

Code of Signals

edited by

Michael Palmer

This re-presentation of *Code of Signals* features selections from the original publication by North Atlantic Books in 1983, with the following exceptions:

Nathaniel Mackey's selection, which is available in *Bedouin Hornbook* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1997) pps. 165-178.

Susan Howe's selection, which is available as "Part Two; Childe Emily To the Dark Tower Came" in *My Emily Dickinson* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1985) pps. 33-65.

John Taggart's "Were You," which is available in *Loop* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1991) pps. 79-102.

An exhaustive effort has been made to contact all the authors represented in the original collection in order to represent this anthology in its original format. Any exclusion from this version is due to not being able to obtain the respective permissions. Any assistance in helping contact those not represented in this archive, but featured in the original publication, would be greatly appreciated. Any & all corrections to the texts in this publication should be addressed to: Jerrold Shiroma, jerrold@durationpress.com.

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“A poetics is informed and informs -
Just *informs* maybe - the rest is a risk.”

Louis Zukofsky, “A”-12

“Poetic speech is a carpet fabric with a multitude of textile warps which differ one from the other only in the coloring of the performance, only in the musical score of the constantly changing directives of the instrumental code of signals.”

Osip Mandelstam, “Conversation about Dante”

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James Clifford Transcriptions

1.

The Lakotas will not write. They will remember things by figures and symbols. A circle will mean a camp, and the sun, and the world. A circle with marks across it will mean the spider and a whirlwind. A square will mean the four winds, and the country of the Lakotas. A triangle will mean a tipi; triangles side by side will mean mountains. A triangle with its base up will mean the people. A trident will mean going against. A straight line will mean a trail. A straight line with a head and points will mean a journey, a war party or hunting party. A diamond will mean water. There are many other figures which will mean much.

2.

The Lakotas may have written. They may have remembered things by figures and symbols. A circle may have meant a camp, and the sun, and the world. A circle with marks across it may have meant the spider and a whirlwind. A square may have meant the four winds, and the country of the Lakotas. A triangle may have meant a tipi; triangles side by side may have meant mountains. A triangle with its base up may have meant the people. A trident may have meant going against. A straight line may have meant a trail. A straight line with a head and points may have meant a journey, a war party or hunting party. A diamond may have meant water. There are many other figures which may have meant much.

3.

The Lakotas did write. They remembered things by figures and symbols. A circle meant a camp, and the sun, and the world. A circle with marks across it meant the spider and a whirlwind. A square meant the four winds, and the country of the Lakotas. A triangle meant a tipi; triangles side by side meant mountains. A triangle with its base up meant the people. A trident meant going against. A straight line meant a trail. A straight line with a head and points meant a journey, a war party or hunting party. A diamond meant water. There are many other figures which meant much.

4.

The Lakotas do not write. They remember things by figures and symbols. A circle means a camp, and the sun, and the world. A circle with marks across it means the spider and a whirlwind. A square means the four winds, and the country of the Lakotas. A triangle means a tipi; triangles side by side means mountains. A triangle with its base up means the people. A trident means going against. A straight line means a trail. A straight line with a head and points means a journey, a war party or hunting party. A diamond means water. There are many other figures which mean much.

Note

The source of these transcriptions is James R. Walker, *Lakota Society*, Raymond J. DeMallie, ed., University of Nebraska Press, 1982, pp. 107-108. The short, but complete, text is entitled by the editor, "Symbols. Seven Rabbits." It is published (with perhaps a few changes in punctuation) as found among the papers of

James Walker, author of "The Sun Dance" (1917). Walker worked for eighteen years on the Pine Ridge Reservation, between 1896-1914, as a physician and ethnographer. The documents now being printed in four volumes were written by Walker, by his interpreters Charles and Richard Nines, and by various Oglala Sioux.

"Seven Rabbits" is one of nineteen "Authorities" cited in Lakota society. He is listed as bearing the name (for census purposes) "Mastincala Sakowin," resident of Medicine Root, born circa 1833. It is not clear whether Seven Rabbits spoke or wrote what appears in Lakota Society.

These new transcriptions alter the published version as follows: 1) the verb tenses have usually been changed 2) the initial sentence has been shifted from positive to negative, or vice versa. None of the four is identical to "Symbols. Seven Rabbits."

The publication of Walker's archive was provoked by residents of the Pine Ridge Reservation wishing to use these documents in teaching local history and cultural renewal.

Fanny Howe The Contemporary Logos

Two shocks run in continual opposition: one is the shock of visible existence; the other is the shock of the invisible. That is, consciousness. Both can leave you shaking. For the fact is, the voice in the void is as weird as a miracle. Human voices-babble, anonymous speech, prophetic speech-these murmurs out of invisible thought are not demystified by the mechanism of larynx and tongue.

Adam and Eve heard the weird voice from another angle; but with equivalent anxiety. It is written that they 'heard the voice in the garden walking.' This voice-Memra in Hebrew-was the ultimate voice, Yahweh, the Law, the Logos, and it was walking. This same voice of the Logos was later heard speaking through Moses, whose face glowed so gold, no one dared go near him.

The sound of the Law will come and go in other human and angelic forms through Scripture; then recede and recede. The Gnostics heard it receding into eternity, and it, in a sense became that eternity. The Logos spread out so far, so thin, it was invisibility, or absence, personified. Contact with it occurred only in much the same way as Proust's involuntary memory experience, "It depends on chance whether we come upon it before we die or whether we never encounter it."

To the Gnostic, gnosis, or grace-this sensational moment-was only given to a soul by chance. It was eternity which granted temporality an allegorical perspective, another reality, not the living, audible Logos. Why am I here and not there, and why now, rather than then-the reasons that the mind could offer for the body's temporal position were echoes of some original plan on the part of the Logos.

The gnostic gospel according to Marcion expressed a radical reaction against the Logos/Law/Yahweh of the Old Testament. He, as an early Christian, saw *that* god as representing the spirit of the world, temporality. And for Marcion, the serpent in the garden of Eden was the voice of the true god, the one who is, in a word, alien. And alien, as a gnostic term, was contemporary in meaning, Alien: separate, other, outside.

Marcion was thinking in direct opposition to Philo the Alexandrian, who developed his theory of the Logos out of his interpretation of Old Testament Scripture and knowledge of Plato. For Philo, Yahweh the Logos was manifest in speech as in action; its law represented justice and unity. Prudence, temperance, courage-these three qualities were the central commandments of the Law.

For Philo Plato's perfect model was another image of the Judaic parable. And nothing written in Scripture was empty of allegory, a hidden meaning. "And you shall put manifestation and truth in the oracle of judgement." Philo took his line from Exodus and interpreted it this way: "The oracle here meant the organs of speech which exist in us, which is in fact the power of language...and of this well-approved kind of language there are two supreme virtues-namely, distinctiveness and truth."

In other words, for Philo the Logos represents the hidden unity, or ideal state, of the universe; it speaks through the human mouth, like an oracle, when a person speaks with distinctiveness and truth. These latter qualities represent judgement-the judgement formed of, in and by language.

Marcion, suspicious of such connectedness between humanity and the creator, turned all of Old Testament Scripture around. In his mind, so did Jesus-also called the Logos, the Word-made-flesh-and he read the Passion

of Christ according to his suspicions. That is, when Jesus, as the last word on the subject of creation, arrived, he exposed the falsity of this old worldly creator. The new Father, speaking through, in and with Jesus, declared Himself distant, alien, indifferent, and departed.

Marcion's perspective, though heretical, was not without influence. Christian gnostics in general would agree with him that the serpent's injunction to 'eat of the tree of Knowledge' was the word of the true, alien father. Knowledge, or gnosis, was what mankind deserved: to know that we are abandoned to nature, where what we see is what we get. And what we say in what we hear: words speaking to words. Logical, sequential, temporal language was, to the Gnostic, a mere echo of its original source. As a clock goes on ticking, after it has been set and wound, words go on speaking, even when, and though, no one is paying attention.

*

A modern exponent of a similar vision, Simone Weil, before the last World War, wrote, "We must take the feeling of being at home to exile. We must be rooted in the absence of a place." Her faith-harsh as the Gnostics in its near-nihilism-was expressed, nonetheless, on the steps of the Catholic Church. It was not appropriate, she decided, for her to enter and receive communion, though she was, indeed, converted by her intense desire for the eucharist. In her chosen spiritual exile, she stayed instead skeptical, intellectual, a neo-Platonist.

She perfected the position of hesitation to the point where her life cannot be repeated, but only imitated-a valid definition of sanctity. Contemporary in the extreme, her own writing dispenses with every artifice-no beauty, no fiction, no allegory-yet aims for that distinctiveness and truth which Philo considered 'oracular'.

As in Scripture, where language and revelation are one, in the writings of Simone Weil, mystical contemplation aims to uncover the voice and word of God. But this God is Gnostic in its distance. As stated in the Zohar, "the infinite word of man was aimed at the infinite word of God." But this infinity, now absence personified, for Weil is only known through grace.

Beckett's characters in his plays and fiction also speak for, in and out of infinity-or eternity as the personification of absence. The father's grave in *First Love* is, however, just the view of a father's grave, and the question of allegory is not suggested. No allegory, but the sense of some *other*, even another father, from which this voice issues, of which this voice is issue.

Unlike a fiction of hidden intentions, Beckett's writing hides nothing. His work suggests that any other kind of fiction is a false form of parable or allegory, in that all it can conceal is a new façade, a voice of inventions. He does not seem to write so much for the infinite, as out of it. The mouth as oracle floats in the void, where what is seen, or known, is just as shocking as what is unknown, unseen. A theater of the void makes this vision possible, because there is no façade, nothing to misunderstand.

*

The French poet, Edmond Jabès, wrote of his writing, "I have entered each book of mine with the very clear impression that I was not expected, or, rather, that I had been expected so long they finally despaired of my coming."

"They" are his words, or characters, and the sentiment here is the complete opposite of a literature of faith, a literature of allegory, logic or the Logos.

He gives us no sense of connection between consciousness and the natural world. This is not even a speaking for the abyss. This is worse. The mind is empty, a helpless mechanism on the lookout for word which will, seemingly, arrive by chance. That is, if he, the writer, lasts that long.

Nevertheless, Jabès wonders anxiously, and even Platonically, “Is writing simply the way in which that which expressed itself without us nevertheless expresses itself through what has been handed down to us from our origins and which the word has made us discover?”

The words, in this question, are still at a distance, and receding, but they may have some source which we, in natural speech, hear the echo of. The question also suggests the image of the scattering and receding Logos.

That this perspective is both existentialist in theory and Gnostic in emotion puts those two philosophies together where they seem, in some ways, to belong. Hans Jonas, in his definitive book on gnosticism, saw the connection this way: “Dread as the soul’s response to being-in-the-world is a recurring theme in Gnostic literature...The world (not the alienation from it) must be overcome; and a world degraded to a power system can only be overcome through power...Different as this is from modern man’s power relation to the world-causality, an ontological similarity lies in the formal fact that the countering of power with power is the sole relation to the totality of nature left for man in both cases.”

The dread of Jabès, in the face of chaotic powers, chance, is quite different from Beckett’s dread, as the latter’s oracular mouth runs on some kind of power system of its own. This system is often comic in its manifestation—has to be—and comedy, as the human expression of mercy, not justice, is a sign of power. It looks dread in the face.

As children see how long they can go without breathing, and breathe, so do Beckett’s people try to go without thinking, thinking. There is a backlog somewhere, which can’t be shut up, and behind that backlog, the insight of the person reduced. The desire of the word is for its source. As he writes in *First Love*, “At first I heard nothing, then the voice again, but only just, so faintly did it carry. First I didn’t hear it, then I did, I must therefore have begun hearing it, at a certain point, but no, there was no beginning, the sound emerged so softly from the silence and resembled it...”

And on he goes, with this quest for the origin of sounds, in the form of a fatherless son, reduced to rags by his knowledge of unknowingness. The paradox—or wit, here—is that the origin of sound will be silence. This is how he brings judgement down, on earth as it is on paper. Words invading a blank page.

Similar to the Gnostics in another way, Beckett rotates the classic anxiety about illegitimacy. The father does not doubt his paternity for a minute. Rather the child, cast down by the father, suffers voluminous anxiety regarding his father’s legitimacy. Is he, or isn’t he, mine? There are no illegitimate children; only illegitimate fathers. This may be why the gender of God must continually be He, if it’s not going to be it, as long as this dread and distance are not accepted.

The wrong father motif runs through multiple Gnostic texts. It is the source of their dread. Marcion’s Old Testament god, judging and assessing human activity, interfering in history, and in nature’s laws, is a stepfather who, at least, cares. The alien real father has left his genetic imprint, so to speak, on all that lives, but his heart is elsewhere.

In *First Love*, as the narrator departs from the cries of his offspring, he writes, the cries “pursued me down the stairs and out into the street. I stopped before the house door and listened. I could still hear them. If I had not known there was crying in the house I might not have heard them. But knowing it I did. I was not sure where I was. I looked among the stars and constellations for the Wains, but could not find them. And yet they must have been there. My father was the first to show them to me. He had shown me other, but alone, without him beside me, I could never find any but the Wains...”

There is nothing hidden here. The fleeing father scoots through Beckett’s work with the clack of a skeleton running from a garden.

*

In the Gnostic gospel of Thomas, Jesus the Logos says, “When you see a man who was born without a mother, bow down, face to the ground, and adore him. He is your creator.” And he later blesses the woman who is barren because, he says, “She knows who her father is.”

In both cases absence is the clue to the truth. Or, as Simone Weil wrote, “God can only be present in creation under the form of absence.” So this ebb and flow of the progenitor disturbs more than the rivers of Eden. It is a flux disturbing contemporary imagination too. The human voice is like that of the crying infant, the abandoned child, in *First Love*; and the father recedes continuously. This fathering and unfathering occurs as sonar phenomena. “Hear me!” is what Jesus the Logos cries, again and again, and it’s more than a demand for attention.

In the Old Testament, this voice, Memra, means the wisdom which flows without ceasing in the human mind, but is inaudible, not even a whisper, and is located in thought. And at another level, Memra issues in a whisper as the audible speech which comes from the inaudible source. Both levels are fused in Yahweh, the Great Voice on high, all that unifies that which is scattered, and has no name.

The Logos of the Old Testament is far more accessible than the father in the Gnostic gospels of the New Testament. By the time words are mouthed through Beckett’s characters, lowly in the extreme, affliction has rendered the voice all but inaudible. This is “the point in affliction,” as Simone Weil writes, “where we are no longer able to bear either that it should go on or that we should be delivered from it.” And she, too, has an eye for dualism, the split Logos, writing, “The false God changes suffering into violence. The true God changes violence into suffering.”

And she also writes, “There are people for whom everything is salutary which brings God nearer to them. For me it is everything which keeps him at a distance. Between me and him there is the thickness of the universe.”

The other, then, should keep its distance, in order to remain the absolute alternative to the heaviness of history, the density of nature. In her mind the relics of this distant Logos are available in mathematics, music, art, intelligence, poetry and the Eucharist “Nothing,” she says, “which exists is absolutely worthy of love. We must therefore love that which does not exist.”

*

The sparsity of hers and Beckett’s forms of expression is poetic to the extent that ordinary meanings are rearranged. Both through with and through paradox, a liberating act occurs. “I can’t go on. I go on,” writes Beckett.

This sort of act, as a written event, results in what Coleridge called a 'contemporaneous' moment.

By this is meant a moment which unifies all the disparate parts of a text, a mind, including the burden of history, the vapors of consciousness, and one's motion, forward, through time. Nonetheless, any poetic line is composed under the compulsion and constraint—the sentence-of syntax.

Just as, in one sentence you cannot turn into *she*, *run* cannot turn into *ran*, you can't, in your desire to be free of a certain moment, be somewhere else immediately. This is the judgement of time, history and gender as it is reflected in any written line.

And just as the sentence contains only as much language as it can bear, so can it be viewed as an image of the pressure of temporality. The facing of what is in front of you, by sorting out what is behind, goes into the careful syntactical processing of a sentence. Law and grammar must coexist in that cell. This coexistence requires the exaction of judgement.

Poetic language goes to the extreme with this exaction, and the more extreme it is, the more otherly it becomes. It transforms the state of being lost into that of being free, by making judgement on judgement itself. Poetry writes twice, and produces another sound from the ordinary. In this sense it is free out of its longing to escape the cell of syntax.

Much like the term 'interlinear' which Walter Benjamin uses to describe a perfect translation, poetic language combines literalness with this free overview of its own construction. Benjamin says, "If there is such a thing as a language of truth, then this language of truth is—the true language. And this very language, whose divination and description is the only perfection a philosopher can hope for, is concealed in concentrated fashion in translations."

This language of translation, as Benjamin perceives it, is like poetic language because of the fusion of a literal reading of the word with the freedom of a second look. The contemporaneous moment involves such a fusing.

"Total obedience to time obliges God to bestow eternity," wrote Simone Weil. Her two formulas for the Mystical Way were waiting and obedience. In her book, *Waiting for God*, she explores this state of attentiveness as an alert but passive state, the direct opposite of Beckett's 'languishing' motif, his *Waiting for Godot*. While she comes up with the experience of grace, and he does not, a nonetheless similar vision of poverty of spirit is in both of their work.

In Beckett's prose, where the oracular mouth is both human and the voice of eternity itself, true resurrection takes place: that is, legitimacy is resolved between the Logos and spoken thought.

References:

The Gnostic Tradition, by Hans Jonas
Gravity and Grace, by Simone Weil
First Love and Other Shorts, by Samuel Beckett
Fall and Exile, by Edmond Jabès
Illuminations, by Walter Benjamin

Claude Royet-Journoud / Emmanuel Hocquard
Conversation Dated February 8,1982

Claude Royet-Journoud: (Silence)—I was thinking about the strange bond that books weave among themselves. The manner in which the book somehow builds an attitude, an attitude toward the real; something that dumbly enough helps us live. You can walk the street with the book of a poet living in San Francisco, and that kind of silence around you, that impossibility of connecting, or simply the writing comes at you without your determining exactly what the situation is ... you know that it permits you to account for another day.

* *

Emmanuel Hocquard: There's a quotation from Bousquet with which you conclude *The Symi Letter* (1) which I feel like putting here as an exergue to our conversation: "To write a book is to cause the reader to witness all the vicissitudes of a situation that is finally made clear."

* *

E. H.: One day, while talking, we tackled the problem of a poetry that would be like a trembling fringe of prose.

* *

C.R.-J.: In fact I am concerned essentially with verse, with the rapport between breath and sense in each portion of the line, with the rapport between ... This absolutely imperceptible glide from one line to the next; I would like to make, I would like to succeed in making minimal unities of meaning work-because normally you work in larger unities. I would like to get down a theatricalization not of the infinitesimal, because I don't think that it lacks size, but a theatricalization (silence) of a meaning hardly made, hardly formulable, hardly...

E.H.: Yes, besides at the end of the interview with Mathieu Bénézet (2) you opposed the closure of meaning possible in a line Eluard's: "The earth is blue like an orange" to the meaning remains always open, always possible to reinvent, in the line of Marcelin Pleynet: "The wall at the back is a wall of lime."

C.R.-J.: Which is where my fascination for Wittgenstein's books comes in, for example. Before this literality, before this lunatic appearance of a logic, you tell yourself that via this literality you perhaps recover a semblance of body, or a semblance of the body's displacement.

* *

E.H.: I want to ask you a question you won't like. It's the question of biography, what I would be tempted to call "circumstances." *The Symi Letter* opens with these lines: "Dear Roger ... It was first and foremost the storm. A storm of mad violence, transforming the streets into masses of water and giving the sea the color of earth. From time to time some hail. And, further violence, inside this earth: your books. Fascinated by *Suite*" etc. And if I pose the problem of circumstances, I mean, what is around you...

C.R.-J.: If I tell you why I was on that Greek island would that answer your question? It was simply to be able to assemble the heaps of prose from which I begin my work, this impossible pre-text, that is to say material

preparation, or as I called it once “the negative dung” and to put myself in a situation where there was no longer anything between me and the book I was making—nothing perhaps but a landscape.

* *

C.R-J.: To write I need a very long period of work. There are people “inhabited” by language, that’s not the case with me. There’s never anything. I pass my time with this nothing and I’m stubborn and I insist on this nothing and so at first there is this work which is very bodily, which consists in writing a great quantity of prose without literary value. It’s only a way to cleanse myself, to create a vacuum, so that by the end of a certain number of hours per day, per week, per month of a constant effort, you begin to feel it happening, that the world is becoming legible. Because we pass the greater part of our time blind. It is not easy to attain this kind of legibility where suddenly a table is saying something, or a book, or a line...

E.H.: I was thinking of what Clément Rosset calls idiocy. That perhaps in a place like an island, where things and people surround you, life is at one and the same time very airy and very confined, the distances are inevitably limited, and everything becomes a great deal more abstract, a great deal more concrete as well.

C.R-J.: Yes, For example to see a dead man carried by a few people through the street while other people are closing their shops, stretched out like that on a ladder or in an open casket, with new shoes, a dead man paraded through town and who is there, a few inches, a few yards from our face ... We’ve not yet said anything about that, but if writing is linked to something, it is to death or perhaps to “before-birth, “ to a place that is neither outside nor in, and which writing tries sometimes to recover. Also there are simple gestures; in fact the gestures of the butcher, of the meat man. And when I see the butcher over there preparing the beast, then slaughtering it—because the Greek butchers are not playing cards!—I think that in the end my work is nearly equivalent (laughter).

E.H.: You’re not the butcher of Chuang-Tzu who hasn’t used his knife in a hundred years?

C.R-J.: Not at all. There is something of this slaughter in the passage from prose to verse.

E.H.: Perhaps what fascinates me most in writing is what I would call enigma. And ever since I’ve been reading you, it is an impression that continues to sink in, I sense the eminently concrete character of your language, of your poetry—simple words, words from everyday life, a flat sound—and at the same time its extremely abstract character; and there I return to what you call slaughter.

I see it as a labor of abstraction.

C.R-J.: “ Enigma “ is the first part of *État* ... While listening to you I was thinking of this line of Anne-Marie Albiach’s: “All the clues are mystery to him.”

* *

C.R-J.: It is useless to talk of biography unless you mean to render writing synonymous with living, which Roger Laporte so admirably does. There is effectively no experience “before.”

E.H.: Therefore the word “reversal” can also be understood in this way.

C.R-J.: Another phrase of Wittgenstein that I cite in *The Symi Letter* sheds light on this: “What language can say is only what possible for us to represent to ourselves equally in some other way. That everything is flowing, must be expressed in the application of the language. And if you say that only present experience has reality, the word “present” is already by necessity superfluous.”

E.H.: Yes. That brings to mind an anecdote (laughter) that when examined at the level of words, collapses into the absurd. It was on Symi, on the island, and one day we saw the metaphor drive down. We were at the water’s edge and on this road under construction descended the only motorized vehicle on the island, which was being used to help construct the road. And, on the side of this truck written in large Greek letters was the word “metaphors,” that is to say, literally, “transports.” And there we return to words that cannibalize themselves as far as the sense goes, because before us we had, word for word, a metaphor. Or a metaphor literally is no longer a metaphor (laughter). And wasn’t there a tragedy linked to this metaphor? Am I inventing it? Wasn’t the guy who drove the metaphor killed in it? On an island where there was only one car...

C.R-J.: Yes, as a matter of fact. It was the first road accident on Symi for thousands of years, since before it there was neither car nor road.

E.H.: It’s the metaphor that killed him (laughter).

* *

C.R-J.: Once *The Notion of Obstacle* was written, I was struck to perceive that not once was the first person pronoun “I” used. It was replaced by a plurality of words that echoed it: voice, sleep, cold, it, he, she, they Those words that make up the personages. When I heard the stereophonic work that Lars Fredrikson made based on my reading of the book—the left speaker corresponding to the page on the left, the right speaker to the page on the right—there was no center, if not the book’s binding, or the empty space between speakers—and I realized, physically, the absence of subject. And I could truly feel that tension of the dramatis personae, that theatricality, flowing from first to last page of the book.

* *

C.R-J.: At bottom, for there to be a subject there must be a language, and my problem is to be without language. It’s not that I feel dispossessed and at the same time in the mastery of a superb language, but on the contrary, in an absence regarding myself. There is a sentence in *Love in the Ruins* (3) which goes: “This book is not for you.” I hold to that. It is not for me either. I am also in that same situation when faced with the books of other writers. There must be a kind of violence in reading. You don’t abstractly deposit your body in books, (silence) you don’t put your head to bed on that paper for nothing.

* *

E.H.: Poetry scares philosophers. So there’s a question to ask there. What causes the fear? To return to that word, enigma...

* *

C.R-J.: ... because the more I read Wittgenstein, the more I ask myself what I can understand.... finally what interests me is the mystery of literality. I open the *Tractatus*; I see: “The world is all that is the case.” [French: *Le monde est tout ce qui arrive.*] I am content. That jibes with what I think about accident, for example, about the possibility of writing, about reading the world uniquely via this thread, this knife edge that is accident. Accident is the legible’s only possibility. *Le monde est tout ce qui arrive.*

* *

E.H.: Speaking about the island a while ago, you were saying that birth and death are what come to pass the most conspicuously and the most brutally. I want to say that the whole of philosophy can only find its bearings between these two accidents, even though it never touches either. It falls short, if I dare say so.

C.R-J.: I really like the beginning of this Bousquet sentence: “All poetic experience tends to restore to the body the actuality of birth...”

E.H.: Or maybe metaphysics?

C.R-J.: Metaphysics what?

E.H.: What’s it say to you?

C.R-J.: It tells me nothing. Metaphysical, what is it?

E.H.: It’s where philosophy encroaches upon these two shapeless accidents about which nothing can be said.

C.R-J.: I can’t say anything about them either (silence). I’m feeling a little sluggish... Philosophy isn’t the slant I can take. Life. Death ... between death and me there are my books. That’s all I can tell you, and this gliding from one title to another, and once this problematic of the simulacrum, of representation ... Therefore I put all that in between and I wait for it to pass (silence). You can try to be conscious of this cessation, without turning into a metaphysician about it, no! Yes, this slide from one title to another, from *Le Renversement (Reversal)* to *La Notion d’Obstacle (The Notion of Obstacle)*. I attach a lot to the movement from masculine to feminine article. That’s why I refer now to the next book, not that it is born of this engendering (laughter) but to explain perhaps why the first sequence of this book will be “*Le Drap Maternel*” ou *la restitution* (“*Maternal Cloth*” or *the restitution*).

* *

E.H.: Let me recall that *The Notion of Obstacle* opens with a sequence titled *Até*, daughter of Zeus, who travels the earth swiftly and whose sole preoccupation is the sowing of death, evil and suffering around her.

C.R-J.: Not solely. It’s also vengeance, it’s also the sense of justice.

E.H.: But before anything else it is the idea of devastation, and we shouldn’t forget that *Até* herself is accompanied by the *Litai* who are both daughters of Jupiter and lame. They follow *Até* around, trying to ameliorate the suffering she’s strewn behind her. What I wanted to say is that the image we traditionally have of poetry is rather one that points to the *Litai*. Then your book opens on a figure of violence, not at all one of consolation.

C.R-J.: What interests me is just that wastage in blindness, to connect back to the idea of enigma or of entropy, as Anne-Marie Albiach would say. I just received a beautiful postcard from Roger Laporte where he quotes a couplet from At :

unfailing hand
(description of the punishment)

E.H.: The day I arrived on the island, when we walked around the harbor, there where the water was deepest, where the names of the boats are painted on the stone docks, one single name was engraved; it was the word ATE.

C.R-J.: Furthermore, you had taken a picture of ATE.

E.H.: Yes, I'd taken a picture.

C.R-J.: You had poured sea water.

E.H.: There is a photograph of that part of the dock, with this avenging name.

* *

C.R-J.: We are around a table ... What comes to perforate this reality is the knowledge that, though both speaking, it is not the same conversation we would be having if we were seated on the terrace of the Rouquet; that it is a conversation being recorded for this issue of Action Po tique and that it partakes of our intimacy, our rapport as writers which dates back a long time, and that, at the same time, there, let's say, the accident would be the tape recorder and the will to talk to each other.

E.H.: You want to continue this banality?

C.R-J.: As a matter of fact, regarding literality, simply to say that it is right there that you find the maximum of force — and of terror, of menace. I am thinking for example of Michel Couturier's *L'Ablatif Absolu*, of Anne-Marie Albiach's * tat*.

E.H.: Yes, and then I believe that we must reduce the drama of the thing and remember that the accident is simply "what survives"—to use Wittgenstein's phrase literally—and what survives not in the exceptional sense, but in what is ordinary, and when I say ordinary I am taking it etymologically, that is to say from day to day. Then, evidently, he who is present is in some way involuntary watchman of the quotidian, retaining what he wants to retain. Isn't that the only poetic act?

C.R-J.: While listening to you I was saying to myself: to write is to enter the cold, and therefore it is not eventful. In this cold, everything is event, nothing is particularly eventful.

E.H.: There is no place for a metaphorization the moment that a table is a table.

C.R-J.: Except this pain of the analogical.

E.H.: There's a title: "*Will We Escape Analogy*".

C.R.-J.: That's not a title, it's a line—it's a page ... Analogy, resemblance, and the impossibility of lying. They're the subject matter of the first book, *Reversal*.

* *

C.R.-J.: Yes, there's a time to rest, a time to work, etc—it's very Biblical—but I am very jealous of my periods of silence, jealous in the sense that I don't want to give them up. I attach a lot to those months that go by without writing, so much so that I have trouble freeing myself from them. I sense that they're necessary, necessary to a shift in words, or to the displacement of vocabulary. These periods when I don't write are indispensable to the book. I need several years for each book. It's a rhythm I like. It integrates phases of intense work and at the same time periods of reserve, of absence from oneself.

* *

C.R.-J.: I often think of these words of Roger Giroux: "The absence of writing is my work."

* *

C.R.-J.: The machine's working? (silence). It's nice to listen to the tape go around. (Silence).

* *

E.H.: In *Love in the Ruins* there is this: "It was a long time ago." Every tale ought to begin this way. When I read you I get the impression that there's a great distance, that it comes from far away in time.

C.R.-J.: I am thinking of a page in *The Notion of Obstacle* where I wrote: "distance is place" [*le distance est le lieu*] and I feel that physically. And yes it comes from far away, but without profundity. What I give is in the surface; there is no this or that side. As for *Love in the Ruins* I say to myself: how much biography there is in it! At the same time, this prose, it is the tale before writing begins, or of the instant the writing begins.

E.H.: You fear that there is too much biography involved, but that biography is not of the order of memory. It is completely flat; as you say it in *The Symi Letter*: "Our unique movement: a series of figures outside memory."

C.R.-J.: It's amusing that our conversation is based on *The Symi Letter* which is not a book, but a letter to Roger Laporte.

E.H.: That's why I chose it; but beginning from a place that is not a book, it seems we're allowed to talk of them. In *The Symi Letter* there is this notation: "A day between books" and if you're willing, if we give a title to this conversation, I would like it to be called "A day between books."

1) *Lettre de Symi*, a letter written by Royet-Journoud and sent to Roger Laporte as a response to his recent books.
Published by Fata Morgana, 1980

2) *Ecrire un livre*, in *Digraphe* No. 25, Flammarion, 1981.

3) "L'Amour Dans Les Ruins," in *Digraphe* No. 24, Flammarion, 1980.

First Published in *Action Poétique* No. 87, Spring 1982.

Conversation taped & transcribed by Michele Cohen.

Translation by Geoffrey Young.

Charles Stein Projection

(from *The Secret of the Black Chrysanthemum: Charles Olson's Use of the Writings of C.G. Jung*)

The title of Olson's most frequently quoted statement on his poetics is "Projective Verse." "Projection" is of course a key term in the vocabulary of Jung and other psychologists. The question which we wish to raise here is, to what extent does the psychological meaning of the term as used by Jung throw light upon what Olson intends by dubbing his own practice of verse "projective."

The term is never defined in the course of Olson's essay. It is clear, however, that the poet uses it along with the phrase "composition by field" to distinguish the poetry which interests him from rhymed and formally metricized verse. What Olson leaves to his readers is the task of connecting this basic distinction with the term "projective" in the essay's title.

The basic proposition of the essay is as follows. Olson wishes to provide the formal principle on which non-metrical, unrhymed verse might be ordered. He considered the composition of such verse from both a dynamic and morphological perspective. Dynamically:

A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it (he will have some several causations), by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader. Okay. Then the poem itself must, at all points, be a high-energy construct and, at all points, an energy discharge.

(HU, p. 52)

The transmission of energy of force from the poet to the reader is accomplished by "projection" in the root sense of "throwing forth." The act of writing "projects" the very forces which animate it "all the way over to" the reader. But this transmission of force in the act of composition also has morphological implications, i.e., implications for the form of the poem. In the absence of the predetermined, formal metrical and stanzaic patterns which form the "base of the non-projective," what determines the formal character of the poem? Olson provides this formulation:

...the law which presides conspicuously over such composition, and, when obeyed, is the reason why a projective poem can come into being [is] FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT. (Or so it got phrased by one, R. Creeley, and it makes absolute sense to me, with this possible corollary, that right form, in any given poem, is the only and exclusively possible extension of content under hand.)

(HU, p. 52)

The content of the poem, the matter under the poet's attention, and not only the psychic "force," must be "projected" into the poem, so that the formal characteristics of the matter at hand may be allowed to deter-

mine the formal characteristics of the “field” of the poem. Now this stipulation involves, metaphorically, a kind of geometric projection. In the operation in coordinate geometry known as “geometric projection,” the shape of a geometrical figure is reproduced by a process of coordinate mapping. In projective verse, in place of coordinate mapping, we have the mapping or projection of form implied by the poet’s obedience to the formula, “Form is never more than an extension of content.” Not only the force, but the form of the matter at hand must be “brought all the way over to the reader” through the form of the poem. If predetermined line-structure and stanza forms are not allowed to interfere with the poet’s search for the formal possibilities inherent in the content of the poem, those formal possibilities will be capable of extension in the generation of the poem’s form. The process by which the content is thus extended to produce the form of the poem, is a process of “projection.”

We have, thus, initially, two senses in which projective verse involves “projection:” 1. a force is “thrown forth” to the reader, via the poem; 2. the form of the matter under the poet’s attention is extended (by quasi-geometrical projection) to the form of the poem. This situation, however, is complicated by the following considerations.

The projection of the poet’s energy requires a medium by which it is transmitted to the reader. This medium, as we have seen, is the poem. Now the projected force, as well as the projected content, will have an influence on the form of the poem, because the intensity, duration, and gestural characteristics of this force can only be transmitted through formal elements of the poem’s expression such as line length and the play of syllables. The shape and intensity of the poetic phrase will carry the shape and intensity of the dynamic gesture which created it. If “form is never more than an extension of content,” then the energy which is projected by the poet is automatically part of the poem’s “content”: insofar as the poem transmits energy it is also “about” that energy.

At the same time, the force which is projected is a kind of “psychic energy” generated by the poet’s interest in the matter at hand. The poet’s psychic energy generated by his interest in the imagistic, narrative, and dogmatic content of the poem, will provide the motive force by which the morphological characteristics of that content will determine the form of the poem by projection. The psychic energy generated by this interest provides the projective thrust, as it were, for the realization of this interest in the poem. Thus, the dynamic projection of the force has morphological consequences. At the same time, the quasi-geometrical projection of the form of the matter at hand is animated by a projective motive force.

In the course of his reading of Jung, Olson frequently underscored passages in which Jung discusses the processes involved in psychological projection. To what extent do these passages throw light on Olson’s use of the term?

In a passage in the “Definitions” section of *Psychological Types* which Olson read, Jung defines projections as “...the expulsion of a subjective content into an object” (Psych. Types, p. 457). As in “Projective Verse,” the notion of projection in this definition involves both a dynamic and morphological component. There is an *act* of projection in which a discharge of libido (Jung’s term for psychic energy) occurs and at the same time the projection of a “content.” In Jung, the content of the projection is determined by the archetypal configuration guiding the libidinal discharge. The content is projected into an object which the psyche apprehends spontaneously as having a form analogous to that of the archetypal content constellated in its unconscious. When some object, person, or event exhibits a structure analogous to the structure of the archetypal complex active in the individual’s unconscious, the projection of the archetype and its psychic energy onto that object, person, or event occurs spontaneously. Any repressed psychic content, for instance, forms:

...an autonomous complex divorced from consciousness, leading a life of its own in the psychic non-ego and instantly projecting itself whenever it is constellated in any way—that is, whenever attracted by something analogous to it in the outside world.

(Psych. and Alch., pp.288-9)

The energy which the psyche invests in objects of interest to it is generated in the process of the “projection” of archetypal contents onto those objects. Thus a process of psychological projection is required for the energy which the poet projects in his work, to constellate his interest in the matter at hand. Just as the form of the poem is determined by the form of the matter at hand by a process of quasi-geometrical projection (i.e. structural analogy) so the subjective experience of the interest in the matter at hand corresponds to the projection of the contents of the unconscious (once again, structural analogy). Since in “Projective Verse” Olson emphasizes the poet’s investment of energy in his matter at hand as part of the process by which the form of the poem is achieved, it follows that the psychological meaning of the term is implied as well as the other meanings we have considered.

In *Symbols of Transformation* (a work which Olson read extensively and which deals largely with Jung’s libido theory), Jun discriminates two kinds of projective activity: projection as it occurs in neurosis, and projection as it occurs “naturally” in creative processes. In the first case the “content” which is projected is some conflict repressed in the life situation, past or present:

...repression leads to regressive reactivation of an earlier relationship or type of relatedness... “Constellated” (i.e. activated) unconscious contents are, so far as we know, always projected; that is, they are either discovered in external objects, or are said to exist outside one’s own psyche. A repressed conflict and its affective tone must reappear *somewhere*.

(Sym. of T., p. 59)

In the second case, “projection” occurs without repression:

If, however, a product like the hymn [“The Hymn of Creation” under discussion] came into being *without* an act of repression, i.e., unconsciously and spontaneously, then we are confronted with an entirely natural and automatic process of transformation...Natural transformations of this kind, without any semi-conscious elements of conflict, are to be found in all genuine acts of creation, artistic or otherwise. But to the degree that they are casually connected with an act of repression they are coloured by complexes which neurotically distort them and stamp them as *ersatz* products. With a little experience it would not be difficult to determine their origin by their character, and to see how far their genealogy is the result of repression. Just as in natural

birth no repression is needed to bring or “project” a living creature into the world, so artistic and spiritual creation is a natural process even when the figure projected is divine.

(Sym. of T., pp. 50-60)

In the second of the above passages, Olson checks in the margin Jung’s analogy between creative projection and childbirth. In a poem in *Maximus V*, Olson uses a similar analogy to characterize his own creative process:

Maximus is a whelping mother, giving birth
with the crunch of his own pelvis.

(MP II, p.87)

In these lines, Maximus is giving birth to his work. Jung’s passage would seem to have corroborated for Olson his own sense that the creative process is one of procreative projection. Later in this poem Olson writes again (again in definition of the creative process in which, in the composition of the *Maximus Poems*, he finds himself involved):

I am making a mappemunde, It is to include my being.

Mappemudes were early Renaissance maps of the world which were at the same time cosmological diagram, often integrating metaphysical entities and dimensions with their topographic contents. In “Letter 14” of *Maximus I*, Olson had written in reference to other diagrams from this period:

The old charts
are not so wrong
which added Adam
to the world’s directions

which showed any of us
the center of a circle
our fingers
and our toes describe

(MP I, p. 60)

A map, of course, uses the process of geometrical projection to arrive at its representation of the world’s topographic features. Olson’s declaration that his map of the world must “include [his] being” simultaneously poses and answers an apparent conundrum: how can a “projection” of the world onto a “map” include a man’s “be-

ing?” Man’s “being” includes his psychological structure, which already involves a process of projecting a world. For a map of the world to include a man’s “being,” it would have in part to be a projection of that projection. It would have to represent the process by which all images of the world carry the projections of the human psyche. It would have to exhibit in its structure a self-referential complexity similar to that of the human psyche, and in addition, it would have to situate that structure in the spatio-temporal world. Such a map, in fact, is what *The Maximus Poems* attempts to be. Projective verse, as we have seen, already implies a complex self-referentiality, in that if the poem is a projection of the energies which inform it, it is always in part “about” its own creation, whatever else its content. Further, in *The Maximus Poems*, Olson seeks to locate man in geo-temporal space without reducing the complexity of the above situation. We will examine the importance of this below in our chapter on “The Projective of the Archetypal Force onto Space.” Here let us simply note that, in this poem, Olson implicitly connects the notion of the making of a “mappemunde” with the composition of projective verse, by suggesting a relationship between topographic and psychological projection.

There are several other passages which Olson marks in Jung and Jungian texts where the process of projection in the “natural” or “creative” sense is discussed. In *The Archetype and The Collective Unconscious* Jung writes:

All the mythologized processes of nature, such as summer and winter, the phases of the moon, the rainy seasons, and so forth, are in no sense allegories of these objective occurrences; rather they are symbolic expressions of the inner, unconscious drama of the psyche which becomes accessible to man’s consciousness by way of projection—that is, mirrored in the events of nature.

(Arch. & Col. Unc., p. 6)

Olson underlines “by way of projection—that is mirrored in the events of nature” and puts two exclamation points in the margin next to the passage. Again, Olson read and underscored the following remarks in Neumann’s *The Great Mother*. Neumann is describing his schematic diagrams of the psyche. He writes:

The sixth plane of our schema is the extrapsychic stratum, since we designate it as “world.” Our diagram, however, relates to the world only in so far as it offers an outward plane of projection on which inner images are experienced.

(Great Mother, p. 22)

Olson copies out in the margin “offers an outward plane of projection on which projected inner images are experienced.” There are many poems in the *Maximus* series, particularly in *The Maximus Poems*, Volume Three, wherein Olson seems to be almost totally absorbed in recording concrete details of meteorological events, seasonal changes, or conditions of light, air, and sky. We have already seen how in some cases such attentions are made to carry metaphysical connotations. But even where Olson does not attach his observations directly to dogmatic assertions, the record of his attentions to the details of time and weather are “symbolic expressions of the inner, unconscious drama of the psyche” projected onto “the outward plane of the world” and they are intended by Olson to be taken as such.

In these poems meteorological phenomena are seen against a background of imagery both alchemical and astronomical. In "The Winter of Gen. Starks was struck," Olson identifies his psychological state with the process of the sun's turning at the solstice:

that there is promise again and the Sun comes back once more
toward the Equator and I can confidently expect the year.

(MP III, pp. 105-106)

In an untitled poem the reflected light of sun and moon on Gloucester harbor are given specific alchemical connotations. The "Gold-water" of sun-struck Freshwater Cove is connected to the "alemb the gold-making juices" of Olson's own creative life (MP III, pp. 199-200).

There are two places in Olson's work beside the instance in "Projective Verse" where the term "projection" is used in contexts which clearly implicate its psychological denotation. In each of these, Olson seems to have in mind both neurotically distorted projection and non-repressive creative projection. The first is in "Proprioception:"

'Psychology':	the surface: consciousness as ego and thus no flow because the 'senses' of same are all that sd contact area is valuable for, to report in to central. Inspection, followed hard on heels by, judgement (judicum, dotha: cry, if you must/all feeling may flow, is all which can count, at sd point. Direction outward is sorrow, or joy. Or participation: active social life, like, for no other reason than that - - social life. In the present. Wash the ego out, in its own 'bath' (os)
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THE WORKING
'OUT' OF
'PROJECTION'

(AP, p. 17)

The sense of this is complex but it can, in part, be unraveled thus. The distortion or limitation imposed by the functioning of the ego as merely the surface of consciousness, involves repression and consequently "projection" in the neurotic sense. This neurotic situation must be "worked out" by allowing the ego to be "washed out" in a bath of feeling created initially by its own rigidities. In this process the contents of the unconscious are brought out into the open by being projected "outward" in the creative sense.

The second place where Olson uses the word "projection" simultaneously in its "repressive" and "creative" significations is in the long poem in *The Maximus Poems*, Volume Three, in which Olson both celebrates his father and portrays his dependence upon him for certain aspects of his character:

“procreative” manifestation of archetypal contents without the “neurotic admixtures” in artistic and religious experience. Olson read many passages in Jung’s work wherein the latter defines and discusses “projection,” and though Olson’s use of it is neither restricted to nor clearly derived from Jung’s discussions, Olson surely felt Jung’s use of the term corroborative of his own.

List of Abbreviations

works by Charles Olson:

Additional Prose	AP
Human Universe	HU
The Maximus Poems	MP I
Maximus Poems, IV, V, VI	MP II
The Maximus Poems, Vol. Three	MP III

works by C.G. Jung:

Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious	Arch. & Col. Unc.
Psychological Types	Psych. Types
Psychology and Alchemy	Psych. & Alch.
Symbols of Transformation	Sym. of T.

other:

The Great Mother (Neumann)	Great Mother
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David Bromige
Notes not titled EDEN LOG*

Yes, I came again. "Resurrected". Not my mother, not my father, fathered & mothered me-do still, in some sense. It was as though I remembered them from before, but all was different. heaven having intervened, and I was never with them, no more than with any action, afterwards. I happened to act, and the act happened by me-like by my side.

The hours are irregular here, not enough sleep, we get up too late, the meals aren't on time. Too much color & movement. Too little definition, who's sick, who's well?

Heaven is totally reasonable-I wish I could persuade you of that, wish there were some argument whose axiom didn't remain personal, I mean unique to myself, to do it. If you o.d. reds, your friends will see you there. Q.E.D.

In fear & loathing they turned me away. This is the speech of Eden. And since that is the garden where I long to roam again, let me choose to speak its tongue. But that is the speech straight from this, resurrectified, world; in Eden one says, I have to, have to speak Edenic language.

In Eden, you will be killed for not paying attention. But that will kill you too that you will call, in your post-Heavenly tongue, Chance. Chance will not save you.

In Eden, if you practice poor magic-say if your lymph-nodes fail-you will be banished. This, says Heaven, is according to the terms of the contract you never recall signing. Later, your memories of Heaven may even lead you to think of it as in some way fortunate, a blessing in disguise.

The difference may be explained this way, in post-Heavenic thought a person has to be made endearing, in the absence of any endearing qualities. There are no such qualities in this cute realm of zombies. In Heavenic, the balances prevail. All is weighted & it wants can be explained. Hence the memory of that logic, coupled with the meliorism that is all the resurrectified condition permits, likes to yoke opposites into comfortable paradoxes-much as a chair is constructed, from two main stresses or lines of force.

I think it is Edenic so to describe it. Think-but I'm not sure. Thus, falsely Edenic, as I shall always be, coherent. By logic I was to be cured of primary meaning. Afterwards, common sense would keep me quiet. Language enslaves people. As they wish it. What else is there to do anyway...would not tell you if (even if) you asked.

My name-as yours, strange. Familiar, counted on, we will never see each other again, never. What do names mean, in Eden's mind. In where-in (rimes with *mind*).

So, you came or were borne from far off, a place you think you hate because it cast you off or let you cast off. Is *this* your hospital? (Is this *your* hospital?) Where then will you be, resurrectified, to dog your own footsteps?

There are (at least) these two Americas, the Declaration of Independence, & the forces that actually bend you. Do not confuse them & have to be beaten up in jail in order to get straight-unless seized to. And nothing I can say can prevent that, glory be. Heaven will never be on earth.

You were hungry, you ate-that was mine. No, but my hunger was all mine-I died of it. My dying demands you make that good. Such was the message whose source I cannot prove.

I have wanted the hospital, but had I gone there again what would they have said, Do you know what 1+1 is, Do you know who we are, or don't you, there is your bed, there are all the others, which is which, & does the closest strike you as more important? Later, I told myself it didn't matter, none of it. This was when I was cured—& at liberty. At liberty as one is at the neighbors'-trying to get in, or leave.

When I picture that child's grief, my eyes fill with pleasurable tears, my agony is a familiar flight of stairs. Don't I know that he wanted to de(-)story those who had sent him there, himself, for betraying himself into being there. For if I don't-half-hearted betrayal & destruction shall prove my practice in time. Such is the nature of the animal I am.

I do not choose America fatefully-except as the newspapers report such. I choose it knowingly-having been driven into it.

By Edenic force I know myself in Eden, driven out & cured by the superior powers that sentence me to convalescent ghostly gestures, burning the forests to see them burn with the doctor's voice condoning such inevitable vengeance while their voices, these, my friends, comrades, assure me it isn't vengeance but a necessary act & the fires of my first being go unsatisfied because it is not known these ghostly actual infernos refer to them.

How do those others get out of Eden, the ones who are spared Heaven. I think this is a movement as poorly understood as most understandings.

"They" appear. How. Can they appear before Eden is left. I called them & was banished-this is original sin, this calling. They say, Let's go downtown & drink some brew, go out to the garbage dump & shoot some rats. And you go. You didn't really want to but you wanted *them*, & they got you.

Presidents are made in Heaven, yes, absolutely. Somebody is born-what goes wrong, by what terms of banishment does he come to his calling, what awful sickness demanded such heavy sedation that all memory of Eden is destroyed, so that, cured, this man descends to take place beside his acts without any of that confusion as to their proper manipulation that plagues my own life.

I remember Eden from time to time-left at just the right age. Eden urges me to stake my self on this, "vain hope", in the language of resurrectification. I haven't told myself yet that, truly, these (this) realms are contemporally existent (in post-Heavenic). My mother & father-these beings who in those roles-but how to say it!-those beings, were bound to teach me those names for themselves ((Vati, Mutti)), spoke, so I yearned to understand-to leave Eden; but the yearning kept me there. I mimicked them. Then I was banished; Heaven knew why, & later, they lied. But hadn't it been a mistake-of mine? The gates of Eden must be this question of something said or unsaid for me.

You think the world is a globe, as in a library. But it is words-pictures too but words, like Madagascar or America; America is made of words. The, world, is, a, globe, as, in, a, library.

"Reagan Demands Federal Probe"-this Earth-tongue, because no demand is truly meant, no probe truly felt essential. Time that hangs heavy, in its thinness, must be passed. In hospital "Reagan" invented his name (rage, nag, anger) with counters the nurses supplied. Not as a pasttime: they wanted him awake so that, later, come time to sleep, & his night's sleep wheeled in, he would climb into it without any fuss. Edenic howls.

Now, having extended himself into many men, he never sleeps, except in his own puny necessity. Such is his hate of Heaven, or his fear of dreaming Eden.

The terror of murderous Eden keeps us in this non-Edenic, non Heavenlich region-what is hell. Be reasonable, one says, fearing alike Heaven & what came before. Spare us Reason. In Eden, you will be killed for paying attention.

We kill, kill, kill, to be permitted to continually neglect our murderousness. Haven't we heard this before, those who see the gleam of that first state reflected in their enemies' eyes. I see no reason, none at all, & I note the insistence, why the entire species of mankind should get burned staking themselves on Eden's entrances. This isn't really dying, this isn't really symbolism either-these are blueprints as I am earthlike, & human, as I am humane, a humanist,—I would use Heavenlich persuasion to make everyone obey.

We discuss endlessly. The relief of speech. We assume some object. But the relief of speech has the relief of mountains in it. To what end were they raised. This too has been discussed. Eden has been placed maid a mountain range. What a weight in the mind a mountain may be. Speech is the relief.

In Eden, to make a tale of it, to know it by drumming on its lid, some knock back, & nobody speaks that cant, humanity. Heaven establishes it for the animal dream it is. A friend of mine was eaten by a sow. He & his identical brother were left by their grandmother near the pig pen. When she returned, only one remained. He claims it wasn't him.

Heaven has a superintendent-super in the sense of double-plus, the intender of intenders, but also as above, for sooner or later there is not intent, above.

How could any of it be in vain?

Ashamed because you stood because everybody else did. Even though you meant it. Well, what of the shame of remaining seated under those circumstances? Quantity like oldtime forests-do you walk through a wood as over an open field-this is the kind of thing runs through my head when I'm driving, or walking or swimming along, and dividing it up all over again into categories of experience, saving the appearance of little bits of myths, but also sounding like the (tired) idea of someone "talking" in this way-easy to recognize. Even my voice at times (it says) uncertainly my own. Yes indeedly Insist on the wrongness of killing men women & children we haven't met. The words are as patient as redwoods or Galapagos turtles that will bite your balls off. Where have all the flowers gone-Detroit, up the ass of a dead donkey, fell apart in the process of cross-pollination, (say during cross-pollination), they are with us still, nay, they are dead, but in our pleasant nostalgia of grief we are going nowhere about as fast as blowing reveille into a morgue satisfies Heavenlich regulations. The return of each category acquires the patina of a running gag. Let him eat it.

**In April 1972, a work of mine titled Selections from a continuing Search in Language beginning in 1969 at Present Titled EDEN LOG appeared in Caterpillar 18. Eshleman had made a selection-or I had-from a work some 3 times its length, a work that then I supposed incomplete but, having failed to write further on, have now changed my opinion of. Here it is minus the part that Caterpillar published-except for some half-dozen sentences, repeated here because they look essential for the comprehension of the rest.*

Michael Davidson
Answering Motion
(for D.S. and M.S.)

A mode he wants to master writes itself despite his intentions.

A mode he wants to witness writes him as master.

How we move through to answer the question, posing in its place as that for which the question exists something otherwise quite permanent.

Never interesting until allowed; once allowed interesting useless as interesting.

That is, how to solve the problem through the words, not by means of, they so have their own formulations in the way you have your discriminations.

The form allows it to happen, not imposes itself, allows what never could be expected and allows for that allowance including its refusal.

Not the problem to be solved so much as the problem to be proposed without its being referred to.

To permit movement without end yet enjoying the illusion of movement toward something, enjoying the feel of it and its distractions.

There is something else.

When nothing is there and still having to go beyond that to the things that start arguing against nothing.

Not to make it easier than it is, still he calls on an old formulation for advice and careens off in another direction.

As if to build around a manner of speaking without its terms and then to find that the terms were already in place.

To repeat as if.

Having something having a point and having a substance then having the time to know that the terms were already in place.

Paradox of making sense: you must have been an idiot not to have seen it before.

Wants to cover everything by illustration so comprehensive the illustration itself seems redundant.

Attention to this leads to attention to this; you can't not be here while searching for your coat.

Listening for what comes next having heard what came prior argues against nothing happening.

This much, if adequate, startles as being the somewhat less for which more asks.

Michael Davidson
Discourse in Poetry:
Bakhtin and Extensions of the Dialogical

Discussions of ideology and poetry have generally occurred along two basic aesthetic axes: expressive and formalist. For the first, poetry exists to reflect the poet's mind as he or she comes to grips with political and social contradictions. The rhetoric of such poetry is based around a moralizing irony in which social and personal history are continually juxtaposed, one qualifying and undercutting the security of the other. Ideology exists prior to or beyond poetic language, even though the poet may recognize certain ideological implications of speech acts contained within the poem. The main thrust of such poetry, and of its analysis, is to provide testimony as to the authenticity of response to world-historical events and to display the disparity between that response and the ideologically conditioned signs of social intercourse.

The second approach sees poetic language as the site, not the reflection, of ideology. Poetic production is a dimension of larger structures of social production, and thus to foreground language in its systemic or material form is to expose the material basis of all human interaction. Such a poetics takes itself as its subject, not out of some impulse toward self-reflexive irony, but as the laboratory in which the limitations of a referential paradigm may be studied. In a desire to de-materialize the text by violating logical and narrative sequence, this poetry "re-materializes" language as a dimension, not a reflection, of ideology.

Granted, these are rather schematic definitions for which individual poems will provide variations, but one could use them to characterize general positions. The limitation of the first is its belief in a self-sufficient subject which determines the moral tone and arranges historical events around that tone. There is little room for uncertainty or complicity within or about those events, and so the reader may only witness, in a passive sense, the author's testimony. In its attempt to criticize the hierarchies and authoritarian structures of social life, the poetry replicates that very authoritarianism by relying on some unitary, egocentric perspective. The limitation of the second view of poetry is that, under the aegis of productionism and re-materialism, the specific "object" nature of the text may be fetishized over the interlocutory process between text and reader. What may begin as a desire to expose language as system may result in an avoidance of the socially-coded nature of larger linguistic units.

What is often lost in debates between and among these two areas is the role of discourse by which any utterance is given a social frame. Poems are not simply made up of linguistics units or rhetorical strategies; they are constructions of inherited communicational and discursive situations by which meaning is produced and exchanged. A line in a poem or a sentence in a prose piece are informed by numerous codes: those of social intercourse and polite talk; those of literary genres and stylistic conventions; those of socio-economic "class" distinctions and social ideolects; those of private and even oppositional languages. Mikhail Bakhtin calls this proliferation of discursive frames "social heteroglossia," and their interaction, "dialogization." The active interchange among these levels is not simply an art specific discourse but reflects a similar dialogue among social codes (ideologemes) occurring in the world at large. Bakhtin has applied these terms only to the novel, however. Poetry, he feels, is monologic, incapable of transcending its own "...unitary,...sealed off utterance." (1) The novelist, he says, "...welcomes the heteroglossia and language diversity of the literary and extraliterary language into its own work." (2) Bakhtin's view of poetry seems based largely upon nineteenth-century lyric poetry, although he was certainly aware of developments in Futurism and *Zaum* poetry, (3) but I believe that we may expand his method to encompass much more than the novel and, more importantly, to apply his theory of social heteroglossia to recent developments in poetry.

At the center of Bakhtin's theory of novelistic discourse is the idea that, despite all attempts at creating a unified language or poetics, there is a counter-impulse at any given utterance, toward the complexity of languages, styles, rhetorics and ideolects informing that utterance:

The authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogized heteroglossia, anonymous and social as language, but simultaneous concrete, filled with specific content and accepted as an individual utterance. (4)

As readers of his great work on Rabelais know, (5) the carnivalistic theater of folk culture, with its sources in popular mythology and ritual, is the ideal forum for this heteroglossia. Rabelais' work, based as it is upon this folk tradition, inverts the world and transforms its terms into burlesques of social hierarchies. Here, the tendency is centrifugal, a dethroning of linguistic unity and social authority. The modern novel, Bakhtin feels, has inherited this carnivalizing tendency, even at the moments when narrative seems most "unified" by specifically stylistic features.

The ideal of linguistic unification (what Bakhtin calls the "centripetal" forces in socio-economic life (6)), from Aristotle's categories to Leibniz' "universal grammar" (and, no doubt, to Saussure's concept of "language") becomes the great theater against which any given utterance plays. "But the centripetal forces of the life of language, embodied in a 'unitary language,' operate in the midst of heteroglossia," (7) and thus must be read in any literary text according to two levels: the authoritative, ideological horizon demarked by notions of genre, style, convention and the "centrifugal, stratifying forces" of social languages and verbal environment. Stylistics, Bakhtin points out, has abstracted the surface, verbal character of this multi-faceted utterance in order to study the specifically literary character of the novel. He wants to bring into the field of literary stylistics and rhetorical analysis the full complexity of the "socio-ideological conceptual horizon" within which text production occurs.

I can only offer a tenuous suggestion as to how Bakhtin's method might be adapted to contemporary poetics. His reading of Dostoevsky, Rabelais, Dickens, Turgenev and others are thorough and exhaustive examples of prose stylistics, but I believe that his attention to the socially coded nature of discursive units might equally apply to much modern (if not classical) poetry. It would be interesting to speculate, for example, on the degree to which modernist collage technique in Pound, Eliot and others, is dialogic in Bakhtin's terms. Criticism of modernism has to totally accepted the notion of "spatial form," that it has not investigated the dialogical tensions ("ambivalence" is Bakhtin's preferred term) between, say, Pound's use of ideolects in *The Cantos* or Eliot's class-differentiated voices in *The Waste Land*. We have grown so accustomed to seeing these gatherings of voices as so many variations on a theme, the "luminous moment" splayed against its various occurrences in history. One could, however, see their interaction as appropriations and inversions of the same sort of social heteroglossia that Bakhtin finds in the novel.

The techniques of modernist collage and montage are perhaps the most obvious examples of discursive dialogization in poetry. I am more interested in how Bakhtin's categories might be adapted to more recent modes of writing in which language is brought to the foreground and for which the interaction of contextual frames is central to its structure. In such writing the discontinuity between one line or sentence and the next is both a qualification of casual, narrative logic and an assertion of the paradigmatic nature of reference. The gap between elements is asserted as a sign in itself, not simply as a caesura between two elements in a theorem. The gap calls attention to contextual frames within each unit, frames which overlap and interpenetrate like sedimentations in geological strata. In Bakhtin's terms these frames are part of a dialogue, one side of which is intertextual and the other of which is inter-ideological.

The opening of Charles Bernstein's "Baggage" may serve to indicate some of the ways in which dialogization occurs within lined-poetry:

Thinking ain't doing, so really I'll
partly I've never gotten in the habit
you always seemed to turn
so where begin to, where report.
Waist deep in, keep fronting
for, fanning, desire to type.
Not combatting, becoming.
All weighing down
same time as forcing to surface. (8)

Stylistically, this passage makes use of a series of modified assertions or qualifications. The truncation of each element at the terminal caesura deliberately undercuts whatever attempt is being made at assertion, and within each line, qualifying adjectives and adverbs, subordinate syntactic elements and modifiers also neutralize these assertions. "Thinking ain't doing," however confident, vaporizes with the next clause, "so really I'll..." with its slangy adverb. The next line seems to refer to the previous ("partly I've never gotten in the habit" of "Thinking"), but it also occurs as another evasive remark on its own. Each line continues this process of assertion and qualification; instead of completing the thought, each new line establishes a seemingly new context while sustaining certain elements of the previous. "Not combating, becoming..." strikes us as an epigram from some sort of pop-psychology, holistic document, while the next lines, "All weighing down/same time as forcing to surface" seem to provide a more technical, perhaps scientific version of the same thing. The sustained use of participational constructions throughout helps to neutralize action, and the absence of any particular pronoun leaves a series of subjectless phrases and clauses, each attempting to make some clarification about some action that has lost its import.

Beyond the level of style is the area of social discourse by which we use a variety of strategies to avoid responsibility, action or involvement. Each line in Bernstein's poem reflects one of these evasive strategies, beginning with the relatively casual ("Thinking ain't doing") to the formal ("so where to begin to, where report."). Because each line has a tenuous relationship to its neighbor, potential dialogues are established among them, but the lack of specific focus and sustained syllogistic logic defeats any appeal to some unified discourse. Rather, one witnesses the site of numerous rhetorical and discursive strategies.

Another passage from the same book makes the critical nature of this conflagration of voices clear. In this case, the format is prose but the principle of combination is the same as for poetry:

Bachelors are all agape over a new girl in town.

Rob sees red when Laura goes blond.

"Genocide." Graphic film footage depicts Hitler's persecution and extermination of the Jewish population in Germany and in the occupied countries.

A mental patient returns home to a cold mother and a domineering husband.

A freewheeling narcotics agent works with a junkie's vengeful widow to track down a shadowy syndicate boss. (9)

Here, the “target text” is the short, capsule summary of films in which the entire plot is reduced to one, easily consumable sentence. The first two use the elaborate hyperbole of 1950’s teen movies, but the lighthearted mood is subsequently deflated by the brief description of “genocide” and the references to mental patients, family crisis, narcotics agents and syndicate bosses. Bernstein uses the rhetoric of film blurbs, with their catchy metaphors and hyperbolic qualifiers (“cold mother,” “freewheeling narcotics agent,” “vengeful widow”), as a counterpoint to the plots of those films: love and romance, genocide, oedipal anxieties, narcotics and crime. The juxtaposition of one against the other exposes the social reification of such a rhetoric and suggests some ominous interrelations between the movies themselves and their marketing. The rhetoric that generated “Rob sees red when Laura goes blond” may seem slightly absurd on its own, but in connection with the rest of the blurbs and their violent or sexual innuendoes, the blurb gains a distinctly ominous tone.

These brief examples rely on negotiations among various discursive frames, some textual and some social. They do not depend on any coherent or unified narrative; rather, they move by a strategy of code-violation whereby each unit re-frames the previous. Obviously my examples are a long way from the carnivalesque narratives of Rabelais or Menippean, or the “polyphonic” novels of Dostoevsky and Dickens, but they do point up many of the same problems addressed by Bakhtin in his discussion of narrative. Criticism of “language-based” writing has usually operated from the same monologic perspective as that which Bakhtin sees as the domain of formalist stylistics. It assumes that linguistic fracturing, of the sort displayed above, is an attack on reference and on privileged epistemological categories by which the world can be known. As I have tried to indicate by my use of Charles Bernstein, this fracturing is profoundly “referential,” insofar as it illustrates the instability of unitary referential paradigms. Instead of focussing upon language’s ability to stabilize reality by means of a single image or pattern of metaphors, it frees the actual discourses that occur in any given utterance.

Bakhtin’s critique of poetry is based largely upon the tropic or figural nature of poetic language and upon what he sees as a single, monologic perspective of lyrical subjectivity. (10) While I feel that his view of poetry is itself somewhat monologic, I feel that his reading of the inherent dialogization of the novel has enormous implications for stylistic analysis. I would contend that current poetic practice foregrounds the ideological character of discursive frames and by so doing illustrates aspects of social heteroglossia that have existed in poetry since the beginning. What is needed is a critique of poetry not based upon the authorial expressive subject but rather upon the propositions of “subject” generated by specific ideological discourses. And as Bakhtin has already pointed out, what is needed in the realm of stylistics is a form of analysis cognisant of socio-historical processes within which texts are produced.

1. “The poet is a poet insofar as he accepts the idea of a unitary and singular language and a unitary, monologically sealed-off utterance. These ideas are immanent in the poetic genres with which he works. In a condition of actual contradiction, these are what determine the means of orientation open to the poet. The poet must assume a complete single-personed hegemony over his own language, he must assume equal responsibility for each one of its aspects and subordinate them to his own, and only his own, intentions. Each word must express the poet’s meaning directly and without mediation; there must be no distance between the poet and his word. The meaning must emerge from language as a single intentional whole: none of its stratification, its speech diversity, to say nothing of its language diversity, may be reflected in any fundamental way in his poetic work.” M.M. Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 296-97.

2. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 298.

3. I have been unable to find any sustained treatment of the Futurists among Bakhtin's works translated into English (there are brief references in "Discourse and the Novel"). Although her source is not cited, Julia Kristeva alludes to a more sustained analysis of Russian poetry in her important essay on Bakhtin, translated as "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," published in *Desire and Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 71.
4. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 272.
5. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968).
6. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 271.
7. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 271.
8. Charles Bernstein, *Islets/Irritations* (N.Y.: Jordan Davies, 1983) p. 70.
9. Bernstein, p. 27.
10. One could argue that lyric poetry has never existed within such a two-dimensional frame. Indeed, the rhetorical nature of such "I-based" poetry calls such a frame into question. The use of persona, irony, rhetorical figures, pronominal shifterization, elaborate dramatic frames (the dialogue between body and soul, the dramatic monologue, the courtly love complaint) all conspire to problematize the nature of this hypothetical lyrical "subject." This fiction has always spoken "as if" alone, but always through highly mediated linguistic and rhetorical structures. Rimbaud's "Je est un autre" is only one recognition of the limits of the "unmediated I."

Diane Ward
Nine-Tenths of Our Body

Last night camouflaged thoughts spoke through mouths
pressed to the cloth of sleeves, hard edge of a
shoulder blade. Thrown up to join the abandoned
flock, miles to go, vague direction, consciousness
peeled: length of rough composure, rare animal
skins, desire hidden in the smooth slide from top
to toe.

Verbs are fast, slow. What I took is taken.
Lesions cover vocabulary, my mouth an awesome
darkness encircling barbs meant as truth,
intruding on dreams meant to be lived.
Here, my department, a voice says who's
there. The phone rings.

Those years were knotted intention, slowed to
two hands traced on a wall in black charcoal
again and again, impatient fingers tap unsteadily
through the night, looks longing to substitute
place for a moment of unconditional release.
Wanting solitude and wanting magnitude is
the frenzy that eludes our control. Show
the other face. Dear on the end of this sentence
won't. In the middle it's split into two conical
shapes shouting appropriate phrases and attitudes.

Dressed in black, shell legs, arms blocked out.
Once I was in silver and gray, pink or pinned
jewelry to my breast but look. I stand, waiting,
across to you. Leave through that door. Stare,
straight into expressions of fear. Stand, hands
held to here. Stare, eyes leveled here. Motion,
point to here and gone.

Thought of the kiss lasted 2 minutes, stopped. Longer
than it deserved, sharp spears of ice were mental
pictures, each day lingered, hugged yesterday not
tomorrow. Chemistry forgotten, a laser-like minute
charges position's importance, marches in circles
around the revolving figure, turning late.

One extended phrase is beauty, words ring, computed
in infinite ways from the same fragmented definition.

An answer was inadequate, doubles intend to encompass,
and control.

Detail sneaks up on bodies which deny what fingers,
mistaken, feel. Campaign against snares, faces
blanked in the camera, my body delays each day,
my helmet or my hat, answer as question, point
of shadow that's motionless several minutes and gone.

Born, a circumstance that denies necessity. Surrounding
my hand, dailiness erases futility, slogans adorned then
beaten, blood on my fingers, not fright, a sense that
compels to advance, laugh returns boomerang prevalent
phrases.

Food raises to lips, body fills up clothes, thoughts
contain a desire to think, luck creates the will to
continue. I watched you, too. I found a third
person who wrote so slowly that one phrase contained
months in time: not condensed but conclusive. I watch
to see I'm worth favor, the active delay. As your hand
drifts precisely toward the table, your fingers one by
one release the glass and it's with me, we are
finished, softly.

To start indicate the place that's nine-tenths. Small
in volume, it lies suspended in our body. A child
visualizes a sphere floating through hollow arms and legs,
dancing through the torso. It contains the rest, but
is finite. It appears to be an insignificant point,
free in itself, permitting misconception, perfection
belongs behind you and in what you will do, just as
in time there is never a nine-tenths. Only its
endless picture.

Words confuse the territory we turn toward, silence
a threat like death, today's surroundings seem dropped
in random spaces, solitude continues its invisible
evolution, and watch us, watch myself, a figure contorts
into a stooped man, clusters of air pockets like
pink pearls or iridescent scales ripple around and crash
gently into my body, his body, his relation to them
changes as they drift, though he, I remain motionless,
untouched.

Sphere, the world made manageable, cracked in two equal
parts, smooth surfaces created in a single slice, mirror

images, ridges and torn places the eye places together
as perfect, but billions of hands can never retrieve.
Two halves that become two domes on buildings of
opposing governments, two bowls of soup, one for each
of us, or two breasts: half-spheres of logic and purpose,
leaders of the body-side of me with its ability to
produce others to join the billions whose wills stumble
across another's, lend secrets, tentative, then wait
for reactions as though they would be explosions, but
their secrets are cradled in the other's arms, the signal
then is to give away for good, the space left isn't
empty, just momentarily unoccupied.

A row of pitfalls manages to avoid its own jolt.
There's an intimidated man feeling the stranger is
himself reflected in the faces around him. There's
a long distance call for you. There's a string of
numbers that identifies you as born to move past
the middle of the night, through the afternoon,
to mid-morning, early evening, repeating so it seems
it's all refractions of ricocheting time, no longer
linear, repeat mistakes and favorites. Vibrating
your body, recorded in your mind, a continuous loop,
a wall around a village, every image exact though
distorted by the stretching and contracting.

Last night I was the mouth pressed to the shoulder
blade at the same time I was the hardest edge
of the bone itself. I was two figures, no three,
shrinking away toward the distant line labeled
horizon, known to trade its place with you.
The three figures were drawn together twice:

First, as stick figures or in full perspective
on white paper by the hand that's free to dream,
clearing the way for the second drawing,
the moment that imagination always knew could
include you, me, and the spectrum of pronouns
conducting a conversation as background to
the ragged line of isolated bodies moving as
one, voluntarily bunched together then released.

Diane Ward
Tender Arc

Describe porcelain and I was touching the cool gleam of white sink.

The ellipses you mention, painting, eyes call such
and such to your heart, sighting pink, and pink
settles all around me.

I can tear off pages of this notebook and still be here.

Like fantasies airing out, another in stages, runaround
kiss: I float, a crooked video feeling, mirror for
mirror.

Numbers aren't relevant: my weight goes quickly sometimes.

If you fumble, smart and resplendent, finally saturating
the moment into a fixed home, lies-insipid go wherever
you follow, behind you, then you're gone.

I'm alone, my clothes are the imploding kind, the kind left
behind then duplicated.

A car idles like my sound, a drone trying multiple knots
that are sobering, consonant ideas that find everness
bound in one moment's soothing.

I'm starting to feel what the night is, dark and stars.

Your arm reaches through meaning touches the kindness that
misses its mark, only to return trailing sharp corners
that follow in a tender arc.

I appropriate pristine from what you've lived,
from memories that fade and soften in you.

Elongated theories of tens secrete zeros that latch
on to definitions made temporary by growth. Where
there's one there'll be two.

I'm taking these on in my own memory though they belong
in yours exactly.

Man-made cases of please, continue. Titles for You:
phone an enemy, low play, keeping stronger pinned to
your chest like facts that stack better flatter.

There are sunglasses, it's hot. A fashion like fungus
passes through the usual motions of fit then rot.

It's the church, its green door the same color as the blue
sky, its white walls the same as the brown dust.

Murmuring, something I knew from the, scheme or order,
a sort of maimed invective, passed so high. I fit
better, I bite, my aim is grounded in utterance.

The serious one seduces me, near and coupled with Sunday's
reasoning in you, still, without the motioning and
fleeting, barely moving.

In one, you stand in an old church's doorway.

Run through the place where your hand on the cold wood is

encouraged, temperament stored away.
In one, you're beating a clump of seaweed with a stick
or rock or a shell.
Run forward, retrieve the dream that flickered to a
stop when the machine fell.
In the dark, it didn't matter how they looked.
One part, an instant antonym overpowers your disdain for
embellishment, lazy hook.
Once a man fell asleep in his lover's closet, obsessed
with the smell and feel of the empty clothes.
Come and shelter us, creeping minutes cover content,
interesting but melting away. The important finishing
rose.
I've seen them all lying around off of you and I don't
equate them to you.
Reams of paper, calls, minor sounds distorted in your
mood, its plain, simple: over fate, to face it like
a friend you could lose.
No shirt. No opinion or lingering out of courtesy.
In one you wear a bathing suit, one shorts, one pants
with a belt.
Comfort and care, I pace myself and lose, one contortion,
one stance, hasty minutes mean more when refelt.
In two, you wear shoes. Invent loosened humor as your
share, keep laments at arm's length, the nuisance.
Sky is in all three. Light spins above calm, free from
atmosphere.
Two are on the beach, the water's blue, sky just as blue.
The pair of aimless figures drone like doves that reel
high against the humble, muted sky.
Your voice before or after the camera, were you yelling
over sounds around you and what sounds.
Our choices create scores like basketball, the fans hurl
loose, intelligent phone messages and hound us then
sometimes we lose what we found.
In Mexico, *sin que relación*, a secure photograph is one
without history.
You would let me over the fence, my fingers scraping the
paint off, then I would be sure that the laughter comes
mixed with bliss and fury.
But what I know. Covered in crossed fingers, heart, and
soul.
Each of you in Mexico. Each of me, blue sins accepted.
With me, three photographs are here. Picking off the if
and then each season, steam and blacktop facts.
It's dark, I know it's there, but I can't see the clock.
Parking lots may surround you, odors, hints that once

were cherished, untitled mansions that never got their start.

Mid-afternoon, from across the river, buildings around Wall Street throw shadows onto each other, colors vary as the 'shadowed' buildings' colors change. Permanently paint the shadows on.

A still patch of room, hum, outside, silver of filtered sounds across the wall, the sheets grow hollow, one you threw over, the other under where you hover and carry last night's phantom, still dream, memory stage. You learned the faint phrase low voices travel on.

The unfinished skyscraper downtown twinkling lights eternally.

I could diminish. My title is my name and a frown pounded from the hardest ink stings the sight we purchased.

In the dark, a big clock. Minutes marked by figures held in a strange hand.

This is my view: another apartment window, shelves and sugar.

Or then this is you, just summer, a carbon sentiment, intro to yellower fields, just tugging, just far.

Clark Coolidge
From Notebooks (1976-1982)

“movement”
has a arrow edge nerve to it
“motion”
sounds like a washing machine

*

Perhaps art is merely the translation
of the external into an obduration
of mind that erodes neither to the
side of memory nor conception.

*

The worst danger for an artist's work:
assimilation. And this is a country of
highly refined assimilation mechanisms.
To make *like* (how I hate that trait),
to leaven, make digestible, democratize,
ultimately strip of individuation.
Art *is* isolate. Its obduration is
unacceptable. At its deepest levels, art is
an attribute of nothing else. It may not be
defused in attribution to. I would prefer
hatred, obscurity, misunderstanding. In fact
it is my right to be ignored, maltreated,
discomfited.

*

The history of 20th century art is so much one of
assimilation, that art itself is finally becoming
inseparable from the main mechanisms of society:
business, education, government, the church.
Therefore the artist must reject art to keep clear.

*

At the same time there is the plethora,
proliferation of all forms, making a muck
unforeseen previously. Beckett's statement (1961):
"To find a form that accommodates the mess, that
is the task of the artist now." seems pointed
exactly at our condition.

*

Criticism is divergence, immediately.
I know, when I have written, that there
is no other possible state of this matter.
They have only to begin "This is..." to
be off the mark. And in the wrong voice.
In fact in *no* voice. They write in a mode
that does not speak. But I must remember
that when they write *about*, that "about"
means only "around", not on. And I know
that I am capable of wounding myself
far more deeply than they. The beginning
and end of my work remains here.

*

To create is to make a pact with nothingness.
The void exacts its tribute. What price do
I daily pay for maintaining sufficient
ignorance to accept forms when they emerge?
Writing, I sometimes feel I am working with
nothing. Where are the words? Certainly not
here on the page. Their only firmness seems in
sorts of motion. I am constantly emptied
by their infernal obduration! Cursed forever
to listen to the voices inside there is no
stepping back from. Where silence is a
blessed hell.

*

I am jealous of my own doubt.
To say *no* to everything, what a wonder!
To set in motion, contains its own stopping
point. I glare in at myself to start it all
turning again. I have often opened my doors

to find the small flame of my doubt my only
light. Sometimes I shelter it with the mass
of all my works. I cup it with my acceptance,
blow upon it with satisfaction. I am vitalized
by all it has killed.

*

Obduration. Hard Time.

*

A sentence is a collapse.
Time on itself. Lands. To resurface,
and stun in.

*

We now have to peel the skin from
the cup, in order to lap what's wrought.

*

The miles will topple me, and I
will be reached.
Put in my placed in my will.

*

There are walls in the mind's time, and
I would live in the breach.
I would crack myself open to what?

*

What I want from the world is the freedom to
need what can't be given but must be taken.
I want to *stay* in motion. I want the first thing
to be the last, every time.

*

Alternate: L. alternāre, to do a thing
by turns; change; hesitate
So, alternatives are *hesitations*
along the way.
Thus, he who finally accepts alternatives
is lost.
But, in art, he who takes but one step,
in any direction, is already lost.
Sometimes I feel I could speak but one
word, and thus disappear from the one
I am with.
Again, art is a disguise?

*

I want everything to come together.
And then I want it all to go away,
leaving behind one thing that was never
in the pile to begin with.

*

The world is not enough. I want something
else to appear. Only I can cause this,
only I can hate what I have done
enough to destroy it.
Only I can stand at
the point of my own collisions.

*

Are the mistakes, the chips that fall from
these catastrophes, pieces of the void?
Blurred puffs of time, like cigarettes?

*

I smoke *and* burn. I am moving in
opposite directions at once.
Like a sentence, when written, seems to
move backwards to complete its hold

on itself. The dialectic of forward
and reverse. Weighted on which end
will the work be completed today?

*

The void gives no opening when one is
inside. It is all of the world again.
The feeling of everything giving onto
oneself once again.

*

On the inside of the mask there is nothing.
My eyes slip from the holes,
and I go to work.

*

When I give them my works, how pleased
they seem with degrees of failure.
The only applause I could accept
would be the sound of them all
going to work from disgust.

*

There is a series of images in Robbe-Grillet's
film, *L'Immortelle*. The hero searches
among weeds for a scrap of paper his lover
has pretended to write her address upon (actually
she has written nothing, crumpled it, thrown it
away). He finds the ball of paper, spreads it out,
looks at the blank page, crumples it again and
throws it away. And we see him do this over and over,
each time in different clothes, in a different light,
finding the ball of paper in a slightly different
place, but always throwing it away again
with the same gesture.

*

Not only to be aware of ourselves thinking,
but to watch ourselves creating...
I feel like the person who tells himself
the story of seeing himself meeting himself.
Have we come all the way back around
through all the myriad mirrored cubicles
of our wisdom to that common tin can
in the field?

—11VI76

*

Perhaps the reason one can never do what
one feels oneself able to do is that
one's ability is actually limitless.
Will I carry onward the plural noun's *verb* energy,
or leave it resolve into a still group of similars?

*

Sometimes I fear when I get up and walk across
the room that each footstep I take stands
for a word missing in the work I would
be doing if I hadn't got up and walked across
the room.

*

It takes so long after it is written
to realize a work.

*

How it all changes from what you thought
to anymore think.

*

Maybe the universe is not infinite.
The further you go the more things
connect with you.

*

Poems rising always from the potential of
an endless unsettled. That there are forms
in words for what is not known: the bases of
a poetics. It has always puzzled me when a poet, who must
primarily expend so much energy transforming
the common language into an irreducible variation,
then immediately wants to break down what
he has made into the common tongue again.
As if fear of the unknown were
the mother of discourse.

*

Living in a culture in which even some of
the best people one meets don't read with
sufficient attentive delight to find my sort of
writing useful...
Poetry is always using
words you don't know.

*

In the space my mind inhabits to write
there seems no time. The elements do not
travel to arrive at the sensitive lining
of thought but shockingly *are*, as if one
turned suddenly to see a figure one then knew
had long been in the room unsuspected. So
I must construct time, actually, when I
compose these elements(?) For their entity
thenceforth must appear as a line.

*

I contribute to, how do you say it, barriers.

*

Interest: to be between
Obsession: the be besieged

*

I have a range/rage now I hope
will not tip me from my route.

(6IX78)

*

This whole damn house, with its engines and smells,
has become a part of my skin. I develop
hypochondria of the abode.

*

Dream of entering my workroom here in a dim light
and see what I first think is a standing ghost
personage where my desk is placed, but looking
closer I suddenly see a fiery black horse
leaping at me and no doubt about its intent
to kill. I wake up yelling before it reaches me.

*

Before I shall even decide whether to
greet them or not they are gone.
Some forms of indecision amount to
a fine enough riddance.
Even now I hear the relays in the wind
clicking shut.

I only want my work to pierce my
forehead from without.
Sure knowledge only at the bloodflow.

There is little to gain but much to be
shattered. The sign on the hill fence post
rumbles, so still is my nervousness.
The top of the hill grows blue and more blue.
All that is active in "more" is to darken.
When there will be no more windows where
I sit.

Clashing birds are the spirits of these words.

I am afraid to watch there an imperfection.

A fearsome state in which water may
come loose. Then haul up sticks.
Then drop all ropes.

A house constructed of standing.

I run into the cat in the dark as if a
moving stake. How could the small animal
feel so solid?

I don't understand a thing, then I am
penetrated. Each thing a volleying liar.

My typewriter wounds me.

In grasping or releasing the pen random
strokes begin to cover my fingers giving
my hands the expression of a redman.

The convulsive inner tension of my mind
clawing/grasping at the words, as if
vast jaws with massed force again and again
closed on nothing.

The world keeps letting me go, leaving
at least some gaps I then fill.

To finally not know whether I am
reading or writing.

Ah, yet a new morning of incapacity!

Plans for writing are like sinks filled
with dirty dishes.

Poems to the dogs.

At a loud report the lines of all the tree
trunks and smallest branches on the far hillside
volley across the cold space to become
cracks in the window glass. The effect
is utterly precise. Then the fragments
begin to loosen and to fall into the room,
the whole pattern bulging to give, revealing
a blackness of space behind, howling with

something that wants to get in.

The day dims and will molden.

The world clatters with willness.

How can one stand to be so full of
people?

Before all the doors stand stones, as
Kafka so properly said. But will
anyone notice and then greet them?

There are places I am from
that I have never seen.
There are faces in the dream that
stop me.

The desk is a door that I am
forever going up to to knock and then
turn from.
Phillip's picture is the Door of the Law.

Kafka died exactly one month to the day
before his forty-first birthday.

We keep leaving hollows in the world
to be warmed by others.

What do I stop from occurring
each time I refuse the writing?

This pen is too long. I feel as if I am
unsheathing a sword.

The weight of the writing at the tip of the hand
just as it enters the paper...

No weight off, thus if any smile at all
a hard one.
No wonder my back cracks increasingly.

Reduced to these flagrant stupid chips of
personality.

I no longer want any knowledge that

will not immediately produce an even
greater ignorance.

If I could write a novel suddenly so ancient
that I would pause in wonder at never
having read it before.

All the work in the world is as a pie
before gathering birds.

—30XI79

The time varies I want to knock back an inch
a blade off the duct sound desires.

*

The impulse to make a work of as many and varied elements
as possible and *still* all the more wondrous because somehow
unified. This Webern seemed to think he had found in his
12-tone works. Klangfarbenmelodie unified through
Composition in Twelve Tones. I wonder if this principle
still lies hidden (for writing) in the old forms?
or still elsewhere?

*

Everyone starts from the middle of his field
but man is no longer the center.

*

Williams is our Cézanne. With him
the way of working begins to open.

*

I would like to recover the excitement, surprise
of wholeness in writing, that we only seem to
accomplish now by fragmentation, lapses and sudden
turns.

*

It's not intuition really. You're only presented with certain things, and a good number of those better be the right ones.

*

He had all his things there, waiting for...
They had active possibilities. Should they be enumerated, or left to breed? Knowing has nothing to do with any of this. Any one could know what he did. Any one could close the door on them and walk downstairs and out leaving them all untouched together.
Something appears on the screen, speech...
For your own sake at least stick to the subject.
But who could better care for things?
They come apart, and stay that way.
They are not dangerous to themselves.
He has the thought once that everything fit together.
If only he could remove himself sufficiently.
No, nothing but what comes from inside this time.
Blind intervals...
They were surprised by the blue and red shower at night.
The next day the usual explanation.
They saw it. But what they remembered later was that they heard about it later.
To grasp the relation of words to matter, mind, process, may be the greatest task.
What I discover in writing comes out of the mess, the mix. I know no nodes before.
Don't move.
My imagination is not pure enough to present a single beatitude of image.

*

The thought to weight things
and then rush back to them.

*

Rearranging all the things into forms of face
pressed into the air. Not knowing what to be there,

nor budging from it. Image as negative
off the "real" world. Impression in what?
Vacuum of ignorance? I am accoutred
with knowledges. But they seldom make the
impression. The image is what I have forgotten.
It curls itself out of semblances
of silence and the unaccustomed nerve.
Bloat is the result of knowing and takes no hold.

*

Perhaps the point at which I know nothing will be
the place wherein I am finally able.
The use of words posits a sphere in which all impulse
routes may describe themselves freely but always on walls
of thought. Therefore I find that I can only write certain
things. The verbal dimension is never a blank. The room of
the poem is a charged and loaded space. Anyone who has ever
written a poem has somewhat altered the weights and trajectories.
It is as if each succeeding poet will be obliged to invent
his own physics of sense and motion. The resultant scope is
endlessly additional without sum.

*

On the contrary, there is *too much* meaning!
As if everytime you wrote or spoke something's name
it was bound to appear in the room, or
somewhere else unknown.

*

One of those giant cyclotron magnets that continually
reverses its polarity might be a good figure for
(the project of) our times. Or the heart that will be
open or closed at that precise instant the lightning bolt
strikes one. And the clock that shows us time as space which
diminishes because more and more swept away
in the hand's revolve.

*

Can you add words?
Can words be added
or subtracted?
And if counted
what change amounted?

*

Words posed so completely
the need not tell me their names.

*

Being worked so much through my own poems
I tend to think I can never again enter
poetry but then once more I am taken in,
hintless and falling.

*

Whole poem composed of
the empty space of the first thought
the second thought erased.

—IX82

Aaron Shurin
A Thing Unto Myself:
The unRomantic Self and Gender in the Third Person

I am in a pronominal funk, where the crisis of subjectivity in which the so-called Romantic self is under attack crosses purposes with the tyranny of gender located in the third person, giving my many selves consternation and causing a panic in their vocabulary. This crisis in subjectivity, already articulated in the later Nineteenth Century, challenges monolithic and static conceptions of self in favor of a multi-faceted or liquid identity, and the resulting psychological and cosmological restructuring dovetails with contemporary challenges to authority itself, questioning who has the right to speak for whom? Where and how does one gain authority to speak in the midst of contrary and varying social forces constituting identity, a socio-linguistic milieu where the pronouns known as “shifters” may be accused of shifting the blame as well as shifting the responsibility. As linguists reduce the province of “I” to a narrower and narrower present moment of discourse, a vast amount of the matter of self gets rerouted to the status of third person, the exclusive domain-in English-of gender, so that the liberation of person, of consciousness in the form of “person”, is threatened at its second remove. Rimbaud’s 1871 letter to Izambard is famous for its pronouncement “I is an other”, fracturing the complacency of first person discourse. Earlier in the letter he states “It is wrong to say” ‘I think’. One must say: one thinks me.” Here the use of the third person is direct in combating authorial majesty-the “I” is reflexive, and has no right to its creative presumption. Though the I/Thou relationship has a long history in poetry in the form of the poet directly addressing her soul, his heart, her self (thus becoming firmly entrenched in the discourse of person), Rimbaud projects the self into the realm of what Emile Benveniste calls the non or third person, whose indication is not presence but absence. With this distancing Rimbaud adds the what-am-I-not to the what-I-am, enlarging the possibilities of discourse.

And before Rimbaud, or contemporaneous with him, both Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman began to offer similar possibilities towards an expanded image of self. Though it might seem, at first, that Whitman was propounding-especially in his grandiose “Song of Myself”-one huge monolithic self, he was actually careful throughout to locate multiple points of reference for this large identity-“Walt Whitman...a kosmos”, yes, but though “I am large, I contain multitudes.” In this multitudinous self are many simultaneous voices, not just Whitman’s: “It is you talking just as much as myself, I act as the tongue of you” and “Through me many long dumb voices”. The multi-faceted self grows directly out of Whitman’s concept of Democracy as a mass of individuals, and, in fact, by the later editions of LEAVES OF GRASS he had chosen to open the volume with a short poem in which the original “Myself” was now put in the frame of the third person: “Ones-Self I sing”, he begins, “a simple separate person, / Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-masse.” So far is he now from insisting that kosmos be labeled with his particular name that he merely refers to himself as “one” among a larger one that is actually a many, a “masse”.

In a poem questioning her own sanity, Emily Dickinson points to a multiple self as source of the trouble, and she does so with a seeming awareness of the first person’s exclusive location in the “present” moment of discourse so that a past “I” is actually a third person. (“I can only be identified by the instance of discourse that contains it and by that alone. It has no value except in the instance in which it is produced.” -Benveniste) “And Something’s odd - within -” says Dickinson, “That person that I was - / And this One - do not feel the same - “. Though there may, indeed, be an emotional or psychological root for the severing of her integrated sense of self, she is adamant in her poetry about giving this self its multiple locations, whether she is referring to a “dead” self (“A Breathing Woman / Yesterday”) or a living counterpart that has actually acquired its own name (“We don’t cry - Tim and I, / ...Then we hide our brave face / Deep in our hand / ...I - “Tim” - and Me!”) I will talk more of this

pronominal switch, but notice, here, how she has taken the “I” and located part of it squarely in a third person, in “Tim”.

Benveniste and Roland Barthes offer linguistic analyses for his narrowing realm of unquestioned first-person authority. “*I*” can be used only in the present, and can refer only to the person speaking: “*I* is ‘the individual who utters the present instance of discourse containing the linguistic instance of *I*.’” (Benveniste) This is the only way to gain the authority necessary to make one’s self the subject: “It is by identifying himself as a unique person pronouncing *I* that each speaker sets himself up in turn as the ‘subject.’” The shifting nature of the first person trades this authority back and forth in discourse or writing/reading between the I and Thou, for, as Barthes notes, “The *I* of the one who writes *I* is not the same as the *I* which is read by *thou*.” According to Benveniste, the third person, because it (she/he) exists outside of this immediate discourse involving subjectivity, is actually not in the realm of person:

There are utterances in discourse that escape the condition of person in spite of their individual nature; that is they refer not to themselves but to an ‘objective’ situation. This is the domain that we call the ‘third person.’

...

As has long been seen, forms like *he*, *him*, *that*, etc. only serve as abbreviated substitutes (Pierre is sick; he has a ‘fever’); they replace or relay one or another of the material elements of the utterance.

...the ‘third person’ is indeed literally a ‘non-person.’

Any word that thus takes over for the authorial subject other than “I” is in this area of non-person, a first person that is a “thing” unto itself. A dislocation or multiplication of the autonomous self thus projects objectivity into the zone of subjectivity, offering an assault on conventional linguistic foundations:

Language is possible only because each speaker sets himself up as a *subject* by referring to himself as *I* in his discourse. Because of this, *I* posits another person, the one who, being, as he is, completely exterior to me, becomes my echo to whom I say *you* and who says *you* to me.

(Benveniste)

The multiple self who is reflexive, who is both subject and object in her own discourse, brings *relation* into language in a new way, brings relativity forward as simultaneous perspectives on the event of discourse — the immediate constitution of identity speaking for the world.

Ron Silliman, in his introductory essay in *IRONWOOD 20* to an anthology of so-called new “realist” writers, points to an un-located or discontinuous “I” as a primary characteristic of the group of writers he’s discussing. Though there are certainly others who share this particular methodology, Silliman notes “these writers do not simply sing of the self. Instead, these works investigate its construction through the medium of language. ... We do not contain multitudes so much as we are the consequence of a multitude of conflicting and overdetermined social forces, brought to us, and acted out within us, as language.” Thus Silliman brings social and political

reality squarely into relation with the matter of identity and subjectivity in discourse, pointing not only towards multiple locations of identity but multiple constitutive forces that are themselves creative of identity.

“But to whom might such an art communicate directly?” he goes on to ask. “Self-reflexivity (i.e. a conscious response to alienation) is clearly a requirement.” It would be necessary, he adds, to locate “those individuals for whom this question of the subject of self is neither abstract or peripheral, but is as real and concrete (and problematic!) as everyday life itself.” We have seen that the deconstruction of self brings the “objective” third or non person into the subjective realm (or vice-versa). It is also clear that the domain of this third person, in its singular form in English, is governed by the House of Gender, that place of fierce behavioral definition, modification, and reward. It will be necessary, then, to look with a cautious eye towards the role of gender in the third person as a constitutive force for identity, and to look towards those people for whom gender is already at issue in their everyday lives as just “those individuals” Silliman is seeking for whom the issue of self is concretely problematic.

The force of gender in determining identity in our society can hardly be overestimated—it is constitutive at every conceivable level of social interaction, going far beyond a merely physiological foundation into areas of behavior where physiological gender is irrelevant. Yet its distinctive binary terms continue to enforce themselves. At significant levels gender is projected onto the self as primary identity itself, before personality or individuality. The awareness of one’s place (or misplace) on the axis of gender puts the third person objective into the realm of the first person subjective. “They came in with rags and a belt”, says Bertha Harris in *LOVER*, describing the event of her first menstruation. “They said, Now you are a woman. I had been exchanged for a woman.” Similarly, men whose supposedly “girlish” ways throw their gender categorization into some con-fusion — and these ways may fall among a number of behavioral patterns from speech to walk to position in intercourse — have primary, though “confused”, gender identities projected onto them, defining them. In explaining her difficulties with gender-tyrannization over her identity, Gail Rubin draws upon both Sartre’s myths of racism and anti-semitism — where the Jew’s subjective sense is destroyed by other’s sense of him as an object, as “other” — and his analysis of Genet’s homosexuality, his “situation as the object which he is to others over the subject he is to himself. ... The fact that Genet is first an object indicates the origin of his particular brand of sexuality.” (Some contemporary historians such as Weeks and Altman are beginning to describe the historical process by which homosexual “acts” came to be seen as constituting a homosexual “identity”, creating object -status.) “Beyond that”, says Bob Glück in *ELEMENTS OF A COFFEE SERVICE*,

a certain word was growing in me, a word too charged for the newspapers, for books, TV, even for my father’s jokes. When I located Homosexual under H in the index of library psychology books, the sight of it jarred me, my stomach clenched — blushing, I averted my eyes. It went way beyond fuck, shit, or piss; in its clinical remoteness it went beyond nigger, dago, spick, kike; it would grow and become large as I was, equaling me. If the word was so despised, what would become of me once I had given it corporeal form?

The confusion is dramatically linguistic; the attempt to locate self along an axis of power, or access to power, forces the readings: I is she-that-is-a-woman or I is he-that-is-not-quite-a—man. At the merest level of reportage, gender signification has an overbearing and potentially warping power — as any homosexual writer knows who has had to brave, or cow to, social opprobrium against same sex love. The switching of pronouns to fit social erotic convention is powerfully indicative of both an awareness of the tyranny of gender and the mutabil-

ity of identity. It is in this context, that both Whitman and Dickinson switched erotically charged pronouns, and we have, luckily, both versions of these poems.

Whitman's famous "Once I Pass'd Through A Populous City", placed among his "Children of Adam" poems that describe so-called "amative" heterosexual occasions, tells of a liaison with an unknown woman in an unnamed town. For years this poem was pointed to as proof of Whitman's supposed relationship with a mulatto woman in New Orleans, who was also supposed to have given birth to some or one of his children. "Yet now of all that city", says Whitman:

I remember only a woman I casually met there who
 detrain'd me for love of me
Day by day and night by night we were together - all
 else has long been forgotten by me,
I remember I say only that woman who passionately
 clung to me,
Again she holds me by the hand, I must not go,
I see her close beside me with silent lips sad and
 tremulous.

Some sixty years after the initial publication of this poem it was revealed that, in original manuscript, the erotic import was entirely different. "But now of all that city", Whitman writes, "I remember only the man who wandered with me, there, for love of me," adding, "I remember, I say, only one rude and ignorant man who, when I departed, long and long held me by the hand, with silent lip, sad and tremulous." Such manipulation of gender and its pronouns is enormously suggestive of Whitman's ability — we might call it necessity - to find for the self multiple locations and multiple voices.

Dickinson employed the strategy of cross-gender terminology in several poems and letters. I've already mentioned the pseudonymous "Tim", and Rebecca Patterson reminds us in her study *THE RIDDLE OF EMILY DICKINSON* that:

Emily, too, liked to pretend that she was a boy. In her letters she sometimes spoke of her "boyhood" and in many poems she was "boy", "prince", "earl", or 'duke'.

The poem beginning "I showed her heights she never saw -" is crucial to Dickinson's work, depicting a moment that recurs - symbolically amplified and metaphorically turned - throughout the poems. This moment is charged with romantic and erotic weight, fraught with psychological intensity, and sundered in its moment of glory by a deep refusal. "Would'st have me for a Guest?" asks Emily, but "She could not find her Yes - / And then, I brake my life -." This passionate poem, directed to a woman friend, was nevertheless rewritten in later years so that it read "He showed me heights I never saw," etc. We also have two versions of the poem beginning variously, "Going to Him! Happy letter!" and "Going - to - Her! / Happy - Letter!" In this dialogue between the writer and her letter, filled with emotion directed towards its receiver, Emily not only switches the entire set of pronouns in the two versions, but refers to herself in the third person "Tell Her - just how she sealed - you". Dickinson's articulated junctures resonate here with a deeply kaleidoscopic sense of identity. "Tell Her", she says to the letter

(which is to be tucked, rather seductively, into her bodice) “I only said - the Syntax - / And left the Verb and the Pronoun - out!” Whether from fear or insight or parts of both, Dickinson cracked through the rigidity of gender-located pronouns in pursuing the articulation of her self and her desires.

I mean to suggest that those for whom gender signification is seriously at issue might be inclined towards manipulating pronouns; and since they are not fixed for themselves they need not be fixed for others. There is a rich field of homosexual subcultural parlance exploring cross-gender identity, and an equally fierce attack by contemporary women on formerly sacrosanct territory of the male pronoun. To expand the area of the objectified-as-woman-woman, women have begun to explore the associative cultural identity of males, enlarging their sense of self towards its fuller possibilities. Judy Grahn’s “She Who” poems offer a litany of such exploration:

She Who continues.
She Who has a being
named She Who is a being
named She Who carries her own name.
...
I am the woman the woman
the woman - I am the first person.
and the first person is She Who is the first person to
She Who is the first person to no other. There is no
other first person.

Similarly, contemporary women — and in fact many gay men have resurrected the term “goddess” in describing their spiritual potentialities, not so much to replace one binary term with another, but to explode gender signification in the highest of all the third person powers, otherwise known as “Him”

No group, I think, has been more inventive — and again this may be the invention of necessity—in exploding traditional gender terminologies than gay men. It has been an age old custom of gay men to replace their masculine-signifying first name with feminine ones: John becomes June, Louie becomes Lulu, Mark - Marcia, Ron - Veronica, Tony - Tina, and for decades there has been the all-purpose “Mary”. In the event of complicated nomenclatures there is always an-across-the-board female-suffix like “ette”, so Robert will be Robette (or perhaps Babette) and Timmy, Timiette — or Timietta if you want to double-suffix it. In the tradition of Romance languages, the nouns of the world can be similarly manipulated — I am writing an essayette on my little deskette, though again this might be too Francophilic and I could substitute “deskina” for an Italianate touch. Or perhaps a little dramatic characteristic or dream of power will locate itself behind the introductory “Miss”: Miss Destiny or Miss Taken or Miss Attitude. (In the true spirit of non-gender specificness, a friend of mine — buoyed by the very articulated personality of his dog — has opted not merely for Ms but for Mx, thus being non species-specific as well.) There is a long line of simple “girls”, as well as girline, girlfriend, girlfrenzia, and girl-thing. And behind these, in a kind of majestic purity, waits the absolute pronoun -itself: “She”, filled with cultural determinism, fraught with psychological fundamentalism, resonant of mythology. The powers that are projected or transferred onto the female are thus transferable making cross-gender terminology akin to sympathetic magic. And here I would profess my own opinion that, there is certainly misogyny among many gay men, this freedom with feminine pronouns and gender-identified words is not meant to be demeaning to women — it is meant to demean the system of role signification that distributes moral, intellectual, and social characteristics along gender-specific lines. It is used to crack presumptions of behavior and privilege, and to redistribute the

goods. In much the same way women seek to gain for themselves territory formerly reserved for males, many gay men seek access to territory previously circumscribed for females. Both of their experiences are born from role objectification (as well as sexual objectification) so that the self becomes a thing to others and ultimately a thing to itself. Thus, Miss Thing is the grand ironic nomenclature in gay terminology — the perfect person-as-object! Actually any objectified quality projected as a state of identity will serve as well, witness Genet's account of the evolution and declensions of the "Quite":

"No", said Mimosa, "I'm the Quite Alone."
She also meant: "I'm the Quite-Persecuted."
...
"My God, I'm the Quite-Giddy!"
...
"I really am, sure sure sure, the Quite-Profligate."
...
"Here, here, behold the Quite Fluff-Fluff."
One of them, when questioned by a detective on the boulevard:
"Who are You?"
"I'm a Thrilling Thing."
Then, little by little, they understood each other by saying: "I'm the Quite-Quite", and finally: "I'm the Q'Q'."

The pronouns of gender are tyrannical. Because they exemplify the social, cultural, and economic factors embedded in gender-role modification of behavior, they animate the supposedly non-personal realm of the third person with their own constitutive energies. I would suggest, then, that gender signification distributes person onto the axis of the non-person, substituting cultural gender-determinism for identity. Explorations towards a reflexively expanded self must not be caught out in this trap. There is a vast territory for analysis and discovery in both gender signification and the mutability of pronouns. A world of multi-subjectivity and multi-objectivity waits somewhere.

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Steve McCaffery The Unreadable Text

Barthes, in his masterly reading of Balzac's *Sarrasine* distinguishes two fundamental types of texts: the readerly (*lisible*) and the writerly (*scriptible*). The readerly is the classic text, grounded in a transmission theory of communication and an ideology of exchange the human condition of whose reader Barthes sums up in the following:

Our literature is characterized by the pitiless divorce which the literary institution maintains between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its customer, between its author and its reader. This reader is thereby plunged into a kind of idleness - he is intransitive; he is, in short, *serious*: instead of gaining access to the magic of the signifier, to the pleasure of writing, he is left with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text: reading is nothing more than a referendum.

The writerly text by contrast is resistant to habitual reading; it is "the novelistic without the novel, poetry without the poem...production without product" making the reader no longer a consumer but a producer of the text. The writerly text proposes the *unreadable* as the ideological site of a departure from consumption to production, presenting the domain of its own interior, interacting elements (signifiers) as the networks and circuits of an ultimately intractable and untotalizable meaning.

What I would like to question in this approach to the unreadable is Barthes' and subsequent writers' tacit identification of *production*, *creativity* and *value* that attains the status of an ideological occlusion. Or to phrase it differently: what alternative approaches are open to the opaque text other than semantic production?

We need to insist, for instance, upon all writing's *unavoidable* proximity to non-productive values and radically non-utilitarian economies.

For instance, the sound and rhythm of language can never be reduced to the operation of language per se. The written mark is a threshold of extreme ambivalence: as a material support for signification it is separable from the signifying process is unsupportable without it. Both rhythm (which is dissection, repetitive difference and death) and sound constitute the radical *Other* of the linguistic interiorized and repressed within all manifestations of the signifying process. Kristeva speaks of this highly dialectical component in language and distinguishes two fundamental dispositions: the one thetical, nominative and propositional; the other preverbal, residual, operating through sono-rhythmic gestures across the lines of the symbolic order. It is this latter disposition that guarantees a certain place for unconscious formations and flows within language and that commits all writing to both a biological and social programme. Rhythm is dissective and cuts up the line of durational time; it is a radical discontinuity, a death drive experienced as a betweenness that asserts the negative difference between two erotic points.

Mist moved
men tal

is no longer simply an alliteration, but refers to its own radical dialectic operating between a nonverbal gesture of repeated sounds and the semantic order of the words. It is no longer sounds that make up the material support for words but the contestation of two basic and antagonistic orders.

It is at that pivotal point where language is both composed and dissolved, made and unmade, produced and consumed, the point where the unreadable appears as both a break-down of social code and the eruption of a radical otherness within the linguistic order, that language connects with the unconscious and its drives. Kristeva's notion of language's double disposition has important implications. In the first place it reinstates the centrality of subjective *outlay* that Saussurean linguistics had removed, hinting at a writing through language towards that constituent of language *that exceeds the linguistic*, of a language always in excess of its verbal, discursive form and carrying the logically anterior energies that do not define so much as "mark" the movement of the self as a plurality of desires. This too, is a non-productive economy with its basis in intensities and the Freudian *drive*; it marks a counter-propulsion in all language by the subject's instinctual, non-semantic forces that push through language. Understood as part constituted by such libidinal economy meaning presents itself as a membrane through which instinctual drives force passage or have that passage denied.

Whch nugkinj
without sJuxYY senshl

 "sensual"
though he meant it
for ray for is for is heh hahpeh uvd r fah
breaks at the point

is beh aht.
baht at
 (the moors at ilkley. june. nineteen or
 sixty three)

si gidrid. impOg a rising or simply the

Qwerty

This passage (from LEGEND) puts to systems in contest: a limiting, organizing system which pushes the independent *letter as a component* towards the word and phrase components in the production of meaning; and a disposition towards disorganization, driving the letter in clusters that register closer to the order of a prelinguistic "thing", experienced as marks or gestures rather than semantic exchange objects. The sign function here is decidedly ambivalent, a pressure point produced by the confrontation of conflictual drives, a simultaneous push

towards and away from the semantic order.

Libido is not utilitarian; it is not a producer but flows in an unmediated outlay of blind power. Similarly, it can never be a theme or a representation; it can only be the register of intensities despite linguistic constraint and can only seek detachment in discharge.

Envisioned here is a situation in which both writer and reader confront their own negatives and plural dispositions; a sense of the subject not as an integrated self-function but as a multidetermined threshold between two violently contestative orders.

Finally, to approach the unreadable text through Bataille's notion of sovereign communication and the General Economy. Bataille describes sovereignty as "the power to rise indifferent to death, above the laws which ensure the maintenance of life." Sovereignty "is the object which eludes us all, which nobody has seized and which nobody can seize for this reason: we cannot possess it, like an object, but we are doomed to speak it. A certain utility always alienates the proposed sovereignty." Sovereignty is a gesture (without true responsibility) beyond use value. Seeking to detach energy expenditure from utility it finds best operation in an economy of *unproductive consumption* - an economy that Bataille has termed *General Economy*:

The general economy, in the first place, makes apparent that excesses of energy are produced, and that by definition, these excesses cannot be utilized. The excessive energy can only be lost without the slightest aim, consequently without meaning.

In the general economy (an economy of total and irreducible non-conservation) writing aligns itself with all other non-utilitarian practices (gambling, war, excretion, eroticism) as a loss of energy without meaning and emerges as a "carnivalization of the sign" (Bakhtin) and the non-productive expenditure of meanings. Sovereign communication, like the Barthesian unreadable text, rejects that model of communication as a transmission-reception across time by two individual, reflective consciousnesses. But where Barthes sees the breakdown of lisibility as a return of the text and writing to a defetishized zone of production, sovereignty enters the non-utilizable arena of mutual impenetrability:

(Sovereign) Communication...is never stronger than when communication, in the weak sense...which makes us and others appear penetrable, fails and becomes the equivalent darkness.

Here the communicative act involves the destruction of the communicative model in a simultaneous cancellation of both writer and reader as impenetrable terms.

The unreadable text should be submitted to both these scrutinies and a double reading proposed: Barthes' textual production and the more negative existential approach of Bataille. Do we enter the texts and produce a reading or do we proceed further in the *experience* of the unreadable? What is critical in this type of text is an awareness of its radical double disposition that simultaneously petitions an active productive engagement and a renunciation of the reduction to utility. It is when these texts are experienced as multiple peaks of ambivalence

(as both wastes and potentials, inscriptions and aporias, productive encounters and non-productive consumptions) that something close to a sovereign immobility may result. The challenge to readership is the challenge to develop a capacity to experience ambivalence as ambivalence and to resist the utilitarian pressure to rush immediately into solutionary or compensatory strategies.

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Bob Perelman
Words Detached from the Old Song and Dance
(a talk delivered at 80 Langton Street)

Chomsky quotes a joke that's apparently old hat in linguistic circles, but I thought it was fairly profound. Question: How you tell a language from a dialect? Answer: A language is a dialect that has an army and a navy. Individual speech acts want to extend outward, too. "Syllables aim to spread out, but hardly do." [Primer] The speaker speaks, the listener listens, and the context interprets (soaks up) the utterance. Speech has a hard time being autonomous.

Language, on the other hand, aspires toward universality. The U.S. wants the whole world to be "free." The word covers our government's intention. Bombs of all sorts try to maintain the correct interpretation.

One of the things the language/dialect joke says, to me, that signs aren't motivated. The sounds have to be forced into meaning. Down on the farm (dialect), they moo, neigh, honk; here in the capital (language), we speak words (the truth).

Speech is particular—it includes voice, accent, time of night—but language is absolute. It's a generalizing totality, including "world," "sun," "self," and "other." It doesn't always need an explicit army & navy to rule the earth,—it can be internalized, taken on faith as immutable. It can represent truth, not force. Zukofsky says:

The economy of presentation in writing is a reassertion of faith that the combined letters—the words— are *absolute symbols* [my italics] for objects, states, acts, interrelationships, thoughts about them. If not, why use words?

If writing is that exact, then time doesn't matter. Words extend outward in thought (or on a page) forever in a way that they don't in speech. Are empires founded on writing?

I want to look first at the combined letters.

Our writing is alphabetic. As I'm typing this up, that seems totally tautological, but it's not. Eric Havelock, in *The Literate Revolution and its Cultural Consequences*, discusses the problems a potential alphabet must solve and the consequences of our alphabet once it was invented. He makes a good case for these consequences being quite profound.

An alphabet must meet 3 conditions in order to allow widespread literacy:

First, coverage of all the phonemes in the language must be exhaustive; second, the letter shapes are to be restricted to between 20 and 30; and, third, individual shapes are not to be asked to perform double or triple duty. Their acoustic identities must be fixed and unchanging.

Pre-Greek syllabaries aimed to capture the sound of the language. Havelock provides the following analogy to explain their clumsiness:

If English spelling weren't historically somewhat arbitrary, "Jack and Jill" would be alphabetized:

No. 1) JAKANDJIL

A syllabary would write the open syllables JA and JL. Havelock allows his typical example to have signs for vowels, as is claimed true of Linear B, so we would have A. The rest of the consonantly stops would have to be written as open syllables: K=KA; N=NA; D=DA; L=LA. So the whole phrase reads

No. 2) JA KA A NA DA JL LA

A Phoenician-type system cuts out the vowels, giving

No. 3) JKNDJL

Havelock's point is that example 2 would involve hundreds of signs, while example 3, involving only 20, is phonetically ambiguous. (It could be saying, "Jocund, jolly...") Syllabaries only work well in triggering recall of familiar material.

Unlike syllabaries, the alphabet is simple enough for a child learn. Learned early, it becomes an automatic reflex, faster, finally, than hearing. It eventually democratized literacy (only priests, traders, or palace accountants had learned syllabaries). The alphabet can say anything; a kid can read anything; thus, a permanent generation gap.

Unlike hieroglyphs, a kind of symbolic thought, the as Havelock puts it, "doesn't think." It's a transparent window, onto the sound, onto speech. But the consequences of alphabetic technology changed what was said.

Oral poetry had been the antithesis of novelty. (Even though each oral performance would be new, i.e., slightly different.) The oral poet expressed conventional wisdom. Quoting Havelock:

The Greek city states of the 9th to 6th centuries [BC] perfected a system of oral instruction in dance, music, and recitation, by which certain works of oral composition were selectively memorized, recited, expanded, but in a disciplined manner . . . as part of an initiation into oral society Homer, in short, is a monument of oral education, not just artistic achievement. He was a 'cultural encyclopedia.'

Not that the *Iliad* & *Odyssey* are common speech; they are an artificial language, 5 dialects melded into a stock of transposable rhythmic phrases that imprint on the memory. But the narrative was familiar, and embodied common norms, protocols, opinions (Even though these were often violated in the poems. The interest would lie in hearing these tensions resolved.)

After the alphabet was invented, the society would still be oral. Aristotle speaks of an educated person as being musical not "literate". Early alphabetic poetry "continued for some time the previous oral functions of reporting, conserving and recommending the unwritten ethos of Greek social, civic, and personal behavior." The lyric poets, Sappho, Archilochus, Pindar, clearly used writing, but their poems were oral occasions, addressed to a loved one at a symposium, or sung by a civic chorus (Jugs & buildings spoke, too: "I am Nestor's cup.") Fame would consist of the work being orally memorable.

Written and oral values gradually separated out. At the beginning of his history, Herodotos writes that he's in an oral situation: "Here is information gathered by Herodotos of Helican now published to prevent what

has happened from departing from the memory of man.” The word translated as “published” actually indicated reading aloud from a manuscript. Memory would then be in the living tissue of his audience. But, a generation later, Thucydides, while he’s also concerned that his work last, calls it a thing (i.e., a book) wants it to last forever, and contrasts its truth with the style of popular entertainment designed to please the public (i.e., traditional oral performance).

Not just the writing itself. but its subjects get reified. Aeschylus, writing in an oral community, has prologues to his play spoken by characters who are part of the action. The story, internal to the community listening, is speaking. Euripides’ prologues, says Havelock, “separate themselves bookishly from the action, the plot becomes more objectified and, in later plays, more fictional, exploiting surprise & irony at the expense of prediction, while in the choruses, as if to compensate for the growing rationality of the dialogue, emotional and personal release encroach upon societal and traditional meditation.”

The alphabet, that clear window, transforms the view, which becomes novel, personal, abstract, eternal, ineffable, i.e., unsayable.

The beginning of the Iliad deals with justice, but in a narrative way: Agamemnon isn’t fair to Chryses the priest, then he’s unfair to Achilles. Achilles should obey his king, but he doesn’t, etc. The narrative, after embodying these tensions, finally unravels them. Compare Plato, who, though he does tell stories occasionally, aims finally at defining “the Good”: a word, on the page or in the heart of space. For Plato, writing is still a social service (he’s trying to define the perfect society), but the goods it delivers are new and strange, too good for the unphilosophical masses.

Virgil writes out of a much more complex situation. There is now the State, in place of the earlier Greek phonological group. A writer’s place was now precarious, accidental, ornamental. The opening lines of his first book, the *Eclogues*, deal obliquely with the fact that he has been to Rome, has found favor, and has been granted a small estate. He now has the leisure to write, to pipe his oat. In the *Eclogues*, shepherds with Greek names pretend to talk to sheep. The poems speak of social and poetic success by successfully being ornamental: they imitate Theocritus, who invented the original displacement of “the pastoral” in Alexander’s smaller, earlier empire. Pastoral was always literary until much later when people began taking it literally (Marie Antoinette playing shepherdess).

Besides the State, Virgil was also having to deal with literary history (another consequence of the alphabet). In the *Aeneid*, Virgil is taking on Homer. The first six books imitate the wanderings of Odysseus, while in the second six the duel between Aeneas & Turnus duplicates that of Hector & Achilles in the *Iliad*. This is encapsulated in the first words: *Arma virumque cano*. *Arma* (arms, war) recalls the first word of the *Iliad*, *maein* (rage), and *virum* (man) quotes the first word of the *Odyssey*. *Cano* means “I sing,” but here it’s a literary usage. Homer says he sang and he did. For Virgil, to sing means to write in a lofty manner and to imitate Homeric meter: what had been a mnemonic device now signifies grandeur.

The major themes and most noted episodes of Homer are imitated: destructive illicit passion (for Helen, read Dido), the journey to the underworld, the funeral games, etc.,—most of the narrative of the *Aeneid* refers to Homer. There’s also a great amount of direct verbal imitation. But there’s a fundamental difference, exemplified in the divine shield motif. Both Achilles and Aeneas are given a magic shield before an important battle. But where Homer has Achilles’ shield decorated with cosmic emblems and generic scenes of daily life, Virgil has Aeneas’ shield depict the history of Rome, ending with the Roman Empire. What is conventionally universal in Homer is tendentiously universalizing in Virgil. All words lead to Rome.

Homer’s heroes are what the poems are about: they embody the values. Aeneas is more of a hero: he has to end up as the embodiment of the Roman Empire. Homer’s characters laconically express a concentrated essence of some major types of human behavior; but Aeneas gets progressively blanker as his moral education continues along. He tries to defend Troy as it falls in Book II, but he is told by the gods not to fight but to go found Rome. He falls in love with Dido in Book IV, again, he is told to go found Rome.

He ends up fully restrained, pious, plus he's on the winning side. Like some ultimate NFL coach, aided by the forces of light (mostly male), hindered by the forces of darkness (mostly female), he struggles manfully toward a bland totalitarianism. The Empire is to be brutally decent. The gods & dead ancestors provide pithy slogans: the Romans are to "show mercy to the defeated and to defeat the haughty in battle." Jove says, "To the Romans I set no boundary in space or time. I have granted them dominion, and it has no end." Augustus is both the model and the target of this combination of good manners and absolute power: the Emperor who modestly called himself First Citizen, frowned on adultery and dirty poetry (he banished Ovid), encouraged farming, old time religion, while at the same time he owned Egypt (among much else) and was a god.

As propaganda, the *Aeneid* was completely successful. It was taught in the schools for millennia. Keats translated it. Eliot claimed it as the main pole holding up the tent of Western Civ. The quality of its defense of Roman virtues turned into evidence of those same virtues.

In keeping with its lofty mission of justifying world rule, the tone is very lofty, the material accoutrements are usually sumptuous, and all physical description is heightened: cups are made of gold, storms at sea make the waves lash the heavens, etc. Human beings have a tough time talking in such a dense atmosphere:

And now Helenus, Apollo's own henchman, addressed Anchises with profound respect: 'Anchises, counted fit for exalted marriage with Venus herself, Anchises for whom the Gods take thought since twice they have saved you from falling Troy, see—Italy's land is before you, sail fast, and make it yours. But first you must voyage right on, coasting along the nearer side of Italy, which lies out there, across the sea, for it is the far side of Italy which Apollo unlocks for you. Go forth in the strength of your son's loyalty. But why do I continue so? The winds are rising. I must not keep them waiting by my talk.'

The little bit of the plot given here: don't go straight to Italy, go around, is typical of the narrative, which is all delay, repression of desire in the service of eventual total control. Virgil emphasizes the pain of this process. So much so, that lately critics have tried to read the *Aeneid* as an anti-Imperialist poem, one that says the Empire wasn't worth it; Aeneas was wrong to desert Dido; the real hero in the last half of the poem is the aboriginal opposition leader, Turnus. The poem ends with Aeneas losing control of his temper and killing Turnus who's begging for mercy in a nobly restrained way,—almost as if the *Aeneid* is really *Tales of Gran Apacheria*.

Adam Parry is one of these critics. He says, "In the finest passages of the *Aeneid*, we find again and again, not a sense of triumph, but a sense of loss." His analysis of a tiny lament for a minor character is worth quoting at length:

For you the grove of Angitia mourned, and
Fucinus' glassy waters,
And the clear lakes.
Tē nemus Angitiaē, vitrea te Fucinus unda,
Tē liquidi flevere lacus.

First ... there is the absolute mastery of rhetoric. We have a tricolon, three successive noun phrases, here in asyndeton, that is, with no grammatical connectives, joined to one verb, *flevere*, mourned; and this device is combined

with apostrophe: the dead warrior is suddenly addressed in the second person. The pronoun *te*, you, is repeated thrice, each time in the beginning of one of the three elements of the tricolon, a repetition we call anaphora. So much is developed by standard rhetoric. Virgil's mastery consists not in that but in the subtle variations of it we see here. The three nouns are all a little different. The first is a grove with the name of the goddess to whom it is sacred in the possessive singular: *nemus Angitia*, the grove of Angitia. The second is the name of a nearby lake, Fucinus, qualified by a noun and an adjective: Fucinus with glassy wave, *vitrea Fucinus unda*. The third, beginning another hexameter line, is a common noun *lacus*, lakes, in the plural, with an adjective only: *liquidi lacus*, transparent lakes. The first two nouns are opposed to the third by being names of places. The second and the third are opposed to the first by having adjectives and by having adjective and noun separated, whereas the grove of Angitia, *nemus Angitia*, comes together. But the first and the third are also opposed to the second by the variation of the anaphora: *te*, you, embodying the directness of lamentation, begins the first phrase: *Te nemus Angitia*... *Te* is repeated in the second phrase, but its directness is modulated, softened, by its coming second in the phrase, after the adjective *vitrea*, glassy: *vitrea te Fucinus unda*. Then in the third phrase, the tonic note is struck again: *Te liquidi flevere lacus*. And, finally, the verse accent falls on the first and the third, but not on the second:

*Te nemus Angitia, vitrea te Fucinus unda,
Te liquidi flevere lacus....*

The image Virgil leaves us with is not a fallen warrior, but a mourning landscape. The dramatic preoccupation of Homer with the single man and the single instant of time gives way to an echoing appeal to the Italian countryside, and an appeal strengthened in wholly unhomeric fashion by historical associations....

The place names ... are from the Marsian country ... where the Marsi had recently been defeated by the Romans, succumbing inevitably to the expansion of Roman power. The explicit message of the Aeneid claims that Rome was a happy reconciliation of the natural virtues of the local Italian peoples and the civilized might of the Trojans... But the tragic movement of the last books ... carries the suggestion that the formation of Rome's empire involved the loss of the pristine purity of Italy.

The finesse of Parry's reading is quite convincing. But the explicit statement of the poem as a whole is that Rome was a happy reconciliation of the appropriate virtues. To read Virgil as subverting those values, we would have to dismiss the bulk of what is said in favor of the mournful tragic touches, which do occur at intervals throughout.

The *Aeneid* exists as one of the most effective pieces of propaganda ever written and the discerning reader can find in its details the finer sentiments of humanity. In modern terms, it's like hearing snatches of Mozart's G-minor quintet broadcast in various parts of the Liberty shopping center. Poetry can provide a sort of

contemporaneous afterlife for the displaced sensitive reader. A sort of Monday-morning Emperor, he can exquisitely disposed syllables, the pain of repression with the territory of world dominion. The squashed individual can bloom again, in an armchair, reading.

The *Aeneid* is finally a thing, a formal object. Lucretius' poem, *De Rerum Natura*, is primarily an act of address. There is an impassioned message, which goes into great technical detail. Lucretius is preaching atomism, and, more importantly, its consequences: religion is baloney; there are many worlds; this one will end; phenomena are explainable; sentience is formed of insentience; the mind dies with the body. His use of poetry is just that,—a use. He hopes to interest a patron, Memmius, whom he hardly knows, to buy his line. And, of course, he hopes to relieve humanity of superstitious terror. Poetry is just the sugar coating on the pill (literally, the honey on the rim of the cup of wormwood). The verse is truly didactic, and comes from the tradition of pre- and post- Socratics (Xenophanes, Parmenides) who composed philosophy in dactylic hexameter since that was the appropriate mode of preserving a message in an oral society.

Lucretius is not concerned with making a perfect object. He'll explain the motion of the moon one way, then immediately offer a contradictory explanation: Maybe it disperses everything and a new bunch of atoms fly together the next night; or maybe it's the same object, blown around by a complex set of crosswinds. The point is that it's explainable.

Phenomena and our grasp of them are his object. The is pointed totally outward toward the world:

Give your mind to the true reasoning I have to unfold. A new fact is battling strenuously for access to your ears. A new aspect of the universe is striving to reveal itself. But no fact is so simple that it is not harder to believe than to doubt at first presentation. Equally, there is nothing so mighty or so marvellous that the wonder it evokes does not tend to diminish in time. Take first the pure and undimmed luster of the sky and all that it enshrines: the stars that roam across its surface, the moon and the surpassing splendour of the sunlight. If all these sights were now displayed to mortal view for the first time by a swift unforeseen revelation, what miracle could be recounted greater than this? What would men before the revelation have been less prone to conceive as possible?

This is one of the simplest and most effective examples of defamiliarization that I know of. At other times, his discussion of the world is ludicrous,—like when he explains that when clouds block the sun you can't see the sun any more. Who does he think he's talking to? A perfectly dark mind. His verse becomes all revelation, veering between the beatific and the preposterous.

Where Virgil was writing by Imperial command, justifying the hierarchy for all time in the loftiest tone, Lucretius was haranguing a minor government functionary who certainly wasn't listening to the poem's blasphemous relativism: that religion is evil, that there are many worlds (compare Virgil putting Rome in the center of time and space). In *De Rerum Natura*, the separation of the message from the addressee produces, at times, a very curious no-tone. Here is Lucretius describing the nature of the mind:

Since, therefore, the substance of the mind has been found to be extraordinarily mobile, it must consist of particles exceptionally small and smooth and round. This discovery, my dear fellow, will prove a timely aid to you in many problems.

It's as if he were giving him a Swiss Army knife.

The address to a social superior is conventional, of course,—a poet needed patronage—except that Lucretius keeps it up throughout the poem. And beyond that, he is addressing the reader, didactically. Unlike the oral poet, who is reinforcing what the community already knows, the *didactic* writer will always have something new and, possibly, unacceptable to get across. The efficacy of his address will always be in question. Critics used to praise the “objectivity” of Homer (which comes from its communal nature); Lucretius strikes me as often totally subjective in his attempts to communicate:

What joy it is, when out at sea the stormwinds are lashing the waters, to gaze from the shore at the heavy stress some other man is enduring ... But the greatest joy of all: to stand aloof in a quiet citadel... and to gaze down ... on others wandering aimlessly...

A number of times, he makes the analogy between making up things and letters making up words. But the he can't explain is his own writing. He wants to say the world is orderly, but he keeps prefacing that claim with statement “A tree cannot exist in space, or clouds in the salt sea; fishes cannot live in the fields or blood flow in wood or sap in stones.” He can't shut off his own metaphors. In the following description of a river, note the sequence of water—army--milk-army—ax—water—foot—water:

It flows overground, a steady column of sweet fluid marching down the highway already hewn with liquid foot for the guidance of its waves.

Lucretius wanted to change readers' minds, to promulgate a new world; Virgil wanted to elevate their minds into an enthusiastic quietism, a happy acceptance of absolutism. It's not a coincidence that Virgil is the better rhetorician (Lucretius doesn't even have a stable word for “atom”). Virgil's became part of the substance of education, a standard part of the curriculum. By the sixth century, Macrobius regards his works as divinely inspired: all knowledge can be found there. Virgil is a theologian; his books are revelatory, infallible. Author mysterious and can be studied forever.

Words detached by writing from the old oral song and dance will be stable enough to say anything. But the departure from convention and, most importantly, from a unified time of perception and production, will cause signification to wobble. Writing (clarity) and reading (mystery) don't happen at the same. Robert Smithson says that if you stare at any word long enough, it fragments. Over a longer span, Ovid wrote, “To get something is good, to keep it, better,” referring to sex. For the Carolingians however, the text spoke of religious faith and salvation.

To combat this anarchy, there is order (*decorum* / empire). The action of the *Aeneid* begins with Juno (identified by critics as the Principle of Unreason) going to Aeolus, god of the winds, to get him to unleash a storm against Aeneas. Virgil gives an extended picture of the winds moaning underground, dying to get out and blow everything away. “Forseeing this,” he writes, “the Father with whom is all power banished the winds to a dark cavern and piled above them a mountain mass, appointing a king over them...” God's in his heaven, and the words are all in the dictionary, under control.

Verbal behavior gets reified into a frozen hierarchical mass. The typical pro-Imperial critic, in the following case Theodore Naecker, continues to worship this mountain:

For, whether we like it or not, whether we know it or not, we are all still members of that Imperium Romanum ... The Imperium Romanum which Virgil knew in all its natural grandeur and revealed in the splendour of beauty is no hazy ideal ... but a reality, deep though at times that reality may lie buried ... Wherever there is the will and urge to empire, the measure of its wisdom or its excess, of its blessing or its curse, is to be determined by the standards of the enduring reality of the Imperium Romanum.

It's a little easier, of course, for most people to see this as oppression. The principle of oppression has been variously identified as decorum, unitary, syntax itself. A few quotes: "I fear we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar." Nietzsche. Derrida issues a call for guerrilla warfare (with modest tactics):

We must therefore try to free ourselves from this language. Not actually *attempt* to free ourselves from it, for that is impossible without denying our own historical situation. But rather, to imagine doing so. Not actually *free* ourselves from it, for that would make no sense and would deprive us of the light that meaning can provide.

(But maybe we can bend the pages a little, or take out our nail scissors and cut off the page numbers.) Bernard Noel identifies syntax as one of the causes of concentration camps. He says, "Bury syntax, comrades, it stinks!" Steve McCaffery has made the equation between syntax and Reichian character-armor.

In all these cases there is a time gap. The eye is a privileged spectator. When Smithson speaks of the word splintering into many words, he says it does that if you stare at it long enough. And the word stares back. No time passes, and the mind is free to churn. Hearing, however, is something else. Hearing is sensuous, timebound, easily impressed, easily confused. "Making sense" always refers to the acoustic (sensuous) level of discourse and thus to rhetoric, which was, originally, the science (topography of) hearing.

Originally politics and aesthetics were united in the dictatorship of the senses. In *The Frogs*, Aristophanes' comedy which is also the earliest piece of literary criticism, the question of who is the better poet, Aeschylus or Euripides, is resolved by a them each to answer a current political conundrum. (By the way *The Frogs* is the first place we hear of reading word to word. The whole play presents the conflict between reading and speaking quite clearly.)

Terry Eagleton says the following about classical rhetoric:

Its intention, quite consciously, was systematically to theorize the articulations of discourse & power, and to do so in the name of political practice ... Born ... as a supremely pragmatic discourse—how to litigate, prosecute, politically persuade—rhetoric emerged as a discourse theory utterly inseparable from the social relations of exploitation. Cleric & litigant, politician & prosecutor, military leader & popular tribune would naturally have recourse to the prescriptions of rhetorical theory; for how absurd to imagine that the business of politically effective discourse could be left to the vagaries of individual inspiration ... Textural "beauties" were not first of all aesthetically savored, they were ideological weapons.

Two standard rhetorical terms are the colon and comma: cola are repeated phrases of similar length (You were helping your enemy; you were hurting your friend; and you were mistaking your own interests); the comma is a detached work, used in without conjunction (You have destroyed your friends by jealousy, injuries, bribes, insults). One early rhetorical handbook describes their effectiveness like this:

In the first figure (the colon) it seems that the arm draws back and the hand whirls about to bring the sword to the adversary's body, while in the second (the comma) his body is as it were pierced with quick and repeated thrusts.

In Imperial Rome, by the way, after the scope of application of rhetoric had been severely reduced, gladiatorial shows grew bigger and better.

But when rhetoric was flourishing, both as a practice and study, attention was given to all aspects of language. The handbooks advise the orator to study vowels, consonants, rhythms, all the figures of speech & thought, arranging of material, tone of voice, gesture, dress, & techniques of memory. The lists of figures, which are the most notable relics of rhetorical practice, were part of a more total discipline.

The figures were named, exemplified, and they eventually became elements of display, where what was displayed was simply class distinction. But originally, they were used as effective instruments of persuasion. Meaning was never to be built up for its own sake.

One early handbook disparages ambiguity. The anonymous author is very scornful of dialecticians like Chrysippus who maintained that every word was ambiguous. Such theoreticians, the author claims, are inept speakers, finally unable to pronounce their own names. But then he goes on to demonstrate how a single historical example can be argued from two different sides. In other words, he is anti-ambiguity and pro-distortion.

No fact is neutral. If you want to praise someone from a noble family say, "He has been their peer or superior." If of humble descent, "He has had his support, not in the virtues of his ancestors, but in his own." In censure, "If he is of illustrious descent, he has been a disgrace to his forebears, if of low descent, he is none the less a dishonor even to these."

So, rhetoric is instrumental, manipulative, and therefore corruptible. Even at the beginning of rhetoric practice, Plato banishes the sophists (rhetoricians) along with the poets, from his ideal state.

There is a surprising literalness to much rhetorical analysis. They are quite sensitive to figures. The examples often seem quite tame. For instance, in discussing metonymy (part for the whole: calling a "man" a "hand"), the following will seem like a marked case, "Italy cannot be defeated in warfare," where the fact that Italy has been put for "the Italians" seems remarkable. Of course, today we're singularly insensitive to such metonymies. We are the United States, or Russia, and that's why the nuclear bombs are aimed at us.

As a cultural practice, oratory flourished in Athens & Rome when they were relatively democratic. With Alexander's empire in Greece and, later, the Roman Empire, there was, to quote Eagleton:

a severance of rhetorical theory from rhetorical practice ... the Greek city-state, with its partially phonocentric, oratorical political practices had yielded decisively to government by script. Rhetoric was now a predominantly textual rather than political activity, a scholastic rather than a civic pursuit.

A prime example of scholastic textual rhetoric is Quintilian's work, written around 100 A.D. A very cultivated man, he appreciated the poets thoroughly:

Perhaps the highest of all pleasures is that which we derive from private study, and the only circumstances under which the delights of literature are unalloyed are when it withdraws from action ... and can enjoy the pleasures of self-contemplation.

The self-valuable word.

Quintilian and other rhetoricians like Longinus were spoken of approvingly as "walking libraries." The closing down of the rhetorical situation produced the "man of letters." Here we see the birth of the English Department.

Rhetoric's early moral problems with manipulation and distortion are now solved. The perfect orator, says Quintilian, is "the thoroughly good man." His taste is perfect, but, unfortunately, there is little left to express. Rhetorical training was now a major part of being educated, but students would be asked to make up speeches on "controversies" approximately like the following:

A husband & wife swear an oath that if one of them dies the other will commit suicide. The husband sets out on a journey and sends a message to his wife announcing his death. She tries to kill herself, but fails. Her father orders her to divorce her husband.
She refuses. He disinherits her. The husband comes back and sues the father.
Who's right?

Quintilian catalogs all the rhetorical devices, separating out appropriate examples from excessive blunders, but the standard now is taste, not effectiveness. Against the possibility of endless shifts in meaning, he clings to norms. He castigates "Asiatic" opulence (as opposed to "Attic" clarity) in very homophobic terms. Although at one very interesting point he acknowledges that all language is figural - i.e. that every utterance has a shape—he dismisses this:

We must interpret [figures] in the sense of that which is poetically or rhetorically altered from the simple and obvious method of expression.

So now there's Meaning, clarity and (tasteful) Decoration. There are rules and tradition. These get used mechanically and sometimes ludicrously. A standard item in classical rhetoric was the topic, the commonplace. For instance, at the end of the speech, you say you've talked enough. Poets develop this into the topic of "We must stop because night is falling." Virgil uses it often in the *Georgics & Eclogues*. (Milton ends *Lycidas* with it, Ashbery uses it a lot.) But an anonymous poet writes a 28 line poem describing London and ends with the same convention: "The rest I pass by, for the time of day passes by; the hour ends the day, the poet his work."

1700 years down the road, the figures have been separated out, little figurines. Frontanier tells us how to read:

[examine the passage & see if anything] should not be taken in a sense different from the literal & normal meaning; or if to this literal meaning there has not been joined another which is precisely that which was principally intended. In both cases it is a trope ... what is its species? ... that depends on the particular way of signifying or expressing or on the relationship which is its basis. Is it based on the resemblance between 2 objects? Then it is a metaphor...

But this bland intentionality can be subverted at either end. Reader & writer are separate. Rules for shifts in meaning can be applied independently. Science will never get to the bottom of this intentional reality. "Pass the salt," can be a completely metaphorical statement, as it is at a Seder. Compare Creeley's use of "here." Metaphor can be taken literally, which I do quite a bit in aka: "I was never an easy letter to balance on..... I was left holding the bag. I peered into it."

But this time-space gap of writing is no more than an enclave of freedom. The Romantics, surrealists, language-writers have all demonstrated that large supplies of surplus meaning can be produced. But surplus meaning has little political effect. Life is certainly too short to read *Finnegan's Wake*.

Speaking of the Romantics, Eagleton says (I'm paraphrasing) that they opposed poetry to rhetoric. Poetry was antiauthoritarian, identified with nature [thus in poetry, signs were motivated. If signs are motivated, by definition, there's no need for rhetoric.] Where rhetoric was authoritarian, poetry was aesthetic; where rhetoric had an audience, poetry had The Author. Quoting Eagleton directly:

In the absence of that known audience that was in a strict sense a material condition of rhetoric, the creative authorial subject was duly enthroned: source or medium of a transcendental discourse that spurned rather than wooed 'the public.' Language was less public medium than individual expression; rhetorical analysis would be gradually outflanked by 'stylistics'...The very form of the 'aesthetic' provided imaginary resolution of real contradictions.

This analysis applies to much of the current situation. There are many schools of poetry as revelation, involving Jungianisms or techniques of the sacred (divorced from an oral base ... even when delivered orally). The Situationists call for a revolution that "must invent its own language." Language-writing-theory often attempts to liberate language from the shackles of normative clarity.

But all these claims are still based on the timeless privilege of the separated reader/writer, who are never in the same place or time. From time to time, people open their mouths and have a hard time saying exactly what's wrong, or of convincing each other fast enough of what's to be done. Words on a page spread out to implicate an endless variety of other words, at various speeds. Nostalgia, utopia, or Other are all possible.

But political reality is grossly temporal. Nuclear bombs too small for surveillance procedures to detect are being designed at Livermore. Lebanon was invaded. Millions of people watch the news. Some refuse to. Reagan is President. Unfortunately, these aren't typical or timeless statements.

In a very interesting piece on politics & writing ("Constitution" in *Language*, Vol. 4) Bruce Andrews says:

Writing doesn't need to satisfy itself w/ pulverizing relations & discharging excess. It can *charge* material w/possibilities of meaning—not by demolishing relations but by creating them, no holds barred among units of language ... where meaning will insist on spinning *out of* the closed circuit of the sign to reach or *act on* the world.

I generally agree with this, as my writing demonstrates. But there's a misplaced emphasis in the latter half: meaning doesn't exist outside of specific readers & listeners. Nor will writing insist, or act on the world. Writing only acts on people. How?

That question explains the usefulness of rhetoric.

Barrett Watten, at the end of "The Politics of Style," says, "The chain of literary acts seems to be a continual sequence of non-identities. " I interpret this as saying, What I think and write, and what you read it to mean are two different things. (Though maybe I'm not reading him right.) Rhetoric, as I'm envisioning it, works to minimize that non-identity. So, I'm trying to sail past the sirens of semiology. The authors are not in eternity. What does the writing say?

Isaac the Blind, 1350

Lock Your Heart
That It May Not Brood
—Sefer Yetsira, I, 8.

That he may not brood—concerning that which is hidden to thought,
lest he fall into confusion. For only from that which he comprehends

is he able to recognize also that which he cannot comprehend.

For language comprehends
only that out of which it comes.

since man is unable to grasp
the sphere of the divine,

& the letters of the alphabet,
but only the sphere of language itself.

& there are no spheres
outside the letters of the alphabet.

& all the divine spheres are given
to be meditated upon.

For every sphere fills itself
from a sphere above it.

& they are given in order
to meditate from the sphere that appears

in your heart,
to meditate

up to the infinite.

For there is no path to prayer
other than that whereby

man is sucked up by finite words
& rises in thinking to the infinite.

(a rendering by Gary G. Gach)

Michael Palmer
Period (senses of duration)

(Talk at 544 Natoma Street)

I have been asked to speak for an hour or so about whatever I would like which is a little frightening in two respects: one, what is an hour, more or less, as a space of time and two, what would I like. Even after having done this a number of times during the past ten years I am no closer to understanding what comprises an hour with its division into sixty minutes, its minutes into sixty seconds, etc, all deriving from a Babylonian numerology based on twelves at the near edge of pre-history. And certainly I am no closer to knowing 'what I would like to talk about'. I remember in a college seminar being given the assignment of speaking on 'Verlaine and Song' and literally being taken sick as the time for talking approached: fever, nausea, an overwhelming desire to sleep. Not that I couldn't think of what to say, but that there seemed so much to say - the topic of song seemed endless - that I couldn't decide what to put in and what to leave out. More than that of course, there was the prospect of others sitting in judgment, which is what graduate students practiced at most once they had learned how to hold a sherry glass correctly; and at the head of the table a very tired former Sorbonne professor with his blue suit and maroon socks, who had just barely gotten wind of the Symbolists but wasn't sure that their behavior was all that correct. We speculated that to survive he must have had a minimum of three pairs of the maroon socks, but more likely six or seven, and two of the blue suits. When I finally did give the talk, a couple of weeks later, he was kind about my strangled schoolboy French and psychotic demeanor, probably writing the whole thing off as an aberration of youth, given that I never really did get to his notion of song which, I gathered eventually, meant for him the various popular melodies some of Verlaine's least interesting poems had been set to in the late nineteenth century. It seems to me now that I spent six or seven very intensive weeks preparing the talk, then spoke for about ten minutes, but I may be exaggerating.

In any case I want to look somewhat haphazardly at this notion of a period of time and have decided to wait until the Monday before the seventh day, the day of speaking to you, to begin preparing it, so that the talk itself will reflect somehow that duration. This 'seven' with its lingering association of good fortune again brings us back to the Babylonian astrologers who associated the significance of seven with the seven so-called 'planets', that is the wandering stars: Sun, Moon, Venus, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury and Saturn. These, Karl Menninger tells us in his *Number Words and Number Symbols*, were thought of as messengers of the gods; and body-parts, colors, stones, days of the week, etc, were "ordered according to their pattern." The names themselves changed when the Jews brought the Babylonian week to Rome in the first century, but the unit of seven was retained. So it is that I invoke all of the gods (not just one, as Lucretius) to see me through this. And unlike Lucretius again I won't be speaking of the order of things so much as their variety and the inconstancy or mutability of our measures. And unless an illumination occurs during the week I won't have any conclusions to make - the whole idea is simply to lay out some "senses of duration" as they come to me over this period of time, presuming I last it out.

Also I have wanted to wait until Monday evening since a good part of my feeling for time, for particular lengths of time, is tied up with night, specifically sleepless, so-called 'white nights'. I have been experiencing these again recently, as I have periodically throughout my life, and so each seems to connect with every other and the quality of time and duration in them seems fairly constant - they throw me out of daily time even as they force me to reflect on it. That is, they acquire a particular identity by relation to all the others. The chain of them forms a sequence explicitly felt in the nervous system, so that lying awake at one point in time physically reminds me of other like occasions and their causes and the immediate concrete surroundings. So there is both the singularity of the thing and the loss of that as it rhymes with other such nights.

In daily life our habits of activity tend to usurp the sense of specific duration - they help us forget it, and we are to some extent glad of this even as we make our efforts at recovery of the moment and the sum of moments (really the accumulation, since there can't be a sum). Even the measuring of time - "I've got to leave in twenty minutes"; "The soup will be done when the bell rings"; "I hope he doesn't talk too long" - is not an experiencing of a particular passage so much as an equation relative to a daily economy, a kind of parceling which may nonetheless be generated by absolute necessity (I'm reminded of the resident of the Warsaw Ghetto who spoke of marking a loaf of bread according to each day's portion - I've thought a lot about what kind of desperate calendar such a loaf stands for). Regular nights, like regular days, have no duration - we enter the territory of delta sleep - no dreams - or the dream state where time is impossibly compressed and altered to fit the story we then make out of words when we wake. Both can be a horrifying luxury, wherein passing images intervene to eliminate the knowing both of the moment and of the accumulation of moments which, if we could codify them - and we can't - might actually stand for experience. But even as I write "stand for" I see the thing receding; a story comes to stand in its place. So the "story" is a similar kind of luxury of displacement and we are drawn to it. And so mysteries or detective novels often fill or obliterate such long nights, since they contain no mystery but instead relieve us of its insistence. We read them with the sense that they are required to resolve themselves (when they don't or do so imperfectly they're no good). That is, the various threads must be shown to connect and abolish chance. There will be a restoration of order, a satisfactory termination having to do with causes and effects, an explanation of things. Simultaneously the work will erase itself - it will not leave itself in question and can be permanently closed just as the 'case' is closed. When Wittgenstein wrote the *Tractatus* he also hoped to close or at least perfectly circumscribe the 'case', just in case, and very quickly discovered the narrow limits of such an ambition, even if the logicians who later took their false cue (I first wrote 'cure' by mistake) from him did not. One discovers the secret of the thing - like the atom - and the case would seem to be closed. Henceforth (post-Los Alamos) events are circumscribed by democratic will. Deviations from our shaping of historical time will be, if not eliminated, at least explicable and controlled - events acquire an absolute measure until the secret is revealed and thus taken to a place beyond control. At this point no termination can be described as satisfactory. "The secret is out" and we await the day the earth becomes the sun, the ultimate *dies soles*, Sunday, or sabbath of fire, everything is light and our week on earth terminates.

Until then there is the rhythm of alternation, dark-light, by to keep time. And hence the deliberate paradox of "white nights" (its other pole I suppose being "dark days"). It is in such periods of isolate waiting, reading and remembering that I most explicitly feel both the passing of time and the sense of a unit of time, from last light to false dawn (in Boston the end of night would be marked by the first cries of gulls, usually heard before you had sensed the fading of darkness). In *System and Structure* Anthony Wilden says:

It is true that outside the domain of science, very little has been added to what Saint Augustine had to say about human time, but obviously our consciousness and use of the category of time has greatly changed, especially since Hegel, and since the growth of the modern novel in which *duration* is not a simple decor, not an *a priori* outside the characters and outside their time, but more like a character in itself. Human time is that in which the future is primary; it is articulated on human desire. Using the Augustinian categories, one would say that the present of things future (hope) - becomes the present of things present (perception) through reference to the present of things past (memory). The whole process is dependent upon that aspect of the human discourse which confers *signification* upon hope, perception, or memory.

Generally in the silence your heart-beat is magnified as a kind of metrical accompaniment. And memory is generated, hurling you backward (as now I think of Boston, as well as nights of a year I lived in Florence, nights as a child before that, nights on a cot in boarding school, hiding a reading lamp under the covers). And in that way they do all seem to weave into one endless night which is possibly the more accurate, enclosing period. I accompanied by a sense of separateness, a feeling of fundamental isolation that goes back for me to earliest experience but also extends forward in time with the conviction that it lies outside the range of personal choice whether or not one will end up alone, and I suppose who in a sense doesn't. One feels utterly "at a distance" as Canetti phrases it in *Crowds and Power*, yet rather than reinforcing an identity (as for example 'over' those who function in a more conventional rhythm), such isolation threatens to annihilate it. So one refuses to break up such time into a routine of set activities since that would both admit the possibility of a regularized alternative to daily life and would eliminate the quality of undifferentiated time which characterizes it - that quality of more or less pure sameness and interiorization, night being the space or silence between the beats which is in fact what time is - nothing. (I am thinking here of John Berger's scenario for the Alain Tanner film *Jonas* which I will get back to later in the talk.) Habits or recurrent patterns tend to digitalise time, as Wilden would say, and emphasize segmentation, just as dates and other time-words do. Time disappears into this or that time (and consequently "not this" and "not that"). In this way its measure is taken. "Let us," says George Kubler in *The Shape of Time*, "imagine a duration without any regular pattern. Nothing in it would ever be recognizable, for nothing would ever recur. It would be a duration without measure of any sort, without entities, without properties, without events - a void duration, a timeless chaos." So it is that recurrence and periodicity allow us to project images of time onto the variousness of events, to make our particular measures in a sense, and to distract ourselves for the moment from time, to choose a moment from time.

There are obviously infinite types of periodicity. In the thirteenth century Aquinas speculated "on the nature of the time of angels," as Kubler notes, and revived the neo-Platonic concept of "the aevum as the duration of human souls..." This scale is echoed by Karlheinz Stockhausen when he refers in an interview with Jonathan Cott to the notion of the *ylem*, the rhythmic pulsation of the cosmos every eight-thousand and something years. What is interesting is that he invokes all durations as in relation, as currently potential musical information, from the beating of the heart on out. When Thomas Campion makes his impossible case for quantitative verse in English in 1602, it is also a plea for attention to the specific gravity, the particular weight and duration of individual syllables, an attention he felt was being blurred by the increasing reliance on a metrical grid resulting in a severe case of hearing loss among English poets. And now linguistic research, with its own sense of measuring, has brought attention to the temporal shape of elements well below the syllabic unit. "How high the moon" sings very well, "how high the dune" fairly well but "how high the dog" presents problems not only of sense but of phrasing where a lingering extension is needed instead of abrupt termination. By now it is late Tuesday evening ("Evening: Day Two" as the subtitle would read in the war movie), and I should at least attempt to go on to a few particular instances.

Proust of course was a master of the sleepless state and laid a large claim to time as well. Here is a quotation from "Combray" in the recent Kilmartin remaking of the Scott Moncrieff translation:

Thus I would often lie until morning, dreaming of the old days at Combray, of my melancholy and wakeful evenings there, of other days besides, the memory of which had been more recently restored to me by the taste - by what would have been called at Combray the "perfume" - of a cup of tea, and, by an association of memories, of a story which, many years after I had left the little place, had been told me of a love affair in which Swann had been in-

volved before I was born, with a precision of detail which is often easier to obtain for the lives of people who have been dead for centuries than for those of our own most intimate friends, an accuracy which it seems as impossible to attain as it seemed impossible to speak from one to another, before we knew of the contrivance by which that impossibility has been overcome. All these memories, superimposed upon one another, now formed a single mass, but had not so far coalesced that I could not discern between them - between my oldest, my instinctive memories, and those others, inspired more recently by a taste or "perfume," and finally those which were actually the memories of another person from whom I had acquired them at second hand - if not real fissures, real geological faults, at least that veining, that variegation, of coloring, which in certain rocks, in certain blocks of marble, points to differences of origin, age, and formation.

Here Proust describes "his," the narrator's, process of losing his way in memory and reflection, unhooking himself from conventional thought patterns and associations, to a point where the various rooms of his life merge into one - for a time he literally does not know where he is. All this of course is facilitated by darkness - the imagination is set free to respond to a range of memories and associations. His extended periods mirror this wandering, providing a like path for the reader to travel. In the most extreme of these the reader too can easily become lost and must return into the twistings of syntax to regain bearings. The path is anything but straight and strictly linear, and the journey along it cannot be hurried. We are forced to move, like Zukofsky's hummingbird, both forward and backward, "how else could it keep going." Here from the "Overture" to the book is the beginning of a sentence which exemplifies his extended periodicity:

But I had seen first one and then another of the rooms in which I had slept during my life, and in the end I would revisit them all in the long course of my waking dream: rooms in winter, where on going to bed I would at once bury my head in a nest woven out of the most diverse materials - the corner of my pillow, the top of my blankets, a piece of a shawl, the edge of my bed, and a copy of a children's paper - which I had contrived to cement together, bird-fashion, by dint of continuous pressure...
(The sentence continues for another five hundred or more words.)

In a chapter on Montaigne in *System and Structure*, Anthony Wilden states:

In the closed literary system, time is pure sequence or pure background; correlative, the narrator is omniscient, timeless, like St. Augustine's God. On the stage of the open system, however, time is also one of the players - as George Lukás (1920) said of Flaubert's *Education sentimentale*- and the narrator is *imbriqué* ... The time of this type of novel is not simply unilinear or sequential: it may be synchronic, diachronic, mythical, repetitive, ostensibly circular, actually spiral, or structured (but not read) like a mosaic. Time- and therefore the reader- is one of the *dramatis personae* in Montaigne's personal

quest. The past is always remembered, re-presented, just as the Other is remembered, represented, Time is lost and regained; it is subject, object, and relationship in itself.

Proust's sentence (often Wilden's too) threatens never to end, never to "come to the point", that is never to tell, but to continue forever in its languorous, self-enraptured turnings, drawing the reader into the process of remembering itself which threatens to abolish memory. It presents a two-fold temporal evocation, first of that nocturnal time of a paradoxical speculation without light, resistant to intentionality, and then of a period in social history whose passing the book both represents, admits of, and attempts to subvert by offering an ahistorical periodicity in its place, a moment in which to dwell. The resistance of the syntax to scanning or speed reading (one could say, to the habits of the new century where readers have already become viewers, scanning the texts of silent films) enforces upon the reader this inhabiting of the text - one must take the time and must again and again turn back.

(It is Thursday now and I didn't work at all on this yesterday, but as I was coming to bed around 12:30 or 1 last night, Cathy spoke the following phrases to me:

"Who are you?"

"Are you from a book?"

"Tomorrow you can meet the owner of the house."

"Is someone asleep?")

Like Proust, Henry James is known for his extended, labyrinthine periods, yet they manifest a remarkably different rhythm and perform a different function. Here from the opening of chapter XXXIX of *The Golden Bowl*, James's last and stylistically most extreme novel, one that he did not write but dictated in a manner contemporary. daily speech patterns:

The resemblance had not been present to her on first coming out into the hot, still brightness of the Sunday afternoons- only the second Sunday of all the summer, when the party of six, the party of seven including the Principino, had practically been without accessions or invasions; but within sight of Charlotte, seated far away, very much where she expected to find her, the Princess fell to wondering if her friend wouldn't be affected quite as she herself had been, that night on the terrace, under Mrs. Verver's perceptive pursuit. The relation, today, had turned itself around; Charlotte was seeing her come, through patches of lingering noon, quite as she had watched Charlotte menace her through the starless dark; and there was a moment, that of her waiting a little as they thus met across the distance, when the interval was bridged by a recognition not less soundless, and to all appearance not less charged with strange meanings, than that of the other occasion.

The sense of voyage, of *voyage imaginaire* within the confines of a room that we feel in Proust, is absent here. The psychological mechanisms of recall and association are not given anything like the same permission in James. Instead we are presented an endlessly insistent and endlessly impossible act of definition or mapping. It is like following the development of an enormous equation across the blackboard as the physicist moves back and forth, occasionally erasing certain figures and replacing them with others, or adding one or another of those opaque signs for “greater than,” “less than” or “to the twelfth power.” Then when it is apparently complete he steps back, looks the whole thing over and realizes that it remains unfinished, so begins to fiddle with it again. Should any one thing not be in exactly the right place and be precisely qualified, then the entire set of signs will be invalidated. In the midst of the figuring, the immersion of concentration it demands, there must be a point where you feel you are actually constructing a world, the thing itself, rather than an image of it, and I’m told that in the outer reaches of physics and cosmology this is no simple question - that, as among the Pythagoreans, the figures by their logical inevitability announce their necessary being not as ancillary but as constitutive elements. Yet when you finally do step back for the last time you have a blackboard and you have chalk-marks, and very possibly a twelve-year old prodigy in the class who will point out a fundamental error in your calculations. Where Proust’s Bergsonian world forms outside of scientific time, James’s anxious adjustments and qualifications announce something surprisingly close to the psychology of another member of the family, William, with its call for an examination of the conscious. (This is a program undertaken in another fashion by Gertrude Stein, former student of William James, whose sentences are comparable in their complexity and duration while obviously utterly different rhythms and texture.)

A second source of the anxiety we sense when enter passages of James’s writing might be comprehended through this observation of Werner Heisenberg in *Physics and Philosophy*:

Natural science does not simply describe and explain nature; it is part of the interplay between nature and ourselves; it describes nature as exposed to our method of questioning.

Never the “thing in itself” which we alter in our attempt to see it. James represents possibly the last major gesture of resistance to this truth, at the same time that the rhythm of his work seems to embody its recognition. As the object of attention resists the gaze and recedes, the act of attention comes forward and wholly to displace it.

Next, the opening passage from a recent work by Samuel “Ill Seen Ill Said,” published in the *New Yorker* in October 1981:

From where she lies she sees Venus rise. On. From where she lies when the skies are clear she sees Venus rise followed by the sun. Then she rails at the source of all life. On.

Now we have passed through the mirror into the territory that James may have feared he was actually seeing. We begin with the *impossibility* of the act as unquestionable. Articulation has been reduced to spasmodic bursts of speech, to angular moments, like some grotesque parody of orgasm. Malone speaks of his breathing as gasping but can nevertheless deduce from that evidence that he is probably still alive, that is, not yet dead. Molloy yearns for perfect immobility, “To be literally incapable of motion at last, that must be something!” The elaborate

hypotaxis of James has been displaced by a sequence of markers, by the gestures of someone marking time, marks on the wall, a gradual but insistent reduction which begins (see the trilogy for example) by turning Proustian memory from an act of recovery to a groping, almost aleatory process. What's gone is utterly gone. (In his book on Proust which is really on himself as Proust, Beckett announces that Proust had a poor memory.) Beckett's narrators, his rememberers, are amnesiacs. There is no duration, no illusion of lasting, and the "going on" is nothing more than an endless coming-to-a-halt. Yet as in Proust it *is* endless, because it can't be helped. The rhythm is autonomic. Stopping is not a matter of choice, anymore than starting was.

I don't know that Zukofsky's view of things, particularly at certain moments, is all that much more optimistic, yet history remains, as posited, as possible, its dialectic considered throughout "A". ("This matter is the substratum of all/Changes going on in the world" in 8; and in 9 "The measure all use is time congealed labor/ In which abstraction things keep no resemblance/ To goods created.") The presented is felt as flowing from a living past whether in the figures of fathers and fathers' fathers, Zadkine's La Prisonnière carved from stone, or the letters of Bach's name transformed into a musical theme. We are part of it for a time if we attend to it. And in "A"-11 comes the amazing celebration of measure, that is a life's measure, song as a river imprinted with stars:

(tape of Zukofsky reading "A"-11 at Harvard)

Song then is where harmony gathers, "the upper limit", turning the linear flow of living-dying back to its sources, and this is certainly harmonically one of the most complex poems that exists in the English language. If you trace the network of internal and end rhymes, as we attempted in a prosody course I taught at New College last year, you end up with something that looks like the printed circuitry of a computer chip - every vowel redoubles on itself constantly, everything 'rings'. 46 lines, 425 syllables, an opening stanza of six lines, then four of ten, the poem's "eleven" echoed in the 6 hendecasyllabic lines which open each stanza, hendecasyllabics being Dante's measure. The result is an interweaving of horizontal and vertical movement, to borrow the terms from music. The meter, that is his handling of the meter, generates a very strong movement forward but the rhymes constantly send the reader back, as does the frequent ambiguity of the syntax.

The image of time so proposed is multi-directional and the moment of the poem seems to outlast itself, to be held in the air in its sounding. The period seems not so much discrete as continuous, in a Heraclitean sense, as a moment of on-going process. Zukofsky is able to achieve something like the same effect elsewhere, as in the poem " (Ryokan's Scroll)" from *I's* (*pronounced eyes*) which employs one-word lines and where the measure entirely depends upon what Campion referred to, the quantity of individual syllables:

dripping
words

off

a
long
while

the
first

snow

out

off

where

blue

eyes

the

cherry

tree's

petals

The thing is held, extended in time, by the junctures or silences across which the sounds project and in which they gather. The movement times the unrolling of a scroll, the passage of the eye downward and so the bringing to light of words and images. A couple of years later, on the train home from the reading in Cambridge where the tape I just played was recorded, he timed a sighting thus:

After Reading

After reading, a song

a light snow

a had been fallen

the brown most showed

knoll trunk knot treelings' U's

The Sound marsh water

ice clump

sparkling root etc.

and so far out.

For Tanner's *Jonah who will be 25 in the Year 2000*, John Berger, the Marxist art critic and novelist, wrote an extraordinary comic scene about time, the holes in time, and the keeping of time. The new teacher Marco, on his first day, is discussing history with his high school class. He begins to beat rhythmically on the top of his desk and says, "Between each beat there is time. Time is the fact of recognising that the second beat is not the first. Time is created by opposition." Some of the students take up the beat, laughing and yelling, and Marco notes that "In a synthesis, time is diminished." The rhythm of the beats intensifies, now with all the students beating on their desks and yelling deliriously. Finally Marco says "In a total synthesis, time disappears." The bell rings, indicating the end of class and a return to kept time. The anarchic moment and its destruction of measured time has passed. The overcoming of opposition, difference, is concluded. This also coincides with the end of the first reel of the film, another measure, since the six reels represent six explicit stages or ages within the film.

From one perspective, Berger's novel *G* concerns mutually cancelling periodic rhythms, principally the rhythm of historical events or moments in juxtaposition with personal, "sexual" time as embodied to an extreme by the central character Giovanni or Don Juan. It is also about the loss of credibility of fictional conventions and the impossibility of description. As in a Brecht play the frame is constantly being taken apart, analysed rebuilt as a function of the story itself. I don't want to analyze the thing, the novel which risks analysis within itself, any more than that, but simply would like to quote a few passages here that fit loosely with what I'm discussing. First one of Berger's narrative interjections (and I suppose we can say or almost say "Berger" here - that is one of the questions):

Some say of my writing that it is too overburdened with metaphor and simile: that nothing is ever what it is but is always like something else. This is true, but why is it so? Whatever I perceive or imagine amazes me by its particularity. The qualities it has in common with other things-leaves, a trunk, branches, if it is a tree: limbs, eyes, hair, if it is a person - appear to me to be superficial. I am deeply struck by the uniqueness of each event. From this arises my difficulty as a writer - perhaps the magnificent impossibility of my being a writer. How am I to convey such uniqueness? The obvious way is to establish uniqueness through development. To persuade you, for example, of the uniqueness of Leonie's experience by telling you the story of what happened when Eduard discovered that Leonie had been unfaithful to him. In this way the uniqueness of an event can be explained by its causes and effects. But I have little sense of unfolding time. The relations which I perceive between things - and these often include casual and historical relations - tend to form in my mind a complex synchronic pattern. I see fields where others see chapters. And so I am forced to use another method to try to place and define events. A method which searches for co-ordinates extensively in space, rather than consequentially in time. I write in the spirit of a geometrician. One of the ways in which I establish coordinates extensively is by likening aspect with aspect, by way of metaphor. I do not wish to become a prisoner of the nominal, believing that such things are what I name them. On the bed they were not such prisoners.

Then, speaking of the protagonist G, who has just made love with a chambermaid in the hotel where he is staying:

He experiences every orgasm as though it were simultaneous with every other. All that has occurred or will occur between each, all the events, actions, causes and consequences which have and will separate in time woman from woman, surround this timeless moment as a circumference surrounds the circle it defines. All are there together. All despite all their differences are there together. He joins them.

With the brief commentary that follows, set off from the on-going narrative line by extra spacing:

Sexual desire, however it is provoked or produced circumstantially, and whatever its objective terms and duration may be, is subjectively fixed to two points in time: our beginning and our end. When analysed, sexual desire has components which are violently nostalgic and lead us as far back as the experience of birth itself: other components are the result of an ineradicable appetite for the unknown, the furthest away, the ultimate of life - which can finally only be found in its negation - death. At the moment of orgasm these two points in time, our beginning and our end, may seem to fuse into one. When this happens everything that lies between them, that is to say our whole life, becomes instantaneous. It is thus that I explain the protagonist of my book to myself.

“In sex, a quality of ‘firstness’ is felt as continually re-creatable,” he says elsewhere. It is projected as apart from replicable experience and so as a moment without relational identity. Again the words of George Kubler, “Let us imagine a duration without any regular pattern. Nothing in it would ever be recognisable, for nothing would ever recur. It would be a duration without measure...” It would in effect be the opposite of history, or the negation of it.

It’s Friday morning now and I find myself hurrying again did I make myself write the whole thing out,: just talking) - I find myself hurrying to finish the talk also trying to hurry or compress the talk a bit so that it will fit into its time. I want to get to a few short pieces of music as preface would like to read to you Clark Coolidge’s piece Note on Bop” published in *Vanishing Cab #4*:

A NOTE ON BOP

In Bop, especially in its drums which almost purely color and are colored by time itself, there is the sense that sheer continuance gets articulated. Momentum as seduction, in which the “one” of that ever first beat tends very soon to lose its “e.” And the shaping of the always initial impact becomes the highest of enveloping tasks.

Awareness of all the room that exists within a single beat, and just exactly which point in that space you want to occupy, though the room itself may be moving at a very high rate of speed. At the time. Bop’s fascination with extremes of tempo reveals its major involvement with the realms of time. Time and Changes, Bop’s two keystones, nothing more basic.

The feel is that time has a precise center. Like tightroping on a moving pulley clothesline, you’re always trying to keep up midway between the poles. It really gets that sharply physical. As a drummer you’re holding time’s cutting edge in your right hand (ride cymbal), a simultaneity of holding and shaping. You occupy the center of the sonic sphere, the world, and ride it and bear it,

inviolable (why heroin is Bop's perfect chemical). And everything that happens there happens once and at once. Once and Ounce, Groove and Chord, Wave and Particle: the Complementarity of Bop.

Bop's connections with poetry are too synesthesiac to be descriptively fixed. Perhaps there is a renewal of the urge toward a longer more supple line. And the continual sense of the *image in motion*, never static, acted out and acted upon. Kerouac pointed to Lee Konitz 'who inspired me in 1951 'to write the way he plays.'" Then again Cecil Taylor (moving over a thinner place in the Bop Continuum) once remarked that he wanted to "try to imitate on the piano the leaps in space a dancer makes." And Jean-Luc Godard last night on television spoke of his movies as "the train, not the station, because I am no longer waiting."

Touch is essential. Can you touch time? Consider Kenny Clarke's "magic cymbal" which he "kept level" and "when somebody would sit in on drums and use his set, it would sound like the top of a garbage can, but when he played on it, it was like fine crystal."

Time is a substance if you hear you can get on and ride. I have always found metric feet awkward as a base for my lines. Rather the unceasing teem of that top cymbal at the back of my room.

Max Roach is imprinted on my nervous reflex. I sit at my desk helplessly tapping out his snare and bass exchanges between thoughts. Sometimes I feel the space between people (voices) in terms of tempos. The rush of an idea, a Blakey press-roll. That characteristic Roy Haynes snare & sock-cymbal figure a definitely constructed image, perhaps over to one side but more important than the main action, a sort of very bright cam. Klook's brushes a landscape in my sleep.

Then there is the famous door of Elvin Jones: "The length of my solos doesn't mean anything. When I go on for so long, I am looking for the right way to get out. Sometimes the door goes right by and I don't see it, so I have to wait until it comes around again. Sometimes it doesn't come around at all for a long, long time."

These days I ask myself again and more acutely the relation (if there is one?) between language forms and the wordless shapes of time. Perhaps there is no direct exchange. All I can be sure of is that I am able to possess them both within one body and one mind.

-30x80

So there is not only this space between beats that Berger speaks of, but that space within the beat where a decision must be made about articulating time which will alter, one way or another, the feel of that time. Like

Clark I have experienced different musics since the age of fifteen or so as essential personal information, with the difference that I was never a practicing musician and so lack to some extent his detailed understanding of what is happening. I have learned a good deal of what time I've learned from listening to Lester Young lagging behind the beat and the countless other ways of shaping time that jazz musicians, classical composers and various world musics suggest.

The first piece is by a composer who does not usually interest me very much, Milton Babbitt, and is called ... Minute Waltz (or $3/4 \pm 1/8$). It derives from the Waltz Project, a series of waltzes commissioned by Robert Moran and Robert Helps for the New Music Ensemble and first performed in the spring of 1978. Every other measure is in $3/4$ or waltz-time, the alternating measures having an eighth note added or subtracted (so $5/8$ or $7/8$). There are a number of punning waltz references over the 32 measures which, at a metronome count of 96, are meant to last exactly one minute (so the pun, Minute Waltz). One definitely picks up, at the margins, a sense of waltz time from another age, but the time of the waltz has been circumscribed and transformed. (Babbitt is known for his work with totally organized serial music, that is systematic organization of rhythm and dynamics as well as pitch, often using computers to effect this.) I'll follow with Philip Glass's "Modern Love Waltz" (2'56") as an interesting contrast, then Sonny Rollins's version of "Shadow Waltz" with Oscar Pettiford on bass and Max Roach on drums, recorded in 1958.

(tape of the three pieces)

The final piece of music I want to play is the fifth of Mahler's Rückertlieder, with thanks to Chris Gaynor for suggesting it and for providing information about this song cycle completed at the end of the last century. The work itself seems to bracket and thus stand for a period in that the poems of Friedrich Ricer come from the time of flowering of high romantic expression early in the century, whereas the Mahler music is written at a point of transition to the modernist harmonic sensibility with its dissolution (already underway throughout the nineteenth century) of classical tonality. Mahler's tonal centers here shift and are often left unresolved in the strict technical sense, lending to that feeling of suspension of time which listeners to these songs often remark on. We are not offered a series of divisions and conclusions but a space of time minimally filled with events. The result is an exploration of the hidden or undisclosed nature of feeling, with no forced or theatrical sentiment. Instead of a virtuosic manipulation of material there is an attention to what the material (here I mean the words) may offer. In this regard it is both a reaction against one manner of representation of feeling in the nineteenth century and an affirmation of the ground of romantic aesthetics. It feels too very much like an ending, a final statement in that area. First the translation as given in the notes, (with one minimal alteration) then the piece as sung by Janet Baker:

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen

(I have lost track of the world)

I have lost track of the world
with which I used to waste much time;
it has heard nothing of me for so long,
it may well think I am dead.

And for me it is of no concern at all
if it treats me as dead.

Nor can I say anything at all against it,
for in truth I am dead to the world.

I am dead to the tumult of the world
and take my rest in a place of quietness.
I live alone in my heaven,
in my loving, and in my song.

(tape of Rückertlieder 5)

A few weeks ago the sentence came into my head, “A week lasts as long as three lines of light,” and at first I thought it was the beginning of something but nothing followed from it, and I have been wondering since then what it was about. It is as if I were trying to project the measure of duration into some other area of perception, distance it to prove its foreignness, or my distance from it; and at the same time, as always, control it, manufacture an image. At some point in working on *Notes for Echo Lake* I realized that the ‘notes’ themselves should number twelve and that the larger period, so-to-speak, of the book would be a year, an entirely metaphoric year since the book is drawn from work extending over about three years. And so too the final section of ‘notes’ would come to be made up of twelve poems organized in different ways around the number 12, with the final poem being made up of twelve twelve-syllable lines:

One of the twelve hours of the twelve days of the year
Wave-patter not first or last or an arm detached
not rain exactly opened his hand to read the
words written there. Would tell him what she would tell him
if he chose to, as if a blue robe were falling
not forward exactly, reed-boat of a sort of
drunkenness bearing seeds across water as if
to pretend a pattern. He asked her and asked her
then chose a tree to suggest sleep. These were empty
novelties whose ink absorbed light, red and redder
than the tree itself, rivers and mountains were all
we saw, objects much like those everyone had known

I’ve since been somewhat troubled by the artificiality of this and the strained-as it feels-contrivance, yet at the same time I understand the need I felt to “fix” the measure that precisely, to convert it to artifice to stand against the real time in which it had been written and would be read, and also I suppose I meant to set an unmistakable period to the book as a whole. Also I think I hoped that there might come to be in the reading a sense of measures enfolding others that extended beyond the immediate numbers of the book, to place it explicitly in relation to those numbers we use to name and veil time. So an ordering of series at different scales would project outward from the single syllable, the unit within the line, to the line as unit within the sequence of lines, to the sum of that sequence within a frame of eleven others which together would form a book beside the eleven other books or months of the whole to act as interludes, *inter-ludes*, as an index of the lived spaces across which epicycles, of interlocking perfect orders. “A week lasts as long as three lines of light.” Or my “Seven Lines of Equal Length,” that is, lines as Duchamp might have measured them, allowing his one-meter lengths of string

to fall from a height of one meter, thus joining reason and chance in a new measure for his “Network of Stoppages.”

“I am caught / in the time / as measure,” says Creeley, yet he much as anyone has caught the measure as physical time and recast it to fit his person - line as breath’s span and, among the short poems, total length as the duration of a single act of attention. By such gestures we both disclose ourselves and find ourselves enclosed. By bracketing lengths of time we propose beginnings and endings or starts and stops other than what there are. We offer alternatives where imaginary numbers may be taken for - have become - real ones.

Now it’s gotten to be Saturday, *Saturni dies*, time to begin trying to type this into legible form. In what sense for this particular talk an appropriate bow to the calendar I’ll end with the last poem in Zukofsky’s *All*. It’s called “Finally a Valentine”:

There is
a heart

has no
complaint

better a-
part

than
faint

so the
faintest

part of
it

has no
complaint -

a
part.

Period. Thank You.

14 february 82

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Gerrit Lansing
La p(l)age poétique

nations of poetry on the beach
scanning “horizons endlessly”...
awaiting...

Poetics will be planetary or not at all (*hommage à André Breton*):

its data and resource unrestricted by any “tradition.” The word of sin was always Restriction, and, in the bondage-scene of verse, was always, at its best, high play (game of Decorum, the keeping, the conventions apt to some local time-crystal).

The dead hand, or confusion of times, was ever to take the living rules of one historical moment and try to fasten them down on another time. Pseudomorphosis. The restricted notion of “form” never furthers. “Form-content opposition” is not an idea fruitful to explore, but what may be fruitful: the direction pointed by glossematics, definition of linguistic elements, on sub-sign level, by their combinational relations only. In aesthetic theory this is paralleled by a fundamental contextualism and perspectivism.

The gravelled ways of those poets involved in practicing what they already know (for example, Auden, J. Merrill, Larkin) are less informative of song than the bewildered hike of a Khlebnikov. Dusky Whitman says, “At its best, poetic lore is like what may be heard of conversation in the dusk, from speakers far or hid, of which we get only a few broken murmurs.”

The space that opens out in a planetary poetics is not imperial-universal. Making the soul is always particular, in whatever tongue. Even parochial, the historic you inhabit is also the formant (manifesting the unheard etheric formative forces), and the isness of “the mere objectiveness of things” (Stevens) includes the language in which you wreath it. Wreathing and writhing and rythming (rythmetrick), all shine together in the moonlight or sunlight falling on Tellus.

That figurative beach or page is a head, for launching or welcoming down the grand insolite poems to come.

Dennis Barone
The Rape of Clarissa
Terry Eagleton

University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1982

In *The Rape of Clarissa*, Terry Eagleton applies the theoretical astuteness of his past works, such as *Criticism & Ideology*, to a specific text written by a specific author in a specific time and place. Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* serves as a case study for the testing of Eagleton's historical-ideological criticism. The results of this test are both pleasing and profitable.

In *Criticism & Ideology*, Eagleton outlined a methodology for understanding how a literary text reproduces or modifies its ideological world. A literary text, he observed, is a part of an ideological environment that is permeated by general socio-economic conditions. The task of criticism "is to show the text as it cannot know itself, to manifest those conditions of its making (inscribed in its very letter) about which it is necessarily silent." But, he warned, literature must not be read as a mirror of the social world and its beliefs within which it was created. In the struggle between ideologies, "literature is an agent as well as effect of such struggles." In *The Rape of Clarissa*, Eagleton argues Richardson's novel was a crucial mechanism in the ideological struggle between an hegemonic aristocratic class and an emergent middle class.

In the "Preface" to *The Rape of Clarissa*, Eagleton sets forth the proposition that by using "post-structuralist theories of textuality," "a feminist and psychoanalytical perspective," and "historical materialism" or "Marxist criticism," he can demonstrate that *Clarissa* is a novel we should read and which many past readers have misread. He cautions that he does not describe Richardson as a radical, but as an intellectual within the emergent English middle class. The subversive effects of Richardson's novel *Clarissa*, Eagleton states, "far exceed its author's intentions."

The "Introduction" describes Richardson's social-economic position in bourgeois England. A critical study that employs such methodological means as Eagleton does in this work, can easily end in the error of *presentism*. Yet, Richardson's work is not viewed through eyes clouded by the biases of the present. The "Introduction" is very effective in averting such a shortcoming. Here Eagleton describes Richardson as tradesman, as a master-printer. "Political, pedagogic, religious, cultural and juridical: Richardson's firm moved at the intersection of these mighty ideological apparatuses," Eagleton writes. Richardson was a family-man and, of course, he was an author as well. The interactions of these three spheres of his life are discussed as they bear upon his three major works: *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, and *Grandison*. He concludes this section noting that whereas *Pamela* represents the joyous "moment of an aspiring class," *Clarissa* examines the loss in individual freedom that the alliance between the old nobility and the new bourgeoisie necessitated.

In the following section of the book, Eagleton uses his various analytical tools to interpret *Clarissa* and to demonstrate certain errors in past interpretations. He finds fault with works such as William Beatty Warner's *Reading Clarissa*, "A fashionable deconstructionist piece out to vilify Clarissa and sing the virtues of her rapist." Eagleton convincingly interprets Clarissa's characterization and actions as radical. He describes her death as "an absolute refusal of political society: sexual oppression, bourgeois patriarchy and libertine aristocracy together." This section of the book is the most rewarding. It fulfills the proposition of Eagleton's "Preface." The reader does indeed desire to read *Clarissa* again, if only to sort out these interpretations for himself.

A "Postscript" follows. Here Eagleton looks at the failure of *Grandison*. Eagleton observes "though *Grandison* solves a problem by blending male power and feminine virtues, it is clear enough to us that he can exercise such virtues precisely because he has power." Whereas *Clarissa* resolved its ideological dilemma, *Grandison* does not. In these three novels, Eagleton reads an ideological project. *Pamela* skirts the issues of class and gender relations, *Clarissa* boldly asserts a radical approach to them, and *Grandison* is awash in contradiction.

Eagleton's thorough use of the critical method outlined in *Criticism & Ideology* upon one novel,

Richardson's *Clarissa*, results in a rewarding and provocative study. Eagleton situates the work in its ideological context and shows the "conditions of its making." He then demonstrates the efficacy of *Clarissa*. Finally, he says something of the conflict between our professed beliefs and our social reality; he says something of our ideological world by noting that critiques "ritually re-enacted" the rape of Clarissa. Eagleton has written this work to inspire a reconsideration of *Clarissa*, a reconsideration that will not repeat the rape.

Charles Bernstein
The Stadium of Explanation
The Mirror of Production by Jean Baudrillard, translated by Mark Poster
(St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975)

Baudrillard has written a master critique of positivist tendencies in Marxism and, as such, of the universalizing epistemology of the modern scientific/objective theory of analysis. As a result, the book's critique applies not only to Marxian thought but also to bourgeois economics and social science, and to psychological, linguistic, and anthropological structuralism.

Baudrillard calls into question the Marxian projection of the primacy of labor as value, which creates a valorization of production as the "meaning" of human being. Marxism, according to this argument, gives privileged status to the economic realm, misinterpreting all past and present societies under this model. Baudrillard goes so far as to suggest that the proletariat is given, wrongly, "objective" and privileged status by this account—a rationalization of a projected concept of "class" that neatly and inevitably plays into the Communist State rationalization for a vanguard/centrist party and a bureaucracy to carry out its will (p. 158).

A change in the control of production that does not call the value of production itself into question is of no benefit since the real tyranny, or "terrorism", is the concept of Product as Value. *Revolt*, in contrast, is always in the present and consists of what Baudrillard calls "symbolic", i.e., non-instrumental, non-finalized exchanges. Orthodox Marxian revolution plays into a teleological historicity—sacrificing the present for a future utopia, the means for the end. "For utopia is never written for the future; it is always already present" (p. 163). The book ends on this note of utopian immanentism—a questionable exchange of a rejection of "economic" logos for a logos of nonfinality, discharge, uncoded/unsignalling "speech". "The cursed poet, non-official art, and utopian writing in general, by giving content to human liberation, should be the very speech of communism, its direct prophecy" (p. 164).

This is reminiscent (and probably an influence on) the concept of "desire" in *Anti-Oedipus*; though of course here not desiring production but the "actualization of desire" in the symbolic realm, where "symbolic" means non-universalized, non-dialectical, and not rationalized in the mirror of an imaginary objective history. (Poster, in his introduction, remarks on the possible similarity this may have to Habermas' ideal speech situation.)

Baudrillard criticizes Marx's unreflected acceptance of the prevailing "code" (political economy) in a typically grinding, if sometimes impassioned, exposition of these issues. Baudrillard's style of writing can be critiqued on the same ground as his attack on Marx for not breaking with "rational discursiveness" and the "logic of representation-of the duplication of its object" (p. 50). The real opposition, says Baudrillard, is "less the monopoly of the means of production (which is never total) than the *monopoly of the code*" (p. 127), with its Euclidean geometry" of history and its Renaissance perspectivism "allow[ing] the spatial imposition of an arbitrary, unitary whole" (p.114). Baudrillard's writing practice, however, mirrors the very code he wishes to be set loose from, without self-reflection on this fact. His style is more like a "mirror of production" than a symbolic exchange" (between reader and writer). Like Moses, Baudrillard seems only able to point to the promised (premised) land without entering in. Nonetheless, *The Mirror of Production* is buoyant and inspiring writing in the tradition of neo-Luddite, utopian, and anarchist works. Along with the new Situationist anthology, the book may be the quintessential theoretical document of the best of the spirit of Paris '68.