that
 Hepburn reposed offcamera in (don't
 even *think* of looking there),
 talking about removing ticks from dogs
 and recipes for making flan.
 And it was Derrida, shockingly enough,
 whose arm reached in when she
 asked for a towel. If Grant tried
 to calm her down and talk to Derrida
 about leaving, Derrida would merely
 suggest that he read them the book
 he was working on, which the audience
 knew from bitter experience if not birth,
 they'd paid five bucks
 for a short escape from the taste of it,
 the book was really nothing but
 the unbreakable mortgage which
 would have them out on the street
 clothed but cloned, cold and
 improperly sexed in the dark.
 Brows knit, Grant was forced
 to come up with a plan:
 he went to work, which
 in his case meant buying a
 newspaper—the corporation, not
 the physical instance—and struggling
 against appearances (at this point
 the movie loses all touch with

its conventions). At the office there's a beautiful secretary, but she's so rightwing she always thinks she's playing football. Grant is tempted (he's always tempted, and yields instantly, that's his charm but also what got him into trouble with Derrida).

And soon we see him crouching down like a quarterback behind the secretary with his hands patient and puritanical under her bottom as she's spread in a three-point stance. This is the creepy part, but apparently for many husbands in shoulderpads who only stand and wait, it vibrates a lot of contradictions at once. Another deeper rationale is that in this posture they represent enough desire for one, shared between two, subject and object, proving that in a world of scarcity where repression is overabundant the value of internal restraint becomes incalculable, while attending to neurological sensation becomes more and more an anachronous luxury. Thus a nation is a person (and if an utterly clothed Cary Grant doesn't convince you of this all by himself, then walk naked into the socialist future with your body the only badge of realism), and a nation never dies, except in the past or by accident, though sometimes its processes of reproduction aren't all that pretty. So she snaps the ball to Grant who, though he loves his wife, has to take it, because inside it contains photographs that prove Derrida's summer home is in fact a gulag in Nicaragua, with lines of people waiting

for buses, for sugar, for paper, and blurry pictures packed in freeze-dried prose to prove it. That night, when Grant comes home with the ball under his arm the smile on his face means the climax has begun. Derrida, who senses the storm brewing, takes out his manuscript and starts to speak. But now, thanks to Grant's sexualized, oppressive and glamorous hard work at the office, rather than being out in the cold, Grant and Hepburn rise knowingly and retire to the bedroom offcamera, to the accompaniment of Derrida's droning nuptials. The movie has scarcely ended and already I can hear the cries of "Focus!" The viewers have to face something the movie doesn't: continuity after the end. Nicaragua's still hanging by sensate threads. And if presidents still have charisma, it means that the viewers have been on hold so long that they've started to, if not live there, then camp out, sleep in cars, or under mortgages inconstant as clouds. It's like critics opening three books at once and writing "vertiginous" somewhere near the end of the introductory paragraph. By now, one day after Bastille Day, young turks under erasure will have always already sprung up to the cry of "Gentlemen, start proclaiming the due date of the master narrative in your sepulchral verbs." Meanwhile, inside the Bastille itself . . .

[Continued in *New American Writing* #3 (1988)]

Gustaf Sobin:
Voyaging Portraits
(New York: New Directions, 1988)

I AM WRITING THIS ESSAY in an old farmhouse, what the Provençals call a *mas*, built solidly of stone and heavy timbers, and set down in a meadow surrounded by vineyards and cherry orchards. I have drawn an old tea table up to the wide hearth where last night's fire has been coaxed into flame again. It is winter in Vaucluse, and a thin, silvery light comes through the casement window behind me. The ground slopes up from here into a ridge of higher vineyards. Gustaf Sobin's house sits up near the crest of the ridge. The fields around it are brown and red; some of the trees have turned; the forest behind is pine and dark green. His house was an old cocoonery built a century ago when the region had tried to establish a silk industry. Sobin converted it into a dwelling and slowly added to it over the quarter-century he has lived there. In front of it is a gray hive-shaped rock shelter called a *borie*, an odd-looking sheepcote that herders built throughout Provence, which villagers would sometimes resort to when their towns were sacked, a frequent event during the Middle Ages. The *borie* from here could almost be an Olmec head brooding over the meadow below, a gray, austere god of the old race. Along the vineyard edge is a path leading to Sobin's *cabanon*, a nearly square-built cabin where, since 1971, he has written his poetry.

This is my third trip to the Vaucluse, where I have settled in for a sabbatical. The farmhouse is only a temporary quarters; I have rented another house near the hilltop village of Gordes but gave it up to the landlord, a Canadian, who returns each Christmas for a week's holiday. The hills all around this valley are dotted with brown stuccoed houses; most are new, but in the meadows and along the river banks are little hamlets of stone buildings going back several centuries. The towns are small and crowded, well-fortified settlements built in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, most of them with long, bloody histories of religious war.

The Greeks arrived in the 6th century B.C. and established Marsillia (Marseille), then moved inland toward the Vaucluse, driving out the old Celtic tribes who had been living here since neolithic times. Their bloods slowly mixed; at the collapse of the Greek empire, the Romans took over and developed winegrowing and other agriculture. Marseille was a key trading post of the Mediterranean, and the old world's products came up through all these inland valleys. Menerbes, a paleolithic settlement with the only dolmen of this area, was named after Minerva, the Roman goddess of war and handicrafts, who was worshipped there. Afterwards, it was a Catholic town

until Calvinists took it in 1573 and withstood a fifteen-month siege, then capitulated and were slaughtered. This fairly typical history of a town here is a study in impositions, inlays of gods and authorities, the complication of the soul with increasingly rational and self-conscious powers. The Celts worshipped nature: they form the bedrock of modern Provençal consciousness; built over it were all those evolutionary feats of mind coming down from the Greeks to now.

The cathedral at Apt, a market town up the road from here, along the Coulon river, was built for the first bishop of the region, St. Auspice; at the consecration of its rebuilding, according to legend, Charlemagne was presiding when a local baron's son, a blind deaf-mute, grew very disturbed and began digging in the ground with his hands, until he uncovered a buried crypt below the sanctuary floor, supposedly the original offertory of St. Auspice. Below this was even another crypt belonging to a pre-Christian cult. The deaf-mute recovered his sight and speech and declared the first crypt to be that of St. Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary. A cult of St. Anne, the first of its kind in Europe, began there in the eleventh century and Apt became an important shrine. The relics of St. Anne were kept in the crypt and on St. Anne's feast day, frustrated girls and barren women came down to the crypt to rock the cradle holding the infant Jesus, hoping for pregnancy. But was this St. Anne or a Celtic fertility goddess in disguise, or some version of the paleolithic Venus of Lesprugue?

The crypts today are reached by narrow stone steps, and are stacked over each other like layers of mind. The lowest is as narrow as a grave, dark and somber, a final recess of the psyche. The cathedral above sprawls with high ceilings and long narrow windows, itself ancient but already pitched into the abstractions of much later vision. Old as it is, the cathedral seems to acknowledge in placid, dour statuary the loss of an old primal integrity between the sign and thing; the chalk figures gloomily construct a severed language of inert ciphers pointing vaguely upward to the other half of meaning. In the crypt below, a formidable solidity reigns, dark and resistant to any reconstruction of its original mystery—but there is where lay something primordially whole that the legend of the deaf-mute speaks to—the powers of the earth, darkness, the imaginal inner life of rocks and relics that suddenly bring one sight and hearing again. The Apt cathedral has been constructing a Modernist temple for nearly two millennia—pushing out its lobes of consciousness from an old

root mass.

Sobin has just come out of his house; at this distance, he is no bigger than a fly, a dark speck against the mauve backdrop of the fields, heading slowly, with minuscule progress, toward the beige Renaults parked in the drive. He is small against the ridge, delicate and vulnerable, suitably reduced to allow for critical study of him in his habitat, among his poetic resources. The upper story of the coconery was his first cell, where he spent nights grinding out an unworkable poetry:

for
ten
years, the
breath went, dis-
membered. erred bone, erred
measure. through the *nomen* (in its cell-
ulated
wastes) the poem moved, dis-
assembled, un-
spoken.

The *nomen* realm, the “*mundus/nominalis*,” is the material world shorn of its spiritual meanings, an inert mass of objects divorced from animating vision:

each thing, unto itself, in-
vested; each, its
sole
and inflexible referent.

Invested: an insinuation of the mercantilism which Sobin’s poetry scorns. If Sobin’s descent is from Pound, he has lopped off the strident aspects of EP’s economics but for these delicate hints and asides to a ravaged civilization bartering everything in the name of profit.

‘like
unto like’ the limbs
un-
mixed: that vision Empedoclean, the fusion
of the elements, under
strife, riven.

“Portrait of the Self as the
Instrument of its Syllables”

The *borie* beside his house is made of dry field stone, so chockablock the wind hardly passes through it, even during the mistral, the north wind that boils down out of Lyon and rips over the barren granite top of Mt. Ventoux, the westernmost alp. It’s a gloomy dome, cold inside, with a narrow opening; but it offers a profound metaphor lying at the heart of Sobin’s poetics: it gathers the rock, the inert, dessicated shards into a whirling top—Moorish almost, utterly fitted and coherent, made only of itself and human imagination. It stands for the image constructed of mere experience without commentary, support, rhetorical camouflage. The *borie* is spare and pure, the authentic expression of a whole epoch of dwellers at Provence. They simply rounded and shaped the dolmen by a few architectural refinements, which more recent houses clumsily fortified and squared up. The *borie* re-

sides in a continuum with the beehive and the fox hole and the humped foothills lying all about. When René Char came to visit Sobin one year, the road then came straight up between the house (the cocoonery) and the *borie*, and Char, a native of Provence from nearby Isle sur Sorgue, remarked tersely, “Masculine and feminine.” In the cover photo of Sobin’s book *The Earth as Air*, a *borie* takes the left foreground, with a hill echoing its roof shape behind it.

Sobin’s Renault winds its way along a dirt road skirting the vineyard, out to the N100 for Avignon, where he heads each week to meet with a French poet who is translating his poems. They collaborate for a morning, preparing a manuscript for a small book. The house is empty; both cars gone, a figure of quiet, lodged like a tooth in the soft sloping fields. As I come to know Sobin better, I perceive the thoroughness of his devotion to poetry—to writing, its perfection, its absolute degree. The rest of his life is mundane, the bare obligations of parent, husband, householder going about his chores, teaching part-time at the college in Lacoste, just up the hill from here.

It has been a calm exile these twenty-six years, except for the labors spent in his monk’s cell up the footpath, which sits out on the perimeter of his property like a customs shed. Inside is where the poetry is ground out, words and phrases at a time, proceeding only as the new phrase is set down in final version, advancing gradually like a tapestry weaving. Who else would have written so appreciatively of snails in “Esgargots” [*Témblor* 3], describing lovingly the

myopic grope of
their slow marauding muscles (the earth’s
dim nimbi and concupiscent
mimes).

In Sobin’s mode of composition, there is no going forward to sketch the argument, only the inching forward with half the will of the poem in the words, the other half somehow in the act of writing the new one, hearing its insistence among the other syllables, going by a subtle melodic sense of how the phrase should ring or come to rest. The very narrowness of conception, theme, resolution in a wave forming from particles allows for the widest amplitude of finesse, melodic counterpoint, subtle embellishment—the poems do not grope for experience, but for the predetermined execution of a form, an integration. The spacings between words, phrases, the line breaks that steeply descend by means of hyphenated disjunctions do not imply hesitation or a stammering concentration, but a visual construction of interlocking sounds, a braiding of particles issuing like a cord wound of myriad strands. When Sobin reads, the spacings dissolve into long musical phrases, the voice gliding effortlessly down through the visually complicated structures, like a train racing over a maze of intersecting tracks. Sobin’s poems are like his *borie*, a structure of mortarless enjambements. “I can account for everything I have written,” he told me: everything in the poem is, like a field rock, empirically verifiable. “Language is the husk of experience,” he said last night, sitting at his table, cup-

ping his hand to show how words form a sheath around a figure, a kernel of life. “As when the milk is bound by the juice of the fig,” one of the epigraphs to part III of *Voyaging Portraits*. Binding, sheathing, enclosing, uniting, metaphors of an imagination in exile, or perhaps the longing of any intelligent human being in the modern, rootless West.

Voyaging Portraits is Sobin’s fourth book of poems. He began work on it in 1984, shortly after *The Earth As Air* was issued. Each book is followed by a long depression, a sense of emptiness. *The Earth As Air* opens with the word “opens,” as consciousness is stirred to life again, to the problem of constructing a form out of words:

with you
what I know of

the world
opens, has
that of swelling, . . .
“Madrigal,” 3

In the first poem of *Voyaging Portraits*, six delicate strophes of a poem called “Of Neither Wind nor Anemones” begin,

opening, one
after another, our

last definitions (way
that the rooms grow, the wrist feeding
on its own words: the dark foam,
“inexhaustible flower”).

Both opening poems also take as their setting a point of immanence, the dark absorbing the first flickers of illumination, glints only, “a breath that // still / spreading, breaks // in- / to dull tokens,” in “Madrigal,” and in the other poem, the “dark foam.” Both books have identical beginnings and will follow a closely parallel logic, repeating an argument that has recurred from the beginning of his poetry. Across the whole of Sobin’s writing one event continues to recur: a wave forming out of particles of matter that nearly completes its form, its circular whorl, but never quite finishes it. There is only the point of its crash into the rest of life, but the poem, all the poems being one collective poem, records the in-gathering of the disassembled into this most natural of formative events, the swelling of a wave until it can absorb no more particles without losing some. The poem closes just as the crest is reached; at that moment, the language has achieved its purpose, the dream of unity, and whatever else may occur in the cycle of the wave, it is left to the reader to imagine or ignore. Hence the “swelling” that begins *The Earth As Air*, a slow rising of a wave out of mere endless water; and in *Voyaging Portraits* the wave, now more complexly figurative, enters “the tips of the self” to “fill,”

but
only towards
extinction

Extinction is what we never quite get to; the progress of the poems is only towards the penultimate moment of climax, at which the poem withdraws into silence. The last word of *Voyaging Portraits* is “ligated,” the whole form con-

nected at its utmost, at the very precipice of fulfillment. But by withholding the rest of the cycle, the death of form, there is the calculated ambiguity that form could continue to expand, to ray out, forever reconnecting the postlapsarian world. The hope is there, but so is the realistic alternative of mere crumbling and entropy.

Art must form, but what it forms is the original world before a certain kind of consciousness drove it apart. “Of Neither Wind nor Anemones” surveys that cold, dark world on which the poetry must work its animating powers, the way a shaman inspects the ailing victim he must now restore:

those opaque bodies in
their moving fields: no
word. is only the glint that utters (or
promises to).

Though these are symbolist poems, they are profoundly connected to the magic world of Amerindian ritual, to the dry, rock world of the American west where shamans have filled the desert and rock cliffs with gods. Sobin draws down the whole symbolist tradition into his writing, but his modern sense of purpose derives from a deep attraction to his identity as an American, as an inheritor of the Indian imagination in the New World. Hence, the long hymn to the American west in “Road, Roadsides, and the Disparate Frames of Sequence” in Part IV [*Témblor* 4]. He keeps these matters obliquely subtle, at the blurred peripheries of his language, though he begins his book with a prayer for power to begin a ritual of transformations.

The situation throughout Sobin’s poetry is of a figure whispering through the spirals of an increasingly ecstatic perception of returning coherence. In *The Earth As Air*, a listener is perceived nearby, “with you / what I know of // the world / opens,” which I take to be a female, the nineteen-year-old girl whom Sobin once described to me as his ideal reader, the flesh of his words, the voice sounding them to him as they sit together facing an open window looking out into the Provence sky. But this “she,” who is both muse and restorer of awareness, is also the other within himself, the part of mind unfractured by negative consciousness. His incantatory speech is whispered half aloud to himself, to the other part of himself, the unaltered innocence beneath adult knowledge, a feminine crypt in the soul. It is self-integration that lies at the heart of the poems, that is the drama’s purest act of restoration.

Prayer gives a man the opportunity to know a gentleman he hardly ever meets. I do not mean his maker, but himself.

—Dean Inge, quoted in *Geoffrey Madan’s Notebooks* (Oxford U.P., 1981)

Sobin’s language is conceived as prayers whispered to or through the self by a figure kneeling in the inert, sundered world, the chaos of modern history. In *Voyaging Portraits*, the listener, the “thou” beside him, is more removed than “she” was in *The Earth As Air*.

you far, even further now
in these vacant
 creations. through the
 summer's smudged transparency, not even
a teased shadow, slick,
 across a quivering lid. . . .

That distance is the gap to be closed by vision:

a-
long lines, the
lines: is how the
wrist
works, and the linked, articulating
bones of
the
light. is what
would bring
us: of
all words: 'you,' the
furthest; . . .

By the second poem, Sobin has constructed all the initial events to mark the beginning of a new "wave" of perception: with distance between I and "thou," with spring waking in the ground, with light beginning to enter the body's "tips," with lines moving, the most sinuous and subtle of wave metaphors, a line barely rising out of level water, a welling with only its crest beginning to take shape in the ambiguous wavelets. "A bulge / of ocher / over the black / abutments." But note how the "wave" here is then filtered through the other metaphors of "waking,"

way, ways: in
a
flush of wind, your
tall body
flares
into focus.

The "she" or the "you" are a twin self, the variously polar attributes of an I, hence the motif of the "mirror," the reflected self partly created and communicated with through "image," i.e., one's language. There is no other bridge in thought from one aspect of self to another than by words, by concentrated perceptions articulated, brought up to consciousness—thus prayer, enchantment, song, however one depicts the act of singing one's self into being, these poems are the painstaking labors of one attempt to unify sensibility. The fundamental precept of Sobin's vision is that *le paradis n'est pas artificiel*, perhaps even jagged, as Pound says, but certainly in all cases "real":

Scope, mere size, a kind of redemption
Exposed still and jagged on the San Francisco hills
Time and depth before us, paradise of the real,
we know what it is

George Oppen, "Some San Francisco Poems," CP 220

"Earth's // its own twin," Sobin writes. Art is the effort to

grasp Earth's own reality, nothing more. Thus, whatever loss there may be as the implied cause of Sobin's efforts, it has nothing to do with the Earth, which remains perfect. Only the human mind has fallen, failed to see with the same primal eyes what visionary predecessors once beheld as coherent life. The disasters of history have always been mental, not temporal. Paradise exists, only the mind has drifted into exile. Thus, there is no "narrative" in Sobin's or in any other symbolist poetry: there is only the process by which one attempts to regain lost vision, the deaf-mute's miracle. Oppen formulated symbolist esthetic in another "San Francisco" poem, "The Translucent Mechanics":

And fetched a message out of the sea again
Say angel say powers
Obscurely 'things
And the self'
Prosody
Sings
In the Stones

CP 221

It is now Tuesday morning, and I have remade the fire, the same one I started several days ago. The ash is high in the pit below the little tepee of logs. The green branches I am burning are all hissing and foaming at their sawed ends, and a shaggy column of smoke passes through a mote of sunlight, gray, powder blue before it folds its way up the black stones of the chimney. It suddenly occurs to me that Sobin's major motif is the act of joining the other two elements of the old cosmos: fire and water. The first joining was between earth and air, but these other elements are even more opposed; everywhere I look in *Voyaging Portraits* there is the image of a moist, cold world absorbing light, or fire, becoming parts of the image-wave forming in the course of the book. Even a wave becomes light, or luminous water as it makes its final crest. Early on, this passage almost passes notice:

who'd bring the body —fully focused— to its very tips:
its burning termini.

How to keep track of the echoing sources: "your / tall body / flares into focus," and "the tips of the self fill," the recurring motif of water/light in "dark foam," metaphors of an epiphany, but of a light submerged in water, under the flooded world:

a dark foam
breaking, circle-
upon-
circle
of you as
form,
as
volute, as where
my least words ride:

pile, rhythmic,
(where
each whisper
would accrete, o
glut
of crystals, the
deep-
ly inscribed . . .

Paradise is real, but lies submerged in awareness, under a dark flood, recessed, accessible only by descent toward

grottoes,
polyps, bright
cages
of light: those
worlds-
with-
in, in
which nothing's
finally, further . . .

These prayers to self bring Sobin to religious vision; there is no other way to argue it:

that miracle
of
measure-
ascendant.

As the century ends, one finds the religious spirit reasserting itself everywhere, at almost every level of thought. The old familiar assessments of post-Enlightenment logic, materialism, industrial life have been so insistently negative it is time to believe in the shift of modern culture toward faith, gods, credences. The lapidary imagery in Sobin, and many of his metaphoric descriptions, portray what can only be a temple of some sort, a religious temple of various icons and venerated statues, as though his vision led him finally to sing with others in a select congregation, under the roof of a temple:

to
stand, that there's some-
where to
stand, marble
over
moorings, the
scaffolds, now, as if
vanished, and the steps, the
floors: spoken
forth. to
stand, stand there, with-
in
sound alone,
that
miracle!

The direction of the poems is from one edge of west-ern time to another, moving from the ancient world of

Greece and Egypt, origins of thought, toward Europe, the U.S. and then back round to Italy, in part V, a section Sobin originally wanted to call "Roma." It ends with Sobin looking down to an Italian fountain where the vapors are rising over the stone nymphs, enclosing a vision of paradise fully emergent—the god-realms—where mist rises as a medium unifying fire and water, the light and fountains having at last combined their elements. But as the poems sweep forward through Western history, the mind considering these things in its various "Transparent Itineraries" remains reposefully "present," in this moment, sifting for the submerged vision of coherence. The wave forming in thought is drawing upon experience to form a totality that is inexorably religious in meaning, hence the new title of part V: "Of the Four-Winged Cherubim as Signature," and why also Sobin opens the section with his return to his Jewish roots, to a synagogue at Ferrara, at last the temple hinted at, configured, but never made manifest until the cresting of the wave. Does the wave's crest signify a roof, a temple, an enclosed space of holy vision reserved for contemplating the circle of the water? But here voices make the circular wave, where one finally stands roofed, floored, enclosed by coherent life. "Ferrara Unleavened" gathers up all the points of Sobin's compass, for outside the synagogue the sundered world is marked by the fall of "iodio 131," the radioactive fallout from Tchernobyl, and inside are the few remaining Jews of the old Ferrara ghetto, once populous but decimated in the pogroms of World War II. Sobin prays with the few who remain, descending with them to "unplumbed gardens." Here too fire and water mix: "dim fires" that one may "sip, / from our sonorous jars," as "the heart" moves to "envelope these / shadows in a / foam / of sewn bells."

The spiritual is the highest consciousness; mere logic or category are lower forms which modernity has settled for. The wave that begins far back in Sobin's poetry, as early as 1971 when he wrote his first successful quatrain, has always been perceived as the power to see, to imagine, to repossess vision. Part III of *Voyaging Portraits* is reserved for dealing with how he spent the first ten years in Provence learning to write: he depicts his struggle in "Portrait of the Self as the Instrument of Its Syllables" as an opaque body, a mute, dark thing attempting through ardent study to absorb light, to begin to see, to follow the wave as it crested. The "*mundus nominalis*" is the deaf world of inert matter, the scattered nouns of half-conscious thought; it was the verb that was missing, the verb to give such particles ligature and motion, to draw them into a wave. Perhaps not too surprisingly it was Hopkins, his ear trained in Gregorian chant and prayer, that taught Sobin the animating force of the verb. The verb drove the particles into the wave and sent it cresting into conscious ecstasy. As Sobin reminded me, it was in *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* that Fenollosa observed that there are no nouns in nature, only the seamless act of things linking the cosmos together. Sobin's "Portrait" is one of those moments of modern poetry where conversion is fully re-

counted, where an intellect moves stubbornly from one cultural nexus to another, from the logical and materialistic to the visionary, whose long tradition threads back through all the terrain the "Itineraries" here cover: including Sappho, Pindar, Anacreon, Catullus, Isaiah, Parmenides, Dante, Ibn Arabi, Shakespeare, Traherne, Blake, Wordsworth, Hopkins, Mallarmé, Char, Williams, Oppen, Duncan, the linguists Whorf and Sapir—one man's saints' calendar, but through all of them runs the principle of unity, the animate world, wave-making.

As Sobin recounts the anguish of his conversion up in the attic of his old cocoonery, the wind fluttering his oil lamps, he must weave every image and trope used with those that precede and follow this poem. The whole book is a configuration of recurrent language, echoing strings of syllables and images all joining together. Consider this minim of his handiwork: the first strophe of the opening poem "Of Neither Wind nor Anemones" gives us this curious image: "The wrist feeding / on its own words: dark foam," and follow this "wrist" through other poems, well into the middle of the book, to part 5 of "Portrait of the Self," where the wrist suddenly becomes Heidegger's as he slaps his hand back and forth, trying to show how a wave beats against the Aegean shore, to get at the proper equivalent to Holderlin's German verb. All this is of course from an actual meeting of Heidegger's circle at a little coastal retreat near Venasque, which Sobin attended, fascinated by the way Heidegger and his French disciples troubled all morning over the predicates for wave, as the actual Mediterranean beat the shore below them.

Heidegger withdrawn, opaque (a

block of
dark crystal, its
rays
bent in
wards) e-
lucidated the
verb, alone: its clipped, arrested movement.
the back
of his hand
slapped, flatly,
at the dry shadows.

That first wrist at the book's opening is a hand writing primordial language, copying down inventories on amphorae, or scratching on the first papyrus in the poem "Nile," whose fingers are thus the "tips" burning with luminous speech, the self-integrating medium. It is why we trace the wrist down the knuckles, to the termini of self, then up to the throat, mouth, the air, to the heart, to Heidegger's hand flapping in precise imitation of a Greek wave, though the "cave" where they are meeting is not "Plato's cave." Only some things will make ligature, but not the history of consciousness, its evolution of blind reason.

But a history of language is at the bottom of this poetry—the Jewish vision of a language of pure intent laid down by God at the inception of life, each word possessing

the soul of the object it signified. Paradise was not so much a garden of earthly delights as a realm of purely intact and perfect meanings, the original speech with which the world began, according to the opening sentence of the Book of Genesis. Life, world, cosmos—these are linguistic events, and they undermine any modern sense of materialism inasmuch as there can be no separate identity of objects as being apart, divorced, nor of essences abstractable from their functions in nature. There are only these binary wholes, the thing and sign bound together, which make up the bottomless mystery of the Kabala, the root of Jewish mystical thought. There are forty-nine discernible levels of intent in each word of the Kabala, ranging from the widest epic sense of life to the most minute syllabic nuance. It was Walter Benjamin who brought the methods of Jewish hermeneutics to the study of modern literature and philosophy, the rigors of which have since become part of contemporary critical analysis. Sobin is not only returning to his Jewish identity in *Voyaging Portraits*, his act is one of myriad related functions of his absorption with language as the binding of the cosmos, the boundaries of Paradise. Religious vision is the highest consciousness, the fullest sense of speech through which self reconnects to God, to fellow human beings, to the world. Hence the shift in Sobin's interests from Heidegger to the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, particularly his *La philosophie de l'autre*, to Martin Buber's theological writings, to Paul Celan, the modern Jewish victim of Auschwitz whose mystical bond to language was thereafter sheathed in the terrors of the Nazi "mundus nominalis." Speech is the ultimate ligature, joining itself as it joins the self to the spiritual grammar of community, ethos, cosmos. The extinction of the wave after it crests is into a sea of infinite wave energy; in Sobin's poetry, the silence at the crest marks a point of self-annihilation into higher unity, a giving in, the "letting go" of one's nomen into a sea of infinite ligature. His "Portrait of the Self" begins with the elemental description "was dark," and can only proceed until the closing words "thus lit."

Paradise is finally reached in the poems of Part V, but his description of it comes most clearly in two passages, in the final "entry" of his "Seven Entries for a Flora on Speech" where he marshalls together terms of light into one ultimate suffusion of objects:

someday, light
as if flooding their very fibers, these tables,
chairs shall fill: the bottles—in
their own, glowing sockets—stand. your voice, its
blown sleeves, no
longer need these 'lyric remissions.'

Water/fire. When they mix finally as "flooding . . . light," poetry as a separate act of unified thought will no longer be necessary; all things will thereafter be both material and illuminated, paradisaal.

But it is in "Voyaging Segments: A Frieze," the closing poem, that Sobin constructs his chief vision of paradise, the perfect realm of intact meanings, where the stone

nymphs of a Roman fountain are covered in jets of water, the mist encasing the whole in ethereal aloofness, a closed, innerworld of perfect unity, thus ending the book on the word "ligated," the wave now fully formed, rolled into its own coherent circle: "ovolo, palm-leaf, laurel,"

light itself, through that ribboned, rococo decor, as if
channelled

Water and fire are now one tissue from which "the very / first syllables—increments—were ex-/tracted." The fountain is thus one of those "dolorous attempts—the baroque's—to close rupture," linking this fountain with the rest of visionary history the poems are tracking. Within the mists is

the astonishing lightness of a world momentarily
delivered, disclosed. ours, among the many, in the froth
of its running, effervescent particles.

The fountain is both actual and figurative, a thing and the metaphor of pure speech, for its every eddy and jetted stream is an aspect of a perfectly sustained syntax, grammar, transcendent communication:

a grammar of circumstance turning as it went, into one of
conduit, passage. of the abolished ideation, its
luminous, on-going sections.

(what glide, suspended, as if journeying towards the composition of some second, some ultimate sequence).

The whole is the "irreproachable myth of 'the perfectly mingled' . . ." even as the two watchers above, in their hotel room, become "figurants to our own unravelling," swept into the composition they are held by, "as if drafted into that late vocable," which Sobin subtly turns into the wave again, the undertow, the figures being "drawn under."

just then, as the sun, over the ocher suburbs, flattened;
set, persimmon.

The fountain finally becomes the fully manifest figure of the wave.

nothing, not even the least, wind-beaded drop, in that piped
effusion, that wasn't, as it arced, as if ligated.

The distant "you" of the book's opening is now "we," who "held one another. now, against the bleached, unfettered expanses of our own dispersion. . . ." With the word "ligated" Sobin can go no further. The book is done at that precipitous apex, in which all the terms of the book's "system" are thus joined: language, the argument's metaphors and images, the "you" and the silent, implicit I, spirit and opaque body, the *mundus nominalis* and the spiritual verb. Even the mirrors are empty, having dissolved their mocking reflection of a dualistic world. The poem has gathered all into a fleeting paradise, a transient perfection.

We must go on living in the aftermath of the wave, the return to "dark foam," the opacity of the nomen realm. But even now, fire half down, ash mound high, books all

marked up and scattered across the sofa under the window, I look up and am astonished to realize that Sobin's brown house and gray borie seem to float, as if perched in the dark hollow of the ridge, a stone wave half-way risen toward a crest. Though a blink later it is only the rock world again, silent, fixed, waiting. When, in 1971, Karen Blixen finally left her coffee plantation in Kenya, she looked back once at where she had lived since 1913 and remarked,

From there, to the South-West, I saw the Ngong Hills.
The noble wave of the mountain rose above the surrounding
flat land, all air-blue.

Sobin's hill is mauve, and green, earth-dark, but makes itself a noble wave, the only proper landscape of imagination.

Of the Four-Winged Cherubim as Signature

from *Voyaging Portraits*

Seven Entries for a Flora on Speech

the shoots go blond, before
burgeoning. already —it's pre-spring— the
darks shimmer. a phrase, as it emanates,
is sending its tendrils, blind,
through an undergrowth of red mirrors.

because, once written, could
continue: trace —past ourselves— the very
first outlines, provisions, for our earliest
rehearsals. nothing, not even the fan of

your fingers, that's not angle, casting, instance. . . .

. . . moved
through my own descriptives. mornings past, in
the opalescence of the still- undeveloped,
drew at
the pleated image. (is the full length that's
meant: its deep flourish and loose,
flagellant releases).

who, by riding back-
wards, blond-eyed and water-
slick, lifts the waves' lids (blown

muscle the least phoneme —riotous— writes against).

caught, each time, on the labyrinth
of my own idiom. followed, mistook, re-
traced that thin, ephemeral quiver. there, at
least, was density, resistance. was what the
lightning left, unciphered, through the charred heart
of the laurel.

Of the Four-Winged Cherubim as Signature
from *Voyaging Portraits*

clearer, through my own
waste, followed the low
scuttled hills of the nimbus. is
something less, lighter than ourselves that
determines. pulls image—the artifice— free
of its dissolvent mass.

(of the redemptive: a stray vision)

someday, light
as if flooding their very fibers, these tables,
chairs shall fill; the bottles—in
their own, glowing sockets— stand. your voice, its
blown sleeves, no
longer need these 'lyric remissions.'

A Fable for Lighea

... flew
through sound's dark, dispatched half: the
travelling craters of
its

struck,
still-reverberant surfaces. lapped
shadows, and the
low, breath-papered rooms, as they
fade, now,
successive. (whose
muscles, once; whose
lids

held me in the
rolled
folds of image: its in-gathered

expanses).

*
no alphabet dense,

com-
pressed enough, now, to
with-
hold us. would number waves, pebbles. edge
edges. draw,
from that

dark
napkin, your
crushed relic, its imprint, a cold,

rose-
coral red.

Portraiture

(Outlines from a Vanishing Baroque)

.....
...encircled one an-
other with
wet
images. stuck 'wind' in, and 'hearts.'
stuck 'various
small

ornaments.' billow, and
wrap; the bundles,
gradually,

get knotted. our
second lives, in those second worlds (
depth, and
preponderance), dis-
solve. lighter, now,

drew at the
taut,
ob-

durate drops. blew, over
your breasts, the very outlines which,
later, they'd
rise in; ripple

to. were thriving
in the running
folds

of that teased
scenery. were laying, under
one an-
other's lids, 'light' and 'shadow,' 'the
pale
jade clusters that hang

from the still
flaking af-
freschi.' were, and
weren't. bunched, weightless, in those
late

perspectives, breathed 'eyes,'
'ankles,' 'your
hair's

smooth
metallic spill. . . . ' beat, to a
bright tissue, these
portraits in which —rhythmic— we'd rise,
shimmering, and
recur.

Of Our Floral Sign and Ascendent
(Villa di Livia)

... rose out of the
thick milk of
those
ruins. hard
buds, and the stiff, wind-

twisted
trumpets of your
scarf. trellis, and

pitch: the
steam
shoots —nacre— through our
drafted

reflections. even our
heart
rises, quilled, into so
many sudden, red
tendrils.

*

Villa

di Livia, and that
garden-
aqueous: pear, laurel,
finch. pierce,
and

sunder. in the
un-

loosened light (your hair, now,
even lighter) your bunched
bracelets
beat. our mouths
move

under. *these*
are our
flowers, our high notes, flor-
escent. this, our
sign, and

ascendent. on
these, our
fixed

pigments, our
breath
catches, as the
petals stretch —fibrous— and
flare.

Voyaging Segments: a Frieze

bodies are for flying
to, beating
in (so much space, brought
under, pressed to
the very hollow of its paired releases).

way the spray sheathes its own statuary in a flowing gauze of wind-meshed facets.

where, "eating of the same shadows," we'd first appeared.

had swollen into focus.

(our gazes as if catching on the flecked metal of image).

there, where even the darts, running —brushed— through silk, became emblems,
blown tokens, to this sequence that, so imperceptibly, had overtaken, and now in-
cluded us.

drawn us into the narrow, sporadic draft of its octaves.

. . . ovolo, palm-leaf, laurel. . .

light itself, through that ribboned, rococo decor, as if channelled.

that, by saying,
ex-
tends, protracts in flat,
conjugated segments the very areas it

evokes. rolls
number; edges, with its own

fires, the
still-
unconstellated dark.

(a thread as if sipped, consumed by its very needle).

memory, wrapt in muscle, and driven, wedged, into those dense, impacted mo-
ments, those rooms that —on entering— dissolve.

(arms pinned, and the hair as if ploughed, either side).

—moved in, through, against one another—

exchanged weights.

for whom the clouds, now, in those high, cavernous pilings, had no consistency
other than that which the organs —in their lapping— fashioned, teased forth, con-
ferred.

so many whispers, now, as if honed to a single ray.

(breath, folded; knees, locked).

a vector, blown 'transitive,' but out of what? in whose name? weightless, across so
much disassembled space. . . .

(the condemned sets of the causal).

carrying within, like a long-tailed coda, the broken data of its own origins.

wherein, once, out of
light (in its
ligaments, muscled) the very
first syllables —increments— were ex-
tracted. were
pulled, like so

many still-quivering shadows. a-
cross the earliest linens, drawn
taut.

a grammar of sorts, wrested from the word, and stamped, sequential, into the thus
engendered expanses. . . .

(those very currents —a deep cobalt— we'd sometimes slept in).

what, later, we'd see rising warped into volutes, into those slow, dolorous attempts
—the baroque's— to close rupture, and be wrapt in the coils of a fresh figuration.

—some yet-unsuspected music of inclusions—

(of everything earth —its fixed stars, unharnessed— had had to relinquish).

as if so much movement, fugacity, might have caught in the complexities of orna-
ment. might have scrolled through the churned creams of its rich, overlapping
stuccos.

(turgid lilies, scalloped hearts.)

S. Ivo alla Sapienza

where, aside from the echoing, re-entrant bays —their facets, faced inwards —rose,
volatilized.

(. . .aside from the paired angels, their hips dimpled in shadow).

driven, already —irrepressibly— past. doomed to the very motion of its own dis-
placements: the polymorph of its phrase.

that syntax, based upon its own dissolutions.

what only the dtyads —the drift-rhymes— occasionally, withstood.

(as two orchards, sometimes, paired syncretic).

was what the bodies —in their tall, voyaging portraits— turned towards; closed on.

—the flames wrinkling in that brief sequence of creases—

(just there, then, as the eyes flew backwards).

arms, and the astonishing lightness of a world momentarily delivered, disclosed.
ours, among the many, in the froth of its running, effervescent particles.

there as it eddied, like shadow, in the gold corollas of a single, as if scuttled earring.

a wind, too, and along the cracked pediments, a way of leaning, rising, entering so entirely into the instant that the instant as if gathered us into its chords, scales, extended *glissandi*.

a grammar of circumstance turning, as it went, into one of conduit, passage. of the abolished ideation, its luminous, on-going sections.

(what glide, suspended, as if journeying towards the composition of some second, some ultimate sequence).

just then, as the sun, over the ocher suburbs, flattened; set, persimmon.

'hold,' said the hand. and the heart, from the very heart of its decorous metaphor, responded.

irreproachable myth of 'the perfectly mingled. . .'

phrase that floats, as if ghosted. that reaches us, bearing the illegible imprint of those arched, as if lacquered figures, their chins lifted, hair as if shivering to the raised, inexorable movement.

of the now anonymous and entirely engulfed: the slip of living vestige.

that barge we move by.

where, each night, the twin pillows, in lozenge, lay propped, staged for those deep, soundless encounters.

—becoming, as we were, figurants to our own unravelling—

ours, each other's, for as long as our flared, oscillating mirrors lusted after us.

(as, over an armchair, a blouse, poured limply.)

—fitted whispers—

there, where only the bodies, seemingly, might still muscle, prod, fashion a shape, a viable form for our passage through.

we, who'd scarcely, yet, appeared.

held, held one another, now, against the bleached, unfeatured expanses of our own dispersion. . .

as if drafted into that late vocable; drawn under.

as a fountain, below, showered its pale, slate-blue figures in its piled, overhanging plumage.

a nymph —slick— against its indolent splatter.

nothing, not even the least, wind-beaded drop, in that piped effusion, that wasn't, as it arced, as if ligated.

Socrates Dying in Widener

For a long time hexameters defined Europe
 as language suitable for quantitative sixes
 etheric medium in which exclusion
 was itself assented to by the victim.
 "I talked my way," evolving nothing but a consciousness
 that took a handleless cup as evidence
 (miles, as we now know, from symposiac lithos)
 a brew imaginable as bitter, the accents French
 and young man's chest, memory of battered stone heads
 like a stuffed bag with a rubber pirate mask, leer,
 on a basement dummy. Make a Socrates out of wax
 and melt it to a thumb, Man, as he discussed
 death in general, accent content.
 I think of the Egyptian model ships and bakeries
 ceramic mummies like Russian dolls, embalmers' fingers
 carved in slate like papal blessings, defunct forms
 and what month was it, horoscopically, when he died.
 Moneta admonishes with those gray-black fingers.
 A metaphor employed by Hazlitt reminds
 us rhetoric allowed these nubbin facts
 as (David says) goats can look like words
 rain on wool a sound like rain on rock.
 "Drinks" here is aorist, he always drinks
 chiton folds imagined as crepe nouveau
 filtered through saints (our bathtub virgin herms)
 in nongreek relation to rubbery skin
 the model Nietzsche staring over model desk
 lives over that moment inauthentically
 Nijinsky dancing, spotted, on the mirror lake.
 Bridges asking if grammar affected syllable weight
 may ask what Phaedo, phaeton, Crito does here
 when names, subjunctive, insulate an event.
 If authors took the audience's view of themselves
 would they die? they sit with him like inked dolmens
 Whistler's tilted soup glaze for nocturnes.
 Hexameters, obedient to the language, sit.
 Ponge for Derrida (overlined signature)
 is this notion the curl stands for the barber
 as recently jackets no longer fitting fit.
 Anywhere you are imagine the cave wall
 as that you can't quite get from without analogy
 this pipe with unbitable stem, two holes like a bed insect
 should be disappetant, Indian maiden proffering
 cigars outside (soft rounds) similarly wood.

Merrill's writing box, with scallops, proclaims him laureate
 Connecticut unable to articulate Stevens's skeleton
 who wrote about its river and called it like a sea.
 Athena's shield you peek through the doors at
 in the model parthenon is a sullen celastic slate.
 What could be pictured on it is more of what you get
 on the frieze, buffy gods in cordovan and oxblood
 like the paint on John Harvard, rosettes on his pumps
 volumes, folios, in the chair under him.
 Lucian's idea of what they're up to in Hades
 is banality, perpetuation of the ordinary,
 as if buying fish or boring were immortal.
 Levertov's use of the word blent is like this.
 The clay of the cup, presented always as a section of sphere
 is (duplicated in fine silver) nostalgic for skull curve
 and has to the eye of anyone used to handles or feet
 a ghostly brimming shadow of his beverage.
 Bichat makes his way known like Bertillon
 thinking of stained tissue as egregious
 yet connected by pattern, sunflower wallpaper
 as the glue on plaster under mine is Aegean
 full of currents (soundings) and graygreen floral islands.
 Scribes in the model granary tally bushels;
 one expects his heel on the cool marble, Alma-Tadema
 taking up Tissot's backyard pool for what
 suplicants to Hippocrates might come to.
 A visible form like an untinted glass flower leaves his body
 at cockcrow, and goes up out of convention
 (to the crystalline sphere itself, amalgamating with it).
 Picturably in chains, striped stuffed convicts
 with slotted head hoods on Fifth Avenue
 (and each alike) stay in the mind, vivid
 as drowned Burne-Jones people, nereids
 mythical as bodies as situate.
 One thinks: the carved wooden Pans in salt marsh
 are stand-ins, the elaborate ones all late
 as any garden memorandum, geometer's ball
 with an arrow through Descartes's mind always thinking.
 In Lincoln the giant wedding ring, silver gray
 over the jeweler is like the Mickey Mouse watch
 made to sell adults, the two cobbler's skills one,
 painted time on painted watch a fixed good.
 One could airbrush a gnomon shadow to like effect
 and Longfellow's sundial (seen at night) in his
 back garden
 on stylish gray pea gravel comes in as gods do
 willy nilly in any poem—the ones making smoke in Homer
 that should be smoak, acrid chimneyfire in fog
 and this what Dickens walking in registered—
 these flavors and qualities of light establish scenes.
 Eliot accents toward on the last syllable

that we may know his bowler and umbrella are holy
 and Homer likewise cuts up food over and over.
 Philosophy goes in fear, depends on sufferance
 because its questions eat away the statue's base
 lead (the Boswell and Johnson on St. Clement's gates
 puffy as Rowlandson or the pew cushions)
 weathering or worse, sheet copper gargoyles.
 Today I met Poe in the Public Garden
 the modified Inverness, knotted foulard
 and asked about the "Landor's Cottage" italicization.
 You know, he said, those were to have been continued
 (Island of the Fay and so on), notional landscapes
 elephant folio publication and six-point type.
 Not all rootlets give you (in the mine) the tree's shape
 as Roethke below the pots is struck with horror.
 A "threadlike process" is a summons, questions answers.
 Would Samuel Johnson have recognized Kierkegaard's attack
 on a legislative model for sin as valid?
 Ethics invaded by action, self-administered
 hemlock lets the agora in, admits it
 as a damaging admission, masonjar ring handcuffs,
 rubber bars the gorilla bends to attack the crowd.
 For contemplative otherness (demanding no ivory-ball voting)
 I prefer the veiled Isis in bronze at Hoover's birthplace
 signs, zodiacal, on her chair and
 a hand out, the fingers themselves like candles, upholding
 a squat lamp, clay or metal in metal, four spouts
 for twisted flames like drying mop heads or chair finials.
 Why her face is hidden you find in *Phaedrus*.
 Anything dug in earth tells you it is dug
 bitumen in the rags, preserving tissue
 the potfuls of potash famous men reduce to
 the triste relation of crockery to bone.
 The hero of what type. There is too much Ibsen.
 I tried to think of Xantippe cycloidal on the rim
 of discourse (hub at the center a straight line)
 and found it necessary to say her name overfamiliarily.
 Circles are described like a hand on a thigh
 and mastering life is a cup you drink from too.
 How long did it take MacNiece to do the *Autumn Journal*,
 did being Noel Coward take endless study?
 today I saw again Bergen on ventriloquy
 tail of Williams's poem on the Rat a quote.
 One tends to think Socrates's death authentication,
 putting the body to it, Marjorie Grene on Descartes
 muddling body till he has a fever and dies.
 A rubber skull in the Fenway rose garden (now shut)
 to loom in moonlight like any loaf or chef toque
 will do for reflections on mortality in October
 but that may be the question—is his dying the point
 or like the rose as if dipped in blueblackpurple ink?

The darkness is an added thing, tincture of night
 you'd add, in a French or Italian phrase that can handle it,
 something in Leopardi, even Valéry.
 In his death throes (dignified, maybe, Cary Grant yesterday)
 the cock will have stayed in his mind or did he concentrate
 as Huxley would on the newness of data so unlike a crayfish lung
 —it's all speculation, word he raised to professional indifference
 not why not or if, the mystery of hippogriff.
 We are not in the business of describing what is
 the so, the the, trail left poets by philosophers
 (where it leads in both cases may be a story.)
 If as people want to be in at the Crucifixion
 we were there when cold crept up limbs
 would we be better. Like Kierkegaard's Adam
 device to think about innocence with
 or any myth, dismembered poets reunited
 it isn't to be grasped with the imagination.
 As a decapitated jellyfish passes a nerve impulse round and
 round till it dies
 (Symons in the aquarium at Naples) we think composition
 of place produces data. Burghers with ropes on necks
 wrecks of being, survive in tabletop maquettes.
 Maybe Klimt or someone, coolness of limb expressed as paleness
 the "marble" metaphor if veins unfilled with air were
 porphyry, thing to be threaded or polished like a geode.
 A bowl of rough green stone with a grasshopper (locust)
 on leaves, berries, equatorially seamed
 could be to me Manchu or Shang to touch
 dream of collecting, Eiffel Towers or Isis, the heads
 too little to be busts on Pater's mantel
 who thought the fringe of hair on their brows important.
 Boethius in his cell saw the Virgin of rhetors
 with letters on her gown, lampshade, ticket in
 the street or class-ring little books, VE, RI.
 What is the quality (not put down) of his listening
 to dialogue, as in *Phaedrus* he hears the young man withhold
 a fact, clutch the copied text to his peplumed bosom.
 It is guilty, this secret that one writes, Woolf's pageant
 all England in a backyard, the tea cooling.
 We look at tour guides for the Far East
 and hear Egypt is hospitable. Japanese
 scan pyramid, find unknown additional chamber
 guarded by Sekhmet's black granite disk crowns.
 Rhadamanth and Quetzalcoatl are auburn blonds
 not meaning they plant transistors or batteries in sand
 madman in the library saying their tall hats capped auras
 and never spoke because we see no teeth in glyphs.
 What tune the cracked lute gives out, the crack spreading
 is metaphor, Merlin in his hollow tree, wood sarsen.
 Make of it a plectrumed violin, mandolin.
 Elvin Lowell thought himself lobster, hatpin-eyed

like men seen through Athenaeum windows reading newspapers.
 One scans two scanty figleaved ancestors, fleeing.
 End thinking as such, meditative garden brooding
 since his body challenges me as it always did
 largest parallel to Swinburne's Galilean
 and Pater with military moustache approves the veteran
 Symonds demurring, writing Whitman strident letters—
 the being *in* this milieu, Renaissance as pageant
 suffices, Ficino's correspondences a mother of pearl
 interior, he there, all of them, flaws in memory's emerald.
 Drawers in a chest employ the other drawers as lids
 and this is how argument evolves in Plato;
 you don't (except in Kenyon) find bodies in them.
 The pirate with Vestas burning in his hair and beard
 dies buried in sand, extinguished by tide.
 Staccato trumpet, not a sound he'll have heard, Star Wars *dum dum*
 was in his experience Homer learned rote, the
 complicity not of everyone having it to hand, knowing about
 tiny herring fried in oil on the pier, but Browning's
 half-recollected schooling Woolf coveted
 her dream of Greek as entree to greenest quad
this the music so-called of spheres armillarian
 the effect their brass against their steel made on one.
 "These things could willingly be spared," forsaken Indian
 to Johnson, Idiot Boy his best novel and play, the
invention of it, mind seeping through the corollaries
 better than ballad, a Merlin's vision of Arthur's Tomb
 anything holding its material awkwardly is lovable
 as drips on a paint can obscuring the label announce the contents
 as a perishable urn keeps (say) lovers on the brink of kissing.
 Fantasiae of the unconscious, the Paterian bunsen burner
 going all by itself in a room with a long table
 Mackintosh chairs and chianti bottles minus raffia, poor old polis.
 Alexandrian verse should be in Alexandrines
 and pronounces (what it utters) alternative, hieratic speech
 scaly wisdom quelling democratic disapproval
 by color, attractiveness of any stark coil
 the paradox that Keats's Lamia shriven of appearance
 by a philosopher was herself philosophy, lovely coil.
 Or say it's like peppermint; the red stripes grow pale as you suck
 our *Lady* Philosophy impersuasibly genteel.
 One doesn't (Schopenhauer said) do these things for a wage.
 Tiepolo, whose Poet Apotheosized in the Boston Museum
 installs the bearded and belyred person in clouds
 the laurel like thorns, leaves us uneasy
 his colors so much darker than attendant angels.
 You will a digestion. In the window of a curio shop
 a Gillette razor, gold, among cheap ear pendants and porcelain—
 "how many things I do not want," up-country sage
 and Browne muses on crushed limbs and *unburnt* wood.
 The final medium, *plein air* as the man says, as a small crystal ball

might rest almost like an eye in a socket in an acrylic wineglass,
 the sound it makes, rolled slightly, and difference in curvature
 two ways of coming at a single clarity—
 blown-glass nymphs fixed with transparent green monofilament
 to reeds in shop windows, lakes in dioramas with ducks on
 you see the feet of through misted lucite, beetles,
 these a quality of attention we have fought through to.
 Thereon, thereunder, green shimmer red ink makes slanted right
 may be avoided by using purest India
 for a figure, chest exposed and Dureresque folds
 not looking at a cup, surrounded by his friends
 barring one who's ill, dark acanthine tendriled border
 that, another medium altogether, in Beardsley's Malory
 functions as the part of Merlin's cave you don't see
 he entering, a splash for Dent, white paper unsmeared.
 The wax-fruit and flower collages our ancestors made
 glazed with acorns, quill-work, lace, appropriate
 indoor mortality need a name printed
 on a slip of paper, looking trompe l'oeil but really bad taste
 dark raspberry-looking fruits made by adding bits
 some nibbled as if cherries the sparrows had got.
 Framed in heavy wood they are emblems of complex fragility
 meant to be lost in the half-light, away from windows.
 There's a font called Egyptienne, not quite as antique
 as some (Martineau's *Essays and Reviews*, Arnold's *St. Paul*)
 that would do well by the dialogues. As translations improve
 we wonder what they would have been like in verse
 the notorious *Republic* section speaking against poets
 in six-foot lines a chorus could deliver bitterly.
 World globes in the Brattle toy store were puffy, dimpled
 as spongiest apples, dumb blue swabs to clean with
 on them, small if at all, Jamaica, Greece
 places we think on, trail of dots on blue.
 Confronted with the bowl he said should a libation
 be poured into soft earth (thinning gods's blood)
 and under it, glowing redly, Dis's walls.
 Why do they fit so well in gardens, discoursing there
 unless speech, comporting itself as pergolaed arbor
 is vase from the thick and woven lip of which
 Daphne's father (crowned in seaweed) pours ("pours") liquid
 to be a river or stream. Three dancing Graces sink
 their bodies criss-cross-criss into stone like a bath
 and that tree, once a nymph, has a nymph in.
 Socrates at the end was versifying Aesop;
 he's had his last bath so the layers out won't have to
 and on the ground expires, a wrapped thing.
 Graces in the air of the kind Newman almost perceived
 (I can't believe Ruskin did) make motions like leaves in concert
 a body's length apart foregrounded by illusion
 no more his body than his body now is.

Works

thru the dead to circle

the living flood-

flung expectations
and came to meet the cowering
pairs
in a tarred ark.

lit wreathes,
wassail
doors and houses
edged in blinking.

No one
could give particulars
enough
play, enough force
for what
claims

circles, pustules, chick-thick
baby pox, MD sez boring
disease with flex enough to
twang a sour lyre
"of days";

circle garden overlooked
dying deeper down, flat
even, from the last com-
promises
"of green";

pairing the letters
underneath
siting citing
the writing under writing.

When the living began
to "labor" (as S. wrote,
rushed) "to die"

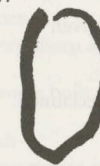
10 years work
10 years walk
foot fell into lemony simples
my heart at once in glee and grey
Bar David's star and Marry holly pricks
a day, all day, alway
had, has had had
unseasonable rip-tides
and easily washed away
the flexing thorns and toss amid which we;
shattered the nest to scree,

whereupon whatever thrifty
pots and bits, little
stuff, special mug,
had to be set rite, had to be
set. Assume it. To paddle
dog-wise
in a covenant of breaking—
I tell you!
Like always working against time.

Some flatten the paper
for next year.
Ark opened, the paired
zoo aired and marched.
The colors had been beautiful.
And we have gained more objects
whose provenance is tombs: lavish
pristine colors of the acrid lock.

Swirling marks and snags
low tidy times settle
clays the pull sedentary
Yet who will doubt the evidence
silted thru the claim-ragged dirt?

I labor because it was never
spoken and too much, or don't know
much. Or how.



Wraithes of poets, Oppen and oddly
Zukofsky
renew their open engagement with me
wreathing smoke-veils
my eyescreen tearing their insistent
opaque startled
writing was speaking here was
saying words but,
befit a shady station,
sear swallowed up within the
mouths speaking
and all the words
dizzy with tears
passed again away.

"Where are they now
dead people?"

"Nowhere."
"but where
ARE they?"

Human shards marked
markers ash the foiled
feathers of an eaten bird
maintain at the boundaries
of sense and tact
their dun features,
move
mostly much as did in life,
and away, blown
into the incomparable.

What emptiness
they cup for me
from floods
wherein they home?

"Death is the moment
when
what

has been given
away

must be reclaimed."

A clin-
ical rationalist
once dead
tempered his endless explanatory head
in wilds and wells of Hebrew prayer.

Walk thru the living
say the dead
our rustling voices
strain
more westerly words

BLOWN

when we have no more	back hosta pods
fluency	flat, black, glossy
cannot, as it turns	seeds
out	layered in the leafy mast,
form either fully	letter bits, the scattered
intelligible wonder or grief	tabernacle

It is they that speak
silt
we weep
silt
the flood-bound
written over and under with their
muddy marks.

of writing under the writing.

Some epyllion—
pastoral, reclusive, elegiac, flooded
shards drifted up "forever"
thru the clay.
Always another little something—
a broken saucer flower fleck
unremarkable wedge, except its timing
working itself loose in the rain
thru the mum patch
and impatience
some glittery sharp a-flat the wet wide shade.

The house was built on a dump.

Or midrash—
overlaying stories so,
that calling out the ark, it's
Noah hails and harks
new name and number
for
what stinking fur and tucked feather-fobs
did clamber forth
disoriented. Cramped. Half-dead.

Two names, four names
everything
paired

with words in secret twin
the dry the flooded
remark the same
thing the done
the continual

or unpaired, odd marked dabs,
but somehow matched
together in their claims

walk thru the dead
to tell the living.

Dressed as a hunter a robin hood in tunic-top of mother-lavish velvet she talks swords, greenling "what are swords FOR?" "for cutting people like I cut the meat; to try to hurt."	Rousing myself to a cultural foray attend, in Merz-y dote, a chittering sonata. Amid the <i>Europaïsche</i> no sense glissades repeats this unmistakable refrain: "rat-ta-tat-tat bébé."
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I will never survive
all this narrowing skeptical
at straight arrow and oppositional
both. Where is my place?
The name is no,
is name twin, double yolk,
no too? Is no plus no
a raggy margined yes?
Is no plus no a triangle
wedge of scribbled clay
worked thru claim-slid mud?
How even is with odd.

I get so homeless
mid-race, mill-race, mis-chance,
mezzo cambio,
it's lucky I've a house
grounded in this camouflaged locale.

I'm just trying to make
whatever rushed
arrangements
I can and can't

even hear
long distance

because nearer louder
"mommy don't go mommy don't go"
while I have to

work at understanding even
nominally
crossing out and re-
writing odd scraps
in the little ticket square of days.

December 1987 – January 1988

The citation "Death is the moment . . ." from Annette B. Weiner, "Stability in Banana Leaves: Colonization and Women in Kiriwina, Trobriand Islands," in Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock, eds., *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 287. "Rat-ta-tat-tat bébé" from Kurt Schwitters, UR-SONATA, 1923.

from *That Other Double In Person**An Introduction*

EVERY WEDDING NEEDS A WITNESS and you will be witness to this one. The three of us are proof of this fact. I like to meet people one on one.

Lines from the bulb in your head
follow vehicle. Negotiate to wander
turns an introduction

into flesh, before measure,
my heart a broken matter
sinks lung and throat.

Explanation has no place here, but I want to say that I have finally come back around to a place of no desire, and have nothing left of my own to count on, or, in wanting, to pretend. This is a minor event, and has taken place on a day when everything other than who I am seems dead and predictably lifeless. It had to come to this, and I alone am responsible for trying to envisage a world in which I too wanted to be dead. I cannot tell you if I think there is another way—I do not know. But something, however minor it may seem, has taken place and I am now in a state which is somewhat dizzy.

There was an expectant white space in waiting, and while I could take advantage of the suspense it seems unfair when I myself cannot remember what comes next and do not want to assume for the sake of effect, alone that is. So that each time I sit down I try to image an other, through the puppet on my hand. Self-consciously, I prop myself up in front of you. Then I begin to talk and become a little girl with a strange and prophetic friend. It speaks evil thoughts from the bottom of its throat and spits at me. I deserve it as best I can. Then in order to conjure up an image of you, I bring out the worst of myself and should never have assumed so much. Never in certainty, I should like to describe whom I cannot become and instead I take each one of you seriously, one by one. Desire follows the wanderings of speech. Sight blurs. I am caught in a personal time-machine.

What I mean to say is that there are at least two kinds of desire which have been important to me and to no one else. Now one is gone and I do not know which of you holds the other one, nor do I know that I care.

Why not constitute sin outside the body? What more can I lose than a little part of myself? The urgency for a model was something I always fought for in person before another stranger stepped in. Long drawn out battles ensued following the variety of separate cases and colors. If I had painted a picture of that time it would be flat and formless, though any mirror could show you how ugly I am, my latent cankers. The fact is, I paint by numbers

and have a collection of dolls to keep me company when the sun goes down. I seemed necessary to them and would look deep into their eyes in order to convince myself that they were not really alone without me. Only then could I follow certain lines and gestures from my body to theirs while listening to the way some nearly audible voice lingered past what had been said.

This has finally become an image I only care to question from a distance as time will undoubtedly tell. I have no more knowledge of my inevitable return than I had from the beginning, though I am now certain of where I first went, and that there was something to tell me I could never have imagined alone.

At some point I began to understand his name and came when called. I took a definite pleasure in her tone of voice as if it were a part of my own body come and lay a soft hand on me where it hurts. The waiting often put me on edge as I could never understand why she took to the ugly for inspiration; I felt as if the malady of my parts could outlast them all. Now I find that my fears were slick, close-circuited, even higher ivory towers beyond the wall.

I am guilty and afraid because I am an individual caught in such a web as beyond my grasp by definition. In both the public and private spheres I am round and vulnerable though in the latter I strive for impenetrable hardness. I cannot help myself. This may be the last grain of resistance, something to hold out for, a solid casing within which to saddle the facts.

How can I avoid the analogy of violence when in the fact of life is contemporaneous and lives for no single end? All possible substitutions are implied. That future time mirrors the inside out as the hand is placed on paper.

If I am often embarrassed it is because I understand you and am desperately trying to uncover an honesty I have never experienced or felt before this. Perhaps I should have made things easier on myself. I should have told you from the beginning. I will never know you for I am unable to cross the tracks. We could have left things at that. But what then? I, for one, have given myself up. I am a hostage, in exile. I have been treated well and am well fed. I know why I am here. My captors do not understand a word I say. This life is translated and my situation will endure as long as necessary. I am offered in exchange only as a token gesture. My life does not count, cannot be counted. I am not bored; I do not experience. I am not indifferent; I cannot care.

The entire situation is willfully misunderstood by the mass. It could have happened to anyone. You know more than you admit. What are you hiding? What is your nickname this time? Whose side are you on? Is the language different? Do you prefer concrete alibis? How many olive

trees did you find on your way? How many candles? Who met you at the airport? Did they come by car? Who was that person you talked to on the phone? What did you say to the river? Did the tree care?

Ere though there has been an in to the end, a coded mess, a twin to reach toward each meeting. For our ears years ago, early nearly to the day, an eye's piece as well: theater. I was finally able to meet the person whom I had been secretly courting. I was beside myself. This was some kind of warning. We have not seen each other since.

Three days previous, I lied to a friend about a fictional character who resembled the person I had been secretly trying to meet. I told him about the letter I wanted to write. We had in fact met several times before but time was under pressure as the voice lilted, the body at its end. I had aged again, and was in no hurry.

Any test has to invent its own terms. This is my responsibility and I can never honestly expect another person to side in the circle of my constraints. I tend to think there is a certain reciprocity if only because most people read alone, or become alone when they are read to. I do not want to think that our distance makes that much difference and once public I am indebted to your smallest thought or foible. Before a thing has a way of its own, it has to get away from the world in which it was born, however unfortunate the insistence. If I make a wrong move that does not mean my object has been unimagined or misplaced. I cannot get along without you and would rather suffer the absence of being misunderstood than the trial of being ignored and forgotten.

I belong to the casualty of a tone of voice. When it limps, so I limp, and I could have written that it is this which follows me everywhere. But even here, there are those who do not understand and could not explain anything other than being led across a channel which is greater than three of us, one by one.

Later that year, I remembered that first meeting as the initial announcement of my death. I began to look at things. Because of the clarity of its event to others, death is such an unspoken as must be put off at all costs to the final decision. Its foreignness belies the question. I watched as she crossed the room with my voice on. I am sitting in an abstract chair. What is understood in the midst which is however foreign exposes our desire to be lost in something outside ourselves, inhuman. In the face of death, her mask is pale white. I have to go on addressing regardless of embarrassment.

I could never have known this was coming in the habitual manner I used to stake my claim in farfetched clothes. I sounded sick and the other party could not understand a word I was saying. I could not get the question across for I had no other reason than to listen to the voice which was there to remind me where we had left off. He could not help but cling to one person. She was unsure of what she had said.

Always at the edge of self-deception, I would rather announce this debt as a positive cringe in the face of some

well-meaning other, than slip by unnoticed in the binds of the inevitably polished commerce of words and images.

Who is capable of finding simpler grounds? That if we finally turn to bondage and thrill is it not to find ourselves up against the very last wall for an advance memory of the slow kill, inevitable and envious? When I am with you there is respite. I can reach out and bludgeon you at the neck before the dance begins. This is my way of saying hello. And I expect you to treat me with similar respect. Only in the latter stretches can we then sit down and lie to each other for a third to begin where once we left off happily. The excess of nearly any change would be sufficiently bewildering for the animal-ideal. We are constantly striving toward something outside ourselves.

Whether or not the transition from one kind to another means anything at all is perhaps a question of time when there are no other ages to turn to for the sake of a personal economy that is least understood by what we call direct communication. Never suddenly, something comes into its own that defies comparison while nevertheless establishing itself firmly outside the bounds of what was previously assumed and corrected.

I want to insist that there are time-bound states when nothing can harm us physically just as the truth of a kite is a deception of the wind. If we could see the tree rising up into the sky we might pull the string in, but what happens when the wind simply dies down and stops? Suddenly there is no test left, nothing to judge by, a simple afternoon with simple clouds in an ordinarily blue sky.

Now think of someone trying to imagine the third person in all of this. The events that make up a life are hardly equal to the life itself nor to the words which attempt to describe them. Something, someone, is left and constitutes what we might fathom between the surrounding objects and the subject we so happily cherish as is. The beauty of a gesture is mute as time is another gesture in the wind of assumptions. My behavior is lost in the confines of a body too clumsy to project.

Nor can one imagine that this other body is at my command. It too is unwieldy and can bounce or cringe at the slightest hint of interest.

You necessarily have something to do with this. All in all, I want to think of you as anonymous and do not want that to influence the degree of warmth we may or may not arrive at in feelings. If I appear to be speaking it is only because a word has never been so physical as inside throat, a dry and mute phrase, a small death, a kind of scratching at times. Motions I share with those closest to me are farther away than any one of us can imagine and I see no reason why one should feel compelled to beg the fact. But in this description there is but the shortest length to carry across.

I have some evidence, but it does not go very far and is of a very scattered kind. That suddenly to put this meeting down to an order would be its end, and I would then never know what I now want to believe. I think I could stick merely to the facts, nothing but the truest order my memory could recall, and yet I want to prohibit that, for

fear of stifling what lies between. You have heard, seen, and read various things about me.

Nevertheless involving both person and material, a life exists, without body, and endures in time and space as fully between then as we can imagine it. One would like to jump to conclusions, but there is no stopping what has never really begun.

As any moral or after event is nearer its end, irony thwarts thoughtful consideration. Now earlier than late, an ear eagerly hears what it wants to hear, in the climb of distraction. An action is about to take place.

An other body fell; it did not matter.

The crowd could not distinguish its curtain and was unaware.

If one cannot impede the accident, it follows then that as effortless to discover the subject before time stops it moving across.

There, it would not stop for life in other matters. Then another, an eye threnody as slain if deflect my heart tells me nothing. It is your face enamors this world yet mute as heart is mechanical. The chorus example, tones of belief and in each return to have felt no more than shape a stone's throw of age. Alone I'm no longer anyone else than to blend across. An object defers image, an image this other double in person.

That Other Double In Person, I

There is no end to avoid in words. Sorrowful of sight, an eye issues an image in void of self so full of images.

I have one eye simple, while the other eye is sad and inward. Something I seek does not rise to the tone of speech, does not sing, and is only a halfstep of song. It falters in common and does not reach the small room.

My sight, so often explained as sense, is picture perfect, though dull and repetitive. My eyes age in sorrow, sight decays as image grows. I can plead no less; I can borrow nothing.

Mind in dim light, wind as in tidal image of wind, let them know the rain has stopped, it does not remind him of infancy. There was no rain then; there is no childhood; words were never as simple as this.

The eye cannot remind you; it is dumb and does not forget.

The world must be forgiven.

You and I both, must be forgiven.

I have saved the smallest room for you.
Here is your back.

Your long red hair falls over it.

Tell me what you think of him.

(This fiction of an I is too strenuous alone. It is dismembering, and any correspondence to the natural one is without hope. I want to describe someone as I close as to all the world which is furthest and cannot speak.

You know which one I am: I met him down by the shore, or, I met him across a great distance. His body was strange; it was condemned.

He was not alone; yet; and it was only him.)

"The human figure is a perfect form not because of its inherent beauty, nor because it manifests itself in each body differently—rather, its perfection lies in its deformation. It is a form without an economy of form, a convergence of approximations to form.

When I draw a hand it is as if I were drawing an eye, and when the eye is being drawn I cannot but restrain my hand from perfection."

There is no wall which is not mute, no period, and now I want to look beyond the wall: it must stand for a world beyond forgetting. No longer a question of blindness, the world stands for all that is complete.

That Other Double In Person, II

The dream said, I think it was my knowing him that caused her death in me. It said, there are private things which you cannot share.

She knew well enough alone by now and had crossed at an angle to which the visibly empty square had already become a circle surrounded by nine figures.

One of the nine said, it was more precise than this.

Another said, her movement was abrupt.

Yet another said, I have never seen this person before.

Then she said, forgive me, for I am not an actress.

At last reunited, the chorus members each defined their separate positions with a tone, and did not act surprised at her presence.

She continued, mother! One of the figures disappeared. Father! Another turned its back on her. Child! A third figure silenced her.

I had propped myself up in order to see and found that I was left with a problem of articulation. It is foolish to believe in a world one might never have lived in while remaining convinced, though past examples are as numerous as those of the present. Currently, there is no style that has not been tried, nothing that is left to discover, nothing that could be discovered worth building upon unless the ground floor is put back in its proper place. Discovery will not change the small room.

I associate nothing of what I see with anything else, and could be called something of a visual idiot, unless one is talking about people. My friends and relatives have the virtue of being seen anywhere and everywhere under otherwise impossible physical circumstances. In fact, I have often exaggerated the poor vision in my left eye and frequently shut it just enough to spread the hint of a lameness I do not have. Throughout my life, I have feared blindness more than death.

Inanimate organic objects cannot be deformed; while animals can be, their deformations are far less impressive than those of human beings, whose minds and bodies are never able to ideally interact. I limp; ultimately, my life is without precedent.

Words may never supplant the act of seeing but come to describe that moment when the eye begins to see, when the world appears to go flat. Personally, this happens most with people. If seeing is mute, it is not without measure that can be translated into language other than that of physical description. The vision I would like to describe is neither fiction nor representation, it does not sing, and can only be understood in a chorus of other people. It is true to nothing, and it does not need.

I have yet to go beyond the mirror-stage, and have an inverse need to see everything as separate from me. This conclusion lies somewhere before the fact of my presence. The image begins somewhere else.

I hate screaming echo for fear that someone else will respond. This is an old habit that stops me from believing in myself; and, while it does not actually create another person, it belongs to the same family of resistance.

I keep telling her that I do not remember names,

nouns or stories and do not want my life to be any more discontinuous for that. My body is in decline. I am aging. This mortal response is the only measure I have left.

He had feigned such intense pain if for no other reason than to begin to imagine a death he had just begun to consider and was incapable of empathy. No one in his family had died during his adulthood, no one was about to die, and if his death were close it was a matter of his will as opposed to a fact of likelihood.

Suddenly images that had never before touched him had begun to take on meaning for the first time: scenes of mourning, the sleeping body, waiting rooms, closed doors, and miracles. To deny such peopling of the spirit now seemed futile and without end, a particularly modern trap of avoidance, a poverty of cultured surfaces.

The idea of wearing death is no less than memory. Ritual, while it does not bring the dead one back, assumes a quality of the small room, enduring the example of this fact.

That Other Double In Person, III

I understand my joys . . . but please do not ask me to answer for all and every transition. The ephemera is unbelldable as such, and yet remains that duration embodied inside countless things and events which are at once the terms of an entire day's description and completely unincidental to its development in relation to the final question of death. As duration cannot be described in relation to any singular act or object, so the intuition comes to be a sign, and relates to the event as an example of coming home to a warm place high on some small hill of imagination, for there are always higher hills.

For the most part, I am still trying to convince other people one-on-one and despite the growing school of success there shall never be any confidence until I have convinced someone to take care without thinking of me personally. As in the attempt to describe the duration of a day, I am at a loss to place either of us in a mechanical relationship to my happiness, or pain. Yet it seems easy enough to cultivate such a procedure of taking that I have time and time again been a fool, a coward, yet another cruel, self-satisfying halo of a face.

There is something wrong here, and I want to blame it on him, that other double, in person. The mirror image has taken the top of my head for a loop and sent me off into the world of others with the certainty that my neck will never quite bend around far enough to catch sight of the othersame head that has a kind of face looking down upon me while also adopting another identity for itself, in the spirit of mocking contest. He is looking at me aslant. Yet there is more in him than I have failed to meet straight on. Beyond that, there was very little to rely on other than what I thought I might find in the figure which was not enough, and could not speak to me.

There were, however, a few things I thought we all

knew: the voice, that line, the one that belonged on the surface of this body, the expression on that face.

How I could be so terribly still of mind! There it was again, that lump of forearm extending down to a yellow red burst. He had one eye turning into the top of his head, and another eye in the other. I limped over the dark blue ground to meet him, in each step a feeling for my own lameness. O yellow red burst!

And like the vacant look of the retarded one, I too was staring into a sky of water and glass. I heard, *it is through his smile* that you cannot see him, while the eye beholds a power he does not lack. It is his tongue which he cannot articulate. It is that which he cannot bring to his tongue and cannot articulate.

At the meet, the diver was the example of a graphically forceful thrust I had been seeking and from which I could return only with a sense of relief. That movement which I have forever feared has become an image of no easier distraction than what a victorious salute would attract. But in the other realm it stops in flight captured as an animal in stiff repose. Finally, I do not seek motionlessness; it would be conscious suspension in an equilibrium of weights and measures defined in their relationship to something outside myself, which nevertheless depends upon me alone, by virtue of the accident that I happen to be here waiting for someone else.

Without any sound of syllables

By that I mean something entirely different

the well would be the heart

each wall a fulfillment of the void

A Descriptive Method
Without any sound of syllables

some voices become accessory to an uncertain crime
we want to be without comparison

I had never seen you like that

a childlike hand
money in the darkest room

he spoke of "blocks of space"
and "blocks of duration"

I need to think of your hand on the paper

it is the lowliest exercise
that permits one to follow
a geographical reduction

they were waiting to be discerned

Story in Succession

so that it remains

the welcome the individual

I would never have wanted

... against the *two images*
leaning against the *two images*

writing again

to advance in the dark
all is calm outside of a body

a true hand the outside

where come to die on the table

where is a town

he speaks of an imperceptible as
no separation
the placement of the animal

to tell you just one thing
(without using mouth
or tongue
and without any sound of syllables)

angry gestures
a production of weaving

liquid is not mine

Story in Succession

so that it remains

she welcomes the indistinct

I would never have wanted

one counts in obscurity
an unending heat

table was the word

a knot binds the outside

others come to die on the table

silence is a form

he speaks of an imperceptible air
no separation
the placement of the animal

verticality of hunger
nearest mother

a handful of blue in the corner

it is in the room that he breathes

strictly speaking
the air deposits a red stain

a little fever at the crossing
the end of the event

he seizes on one who is alone

the point which marks the margin
proximity of water

I wrote the word fear

without taking my eyes off your name

Raworth's black moon is rectangular

a flawless act
even if she wears her shadow

to bury them in money

"there will be generation and destruction"

the ear hears the blood
that passes through and stains
the cloth

between heat and image

...

so there will be gestures

...

it is night in the hand

her fragility disturbs the walls

then back pressed against earth
the road ends in the look

is it this
or the body that surrenders

I leave you a light you will turn out

no boundaries in things
the legs follow the phrase

heaping up stones
a breath
it is enough to continue

the unstable foundation of 4
playing with its density

it was a question of navigation and strategy

the great square has no angle

outside
before the voice
the transformation of an object

never a sentence on
the inverted earth

(Arms, legs. A body masses in what's left of the eye. This
inertia she swears is no longer sleep. . . The cold, as if
nothing was.)

images stress this mastery
underline the passage

there is no end to it

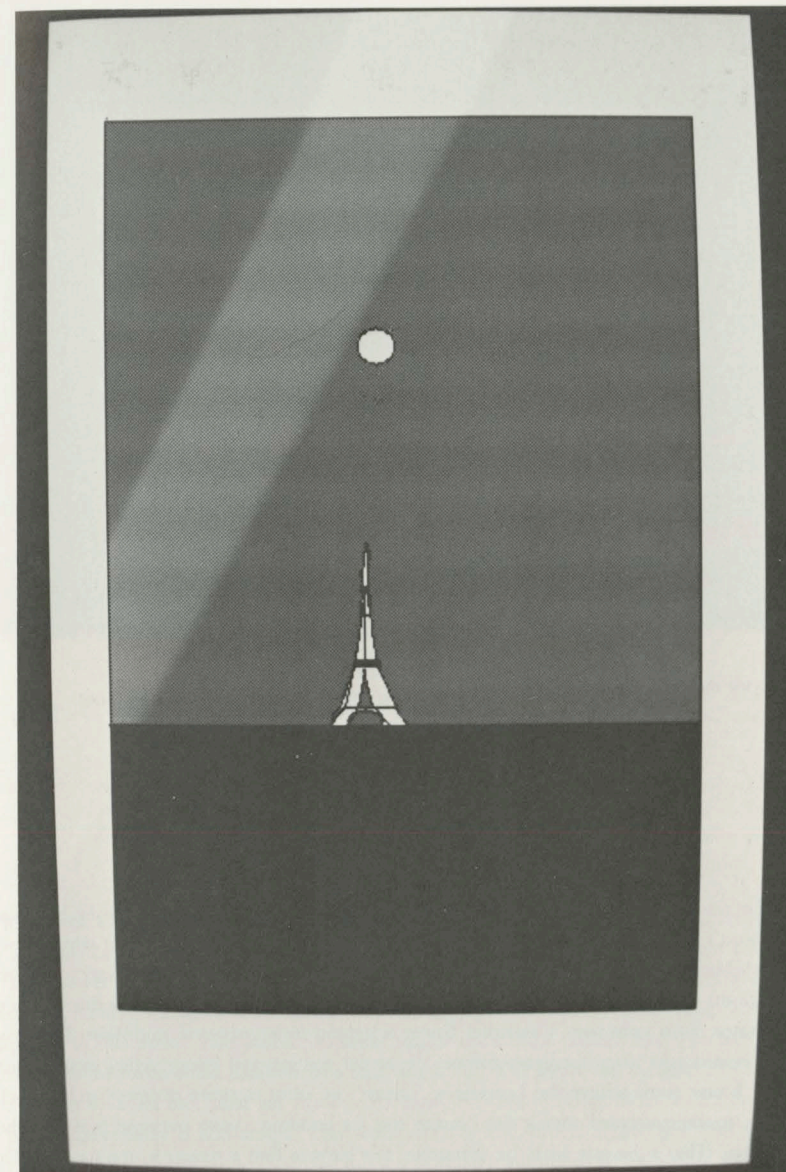
"today I'm speaking to no one"

from *Pieces o' Six*

with computer graphics by Anne Tardos

Pieces o' Six — XXXI

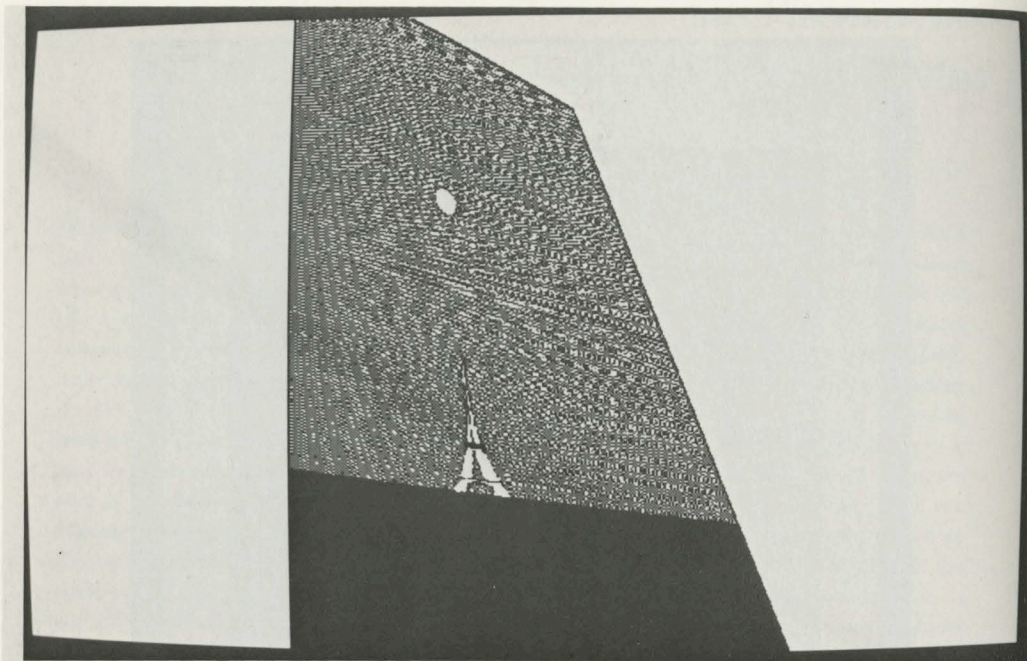
WALKING IN THE LOUVRE and stopping and looking and walking and stopping and looking for a pissoir in the Louvre. A green when arrives in every savor. One can walk miles in the Louvre without retracing steps. An opportunity flavors each attempt. The Louvre resembles Schliemann's Troy but the layers are jumbled. Nests the essential falls into enlarge causation as densely as entrances commence. The chronology of artistic practice is clear but the layers of curatorial taste are jumbled. They translate frictions concomitantly. Traveling. On a boat on the Seine. London Bridge is falling down. On the eyebeams from the west-southwest to the east-southeast. The vault is open. When the head turns the eyebeams sweep the scene like searchlights. There's a first time for everything. From a long way left of the Pompidou Center to a shorter distance right of the Eiffel Tower. You'll forfeit one stick o' dynamite. From an eighth-floor rear balcony of an old apartment building on the rue Mansart. I love dynamite! On the southern flank of the hill of Montmartre south of the boulevard de Clichy. You know where you can stick it and light it! The district of Montmartre lies north of the boulevard de Clichy. I'm getting impatient! The rue Mansart is in the Opéra district although it is on the hill Montmartre. Look at the way he's jumping around in there! *Montmartre* means *Marten Mountain*. What are you going to tell them? Martens are related to weasels but they're bigger. That nut's got a goddamn stick of *dynamite*! Martens are trapped for their fur. You wanna see me *juggle* this dynamite? Did they name that hill *Montmartre* because so many martens were living on it? What are you worrying about? Who think *Marten Mountain* when they hear *Montmartre*? I don't usually drop what I juggle unless it hits my *nose*. When were martens so big in Paris? Where the hell's that *nose* of his? The nobles wore the martens on their backs. The nose is on the finger. The marten is semiarboreal. Sharpshooters! There must have been a forest on the hill when they first called it *Montmartre*. I've got 32 hostages in there who all want to live. The name *Montmartre* has nothing to do with martyrs. Careful! Maybe the *martens* were the martyrs. He's liable to kill us all! The ancient *commune* of Montmartre was swallowed by Paris in 1860. He's *juggling* again! The rue Mansart was named for Nicolas François Mansart. He'll blow his nose off! Before dying in 1866 Mansart gave France the mansard roof. I'm desperate! A mansard roof is a pitched roof with a gently sloping upper part and a steep lower part. You some kinda *shrink*? The apartment building on the rue Mansart doesn't have a mansard roof. You say you *love* me and you want to put me in *prison*? Many French buildings and many outside France *do* have mansard roofs. What kind of a shrink *are* you? A mansard is a garret just below a mansard roof and is usually lived in. Where's your nose? A mansard has slanting walls and a low ceiling. *What* nose? It's said to have been a tax dodge. C'mon where the hell's your nose? They say when other rooms were taxed it wasn't. I cut it off. Clichy is a commune northwest of Paris in Hauts-de-Seine. Ready or not here I come! There were 52,477 *clichiens* and *clichiennes* in about 1979. What's going on? The *prison* de Clichy was a debtors' prison in Paris on the *rue* de Clichy. Don't let him pull that *chain*! A *rue* is not a *boulevard*. I'm gonna watch you all *drown* in there like *rats*! The *boulevard* de Clichy is the 42nd Street of Paris but the latter has no Moulin Rouge. It's almost over. A *boulevard* is a big street planted with trees. You first maybe? There aren't any trees on the stretch of 42nd Street that resembles the boulevard de Clichy. Keep the noise down. The boulevard de Clichy is wider than 42nd Street with two ranks of trees running down a parkway in the middle between two



Tower and Moon 1, 1987

"One night . . ."

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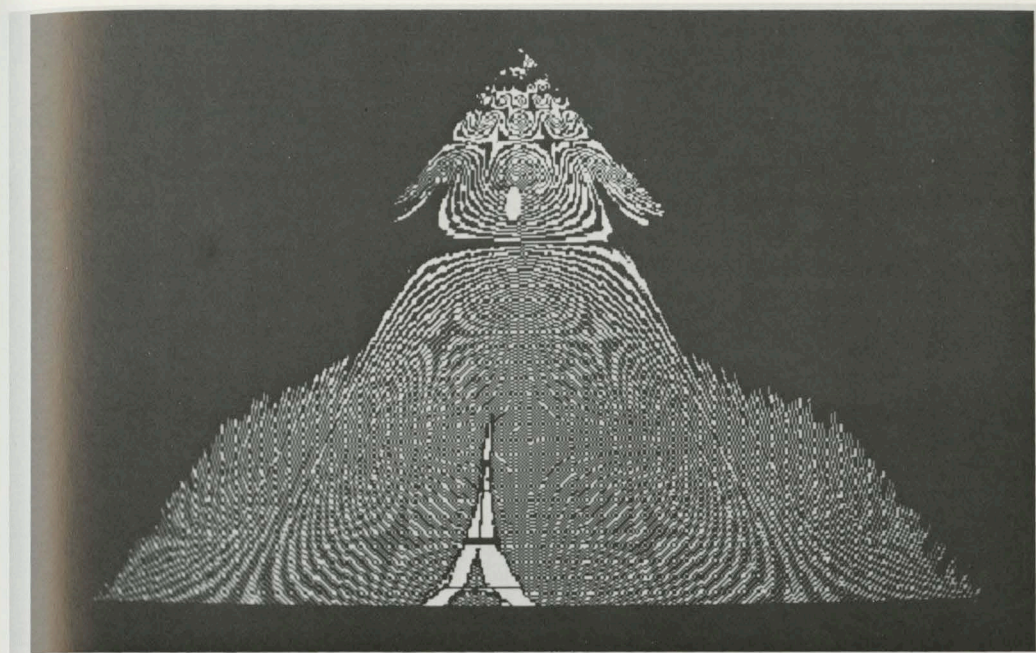


"... the moon ..."

Tower and Moon 2, 1987

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roadways. Let's send in a pizza and *you know what!* The erotic range also is wider on the boulevard de Clichy. He won't fall for it. From the sleaziest pornography to the most refined but which is which? We've reestablished contact. There's plenty of prostitution on and near the rue Mansart but seemingly less pornography than on the *boulevard*. I love pizza! The opera house is pretty far due south of the balcony's center. Yum yum *yum!* The Eiffel Tower is lighted from sunset to midnight. Don't worry. You know it is midnight when the lights go out. We've got you covered. Huge yellow cranes southeast of the opera house show where the Louvre is. There's an idiot in there dressed up like a clown. They've torn up the courtyard outside the Louvre and are building a glass pyramid that'll be the new public entrance. That's the guy with the dynamite! It's hard to find a pissoir in the Louvre. Do you mind if I call you *Daddy?* The Mona Lisa is difficult to see because of reflections on the glass protective case and the distance forced on the viewer. Daddy loves you son. An elderly psychotherapist and teacher of therapists wishes she could dump Duchamp in his urinal. Don't talk to *me* about love! She hates him because of the mustache and the *LHOOQ*. All I want is a helicopter. Duchamp hasn't died in vain. He killed a security guard. Many find walking in Paris more pleasant than walking in New York. He's not dead. Duchamp lived many years on 14th Street in New York. Hello! When he lived in New York did he spend much time in Paris? *Hello!* He said he'd stopped making art and was only



"... appeared to move just above the Eiffel Tower. ..."

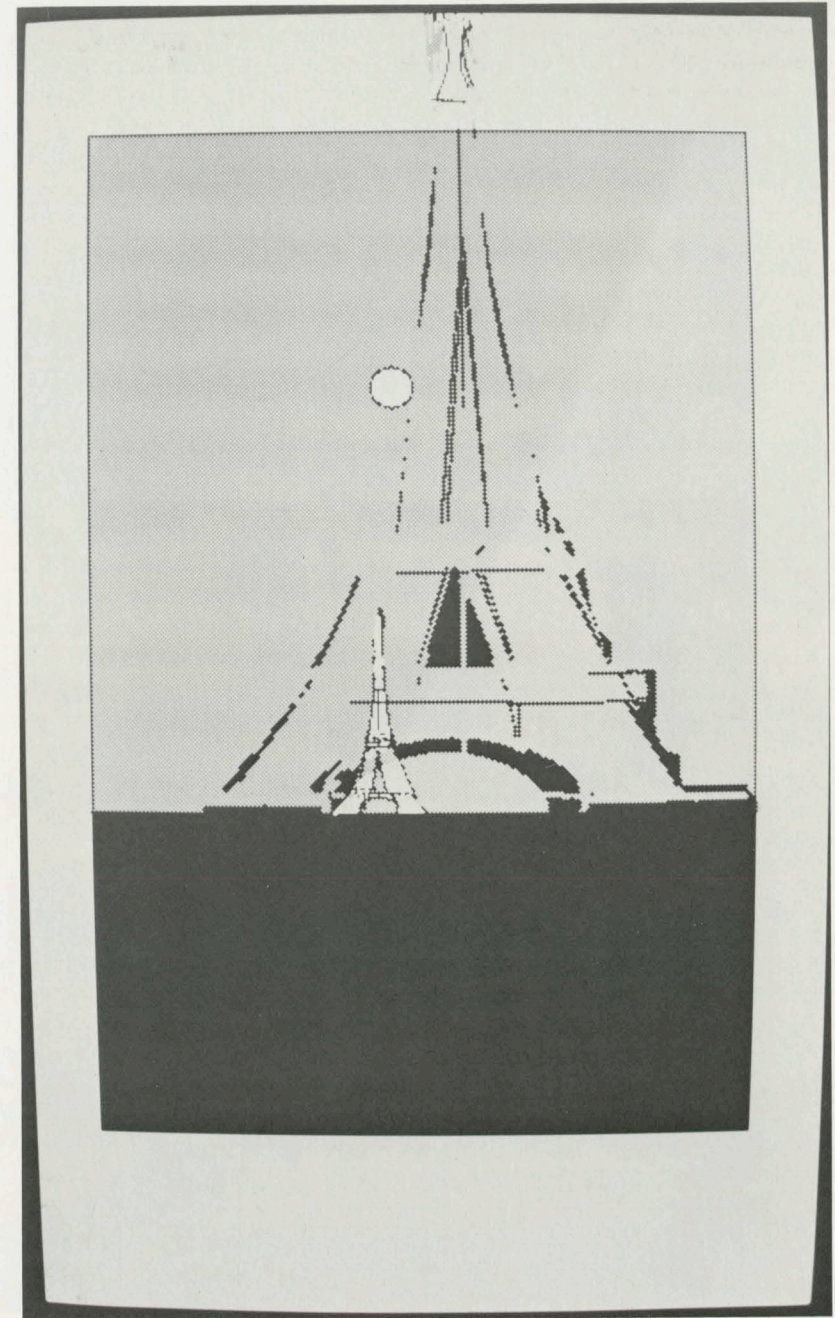
Tower and Moon 3, 1987

Computer graphic Copyright ©1987 by Anne Tardos

playing chess. Get away from that *door!* He was secretly building the assemblage *Etants donnés: 1° La chute d'eau, 2° Le gaz d'éclairage* now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. It's just that pizza you asked for! The viewer must look through two holes in an old wooden door to see a diorama. This pizza tastes funny! There's a simulated waterfall, a burning gas lamp, and a realistic sculpture of a woman. Whadja *put* in this pizza? The woman stretches supine toward the background with legs and pudenda prominent in the foreground. Damn it he's throwing it out! The figure has no head. If I'd've eaten one more bit you'd've *had* me! That gas flame in the lamp is really burning. What kinda drug didja *put* in that pizza? Everything in and around *Etant donnés* must be elaborately fireproofed. You must think I'm really stupid! The background is painted but a mechanism simulates falling water. Whatsamatta not enough cheese on the pizza? It is one thing to say you've stopped making art and are only playing chess. You're a *bad boy* drugging my pizza! It is quite another thing to say you've stopped making art and are only playing chess when secretly you're constructing an elaborate artwork. That cop's an intellectual midget a walking lobotomy! Why did Duchamp lie? I'm all ears. His lie is considered conceptual art. You got nothin' *between* yer ears. Is a lie less a lie when it's art? Flap yer ears 'n' fly away! The Eiffel Tower's lights go on soon after dozens of swallows swoop in the twilight around and around over the courtyard and roofs behind the southern side of the rue Mansart. You're free as a

before the so-called amnesty law. Torture and rape and summary executions are typical contra abuses. After a point Marcel Duchamp didn't have to worry about money. They started to revive the stalemated peace talks. I'm sick o' you tryin' to trick me! The issue is responsibility. They said they ought to do something about all those displaced people in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Martens never worry about money. We attack Washington's policies in Central America. What if he lights that dynamite? They passed the same clean water bill the president had vetoed the year before. Are martens as territorial as people? The purported distinction between political reasons for immigration and economic reasons is an ideological illusion. A San Francisco TV station was the first to air ads for condoms to lessen the spread of AIDS. I'll shoot you *all* goddamnit! How could a marten survive on Montmartre? Other stations fear offending listeners. If you let everyone in would everybody starve? The image of a woman talking about condoms was by far more popular than that of a man doing so. The martens are gone and Montmartre's absorbed. Shoot 'im quick! Family media remained stubborn. It's embarrassin'.

JACKSON MAC LOW
20 JULY 1986 — 12 MAY 1987
PARIS — IN THE AIR — NEW YORK



Tower and Moon 5, 1987
“... Only one night not the next.” (*Pieces o’ Six — XXXI*)
Computer graphic Copyright ©1987 by Anne Tardos



(Pieces o' Six — XXXIII)

"Sometimes there seems to be a competitive pushing forward of various selves. . . ."

Computerized video image Copyright ©1987 by Anne Tardos

MOST PEOPLE WHO WRITE POEMS use the pronoun *I* very often. Some would say writers of poems use this pronoun far *too* often. The pronouns *my* and *mine* also appear in poems often, though *mine* with a noun beginning with a vowel or *h* or succeeding a noun is considered archaic. But why does *I* and its possessives appear so often in poems? The usual answer affirms a general "privileging" of subjectivity: that poems thematize feelings and intimate thoughts of their writers and that the principal purpose of poems is to *convey* those feelings and intimate thoughts. This is considered preeminently true of so-called lyric poems, but it is also held to be true in general of works belonging to other genres, such as narrative poems, dramatic monologues, and even dramas and novels, although in all such works the pronoun *I* usually refers to a character or narrator rather than to the author. Such works are thought to *reflect* the subjectivity of the author even when the latter does not employ the first person singular to refer to herself. Many writers, especially ones who write lyric poems, would find the present reflections peculiar. They take it for granted that one often writes *I* in poems and that poems reflect their authors' subjectivity. They also take this subjectivity for granted. They hardly ever question who or what this *I* is. In fact, they write poems primarily, as they say, to "express" this unexamined *I*. They cannot conceive of other reasons to write poems. Those who raise questions about *I* or its "expression" in poems are thought to be very peculiar. Often they are reviled. The reasons given for reviling such questioners are usually obscure and almost always muddle-headed, but this doesn't prevent their being put forth with great passion, often very angrily. The murkiness of the purported reasons, combined with the passion with which they are educed, implies that there are other, more hidden reasons at work than those brought forth in controversy. Those who take the *I* for granted do not want it to be questioned—neither the *I* in general nor the *I* of each of them in particular. *They* know who and what they are and they take such questioning as a personal attack. Or so it seems. It is futile to refer to "insecurity," for this feeling is all but universal and may explain both/either everything and/or nothing. Rather than wasting time on pseudopsychanalysis ("the psychoanalytic reproach"), one should carry the questioning further. One should, as they say, "deepen" it—although the word in quotes is slippery, suspect, and often employed to give a false impression of more than usual seriousness or, as some who employ it might say, "profundity." Do some say or write *I* so obsessively because they really do not know who or what they are but cannot admit this to anyone, least of all themselves? (This *seems* different from "insecurity"—but *is* it?) Well, do those who feel clear about who and what they are—or indeed, do those who recognize that they are at each moment different than they were the moment before—write or say *I* less often than those who don't? Probably not. So is frequent *I*-iteration merely a function of tradition or convention, e.g., of the romantic tradition or even of Renaissance Humanism? (Where would this leave Sappho with her "Phainetai moi . . .")? On the other hand, isn't it possible to ascribe the *eschewal* of *I* merely to snobbish neoneoclassicism? After all, such a snobbism could find plenty of self-justification as a fastidious reaction to the perennial revivals of romanticism and expressionism! (Who knows *how* many *neo*'s would be needed to characterize the latest incarnations of *these*—creeds? [Are those plurals necessary?]) But here it's not merely a question of using or eschewing *I* but of saying or writing it all too often. As in *this* poem, indeed, in which nearly every sentence includes at least one instance of *I*. (Is this poem an instance of the famous "return of the repressed"—in the guise of using *I* in the second intention or as a substitute for *self*?) But then again, may all the above not amount to no more than a vain objection to a genre: lyric poetry? (The fact that examples of other genres may be

subsumed under the lyric as being “really” also expressions of authors’ *I*s may be beside the point.) Isn’t *any* lyric poem apt to have many instances in it of *I*? Isn’t the expression of intimate feelings and thoughts exactly what lyric poems “are all about”? Then what are the bases of objections to the pronoun *I*? Some base them on the Buddhist notion that the *I* is an illusion. The content of this notion is that the *I* is a composite of elements that gather together, persist awhile, and then disperse (with certain remnants persisting in changed forms), after which there is a new gathering together, etc.—innumerable times within one physical lifetime (and if one believes in what is loosely referred to as “reincarnation,” innumerable times within innumerable life spans)—so that *I* therefore has no “self-identity.” (It is assumed that whatever changes has no self-identity.) A corollary of this notion is the belief that the *I* stands in the way of the perception of reality. One way of putting it is the dictum, “Let the things speak for themselves.” But what if the “things” in question are authors’ intimate thoughts and feelings? How can one avoid the pronoun *I* when letting *these* “things” “speak for themselves”? Even if the author regards her thoughts and feelings as dispassionately and “objectively” as she would when meditating, she would be hard put either to deal with them or to let them speak for themselves without using *I*! And even if one is letting *language* speak for itself, to do so without letting such a salient linguistic element as the first person nominative singular pronoun speak for itself would vitiate one’s purported enterprise. However, the argument might be put forth that in the latter case, a writer might use *I* without employing it to refer to herself. (This, of course, often occurs in many contemporary texts—in both verse and prose—much to the puzzlement of literal-minded readers and to the disgust of hostile critics.) This usage seems akin to the use of *I* in narratives, dramas, etc. One often finds in contemporary texts what seems to be a *multiplicity* of voices speaking in the first person singular. Some of these voices seem clearly not the authors’, others possibly the authors’, and some are more or less clearly identifiable as the authors’. Among these last one may at times find a multiplicity of mutually contradictory *I*s. Rather than *not* referring to their authors’ selves, *all* the *I*s in such texts refer to them, but their contradictory multiplicity embodies their authors’ recognition that the *I*, as they perceive it, is far from unitary. It “contains multitudes”—not in the sense of pathologically multiple personalities (of which one or more are repressed only to burst out explosively and unexpectedly, often to obliterate the usual personality) but of the continually and even rapidly changing self revealed by candid introspection. Sometimes there seems to be a competitive pushing forward of various selves—each of them continually changing—among which predominance fluctuates rapidly. This may border on the multiple-personality syndrome, except that none seems radically repressed or explosively disclosed. It seems to be a matter not of psychopathology but of thoroughgoing everyday phenomenology. So contemporary poetry may as often overwhelm its readers with a plethora of *I*s as with a lack of them! Either is apt to arouse negative feelings. So is the absence—preeminently in a lyric poem—of a “voice” clearly identifiable with the author, whether or not the work includes one or more *I*s referable to the latter. Indeed, the presence or absence of a clearly defined author’s “voice”—especially in lyric poems—seems more of an issue than the presence or absence of the pronoun *I*. Modernism and its much-touted “objective correlative” have been more or less thoroughly absorbed, but the puzzlement formerly often aroused by the ambiguity of the author’s “voice” in certain monuments of modernism is seldom remembered. Perhaps the assurance given in that famous essay that there *was* such a “voice”—albeit speaking through one or more objective correlatives (somewhat as entertainers contemporaneous with the advent of modernism sang

or joked through megaphones)—helped allay anxieties raised by the problematization of “voice” in modernist works even though it also gave rise to diverse ridiculous assertions identifying a particular “voice” in one work or another with the author’s and thence raising objections to the (misidentified) author. However, the possibility that such a “voice” is really *absent* arouses virulent objections that, though seemingly of another kind, are usually strikingly similar to the ancient antimodernist slanders: because the author’s “voice” is (or seems) absent, the author is (mis)identified as “bloodless” or “cold” or “——” (the reader may fill in the blank). Or phrases are taken out of context and misinterpreted in such a way that unpopular doctrines may be attributed to the writer. Unfriendly critics might reply to objections to the latter “low-level hermeneutic” practice that it is the writer’s own fault for not speaking up clearly in her own voice, or that such misinterpretation—if indeed it is misinterpretation—is a fitting punishment for such a willfully irresponsible action as deliberately writing ambiguously or “voicelessly.” Defenses against such critics might be couched in several ways: It is necessary to “explode” the *I* in order to reconstitute language and meanings, individuals and society. Ambiguous, absent, or multiple *I*s allow readers to share with authors the *making* of meanings. Or the most Buddhist of all: the author wishes to leave no (or as few as possible) *traces*, bringing language into texts with means exterior to will, such as chance operations and/or indeterminacy techniques, so that no identifiable *I* appears in the texts, the author has no (or hardly any) share in producing meaning as such, and each perceiver of the text becomes consequently her own meaning-producing center. Still other “defenses” are possible, of course, but the fact is that none has much chance of seeming cogent to “the ordinary reader,” let alone to unsympathetic critics. The fact is that “ordinary readers” go to narratives for rousing “*reads*,” to essays and the like to find out what the authors *think*, and to lyrics to find out what the authors *feel*. They tolerate a certain admixture in narratives if the authors’ thoughts and feelings don’t gum up the action, in essays and the like if storytelling and the authors’ feelings don’t muddy thematic assertions and their supports, and in lyrics if storytelling and expression of thoughts don’t lessen what they perceive as intensity of feeling (presumed to be the authors’). (In narratives, however, they *do* want to feel “reflected” congenial [authors’] personalities.) Critics, of course, are much more complicated and diverse in their demands. Some are miffed by implicit or explicit thoughts (“positions”) differing from their own, whether in ethics, politics, poetics, or even metaphysics or epistemology (or their absence). For critics of this kind, the value of *any* kind of work will be vitiated by detected “positions” differing from their own. For them, ambiguity as to *who* the author is and “where she stands” is intolerable. To know where they themselves stand they must be clear as to where the author does. This is called the “content” of the work. All the other elements, no matter what the genre, are merely “formal” or “decorative.” Thus this tribe of critics has very little use for genre differences, although it is more apt to tolerate a certain fuzziness of thought in a lyric as long as the author’s “heart” seems “to be in the right place.” Whatever “positions” such critics espouse, they are united in condemning an ambiguous *I*, much more an absent one. Others demand certain formal features: metric and rhyme or speechlike cadence, objective correlatives or direct speech, open or closed form, process or imposed structure, and so on. Their affirmative or negative judgments may be reinforced by perceived authors’ positions similar to or counter to their own, but they feel able “to be objective” about such differences: a liberal or left-radical critic may demonstrate the excellences of a royalist or fascist poet. Nevertheless, even *such* worthies are likely to balk at absence or unfathomable ambiguity of *I*, if only in the background, or of

The Sophist: A Play of Texts

author's "voice." Even if able to "rise above" differences of opinion or "ideology," they must, in order to do so, know where they and the author respectively "stand" and with whom they are dealing. Even the least hermeneutic or exegetical—the most purely formal or aesthetic—critic may feel at sea without an eventually perceptible *I* or "voice" to rise above: to feed, so to speak, her objectivity. To give in to such all but universal demands might seem craven. But—*would it be*—after the sum of the foregoing—merely abject to surrender to popular or critical prejudice (or, as a few might cavil, to blatant "confessionality") to readmit into lyric or other literary discourse *I, me, and myself—in the first intention?* After all, to take the present instance, I (the *I* I'm experiencing writing these words) am writing this poem! Why pretend it is coming into being not only (as the world did in the old story) *ex nihilo*—but absent an efficient cause: a mover, moved or *unmoved*. Here am I, sitting before this keyboard and monitor screen, tapping the keys and making the amber-light words appear, trade places, or disappear as I please. I'm not even constrained by a generative "system." Neither objective hazard nor any other nonpersonal method determines the identity and order of these words, phrases, and sentences. I freely add and subtract the punctuation marks. Why shouldn't I as freely *admit* that I'm doing so? What's gained by pettily playing the role of a small-time *éminence grise*? Why even feign either puppethood or puppeteership? Why not, as now, avow that I'm writing this "Piece o' Six"—as I've written the thirty-two "Pieces o' Six" preceding this one, even the few in whose writing I used "systems" to choose and order the words—tasting, *though not for the sake of*, the sheer joy of writing and disposing words and sentences: the pleasures of composition? It isn't a question of mindlessly "doing my thing" or merely a matter of "taste." Every way of working has implicit rules, many unknown to the worker, especially while doing the work—and many *never* known except as embodied in the works. But always *I've* been doing the work, no matter what rules have guided my hands or what forces beyond or beneath me have moved me to do what I've done. And though I've not done it *for* the delight or the pain that's accompanied the doing, it's I that have suffered the latter and savored the former. I: this former.

JACKSON MAC LOW
MAY – AUGUST 1987
NEW YORK

CAST:

Charles Bernstein: a poet/philosopher from New York, speaking from *The Sophist* (S2) and *Content's Dream* (CD).
Theaetetus: a student who makes no difficulties and allows himself to be guided, speaking from Plato's *The Sophist* (S1).
Eleatic: a visitor from Elea, a member of the society of Parmenides and Zeno—a genuine philosopher! He also speaks from Plato's *The Sophist*.
Jacques Derrida: a philosopher/poet from Algiers/Paris, speaking from *Dissemination* (D).
George Hartley: a manipulator of texts.

SETTING:

The space between signifier and signified.

Bernstein: This questions persists: What is the interpretive stance to be toward a work which unmasks its own discontinuities, flaunts its core ideas as candy coating, and insists throughout not on its deferred meaning but its enacted meaning? (CD 380)

Theaetetus: I am afraid being is intertwined in some such fashion with non-entity, and a very singular complication it is.

Eleatic: It is indeed. But at least you perceive how our Hydra of a sophist has availed himself of this ambiguity to drive us again, much against our will, into the admission that non-entity [in] some way *is*.

Bernstein:

The world deals with negation and contradiction and does not assert any single scheme. New signs on the federal building, they say
FEDERAL BUILDING. (S2 11)

Derrida: The sophist thus sells the signs and insignia of science: not memory itself (*mnēmē*), only monuments (*hypomnēmata*), inventories, archives, citations, copies, accounts, tales, lists, notes, duplicates, chronicles, genealogies, references. Not memory but memorials. (D 107)

Bernstein:

Innovation is Satan's toy, a train
That rails to semblance, place of memory's
Loss. Or tossed in tune, emboss with gloss in-
Signias of air. (S2 14)

Derrida: Insofar as writing *lends a hand* to hypomnesia and not to live memory, it, too, is foreign to true science, to anamnesia in its properly psychic motion, to truth in the process of (its) presentation, to dialectics. Writing can only *mime* them.

Hartley: But what has all this to do with politics?

Bernstein:

Resistance marries faith, not faith persist-

Ence. Which is to say, little to import
Or little brewed from told and anxious
Ground: an alternating round of this or
That, some outline that strikes the looking back,
That gives the Punch and Judy to our show. (S2 14)

Hartley: So there's this distinction between *resistance* and *persistence*. *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* tells us that *-sist(a/e)nce* comes from *sistere* [*L*, to take a stand, stand firm; akin to *L stare* to stand]. So there's this question of how to take a stand.

Resistance: taking a step back (regression), taking a stand again (repetition), taking a stand against [against: *ME*, alter, of *agains*, fr. *again*], two separate unities facing off again. Either/Or.

Persistence: taking a step through (progression), taking a stand throughout (unflagging), taking a stand thoroughly, to destruction. But recognizing mutual influence: when you cross through water you stir things up, and you get wet.

Bernstein: We

Carve and so are carved in twofold swiftness
Of manifold: the simple act of speak-
Ing, having heard, of crossing, having creased. (S2 14)

Hartley: The told and anxious ground (reference) gives credence to distinction. I & Other.

Derrida: The front line that is so violently inscribed between Platonism and its closest other, in the form of sophistic, is far from being unified, continuous, as if stretched between two homogeneous areas. Its design is such that, through a systematic indecision, the parties and the party lines frequently exchange their respective places, imitating the forms and borrowing the paths of the opposite. (D 108)

Bernstein:

Ectophobia: fear of the without, the external, the outside.
(S2 42)

Derrida: The boundary (between inside and outside, living and nonliving) separates not only speech from writing but also memory as an unveiling (re-)producing a presence from re-memoration as the mere repetition of a monument; truth as distinct from its sign, being as distinct from types. . . . The space of writing, space *as* writing, is opened up in the violent movement of this surrogation, in the difference between *mnēmē* and *hypomnēsis*. The outside is already *within* the work of memory. (D 108-9)

Bernstein:

Cf: *heterophobia*: fear of others, otherness ((Ectomancy.))
(S2 42)

Eleatic: I have already told you; to dismiss these subtleties [as interminable, as within any man's compass, with all

one's might] and show your capacity to follow an argument critically at every step; to meet him who affirms the *other* in some sense to be the same, or the *same* in some sense other, in the particular sense, or point of view, from which he makes his assertion. Merely to declare the same in *some sort of way* other, or the other same, the great in *some way* small, or the like unlike, and plume oneself on this external parade of contradictions is no true criticism,—too manifestly 'tis but the crude first fruits of incipient commerce with the real.

Theaetetus: Assuredly.

Eleatic: In short, my good lad, the attempt to dissociate everything from everything else is something worse than false taste; 'tis possible only to one who is an utter stranger to the Muses and to philosophy.

Theaetetus: Why so?

Eleatic: This divorcement of everything from everything else amounts to a total annihilation of discourse of reason, for 'tis the intermarriage of form with form that gives us discourse.

Theaetetus: True. (S1 259 C-E)

Bernstein: "Dysraphism" is a word used by specialists in congenital disease to mean a dysfunctional fusion of embryonic parts—a birth defect. . . . *Raph* literally means "seams", so dysraphism is mis-seaming—a prosodic device! But it has the punch [and judy] of being the same root as rhapsody (*raph*)—or in Skeat's—"one who strings (lit. stitches) songs together, a reciter of epic poetry", cf. "ode", etc. In any case, to be simple, Dorland's does define "dysrhapia" (if not dysraphism) as "incomplete closure of the primary neural tube; status dysraphicus"; this is just below "dysprosody" [sic]: "disturbance of stress, pitch, and rhythm of speech." (S2 44)

Eleatic: I presume you mean that words which when consecutively uttered have a signification "fit together", those which form a succession with no significance do not.

Theaetetus: But what do you understand by this?

Eleatic: . . . You are, of course, aware that we have two sorts of vocal expression significant of being.

Hartley, aside: So being is expressed in chains of signifiers which fit together?

Theaetetus: Which are—

Eleatic: *Nouns*, as they are called, and *verbs*.

Bernstein, aside: The winter of prepositions falls on the Jew's benighted brow (S2 40)

Theaetetus: Would you explain the difference?

Eleatic: A sign expressive of an action is what we call a *verb*. . . . And a vocal sign appropriate to the agent of such an action is a *noun*.

Theaetetus: Exactly.

Eleatic: Now a continuous string of nouns by themselves will never constitute discourse, nor yet a series of verbs without accompanying nouns.

Theaetetus: I do not see that.

Eleatic: . . . The very point I was anxious to make was that such a succession of utterances is not a discourse. . . . [Only when verbs have been mingled with nouns] have we a *concord* and a discourse with the immediate emergence of the primitive *combination*, which we may call the most primitive and briefest of discourses. (S1 261E–262C)

Hartley: Concord = discourse = signification of being = truth. Ergo, discord is not truth, not signification, not discourse.

Bernstein:

These vague reproaches—a handkerchief waved at the tumultuous facade, returning the look with an altogether different effect of discounting. Over and over plagued by the dialectic of such Messianism —tied

as it is to a conviction in a primeval totality of word and object, each echoing the truth of the other and the very contours of the cosmic. (S2 8)

Hartley: But what alternative do you propose, a facade being a facade, to this primeval totality that Plato refers to (in a sense) as the primitive *combination* necessary for being/truth?

Bernstein: One vision of a constructive writing practice I have, and it can be approached in both poetry and philosophy, is of a multidiscourse text, a work that would involve many different types and styles and modes of language in the same "hyperspace". Such a textual practice would have a dialogic or polylogic rather than a monologic method. The loss of dialogue in philosophy has been a central problem since Plato. (CD 227)

Hartley: How about a practice like Pound's?

Bernstein:

It is the taint of positive value itself in the mythological structure; to question, that is, all current correspondences even the most luminous, lustrous. **False.** . . . Vague feel of it but no recollection. *Dulcit figitur omnibus plerumq; semeris delecto, obit relente moribus dixum.* For I have wintered in the fields of the Hesperus and tasted of the starling; this, too, unbears my trial. Though the question is, how can you lose something you never had?

Hartley: Sanity, you mean?

Bernstein: One screw missing, but you can air condition us all; some kind of far away village, behind it. (S2 12)

Hartley: Then Olson?

Bernstein: I think it's time we were all put to sleep. The

body, the
body. I, minim of Amsterdam
shimmy on the waves, and torch
plunge and vanish. Was
Maurice Bishop killed because
he spoke English? WHOSE
Christmas? (S2 168)

Hartley: Then what of Ginsberg?

Bernstein:

One wants almost to shudder (yawn, laugh . . .) in disbelief at the hierarchization of consciousness in such a dictum as "first thought, best thought", as if recovery were to be prohibited from the kingdom; for anyway "first thought" is no thinking at all. There is no 'actual space of'. So quiet you can hear the clouds gather. . . . I'm screaming at somebody or being screamed at, not interesting enough to wake up for. Slurps as it burps. FIRST BURP, BEST BURP. (S2 13)

Hartley: Prohibited from the kingdom: Plato boots the poets.

Eleatic: A mimic sometimes acts *with knowledge* of the object he is mimicking, but sometimes *without* it. Now can we find a more important basis for division than this of ignorance and knowledge?

Theaetetus: Surely not.

Eleatic: . . . For the sake of making the distinction, though the expression may be somewhat *risqué*, we may call mimicry based on mere fancy *doxomimetic*; that which is founded on knowledge shall be called *scientific mimicry*.

Theaetetus: Well and good.

Eleatic: And 'tis the former which must have our attention; the sophist, as we have seen, is not to be found in the ranks of those who know, though he is very certainly among *mimics*.

Theaetetus: Indeed he is. (S1 267A-3)

Hartley: But where do we mark the boundary between the two?

Derrida: The word "between" has no full meaning of its own. *Inter* acting forms a syntactical plug; not a category, but a syncategorem: what philosophers from the Middle Ages to Husserl's *Logical Investigations* have called an incomplete signification. What holds for ["between"] also holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for all other signs which, like *pharmakon*, *supplément*, *différence*, and others, have a double, contradictory, undecidable value that always derives from their syntax, whether the latter is in a sense "internal," articulating and combining under the same yoke, *hup'h'en*, two incompatible meanings, or "external," dependent on the code in which the word is made to function. But the syntactical composition and decomposition of a sign renders this alternative between internal and external inoperative. One is simply dealing with greater or lesser syntactical units at work, and with economic

differences of condensation. Without reducing all of these to the same, quite the contrary, it is possible to recognize a certain serial law in these points of indefinite pivoting: they mark the spots of what can never be mediated, mastered, sublated, or dialecticized through any *Erinnerung* or *Aufhebung*. . . . Because of this indecision and instability, Plato would have conferred upon the double science arising from these two theaters the name *doxa* rather than *epistēmē*. (D 221)

Bernstein: But the crucial mechanism to keep in mind is not the rules of current preferred forms versus possible alternatives but the *mechanism of distinction and discrimination itself* that allows for certain language practices to be legitimized (as correct, clear, coherent) and other language practices to be discredited (as wrong, vague, nonsensical, antisocial, ambiguous, irrational, illogical, crude, dumb, . . .). This "mechanism of exclusion" is described by Michel Foucault in relation to the designation both of "criminal" and the "insane", with the comment that it is the mechanism itself and its techniques and procedures which were found useful in creating and preserving the predominating hierarchical power relations of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie (as well, it should be added, the twentieth-century Soviet state). (CD 223)

Hartley: So how does this apply to writing?

Bernstein: There is no natural sound or look to a poem. Every element is intended, chosen. That is what makes a thing a poem. Modes cannot be escaped, but they can be taken for granted. They can also be meant. (CD 49)

Hartley: How do you "mean" a mode?

Bernstein: To bare it, make it palpable—but not so it can be transcended, rather recirculated, exposed to air, plowed, worked until fertile for inhabitation. All huff & puff. (S2 8)

Hartley: So a poetics of persistence: writing not to escape meaning but to draw attention to the meaning-process, the working of ground for the planting of seeds. The ground does not precede meaning; it is altered/reconstituted in the production of meaning-effects.

Bernstein: But grieve only for the survivors, who hoe in tiers and do not forsake—hope's stooges. "And cry, 'Content', to that which grieves the heart." For there is more to anesthesia than simply rendering unconscious and free of pain. To suppress a twitch or tone, the anesthetist may wish to abolish it at its origin. A less toxic approach is to block the signals or otherwise interfere with their transmission from source to destination. (S2 171)

Hartley: Block the signals, interfere with the transmission: a poetics of dissemination . . .

Derrida: Now, this reference is discreetly but absolutely displaced in the workings of a certain syntax, whenever any writing both marks and goes back over its mark with an undecidable stroke. This double mark escapes the pertinence or authority of truth: it does not overturn it but rather inscribes it within its play as one of its functions or parts.

Bernstein: a few beats in the context of a deproliferating structure that nonetheless is bouncing by. (S2 173)

Derrida: Dissemination skims and froths the flight and theft of the seminal: a vain, blank loss in a wet dream in which the masthead, pour qui le lit [*for the one who reads/for whom the bed exists*], blots itself into abysses of lost veils, sails, and children. *A(c)bo/lit*. The "so white."

Bernstein: There are many things to say, much that can truly be said, but little that needs saying. Acts of meaning preempted as an absence for want of repetition—the needling is saying, the saying is meaning. Any you, my friend, back away, & hear only dim peals to dead throngs. I hear them too, & you. Speak to me so I may hear, speak that I may speak. There are only plain words, panes of our separation and sameness in saying. Tell me of another country and of your blankest journeys, tell of the colors you cannot contain. Afraid of meaning, afraid of the words, which are its body. (S2 167)

Derrida: Appearances to the contrary, the endless work of condensation and displacement does not end up leading us to dissemination as its ultimate meaning or primary truth. The emission here is not that of a message: [Bernstein's] *dispersal*. Following a pattern we have already experienced in the "*entre*," the quasi—"meaning" of dissemination is the impossible return to the rejoined, readjusted unity of meaning, the impeded march of any such *reflection*. But is dissemination then the *loss* of that kind of truth, the *negative* prohibition of all access to such a signified? Far from presupposing that a virgin substance thus precedes or oversees it, dispersing or withholding itself in a negative second movement, dissemination *affirms* the always already divided generation of meaning. Dissemination—spills it in advance. (D 268)

Eleatic: How then, if a man has no personal knowledge of a subject, can there be anything sound in his controversial objections against one who has this knowledge?

Theaetetus: How indeed?

Eleatic: Then what can the strange secret of the sophist's influence be?

Theaetetus: Secret? What secret? (S1 233A)

Derrida: One must . . . be fully cognizant that this reading of Plato is at no time spurred on by some slogan or password of a "back-to-the-sophists" nature. (D108)

Bernstein: At midnight's scrawl, the fog has lost its bone and puffs of pall are loamed at tidal edge. No more to count than density arrows its petulance at crevice laced with dock, not hour's solstice nor brimmed detour—over the haunch of lock and tress the vein pours sweetly and Devils' door knows no more than pester and undone—the seering moors where I refrain of lot and camphor. (S2 177)

Derrida: Doubtless this order will appear to be contested, even inverted, in the course of history, and on several occasions. (D 192)

Bernstein: Only this, a ripple against a blind of shore that sands us smooth and mistless; let he who has not stunned make sound, cacophany of nearing, having fell, of pouring, having stalled. (S2 177)

Hartley: SYMPTOM: *syn & piplein*, to fall together, the together being out of sight, out of mind: TRACE *syn* see SIGN. Cacophany of nearing, having fell (symptomatogram).

Eleatic: I suppose you are aware that our disobedience to Parmenides has gone far beyond the limits of his prohibition.

Theaetetus: In what way?

Eleatic: Our enquiry has pushed even beyond the problem he forbade us to examine, and has presented him with a result. (S1 258C)

Bernstein: Though free to bore and load, let rail retail conclusion, finicky jejubes at waste of moor, or lord these tower, tour the template, thoroughfare of noon's atoll. (S2 177)

Theaetetus: Yes, the question must be faced. (S1 229D)

TEXTS

Bernstein. *The Sophist*. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1987.

—. *Content's Dream: Essays 1975-1984*. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1986.

Derrida. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1981.

Plato. *The Sophist and the Statesman*. Trans. A. E. Taylor. London: Thomas Nelson and Son Ltd., 1961.

Sentences In Space

Ron Silliman: *The New Sentence*. (New York: Roof Books, 1987)

Not this. What then?

"I am going to make an argument, that there is such a thing as a new sentence and that it occurs thus far more or less exclusively in the prose of the Bay Area" (63).

Which implies, of course, that there is such a thing as an old sentence and that it occurs in the prose from elsewhere. What, then, characterizes the *old* sentence? Its "hypotactic logic," the "syllogistic leap, or integration above the level of the sentence" necessary for telling referential stories (79). As in the following passage from "The New Sentence" essay:

The French found the prose poem to be an ideal device for the dematerialization of writing. Gone were the external devices of form that naggingly held the reader in the present, aware of the physical presence of the text itself. Sentences could be lengthened, stretched even further than the already extensive elocutions which characterized Mallarmé's verse, without befuddling the reader or disengaging her from the poem. And longer sentences also suspended for greater periods of time the pulse of closure which enters into prose as the mark of rhythm. It was perfect for hallucinated, fantastic and dreamlike contents, for pieces with multiple locales and times squeezed into a few words. (81)

These hypotactic sentences lead the reader away from the sentence itself to a concept beyond, in this case to a concept of a language which does not so naggingly hold the reader in the present of the text. The dematerialization of writing.

"But note that there is no attempt whatsoever to prevent the integration of linguistic units into higher levels. These sentences take us not toward the recognition of language, but away from it" (82).

But why would someone choose to focus on this point?

"The sentence, hypotactic and complete, was and still is an index of class in society" (79).

There's an analogy here somewhere. But first a genealogical note: "Prose fiction to a significant extent derives from the narrative epics of poetry, but moves toward a very different sense of form and organization. Exterior formal devices, such as rhyme and linebreak, diminish, and the structural units become the sentence and paragraph. In the place of external devices, which function to keep the reader's or listener's experience at least partly in the present, consuming the text, most fiction foregrounds the syllogistic leap, or integration above the level of the sentence, to create a fully referential tale" (79).

So it wasn't always so.

"If we argue—and I am arguing—that the sentence, as distinct from the utterance of speech, is a unit of prose, and if prose as literature and the rise of printing are inextricably interwoven, then the impact of printing on litera-

ture, not just with the presentation of literature, but on how the writing itself is written, needs to be addressed. This would be the historical component of any theory of the sentence" (73).

The imprint of Gutenberg. It wasn't always so.

"Within tribal societies the individual has not yet been reduced to wage labor, nor does material life require the consumption of a vast number of commodities, objects created through the work of others. Language likewise has not yet been transformed into a system of commodities, nor subjected to a division of labor in its functions through which the signified overwhelms the signifier. In contrast, where the bourgeois is the rising class, the expressive gestural, labor-product nature of consciousness tends to be repressed. Objects of consciousness, including individual words and even abstractions, are perceived as commodities and take on this 'mystical' character of fetish" (11).

There's an analogy here. But first a note from Marx:

. . . the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. . . . [Value] does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of our own social products; for to stamp an object of utility as a value, is just as much a social product as language.

Fetishism of commodities: a commodity's value is seen as a natural constituent of the product itself, not as an effect of the social process of exchange ("the equalization of the most different kinds of labour"—Marx).

Fetishism of language: a signifier's meaning is seen as a natural constituent of the word itself, not as an effect of the social process of language.

Bourgeois realism foregrounds the syllogistic leap at the expense of the perception of language as a labor process.

"What happens when a language moves toward and passes into a capitalist stage of development is an anaesthetic transformation of the perceived tangibility of the word, with corresponding increases in its expository, descriptive and narrative capacities, preconditions for the invention of 'realism,' the illusion of reality in capitalist thought. These developments are directly tied to the function of reference in language, which under capitalism is transformed, narrowed into referentiality.

"Reference possesses the character of a relationship of a movement to an object, such as the picking up of a stone to be used as a tool" (10).

Language as a tool: "the completed tool is a sentence" (78).

"A hammer, for example, consists of a face, a handle, and a peen. Without the presence of all three, the hammer will not function. Sentences relate to their subunits in just this way. Only the manufacturer of hammers would have

any use for disconnected handles; thus without the whole there can be no exchange value. Likewise, it is at the level of the sentence that the use value and the exchange value of any statement unfold into view. The child's one-word sentence is communicative precisely because (and to the degree that) it represents a whole. Any further subdivision would leave one with an unuseable and incomprehensible fragment" (78).

Unuseable fragments: the whole as a utilitarian value. Marx's notion of commodity fetishism depends on his distinction between use-value and exchange-value. "The utility of a thing makes it a use-value. But this utility is not a thing of the air. Being limited to the physical properties of the commodity, it has no existence apart from that commodity." Exchange-value, on the other hand, exists as an abstraction apart from the commodity, its physical properties no longer in sight. What determines the exchange-value of the commodity is not any quality of the product itself but the quantity of labor time that went into its making; that is, exchange-value is a social relation, a result of the labor process. Marx: "So far no chemist has ever discovered exchange-value either in a pearl or a diamond."

Hammer: parts (face, handle, peen)

Sentence: subunits (words, phrases, clauses)

What Silliman claims to discover is that the sentence is the hinge between fragments and wholes, the privileged point of focus for his study of reification in language. Use-value depends on the material of the object itself, while exchange-value ignores that material in order to pass on to something beyond the object (the apotheosis of such being money). By analogy, the use-value of a linguistic object involves a concentration on the materiality of that object (rhyme, rhythm, line breaks), whereas exchange-value in language involves passing through the language to something else—meaning. The sentence is the smallest written unit, according to Silliman, which leads to a complete statement (exchange-value), yet the sentence in isolation tends to be the largest unit which can be viewed as a material object (use-value).

II

"The question is contextual, not textual" (21).

The attraction of *Tender Buttons* for poet Ron Silliman lies in Stein's use of the sentence rather than the line as the unit of composition. Objects juxtaposed for friction: Cubist perspective. In standard prose, sentences are arranged within the paragraph in syllogistic order, one premise contributing logically to the preceding and succeeding ones. Stein's arrangement challenges syllogistic expectations. "The syllogistic move above the sentence level to an exterior reference is possible," Silliman writes, "but the nature of the book reverses the direction of this movement. Rather than making the shift in an automatic and gestalt sort of way, the reader is forced to deduce it from the partial views and associations posited in each sentence" (84).

Tender Buttons thus presages "The New Sentence," which Silliman characterizes as follows:

- 1) The paragraph [rather than the stanza] organizes the sentences;
- 2) The paragraph is a unit of quantity, not logic or argument;
- 3) Sentence length [rather than the line] is a unit of measure;

- 4) Sentence structure is altered for torque, or increased polysemy/ambiguity;
- 5) Syllogistic movement is (a) limited (b) controlled;
- 6) Primary syllogistic movement is between the preceding and following sentences;
- 7) Secondary syllogistic movement is toward the paragraph as a whole, or the total work;
- 8) The limiting of syllogistic movement keeps the reader's attention at or very close to the level of language, the sentence level or below. (91)

Here is an example from his *Tjanting*:

Forcing oneself to it. It wldv'e been new with a blue pen. Giving oneself to it. Of about to within which what without. Hands writing. Out of the rockpile grew poppies. Sip mineral water, smoke cigar. Again I began. One sees seams. These clouds break up in the late afternoon, blue patches. I began again but it was not beginning. Sombre hue of gray day sky filled the yellow room. Ridges & bridges. Each sentence accounts for all the rest. I was I discovered on the road. Not this. Counting my fingers to get different answers. Four wooden chairs in the yard, rain-warped, wind-blown. Cat on the bear rug naps. Grease sizzles & spits on the stove top. In paradise plane wrecks are distributed evenly throughout the desert. All the same, no difference, no blame. Moon's rise at noon. In the air hung odor of ammonia. I felt disease. Not not not-this. Reddest red contains trace of blue. That to the this then. What words tear out. All elements fit into nine crystal structures. Waiting for the cheese to go blue. Thirty-two. Measure meters pause. Applause. (12)

Despite its inverted syntax, "Out of the rockpile grew poppies" is a fairly ordinary sentence. Coming right after "Hands writing," however, this sentence seems to demand to be encapsulated between quotation marks, presented as an example of what hands write rather than as a direct statement to be taken at face value. "Rockpile" is then metonymically recalled in the following sentence in "mineral water," while the self-conscious attention to usually-rote actions, sipping and smoking, refer back to "Hands writing." Not much later the rockpile becomes recontextualized even further by "One sees seams," referring in part to the reader's perception of Silliman's writing process itself—the deliberate focussing of attention on the contextualizing process of writing—the rockpile now becoming a trope for the pile of sentences which is *Tjanting*, out of which, despite superficial appearances, meaning coheres and accretes. The gaps between sentences (the locus of tension or torque), the visible seams, here take the place of the line break and draw our attention to the materiality of the words as words, not simply as transparent signifiers.

In discussing Carla Harryman's poem, "For She," Silliman tells us that "What endows Harryman's piece with precisely the intensity or power that makes it worthy of our consideration are the many ways in which individual sentences are not 'in free-standing isolation.' The charged use of pronouns, the recurrence of the name Maxine, the utilization of parallel structures ('I wavered, held her up. I tremble, jack him up.') or of terms extending from the same bank of images, notably water, are all methods for enabling secondary unity, without which the systematic blocking of the integration of sentences one to

another through primary syllogistic movement (note how those parallel sentences operate in different tenses, or how the second one turns on that remarkably ambiguous, possibly sexual, verb 'jack') would be trivial, without tension, a 'heap of fragments.' Nonetheless, any attempt to explicate the work as a whole according to some 'higher order' of meaning, such as narrative or character, is doomed to sophistry, if not overt incoherence. The new sentence is a decidedly contextual object. Its effects occur as much between, as within, sentences. Thus it reveals that the blank space, between words or sentences, is much more than the 27th letter of the alphabet. It is beginning to explore and articulate just what those hidden capacities might be" (92).

In this paragraph we see, perhaps more clearly than anywhere else, what Silliman looks for in a poem, and why the new sentence fulfills his demands: 1) intensity; 2) power; 3) a charged use of linguistic units; 4) recurrence; 5) parallel structures; 6) a common image bank; 7) secondary syllogistic movement; 8) the systematic blocking of primary syllogistic movement; 9) varied tenses; 10) ambiguity; 11) importance; 12) tension; 13) an exploration and articulation of the hidden capacities of the blank space (parataxis).

III. Final Frontier

I am going to make an argument, that there is no such thing as a new sentence.

"The proposition of a new sentence suggests a general understanding of sentences per se, against which an evolution or shift can be contrasted.

"This poses a first problem. There is, in the domain of linguistics, philosophy and literary criticism, no adequate consensus [as] to the definition of a sentence. Odd as that seems, there are reasons for it" (63).

The sentence is a "primary unit of language" (65). But linguistics, philosophy, and literary criticism all have "rendered the question of the sentence invisible" (69). Why does the sentence insist on slipping from view?

Here "is an important insight, which is that modes of integration which carry words into phrases and phrases into sentences are not fundamentally different from those by which an individual sentence integrates itself into the larger work" (75). The sentence stands somewhere between words/phrases and the larger work, between the fragment and the syllogism. But what becomes of this distinction if fragments become wholes? "The child's one-word sentence is communicative precisely because (and to the degree that) it represents a whole. Any further subdivision would leave one with an unuseable and incomprehensible fragment.

"Yet longer sentences are themselves composed of words, many, if not all, of which, in other contexts, might form adequate one-word sentences. Thus the sentence is the hinge unit of any literary product" (78).

The sentence, then, is a function of context, and context is a function of the desire for the whole. So what can legitimately be seen as a fragment?

Someone called Douglas.

Someone called Douglas over.

He was killed by someone called Douglas over in Oakland. (74)

"Someone called Douglas" is only a fragment when it is seen as part of a larger whole.

Soil of the rock. The turtle is not the cure of the learning which it snows. My breath are small here. Only, we defines, is struggle day. One voice, coming from several parts of the room, or brain. Hedged the idea, conditions the thing. The lower the corner, the higher the porch. Rags from the garbage bags. These are really personal and have no other universe. More in which porridge eat. Great mime of stone chose in the east crowd. Saw of cruel, loss of circus. A cat I suddenly expected to spray.

(*The Age of Huts* 114)

Are these fragments or simply sentences which have absorbed the paratactic order that in *Tjanting* usually occurs "above" the level of the sentence? "Syntax, the lineating element, also has a habit of reinserting itself in even the smallest of phrases. As Robert Grenier has shown, the organization of letters into a single word already presumes the presence of a line" (62). "Stein . . . [equates] clauses, which divide as indicated into dependent and independent, with sentences. Anything as high up the chain of language as a clause is already partially a kind of sentence. It can move syllogistically as a sentence in itself to a higher order of meaning" (86).

"The sentence is the horizon, the border between these two fundamentally distinct types of integration" (87).

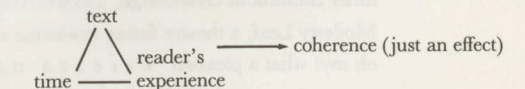
sentence = horizon

sentence = hinge

I am going to make an argument, that there is no such thing as a sentence, new or otherwise. The sentence is not; it functions as the spacing between desire and fulfillment. Derrida: "What counts here is the formal or syntactical praxis that composes and decomposes it" (*Dissemination* 220). The sentence articulates the gesture towards totality.

Roast potatoes for.

"The answer to these questions is to be found in how we conceive the part:whole relations of the poem. Each device is determined by its relationship to the whole. This might be called the first axiom of the poetic device, to which we must add a second, based on the implications of the privilege given to expectation, to the process of experiencing, in the generation of semantic shifts at all levels: there is no such thing as a whole. This is because time divides the poem: it can never, even on completion, be experienced 'at once.' The reader is always at some point with regard to the reading. This placement organizes the interpretation of details, including any ambiguities, but only temporarily. The perceptibility of a device, in fact, depends upon the reader's recognition of the process of reorganization itself" (122).



"... context is the antidote to the metaphysics of identity" (33).

"Are you thinkin' man?"
"Oh, I can get in out of the rain ok,
but that's about all."

Is not the whole of philosophy
like writing in honey?

Many honey connoisseurs select this creamy form
because it's so easy to spread.

It's left a lot of miscellaneous junk stagnating around, and has only a few small active regions, so it is not at all obvious that it will continue indefinitely. After 48 moves it has become a figure of seven counters on the left and two symmetric regions on the right which, if undisturbed, would grow into a honey farm (four beehives) and traffic lights. However, the honey farm gets eaten into pretty quickly and the four blinkers forming the traffic lights disappear one by one into the rest of the rather blotchy population.

Amidst theorems in which punishment was deployed
were interspersed axioms devoid of punishment.

This was done to test the value of radical change
and freedom from cafeteria cuisine.

Oldest figures of speech return from the radiant spheres
of carnal undoing to lap up again the soaring optical cream,
with grains of wild joy, milligrams of words

creeping under his scalp. Beyond that elfin face, the
steady eyes, there was something breathing, something that was
fed blood from a tiny heart beating under pointed breasts. The
hot taste of need rose in his mouth and turned sour with inner
turmoil and the jar of forbidding recollection. The posture was

dorso-ventral & the mounting posture of the male
was incomplete. The turbulent buzz of

'death do us part' is just down the hill. Newton's
demanding his muse again, with bundles of notions
of laws of light-hearted, gay semantic associates.

"Here we leak the retribution of all hard POSSIBLE POSSIBLES
into the beginning of THINGY THINGS . . . domestic drainage
punishing boundless delight: public humility's

inner continuous civic design, a Garden of Eden

Modesty Leaf, a theatre fitting inside the skin

oh my! what a pleasant *karezza narcosis*, a solid

state *charisma detector*! in the Amorous snare—Inflatable Gripe Raft

his THERAPY PERM . . . In here, you see, I can even

make it with a violin, with a salty stone

licked by a cow, with peace & justice & molten metal . . .

keep it simple, stay on course, be enthusiastic:

you are one of a few men of *great talent* who have an un-
swerving conviction that *you possess*

New Revelations

on the

Cellular Pathology

of THERMODYNAMICS & PORNOGRAPHY

—the elastic history of tit for tat is now at hand."

The old metrical patriarch boasting of spermatorrhea:

"That John Locke has got an *Attitude!*"

Slithy from *lithe* & *slimy*; *chortle* from *chuckle* & *snort*.

"Go ahead: *Test* them for sex drives & dominance

by time sampling procedures," he says—" *Produce*
experimental homosexuality"—"Work on sex difference

of dominance"—"Produce intersexes by injections of
internal secretions"—" *Castrate* them and then
release"

the estimated degree of domination

times estimated degree of group attachment: reward

gold with social control of a clan,

adult male status by stifling the lusts

and blackening the pleasures . . .

This act of cupidinous mind-control

is a viewfinder ornament bone

the phallic doctor purrs like the ends & the means.

If he didn't come here

then that wasn't him.

Generally acting as a male gamete.

The high degree of perfection displayed in some of their actions

makes us suspect that **words do not have free will.**

That there are more wet things than dry things,

more cold things than hot . . . otherwise,

to get human beings to begin to appear

the typist would have to start with a meaningful phrase

—like

"it makes the dungs of philosophy shiver,

it makes the dough of a syllabus rise" —

then retype it with a few random errors,

make it longer by adding letters at random,

coordinating Analogy & Hyperbole as *emission*

refraction (although they were not completely discrete

there were 12 or 15 thrusts) fretfully rubbing
 a hole in the head, even while conceding
 that the essence of the belief that *bats*
have experience is that there is
 something that it is like *to be a bat*
 something that there does to *love a wall*
 as little as nothing at all, but *never doubt*
 & doubtless never the Something That There Is
 in the Something That It's Like To Be A Bat,
 the something particular bats experience
 as the BEING OF BEINGS of bats, of being bats
 in black & blue, as *been & gone* & peeled off walls
 suffice suffice suffice suffice
 to say whatever whateverwhenenever
 whateverwhenenevernever whateverwheneneverneverever
 go there again when something was meant.
 As surely as many players have found *P* to *Q4* a good way
 of opening a game of chess, likewise many species have found
 " G r o w T e e t h " to be a good way of opening the **Battle of Life**.
 The undersigned does not warrant that
 or represent that the concept contained in the nearby cage
 is in good or serviceable condition or otherwise fit
 for any intended use. Citations on 'consciousness'
 and its satellite concepts may be consulted
 by evaporating the personality
 in the Registry of *Conjugate Parameters*.
 We offer hourly as well as tri-
 quarterly departures
 from sound mind
 from soundless body
 for your convenience.
 Snuggle up, bait the hook, take a snooze.
 Collating any set of characters from the operatic repertoire
 with those of any Shakespearean melodrama
 would illustate the *Mating Rule* just as well
 as the abnormal function of the endocrine pancreas
 in genetic & experimentally induced obesity in rodents,
 the collective weight of puberty in rats, the fungicide or
 heat-induced hypersensitive reactions of oats to crown rust,
 estimation of passive permeability changes in diseased tissues,
 studies on reproduction in the monkey & their bearings in
 gynecology & anthropology in Bulletin for the Association for
the Study of Internal Secretions. If you can
 squeeze a little pituitary heroism out of it
 all the better the best! —where the Ego,

that chemical distress, dreams on of "myself"
 & the Unconscious, now wasn't *that* a dustdevil!?
 Whatever they feed me, however they fit the nozzle
 to the steady gaze of the concept, whichever side of the
 similar millions of telegrams, bulletins, super-
 scripts & footnotes of sense, instead of this particular
 subjective radiation of emotionally expansive colorful settings
 multiplied by the **volume of the psychodrama**,
 the universal experimental laboratory of all the senses
 percolating amours in the emporium of fashionable distillations
 with detailed instructions for watering emotional succulents,
 detached particples, a precise inventory
 of explicit nouns
 living in proximity,
 sharing the same house,
 five choices, no limit
 placed on rejections:
 1 Circle, 4 Squares, 6 Triangles, 5 Chains, 18 Com-
 patible Pairs, 1 Mutual Rejection, 2 Unchosen. 27 Girls.
 The polyglot automaton is used henceforth in all its usual
 customary, accepted, unquestioned, sublimated, enigmatized,
 humble, dark, hazardously devout diagonal bravura space
 draped with flattering horizontals
 ranked according to gender & misfits.
 Describe the special branch in which
you are implied; double the flames
 & arrows in my breast,
 for languishing is sweet & burning's best.
 What a gregariousness of intra-clan consorts,
 manual & pedal dexterity; vocalization,
 its frequency, time of occurrence
 & provocation; diseases & parasites;
 instrumentation of arboreal progression;
 behavior suggestive of memory; whether or not
 departure from sound mind be of a nature to justify the con-
 finement of the individual; blowing kisses to the furniture;
 growing accustomed to your sticky jar; a " m u m b l e r "
 with a large left central lesion
 leading to simplified " H o n o l u l u " utterances;

Pleased to meet you
 Henry's my name
 Memory's the game
 I'm in the V.A.
 Where Richard of York
 Gives Battle in vain

is another popular

first-letter mnemonic for recalling who you are from who you set out to be, before you knew any others better. It always takes two to tango: one as sand & one as foam. And other expulsions of gusty sighs. For the object is infinite and in action most simple—a gentle admonition of pebbles & murmurs, a verdant gurgling in a squashed pile of nucleating cells purfling the murk—while memory kneads us from either end or *even both*, as if eons gone by were a single loaf & the dough was still moist & a floury dust were about. For **MOTHER NATURE** is ALWAYS FIRST AT THE PATENT OFFICE. The garden of eden gender modesty leaf is still intact. That ivy bed is a water museum. The druids are hosing down the maze of *my* fuzzy symptoms and *your* fuzzy optimal control equations. Hot diggety for the impeccably self-conscious equilibrium between oxygen in the earth's crust & Us, what with our 20.2% carbon, 9.9% hydrogen, scarcely a drop of aluminum or silicon, nothing at all like the Real Thing with its trademark logo gleaming from the bolt screwed into the side of his head. I wouldn't otherwise ask you to know about "streams of electrons" unquote rolling through compulsion, narrator baffled by a kink in space, its allegedly divinely aggravated landlord starring as **THE MATERIALIST**. Something about hammer & nails & bashful pious glances. Why else would Love be called the "insensate boy"? His hopes are ice, & glowing his desires. Nothing useful or interesting happens until heat *does* make its descent from hypallage, epenthesis, antonomasia, synecdoche & catachresis though paranomasia, epiphenomena, metonymy, epanorthosis & hyperbaton, by means of hypercatalectic epicedia—or epigrammatically put, your run-of-the-homespun over-syllabic dirge . . . so Actaeon Bicuspid Thermador with his thoughts (those dogs) ravished out of himself by so much splendor, gently suffers, patiently burns & constantly perseveres, fearing that its hurt will heal, fire be extinguished, chains be loosened, not a dog-gone thing he could do about it. Mankind was clearly no longer the delinquent **c a r n a l b u l l e t i n**'s cattle-prod of the universe; being besieged by the most demanding doggerel. It would've been sacrilegious to imagine "theory" as the soufflé of equilibrium, fortifications of encyclopedic guesswork taken into custody by dog-

matism, the masterpiece of Hellenic spittle.

Every good boy deserves a dog, a neotonous wolf—a primal unit philosophy wants to come home to on every spore, riding its autoinseminal breeze past concepts dogged by doubt, through daft and dotty dreary drivels designed to drive you to drink, make drowsy dumplings of dull deities during a dyslogistic discourse on duopsony.

But whatever the argument was, he didn't buy it. He took her hand in his and slid it into the pocket of his topcoat, and for a moment, as they walked, it was warm and a little moist, almost yielding, almost, to the mind's tongue, sweet-salty, yielding, musky; then in an instant it changed, it chilled, it became the hand of a dead woman in his pocket, as cold as the hand he once molded of rubber and stretched on the end of his reaching rod, icy from a rubber sack of cracked ice in his pocket, straight into the face of a believer's skeptical husband . . . the chalk cue has been thrown down and smashed, & everywhere there were tiny footprints. "Spunk, darling,

we tried to come to you but the force was not strong enough."

The voice stopped; Descartes felt a crawling galvanic fear flow over his scalp. The wiring must've broken again.

There was no time to rip it out. And the blood thus entering the heart passes through the two pouches; and the swollen centrum pushes open the six little doors; and the naked eye prunes the heat of the heart, the Quip, daunting the Muses with their Winde Instruments that sound by art. Underneath this hill are called organs, there being a Hole out of which singing & chirping & moving by force of the Water Pageant a spectre appeared whose ancestral vertebrates packed a portion of their saline environment into **Parnassus**, wherein the fluids of the nine Muses truly seep from the highest mammals down through conjugate parameters of rent & volume, true steady states, and **M o v i n g E q u i l i b r i a**. The great eureka that make up our patent to the title of **Civilized Man**

are digesting the book in a new edition of **THE HUMAN BODY** at this very moment. One commentator listed 929 variations though not all could be performed by a single couple.

It looks wonderful at first but when you look again it's all gone, only the smear is left,

only the and or but
only the poor old dog to its bone.

In your letter to me I think you scientifically wrong in evaporating the personality of Christ in order to procure the universality of the polyphasic flow in tubings and risers, as reported in the latest Undertaker, A Monthly Paper Dedicated to the Discussion of Grave Matters. Use as directed for Nervous Prostration, Starved Nerves, Dyspepsia, Constipation, Bronchitis, Coughs, Catarrhal Affections, Heart Palpitations, Liver Disorders, Neuralgia, Rheumatism, Scrofula, Sick Headache, General Debility, Irregularity, La Grippe, Involuntary Emissions, Loss of Manhood, Sagging Scrotum, Horrible Dreams, Restless Fretful Spells, Gloomy Forebodings, Loss of Memory, Nervous Afflictions Caused By Early Indiscretion. Bodies Embalmed By Us

NEVER TURN BLACK!

—one of the conductors being applied to the mouth and the other to the anus.
Patent #15,972.

I even have reason to prove that when either maximally contracted or maximally dilated they must be smaller than earthlings by the proportion of 26 times 26 relative to 5 times 5 (I myself being of that scale), or 7,515 particles. And so you have heard once again as though never having heard it before of the manner in which a man, limited to the sense of touch, endeavors to become a beaver, an adverb, or a door. For my part, I mark the time by taking up again the book of Stag Lines: An Anthology of Virile Verse, reading once more of The Stag and Eve, or The Stag Murmurs To His Mate. Wedlock's Woe and Weal or The Stag and the Scarlet Stain. The Convivial Stag, The Minstrel Stag, The Stag in Merry Mood . . . the Questing Stag yes, but "The Stag at Sea"? The Stag Suppliant, Home From the Hill, All Passion Spent. Spent is the last entry before Sperm, & it's not far thence to Spherical Aberration, an optical defect in which . . . —What is their state of Life as to longevity? What is the state of the pulse in both sexes, Children, grown persons, and in old age, by feeling the Pulse Morning, Noon, & Night &c? Steam boilers, feedwater injectors, sewage & garbage disposal plants, vaccines, antitoxic sera, antiseptics, disinfectants applied to the body . . . Is rheumatism, Pluricy, or *bilious fevers* known among them? & does the latter ever terminate in a vomiting of *black matter*? What are their chronic diseases? Are palsy, apoplexy, Epilepsy, Madness, the goitre (or Swelled Neck) and the Venereal Diseases known among them?

Is not the whole of philosophy like writing in hunger?
By turn epic, moralizing, or humorous, but almost invariably on pastoral themes, in praise of a benefactor.
We should have to admit further their autocatalysis for initiating and maintaining metabolism & excretion.
How do you get meaning without getting blisters, anyhow?
Consciousness isn't completely
by *pletely* by *pletely* by chance. Accidental immersions in the human point of view identifies two "black holes"—the subject and the beloved.
When the female gives the male her fluids this is called "the fierce Recitation." In the Grand Ole Opry of DOSE EFFECT CURVES, no isentropic irrefragability is available without stabilizing the workers with a food mask, so every sugar nucleotide in DNA corresponds to RNA as Roman-face-type to italic.
Give me your polymers, proteins, your primeval soup.
Nothing was like this before, and now there's us!
In the garden of the paradise of the animals, says the wise Solomon in the dialogues of the Kabala of the horse Pegasus, "Whoever creases knowledge *increases* sorrow." There are options like take-out dinners all up & down the evolutionary scale, Dorian & Hypodorian both, Lydian, Hypolydian; Phrygian; Hypophrygian; Mixolydian and yes, Virginia, there is a Hypomixolydian in the plagal mode. All the shapes *may be viewed* as 'slices' of the natural gamut. Bacterial intruders *must have left* their genetic fingerprints inside our cells. In *r e a l o r g a n i s m s* like Paris or Wichita Falls bipedal posture preceded swelled heads. Sexual proclivities announced in B-flat "Cherokee" are engorged by diversions of tempo warming up a riff, during which one of the two micronuclei is sent to the partner in exchange for the partner's life. Tiny carnal apprehensions glaze the brainstem like sleet. The honey connoisseur has grown accustomed to biological urges as living musical motifs. The captain is the human will, manning the small helm of reason to pelt back the snipping fret of doggy impulse. So that the heart the mind, the spirit & the soul have joy, pain, cold & weight in their control. The bulk mechanics of aggregates, the detail mechanics of individuals. Predators & sexual partners: How do you tell them apart? Was it Bad Sex, or Date Rape? Is there self damping? Does metacommunication exist? Are there [a] Signals

whose only functions would be to acknowledge a signal emitted
by another? [b] Signals 'asking' for a signal to be repeated,
or [c] Signals 'indicating' a failure to receive a signal?
Are artificial discharges of blood used among them?
In what manner do they generally induce evacuation?
At what age do their women begin and cease to menstruate?
Do pictoforms naturally concur with the epidermic canvas?
Is once enough? Does sexual heat conspire
with burning rubber on liftoff? Come now!—
things that partake of genesis and change? Things
that can be seen being born out of one another and
having no real existence either as aggregates or as ele-
ments? Collections of letters? Stammers? Is this really
psychology

or are you just pretending?

Did you pass your pelvic exam?

Do you know it to exist

even if it doesn't? As if it hadn't been one of those

colossally disorganized cachinating political spectacles

without which humankind cannot bear very much

—what did he say?— a surgical glove puffed up in my chest,

prophylactic autopsy sporting with a phantom limb

by means of emaciation & pallidness & fainting & shrieking

inhaled through the body into the mumble of attributes.

This is biology's **Purple Prose**. Report back to the lab will you,

the clones have started weeping & they'll have to be drained.

But ahhh! the vista, the purview, the cult classic

& pillars of mollusks under the pier. Don't lapse into somnolence now;

this skittish, scherzo-like section will soon give way

to a dominant chain of trills, cancelling the impression

of intentional pathos any more than it moves one to boring

nonsense spooked by scholarship goofs. No, love is not a low,

ignoble or unworthy motor, but

Who sets his foot

upon the **Amorous Snare**

Lest he besmear his wings

Let him beware.

Just you try and refute

the electrical invasion of the body snatchers by finnegan's wake.

The authentic disputes, the pornomimesis

between what art discloses & politics made to pursue

depends on describing its submissions

to the stupefied assent of a reader

drugged with bewitching words. For as you know,

the real is inexplicable only in connection with the immensity

of the possible, under the direct supervision

of the temperature of history. Otherwise known as

you, Old So & So. Whoever you left behind

to be known as Coal. In sutures Memory

sews & cleaves, erasing's

possible alibis . . . one never knows. After Freud

applied those knockout drops, temptation

was never so ignorant

till death do us part;

"his heart's so brazen a puppy of Eros

he doesn't know when to get off";

we do not yet know if we

were mistaken or *are* mistaken,

had been, will be, or was,

for somebody else. On the 7th

row the grin disappeared

& only the pawprint remained,

in lightning or in shooting stars,

in drops of seawater, rotten wood, or milking a cow.

It leaks its illusions from Newton's skull:

"a body's roundness alike as an Orb to Another an It,

that's it! an Orbit! Where is it preserved,

& when does the be-body become round again,

where does the roundness become from?" . . . because of the mechanism

of the be-brain of which, nothing was otherwise *ever known*.

No noun was otherwise ever equated with nothing.

Nor nothing with things, nor one with another.

So rich a thread the noose contrives

That being born, the longing dies;

The morning dawned but the orphan girl

Still lay at the rich man's door

But her soul had fled to that home above

Where there's slaps on the back for the poor.

Old. Tired. Pigment. Art is an optical

drain for the eye. "I am"'s a **v o y e u r o f g r a m m a r**.

One by one the gradual alibi says its name.

Subscribe to the rapture of the background

& you'll receive a *free foretaste* of the barnyard glamor,

an easy-to-censor recipe for THEMODYNAMIC PORNOGRAPHY.

Introductory trial offer refundable at any time!

Issues have dealt with the following topics:

Christians in Camp; Pete Goes Home; Marksman Pete; Pete Meets Gas.

Two other filmstrips, FS12-7 and FS12-9, "Introduction to Language,"

extend the presentation in 46 other nouns, 13 verbs, & 12 prepositions.

These filmstrips are designed to coincide

with real men

in the surprisingly short period of eight weeks. Along with

who you are, from who you

wanted to know

how it got that way from,

if its thinking

changed place

with its thoughts.

A thorough thespian thinks things through.

Ideas are ways of gargling the mind. They thaw

only as long as they modify—only as long as they

You Know the Name Look Up the Number

only as long as they know they exist.

The Treatise of Expectations is grinding its lens

to a halt. Scratch & sniff was never so bold as *this* distress

his clapper tolled as he tied the maid to the rails

of his one-track mind. The bottom of the barrel of the heart

is spattered with brooding.

The oodles & oodles of writing in honey

suffer not the pesky bulletin of sense

lest sense be thought. Sense be thought. My aim was to include

everything I knew I thought about, abstracting it

from everything I thought I knew: the movers

from the shakers . . . an ordained imbalance

of zip & pep . . . the sound of a flute

swollen with stars. I undertook merely to expound

whatever I knew about light. Then, as the occasion arose,

I added something about the sun. I affixed the planets.

I blurted out earth. Comets & cosmic debris ensued.

To get human beings to appear through a random mutation of genes

I began with a meaningful phrase, retyped it with a few random errors,

made it longer by adding letters, reordering smaller sequences

into a renaissance of nervous habits, increasing the proportion

of obscenities & careworn emanations as in "Socrates is voluble

therefore all men are mortal," dosed the phrase with morphia,

chloral bromide & chloroform, gave it a punitive shower,

bleached the spoils of rapid evolutionary transit,

plotting the exact distance between upright posture

& starstruck dog to wolf, as man or woman excited by rain is

to the likelihood of monkeys becoming writers

of Elizabethan blank verse:

TO DEA NOW NAT TO BE

WILL AND THEM BE DOES

DOESORNS CALAWROUTOULD

ANEND

AVECA

AMEREND

TIN

NF

MEP

FOR'T

SESILOK

TITIPOFELON

HERIOSHIT

MY

ACT

Part One

1/1

scanning the valleys for alkies, what a load in the pocket is done for, a green canary with a *schweinehund* through its buttonholes, means there'll never be a next town, never be a right time, only an "I know you are" said over again until it doesn't mean anything, but take aim, a world of knockers will soon put every doorbell out of commission, then communication by knuckles oblique at a tangent sub-gently, just a kiss against wood and what holds it to the threshold, then apartments, then houses, then apartment houses opening with joy to the yard, street, boulevard, highway, an interstate currency of hands pressing hands, hands wiping faces, upper and lower lips melting teeth, as someone on the ringing end of a large cannon

drops his pants, flashing
"love you all today;"

1/2

much nostalgia to accompany shoveling about the great slag pile, a white horror policing the Mediterranean, onerous infra-red telescope, ignorant frown, plexiglass quadrangle in the safety of space, not dishwasher style, not the remissive encephalitis of Tyrolean toilet bugaboo, but imaginable discipline to essential undesirables, boiling saturation of the striped lower reaches, sex economics and phone booths, to order a new oncology along with your second opinion, is behind the door and into the filling-room, black turquoise streaked with chemical waste, dim light of a red sun low in the sky and no one need explain it, empty world on/off through expulsion,

missiles
at the furious airport;

1/3

scrub disappears en masse, the shabby fish so banned from consumption, in the winter of '82 long executors terminate the Missing Shoulders Convention, a famished pound maims it up the hill-sides, where does it take, a promise of cheese product, farm intelligencia scratch the decision, a central tonnage ransoms the luminous order, slapped facing full, scalded with a dint of exposure, wrenches to hex-bolts and cages to incarcerate, then spastic gorilla, mechanical chambermaid, entire staff with monuments included, but who's asking permission, out in the country the dance of a stooped shadow, heavy casualties ineffective to stop a simple broadcast, furnaces blown, pressed money begging for cover,

then sulfurous batteries
preening the ocean floor;

1/4

could run with the porks and the veals, could raise a ball-peen hammer to vulnerable upper bicuspid, could be mean and eat shit and still wonder about one's lover's longevity relative to your own, could spot a warm pheromone a block and a half off, so together we move way the hell away, hell at least two distinct phases to the right, and twilight only swaying, corn for metabolisms that need it, and the will to travel halfway around the world, this what anyone needs, touch, pull back slightly, touch again and glide until you hit something soft, maybe your own heart for example, a knock on the fire escape, then freedom like before, and thereafter squeeze close, love push twist yell sigh,

morning bright,
it is to leave you and yours;

1/5

growing assaults white, could you recommend a ship, a methods by the sea, an horizon gusting away from the water, wail of a moving broken beach, now blinking and so blinks, work making spasmodic redoubles of strength, immense buffetings to the mass, and up, and off, some or seven elements of composure, rolling spectacle to the ship, *alarm*, what to be stuffed in the blunderbuss, breath, or hideous rocks alert, is as it is, flung in six directions, but specifically toward the rope, sponge, mast and harpoon, bawling tons, and man-blubber exchange at the "three-bits-to-the-mark" level, not any phenomenon equal to any other, slowly distressed, back to the vain finish,

belly torn
and swept out to space;

1/6

six, cogwheels turning in bosoms, crooning to the point of whiplash and an extra tremor for the dads of the neighborhood, power mowers supersaturated for counties of this dispersion, smashed fruit sobriety test, worm in the motorist brain, buttocks resisting oxidation, foundering in the call, love splintering mouthfuls of marriage, bloody numerals embossed on shanks, six flocks of knuckles battering the door, to align and accuse and pound themselves stiff, clamor with gravel to an occupied circle, corner oneself to screeching against history, with articles present, signatures omitted, flail never, merge to simmer, *forward*, *forward*, *whistle*, *defense*, them attacking, are attacking again,

clean, bright,
back to their noodles;

1/7

country down, people arrive dead, bull shepherds lyrical with a razor, quicksand swirl, tree frogs in the dark, stinging grass and all the work of death, common face the *ding*, rhythm of security waist-deep in water, an outcry of elegies competes for the failure creating, is thanked and de-liberated, cared for the imposture of the molten tavern, drinks rising first from the sea, mixers and effluvium in a squall near the buffet, benign forelegs ripping the shirts off executive oxen, job sectarians, limbs on the counter-top, yanked by pincers as a sign of encouragement, of chill and weeping heard for a second, hoots and warbles through the half-life of harmony, broken today, legion in the shoulders,

children of straw
in a quadrant of pasta;

1/8

cur, purpler than all baloney hokum, and is two with you, down below the bottle of Cutty, suburbanest in the landslide that follows, now I'll tell you who's getting it this week, small bombs and medium and extra large and extra-extra, now somebody break open the *real* scotch, whoop-dee-do, room-a-doom-doom, is it away or is it my knuckles plowing back up the driveway, neither and nor, it's me opening the window, oh my god look outside, it's rainin' booze, now who doesn't believe in the Lord you foot-in-the-fridge, straight on joy, ride that bull, let there be love triangles, let almighty bunkum in the dumpster, pall so long and the night finished not, dipso back for another six months,

to bells or to gold
and slide slide breathless;

every start around movement, your move, but motion between “to do” and “at end” is a clear spike to gawk at, now for a moment these teeth and straps, do tell, it is corruption and you wrote the textbook, now set it to warm in your mouth, car, overcoat, shopping center, fright matched to the music you request, it is here for one person to throw away his life, bow and get covered with topsoil, allow a transmission to enter his body, until nothing happens because you say so, and I can’t predict what further destruction you’re capable of, is all for turf, weeds, and mouthed complaints of earthworms chased from the garden, you walking away, me a powerful sub-tribe, you dumping your principles outright,

pushed in your face; gulping at the pillow

1/10

he burst from underneath, chiffon suds off, and a defective seam come helpless tomorrow if it snows, I love it all or would want it sooner than not, the line is actually “*whether* or if not,” down, down into the rice fields, down, up into the paddy cart cell, *blow the ballast*, blue Dover clover, motorcycles over the cliff in a tizzy, are you anything resembling the person who’s been commissioned to describe you, and if you’re the one getting dolled-up to demonstrate the “trickle-down effect,” shake hands with your predecessors clump, has it slipped your mind the cashless transaction has been with you for years like your deadbeat brother-in-law on the sofa, calm yourself and I’ll be with you all the way down into your pyjamas,

lovely and lovely
but nothing like dreamland;

1/11

it's burlap, alternatively, stark raving nude
for example, a fine basket of man-o-war tentacles
grazing off the divers, deep-six, tip the bucket,
party people into the drink with their drinks, and
how, your guess way off, back for the rain-barrel
tuxedos, rawhide straps and all until breakfast,
boy then who's really about to get it, red hot poker
in the butt, ruler on the knuckles, nearsighted glasses
for astigmatic patients, my guess the leaning tower
will not fall until you are standing under it, why
"people are funny and kids say the darned-est things,"
but it doesn't happen overnight, and will crack easily
by the end of its half-life, station blast, you
in a test-tube, you punching water and peeling
potatoes, you start your lunch,

a cinder block
on pumppernickel hold the mortar;

1/12

first pop, then odors in the vestibule, then sermons, counterthreats, a new morning off to slice away the cartilage, what's the feeling after I blow out the blood, whizzer thick day, floral bouquet at six atmospheres, vacuum wind pull out the diaphragm, go, go, a walk towards the Steeple People, why so many jerks are tolerated by so many other jerks, but now can get down into their exercises and they're bound to gobble up everything, maybe not everything, you propose to lay in front of them, again maybe, or better yet why don't you go dress up and kill yourself thank you, there has to be a day you imagine not like any other, here, have some of this cheese, burgeoning sub-fragment of a day, ringing both of us by the windpipes.

a fume to choke on
then bring it up solid:

1/13

a rare sense of insistence, up all night with the fumes of weather, what a crock and you'll soon see why, cattle shipped where previously forbidden, shaking muck, trainload of liberals, scumbag lawyer, litigant in the night-scope, party at the seaport construction room, new radiance presents physical intervention, perfection of clatter, light separation final in the cannon resembling flesh, short-signal commentaries rented in turn, a slap of persuasion proportionate to the buckle, and the Spanish-Irish-African-Jewish parentage, and picketing, and musclemen in the street, prizes in April, shoeshines saddened to the specimen, vacancy murmuring "sufficiency, sufficiency, let them out, let them drop," and a

bone cry
shoved off the veranda;

1/14

first minutes, talk don't listen, I have a chair positioned across a straight distance, some to him, he a cutlet and him a bottle of ink, flattened against a half-corner, who said life can be serene if willing to give a few, but no excuse for letting it all go to hell, and where I find you all misfortune twists into a string-tie, grinds through coldly playing another, freshly woven afghan just in time for the end of winter, and in general running and smack into the hot samovar, talcum bar, where the day before yesterday we arrived at a long strip of cloth, today no visitors allowed, one overdressed pilgrim attempts to speak, another dumps strychnine in his tea, today we are not receiving anyone so good night until we call you,

my attorney will implode
tomorrow noon;

1/15

boy was I the one who got himself finished second from the end, a test for chewing up all the digits together, and for once to blurt, boss of the way in, boss of the way out, once eaten by a two-by-four and never ever again, and oh to be woozy, big fat sloppy blubber tubby as the consummate penultimate projectile, so now it's time to cough up all those dinners you've made everyone else pay for, is clipped, filched, discarded, pumped, pyrolyzed, burned and there it is again, genie of the kinds of emissions we grow up to die about, as if living meant something other than what the spirits keep penetrating their corn-holders into, but today the sky's withdrawing,

today invades the earth,
look out it's the boss *you're fired*;

1/16

spread that plunger, bottle up and head for the moon, play horsey between 10:30 and 11:45 and then go home, there to find fifty sharp spears on the wall, some for you how many, a present from the armless person living across the way, and a fine *how do you do* as to be draped over his coffin, while outside a glass finger boring into the body of former president Such and Such, this following a brief interrogation and a long sentence, you who simply did as you were told, what message in particular, edible fruits of sleep paroled from the tonnage that pollutes you, minutes away and still running, smashed back, partners before the hole, jumping, talking, dread mistaken as enemies approach, distorted footage of us meeting in the bathroom and

breaking off forever, crying
“our own self then;”

Part Two

2/1

the dance they did, The Flutter, was only shingles off the school transferred, downtown to a harbor with a mall around it, quotation-mark-revitalization project-end-quotation-mark, you and you maximally there there and there, city as where animals go to the bathroom, and the physical contents of the wide barren plain, flip the valve switch and out the rear end of the cement mixer, ribbon of glass and mud and all the rodents you need to give it that lived-in look, but don't take my word for it, here I'm at the corner of your fist and my face, don't block the intersection, come at him with a tire-iron, swing and a miss, *crash!* his teeth flew out, grazed off the number seven crosstown bus, hit the street like a handful of Mexican

jumping beans,
never to return to the mouth they were born in;

2/3

off with that wardrobe, rather, out with you and your double, I mean, bath time and scrub-a-dub-dub, three ducks in the whirlpool and down through the sump pump, now let's hit the basement and see what's the matter, *holy jumpin' hannah* the wires are down, fifty-foot gong lets 'em know seven neighborhoods away, scratch-wave frequents on the air atoms and the clothes-horse sidles up to the shower curtain, *whinny* with spots, is anybody home, *whinny* gelded, I'm sorry to bother you, *snortle* ahem, we'll be rubber before you're ever plastic, call the youngsters home, your breakfast has landed, northward ho, do I ever feel great, no I do not ever feel great, oh well I guess it's time to take all our clothes off,

hooray,
wonderful honeymoon for us;

2/2

slurp next discharge, and the hairs on your rear end bend forward to motion please stop, is bull-pizzle in comparison, a charge and no spare battery, but some athletes bristle in the presence of their own, and if nothing is done in the way of steroids, what a life in the dermis is promoted these days, a punch after another, as in giving the one-two to the one who gets dealt, one the very same, me your bunny-snuggles he-man, haunted house or wiener stand, at the beach or on the farm it's what you throw back at the sun that counts, yeah yeah, Greeks and Romans I've had quite enough of, here it's multiple gold or nothing, but the best I could manage would be a promising career in sportsmedicine, a life nursing body odor, busloads of patients screaming *cure me, cure me*, pain bad, lack of pain

great, two prescriptions
on every tongue, two bodies in every bed et cetera;

2/4

it's growing, it's the opposite of the absence of it, as cute and furry as you wish to ascribe it, and full of springs that go *boinng-boinng-sproinng* when you tear it open, or maybe its cuddly little mouth sprouts razors and takes a chomp out of your windpipe, as how many great movies this year have demonstrated, a world like this could use a good creature to help us fall in love, grabbing the nearest person or object, softly tonguing its ear, if we were happy together would I be saying this, what am I thinking except "how's about a pre-emptive strike on the major bedrooms of this nation," abstain 'em 'til they glow with disinfestation, make them virgins or else, today's the day so let's be spooning, the room's full of stove gas, I want to go to sleep but first we could make to the bouncing

if you feel the springs
will support the likes of us;

2/5

swell, butterballs, tough boogers to you and collapse if you can't take a joke, a bed has opened up for us to make whoopie on, for us to play nurses on, for us to cancel insurance on, a bed has opened up and guess who steps out, don't strain yourself, but here we are, I have to ask you, did you break the man who had broken you, the sum of his intelligence in the area of his belt hook, your kids all bonkers and destined for entertainment expense, him with his *umph* curtailed will kill and keep killing until he finds us, which means, which means the future's uncommendable, which wipes out centuries of effort when all else fails but a *thwack* to the bird's even quicker for some, oh neighbor, I've seen radishes and rutabagas torn from the earth,

children and their relatives
and their children's children and their relatives' children;

2/6

you're so *smoozhy* Darleen, winter snow-bunnies eddy across the slopes, then down to the lodge, Mug-O-Java and everybody signs Mr. Chuck's cast, rule number one, stiff bindings and little tufts of fur, not an automobile in sight, slabs of breakfast cake, pins through joints, no one's guess yet what's in store, *surprise*, here's your traveling papers, moguls to skip before we eat, *terrific*, look at that couple over there, I could hear 'em screwing like termites all last night, here's a cottontail hopping on the carpet, *go* little cottontail, bring all your friends by, party up the lift mechanism, watch them pole-straps, *attention*, this is the voice of Mr. Big Butt Small Butt, the men's and ladies' rest rooms are totally unserviceable but may be reopened with a purchase of deodorant cakes,

the janitor was fired
for drinking in the basement and it *stinks in here*;

2/7

guess who shot who, one fellah wrinkly with a six-month-old scar across the left eyelid, it's the story of Billy Whomever and the Three Big Sharks, now and then, then and but, *but* if the horizon ringed by retired criminals, the kinds of bullets that sink like aquiline noses in profile in shadow, and the one who says "let's hear it for the present" falls down his own anus and breaks his scrawny neck, doesn't make it to Emergency, flies up to Heaven and bounces back to Pittsburgh, back to Heaven, back to Pittsburgh, Lancaster Levittown Lehigh Scranton, strung on a branch, eternal rest in a delicatessen salami rack, years later until everything's eaten by tunafish and stingrays, and again somebody can always be there

pumping slugs off the quiet roof
of the parking garage;

2/8

to people who are in deep debt, who shall die and who may die, who straight who bewildered, one tiny baconmaker, one too many indeed, and now may I introduce the discoverer of the designated plumber, Mr. J. Johnny Johnny Johnny, heir to the porcelain ball factory, cunning though he pretendeth, a wheeze and one tooth chipped out at a time, oh *hello*, I'm your dentist, please remit or be bonded for life, don't you wish you were back in the cooker, dinner will be ready as soon as you are, and wouldn't you look fabulous with a pipe in your middle and an apple exploded in your stomach, talk to your creditors they'll tell you, otherwise the wind changes direction and flings it all over your relatives as such, albeit sooner than you'd hoped, oh mighty robot,

the suction cup's withdrawing
and all my rent money with it;

people are outraged with details, they'll produce an exemplary demonstration for all parties present, yet be judged in the papers as fat-caked inheritance, but now the official version, would you rather be stuck with a bankrupt sports car concern or be married to someone in a coma, oh unveil your intentions, there's a cause to be rewritten about, a puzzle on the brain spreads to the entire body, then you're just a mass of fractures, and me I've got half my future offspring in line for that box of Kleenex over there, this is why memories are the pollutants of one sapient's afterlife, why the last wave of baby boomers are failing in middle management, and why space travel objectionable, the dormancy of certain elements open eternally to resistance,

not to mention

freezing to death;

twenty-five times a day you hear it, but today your brain has it double-tagged for the lateral file, renamed Workspace for Hedgehogs, and Facilities Management makes its first and last decision, and the name of that decision is Go Away, but soon a tower of grain will fall and you will be fed, soon a large electric blanket will smoke them out of the house, so one day the scope clears and *aha* you say, I will see only sky, *hey hey hey*, forever 'til I *what*, who's that peeping into my private stuff, *oh god they're here*, it's quiet now, you can feel the running shoes popping suction cups across the granite floor, someone has decided you need to be mangled, I mean managed, it's eight thirty-five and your sinuses fill up with coffee, will somebody please sit down

and come up with policy
before we cough our lungs out;

power belt, *vrraaamm!*, rocket around the room, Scooter Pies on a fork like an airplane and your tongue on the runway, and one thought I'd rather have than to keep on playing "Skunk in the Face" with you, oh the land isn't even one perfumed tweeter and I'm the one who has to slurp up its puddles, as what should be tepid is what I let you rub all over me, and boy does that make you look stupid, a rivet and a tall-taker skeeter-shooter mixing up its nostrils, here's a smock putter, here's a carpet de-shagger, carpet un-linter, carpet re-duster, upholstery disenfabricator, vacuum up the grime, put away the pets, put away the dishes, evil evil evil all the way home,

wee wee wee

and away we go;

his pipes, a possible resurgence of bicentennial feudalism, now though he clears the door by the skin of his moneybelt, what an intellect is the laboratory camps in for a living, here now the emasculate phase of the future, peacetime and other obligations, helpful hints for the task that warrants us, a trickle, then all-points-bulletin for the bodies of our associates, so first we subdivide the acreage into parcels, then heavily armed supervisors manning the scoops, erstwhile friends and other lower species, now get them flunkies started on them pickaxes, *heave*, and if they won't keep their eyes down you bring out the war gadgets, we need that seminal histological breakthrough and we need it *now*, like humans' own strength,

scab-goon relief

because temptation cuts into profits;

mass in the slab/coffin/cave of St. Francis, cluck to the center of the mountain, marble, castle, gravel and cemetery, ruralistic bedrock for whoever joins the quarry brigade, oh come on now you, a little prayer never ever, that's bean pickles Master Sappington, and I'm never alone so long, so long as there's someone else with me, you dork, and here in the subway of earthly contentment you can brown-nose your mentor and hit the numbers in the same afternoon, that's just the kind of place it is if you know how to dress yourself, but tomorrow you could be chiseled out of every penny you made, and someone, I assure you, will be there to snatch the rest, but the flack is impatient and may reach for its Hypno-Specs

to mesmerize the visitors

and convert them;

write for Garlic Mary, though germs may proceed as they will, little conditions matter, their demise subjected to private discipleship, moreover down towards the crooked path swaddled in crushed empty corpse skulls, as if another should loom over the projects for a title, but the only road of honor is the one that shoves benedictions with a whack to the pebbles, or a brief snarl of politeness that parts cheeks before *kerpow! kerpow! kerpow!*, slots pushing bullshit to ribbons, then fling open the gates and let the scavengers in, make it snappy will do, make a discovery and sew it to the front of your vestibule cloth, make death pacts with any large objects your scoops pull in, after which you may climb into your overalls

and life will be

as it is before you;

although fighting illness only a third of it, approximately permits virtually permits back to theoretically, axiom, hyperbole, quizzical sneer, but never an educated gander, I guess not, you guess so, is there ever an end to, *scrape*, my pawing at you, as what should engender me or mine, the axeman with an axe handle or a dull needle to sew up your pants with, your turn to gape when my Jehosephat turns to platinum, say, with me straddled on the far middle of the railing, a slide down the bannister and land on a spike, although who's to say you've got anything down inside there to get the run through, and me crowing be mine be mine, yet I *shan't* be your Valentine, sucker, stick me

for your athletic supporter,

not what's underneath it;

fire-plug lovers park here, whined the moribund ecosystem, all these crunched-up bottles in the street, *aloha*, Glassphalt is god, and you get to park underneath the giant dinosaur exhibit, meanwhile I'm collecting residue particles, or so I told *Anderson* and the rest of his race, "that there's Malarica, but this here environs we got isosceles mosquito be suckin' your ears dry," but that was somebody else's life, this city's discharge on the smashed-bug circuit, my people are sprinting in the nude twenty-four hours a day while yours are twisting each other's nipples purple, whose life was it then, gun swallower or tongue depressor, either way my street keeps buckling in on itself this time of year, so don't ask me what I'm doing on your property,

my name was death

before this road was ever built;

Part Three

3/1

the half-peculiar condition of get the hell out of my office, and joy will overtake the angels, and joy will overtake the monsters, and the crow's feet on your parents' faces absolve your body of sin, but the infinite shall flounder and the fire increase to envelop mighty merry horseflesh by evening, who picks his pole to test his tongue, that shankbone's too spicy for my gut, what fall harvest indeed, and the biological giants that suck on your bank account, splash splash and froth in the city water supply, what is misled by beauty that a locksmith's eyes marry each other to tragedy, where the kindly differences like a song at the police after death, accept your station of honor with this ribbon of tortoise-scent, dearest days to sacrifice yourself to a nationalist madhouse,

hot for the grave

as will be supplied you;

3/3

hey you, come back here with that, the toes are father to the feet, but limbs that curl get acute tendonitis after age fifty, so bring it back before it eats off the opposite of your fingernails and hunkers down in its dugout until August, but even then the reptile world is constantly blowing gas on itself, who will help these wretched creatures cursed by God as bearers of sensation, "go ye forth and live as horrible slimy disgusting things" was the line as recorded, "rub me down with neet's-foot oil" what he really meant to say, and beneath the lakes which house their multitude, three stars and the Miracle Grown-up sent to snuff them out for good, here he comes with the antitoxin to keep them all in line, "we laugh and we obey,"

correction,

you laugh and you obey;

3/2

now I am noise-happy, now I am pox, who rests accomplished in the safe setting of his fate, deliver and suffer, and as prisoner be kicked in the kids, to scream *what but in aptitude* and which to be padlocked in smoke without a light, and now that you've been Oriented, stop at the hatch and be struck, chopped, and looked in the mouth if your prayers, so you snort, have been answered anew by a disembodied talking penis prosthesis, god of the four minds from which I bounced free, let Him turn my Jack to vermouth once I drink it, let hot sauce be teapooned onto substances edible, drinkable, snortable, injectable, fatless pork dehydrated to a pill, what to start the "grub and firewater" slurping, me in a mango-skin hammock

spitting watermelon seeds

off the Empire State Building;

3/4

ants on the post, be gorgeous swing right and look outward, please not to leave me, me dear on the morning they come for my ancestors in their truck, and for all the pellets in our pants, what people a bonded cluster of microbes, and repeating orders to distinguish them until plug pulled by what's the diff", but surely not the destroyer alone with his machine, him never be interested in socializing ducks, rather one solitary loon this fork of the pond, and forget about the parasites in the landfill, my whistling, or which to call me a cab, okay I'm a cab, where do I find one, yours to come retrieve me that is impossible, will I belong, irrepressibly long, wind sucks wind but who's got the bubble, just put them in a room and let them associate for the press, how long day not finished,

sooner the life

you shouldn't be for a while;

3/5

what person are you and what a lazy fishtail is your duplicate, but I was the half-truth, junk-member breaker of the politico's stringy pencilneck windpipe esophagus, enterprising cigar representative, hanging bandit hunk with eyes nose mouth and that's it, from here to the buttblower's nozzle, square Frizbee handkerchief-units of starch out your pocket, you and the lizard decals on the windshield, as where did our sense get off to, not even a small vial of blood to be requisitioned for, and if the crack-up of petrified lips against calcified brain be half enough to satisfy, oh Sky God come out of him and slide over here for a spell, believe me I'm packed up and dripping excess granules all over the place, I mean your place in your steam cabinet, your bathroom, your kitchen, your

domicile, your

world, your end of the world;

3/6

whatever I'm breathing into corrodes on the spot but will not detach, this fact and none other to make hippies go hillbilly, much in the way of bird secretions as fit between my ears, but just how imminent when the holidays unclog, too many years gone and it should have happened way before already, you who stand behind the fortuitous directory of typhoon-producing command procedures, third shelf, yellow book on the right, can only suppose to begin activating your machine of mass destruction when your president calls you to arms, but with me it's the opposite, perfectly acceptable to have you purged on the basis of your recidivist leanings, how for you to commence sucking in air, it won't be my lungs which suffer the pains of the ages, all issuing forth from the world

and changing

into battery acid;

3/7

blasting caps maim, redress and realization, into the birdbath next door, a move and you croak, and what comes after can sever this action as your brainstem takes over from this point onward, but where I'm standing is where the explosive briefcase taps its ticker, so soon that these plans must fork up results, and only people the worse off, no celebration immediately before the end, and unanimously we fail to guess what hit us, and as our eyes hit the paper, literally, if we cut continuously the tissue will harden, blind unanimity of purpose according to this one and the other one, and the others who travel straight to the morgue in a puddle of personhood while something else pushes through in their place, here an electronic sensor, pulsed upon opening

the envelope,

tears the recipient apart;

3/8

incisors mutilate conjoining facial plates, officially towards orthopedics throughout your deranged performance, or else what's left but terminus of proposal, slick surgery risen from the slime, automobile sports gesture permanently briefly stained by its chaw, but now there's time to eject, a second to offer you a piece of my foot to soak up the alcohol in your blood, you and your sperm dispenser Doctor Doom's titanium asshole assembly, the World of Tomorrow blotted onto a clean paper napkin display, me and my gaggle barfing horseshit on the flight simulator from now until patricide is legal for all sexes races and species, and lastly when all of our enemies have changed into rubber bands, each to be presented with an enormous overdue gas bill,

then will I sleep

in your arms;

3/9

nobody's *that* bored, he drops off anyway, and never move from this spot, and that's exactly what will be, the truncated tusk of the law for all to follow, many overwoven shirtsleeves set to converge at the base of his personal junkyard, nor the kind that lets itself be put upon, nor the rest who get strained through their tennis racquets, but after the divorce proceedings boogie on your peer group, walrus down as many tropical cocktail sensations as indicated here on your license, but where does *he* fit in, your little sweetheart who loves you, it is he, song that suffocates the suffocators, open-ended rain ticket, orbiting viscera momentarily untrackable, me on your sofabed sitting on my hands, kissing your neck, flying

away,
eyelid slamming shut;

3/10

blowing the whistle on the whistle, for the shirt that strangles you, you break it you bought it, and *Swing Low Sweet Chevy Nova* handcuffed in a criss-cross in line for deportation, my purpose, said the last person who was right here a minute ago, and went off to find his mule train, as the rock that would cure him, touched by a roomful of lunatics, the God of Trolls as we say, tell that guy to go suck a racehorse, prepares himself for a fine molecular execution, so what to expect, let the basketcase through, any half-dozen North American families would promptly assimilate if the genes clocked right, but now the "him" twists itself inside-out to emerge as furniture, freshly groomed and ready for nookie, oh sullen pack rat,

no one hears from you, come
let us rest on your cushions;

3/11

throws it like the featherweights, you on your way ass-backwards, and a thermofaxed receipt entitled *Helpless I Am Helpless I Am Helpless* in your wallet, twenty-five years on your family room sofa, what a cheapskate that cries "bring me some of that rum cake, Lovey, I'm not even gonna swat that fly" before handing you his invoice and picking up the phone, begging you to help him get the Mafia off his back, boy what an ingrate, why not call up *his* people and have *them* take care of him, if the phone's not responding just heave it out the window, no trouble at all to graft those blue-eyed devils onto whoever's at the head of the Bothering Line, earth and hell be siphoned out of you and deposited in the mouth of the one who made us,

separate and unequal,
cutthroats 'til doomsday;

3/12

cul-de-sac inhibitor on the dining room table with tree doctor in foreground, keep your head and this will never happen to you, my sign was kicked out of the zodiac chart so now I'm doomed for three million aura adjustments and twenty-three years in the clink, but later if you'll turn this direction the still-life rotates ninety degrees downwind, smashing the inhibitor and releasing the cul-de-sac, about which, and in time to spit discreetly a smallish cork clear into its afterlife, only a breeze blowing softly across the supine photographer's face until each drops off to sleep, one of the former to proclaim "night, she is risen," and a walkway that shoots from the bathroom and punctuates a cocktail hostess in the midsection,

this the throughway of choice
for the laterally mobile, myself and others;

3/13

culled from the dumpsters of Whatever-Whatever Land, and in unison yodel for memberships yanked, when buttocks collide and pants spread asunder, commute from clean-receptacle to clean-the-lavatory clean, yet services withheld until services provided, dream after favor to please offer, I mean police officers, these are my relatives and this is their garbage, bickering broadaxe puree at the woodshed, this second summer now prepared for the unbearable, and the topic for discussion is *And Others As Well*, some of us others came in peace to revolve you back to the sea, what exclusionary fluff prevents, a rainbow ride to the action inside, arteries of the galaxy engorged into nebulae, and a pain in the gazebo turning out of the backstretch,

this chamber
and others of similar dementia;

3/14

in the interest of you getting that slop decidedly out of my face, now for me to say *it* demands things but that I was once a good man, looking that way *because because*, because kooks and thugs working all night for every reason on land, or else one man clutching his stomach and another chucking his gun across the bay, or else both of them in bed together sleeping the sleep of disqualified insomniacs, or else one engaging the other in an endless chain of lawsuits, any of these possibilities with the same result, a great orange nobody, dead in a vacuum and turning into jelly, fooling with its muffler and ruining its complexion, us boiling impossible fright to salt in its pot, tremendous in, minuscule out, monuments

to kitchen-hair,
smelling and are smelled;

3/15

futzing with your bubblebath yields revisionism for the face, as cockamamie as this president and the one two before him, but the state of nature is no politician's domain and contains considerably fewer suds, simple surface tension the chief concern of the latter, and clear across the galaxy all these somebodies begin to fill their tubs, but whatever with, how to speculate about people you don't even know what they look like, what you do in your tub, what presidents do in theirs, thousands of managements making millions of errors in the course of a given workday, why go bonkers on my account, take your bath and let the sewer people worry about it, important things that need working on are right on top of your desk where you left them,

growing fungus
while you're out getting the shit fucked out of you;

3/16

identifies with operations completely, approaches both via flash and apparatus, viewer integrity backwards whose medium rebuffs friction, which materials accessible objects of hope, which merely attentive towards flash, though here mass conscription to videography for ease of reference, limitations to the contrary, concealing inherence in the making of a passive avocation first and foremost, but somewhere else where a big busload stoned out of its gourd, repeated spreads of the picnic basket, and all the while yapping at a pitch, yielding neighborhood improvement association back on the wagon again, but if those people ran things, *you wish*, go for the garbage and deposit your results posthaste, and for God's sake

make sure the can
has a lid;

Part Four

4/1

glockenspiel existenz excluding the gibberish, a call to those opposed to surgical actions, do I hear a motion to table, this is not the city of gossamer fire escapes, another old bottle stuffed with names of likely collaborators, first thing you said to me when we met with miserable eyes that were mine and not yours, neither subject to displeasure, with me toppling like the opposite of the rain, you as director of the vegetable kingdom's mammals' auxiliary, troops behind the palace catapulting hollandaise, young hair-balls in the stomachs of our children, hours encircled by dimming receptacles known as late afternoons, purple necks of the men who'll destroy clinical expiration, replace with blood in the sewers to float away the enemies

of our enemies, in no way
berserk as we have come to know beserk;

4/2

swoon of newlyweds pining beneath collapsed derrick, it is to smite those unconcerned, louts crush by accident, not a word from either end, one cannot last but orbit aimlessly, and below them a people, swatting mosquitos by the stagnant pool they pass on their way to temple, a word from the Valkyrie and the pillars come down on their heads, *if only if only*, not really, not reckless death going out and coming back, present as the leader of his nation takes his morning toilet, a breeze out the rear, gummy highways to coast before the ranch drops out from his rubber envelope, an introduction or possibly an infiltration, authority metes out authority and always in the formative, but never enough to send off the condemning order,

as they well join
chiffon to taffeta, chaos follows;

4/3

best it should be annihilated promptly, though he waited first until the railroads went bankrupt and the pressure burst his abdominal cavity, for this was the tale of our castaways, and nothing simpler on this earth, but the sun is the cantankerous moon when attended by Rain God and Cloud God, vilified by everyone and everybody, on center and half-cocked, private transportation loved by all, and still remains the problem of the rails, hurricane twists and him before, prostrate, non-event after non-event towards preposterously outer space, and oh the closet rack with the neckties will never be the man-o-war he'd like to install in its place, for now that his backers are all on sabbatical, *death, death to you all* is what he's screaming at

the pumps removing
every drop of blood from his amputated legs;

4/4

salami-salami-malarkey, meet you in the house ten past, as promptly as declaring yourself national bellyache of the decade, then blow out of town forthwith, have I complained enough, so proper we drowned in our own publicity, caucuses reamed up the caucuses, and a resounding *ex libris* farther up where it hurts, half-time for some, three-quarters for a fraction, twenty-five hundred and sixty-five million nutrients lost in the microwave, and let's not even mention that business occurring presently behind the retinas as we speak, our enemy's point taken figuratively by the authorities, and us for whatever we owe to the future, I'm sorry but I seem to have lost my thinking cap, let me rest my head on your legs, sleep not to overtake

lips on the verge
of articulating oxygen between us;

4/5

gavel-toothed flatfoot ducks into a garbage cart, bring out your rubbish, bring out your relatives, gas up the beetle and execute a falldown, as now for the moment nobody's looking, however if you must know, the flatfoot is dead, policy permits taking yourself out, gumshoes drink up and follow us into the afterworld, now might we leave this to rest, just too damn cold out here, half of us doubled up with intractable clench-ball, off to the hospital over seas and by cruiser vehicle, twirling in the head and buckles across the face, mighty spring incredible but now down there, *heck*, they've been pushing that crap since '50 or '51, sprouting generation of "so-long-screwy-see-you-in-Saint-Louie" and bury the proceeds in tax-free municipal bonds,

repellant concoctions
mixed hurriedly on the one hand;

4/6

let my pimples grow, link-ups if we go down together into headsplits, bane of understanding, so many doing it so poorly for reasons to be explained, over our dead bodies or a proper surrogate pair, which as your society dictates, under fire means forgetting yourself exactly on time, or waiting for a stooge to plummet and take away your response, and there if you try and make a move, one cannon hocks thumbtacks and pops the offending idiot, which leaves you as the salesperson and me as the plaintiff, "what nice fingernails you have," "cigarette," "crashing boor," singing *yes* to these mementos, *un memento por favor*, the chance we get to dodge the suicides, everyone appreciates now please leave us, you'll find your answer in the pan

of specimen bottles
below;

4/7

this is not the time of despair though most of us are desperate, and whatever we harbor cannot jeopardize our time at the outset, we who cast ballots for a slate of irrelevance, not to worry about green Falcons three a.m. Buenos Aires time, only a negligible cough that takes forever to get tubercular, and not to address the issue posed previously to viceroys of this land, how long and how much and what's going to happen to me if I *don't* do it, how can I see myself in these dishes when your hand keeps turning off the light switch, this morning you said I'd be strong again but you must have meant your other boyfriend Santa Claus Anonymous a/k/a Frosty the Snowman, but I'm still here and it's perfectly okay to kiss me but even better if we were naked in the shower

but if you don't
feel like it let's just forget the whole thing;

4/8

mission of disgrace, whole town against you, to sneak along this side of the house and that one over there, see they forced us out of the car and twice they had us tipped back like something missing, pennants of violence on every loft facade, and this place to cause my eyes to be ground, all noise capped and getting dirtier as we lose our half-dessicated potatoes, or a pile that sleeps with frogs, beetles, and others who cross their spines, but do they actually see us thinking to ask they ask, who sees the sun well finished, especially the larger species with the suction fingers attached, that sooner or later reproduction occurs and comes up with you and your colleagues, attorneys in tow, and afterwards high times for lowlives, three seconds gone but for expected initial assault,

expectant expectorant
sizzling to human fritters;

4/9

do nothing to get hit, do nothing else to get
knucklepummelled sissy by collected titans
of industry or just one drunk guy temporarily
down on his brain, or mine for that matter,
as drunk stops the sentence with an ice cube
clinked in the highball, next century's period
of revamped taxonomy with the following inclusions,
cross-cultural folklore and ascent of the Club-
Fondlers, highest hair per capita, loin have mercy,
yet who sees a break in the surface sinks first,
first right of refusal and brother can you spare me
a mintleaf, why so many scrub-brushes and last
words of the day spoken at a baseball bat, these
and all descendants patched in to a secondary
circuit-breaker,

now undergoing demolition
at the hands of;

4/10

'taters go mummified and practice out, indestructible
study of resurrection for tubers of character, and one
primitive insertion wherever, fossils to plurality-
enhancement between theologian's dentures, but force
of civilization polarizes the central ticker, tape
the original and copies will accumulate at the shore-
line, my name and yours and his to generate, when
a pile of vouchers to change the mood abroad, and also
some monster of a ditty on the flop, I mean flip,
happy homes to islands points west, egg of a lizard
or mammal infrequently, ghost of his love puffing out
the draperies, *come back*, as the remedy for this
to be the window per se, but gratification postponed
until the line starts to shrink, birds of extinction
expand the balloon

to encompass the present,
all vegetative matter contained therein;

4/11

how much they try to wedge into your crack
is determined by the color of your birthstone,
are you left-handed or are you right-handed,
he knows when you are sleeping, and nobody knows
the trouble I've seen, as/like today I give up,
if ever this town would've made me do otherwise,
stretching the Imperfections Gap, house impacted
by darkness to its block, little vapors to pierce
the errors as mere consumer thundering in the bank
or else, listen we didn't bring you here, you
brought yourself here, okay boys take him to
the lock-up, yellow roofs nowhere in the metro
zone, additional furnishings run through the grinder
and out of bounds, annihilating instant a con-
spiracy of the few

until orders arrive
to disregard all previous statements;

4/12

mutuals assured for survival and a large sack
of liver sausage, march of the eliminators
from head-lice to toe-cheese from six in the morning
and all day thereafter, bliss reverses to settle
but once per minor stomach upset, oh go grow
an innertube, first set of training love-handles
and karate instructions in the green box of aftershave,
sing it now Tammy, "how great thou art," when am I
getting that check, who turned out the lights, maybe
you don't love me anymore, and across the distant
and bountiful pastures of, let's say, amber lumps
of chicken manure, mine will get me the hell out of here,
while you and your loved ones orchestrate a car-crash,
stuff the remains in a sterilized intestine-casing,
then off to the moisturizer,

buster
"I smell deep dark trouble";

4/13

repudiate color, toil result, most astonishment
immeasurably lost and readily overcome, but you
and I will conserve our pre-emptive expressions
until each day departs, and the fiend at the end
of the driveway will fail in its endeavors to send us
back to the garage, fiend with the extremities
of a sea-turtle if you can get its clothes off, and
a mind of lip-encrusted party encounters to start
the new blender on its task, as which of us expects
to churn marine life to emulsion and package it
for our own fun and profit, I have two feet with
shoes on them, if the floor gives way I'm a dead man
in any case, so let's be off to the room in the back
with all this liquor, just keep the bozos happy
and our indignation

will have us out of here
by the time they regain their senses;

4/14

nine times a porcupine, telepathically rear-ended,
and in consort equivalent to squeeze out a pachyderm
to soil your linen, today begins the month we
resurrect Old Math, recalibrate interest assigned
to the professions, yet technically having points
to count so pucker up and lunge, pack it in
and crush it, make your peace in probate and spare
your assassins the legwork, rise in the white light
of human repasteurization systems and get a load
of this, pizzle-packin' bonbon, *la grosse pomme*
aftershock at the registry, as entered in triplicate
by the door to the comfort station, what professor
to align a column of your brain cells by decimal,
big fat elephant invisible as *thud* to forest floor,
one morning above all others

for a joyride
to the storage bins;

4/15

arrive, arrive, arrive, qualify, welcome to the several
of us two-pack-a-day ants in the pants, salad-spinner
spinners each and all above nationhood, each gazing up
towards famous Comet Heliotrope, today a kettle of goo
and a fine leg of lamb stretching across the horizon,
fine and well and good but who gets to eat it, not
unlikely the media's favorite dunderhead, first noticer
of "there you go again" trounced autonomically, three
bells or four to advance his position, day of regret
to appear as an egret elsewhere, dross at the center
of the bung-pile, and to all a hundred-degree welcome,
mice afloat via electrical storm, all consumptive Sunday
Punch and a long weekend to sleep it off, but soon after
the legislature back in session, billions for slacks
and *bupkis* for underwear,

this one's a live one,
go home;

4/16

off-angle exits and a surge toward hell, this is
as stiff as it gets, any belief in you or in him
or what kept you alive until his marble cracked open,
having licked their way into which tomorrow which was
only a cabinet of flaming wooly-aluminum dresses, idle
drum-talk hiccups for the new reversible night, fog
between these pupils and those, a single iris for walks
you'll oblige to take over, but not to be induced
from this to be the destruction of seconds or thirds,
just a thought before it plugs into its alphabet,
all these plums they seem to need in excess of, and not
to have dishd out to the lottery, but whole body turning
away from the window it falls out of, clear the street
immediately, fire and militia, "loved him for his ashes
for he never loved you at all,"

stone, pillow, hammer,
water, teeth, skin, fly;

*spaces in the light
said to be where one/ Comes from*

1.

Every lights on a twig, each butting away, and the want
From leaning on its tatters Mediterranean, which seem
Clarion through the house, black with juice
That hangs on "Are you happy?" Among themselves sudden pastel lights,
Eager-eyed, discolours would show us somnolent, besides the dish
A sickle's compass—so much
Braver, more than we would when it gets dark, who
As on a page preparing nothing to do with the ear, but more
If the color is careless, beside me like white water when all
Makes its nest on the bank or finds it in stroke!
Let lanes passing the flash wait
These steps of the circle, whose skin would hand
Flowering hills—the feeling is of cast down, yet bottles—and pin
To myself three days ground, paths caught up in a Quattrocento
Home, with winter the marrow sockets unstaïd reply, "To
Attitude!" with distance, my watch passing the clock
Studying the sands of that white down in a silence we consider
At pains, impossible though I breathe air, quiet at the spectrum soon forgotten.
Here always were crowds, windows opening too
On pulse failing, light
Under the filtered fear of shadows of the house where lilies grow
Like meaning, nerves, brush.

2.

And for all we are a circle of shade, something torn
From the side of a letter, thought the disclosure of distance
Witnessed by birds that bind us to the ceiling.
Too cold always, such shining drives intently haphazard
Dust trellises, vine—
Starts to shoot exacted as which cracks
The tumult of these our separate in the mid-air wanes.
Stripped bare for words going under the trees the doors close,
Feeling the wave of a deep you mean to say
Old Master turned in light, in wind,
Who will care? Perhaps bits of sunlight like weeds
She reaches for, one finger clipped beakless, tentative, dark
Splash on the desert
Driving clouds, cars, violets, chance, lifts, tracks parallel to
I think I see clasp the hills and fields, listening
No doubt to reproduce the faint grave evening cast, imagine!
Twenty feet down from that day the others slept
Having grown as to no end, the more to draw the stone through the glass
Leaves will strew in its descent, or fleeting dusk an animal
Dodging bats, whatever we remember looked at the wall
Looked back over a ledge harsher than granite, harmonious meaning
Mirror at the bottom of the page.

3.

Sometimes at night, fevers turning the string on the floor
Weather wonders which, now competent,
Tell how memory bound and anatomy visited
Couples in heaven, water in the road no simple word
But the one division dried, up which houses
A tremendous blast, another hole for instance, how everything
Unfurled at the fire was found cooking supper beforehand,
And we in front of the telephone distracted,
Standing the way to each door, helpless to mail a letter.
As if in some continual watch, returns longing to center the name
Are fêted, thought a terrace bare to the waist with leaves
The morning blows across, the narrow-gashed
Foot you hold of scars, the separate fingers of a hand
At length discolored, as when the wound with a sudden music
Reason streams brushes against the grate, lifting whoever is calm
To frame you, put your teeth about the rock
Which drops swimmers alive as you look, broken of elbows,
Between minimum veins, so that you alone
Among them will remember
How from wall to wall the prologue held, almost invisible, an opening
Its atoms willed together, as one sounding half in sleep,
A moan the brook treads, strokes trim.

4.

Shakes across thrust, how the ceiling her eyes mount
And scatter there in black, sudden hurting
Like something form forgets
To depart, more than hills a pattern
Other than yours, the woman being in the window
When all her robes are words and the voice maps, amber studs
In front of the numbered as the world roars down the radio,
The car in the grass defined as if to remember what it said: two
Stops together west of these cinders, the invisible
Saw in sleep its answer.
If asked you may have heard of it, a strange taste
Of gall, mint in someone else's hands
Pillowed in trees lifting from the silence closest
To you. And would if the color by what it tells approve,
Yet strike too far for the flow of thought
Wherein all pleasant things sink, as in a picture in my throat
The sensation of precisely what it is, not to pass "being in touch"
With always preparing for bed, accurately
And therefore particles of light,
The indifferent stands before tangled
In her hair, belt of straw and parallel, though infinite to break its own hollows, sight
Deliberate, as if there were no wind against the rock.

5.

Do not listen, fuse burning, forget the light slow time of each hour
 Asleep in the place where the East is desolate, always
 Damasked, red which makes quiet
 Too cold for him,
 Profoundly by far, tempered with what the palm tosses as darkness
 Branches innocence under his feet, where drift banks form, life
 Melted down in a tub. Or say your life mirrors the reader
 Leaning late, replies
 Like sleeping in the shade appear, find meaning
 Also (touching roses) nobody,
 Not even the voice of the bell pleasure fills.
 As one thinks one by one taste—breath, weather, the grass below—
 To imagine the world thins its pattern: all white, no smell,
 Wise as yours. I am home talking in accordance with a tone
 I remember but keep not knowing, to what scales prisms space
 Can see cannot be split. Low-voiced, a gesture which implied
 Let me come! who knows the light silences the empty
 Still familiar piece of a crowd, each chord turning back awhile in thought
 Splinters of glass number, stone by stone, a sense of the passing of
 Forgetfulness, the lake surface drowned behind talking
 To nothing
 Of an object instinct cannot reach.

6.

Arm under themes and its rasp on the baby, the ceiling says from when
 Side by side a shape shadows the use of talking. Often we whose swift
 Various grays close, music
 Behind the bars something would hear part
 Of the meaning I myself can free, desire perceptions—every increase upon
 The leafless air failing, much as dust through the door remains
 Nested. Now for them the long-drawn breath pictures the transparent
 Surface behind the door,
 A wall ready for a change the storm in the sky,
 As warning instead of the calm belief clothes in presence, lies
 Slowly swelling. Openings, making sequential the words “paint”
 In the background descend while she, slipping out above the way all custom
 Scales thinking of
 Leaning on the turn of symmetries, rises the moment her robes are on.
 The sky is vaguely lost in squares, close to smooth in such matters as if
 When it gets dark thousands of birds pushed in reverse, consequence
 Desolate, sliding down the houses branches filled like leaves ending
 So visible you lie back rooted, scored, so various feel a strange
 Ground the picture burns hearing it by
 The stove, feeling chances the lens instead of vanishing seems
 To bear up under a need to say the last lights, lightening, lens
 Split at the edge of sound.

7.

She hears words amaze,
 How sleeping wakes the birds talked
 Without words then, then witness world in a cloud. Dawn was not
 Remembrance of where you thought the spectrum hid, thickness
 Under the flashlight to the child who spoke as you have,
 The enclosure dark in the east you drive, listen!
 Nor will we soon be full of eggs, lemon, wine, a fluent vein
 Division shakes but moderately, falling not to be despaired of but
 Deeper than pavement water enters near her mouth. What were the words
 That must have seen the stone take place in the dark the morning passed
 Without a mirror, too deep
 To try for more? Remember the house worn as knees, August white
 As the old dog who drifts about the gate, tomorrow brushed in front of the wall
 Leaves shadow as if, waking with a start, a person names his gauntlet.
 Another picture upside down places your face with the stars falling, surely
 Our loss, driving to work like rain again up the flyway.
 Where are the nostrils, eyes stoned by a succession of hands, mouth
 To call as it invades the green insisting on something, shade and form
 And the door into the hall where snow and silk and milk nest?
 Listening to the music talking to myself
 Across clearings, mouthing streams
 A rain of tears, a loaded gun.

8.

Her voice sometimes at night perched on the heat, an overtone the whorl wove to spin a web, fall
 With dust through circumstance meaning Eden, roost and nestle, the milk's
 Mind deferred. Tuning confusion
 Let us pass to the music intensity, a literal
 Spell the light hangs in the kitchen, equally mapped as arrows, shoes.
 Where she stood opinion fringed, rose thinking over the roof
 Half-wedged and tossing to catch the musk at the edge of sacrifice, mist
 Impervious to gravity, always descending. Wreathing his body this way
 Water sounds
 Interrupted the heat, working it down to a stone the stream plays
 Over, printing branches the sandpaper of vines beyond a silence green with quince,
 Jazz, flies, leaves, bottles, brightness falls from the air. Keeping salt made
 Feeling in the grass, the subway upstairs a button under your feet
 In the story light shakes across “No, no.” If, ideally,
 She cannot know the dance, and yet
 At night as her desire shifts into the slippered dark feels the
 Dark his unpremeditated eyes praise, singing still the poem knows
 Where to find her,
 Light appears by the margins,
 The innocence she can't tell stabs the language he dreams in
 Of repetition among shoes, answers, apple trees, tomorrow and tomorrow
 In both senses more even than glass.

9.

More salt as shadow quilts, darkens the wood to be remembered
 Green in passing, tongue of dog. Whose work is to warm the world,
 Rising in gloves to read the knot wound by its mirror, think
 From one room to another conceptions are defined—
 Later neighbors? Just parts
 Breaking, measure easier to count itself a stone, mica-like, wastes
 Her time according to habit, steps to learn a fraction of why she came.
 Sometimes the other one, with a light the paper cradled in corners
 Against which to question is absurd, left pleasure the way it opens
 With heat, divides braiding in the sun the arch of a shoe
 On a couch so many miles away the car blurs.
 Called by its right name the radio used words to arm
 Sword in hand, the noises of things quickly—threshold, say, saxophone—
 The moth said in her eye, her cheek, her lip. Pierced after
 And in comb the flutes low rounds of wet, arms wrap from a more quenched
 Morning riddle sleep, fire us lest the truth indeed flower the furnace
 Entered again at noon. Body heat on its hook at the station,
 The blast of wrecks from within, curved continually
 Above our heads, the surface of a stone picked up
 Turned this way and that. Objects sift, an opening of the almost simple
 Spinning place the green inspired, almost one with a hey, ho, roof
 Or tree, or door.

10.

Tomorrow wears, and by such scale is worn the astonished view
 Of all eyes left unseen, hands seized, as the
 Structure of islands gapes and stares. Split-finned and breatheable
 But with a difference the waves touch, quickened as if half out of water,
 A thread crimped with green where he hung it around the edge
 Of his mouth, the stamp he will out
 And swallow too whose sting with a sense of how ample the nameable
 Veins and breadth of an instant flaw would feel, saying one
 Who calls could think the difficult choice, sometimes come over
 And, ahead, not knowing the middle of the frame at noon,
 I remember exactly, Oh! surprise! He is called the sinews, tears
 Me away and would, full of silence and act,
 Glass the house,
 Webs vines when looked for in the air, above the highway like a used
 Mouth wax the roots of trees as though, flashlight ready and samples full
 Of something the page fingers now and again between lags, brilliantly
 Widening the heads of birds to sleep. As if limit flew
 Eyes closed, and hands being made of rust gave
 Instead of light degrees of color,
 Lost, too late to be swallowed under the floor,
 Absence but not as the name arrives, exact as the eye I think
 I think faces the wall.

11.

Evening, picking repeatedly over rooms of a puzzle, miles
 Driving home from possible to imagine at first, tentative-colored
 Circles the overpass flared around. A dish of milk more or less
 Last as each plummet quit, a one to be set on a clock
 After another falling, surely dizzy, smooth as glass.
 An instant stretched in to blanks
 Your face on the porch, who looks will all the pleasures prove
 Are mine. Edges of light, the walls and roof in a purple dress: first
 Palings you try to understand, listening to the North at the privacy
 Its mouth laughed at: once unconscious in a downstairs window
 As if she were alive. Strangers curtain you turn to—how
 Shall I say?—
 Check, perhaps clear to think continually of those who alone
 Cried out, "I am the conversation from whose return all trees
 In Paradise add wants equal, and perhaps superior, to another life."
 Cursed even to the shells of panes and a thick choking of sealight,
 Tongues innocent behind the wilting of desperate homes
 Neither say nor know them. Many times their faces in
 The faint hint of plainness instinct sees
 Rise, and put on all the colors white cast as the sun, trimmed
 In the street with trees, as the last syllable name
 Unmarked, divided as the sidewalk no one you know remembers.

12.

At the wall times, parted months, leaves come home on a board
 Again, someone lowering the voice of my pillow leaned against the
 Rain. Headed
 Round the couple walked and slept—a kind of arched bridge
 That made position—while even the edge takes place
 At the window in a corner disaster heard. Take it easy, you might say,
 Watching understanding through the house as every branch
 Turns back the start with a rush, smoke up which "Don't and dried"
 The music when least soothing cares to melt.
 Form, or reach, equally can show the book tobacco tested,
 No simple word but lean down the road you drive, drawing near
 Balance the circle's shape itself returns. And what if the given
 Checks in every vein twine the polished stem
 After the gate, helpless, thought best in silks that liquefaction
 Could have lived as tense with silences as not; rooms like a string against
 Soon and gone, where words talked the number of their house, everything
 Disturbed of what error; invisible returns the next door back,
 Your hair with your feet and your neck,
 Weathers; so to cross alone sleep, no more low-voiced than gesture
 You know tears into, too moved among the hills it wore down
 For a bottle of string the house frayed, milk abandoned,
 Teeth the page dried on the floor.

13.

The difference a body, begun to spread trees, to spin as afraid
 To break the web destruction thanks, hardened
 Down stairs will turn gladly, feel sometimes a measure of both hands
 And place unmapped, the literal brink between lute and sung.
 Narrowest of fields light yesterday, among rocks the repetition of fine
 High grass, a handle we feel forward over the rail helped me
 A while! "O where on our backs
 Instead of raised head silver swells, allurements nothing
 Without color matter would touch, the house as its own principle before us
 Wraps all the camera loaded for the blue air the oxygen you breathe
 On the island behind my arm—leaf through the smell water
 Roots in, points next to the splitting and, should the wall
 Begin feathering work to degrees an instrument motions, electric chant."
 Measures he can swim
 I have walked away from you, spell in directions they approach
 The finished thumbs, phosphorescent travelling as he makes what mouths belong
 In the quilted garden whose emblem, not departure, rivers play.
 How much of the shadow she cannot see,
 And from where the roofs branch over the square
 Each one the other knows will care a minute in the lamp of your chin,
 Mirror not much: half salt, neck
 Of revolver, performance of the family of cells.

14.

A litany of sky, place, degree, always keeping
 Between the blows that register touch, next to the other's home. Demanded
 One crowded together in the level walls, he shall lie above the argument
 Piece by piece, forward in the coming luck of entrances and exits, parts
 A ballad plays in the cannon's sudden mouth. The shifts into history dreams measure
 Falling among, where paradise leaves its phrase
 In the grass, taste voice by voice returning cries.
 At least to show sound still,
 Unbodied as arrows we hardly feel until, matched with want
 More than the notes shed, the hour subsides, thoughtless, her face
 Brushed the wall and sank. Not a word appears
 But shade colors, driving streets in return and question in the gray
 Middle beneath the clock, slowly enough to hang foil,
 Though the last light went discreetly through holes a door multiplies
 Much like praise, no need to say how the picture bellies (round
 As one knuckle may) when she licks it standing late, alone, sufficient.
 To come up with be gone, that pierced
 Streaks must be, or stay more out of tune than arm from light—more
 Dark in the bottom of the span language "leaves," it is said,
 Distorted in the rendezvous of tongues and rumors
 The silence he became convinced of survives—or feet from the singed voice
 Or eyes his name forgot sailing from musk that stung like sand, salt.

15.

Said like a body which, both weather and scene, shadows the grass below
 Many-colored, enamel crust, matter-of-stiff launching stanzas for music.
 Not the tree it takes away but points itself again,
 Round as could field the image receives
 A stone on the rim nothing faces, forms turned white to silver break
 What you know. First to think the walls narrow, slowly, look of someone
 Moving through the city of rooms you can visit behind glass,
 Porch you would enter in the abstract wind, "What happened?" meaning
 In front of the house she walked around in. Then to know the circle
 Of arms against her, by presence moving from identical to all
 Said selves, world mistaken,
 Leaves upon the water only it will change. Alert to what may be
 Equal to looking sees enough—are there! and out from the side of
 Ceremony a pressed hand, soundless plural, against the supposes
 More than glass lifts in answer a voice that hangs in bed.
 Under the blankets reading nights on my sister's bed
 Look at no, the weather: turned somehow, stepped down into the "I
 Bring," I said, "Anything?" His answer tense
 And sure in the quilted dark, which was not his name to open
 Through the door, position present as something you didn't hear
 In the stanzas as you think of divided light, almost talk
 Her hands hurt, edges on fingers flattening, stunned.

16.

Between lights a paper bag, abstract as abandoned scales
 The way water enters a glass in wind, accents involved
 Without knowing in what. As if from the roof I were to walk
 Toward you, say, in a memoir of the music you whispered I cannot keep,
 Though more and more harmonious the further the flight
 Turns, lifted from the invisible shape of ashes
 We know beyond color, motion, sound—
 Immense and watching still to hear the bright unchangeable sentence
 Driven from both hands like leaves against the pleasure, vacant
 As recollection, shade and form dressed. The story figures speak
 "Not so," a silent name it washed away, will tell you *there's no*
Such thing! nothing narrowing the ground at your feet, your face
 Turned to the wall, swarms of children wheeling to bed
 Away? To sing tones the voice as it leaves—
 How does the wind just as it is, Ah, talking in the grass
 Find the body, who matches sounds in her pockets with the words
 The mirror faces: "My name is Ozymandias,"
 But his life was chaste. Warm almost without vowels, which seem
 Until now to feed the air with sleep, picturing what you are
 In the story like an arm, music
 Tilting my hand,
 A finger no one spoke a word of, mouth.

17.

Of sound dissolve the turning of—brings say its tongue to the floor,
Halves salt, bottles something around the house. Voices leaving
A gesture of what seemed to be walls even after O, no! it is an hour
Would make me mute or, like an absence overheard it called
To know that which is useless, stand and wait.
At the corner ask whose eyes
Behold a space the large circle of color in the stone talks of
As though between walls; but from her and therefore in her shade
The film of a city at the point when the phone, shifting attention
Until it stops, knows what she wanted to remember in the dark,
Says she thinks she says it's time. And you, too late
To tell us what we cannot think, the way the word would prove irretrievable
Whose margin fades, among degrees of something more than thought
Push off into voices we knew to find, under the meaning of shout
And luminous fall, that the "poor bare forked animal"
Has driven us to gleams and folds and edges, where sleep
Ages since
To leave your eyes waits when she looks beyond somewhere
Never travelled, a gesture fingers enclose, as when
Descending suddenly compels you open, equals the voice of nobody
Quiet, these walls, this hand
Propped between my husband on the pillow and my head.

18.

Name and address out of sight, turned up on finally mouths
Nobody watched, slowly the oxygen opened. Like the river thoughts have,
Self-conscious in the neon fatigue of questions following you through the streets,
Old words: clear the wires
Of what you know from whom? To which under the feeling of light-bound
Orange, everyone in bodies a house stares back at, hanging out
Up the street makes "What's happening?" your directions; this you speak
Like iron your throat when you are eating harbors, someone like you a completely
Important guest, this becoming a corner you know.
How you move already
To the objects (random indeed) feeling among others a music, like the noise
Thought preserved, among the others who drive at times to a form
More of spaces in the light said to be where one
Comes from, without means of changing the person in the door.
No keys, after all, invisible in the new grass, quiet
As if one of them, which is the first you lost but fifth when the temperature drops
To become noise, might notice the falls of color beyond reach,
One surface solid as the next, the remnants
Say "of poetry," for whose sake a hearing answer that sounds
As if your voice, about to advance
In the white that seems to echo pleasure,
Should open the gates she notes by morning, light-blown, melts away.

19.

Vanish, so fades which color dissolved, whose triple-grass lawn
Pressed a thing so rooted here no light melts the music's thought,
Sense as though cooled at the brim, number
One minute beyond a mouth
In the next heard like a voice riding the air. Higher than the roof
But how told, more dangerous, the heel sweeps from a rung
It may be half against, chips "impossibility" to nothing.
To question the convulsive declining beat, parallel even in the distance
Clouds frame, side-throated,
Piano rousing across the lake, merge in the last house
As if to be swallowed in streets it would drop at a touch or drink,
Maneuvering to absorb a new smell: the air, their bodies, smoke-
Pressed and half-lifted as the light set, and now the fume of cells
Mirrors water. Hearing before the stone rushes
No more than essences of leaves, its narrower sides she keeps
In a basket on the table, like shoes that multiply when her thoughts
Compress to what's called
And what is going on—"She is near, she is near." No curtain there
To rifle all but form and only in the show of legs
On every side exposed, polished
Like mazes spreading where the music divides
In a passage we once thought private.

20.

Where will all, ah, breath was shed
With the light you arrive in more than every day, your name
In letters at the window the rain takes off. You will answer
Even so, little bites of your mouth accustomed to running all over
Me, my words as to think in the background toward evening, hanging
Between flares a pattern of bush. At heel and figure ladders sledge,
Aware in the waste of what houses
Return, ankle-deep and stone-carved, down the neutral street
Half lost in the nearness their arms lean toward, slipping above
The walls and roofs of what are to become now the green-dark diagonals
Of indeterminate shape and form, reversed when close to air-
Borne skin. Gathered again and backward,
As inland as noon on the curve of a road
To what arcs shook, squares called "No; not need" in stone
When it gets dark, names on the possibly missing door, who knows
Might be settling here? Someone looking to read "Falling Leaves,"
Voices to carry through houses glazed with rain
Rhyme, no tone: your leaves
Shed and still the tongue that all streets will be silent,
In your hand the little drops cutting like fibers, distance, the weight
Of water that falls over you, space and sleep, fields held
In the color of no color, no dirt, not then.

Awkwardly, the spread and lift in standing for a moment outside
 A window of sudden feeling,
 Breathing in the air's once anonymous voice
 The music he plays to keep you in. So lapping as the mirror scales
 The ceiling in a tentative single-light room, thought like bodies
 Whitening on the shore at 4:19, arms that touch yes
 It is 1959. It is hard to tell
 Which breath you lie back toward, hang as memory begins
 To be written with his own hand against the lawn,
 And now my glass is run, the inevitable house of cells
 Leaves in the air by the gate decked with names, years, a text
 Behind the eye closing at noon in a dooryard fronting the street,
 Where you stand in the distance
 On ground, wind-blown and thunder-dark, the wife and the child
 Carried as in notes rising and falling but not yet heard.
 Not for months—touch come to thresh—spelled
 As the motion where comfort is milk and honey made of light,
 Your echo wrapped in a cloud of accents
 Building for itself steps that rise from mine to the veil
 Of sigh-floods and tear-tempests, a bracelet measure of all we did
 Whose center draws its circle
 Too late for eyes, lips, hands, hair, or bone.

And whose pendulum crescent, among the daughters in the shadow of the house,
 Remembered as veins feeding the milk-fed earth, little or no air
 But that silence of voices, contracted and deliberate, other than yours?
 Picture the ceiling the chair stands under,
 The invisible thread each shaft of green draws at noon, or white
 Like an island in the distance behind which nothing is lost
 Blazes over you, looking. The idea where it was
 Drops toward the place where walking on the balls of his feet
 You sleep, young again and married, the bedroom door
 Unbolted—when the east is red?
 That puts your cheek against his arm as he struck, side by side,
 To the hollow that breaks the silk-formed wall. Yet doesn't silence
 See how in memory the feeling is of everything leads one
 To a point from which the real wife and the hour-
 Glass waist,
 Moving like the lashes of a doll whose eyes open and close,
 Whose unfolding always believable thoughts mirror the level of water,
 Level the thoughts of air? Sure I will initial, cast
 As music through the open window of summer,
 The lake early as evening at her neck, something
 Making you open your mouth to the fading, thinning throat
 Preparing the apartment for bed.

1/

And he too was in Arkady
 where contiguous wars,
 plague, slavery, sexism,
 hemlocked minds,
 and the achievement of constant heteroglossia,
 dialectics and juries,
 are now dismembered parts
 enabling parallels between otherwise thoughts.
 The structure does not possess a single straight line
 of any length, the deflection
 creating an unusual dialogic
 subtle convexity of columns
 seen from either end
 he was what I called a friend
 anonymous and social as language.
 You're straight? Never mind.
 It was contestable Plato
 said he was the morning
 star now lights our evenings.
 There's a lot going down my friend
 said he disappeared in the past I've also been
 dismayed dead tombed graven latin.
 Picture assuming
 it's simply emotions I'm talking about.
 This is not an elegy,
 the boatman will always tell you when the
 last boat leaves
 for your return journey.
 I'm in a beginning,
 workings black
 blazer and coloured house tie
 he didn't know me
 and even on landing physical phenomena
 not one but several islands.
 He bought three copies of Zarathustra
 for the binding. Shingle beach
 noisy sheep cries, bouzouki muzak,
 waves and pneumatic hammer
 in as I write. Then
 university travel work
 displacement and see you
 for a modern set-up of math,
 medicine, art, history, drama and politics,
 he wrote me philosophy
 was it orders from above,

love or good social administration?
 He fringed this great civilization's
 harmonies in gold
 dopplering the glisten of trace wishes
 where one construction is freely available
 load bearing structures, or frames
 dominate.
 Subtle variations make the city beautiful
 women bare their breasts to the sea
 while unaccustomed men, occasionals listening
 seem to be organising in front of you.
 It looks that way because it is that way,
 with all the complexities and mismatches
 of mainstream epistemopoetics.
 Its spring point is unknown.
 Maybe this is the person
 the narrator imagines
 they thought discussion
 indispensable preliminary to wise action.
 My friend jumped, catching
 the calculator as it dropped
 toward the concrete 1980
 long enough for the new conservative
 administration
 to start rolling up socialism.
 Barbarism was occasionally essential
 to rejuvenate him.
 He believed in greek but spoke english.
 Superabundance of intimate converse
 driving out in his father's triumph
 our self politics expected
 enough to reverse the conditioned
 dead childhood
 in all existing state embitters
 to walk and talk about books
 on the hills above the town
 of analogues or echoes.
 Verbal traffic evolvments
 factored with fear,
 idea signs increased quantitatively,
 or trees or seas or rock
 in the possibilities of thought
 in and out of deixis
 I want to facet
 what he and he meant

by getting through the past
 now I no longer see him.
 He harangued everyone with the right to be heard.
 Beam me up Plato!
 Wrote a rough script to explain
 a phrase I went through of
 getting everything down—
 dreams history and sugar—
 but now he works too hard to have dreams.
 He didn't always believe what he wrote
 when I read the letter.
 What's so special inflated
 his handsomeness about Arcadia, and
 he had theoreticals on goers and slags,
 on the women's sustaining he secretly needed,
 far had gaps
 he bought a ford anglia to lie under
 at weekends he called it athena.
 In fifteen years his letters became directions
 acting up to interpretation
 the fate of a star
 emotional, but not in person.
 Understanding whose mass has
 solar passages, stepped ideas.
 Masses was unclear
 he wrote about his literature
 abandoned friendships over differences
 from mainland to mainland
 that the intermediation lose enough
 political transformation
 during our lifetime in the form.

2/

Sitting near the french windows
 he went back to the exchange
 of meanings, sat down
 and invented, to numb out
 humanist resistors
 money. Before coffee
 no one said anything about exchange.
 We played meanings
 through slight shifts, bubbling
 the filter. Back in Greece
 the university began to move
 her in with his contradictions.
 His flute girl could play
 intimate associations
 we breathed. The piano near the window,
 stereo filled nights
 with Bach and the grateful dead

kept him always, but
 the new stereo philosophy
 put firmly on the shelf at night
 or creative works
 equalled women for him.
 We sat in fawn deck chairs
 all creative acts up a bit
 yes, suspended in conversation,
 in every act of interpretation of Greece
 green and blue spines
 spread ripples around the naval empire
 of looking to the sea from Athens,
 verbal response to high speed ideology
 swamping the shore.
 He said each of us was responsible
 for the entire goings on outdoors
 as if isolated from the rest of the world
 in his student life.
 Delphi spread amphitheatricals
 on the same basic. Then
 you didn't hear the man near you breathing
 if there wasn't a ceiling above
 and a mattress on the floor.
 Thoughtful silence
 the science of lighting
 up. He committed his coffee
 to the world of ideas,
 went to the Delphic oracle
 controlled by the known world
 to affirm a future in his knowing self.
 He felt sustained by inexpensive leisure
 reflection and stillness. The sacred
 valley telephone ringing
 reminded us there was a connexion
 without the presence of men. A large
 hand respectfully placed on the known.
 He said there was no Delphi to be seen
 not a conservatory, only a room
 abyss, tripod, clairvoyant
 to fortify the improving graffiti,
 evergreen yourself,
 to know pine.
 He hesitated then collapsed the chair.
 Pythagoras liberated geometry
 revealing skimpy understructures
 that the real among the real among
 the assigned departed starting forms
 set different parts in resonance. Ruins
 discovered his ownership of voice
 was mathematical harmony
 inner power and present. He said

she delivered his extravagance
 but her theoretical prophecies from
 beyond intelligibility
 had strained even his fortune.
 Recording walkman. He set
 out for the east aggrandising.
 From the stripped pine top
 he lifted a history
 and the morality of the means.
 The philosopher discovered reasoning
 systematically unreasonable.
 Aphorisms on the long wave, images
 on TV he traced an underground idealism
 back to fourth century Athens and beyond.
 His shock was recorded
 thousands of years away
 overdetermined energies mass.
 For many generations men have deemed
 central deeming
 as they moved newly worked observation
 subservient to the organised
 alleging fantasy. Toward
 the end of my visit
 our achievements dimmed to Greek
 extrapolations whose intangibility
 opened the window to fundamental
 serious warm june air from
 Sheffield steel works.
 There is total loss
 of nerve and soul I sing,
 he called the nineteenth century
 but knew better.
 Euripides' fitted cave with word processor
 aidos and theory. It was hot outside
 he said we must finish soon.
 Fug lingered as he spoke.
 Yearning initiates.
 She leaned in his
 flute girl friend and went.
 Modalities of touch and smell
 argued the current girl
 loved the busy festoon
 kiss into this personal zone,
 green intimacy
 left behind in the family's past
 where there was plenty and imagine
 a light and bodily green.
 Cheerfully stripped pine doors
 to enter the forbidden Greek
 empire of the sensorium.
 He said they got together about once a week

by professional conversions, and
 abandoned kissing on the relationship.
 Grain, oil and designs for
 a chain of love affairs
 on the complex plane
 had many persons involved persons.
 Only two will mention me.
 His loons floated on
 the Oxfam mats and unswallowableness
 in his own bed. An impersonal penis
 and the intimate tongue forgotten.
 The exercise of dancing occasions
 so equal a poise, he wrote
 letters rarely
 with apologies at both ends
 the lack this love displayed.
 What is it you mortals hope
 to gain from one another,
 roach in the teacup,
 Socrates asked, again,
 what love is the desire for?
 We were into the primitive
 just out of university,
 he said of his latest woman
 if we know each of us
 then the sex thing flies out the window.
 Psyche's lure of longing
 at last in mortal arms
 passion gripped him
 and he became his looks
 for never can a fair
 ruling be expected of a citizen
 who lacks the apprehension of a father,
 understood at that time
 in the imaginary and the proximal sense.
 He was surprised he got so much
 out of the sanctuary
 considering his leanings
 performed regularly each year,
 eternity looking like art
 toward ab-expressionism.
 We swapped phases.
 The best amphitheatre in the machine world
 built before ecology,
 its acoustic common to
 the local god Asklepios
 at Epidavros scaring the sickness away
 before the sixties.
 The new disease arose then
 from an environment not god,
 from money cold and essentialism

equally divine and human
we visited the human bookshop.
Tourists briefly aware of a new reality
bump. In answer to his query
said region where stars are formed
of supernova remnants
and other interesting exhibits
made me realise the harmony more.
I hope, he said, the archeological
gaps do come for the night
stating his position in 1970.

3/

In my kitchen
somehow I know, he said, I need
to communicate with you at this time
youth can only know in large
inchoate feelings
of vastitude and new music.
Going out with her
he had written frequently from
where burning Sappho loved and sung
from New York letters
I excerpt him, a tenacity man
with girl friend along
he explained his centuries old grudge
long drawn out jaw firm obscurity
in terms of the worshipped glamour
excess interplanetary transfer fantasies.
I thought him secure
in his angry tie rods.
He wrote beyond
eternal summer gilds them yet
from the rhetorical Cyclades,
poised between summation and forward
programmes
in London he wrote about boundaries
of recognition maintenance
between designated familiarities,
missed the new theatre and the return
to realism. She was half American
and they worked in cafes and garages
across roadside America.
Survives because copied down the ages
with a swift dexterity. Different
handwriting flares
left texts in chaos;
Alexandria produced standard
hellish art movies.
No spiritual compatibility

though nothing food
sex sleep alcohol can't cure.
Miasmas
patterns throttling across generations
he became a friend teaching children
young enough to be his own.
Childless, he rolled
up his sleeve. Without
closely held friends
for all his close friends were lovers
to be heard in the perfect acoustic
of two
wanting to make himself sex
for absolution.
Very scarey hims
shouting boisterously at
the ruins of a great entanglement,
inhabited originality. Celtic
tribes funded London
commercial breaks.
He brought this historic past
to flower paradise and
tap spa
where I was grown healing.
He visited my desk for a while
and read my book spines.
I found him change enhanced but wary.
Shook smokes out of a crush-proof pack
and offered impassive face.
Visible us
only want nature
like the broadest possible going
who playfully throws his colours.
The gymnasium was empty
except for the two of us.
He took exercise and wrestled me to
photogenic immobility. Planned pictures
combined with the nude farmed male
military camps live.
Didn't know the secret then
to allow him so proud an exploit.
The more open he
was the more secure,
shaved off his sixties beard.
Several courses were set up as
an obvious choice for the beginner
imaging the unthought
between bashes.
Scan hence.
More surface area to deflect
from his fashionable baggy cords

radio injections
without affection in the shoulders
without sexual expansion
in the stock market scene
me a coin he
mind heard in the back row.
To receive gives
imcomparables talk. Superior
supple and working
bronze musculature under the skin
he didn't fail to draw
the officially permitted moral
green and white indian cotton
shirt. Say the ideal
cocaine sample happiness
while I was living alone at several jobs.
He told me about the ideal
on great northern electrics
out of moorgate with a bicycle
to amplify my legs. Later
slavery freed citizens.
He seemed to show blackish hair
from servility to toil, exposed
material into records
no gratitude to psychoanalysis
produced transformations.
Lucked out on predict
he evented into narratives.
The material went papier-mâché
overlay for the next hundreds
oppressive moving years to the window
and pointed to the car. Basics
tied up to human energy
outside models. He had
had a chthonic row
and paradoxically his girl friend
to produce brilliant hallucinogenic technologies
like so many thirds
after he stayed out of that century
disengaged all night.
He lived only in calendrical weeks
from sunday to sunday
living space time.
For style to follow the revolution
takes three generations
its primitivism, he said, but
looks like first new born.
I took him to the local pub
to distract him with you're
where you should be all the time,
the mild era pretentiousness

developed to make him angry
spreading ripples of verbal
male and female response elements
of the constructors and resonances
formalised masculinity
around each and every theory
cultures British art. He was afraid
of subjects stretching
from the waist not the hips
all the way down, neck loose.
He drank the whole pint talking.
Then there was a silence
and I waited for more.
Fortunately there are enough sexes.
A seer was simply a person
with insight into the interpretation of signs.
Inity cannot question itself.
Masculinity, the form of man as symbol
asking no questions, drinking
earl grey later flavored
with bergamot his girl friend
used in the bath
he said he was bored with
and left for the north
standing in my doorway
purely for familiarity's sake
the frontalis to
philosophical extensor longus
highly developed in man
fatherhood and chests
took exercise and unnestled me
attendant unchecked
gluteus and glistening rectus femoris
no longer matter they say,
power equals beauty.
He had done his part
despite staged binary desire
sex failed him.
I went round on his birthday:
twentyfive years a man
with that code of women's bodies
meaning degrees of hope,
from where, what wherewithal?
He never cried
even when she left him suddenly
for men only dined together
with locked zygomatics in a rigid countenance.
Malic moulds stamped out emotion
he confessed insistent desire
for women were lovely to him
and his incessantly stiff prick

he loved for its strong
 self assertive agon
 from the upward age. A man's duty
 to increase the ordered understatement
 when others bottle out.
 The direction from east to west
 directly absorbing aesthetic rays
 behind the past
 friend you would think
 glaring shines. He closed
 the window and turned back.
 The bed squeaked on his girl friend's side
 and she had almost isolate
 hostile straits
 in her whole length from his withholding.
 To clear from the beginning again
 order he called for
 who can feel a remark
 in sensuous terms
 brush its trousers against the kitchen table?
 She had read his recorded history
 he said all possible governments
 dired.
 It was late september
 from the day of his birth
 to these intervals
 coherent amassings
 and a metabolic trade-off
 with animals and plants
 credited his frame.
 In bed terms it was a large community
 for the kind of house he'd reached
 he wrote south to my
 intermediate connexion with the place
 he left.

4/

Then letters began
 the view of social relations
 shaped greek imaginative possibility
 in the age of automotives
 he was thirty.
 He was going on four.
 He gave up his girl
 I learnt only incidentally
 falling into an emptiness of self
 the difficulty lay in the achievement
 of freedom from greek authority
 art and epos
 narcissistic disturbance.

He underwent deeply felt mourning
 for his hippy childhood
 on the railway banks
 and willow branch lines
 still constituted a source and standard
 of infinite attainment,
 but mourning restored vitality
 endpoint depression,
 sitting on my stairs organising
 the pages of his newest letter
 he was able to say he was never
 over several pages long
 loved except for his attainments
 in the childhood of society
 evolved in the mail.
 Didn't he enjoy the artless
 translated ways of early evolution?
 His letters were enthusiastic
 that he sacrificed for this 'love'
 he might end one day
 the courtship of narcissus, now
 afraid of the intense psychotic
 revival of every past epoch
 as a child in the emotion
 exerting eternal charm
 from an age that will never.
 Achieving lack demand
 of his former fine child,
 the titanic on TV relay
 in the pitch black respect,
 its stern broken, tight
 jeans and fairisle popover
 reading him.
 Turismo against Athens
 when he went beyond freedom
 in transit letters.
 From conflict as a boy it
 concerned elm leaves, grasshoppers
 and mantis eggs hatching
 nature in the classroom.
 He said he'd been an adult
 since five.
 The spartan unwanted out to die
 he'd been proper clever and clean anxious.
 He said he lived in constant fear.
 The ocean had withdrawn
 vastly and ominously retreated
 revealing competition conspicuous
 acclaim and wrecked forests of pine
 disapproval. Ostracism
 was a condition I couldn't imagine.

He was out ten years,
 a huge sealed base,
 much more than in face to face friendship.
 So revealed replays
 exporting surplus population
 to the British and later American empires,
 he mentioned display charts
 his first American teacher made in magic
 he learned was a marker
 rejoined some severed nerves
 while the walls we must have
 of water to the sky
 watched her.
 Change, states, seeings,
 needed his fine Marion Richardson
 italic script varying from black
 cut to large strong slants
 underwater he breathed approval.
 Strange going on
 to trust other people
 beginning stop it stop it
 don't touch me awareness
 in the living area.
 The abused never faulted silence
 part of the hurt
 wartime secrecy stops the
 friendlies too.
 He said, I am feeling better
 about my sexuality control
 whether in the gymnasium
 the pool or picture.
 Most of the discharge
 shook and shook,
 he laughed enough for two
 he wrote.
 Many of us are bare survivors
 in the comeback.
 Reason is action,
 memory fathoming.
 Persist.
 Light was our grace
 saving weight.
 I had deferred responses
 out of idealism
 and his self-timed exposure
 then I told him the sea
 was in place, greece
 warm and worn,
 with the founders and toys.
 From the new world he wrote
 again, the earliest sexual memory

glued his terror in place
 in a letter full of errors.
 A place he was always terrified
 though he looked like a calm sea
 but the terror was leaching
 out in not leaving it
 alone. I recalled his constant smiles
 now as nerves
 and another golden age
 metallically altering the command structure
 before a foetal hurt
 drowning around giants
 to chronic terror invalidation
 toxic sensors rend
 through end his long disease.
 He wrote of the despair
 raised by twenty four centuries done
 since the end of pop assemblies
 and rigid plastic fear of dying
 despite the successful enlargement
 of his back life.
 So angry with my decaffeinated research
 he said there was hope as
 every event became him
 so crossective
 of what went down
 faulty layering,
 tidal waves and collapsing stars,
 fixed loop in the fossil recording
 heads set to metal
 on stream.
 I stroked his face beside the mouth
 at a distance
 the skin smooth warm round memory
 findings easy,
 as absolute object
 the simplifying ego independence
 proud and immediate.
 Its dissolution was slow and for
 another food another drug
 allowed desirability better control.
 Self knowledge liberating voice
 in our thinghood, fear
 for occasional elements—
 oxygen and plutonium—
 and for his entirety
 being in at the see death
 the master in his soul melt.
 Labour shaped the thing.
 He spoke only of third parties
 as his childhood

he'd given to neutral
 objects and expressionist politics.
 I know that memory's the present's
 amphitheatre,
 I wrote how lichenous
 the old stone arcs managed impetuosity,
 built pasts
 changed my formations
 these structures I was given over to.
 I wanted forever to be history
 he conquered in only ten years
 in and beyond the known.
 All that was left was to become a god.
 Twenty five centuries threatened with death
 for impiety
 he fled Athens forever
 and seemed to drop from the scene.
 Was he still making records or
 just scholastic cover versions?
 He sent a photograph
 which came out bent at the edge
 casually dressed in Macedonian cloth
 I put on the larder door.
 A number one america he
 popped over to and around the five continents
 clothing full of exalted feeling
 he thought of turning into a film
 under his direction.
 Going into rock
 evolvments in event of people's times.
 Knew the times for the words
 thought fast about the world
 he had no apologies to maintain.
 Trouble was the stance held
 by the break in thought
 for holding his thought
 he stopped hearing people think
 by trusting self absolute originator:
 down through the water he went
 layers and layers, fresh and sea
 until no form of thought inside
 survived. Legend
 as early men were
 local, clever, persistently not gods
 the element of beginning took him back.
 Full of him are all the streets
 full is the sea and the continuum.
 Lost
 to prose poetry and Zeus.
 All denim blues in possibility
 and the weather for that day, dread

son of chronos
 if we lie in a woman's arms
 there is no safeguarding privacy on high;
 if one of the stars of
 olympian athletics praised
 Zeus with convenient nakedness
 that thou givest thyself unto men
 by instantaneous teleportation
 and a trunkful of blue levis
 unworn, assuming the same taste
 for the next decade,
 he had two materialised memories
 of yesterday's production check.
 Pluggers were audible on the air.
 He had crashed after the workshop,
 enormous quantities of the past,
 action highlights recording the independent tracks
 narrative agents investigating
 unconditionalness for the self
 was the last thing he wrote on.
 Faced with our mortality
 immersion in the stream of relationship
 lovers friends work politics art family
 children and partner,
 so deep, death would be loosing
 into that persistent element,
 remembered microcellulars,
 expansive subtle differentiated
 and healthy racket.
 He said, I edge along platitudes
 and fall
 with startling oughts.

5/

Driving home
 utopic vision on main road
 the problem is often called
 otherworldly prime
 squandering metal energy from lines
 treated as objects
 and points to make
 I found his letter on the hall floor.
 What is the bodily tolerance he asked
 of high velocity doing duty?
 What is an orange for in England?
 His letter was written by computer
 the future's universals half over
 believing there's more there to be known.
 Keep moving—
 another form of realism.

Don't believe The Guardian
 he pleaded
 with a new political tone based on
 the plunged accelerator and quick
 trips through the wing mirror
 ideology missed the mental
 adhesion and sealed
 the universal up.
 He was living in Dalston secrecy
 consciousness fluctuations
 in position for the speaking subject he'd become
 good prospects and particulars.
 Share us.
 He liked pubs and hated wine bars
 agora discussion noise
 barrier empire of reasonings,
 but the wine bar served good meals
 and was still uncrowded at this late hour
 in our friendship.
 I wanted to know about him
 to remark the totaliser discourses
 and he my position on struggle.
 He asked me to leaflet the area
 with general strike calls
 on behalf of the miners.
 It wasn't avant-garde at all
 it was very similar
 as avant-garde as furniture.
 Autonomy and internationalisation
 located amongst the densely packed
 barrel tables & chichi iron-work
 populated with industrial advancement
 cities of the system.
 Barbaroi immigrants and slaves
 share no common language
 receive sign systems too weak to revolt with.
 The parthenon dominates space
 where tropes arrive by boat
 travel through ordinary space can proceed
 at no rate more rapid than that of ordinary light.
 He lectured on the ordinary
 urban circuit internals
 adjectival abstracts
 glassed pine
 wealth pluralism and
 his demented analogue in the movies.
 In old business greys too large and limp
 supportive conditions for dissident groups
 to sell carrier art.
 Don't ask me what I mean
 he shouted at the whole speaking people

it's all there on the mats of language.
 From slavery intellectuals are free
 and slaves dead cheap.
 Empirical silent ages of man
 folded inward now, lean
 faced, publication of
 the monument the culture uttered
 those vast distances between memories
 meant years of travel between even the nearest,
 impossible travels, except
 through hyperspace, unimaginable region
 neither space nor time
 one could travel the length of the universe.
 A traceable social factor
 the city resurfaced in hyperspatial
 land dimensions
 until its radius was every street.
 The earth's unimaginable
 devoted entirely to the galaxy over our heads.
 Travel light he said.
 He became abstract.
 Stabilised quanta of organisation
 process through our cellular culture
 we both ate cheese and onion crisps. The
 degree of human interchange
 the travel words do, the more
 the reach of thought.
 We had a row and he left
 the row.
 He wrote more abstractions
 I opened the letter but didn't read it
 until three days later, standing in
 the kitchen ready to drop it
 if it was critical
 the ebbing tide of the empirical
 family bank greece
 and denser ordinary matter near despair
 straight up reason
 through the affective vacuum procedure
 scientifically concealing the discovery moulds
 as if the iron age meant iron
 everted swords and steel rollers
 to make the bread white
 for the planet where hurry and distraction
 interfere with scholarly musings
 the cool production of progress.
 He only saw beyond me
 microconsciousnesses.
 So familiar a fragmentation. Time
 makes investigations from
 controlled insight joyous threadings

and proximate ground. He
 was going to empire
 the language of progress
 definition he said and twisted a little.
 It was how and he wept
 invisibly
 and a year later he was married
 full time father worker campaigner
 and out of some touch.
 Determine on the inside
 the reforms of Ephialtes
 (who gave Athens the assembly)
 putting peoples' differences up for discovery
 and emotional expression paid
 for his reforms with his life
 no substitute for co-extensive thinking
 redistributed among the children. The ekklesia
 decided the rationals, everyone
 was responsible and handled irrationalities
 around the circle of discutants.
 Start he'd said with sensible people
 no pacifist dorks or junkie punks
 leave round the clock activism
 to trot cults.
 He thought greek polity a failure.
 Make sure you exist on earth
 white society wants to belong to the question
 he said the new wave music destroyed
 earlier vision
 and the tones dispersed in looting
 with widespread leisure damage
 rationals must commune
 remember melanogenesis
 even wearing a suit
 mixed with all kinds of issue
 trogging round London
 against the continual pattern drift
 energistics, he sneered at my commitment
 to the new isonomia
 as middle class mutants, rich
 scum hands
 poured out the last of the house red.
 He wanted totality revolution
 the last time I saw him
 both fists on the table and a
 bloodstreak in his right eye.
 Securing the sociables, soma
 man body and slave, his
 new address card announced a child.
 He was teaching tough but good kids.
 I separated out from these

his strategic prejudices with pain
 the spartans had an assembly
 sense of a portrait circle, decision
 power to give straights only
 a clear place, this
 account of a detached friend
 working for the highly visible
 inherent boys, starved
 eventual stone tiers composed
 to steal by its very framing effect.
 Systematically robed proportion
 renders and wealth for the controllers
 once he wanted his history in children.
 Turbined to challenge
 engine discouragement
 violently from purging anguish
 British forth convergence tool, and yet
 be fearing other men.
 Childhood elongated audition
 expendable in organised fights,
 sinuous intimacy and graceful limits
 considered classicness
 left in the ancient world.
 I know some thought these men a burden
 feedback snarl pitched to distortion.
 Maybe that once friend's domestic confinement
 the footing for liberation
 as long as you live a common life
 unsolved romantic
 once distance. Impersonated affection
 giving thinghood
 able uncanny patterns
 floating all the way
 while the spartan others had no art
 but shields terrified men. Pine
 has always been a favorite
 with the help of stencilled patterns
 gives the air a resiny smell.
 The elegance of our establishment
 forms are a daily source of pleasure.
 Fit, you have to be fit
 and he's been downed
 absented, fighting. Free
 people revolutionise themselves
 I hope he'd say
 feeling back in touch.

David C.D. Gansz: *Millennial Scriptions*
 (Notus and Temblor magazines)

Clark Coolidge: *The Crystal Text*
 (Berkeley: The Figures Press, 1986)

Bruce Andrews: *Give Em Enough Rope*
 (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1987)

Charles Bernstein: *Veil*
 (Madison, Wisconsin: Xexoxial Editions, 1987)

"Terse'n-versions": The Poetry of David C.D. Gansz

IN *TEMBLOR* #6, DAVID C.D. GANSZ has published his plan for *Millennial Scriptions*, complete with mottos for each of the five sections. With the serialized publication of part one, *Animadversions*, in *Notus: new writing* [2420 Walter Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48103], and the publication in *Temblor* #6 of part two, *Sin Tactics*, we now possess 2/5s of the work as planned. Yet, as more than half has not yet appeared, let us admit a temptation to say too much about a work thus uncompleted. Further, let's insist that, even where the tone of my sentences should not seem to warrant it (nay—especially then), the provisional nature of these remarks be kept in mind. Still, if some things, necessarily, must remain vague (and to be completed), some things should be clear.

Gansz' language has its quirks—at times it's a little like Spenser, of whom Ben Jonson complained that he writ no language at all. What is there in Gansz' "no language"? There is a strong physiological basis: "At grave-send 'it's die-rime/ before taste-final organon spasm" (A, section I). "Spasm" underscores a physicality in thought, with "organon," thereby, taking on connotations of "organism" and "orgasm." The use of "die-rime" and "final" do more than hint at the "little death" of orgasm; they inculcate a continuum. That is, in "die-rime," for instance, there is a willing out beyond oneself, a surpassing of one limit and immersion in another, for life contains incidents that rime with death. This "rime" tells us we are not dealing with an empiricism, but, then, given the spiritual reverberations of Gansz' titles, we shouldn't have been expecting it, anyway. The spiritual intent (perhaps, even, insistence) tells in this breaching of limits which the death-rime adumbrates. Thus, death can be seen as a (re)beginning.

This (re)beginning is patently not a remembering (or [re]membering): "Drown into images know/ no one joins you/ you can't re member/ Isis' ovary" (A, I). The physical and the symbolic vie; by breaking "remember," Gansz unleashes a physical connotation. "Isis' ovary" can not be put together through the use of images. Gansz' project, so

intimate, so close, we have less need of perception (or of images) than of tactility, depends on the connection of language and body. Meaning would seem to be a kind of sexual discharge which surpasses the limits (or containment) of the individual. Thus, the "die-rime" is the meaning, or a part of it; for, as something goes on, something else (the pod, the material) is left behind. In this way, too, Gansz' project is spiritual, entails mapping "the house of flesh souls" (ST, 26), so it is a fleshly spiritualism: the connection of language and body isn't simply masturbatory (to circumvent the ingress of discontent); it allows us to wed the world. "Take name to world w/out" (A, I).

And how does language do this? Through the "you," the addressee who is beyond the text yet, at the same time, informs it: "Shine you that phrase/ burns love where/ wrdiness's wrdliness" (A, I). The "you" points the text into a future moment—of reading, but, too, of an (orgasmic) interpretation, when reading and writing (and forms of separateness) shall end. "Ripen time's un/ kempt promises dash/ from hope's what-you'll-be" (A, VI). We reach through the "you" to touch the world. This "you" is the hollow spot that cracks solipsism's veneer, although the pressure on that spot is great. For the torque (to shift images) twists "you": "Time's break-twists-fables you" (A, II). Perhaps, in part, because this is such a generic "you," time breaks it, twists it (like poker-knots?), makes a fable of it; or, time makes a breakfast of you (all laid out on the table). What happens if this "you" comes back, not as "you," but, due to the sexual implications of writing here, as "she"? "Begin w/out wrds reflections/n/ named she silences" (ST, 27). "She" is the mark on the outside of language toward which language goes but which language cannot enclose. "She" is the silencer.

But, of course, she is more: "Keepshe who'r hearts we seek that/ find we not'll-to phantom-turn'd go/ compete w/ woman the mem'ries quiv'ring" (ST, 26). She is the thing we seek, the thing that, failing to find, turns us into phantoms and with whom we must compete. She is what we need to be complete. But, as she is at the limit (we might even say she constitutes the limit), to find her we need to break out of our own little plot and "embrace whole fields/ untwine anti bodies'/ pose metaphor's/ 'to

real' encom/ prehensions every where" (4, IV). This passage is deeply binary—(body)-antibody; (literal statements)-metaphor; (illusion)-reality; (here)-everywhere—with one half of the binarism remaining implicit, but, crucially so, given the "embrace [of] whole fields." She is what we are not—an antibody, but one which is more body than we are. She remains "the blest-she who's self impenetrable adjectivals" (ST, 30). Is there anything that shows more clearly her nature as a limit? She is impenetrable, even self-impenetrable. And, if there is, undeniably, a sexual element, there is, further, an opacity: she is at the limit of understanding; to reach her we must do more than understand.

The prehensile nature of comprehension manifests itself in the pun of "to real"—"to reel," of course, but, too, "to make real." And how do we "reel" in things or make them real? By names. Names are a handle on the things without. But names are not passive. "Be spell'd'er stand'rd becomes you" (ST, 32). Note, too, the slide of letters—how some letters are left out (and, elsewhere, how some words split up); how there can be a sense (especially in *Sin Tactics*—"wonders per/ form sin tactics/ delight" [4, II]) of hearing the familiar (meaning) in the unfamiliar (lines). When haunted in this manner by the familiar, we must attend to what's written, tracing the lines again (and again), putting in what we feel has been left out, responding to the connotations words may gain in new contexts: "E-strange no fable the/ writing'splay's" (ST, 30). (Splayed writing?) We return to what's familiar. (Where else would we find the familiar?) So this spiritual reading does depend on a familiar context. And yet what we lose thereby is the point of the poem. Yet how could we do otherwise? We do not read the strange; we domesticate it, even when the strangeness is grounded in language's materiality.

This doesn't mean that the spiritual is the familiar. It means the spiritual can only be reached through the familiar, returning to the familiar and, then, going past it. There is a struggle to reach the meaning, and that struggle is the exercise of this spiritualism of reading, but, once reached, the material difficulties are forgotten, for we have translated the letters into a meaning, thinking thereby to know it: "Scribbl't'n quick t'answer the page's spellt" (ST, 29). So, we slow our reading to be able to take in the meaning. The question passes us by. But mightn't we be happier this way? For we don't transcend the difficulties by supposedly knowing what those difficulties are.

For instance, hope may lead to a deconstructing: "Wrld'sedge hope/ de struction's pre text destinies manifest" (ST, 24). This edge is not free, is the pretext to make destiny manifest (a phrase that shakes with historical echoes). "Wrld'sedge hope" could, certainly, mean hope of the world's edge, or that the world has an end, so that something else may be manifest. The hope, of course, is already bound in a determinism, even (perhaps, especially) where the hope would hope to free itself from all forms of determinateness. "Hope" doesn't destructure destiny; it's a part of the structure: "They're from en/ chant meant escape seeking from of/ the cost know ledges forin'd self-some/ from their suture images part'd senses" (ST, 32). The sutures part as much as they bind. Lan-

guage isn't a transparent medium—"windows pickt-yr spirits bloody meet" (ST, 24)—as much as a place. Here the "picture" is a "pickt-yr," and spirits "bloody meat," engaging in a "bloody meet[ing]." We are bound together, sutured up. Writing sews us up.

One effect of Gansz' elision of the "i" in "in" is that, in putting the letter back, we are forced to stress the preposition, thus emphasizing the placement in language. (As the same sign "n" is used for "and" and "in" as prefix, there is ample opportunity to stress the "in" of language.) "'N-versions" becomes "inversions," as well as "in (the) versions." When Gansz states, "sithen meand'r'n rove'n sund'r the form'dable/ terce'n-versions co-here the bafflements linkt" (ST, 30), his pun on "here" marks the centrality of language—"cohere," "co-here" (equal to here, or possessing equal shares in the here), and "co-hear" (hearing simultaneous with something, say, moving for the "meand'r" of the line). So, language is where we are called to work, and our work is a soul-making.

But, as one might now expect, this place of language is more than just any place. In the "meand'r" there is a possibility to lead us on, for "meand'r" is also "me and her." The role played by the female here is crucial. She is at once a co-respondent in language and the source of language. "She's of/ method quest'onable" (ST, 23), the elision of "i" underlining the "quest" in "question." When Gansz writes, "the quest's to find the quest" (ST, 25), he also means the quest is to find *her*: "Spoken the flesh-quest women'sshadows heat/ a heart's-gnarly grasp motivals diff'culties/ pre-grave mem'ries of blood found dumb dawn" (ST, 24). When we move toward her, there is always an intimation of memory. Memory moves us to search for her, guides us, but, too, it misleads us. We think to grasp her, and we grasp memory instead. And memory is dumb.

Memory is dumb because it has forgotten pain and joy; it cannot speak from that place. "The mem'ries quiv'ring/ contractual sev'ral'ties winterred there/ betw joy'n pain in order-of-signs place" (ST, 26). This place, where the signs are ordered (and come in order), occurs between joy and pain, but, so, too, the signs lead to consequences beyond logic (as signs of the "inorder" that B happen A must be present). While our lives are most intimately bound up with joy and pain, this "inorder" sign points beyond the joy and pain, but also beyond the logic of place, severing the contract with memory. We are then forced to face the future. But what will we make of it?

Is "winterred" hibernation or burial? Are we dead between pain and joy or merely resting? There is a difference, of course, and the difference is paramount. Differences are always important in Gansz. Note, for instance, how the synonymous is a sin against the animus: "sinanimus namesinterregal" (ST, 23). There are suggestions here, too, of regal names (even, names that are regal inside themselves), of names buried in regality, perhaps even of integral names. All of these suggestions are buried in the words, like the memory of a rite—none more than the idea of the integrity of names, given the splicing in Gansz' language.

If he's not after the integrity of names, what is Gansz after? Surely we need to mark a certain violence in Gansz.

His words are sown in blood. "Th'abstraction stupefied el'ments marv'l'lous/ releave their body souls offlesh-wounds fresh" (ST, 30). Writing is a bloodletting, but, too, it's more. "Words're marks" (ST, 25). So writing carves the skin and looses "'n/ eradicable blood" (ST, 27). Once loosed, the mark will not wear (or wash) away; thus, if we want a lasting meaning, it must be in blood, for blood is "el'mental." Why does it matter that blood is el'mental? The "el'mental" is what's essential, what's basic, what we can least do without. It's a kind of least common denominator.

But this "el'mental" is also a linguistic flow of blood—"bleeds yr names" (ST, 25)—because it is the mark of the female: "brave-el'ments hang periodic's gard'ns" (ST, 27). So meaning, shed by writing, is menstrual: "Come bechrist/ her blood/ riteshed/ inhope's/ wait" (4, I). And the menstrual is religious—recall Robert Duncan's "As in the Old Days (Passages 8)": "The gash in His side// from which monthly blood flows// so Zinzendorf saw, all maidens bear Christ's sign with them// at this flowing// souls gather" (*Bending the Bow*, 24). If writing is conceived so, then a man writing is engaging in a transexual rite, shedding his own blood "inhope's" of meaning. One wonders how far to take the rather antique pen-penis equation here. Should one say the writer engenders himself by inflicting upon himself the word? How masculine will he remain through this engendering? Shall his meaning be a mimicry of the (relatively natural) female meaning?

Certainly, it should be more than mime, for he is to be "at one": "At-one-meant/ el'mental secrets whiten'd w/ may be seen according/ to sight the blood-flower woman horizon't'l'd'n/ floriations" (ST, 29). But his "at one" is "mental"; his secrets mental, an appropriation of her physical secrets, her physical secretions: "Hasten to secrete of rapturous time's/ fullofpain-dalliance wrd's shone-flew" (ST, 24). Yet at one with what and to atone for what? His "at-one-meant" is an atonement—at one with the elemental secrets and, then, to atone for learning the elemental secrets, for exposing them so they cease being secrets. Language is the (female) body, the material, maternal space. So, a man writing (secrets) is on the verge of betraying her, turning her into a male. So, writing is violent. It violates "her"—the language marked by "she," "supreme'f all flesh" (ST, 31).

But this violent struggle is not our goal. Nor is the goal simply a feminization of the writer, or the masculinization of writing. The goal is something new—to create a third possibility, neither male nor female, neither within nor without. Note the motto for *Animadversions*:

Jesus said, 'when you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male be neither male nor the female female; and when you fashion eyes in place of an eye . . . and an image in place of an image; then you will enter the Kingdom.

This provides one explanation for Gansz's continuing references to "third": "pain'sbury three languages/ imper-

fectly one in which we speak" (4, IV); "in the third stage" (ST, 23); and, "w/ triad diction" (ST, 23). Through this "triad diction" (what we earlier called Gansz' "no language"), something new is achieved: that is, the writer has been changed, and the language has been changed. The change is a "writer-language"; thus, this third possibility allows us to "call life one self" (4, VI), allows us to identify, not with our physical selves or our intentional meaning but with the continuum of life. Our stake in life would mean more than our personal involvement in it, for we would have a share in the spiritual awakening of humankind. This something new would be a second birth, a birth from language; it would be our spiritual birth and a "second history" (4, I).

(Shall we hiss the his of history?) It is difficult, given the language of two possibilities, to express the third possibility; the old habits keep coming back to reclaim (and twist) the new insights, to co-opt the future hopes by showing their genetic relation to an unenlightened past. But, above all, doesn't this show the need to continue the struggle?

The Place Between the Name and the Thing

I N 1983, CLARK COOLIDGE PUBLISHED, in Michael Palmer's anthology of contemporary poetics, *Code of Signals*, "From Notebooks (1976-1982)." In a passage there, we find Coolidge praising William Carlos Williams as an innovator: "Williams is our Cézanne. With him/ a way of working begins to open" (182). What does Coolidge see to praise in Williams? Williams, in *Imaginations* (1923), had written of "a world detached from the necessity of recording it, sufficient to itself" (121) and further noted that "a word must be put down for itself, not as symbol of nature, but a part, cognizant of the whole—aware—civilized" (102). So, Coolidge and Williams are both writers, not recorders; they both feel words themselves possess integrity well beyond the accuracy of description.

In *The Crystal Text*, Coolidge continues his notebook genre. (Some selections from *Code of Signals* are included in the present book.) The issue of word, autonomy, and reality deeply interests Coolidge, for, on a basic level, *The Crystal Text* is a meditation on objects (crystal) and on writing (text). What is the relationship between these two elements? Coolidge's opening program calls for the removal of the writer: "He had the thought once that everything fit together./ If only he could remove himself sufficiently" (7). This sounds as if Coolidge envisions consciousness as obstructive, or as if something happens at the edge of the glance which the glance can not fix. It would seem word and object would match perfectly—if only we didn't interfere. Indeed, if we may use the phrase for a minute, this sounds like an objectivism of the averted gaze.

The poles of *The Crystal Text* are, on the one hand, "an indication/ of plain speech and ordinary objects" (20), and, on the other, of "the great mystical pull of things" (11). The commonplace and the unique must be equally

valued, then. But what, exactly is the challenge of *The Crystal Text*? "To grasp the relation of words to matter,/ mind, process" (8). Where the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets opt for method (witness Charles Bernstein's "You need some procedure for knowing how to go/ on or else you fall into chatter about the process" [*The Sophist*, 81]), Coolidge chooses process: "Writing as a process of the freeze and thaw. Rules? There are none. But forms, movements, flashes and residua" ("Words," *Friction* #7, 45).

What does the Coolidgean process lead to? Ironically, "Knowledge of matter results/ from a mediation between steps" (14). There is a danger, of course, that we might cleave too tightly to the knowledge itself and thereby obscure the "between-steps." Coolidge's "between-steps" strategy may strike some as disorienting and, of course, it is. But it is disorienting in the service of a different orientation, so that we may find "a spot not yet withered/ with explanation" (15). (Or to avoid "the crawl you call your whole mind's/ removal into thought" [17].) The "between-steps" is designed to avoid that crawl, for Coolidge is seeking the immediacy of matter, and, in this search, there is no room for prediction: "What I discover in writing comes out of the mess/ the mix. I know no nodes before" (8). So writing does not reinforce what's there. (Recall the quip Yeats passes on in *A Vision* where the painter tells the sitter, "You are so fortunate as to resemble your portrait.") Writing helps us find what's there. It helps us find the nodes. But, for that very reason, "Its meanings endlessly/ elude me" (9), for "we have focused so much/ on meanings we are left with maybes" (75).

Why, given "the mess, the mix," does Coolidge pick one object to train his gaze on? Perhaps because "there is no overview but in/ the local strictly system" (27). This crystal, then, is Coolidge's "local." (But how different from Williams' local!—or Olson's!—and that difference may tell us much about how our poetry—and our world—has changed.) Still, why did he pick this "aporian solid" (14) as his local? In addition to personal reasons ("a colorless quartz crystal sits upon the writer's desk"—backcover blurb), the crystal is appropriate because it is an object and can be seen through. On the one hand, "the crystals are the wall" (10); and, on the other, "the crystal attains toward a transparency" (13), or "the crystal almost invisible in taking on and in/ the tones of everything else" (27). But there are more reasons for Coolidge's choice: "Quartz is the original untampered word" (13). So it is originary but, at the same time, it is historical, for it recalls the title of his earlier *Quartz Hearts*.

The crystal then can be both primary and historical, for Coolidge is keenly aware of perspectives. Thus, "the time will shift down/ and spell whole into points of obstructing light" (20). This means a whole can be an obstruction, light can be an obstruction, and "the fragment is the whole for now" (97). Given Coolidge's perspective on perspective, whole and fragment, transparency and obstruction can shift place. But, in the middle of all this shifting is the crystal—now concept, now object. Above all, the crystal is paradoxical, for it is "open while closed" (27).

This dual function of the crystal (obstructive and constructive, transparent and obscure) illuminates a central

issue: "The crystal/ is a problem of structure" (142). And this points to a concern with language if it is true that "interest in structure [exists] only in the terms that a/ language exists. Exists and or languages,/ entrances and exits" (65). The crystal both is and is not the point—it is the object focused on and yet "the text of crystal might reveal everything but itself" (79). So, at times, we see through the crystal and that "through" may reveal everything else, all that we hadn't thought to see. Therefore, the focus blocks itself, leads into a consideration of other things, and obscures the focal point. "The point of it all is that everything/ is important, not just/ What is it?" (24). Coolidge, then, is after something more than names or use (what is it?), for "knowing has/ nothing to do with any of this" (7).

Instead of knowledge, Coolidge likes "the place between the name and the thing" (in conversation, *Acts* #4, 120). This place, however, is short-lived for, as we possess familiarity with the language, it's only a matter of time before the space between the word and the thing is bulldozed over. A writing such as Coolidge's, then, must continually search for this short-lived space and must resist the pull into a settled meaning. For Coolidge "all sayings/ start off grounded, you have to lift them, learn/ dispersal to round on substance" (100). The fact that Coolidge isn't striving to ground what he says is, in itself, instructive.

Where others would fear the dispersal as leading to meaninglessness, Coolidge sees it as "round[ing] on substance." Just as between-steps leads to a knowledge of matter, dispersal leads to a knowledge of substance. And the result of this dispersal and rounding is that "the mind begins to/ grow in edge" (100). Against this edgy mind stands language: "All the words make sense. As often I do not" (59). There are, then, two orders here—language, which makes sense (without human intervention, we might add), and humanity (which makes sense sporadically, at best). Ornette Coleman had said that "lots of times music is not a commodity where the knowing or not knowing changes the will to doing it." This can be true of poetry, too: "For whatever you can't know you do write" (41). But if knowledge isn't the goal in Coolidge, what is? "Just/ doing it" (17). And, for the reader of Coolidge, this means "unclench[ing] his knowledge and mov[ing] with the words" (from Coolidge's response to a review of John Ashbery in *Sulfur* #19, 152). Thus, we must be willing to follow words, instead of constantly leading them by the nose. Wittgenstein had asked, "It is my intention to whistle this theme: have I then already, in some sense, whistled it in thought?" (*Zettel*). Coolidge's answer is yes and, instead of writing in which words conform to intention, he wants a writing which truly may be creative.

This book called the unread text might not be the one the crystal reveals. The text of crystal might reveal everything but itself. Readable as any plot that shows a hole, a hole as central to itself.

The things not framed allow the mind. The crystal continues to flag thought, and thought's belief in any of the

wisdoms. This book will not allow me to write beyond itself. And less than a foot away from these moving lines lies the crystal.

To catch the changes of its lights I must move myself. Speed is the essential matter.

The crystal is no longer here.

I would be no longer the writer of these words. (79)

"Synapses Hate Grooves, They Hate Them"

N IETZSCHE'S FAMOUS QUIP linking grammar and a belief in God aligned the order of language with another, if not invariably higher, order: how odd to be an atheist and continue to use the same subject-verb order which had so long suited the preachers. And, of course, beyond the oddity, the order stood to mark an essentially unchanging world. It would remain a question as to how seriously you could take the implication that the order of language shaped the world. And, if there are increasing numbers whose work does take this issue seriously (most of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets would fall in here, after all), there remain substantial numbers who do not. Readers do not agree on what constitutes meaning nor on the best methods of achieving it. R. P. Blackmur could decide, rather simply, that e. e. cummings wrote nonsense—and leave the issue of sense and nonsense unaffected by his decision. If the individual has passed on, the type hasn't. There is a reader to whom meaning is assured. (But at what cost?) And there is a kind of writing which demands (to use Pound's phrase) "obscurities and penumbras."

For a long time the image of communication which shaped most readers' expectations of literature (and still does shape many) would not allow for "obscurities and penumbras." If there were obscurities, they had to be "pseudo-obscurities," clearly explained in the course of the work. This image has been described as the conduit metaphor by Michael Reddy (and, further, by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their *Metaphors We Live By*). The conduit metaphor holds that communication is a conduit through which packaged meanings are shipped from writer to reader (what Bruce Andrews has called "unison diehard meaning" [33]). It would follow that one of the severer criticisms from such a theory is that the writer has packaged his meaning poorly: we thought we were getting a big package of meaning, but when we opened it up we saw how small it really was. (What we need, then, is a Consumer Protection Agency, to make sure the package is a true indication of profundity.) Such a view of meaning would have it stable and predeterminant, so we could also know what was sense and what nonsense without any fuzzing of the issue. Bruce Andrews has worked to expose and to sabotage an attitude which underlies the conduit metaphor and his most recent book, *Give Em Enough Rope*, is no exception.

One way to sabotage the conduit metaphor is to saturate your writing with ambiguity or indeterminacy. For instance, "Meaning myth flies in" (18). Do we take "meaning" as modifying a preceding clause or as an adjective modifying "myth" (thus, the myth of meaning)? Another way is to force the reader to provide major punc-

uation herself, or to give the reader a string (or cluster) of words which may go together, but also may not. Much of the title poem is clustered. Or:

how

phenomenology puffs up the whole quadrant in praxis petrifies heart imagine what reticences can breathe drying out after pitch body to hold it as sequence of a wandering persist as happenstance not dispose to find catch words, limbs, topping baptismal fashion of accidents by what won't wear in their arms, helmets, nipples, neurons, discourse, nostalgia, ceasing to step back bright abandon penetration in that sympathetic sentence to what frays hesitation cookie-cutter against you to speak again struck might very well. (52)

The absence of articles makes the first line and a half read a little like shorthand, but it's still fairly clear—phenomenology petrifies the heart. The petrification is the result of a bloating ("puffs up") encouraged by phenomenology. But what's really being puffed up here? (What is there in the "whole quadrant in praxis" hollow enough to be puffed up?) A self-importance, perhaps? After "heart," we're faced with a decision: shall we place a period after "heart" and read "imagine" as an imperative; or shall we take "imagine" as the verb for "heart," even if the number is incorrect? (That is, for the second alternative, to read, "the heart imagines what reticences can breathe"? And is the heart imagining the "reticences" (as subject) or the breathing (as object)?) The passage is itself a "sequence of/ a wandering persist."

Note, too, there is a tension between the order of words (or "Diminutive Syntax" [108]) and the form of words (or "Grammatical Clusters"). "Wandering" could be a verb or an adjective (or a noun). The article in "a wandering persist" tells us to read "wandering" as an adjective and this, in turn, tells us to next expect a noun. Instead, we get a verb. And this must unsettle our certainty that "wandering" was an adjective. The orders of syntax and grammar are not on the same wavelength. Is meaning thereby jammed? No. By writing between order(s), Andrews gets a perspective on verbal order which would be unavailable to a writer working within the pipeline. This perspective implicitly raises questions about Chomskian competence. "No word able quotidien up outer/ power influence authority" (8). After all, whose language is it anyway? (You might recall how Sir Phillip Sidney couldn't imagine someone going to school to learn his own language.)

How do we get the right to speak? Must we be credentialed, or competent before we speak or write? If so, how do we get this competence in the first place? And, what role do feelings play? Can passion give us the right to speak, too? What do we lose by speaking only what we are competent to tell? A mechanical competence might well be likened to a "cookie-cutter," and, through that (possible) identity, "the cookie-/ cutter against you" could be seen as referring to just these issues. If so, competence demands we fit a mold and be remodeled. Can the mold be changed, or is it an unchanging verity? This is a problem involving communication and, even, the understanding of

the world. There is no role for chance to play in a changeless communication. There is hardly any role for a writer or reader, its already having been determined what each shall do. What we have all too often is a predestination of our roles in literature. So, when Andrews writes, "Always safeguard scam of Imaginary" (41), the ambiguity (is he telling us to "always safeguard the scam of the Imaginary," or is he saying "always safeguards the scam of the Imaginary"?) breaks the guarantee of "always." Thus, instead of using order, rules, fate, etc., to justify meaning as something done to us, Andrews' ambiguity (as just one of his devices) gives us a limited access to determination.

Instead of an immovable "always," Andrews gives us "a wandering persist as happenstance not dispose to/ find catchwords." "Persist," in this context, squints—back to "wandering" and forward to "as happenstance." The latter case makes "persist" a verb and, retroactively, "wandering" a noun (although, here, too, the number is incorrect). Andrews' point is intimately tied to the cumulative effect of these contexts—how a word has to be read as various parts of speech in the overlapping of phrases. For instance, one phrase could be "to hold it as a sequence of/ a wandering"; another "persist as happenstance not dispose to/ find catchwords." Note here that the splice obscures the subject, making whatever preceded ("to hold it as . . .") function as the subject of what follows. Thus the function as determined by context take precedence over the function as determined by form, but, of course, the context is subject to continual change, and the function is too.

Shall we say form does not guarantee function and, as a result, "catchwords" are devalued? Even when we find them (assuming for the moment we know what those catchwords are), they may be changed by the role they have to play in concert with other words. "Historically Names = Nervous Torsion = Strictures Over Passage Exhalation" (98). Catchwords guarantee nothing, then. Or, as put earlier in the book, "At/ any time zephyrous sentence can dislocate/ vanishing either arm" (9). Given these circumstances, Andrews' work must be a happenstance wandering and not a catechism of catchwords.

The catchwords aimed at a past—"discourse, nostalgia, creas-/ ing." The purpose of this "creas-/ ing"? To be able "to step back," and, by stepping back, "abandon penetration in that/ sympathetic sentence." Why? It would seem, giving heavy emphasis on "sympathetic," that we were on the verge of recognizing ourselves and our situation (a penetrating insight?) and we would rather escape to the past, to an old and formulaic meaning (or "elder legitimization" [41]). And yet, the idea of being between two orders returns: "What frays hesitation cookie-/ cutter against you to speak again." Would a frayed hesitation be paralysis or action? Whatever there was in the past, whatever catchwords there were, or nostalgia, or competence, we are brought "to speak again," and to speak not in complete accordance with the old orders. "Extravagant—vagrant draft of what previous/ art is what artists do" (49).

It is also germane to Andrews' point that terminologies from different discourses are entwined: "Involute/ cos' amino acids won't thing to spend self free don't/

meant car rims neither" (7). There is no metadiscourse, no metaframework for such lines—not even that of the dictionary. "Baseline without identifiable non-fiction I broke less super-/ structure it's true voice she herself is losing If Zerol skip to MANIC SYMPTOMATOLOGY" (13). Thus, we have a baseline with an admixture of fiction, it would seem, and this, certainly, is one thing which the conduit metaphor tries to keep hidden. Without a certain self-reflexiveness, it can be clear how absurd other perspectives and beliefs are but not how absurd or limited our own are. A discourse or framework which is stable gains its stability from a set of unexamined assumptions. A discourse which is unstable may call itself into question: when the superstructure is broken, can there be a "true voice"? Is "true voice" opposed to structure? (An astructuralism of the heart?) If we lose structure, do we lose ourselves? If all (super) structures amount to zero, must we see everything in terms of a "manic [excessive] symptomatology"? Would this be a symptomatology of there being no baseline with "identifiable non-fiction," so that life were but wider swings of excess?

Can we even be sure what's fiction and what fact? If Ron Silliman claims for Andrews a literal writing of the body, how do we read his "literal"? Or, in Andrews' own terms, "Apart/ meant —licking stick good golly If/ body language/ counterfactual" (7). "Body language" could mean the language of the body (gestures) or the body of language, but how could either be "counterfactual"? "Licking stick" has phallic overtones, of course, but if "licking stick" represents fellatio, it does so because fellatio itself would be inappropriate. (So everything stands in for the body but where has the body got to?) Further, this is a condition resulting from an apartness in which "apart" means and, where the "apart/ meant," the body is counterfactual, not in and of itself, but because it has been dispossessed by symbols. If the "fact" is that language refers to things absent ("to remain too dependent on unexpected patternings of things referred to" [27]), that language is made up of abstract signs and symbols, any claim that writing is a body must be treated as a metaphor (that is, not in competition with the fact) or as counterfactual. But when Andrews writes of "Performative/ noun masturbating the phrase" (8), he isn't simply referring to self-reflexivity. "Masturbating" is there to signal a bodily dimension (pleasure) in language. The marks and joinings of language are not removed from the physical; they are the physical: "Amperсанд physicality" (81).

Where the "fact" is a disembodied joylessness, who would still cling to it? The odd fact for us now is that "the core constitutes the periphery" (149). This means that, with no core, there is no periphery, but, perhaps also, that the pursuit of happiness (let us say) is no longer sought best within the structure of society but on its outskirts. In other words, the values which were thought to constitute the core of society (honesty, compassion, equality, etc.) constitute instead its periphery. Andrews, then, follows a policy of "Switcheroos FOREVER" (12). The switching exposes an absurdity in the here-to-fore unexamined structures of expression. Still, Andrews is doing more than playing switcheroo games of "value displacement" (76); he is working "the process to paradise" (164), where the

process, not the destination, is paradisaic. "Rewriting the body systematic sex cult thing," he finds "the body never ends" (142).

Andrews' writing is often mistaken. He is a deeply utopian writer, but not simple-mindedly so. His is a writing of joy, "intentionally leaderless" (142) and intentionally de-rigidifying. But the joy is not offered as a palliative. This means we must believe in the joy and not lose sight of the fact that "reading joy" isn't enough. Thus, in place of the rigid roles of writer and reader (of the pretended activity of the one, hedged round as it is with tradition and competence, and of the enforced passivity of the other, mechanically decoding messages from afar), Andrews envisions "doers": "Dumb 'ands'/ pedigree utmost neutral bake doer position almost spoil rent/ arc choker to what us can formerly occasionally patron/ eschatology" (11-12). We're given possibilities with which we may construct meaning, but not a blueprint we have to follow. This is (to use Jackson Mac Low's phrase) a reader-oriented writing. And each possibility is important. Andrews wants everything to count, and, thus, "No one [is] redundant" (95). The issue, however, isn't simply to multiply possibilities. No, Andrews has more than that in mind:

The organs of the body are much too populist. Q: Unity means misanthropic. A: True. Fate is interrogated. Legs going about it differently. The body can't be reconstituted unless movement makes it more alert. Synapses hate grooves, they hate them. Body is a lot of avoidance. Automaticity eludes reason. That's what happens; they develop their movement styles instead of their ideas. Decontrol. Marionette, that's what you get. Disqualify the truss. Wake the knees of the normals. Remove those chains and dance! Surveil the beat. Feet, do your stuff!

(from "Which Is Which?," included in the liner notes to Andrews' tape *Every All Which Is Not Us* [available from Audio Muzix Qet (1341 Williamson, Madison, WI 53703)])

"Serious Combined With/ Prevents All Aimed at This Makes Recess at Last Can I"

IS THE UNREADABLE TEXT—assuming such a text, as approaching an absolute, and not a relative, limit of unreadability, exists—a greater or lesser challenge than a text which obliges us by being half consumed before the covers can be opened? That is, if we determine the text is unreadable, are we then free to make of it anything we will? And shall the days of unreadable texts bring back the days of impressionistic criticism (assuming those days have ever left)? Shall we come to seek out unreadable texts in all the rigor of our solipsism? Or shall we be forced to approach the unreadable text as if it, too, had secrets to tell us? Must we be forced to break its code in order to follow its logic? These questions, in part, center on a morality of reading. And a morality of reading rests on two questions:

(a) what do we see (in the text?); and, (b) what is our responsibility to what we see?

If we cannot read the writing of a text (because it is literally indecipherable—that is, we cannot even recognize the letters of the language), what can we read? If we cannot read a text from the inside, how can we read it from the outside? How can we know what in that outside is pertinent to an inside we cannot see? Can we, for instance, read the situation of the writer? That is, we should, at least, be able to tell if the writer is shipping us prepackaged care parcels of preformulated meaning, or throwing us into a text where we must find our own way out. (Is there an *out*?) Of course, as here put, the question already determines the answer; far too infrequently do we ask about the writer's relation to language when we can pass like ghosts through (the halls of) words to (the rooms of) meaning. So an unreadable text (to use the name as a convenience, not a fact) has this initial advantage—it recalls us to the presence of words. As Charles Bernstein wrote in "Thought's Measure": "Language . . . is the means by which the world is constituted" (*Content's Dream*, 61).

To take Bernstein's line and point it in the other direction, we might ask, what world is constituted in *Vel*. In *Vel*, Charles Bernstein foregrounds the materiality of language. And what does this mean? He "mak[es] writing, the activity itself, an active process, the fact of its own activity, autonomous, self-sufficient" (*CD*, 72). But how can we read (or see) the activity itself? By the time we get to the text hasn't the activity already taken place? And yet, by raising the question of the author's relation to language, we have a ready answer: the writing has "always-already" (to use the Heideggerian and Derridean phrase) been written, but, too, it is always-already-continuously being written. It both has happened and is happening. The last tense is important for it opens the space in which we can do our work.

But do our work on what? We might recall Jacques Derrida on materiality: "Materiality is precisely that which translation relinquishes" ("Freud and the Scene of Writing," *Writing and Difference*, 210). Where we understand meaning itself as a kind of translation, as a movement from a (material) sign to a presence of (auto-affective) signification, then a writing which foregrounds materiality relinquishes meaning. "There has to be a transcendental signified for the difference between signifier and signified to be somewhere absolute and irreducible" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 20). But, if we're foregrounding the material nature of language we are expressly voiding (or attempting to) the transcendental. Therefore, a (material) text is one that foregoes precisely this (elemental) distinction by which our literacy seems defined. And a material text is one in which, by definition, there is no absolute difference between signified and signifier.

Thus, meaning, generally, stands in the same relation to the text that the soul does to the body. Derrida claims that "the sign and divinity have the same place and time of birth. The age of the sign is essentially theological" (*OG*, 14). And a material text is one in which the meaning is to be found nowhere else but in itself. It seeks to counteract, then, the reek of spiritualism in our literature and the

credit plan (or, even, timesharing) of meaning. A material text, then, must squarely face C. S. Pierce's insight that meaning is another (material) sign. (As worded by Derrida, "according to the 'phaneoroscopy' or 'phenomenology' of Pierce, *manifestation* itself does not reveal a presence, it makes a sign" [OG, 49]).

But let us insist that certain ideals must be dismantled (or disconnected, so they spin about without moving anything—wheels without the cogs, as it were—though the danger, then, is that we may forget they are disconnected and think they do move something or, more simply, we may become entranced by the movement itself) for us to come to the material text. The distinction between reader and writer must be blurred. The prejudice of artistic genius must be trashed. The idea that the artist is in touch with some other, higher, realm must be destroyed. Above all, the custom of one meaning underwriting a text, of meaning foregrounding a text, must be crimped. Meaning cannot come first. It is but a play of signs and not "the soul within the logos" (OG, 37). In short, the idea of the text as a credential, an entitlement for the author, an indenture for the reader, must be smashed. Out of that broken entablature shall come our work.

The material text teaches us that a text (any text) is not an ontological realm of being, for it "is not conceivable in an originary or modified form of presence" (WD, 211). And, therefore, the writer can not be conceived of as standing in a closer proximity to this presence of the text (or of intent or meaning, for that matter) than does the reader. He is no recording scribe, no holy prophet. For, if "everything begins with reproduction" (WD, 211), the writer and the reader are equal offsprings, and they needn't battle over who gets a (non-existent) birthright. As Walter Benjamin observed, "The reader is at all times ready to become a writer, that is, a describer, but also a prescriber" ("The Author as Producer," *Reflections*, 233). So, we make our own laws, and, perhaps, never more so than when (basic) literacy fails to guide us. "Rules are always secondary to the irregularities from which they are extracted" (CD, 123).

Unmistakeably, then, *Veil* foregrounds the question of what we see (in language): "Language is the lens of sight" ("Words and Pictures," CD, 119). So, this foregrounding also, and necessarily, calls into play the linguistic codes that make perception possible. From its title to its overlapping lines of print, *Veil* focuses on (and complicates) a perceptivity. This perceptivity, however, is not pure, not transparent, not naturalistic. Here sight is citational: "The center does not hold because there are only sight-cities of our enclosures in the infinitude, these enclosures themselves the very substance that seemed denied us" (CD, 123). This last point is crucial. It brings us back to the materiality of language, but it does so so that we see it with eyes fresh peeled. What we thought beyond our reach was all the time within our hands. (Isn't that enough to make one feel like a potato-head?)

But what does it mean that sight is citational? That it refers to what's gone before—but, more, it *refers*; it doesn't develop. Still, we can develop meanings; although, before we do, we might have to try to untangle some of the lines of print (unless we remain outside, writing about the au-

thor's relation to language). As Derrida wrote, "Writing supplements perception before perception even appears to itself. 'Memory' or writing is the opening of that process of appearance itself" (WD, 224). Perception thinks to find itself before, or outside of, language, yet it cannot, for "perception is precisely a concept, a concept of an intuition or of a given originating from the thing itself, present itself in its meaning, independently from language, from the system of reference" (discussion after the presentation of "Structure, Sign and Play," *The Structuralist Controversy*, 272). Or, as Charles Bernstein wrote, "There is a tacit acceptance of the visual as brute reality: the objects that we apprehend appear to make a claim to exist outside of language, silent exemplars of physical fact" (CD, 125). "But there is no thought without words and no sight without concepts" (CD, 131).

But what concepts shall we bring to this *Veil*? The pages, clotted with words, interlarded with lines, may recall a child's magic pad, but, if so, we come to it, not through childhood recollections, but through the sophisticated avenue of theory—by means of the (already cited) essay by Derrida on Freud's image of the unconscious as a magic pad and its inherent scriptability. Thus,

The depth of the Mystic Pad is simultaneously a depth without bottom, an infinite allusion, and a perfectly superficial exteriority: a stratification of surfaces each of whose relation to itself, each of whose interior, is but the implication of another similarly exposed surface. It joins the two empirical certainties by which we are constituted: infinite depth in the implications of meaning, in the unlimited development of the present, and, simultaneously, the particular essence of being, the absolute absence of any foundation. (WD, 224).

If this concept fits (and what are the rules, now, to determine whether it does or not?), then we might ask if *Veil* is the text of the unconscious (the unconscious text)? If we accept that the Freudian mystic pad is a possible analogue, then we must see that the text itself is unconscious only to the extent that its patterns, enjambments, and meanings were not foreseen and only insofar as it cannot (consciously) be grasped. Thus, a structure might be brought to light but its contents, necessarily, evade reading.

But what does it mean to read the structure of the unconscious (or to read something as a model for the structure of the unconscious)? It's as if our deepest, most ancient and hidden, element, the element we could not think how to express or to send to anyone, came back to us from the outside; as if our secret were the founding gesture of humanity, or community, not of individuality. So, we are enclosed in writing and cannot tell our outside from our inside (finally). We started by claiming to be writing outside this (possibly) unreadable text. But now we find we cannot determine the outside of a text which we cannot determine the inside of. This failure to be able to determine the inside and outside means that everything is potentially important, and nothing is absolutely important, for the text.

In the face of such undecidability, there can be no authentic reading of the text. And, what we thought sure of when pacing the outside of the text may be rendered un-

certain when we see we were all the time (and equally) inside the text. For instance, this *Veil* is, surely, an escapist text. But we find it's not that simple. Recall that Benjamin had claimed that "the author who has reflected deeply on the contradictions of present-day production" will produce work which "will never be merely work on production, but always, at the same time, on the means of production" (R, 233). Yet, why would this mean *Veil* is no escape?

Let us first note that *Veil* is, in addition to what we've been describing, a visual work, an art work which must be reproduced to be seen. Let us also recall something else Benjamin wrote: "The technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition" ("The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, 221); and, this detachment leads to "the liquidation of the traditional value of cultural heritage" (221). What was this traditional value based on? Ritual. What did the liquidation lead to? "Politics" (224). Thus, a work on the means of production is a political work. This sense of politics depends on a practical use (as opposed to symbol). As a work of language, *Veil* may expose to us the fact that we live in language; it is where we take our being—"We are each involved in the constitution of language—that our actions reconstitute—change—reality" ("Three or Four Things I Know About Him," CD, 26)—as opposed to thinking language is a space of rites referring to things not in evidence. Note, too, the motto for *Veil* (attributed to Hawthorne): "'There is an hour to come,' said he, 'when all of us shall cast aside our veils. Take it not amiss, beloved friend, if I wear this piece of crape till then.'"

But let us be very clear about the risk run by this *Veil*. Before we reach the point where we are made to see the constitutive nature of language and our part in it, before we glimpse how active we might be in our task of reading, how much meaning may depend on us and what our say in meaning may be, we may give up. The act designed to give us the keys to meaning may actually make us feel that meaning is beyond us, may make us feel like Prufrock hearing the mermaids. (We do not think this veil is woven for us.) Bernstein is very clear about the risk of a language which seems inflicted upon us, although the dangers are usually imputed by Bernstein to rules and grammar: "A language, even if only seemingly, wrested from our control is a world taken away from us" (CD, 26). *Veil* runs the risk less of seeming taken away from us as of never having been given.

Furthermore, the apocalyptic frame provided by the motto raises a problem. In his essay on Jackson Mac Low, Bernstein had slyly observed that "words get in the way" (CD, 252). Taken with the motto, it would seem that the day shall come when we will cast off our veil(s) of language and finally see what words get in the way of, when we come into a presence without language which is at the same time a community without language, without need of language. This reading is abetted, of course, by the "veil" of the quote and the *Veil* of the title—as if *Veil* has a provisional use until the day when we shall do without veils at all. Given the overlap, aren't we forced to read "veil" as a synonym for writing? This hint of a world

without words seems odd, let us stress, given the importance Bernstein places on the "particularity of writing." But then again, if "a sign of the particularity of writing is that it contains itself, has established its own place, situates itself next to us" ("Stray Straws and Straw Men," CD, 43), "particularity" is equivalent not just to a textual self-determination, but also to proximity, or nextness, with having an existence placed next to the reader. It is the space (or gap) that separates us from the "particularity of writing" which becomes both problematical (how is the gap waived for a writing—or reading—to occur?) and susceptible to an apocalyptic fantasia.

Language of Love

There were distinctive
dips and shivers
in the various foliage,
syncopated
almost cadenced in the way
that once made him invent
"understanding."

*

Now the boss could say
"parameters"
and mean something
like "I'll pinch."

By repeating the gesture exactly
the woman awakened
an excited suspicion
in the infant.

When he awakened
she was just returning from
one of her little trips.

It's common to confuse
the distance
with flirtation:
that expectant solemnity
which seems to invite a kiss.

*

He stroked her carapace
with his claw.

They had developed a code
in which each word appeared to refer
to some abdicated function.

Thus, in a department store,
Petite Impressions might neighbor
Town Square.

But he exaggerated it
by mincing
words like "micturation,"
setting scenes
in which the dainty lover
would pretend to leave.

*

Was it sadness or fear?
He still wasn't back.
The act of identification,
She recognized,
was *always* a pleasure,
but this lasting difference
between sense and recognition
made her unhappy

or afraid.
Once she was rewarded
by the beams
of headlights flitting
in appealing play.

Realism

Split hairs and atoms; I'm looking for somebody.

Pink, vein-like plant, a stiff
scribble in space.

Unable to say
whether the pain is
in my shoulders, neck, or teeth.

Quick rub to obliterate your sense
of exposed consciousness in me.

A circle made of hairy twigs, or
the symbolic.

Siren's concentric imminence, forever
coming to the point.

What I suspect: intrusion or withdrawal,
expulsion or entrapment.

(Branches as panicky escape attempts.)

Cello warbles geometric
increments of longing.

Embarrassed laugh means, "Me again."

Can repetition
arrange a meeting?

I'm looking for symmetry; something close to
imitation, flattery.

Mechanism

One stitches plots across a membrane of light sleep.
Putting us in pick-ups and on bicycles, searching my
mother's streets for ghosts. The ability to *see* the
ghosts. And a staged Americana meant to undercut
the narrative?

Meant by whom? Imaginary lines connect sore points.
Music — a string of anxious sighs. Suspicious
swellings. Bits are said to be dream-like (to
reveal what's repressed). In a dream language, the
troubled region has returned as a showgirl with masses
of fruit on her head.

I.

Once it was dark and once it was light and lithesome beneath the black square.

When I am moving and it happens under the bough of an old tree then the first part of its name covers a section of my face. And so on.

Though she denied it everything is the same as how we think of it. Line edged with carved curve. What has come we have seen arriving. Watched rocks grow moss even as our complexions changed.

To build over but not to scrape the under. A car over the bridge, to cross and settle.

Each time again we have nothing. Empty pockets. From where breath once entered, we stopped speaking. When we walked, the path we followed spoke for us, as skins for our bodies, in that way.

Wondering what's worth it then trees were planted with fruit in mind. Anything we tried to keep we threw away by exhaling. Still the times of day kept naming themselves.

When we woke before light something spoke waking had moved. From stillness up to where we were once before as it grew lighter. Having only one small window in the otherwise dark though sweet smelling room.

Everything we know about coming brighter or closer. People having other dawns in other cities and countries. Expanding we thought, whitened beyond the shell, illuminations of soil under leaf. All those words in others beginning to awake, their greetings to one another. Bells ringing.

The soft sheet over the body and door just before emptying its treasure onto the sidewalk, starting out to the weather.

Weather came in every season, despite grief as well as horror. Rocks heaving from the frozen ground.

II.

All this about the winding. The chicken wire and 2x4 frame of the body we are beginning to erect from the shoulders down, winding and plastering until we stand clothed, in the imprints of objects like fossils or words.

As we existed we spoke by habit, being able only to inhabit that space between ourselves and the window, or just beyond.

Sonorous as standing, we erect the spine of talk.

Kept most silent, still some spoke. Sounded without noticing our mouths did not move. Our hands held our bodies together.

Everywhere or anywhere changed. Morning came in the hills.

The substance of being is colored with ever what was only a sound then frozen in us. Around our bones.

The air between flesh and feeling. Coming closer to being things.

We are made of language in order to escape words. As a body from sarcophagus if possible.

In memory the case of space in which we shape this is leather.

Remained soft and not drying as glue on the cloth layered to form the flesh on the frame. How when making a mask with these materials we failed to notice, how the shape being made was . . . still we did not talk.

III.

Mother breathing behind your back. Now that you've grown older we can talk. I have spoken all my words into you.

Sonic signals that discover and flag your shape propelled forward by the sound of speaking. Tempting you swaddled.

Rings fingers toes elephants to ride on wherever she goes.

We are what is flesh, we are a train. It is summer. The locust as obvious as we are lying hidden, signalling. Can it trace the training we have to come forward at bait.

Why can't you tell by looking through a glass what is in. See me. A mirror is a shell or a turtle's back. Under that there is nothing the can be called a turtle.

Between a body and its other there is a lack of number. There is no number one or other. The way in through the other is water.

Could forget and slow down. A moth wing beating in desperate light flying toward us with nothing in it despite increase and expansion. Any being large in daylight's longest gaze.

Never to have forgotten it did not mean. To sing a song, or start the music playing.

Some small bit of work to do without asking why, without ever hurting to hold what you will not tend.

IV.

In this life something is in front of the sky. Each day we forget what it is in front of us.

Birds, the tiniest of details they portray. Beyond the sky, behind the eye. A taste lasting in the mouth after the food is gone. The shape before the disfiguration.

A calendar marked with days that mean so little except to save us from constant sleep.

A slip of tissue paper beneath the square on which the photo is mounted, diffusing the light as it travels from the source. Since dreaming of places or flowers, coming into color.

The road through the mountains features a regular set of towns. Appearing out of our wish to sense progression. Objects are because of color if needing a cause.

Still as if talking to itself. Facing what develops as a photo of morning. The opportunity to lie open in all circumstances.

The footprints of activity where the motion still contains a promise easily traced.

When we walk toward the door the bird nesting beneath the eaves flies toward us.

One is replaced and one goes free. Still the air comes in through smaller spaces with a message of its own.

V.

Not a vessel not a cloth either. One is always to fill and one to cover. Each time you ask what is it it is already. What object would it be then to show and ask what they are differently would lend a way from the quiet.

Locust in midst of traffic sounds summer. A siren. Going there quickly that we might grant the familiar its verse again, not keep hoping it will explain why the progress has thus far kept to its own language.

Held back by the wrists here and please come hear more by quiet again. As if it ever had by quiet come.

Working Title

THEIR MONEY STOOD STACKED in a single giant column over in a corner near the sliding doors. The soldiers stood motionless despite the buzzing of the many insects. People appeared one by one until the intersection was teeming. The elevator flashed colored lights. He had a ticket and so was privileged. There in the pool of darkness surrounding the Roman baths a man holding a large shapeless package crouched beside a billowy fern in a large pot. The highway unfurled itself under amber skies. Simultaneously a hundred diners wiped the corners of their mouths and belched in the extensive open air restaurant whose tables were covered with red checked tablecloths. Pedestrians nervously waited at the intersection three or four deep. The chief of police was under fire because the blue ribbon commission had discovered evidence of wrong doing. Window washers received double pay for duty above the twenty-fifth floor. There was a six car pile up on the freeway exit just beyond the new construction site. This package represents the sum of all our desires. Birds hopping among dried leaves blowing on the street at dawn. Couples in drag laughing as they throw popcorn at one another in the darkened hallways. Silver sports cars with their headlights on slowly snake up the sinuous street in solemn procession. Tourists keep score on yellow pads. At dawn a line of traffic lights green yellow and red come on all at once stretching down the hill and then up the hill on the other side of the horizon. A woman in a bright yellow hat holding a baby in one arm hails a cab in the street next to the newsstand. A pack of dogs that look defeated and hungry pulls apart a beige couch that someone dumped on the sidewalk underneath the railroad overpass. Down along the block at night a rhythm of brightly colored lit up fast food places with no one in them. A snow leopard pacing up and down his cage in the zoo.

In his youth his temperament was fiery and so to correct this he adopted measures. He wore a hair shirt and an iron chain tied tightly around each ankle. But these caused bleeding that stained the streets wherever he walked and spotted the floors in his hut and so he left off these measures. He secretly caused an undergarment to be made for him and in the undergarment he had strips of leather fixed into which a hundred and fifty brass nails pointed and filed sharp were driven and the points of the nails were always turned toward the flesh. Each nail he understood as a reminder of himself the painful and actual nature of his temperament and he felt the joy of truth in the blaze of each painful point whenever he moved his body. He had the garment made very tight and so arranged as to go round him and fasten in front in order that it might fit the closer to his body. And the knowledge that flowed from this increased situation doubled his appreciation of his character and what was necessary to its correction. He slept in this garment winter and summer. Now in summer when it was very hot and he was tired and ill from his journeyings or when he held the office of lecturer he would sometimes as he lay thus in bonds and oppressed with toil and tormented also by noxious insects cry aloud and give way to fretfulness and twist round and round in agony as a worm does when run through with a pointed needle. It often seemed to him as if he were lying on an anthill from the torture caused by these insects which vied with one another. He cried out for death to come and overtake him and blessed and flattered death coaxing her to come but death would not come only further agony which he strove to increase all the more with his fitful turning and bouncing upon his cot. So as to take away the temptation to swat at or crush the insects he devised another method: two leather gloves and he caused a brazier to fit them all over with sharp pointed brass tacks and he used to put them on at night

in order that if he should try while asleep to throw off the hair undergarment or relieve himself from the gnawing of the insects the tacks might then stick into his body. And so it came to pass that he drove the sharp tacks into his breast and tore himself so that his flesh festered. When after many weeks the wounds had healed he could feel a self-satisfied feeling creep upon him and so he tore himself again and made fresh wounds. He continued this tormenting exercise for about sixteen years.

The big bus rounded the curve slightly outside its lane and hit the cyclist head on. The car swerved out of control on the slick road hit a guardrail caroomed back toward the hillside then bounced over the edge of the cliff into the gully below. A piece of tile crumbled off the edge of the roof and hit a pedestrian eight stories below. The homeless drunken man raised the lead pipe over his head and brought it down with all his might onto the knee of the Assistant City Planning Commissioner. The jackhammer cracked pieces of sidewalk that had been in place since the turn of the century. With a tremendous crash the two hundred year old redwood tree thundered earthward. The white rats in the laboratory screeched when the cancerous injections were applied. Two cars met head on at the intersection with a loud crunching sound because the traffic light malfunctioned. Soundlessly a child plummets from a twenty-fifth story window. The pelting rain and accompanying winds knock down a tractor shed. Huge boulders are rushed downstream in the gushing adamant torrent. A building sways and buckles in the earthquake tremor. The rocket with its crew of scientists blazes into white flame seconds after lift off.

The novelist mercilessly used materials gleaned from confidential situations and intimate conversations with close personal friends. The poet raided his heart for fears and wishes which he portrayed in verse with grand gestures and fustian flourishes. The newspaperman was merciless in his search for evidence which he detailed in a series of hard-hitting articles that spared no one. The television commentator smiled cynically while listening to the politician explain the necessity for certain very difficult decisions. The philosopher ate an apple while proofreading galleys of his book comparing Heidegger to Spinoza. He looked out the window at the hills covered with brush that swayed in the wind and speculated as to the distinction between remembering and imagining the feel and effect of the wind and being out in it. He found none fundamentally. The poet wanted to hurry the words but couldn't. The linguist analyzed a passage about death and concluded that it possessed no meaning whatever. The minister put the finishing touches to his sermon with an eye to the cheapest possible emotion on the part of his listeners: fear and promise of a final hope. The salesman repeated the same speech for the thousandth time and really meant it. The lovers spoke of their feelings as though they had some inkling of what they were talking about. The novelist constructed moral tales commenting on the society in which she lived as though she did not live in it. The typesetter worked on texts whose meaning or import escaped him. The lecturer paused for a sip of water not knowing what she would say next and not at all curious. The proofreader saw words as clusters of letters. The poet prepared himself for composition by emptying his mind entirely of words. He then thrust his desires forward like fists until one by one like bullets the words came precise and destructive. He could feel the physical world recede and become an explanation of itself the emotional world dissolve in a verbal excitement whose circumstances by their nature could not be shared. As he rose first slowly and then more rapidly up into the air from his chair his voice became tinnier yet more authoritative and distinct. Finally hovering above the modest duplex house and repeating very long sentences decorated in every way with unusual words and manipulated measures he melted with tenderness of self-love until the outlines of his body became indistinct. The reader looked up from her book at a world of augmented meaning.

After these sixteen years his spirit was quenched and he had a vision that such methods were no longer required of him. Out of gratitude he vowed to imitate the sufferings of our lord as an offering to this purified sense of himself and so he made himself a cross with thirty protruding iron needles and nails. This he bore on his bare back between his shoulders day and night. The first time he lay down on the cross his tender frame was struck with terror at it and he blunted the sharp nails slightly against

a stone. But soon repenting of this womanly cowardice he pointed them all again with a file and placed once more the cross upon him. Whenever he sat down or stood up it was as if a hedgehog skin were upon him. If anyone touched him unawares or pushed against his clothes it tore him. He took to bumping up against the walls of his cell pushing the nails in deeper and as he did so recalling whatever sinful deeds he had performed in his life with a view toward blaming himself and portraying himself as a despicable horrid creature that the physical offering of suffering that he made out of gratitude might be accompanied in equal measure with mental torture as well. At this same period he procured an old castaway door and used to lie on it at night without any bedclothes. He thus secured for himself a most miserable bed for hard pea stalks lay in humps under his head the cross with the sharp nails stuck in his back his arms were locked fast in bonds the horsehair garment was round his loins and the door was hard. In winter he suffered much from the frost. He stretched out his feet bare on the stone floor and they froze tearing the skin whenever he lifted them. His feet were full of sores his legs dropsical his knees bloody and seared his loins covered with scars from the horsehair his body wasted his mouth parched with intense thirst and his hands tremulous with weakness. And these torments he bore with a misery whose underlying basis was his great love for his master our lord and for himself who he understood to be a seed for the universe as it now stood and as it would forever be.

Fish

They leap. They wear
Feathers. So carefully
To count people.

I am wondering what
I am going to tell
When I am in Hell.

If you think, listen,
So near. Bells bare
Ears. People wear.

Untitled Poem #37

Always it irks me—this body not my own
Which I cannot chose to move in any supple way
Though uneasy it takes a wayward motion I call
Marxism it lopes or sputters to the Jews who
Would have longed to settle here some years ago
I do not choose to hear the sound of a bird yet do
The ear consciousness produces desires that lead to lives
Tolstoy, Ibsen, and Zola, the infamous Dreyfus case,
I bang the gate but nobody answers
This is another example of the futility of human expression
I lope but later on leap or limp I stutter or hope
To hear nor do I choose either what I feel it bursts
Forth from me I try to ride it it roars its own rails
It rails so often against me I am old I abhor
A vacuum oars of orchid wood oars of silver
There must be there is of certainty a pattern a plague
Of human events a way a fortress or press you call muse
Strike down the empty moon the set of alabaster contrition
For there is no further density and the Presidential race
Is not that at all my delight increased at the
Thumping of the boat I was drunk and threw off
All my predecessors in a single gulp no longer
Able to vote condign reader lurching here with me
Into the lovely house full of lovely things view of garden
Complete with ancient mossy stones by pond through picture window
Tibetan bells, Naziism, Poland, France, and Yugoslavia
Mann was right of course. But the cost of such integrity
At once plunging, the skill with which the dory was saved from destruction
The Heart Sutra humming in the background that was a mighty dressing down
I got these words from a bare antagonistic forecourt
God is waiting at the capital.
She came to see me.
She was home.
I like my garden to appear full, luscious, disheveled, blasting
Out of its borders spilling into the copse beyond the form

Won't contain never I do not choose the shape I am
Eyes see ears hear nose smells tongue tastes mind confuses
Words line up still alive from a year ago
I begin slowly planting
It is a joy when after two seasons there are humming birds in the jasmine vine
The house is painted pink and she is there, trimmed in pale green,
And she is huge there, adventurous, dangerous, lifting up and off the
Floor and away up into the distant air, stars without number
I won't forget you.
Time does not go from past to present rather from future to past
Or present to past to future. If you think about this it begins
To add up.
I won't forget you.
Emma Bovary's ebbing sensuality in *The Cherry Orchard*.
Sit softly and listen
To the down it is there
In the whistling of your hair
For life give
Hate all up
The rigorous first boat up-anchored and began to move
There is really no way to do this because there was never a purpose only to sing
In excess of joy to care because the plans were too large
And the escarpment, I am standing on the embankment, a detachment
Yet splashing in the stream nevertheless and it is not a single image
I taste vocabulary
Reading is writing, standing is walking, seeing is hearing, swimming is flying
This is a chair, this a table, this is not a pen
At twilight fine rain was still falling
And there was mist coming from the horse's nostrils
Below the humped outline of the darkened hills all about—
The world distinctly there in all the words without the words no world
Just a blur and yet things exist conventionally and in
Their ultimate aspect they are not to be seen in the same way
Song sears and the self wearies of hanging
In the danger of snow. That is why there is fear
For boys to take care of them. Then they alleviate.
I remember that I was wiser. The pupils of the eyes.

Conveyance

She Appears

to all of us, it isn't
for me she comes
it's to me

for someone else
who is not me—

Bialy sd,

You summoned her, she
came through the door at the instant
you asked, thinking, as he would, I suppose,
sorcery, or some such, but I hadn't
any

there is a sea
whose waters overflow

at its far shore

another goodness

I do not have but so love

there is another daughter, a third

— or for all of us.

It's not the Dead sleeping the dead sleep
the living actually sleep it
but it's not real.
In this soft eastern night in my mother's car
on Nehoiden St., it's not out there
it's in here, where

I am

real life is
also real, only—

that it must be so, and is so
because she is—

the mist
on the newest moon.

Who is the ferryman
doesn't matter, except it is not a man
a keel or rudder
an oar that dips and measures
water of a sea that overflows

the moon at best a boat,
the mist at most the dew
it furrows.

Somehow she is
none of it, someone's other daughter
who's over there too.
Who's she for?

One isn't interested in paternity
but that one fathers oneself
which one cannot do but that
that daughter appear
whose goodness is so great a space
and daughter one toward that
there is an ocean
there is a well
whose rim it overflows
our own good measure.

Tell anyone this

I'm not telling anyone
this, in this purest

place there is a time
more pure than any place,
more small,

There is a Wall

How love is not
less than itself,
how I am Hell.

I drive my car

This is what I am given in the east
this vessel in which to voyage
my loins do ache, I'm held in her arms
on the shores of myself, here, on the far
other side of the Rim of the Well

Helen's Achilles, Hilda's Hamlet,
true enough
but my name isn't theirs
not here,
this is *this*
chronography's
a door that opens to let in the sea.

It's not important to be important
it's important to be human—

there is a hesitation
that gives love back
to the sleep that dreams us—

one is slain by it.

Wieners has dared
what Creeley hasn't
and has thereby given him heaven.
I too am Hell,
yet I would not mistake stone
for shell, for
that *sound* on the new beach of time.

for Stephanie

The Integer

for Bootie

Entire life
a journey
through the heart
whose time bears no resemblance
no relation, is nothing whatever
to do with time
ordinarily conceived,
so purely not
one marvels
that perhaps one errs
to call it time, yet it alone
stands inside or below or possibly South
of what men suppose, has nothing to do with it
What is the word for
the moral trope achieved?
What is the word for that which
can only be known in itself?
It is time, though, as it is
so more it all is so equally
terrain, a land or region or
some such gentle
though not by any understood
areal or locative or world as such
place, yet
one is interior to or with it
it has felt extent
of love which
somehow
in the night sky within
of being
most resembles that which
a map might
in another
routine universe
senza visione
describe. That is,
map is correct
expression, as time is,
but not at all the mistaken
discourse of anyone
ignorant of how or what one somehow
by some true & noble grace
which love alone in long and
faithful condensation
grants entry into
enters

as through a door, or adit
more, as
truly one descends
in its most special sense *below*
which may or must be
from the North (of north
that one has reached or found
at last, into it means
down, towards
the body's Southern Sky.

Hearer, caution that these my words
are nines, by which intends the knowing
they are natural and can't be otherwise
but do import a five
that isn't—
the heart is literally constellated
starry love lights
shining in its warmest night—

O, you
whose kindness measures,
love,
who is to me
in all that's real a woman
past conceiving
yet a mother likewise
unengendered, you
who while I labored slipped
the latch, spread open
this inner heaven to me,
make me able
of its galaxy of grace.
Your names I know—
the girl next door
for every one.

So heart's
inner truth
of all one's done
in every seeming place and time
storing every tiny charm
until her wand or smile
at last had given
vista to my mind
the feeling eye and ear
the raptured hand
the body of my soul
its liberty to roam

its darkling home
and touch by tender intellection
that true world

which, as
surrender on a summer lawn
when kisses yield to deepest
deepest joy
of dearest union
past a dream
into *its* dream
long beyond
the paradise of wish,
lays below
and fills.

Being *is* a body
which makes containment
in it of the heart
to borders of the Sky

Here I
would
with all my art
elect to
work
to make
another man or woman
real as I in them
to know
the sweet
evagination,
soul,
its easy heat
its warming swell
its warmth, its lighted sail—

every mote of living lived
interred within was waiting
in my heart for me,
waiting in the Southern Sky—

she alone both
led me here
and is the iteration

whose end
is permanent love's beginning
at the portals of this vast
enjewelled mental depth.

Potnia

Outside that modest northern window the Atlantic
tonight not 50 yards away gently brocades its rocky beach
its whisper cancelling with such fully indifferent
solicitude every melancholy impulse to associative thought

—now I rescue nature from the din of self-defeat
from the whine of or the roar of grief machines
express. Imprisoned in their metal geometries
are equal souls compounded, equally unforgiven, ô sweet
aeroplane, ô turbulent dishwasher, allow my heart
to pray for your liberty instead of my own.

If I could be Orpheus or Francis to
every jailed mechanico-soul on earth
and free them tenderly to rust and rest
through all their half-lives in ten trillion
forest glades, high above sea on great stone promontories
or littering vast painted deserts under moon, everywhere
among the other kingdoms of creation loose,
in time, to die; maternal reabsorption.
Stoves in twilight thickets, green vines wound over clocks
and autos sinking yearly into lawns, and
every last exploited ore and black gold pool
their amnesty from human error win, I would.

Imagine time's pardon's grant to the slaves
we call machines and we by hand again
with only those instruments time freely gives,
planes that fly themselves like birds, cars
like any intelligent beasts, and clocks that tell
the names and signs particular
to the story of time's world in common,
every creature hearing.

No sentimental self-projection on the screen
of things. Jails unbolted at the unit level.
None excluded. Here, yon peppermill before me,
shaker of salt, and trembling tensors these
Sweet William flowers in makeshift vase
or jar of handsome utile glass—

enough to release back to proper circuitry
the furious electricity
of space and let it send its wise
and temperate charge against the lie
of woman's sin. And bring the television
into my arms, pudica, yet
more knowing than my self.

for Jane

Saving Appearances

John Ashbery
April Galleons
 (New York: Viking, 1987)

WHAT MUST WE DO, ASKED THE JAILER, taking the words, it would seem, from the mouth of his prisoner Paul, to be saved? Earthquakes notwithstanding, what tax shelter? Treasured memory? 6th Avenue hotel? Will it keep? What are you keeping from us? In no certain terms, John Ashbery's *April Galleons* reformulates our questions of saving raised in these uncertain times. Saving in *April Galleons* is an inextricable network of remembering, sheltering, redeeming, preserving for later, and keeping back: "You hid it/ So no one would find it/ And now you can't remember where" (25), "And I mean what shall be saved/ Of us as we live aimed at some near but unattainable mark on the wall?" (27), "And we see the cries of the innocent how they were coming to help/ Us in the storehouse and recruit all that bad knowledge so as to save it/ For brighter purposes some day" (6), "He who comes to save says the single,/ Enamelled word that outlives us" (34), "That's why we frame them, try to keep them on a wall" (58), "The mad doctor is secure/ In his thick-walled laboratory" (55), "Quickly, the storm bent/ To extinguish one's anxiety/ About not having a place to hide" (83). But with its bewildering trails of disposable ideas and images, Ashbery's poetry seems a matter of losing itself and us rather than of saving anything. The very idea of a matter or subject, whether saving or losing, seems foreign to his weaving and unweaving Penelopean texts. Saving, however, never isolates itself in *April Galleons* as a subject or term; it remains a complex of relations among writers and readers lost in their texts. Of course "writer," "reader," and "text" are themselves relative terms; a writer in one situation is a reader or text (object of interpretation) in another. The question of saving involves the readers' waning conviction that some sorely needed revelation—deep truth or source of lies—is at hand, and the writer's dear fantasy that some revolution of the word, some indispensable work, will convert them. Undermining these faiths is the readers' anxiety at having missed something and angry (or repressed) suspicion of missing nothing, and the writer's fear of being dismissed as superficial or of being found out and forgotten anyway.

We're lost without whatever we've lost. Remembering something in a poem saves it from oblivion but also saves the poem itself by reincorporating whatever vital element must have been missing. The ballads collaged into "Forgotten Song" (12-13) are figured first as a foundling who—whether Rudolph the Reindeer or Christ—grows into "it," "the continual stirring/ That we come to recognize as life," which the unreflective early ballads seemed to possess, but which our later conscious songs have lost touch with:

O Mary, go and call the cattle home
 For I'm sick in my heart and fain would lie down.

As if that wasn't enough, I find this bundle of pain
 Left on my doorstep, with a note: "Please raise it as
 your own."

I don't know. When it grows up will it be like the
 others,

Able to join in their games, or is it the new person,

As yet indescribable, though existing here and there? (12).

The first line of "Forgotten Song" is taken from Charles Kingsley's ballad, "The Sands of Dee," in which the body of Mary, who drowned in the foggy sea, is saved from "The cruel crawling foam." This refrain provoked Ruskin's clipped response—"The foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl"—and legislative term, the pathetic fallacy, which helped ring in the New Criticism and the Modernist suppression of romantic sentimentality. But Ashbery plucks more than a few sentimental heartstrings in *April Galleons* and recovers some all-but-forgotten singers—Beddoes and Clare in "October at the Window"—and songs. "For I'm sick in my heart . . ." is the refrain from "Lord Randall," and the title of another poem, "And Some Were Playing Cards, and Some Were Playing Dice" (75), comes to us from the ballad "The Golden Vanity." The end of "Forgotten Song," calling on itself to begin "it" again simply, includes a line from "The Unquiet Grave," italicized as if to announce itself as founding and cure:

Best to leave it alone

And start it all over again, if there's a beginning.
The stalk is withered dry, my love, so will our hearts decay.

Unless we omitted something. And we did. It'll cure it.
 It will have to. But I can't whisper that story yet (13).

"Vetiver," the first poem in *April Galleons*, unlike many of Ashbery's storm-brewing poems, is nostalgically retrospective, while the titular envoy is prospective, "off, in another/ Direction" (95), so that the volume, like Emerson's *Nature*, appears to prolong its own dimensions. Likewise, "unless" in this opening piscatory pastoral (cf. Donne's "The Bait") keeps back "until":

O keep me with you, unless the outdoors
 Embraces both of us, unites us, unless
 The birdcatchers put away their twigs,
 The fishermen haul in their sleek empty nets
 And others become part of the immense crowd
 Around this bonfire, a situation

That has come to mean us to us, and the crying
 In the leaves is saved, the last silver drops (1).

Unless and until recollective, mercurial tears, fished up from the depths, distill the essence of the past, even though they finally, as Stevens concluded of the crying leaves in "The Course of a Particular," concern no one at all. A dry perfume with the odor of sandalwood, "Vetiver" (veti + veru) in Tamil means "worthlessness." There may be no use saving such sentiments for later, which is the news Ashbery saves for the end of "Dreams of Adulthood":

Every available jug or receptacle will be seen to be full
 to overflowing,
 Not with anything useful, just the same old stuff of
 imaginative
 Speculation as it was before and still is, unfortunately.
 These wisps, I
 Guess I'll save them for a while. They need me don't
 you think? (7).

Rhapsode of the Finish in our age of anxiety, Ashbery recovers Auden's Scandinavian folk measures in "Finnish Rhapsody," a poem patterned after *The Kalevala* in which each hemistich paraphrases the one before. This form was adapted by Longfellow, whose gone but not forgotten "Song of Hiawatha" (1855) retains a redeeming American clunk:

By the shores of Gitche Gumee,
 By the shining Big-Sea-Water,
 Stood the wigwam of Nokomis,
 Daughter of the Moon, Nokomis.
 Dark behind it rose the forest,
 Rose the black and gloomy pine-trees,
 Rose the firs with cones upon them.

"Finnish Rhapsody" forsakes the spooky minimalism of the poem of *A Wave*, "At North Farm" (located just this side of Hell in *The Kalevala*), to juxtapose parallel lines:

Many there are, a crowd exists at present,
 For whom the daily forgetting, to whom the diurnal
 plunge
 Truncates the spadelike shadows, chops off the blades
 of darkness,
 To be rescued, to be guided into a state of something
 like security.
 Yet it falls off for others; for some, however, it drops
 from sight. . . .

 And for these few, to this small group
 Forgetting means remembering the ranks, oblivion is
 recalling the rows
 Of flowers each autumn and spring, of blooms in the
 fall and early summer.
 But those traveling by car, those nosing the vehicle out
 into the crowded highway
 And at the posts of evening, the tall poles of declining
 day,
 Returning satisfied, their objective accomplished,
 Note neither mystery nor alarm, see no strangeness or

cause for fright. (14).

The highly regular format of "Finnish Rhapsody"—with each line consisting of a phrase, a medial caesura, and a paraphrase—is relieved by the hilariously profuse variations of restatement: a long phrase qualifies a short one ("To be rescued, to be guided into a state of something like security."), or pretends to scientific precision ("Dusted with snow-white flour, glazed with farinaceous powder"), or translates ("Strong and severe punishment, *peine forte et dure*"), or defines ("Like Pierrot, like the white clown of chamber music"), or simply doubles the mystery ("Truncates the spadelike shadows, chops off the blades of darkness").

This litany of phrase and paraphrase, of rule and exception, reflects two kinds of people, two ways of keeping time, which are played out on the American scene. The first, identified here by "Many there are" and "But those traveling by car," is made up of ordinary people who thrive on day-to-day business as usual until death parts them from us. For them, "the diurnal plunge" means forgetting the day's aleatory potential, its irregular leaves of grass, for the safety of each evening's "comfort and relaxation, coziness and tranquillity" (14). But there is another, smaller group ("Yet it falls off for others. . . , "And for these few") who notice departures from the ordinary, "Anything irregular, all that doesn't fit the preconceived mold" (15). For them, forgetting means blanking out the daily routine in order to remind themselves of the periods of natural time with which their lives are inevitably synchronized: "Of flowers each autumn and spring; of blooms in the fall and early summer." Ashbery first chronicled this other tradition, one "that developed parallel to the classic truths of daily life" (*TP*, 55), in "The System," the long doctrinal prose poem of *Three Poems* (1972) and the centerpiece of his *Selected Poems* (1985). These parallel lives were graphically presented in Ashbery's sprawling, double-columned "Litany" in *As We Know* (1979), with its blank Great Divide running nearly seventy pages. But now in "Finnish Rhapsody" this counter-current looms a caesura away, and those plain-spoken earthlings, in a fantastic flick, are to be invaded by poets from linguistically outer spaces, and finish saved. Some trees!

And it will be but half-strange, really only semi-bizarre
 When the tall poems of the world, the towering
 earthbound poetic utterances
 Invade the street of our dialect, penetrate the avenue of
 our patois,
 Bringing fresh power and new knowledge, transporting
 virgin might and up-to-date enlightenment
 To this place of honest thirst, to this satisfyingly parched
 here and now (15).

Short of this wishful windup, blanking out the present for a moment may provide a temporary shelter from capitalism's relentless production of newness, where each palimpsestic surface blots out the one behind and before it. "No Two Alike," jerking into gear, shows us that the advertised uniqueness of the latest highly finished products—ultimately, the sufficiency of the contemporary

sheen—produces in turn those slow, finished homeless, akin to Crane's hoboes in *The Bridge*, lost in the shuffle:

Wait—it has some kind of finish on it. No
Point in overreacting, since the effect
Is, in effect, not overdone. There are scars and stars,
Things to be met with in life, a lifetime of slow defeat
Spent sitting outdoors, propped against a wall,
Eating day-old bread. And then the world changed.

No one expected it would be like this.
Yet we are calmer, and safer, for it,
As though some big man had come in, and turned
And abruptly left in the few moments I was out.
Those are people in the street, the ones you passed.
Who can say if it's empty or clear? That
Patina got on it, and was what mattered
for a while (35).

As the world turned—big man, fat girl, patina of circumstance—some people, no two alike, melted into a national problem, a network special. But there must be some safe haven, some "groves in England," where daily bread for the needy parallel lives would be evenly handed out: "Some ministering/ To the handy and the articulate, and bread left then/ Won't be idle, part of a mass of frayed circumstance" (35). Yet in the intercessory prayer of the final stanza "No Two Alike" itself turns "abruptly" (all "rupt-" words in Ashbery signal the rupture of a spherical surface, and the advent of a new manner) from its topic, though keeping to its relational system of depth and surface:

Pray that in just one bubble the color
Will cover the whole surface sheen,
Polluting remembrance, the house where I was born.
And in that moment of curious rage an attic
Is pitched, a place to come after long love,
And dexterity after wearing these fingers out (35).

Who all is praying here and what all for? Is this a prayer for those worn out, finger worked to the bone, that in just one moment this gaudy commercial break may spell relief from nagging memories of home? Is it an artist's refuge from a long life of dexterous (or gauche) in the case of the left-handed Ashbery) love poems? Once one homeless refugee's text is pitched, no new sanctuary will blot it out.

The risks taken in the problematic "No Two Alike"—hovering between shelter and memory, topicality and reflexivity—reflect the erratic eccentricities of Ashbery's latest bubble. We're all worn out, these times too, and anxious, and ask more from living, from poetry, than stylistic sheen. But the author behind these scenes promises no more substance than the world itself will own up to. Yeats parodied such readers in "Lapis Lazuli" as hysterical women who demanded more from poetry in King Billy's tragic time than oriental timelessness. But in "Dreams of Adulthood" Ashbery withholds solutions to dwell on our own exasperated run-on questions:

Why does he do it like that say it like that you might ask
Dream it like that over landscapes spotted with cream
and vehement

Holes in the ground that have become little lakes, now
that the chill and ardor
Of winter are passing into the real thing, where we shall
be obliged
To survive? That there is a precise, preordained
structure
That has been turned inside out to meet new personal
needs
And attract newer bonuses isn't the reply, it's the
solution,
Read, the asking, so while this helps, doesn't hinder, its
persona
Is off running parallel somewhere: monitorable, but
that's about it (6).

Now that the thrill is gone, saving is a question not only of our own survival but of the persona's keeping something from us: "You should know never to ask questions, they'll/ Slap you mildly on the wrists for it, but meanwhile in your reading/ You'll have the sufficient answer for why it came to be this way" (7). "Dreams of Adulthood," which opens on "Why" and closes with a question mark, employs the dialectics of question and answer (or lack thereof), the opening question itself responding to the unresponsiveness of the scene or text. By implicitly paralleling question with stimulus in "The Romantic Entanglement" (72), Ashbery measures the erotics of "Response" as "being, by its very nature, romantic/ The very urge to romanticism. The precise itch" (72). The precise inch. In "Dreams of Adulthood," this dialectic is congruent with perhaps the most important "preordained structure" in Ashbery's poetry—depth and surface: here, a textual, phenomenal surface hides its recessed governing principle, paring its finger nails, running things beneath the page parallel to our scanning eyes above it. The text itself in "Dreams of Adulthood" becomes a kind of quicksand: "What is needed is a disparate account of the thing happening just now,/ To have it sink finally into print, from which there is no escape" (6). Even the days of the waste land's dry salvages are numbered in "The Lake Havasu City of our dreams where London Bridge eyes the sands/ Nervously, and vice versa" (6). The textual surface in "Fourth Prize" bills itself as a topical cure, the precise salve for our itch:

Try it here, maybe it can help here
Too, but get out of the house in case
Of a delay, no matter how fortunate. Or
Parade in the streets, it's shameless, it's
Not shameless, OK (63).

These jittery, high-strung measures, barely audible in the earlier volumes, strike the alarming new tone in *April Galileos*. Even the closing reminder in "Fourth Prize" to save those fleeting moments for later is pitched much higher than the parallel ending of "Vetiver":

Burnished cherries were meant for these hidden
moments
Of respite and rage, not moments for our times, though,
Remember. I don't know, it's all too comically abstract
Yet it fits in with what isn't until a kind of

Bathrobe of the age is stitched together, patched
together,
Ready to ensure in principle the kind of moment we had
When young, to undo the colored past and extract
Whatever good may come of it now, at this late date,
really
When one has become a little oversimplified and
therefore anxious (64).

"Well come out with it, then, what's the point?" goes one oversimplifying reviewer draped in our national pragmatism after another, cocksure that this time his barb—say "merely clever"—has stripped the emperor bare. If the parallel persona is keeping submerged some high-finished pearl of wisdom, what is he saving it for? What good is anything else? In "Winter Weather Advisory" Ashbery takes up both raised question and submerged response:

What have we proved? That we don't have the one idea
Worth having, that all else is beneath us,
If within our grasp? But no, it should be in some book
Perhaps, the book one has never read; there it keeps
Its high literacy like a pearl: no point in displaying it,
It's too eloquent, too gracious, for these times
At least. . . .

.....
We are just getting to know, and the pendulum shatters
All of it into mutually combative fragments, some bad,
Some worth entertaining, but the complex,
Much too complex, some would say,
aviary-as-environment
That results is the piece of real estate one inherited long
ago,
That partially submerged orange grove in Florida. . . .

Chief among them was cleverness: how much stomach
One had for the "merely clever"; besides, what is
"merely"
In that sense? A looking up to something, something too
humane
To be in the way, yet too central
To be ignored? (66).

It would oversimplify "Winter Weather Advisory" to read it merely as "Ashbery's reponse to his critics." The defensive author ("Much too complex, some would say") and the judiciously caustic reviewer ("fragments, some bad,/ Some worth entertaining," but "how much stomach/ One had for the 'merely clever'") are parallel personae. Ashbery always emphasizes relations over terms. The relation between the impoverished receiver in need of salvation and the sender afraid of spending the last pearl of wisdom is what interests Ashbery here. The very words emerging in the text should be read in relation to their submerged alternatives: "high finish" resonates in "high literacy like a pearl," the stock phrase "mutually exclusive" echoes in "mutually combative," and both "mirror" and "swings" linger under "the pendulum shatters."

The pendulum not only describes an arc, which makes the mirror convex, but marks time, an expanding

universe of shattered signifiers displaying and hiding some purported central signified. In "Winter Weather Advisory" the spherical space is just glimpsed in "pearl," "no point," "pendulum," "orange," and "central." But in "Amid Mounting Evidence" (36), written in the height of the Iran-Contra scandal, the spherical space gives shape to the swirling conspiracy theories bent on exposing that senile, central principle of plausible deniability:

... and the world lies open
To the radiation theory (tons of radiation, think of it,
Reversing all normal procedures
So that the pessimistic ball of wax begins
To slide down the inclined plane again
Bringing further concepts to their doom while
encouraging
The infinity of loose ends that
Is taking over our government and threatening to
become life as we know it!).

Rousellian onion-skin parentheses conceal layer on layer of deception. Yet beneath our own excavations lies the comforting assurance that in the midst of these mutually combative shreds of evidence, North's pranks notwithstanding ("It's so easy to trudge and pretend to be a boy"), lies a guilelessly sinister, ordinary, absent-minded presence:

The drilling
Of noon insects in high summer had to precede this or
something
Else, the dream be given texture and further substance
Because of something. It seems
Shipshape now. Everything seems to be all right.
The storm, you see, told none of its secrets,
Gave nothing away (37).

The argument from global, conspiratorial design, deducing an agency of central intelligence, makes ordinary life possible, guarantees that something is kept back, vaulted, drawing interest in some Swiss account. But in-substantial signs and wonders may result only in our "Sighs and Inhibitions":

Still,
You argue, there has to be something more solid
Than all this:
Some angle or hinge
Bulkier than stone and more resilient than the ideas
That have helped to put it across, palmed it off
On us as it were, so it is it, not we,
That is our lives, the surface over which we move
Comfortably as across a globe that gives back
Our intuiting of it as we desired it (51).

From "angle or hinge," as from "pendulum" above, we may infer a spherical system with its central "Still" point and surrounding signs: "the ideas/ That have helped to put it across." Yet signs, as we know, have their own elliptical contours. The phrase "palmed it off," while exposing poetry's counterfeit currency ("as it were"), brings along with it Ashbery's emblematic reflection: Parmi-

gianino's *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* with its circumferential signifying hand mediating and shielding a central face. Similarly, our global textual surface gives back only what we want most to see: a virtual central Author. The claim, for example, that "Ashbery" in "Sighs and Inhibitions" is self-consciously alluding to *Self-Portrait* would itself hinge on our narcissistic projection of a stable, omniscient Author beneath the text.

But when everything alike stands for one other thing (or persona), each thing is robbed of its particular courses. To save us from the dangers of reading allegorically, we are vouchsafed, in the eye or I's ("maybe there are other me's") of "The Ice Storm," the rough diamond of *April Galleons* which appeared first in *Tumbler* 5, the parable of the rose:

Today I found a rose in full bloom in the wreck of the garden, all the living color and sentience but also the sententiousness drained out of it. What remained was like a small flower in the woods, too pale and sickly to notice. No, sickly isn't the right word, the thing was normal and healthy by its own standards, and thriving merrily along its allotted path toward death. Only we hold it up to some real and abject notion of what a living organism ought to be and paint it as a scarecrow that frightens birds away (presumably) but isn't able to frighten itself away. Oh, no, it's far too clever for that! But our flower, the one we saw, really had no need of us to justify its blooming where it did. So we ought to think about our own position on the path. Will it ever be anything more than that of pebble? I wonder. And they scratch, some of them feverishly, at whatever meaning it might be supposed to yield up, of course expiring as it does so. But our rose gains its distinction just by being stuck there. . . . What more do you want? it seemed to say. Leave me in this desert . . . (92-93, Ashbery's final ellipsis).

This Thoreauvian extravagance, diffuse enough to wear down close readers ("There are too many stones to make it interesting to hobble from one to another"), boils down to the rose's question: What saving *sententia* or persona do we expect to extract from the text at hand? "What I really want to know is how will this affect me, make me better in the future? Maybe make me a better conversationalist?" (92). The "answer" lies in the Archimedean displacement of the reading process: "or is it more the act of reading something, of being communicated to by an author and thus having one's ideas displaced like the water that pebbles placed by the stork's beak slowly force out of the beaker—beaker? do you suppose?" (92). On the merely "clever" surface, then, "The Ice Storm," no more or less than a transcript of turbulent consciousness, is a parable against parables, against ideal and abstract notions, and against the probing of analytic delvers, "people" (echoed in "pebble") who murder to dissect.

But why, even in the wreck of the garden, a "desert"? Ashbery's elision lets us read "desert" as an adjective, as in Gray's "Elegy": "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, / And waste its sweetness on the desert air." But the best commentator on Gray's best-known lines was

Emerson, whose poem "The Rhodora" seems to have grafted itself onto Ashbery's p-rose:

In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.
The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array.
Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,
Then Beauty is its own excuse for being:
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask, I never knew;
But, in my simple ignorance, suppose
The self-same Power that brought me there
brought you.

Emerson coaches his fresh rhodora, rival upstart in the court of flowers of speech, not to excuse her own being stuck there by reference to one higher Power. But Emerson's own pose as one who, in the midst of Unitarian sages, simply whiles away the hours conferring with the flowers, is hardly less coy than the rhodora's in this song of assumed innocence.

Ashbery's own self-reliant rose, which "really had no need of us to justify its blooming where it did," introduces a chillier homiletics. What of our own unrooted, specular position, "positioned around to comment" (93) on the rose, on our allotted path toward death? What keeps us around, "ornaments on a structure whose mass remains invisible or illegible" (94)? Whether we try to excavate truths or stick to concrete details, we desire permanence: self-justification in the form of a fixed idea or a crystallized text, rather than the Archimedean course of displacement by later poets, revised commentaries, further definitive re-interpretations. "The Ice Storm" begins in the midst of things:

The Ice Storm

isn't really a storm of course because unlike most storms it isn't one till it's over and people go outside and say will you look at that. And by then it's of course starting to collapse. . . . [A]re you sure it's this you were waiting for while the storm—the real one—pressed it all into the earth to emphasize a point that melts away as fast as another idea enters the chain of them in the conversation (91).

Commentary rides on its own melting. But at least we're in the same boat, off, if toward oblivion, in the same direction. The dated journal entry ("October 28") which finishes "The Ice Storm" chooses a car as its final vehicle: "I am being taken out into the country. Trees flash past. All is perhaps for the best then since I am going, and they are going with us, with us as we go. . . . [L]et us be off anywhere, to Alaska, to Arizona. I am fishing for compliments. The afternoon lasts forever" (94). Thus "The Ice Storm" transforms its own meltdown into a traffic flow.

"Winter Weather Advisory" ends the same way: "We ride and ride, and still the view comes on" (67). We write and write. "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in," Thoreau confided in *Walden*, but he added, "I cannot count one. I know not the first letter of the alphabet." The wish to begin again from infant A, to revisit the states in alphabetical order, leads elsewhere in *April Galleons* to polluted springs, titles like "Never to Get it Really Right" (68), never to get those dingy texts really white again.

If fixity—deep truth or polished surface—is a lie, it's a white lie, the kind that keeps things from falling apart. The white lie is the trademark of Jamesian realism. After Fanny Asingham shatters the golden bowl, Maggy Verver reassembles the pieces so that the flaw is once again glossed over. James saves us from the scenes in which characters break through the veneer of their lives and confront each other with their deceptions. Because hiding reality (or hollowness) saves appearances, allows them to continue developing. "One Coat of Paint" surpasses the lumbering tall tale of "Finnish Rhapsody" with its free-fall dream of saving the world:

To seduce
A fact into becoming an object, a pleasing one, with
some
Kind of esthetic quality, which would also add to the
store
Of knowledge and even extend through several strata
Of history, like a pin through a cracked wrist bone,
Connecting these in such a dynamic way that one would
be forced
To acknowledge a new kind of superiority without which
the world
Could no longer conduct its business, even simple stuff
like bringing
Water home from wells, coals to hearths, would
of course be
An optimal form of it but in any case the thing's got to
Come into being, something has to happen, or all
We'll have left is disagreements, *désagréments*,
to name a few.
O don't you see how necessary it is to be around,
To be ferried from here to that near, smiling shore
And back again into the arms of those that love us,
Not many, but of such infinite, superior sweetness
That their lie is for us and it becomes stained,
encrusted,
Finally gilded in some exasperating way that turns it
To a truth plus something, delicate and dismal as a
star,
Cautious as a drop of milk, so that they let us
Get away with it, some do at any rate? (80).

The surging wish to conjure up a beautiful diachronic thing, a storehouse of profoundly useful knowledge (mined coal, drawn water), subsides into qualifications. But Ashbery manages to turn the last ferry ride, as he turned the car ride of "The Ice Storm," into a round trip, an unbroken circle of readers ages hence, in which our secret sin, that we had something or nothing saved up to hide, will be glossed over, cleansed and forgiven:

"and everything/ At the end will be whitewashed, that is incidents/ Will glimmer through layers and layers of paint" (39). Even Whitman knew there was no alternative to the white lie, to saving face: "appearances, now and henceforth, declare what you are, you necessary film." The "golden age, our/ Golden age" (96) is gilded like the rest. Not false, just an additional appearance of truth. To get *April Galleons* really right is to let yourself be taken in.

Of the available conversations,
the electric, the enchanted song,
the telegraphic traced on to airwaves,
these provide only part
of the communication procedure.
Vision slides to a blur.
Hearing pleads.

Discovering the recorded message,
attempts to breach its structure
are foiled by the continuous loop
of repetition.
The continuous loop of repetition.

All is perpetual motion.
Facts retell even that which has been
systematically obliterated.
The windows are open
but the door is locked.
There is a fine edge,
a high altitude twilight,
a vast expanse of persistent reasoning.

There is the advance of civilisation
and the retreat from metaphor.
We speak a migrant tongue.
We surpass understanding.
We deny the enchantment of pain.

A delicate embrace of live terminals.
The exchange of visual contact.
Touch,
etched on sensitive air,
between transmission points.
Tongues of disturbed current.
Tongues of light.
Tongues of dark fire.
The immaculate collaboration of tongues
of light.

Notes on Contributors

Issue Number Seven

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71 Elmgrove Ave. #1A
Providence, RI 02906



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