VLAK is an international curatorial project with a broad focus on contemporary poetics, art, film, philosophy, music, design, science, politics, performance, ecology, and new media.

VLAK invites contributions that extend our understanding of what is possible; which pose questions about the prevailing attitude of norms; which explore the ramifications of contemporary culture and attempt new critical and creative methods.

“What is lost in abstraction? What is signified by a long work? By a serial work? What are its limitations? How might multiple voices reflect reality? Infect reality? And how sustain such a work? How does the world enter the work? How is the inside destroyed or transformed into ‘another’ space? How end a work? How reshape parts of the world, and is that what we aspire to anyway? Are we breathing easier, feeling better, glutted with our ‘contemporary practice’ digested? Or fiercely unsatisfied, curious, anxious, asking, ‘What are tomorrow’s questions?’”

Abigail Child, *This is Called Moving*

VLAK stands for the drive to experiment, to synthesise, to extend—holding to the principle that a vital culture is always experimental and thus always “at a crossroads.”

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I would like to put this on film. That is my obsession. I have a good idea of how I would too. It would look something like this:

Three dimensional images made from music to correspond to large and small, fat and thin, think bright white and darkest red sounds, spiky sounds, soft cloud sound indirectly represented as tonal layers of pitch sound with appropriate color. Forests of spiky sound, dark staccato and light stalagmite as synth introducing a cue line. Perhaps drum walls formed in deepest electric street cities.

I envision the pulse of the last machine.

I’ve got to synthesize a new one. A mutant combo or an emulator display. A limitless ado, an edit, a to be had. With these facilities I inflect a bit of imagination into direct file still music seen.

That you relate to it is less than the possible sum of its affects. Whether or not music swells for reaction shots.

I like it a lot. I have no idea why this is true. But the film made me think of eggplant.

Light linked to time. Light regulates time.

Once upon time

beats edit charged during moments of black during which sound jumps double in pace and returns to original Pull represents flowers’ prelude. Chaos itself your counter then your fluid machines a new one shoots light and fence advance.
He's got her buffalized.
I think fenced-in flowers represent heaven.

Another foreground, green focus to focus. Moon moves to that. Sky and moon exist together. Moon shines times it. So a musical mailbox alliance quartet. Reset depends beams down as well.

Feel of a doc of a real is presented sound. Sounds are open, white out non-edited time atop mind reminded of. Radio being angle eight.

Colors seem to say kiss me.
A concurrence, a real concrete, a mini epiphany of little middlemen missed maid man misses. Stresses family as vender of theater pitching form undefined prowlers' defiant water etcetera an intense leaf left. Murder is suspect.

Machines kill train. In soft four-photo focus history moves out. A gun pages magazine. Prank eats favorite, ransoms baby reads on.

Reasoning splices. Structure becomes a possible friction Editing strategies a blueprint on how friction is achieved.

I thought I would address you all in black and white.
I decompose differently
Energy and anger anti cartoons. We disown this.

Sectioning musicality
Subjectivity hammers his dog
 goes further into the past each time

A study on how things aren't.
Nine sails fanned open counterclockwise.

Eight burghermeisters in Harris tweed consulted eight golden pocket watches on fobs and, as eight minute hands swept in perfect synchronicity toward the hour of doom, gave their monocles three consecutive twists to the right.

Seven sea lions slid on velvet haunches into the foam-flecked sea, which closed over them like a fist.

Six starlings pierced a low-lying bank of cumulonimbus clouds.

Five hundred yards of varnished yellowgray Chinese silk bloomed upward and outward, unfurling like some fat subtropical orchid, and, with a sickening flatulent hiss, dropped its ballast and rose to the cheers of

Four hundred spectators pressed along the iron railings, surging forward to a great doffing of hats, and trumpet blasts, and drinks sloshed round as

Three shadows were ripped from their moorings and slipped away into the vanishing day, and

Two words uttered aloud were sucked into a great white silence:
THE BOY GENIUS

(It is now too late to do anything about him) stirs from sleep rubbing his eyes like a very young child; from his hiding place between two wooden crates (one containing oranges, the other tinned sardines) in a secret compartment beneath the basket.

* 

He leans over the edge of the gondola, one bent arm at rest in curve of back, the other raised, pointing towards the vanishing point with all the misty blankness of Youth entranced by its own untouchable, unreachable distances.

* 

Beneath his wool cap the pale hairs are caught and lifted by a zephyr emanating from the entumesced cheeks of an antediluvian Wind God (viz. Boreas) whose waftlocked and curlicued visage hangs suspended, in two-dimensional profile, above the white peak of a very triangular mountain at the extreme left of the composition.
A BARQUENTINE

rigged fore and aft with sails of deepest blue creeps, huge and silently, through a mermaid-blue sky. From crow’s nest and mizzenmast and ice-rimed poop deck they gaze, barrel-chested, jutting chinned, down, down, and down, through infinitely receding, bleeding layers of paper-thin blue.
IN FRANZ JOSEF LAND

gods thick as thieves huddle and gloat over the bones of gentlemen explorers, and pull the sky down in sheets. They press icy thumbs up into the soft underbellies of walruses and down into the flattening shapes settling across derelict icebergs. They wedge themselves tightly into spaces left heavy by snow, they shake snow from their hair and send eddies of snow spiraling down. Their forearms are thick, but their heads sway on necks as thin as daisy stalks. Five gentlemen explorers or fifty, it is all the same to them. The bones of the gentlemen explorers pile up and hammered with ice mallets make a glassy sound; the gods biting down and loosing ice floes makes their tusks ache tenderly. They think North! all the time, even when heading south.
FROM THE CAPTAIN’S LOG

11.11.99
Finding progress in this direction hopeless... as close as the ice would allow us... and as the winter snow was fast covering the land, and pancake-ice forming on the sea, there was little time to be lost... fruitless attempts to reach the leads of water evidently separating us more and more: were obliged to edge westward. Dwindling supplies. Young Tom v. ill, may be necessary to [illegible—eds.]

22.11.99
We’ve been stranded on this ice floe for two days ...four days at the most. Perhaps a week. All around us are other, more or less identical, ice floes. A soft white fuzz roaring softly between the ears, a most curious feeling. The swarms of white bees. At dawn—four days. I’m certain of it. The white sheet of white sky grades into the white [illegible—eds.] and the white swarms of bees and the [illegible—eds.]
THE CHIEF ENGINEER

The drag ropes are useless. Nothing for it. He rides along the crests and troughs of radio waves, an electrical, mildly pleasing frisson along the hairs of the arm. Static electricity. They are already miles off course, any fool can see that! The navigation instruments have gone haywire, divesting themselves of sprockets and springs. So far, if his calculations are correct—and they invariably are—they have unburdened themselves of: ten sandbags, four crates of Spanish oranges, a very good selection of French and Dutch cheeses, most of the photographic equipment, a bottle of Chateau Lafitte ’89; released two homing pigeons, which, discombobulated, plunged straight down before righting themselves on unsteady wings, and zoomed off, with—did he dare to imagine it?—something like intentional malice, in the wrong direction.

Yes, yes, he’d said, yes. Of course, of course. Yes, he’d entertained notions, he can admit it now, had entertained foolish notions of the page, blank now, but which would one day contain his name, and all that space, white, pristine, austere, untouched, unknown, unknowable. He’d signed on, signed up, oh yes he had. Now here he is—and where is that, exactly?—a captive audience to a muttering fool, this man who is very possibly insane, his absurd eyebrows wavering like antennae, his beard, mephistophelian, sharply molded into a perfect triangle.

Also: several containers of varied types of meat, assorted fishing equipment, echolocation devices, ten or twelve buoys, and the little dog! Well, best not to think about it. All lost, all lost. Of course it is folly to imagine he’d hear the sound of the crates crashing to earth. Yet he keeps expecting it, wishing for it, yes...now, all right...now, awaiting, with madly attenuated senses, for some thud, some shattering, some creaking splinter of wood bursting on ice. Claustrophobia holds his heart in its vice grip. The Captain’s flinty eyes stare at something just beyond him: a pirate flag, its grinning death’s head imprinted on the sky.
THE BOY GENIUS

The Boy Genius said (perched lightly atop a barnacle-encrusted diving bell, from which was later recovered, by the search and rescue crew, the intimate journals of the Marquis de Bellac, who, along with the rest of his party, had disappeared off the coast of the Bering Strait fifty years ago that very week):

“A body plunged into water is acted upon by two forces—it’s own weight, which tends to sink it, and resistance from below, which tends to bear it up. When we weigh a body in the air, we do not find its absolute weight, but that weight minus the weight of the air which the body displaces. In order to know the exact weight of an object, it would be necessary to weigh it in a vacuum.”
THE GEOPHYSICIST

“Crystallography! Plate tectonics!” he cried, and promptly drowned.
— The Concrete poets regarded *language itself* as rhetorical.
— That of which we cannot speak, we must construct.

Ian Hamilton Finlay, *Table Talk*
In 1965 Ian Hamilton Finlay produced a folding card with the title *First Suprematist Standing Poem.*¹ Here is the text:

```
how blue ?    how blue !
how sad ?     how far !
how small ?   how sad !
how white ?   how small !
how far ?     how white !
```

The seeming simplicity of this little concrete poem is wholly deceptive. Not only are the columns distinguished from one another typographically, not only do the exclamations in column 2 fail to answer the questions in column 1, but the adjectives themselves are hardly parallel. “How far?” can be answered with precision: 2.5 miles from here. “How small?” prompts a more relative response: if I say, “the small boy raised his hand,” one cannot conclude all the other boys are tall. As for “blue” and “white,” Wittgenstein’s examples in the *Philosophical Investigations* are apropos here:

```
“Is this blue the same as the blue over there? Do you see any difference?”
“It’s turning fine, you can already see blue sky again.”
“Look what different effects these two blues have.”
“Do you see the blue book over there. Bring it here.”
“This blue signal-light means...”
“What’s this blue called—Is it ‘indigo’?”²
```

Finlay’s question “how blue?” (or “how white?”) thus depends on the context in which it is asked. And “how sad” is even more subjective. How does one define one’s sadness? Or even trickier: how do I define *your* sadness? Are you just pretending to be sad? Or, conversely, putting on a good show of equanimity?

These are the basic questions posed in Finlay’s visual poetry, forcing us to realize that even the simplest monosyllabic adjectives defy any ready definition. The poem’s title, “First Suprematist Standing Poem,” moreover, adds to the mystery. *Suprematism* was, of course, Kasimir Malevich’s term for the non-objective paintings he first exhibited at the famous “O.10: Last Futurist Exhibition” in St. Petersburg in 1915. The thirty-nine Malevich paintings included were all geometric abstractions, the most prominent being the *Black Square*, hanging at the top of the corner at 45 degrees from each wall. In his accompanying manifesto, Malevich declared that he had “transformed [himself] in the zero of form,” “destroyed the ring of the horizon and got out of the circle of objects.” No more representation of external nature, no portraiture or still-life—only geometric forms in seeming motion on a “painterly surface.”³

---

¹ See Yves Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay: A Visual Primer* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992) 177. A slightly different version, this one with a single column, printed as a poster by the Wild Hawthorn Press, is included in the current exhibition [see figure 1].
In a much cited letter of 1963 to Pierre Garnier, Finlay declared that his own poems could be called “suprematist,” in that his own sense of concretism as a “model of order” owed a debt to Malevich’s creation of “perfected objects, to be again embodied in the perfection of absolute, non-thinking life.”

And indeed Finlay’s concrete poem of the same year, *Homage to Malevich*—a word square made of two permutating words, *black* and *block*—graces the cover of issue #8 of Finlay’s journal *Poor. Old. Tired. Horse.*—an issue dedicated to ten Russian avant-gardists from Natalia Goncharova to David Burliuk and including translations of Khlebnikov by Edwin Morgan and line drawings by Mayakovsky. The back cover of this issue of *Poor. Old. Tired. Horse* reproduces Mary Ellen Solt’s *White Rose* whose subtitle is “Homage to Goncharova.”

A second Finlay *Homage to Malevich,* this time a color print appeared in a one-page booklet of 1974; the image has been reproduced in a number of sizes and colors.

But how “Suprematist” are these paintings and poems? Malevich, let’s remember, wanted his abstract forms to bring to mind the Fourth Dimension, as Ouspensky had defined it in the *Tertium Organum*; his geometric forms appear to float, adrift upon the white ground of the rectangular canvas. In *Suprematism: Eight Red Rectangles,* for example, the bright red opaque, thickly painted rectangles—all of them different sizes and on different axes and none of them fully rectangular—are designed to appear to be in flight, poised mysteriously to collide with one another. Again, the diagonal black and red cross of the later *Suprematist Composition,* whose opaque black horizontal plane hides the less dense vertical plane beneath it, seems to erupt mysteriously from the white ground of the painted canvas. In contrast, Finlay’s *Homage to Malevich* of 1974 is presented as a poster; its flat surface creates none of the illusion of actual flight we find in Malevich, and indeed there is no Malevich composition precisely like this one. Whereas Malevich’s crosses present a dialectic of black and red forms, etched against a thickly painted and complexly colored “white” background, Finlay introduces his orange-red cross at a 45° angle, calling to mind an airplane lifting off the ground and clearing the debris of small and narrow objects in its path. A small mirror-image of the red cross, this one navy blue, reappears on the lower right side canvas, flying in the opposite direction on the light-gray ground, this time with a “tail” of leaves and crossed branches in its wake. Not a mystical image of outer space, as in Malevich, but a signifying puzzle, the branch-leaf shape resembling the form of a rocket. “Which 20th Century Russian artist sometimes depicted himself as the Best Aeroplane?” Finlay asks in a 1977 booklet called *The Wild Hawthorn Art Test,* referring to Malevich’s fascination with flight. In the context of the visual poet’s later images of revolution and war, *Homage to Malevich* can be considered an image of aerial bombardment (see Abrioux 166).

But even if the branch-leaf motif were not designed to evoke rocketry, the introduction of vegetal representations into the stark, purified world of geometric abstraction would be entirely out of place in a Malevich. In Finlay, in other words, the natural world, banished from the Suprematist universe of “Zero.10,” reasserts itself. As in the case of the garden art of *Little Sparta,* Finlay’s the fact is that Malevich was the only Suprematist, and the movement to which he belonged was more broadly called Futurism, sometimes Cubo-Futurism.


5 The first issue of *Poor. Old. Tired. Horse* was published in offset printing by Wild Hawthorn Press in 1963; the journal went through twenty-five issues before its demise in 1968. The interest in the Russian avant-garde was probably prompted by Finlay’s poet-friend Edwin Morgan, whose translations of Mayakovksy, Khlebnikov, etc. are outstanding.

6 Ian Hamilton Finlay / Michael Harvey, *Homage to Malevich* (Wild Hawthorn Press, 1968). In this one, the cross is dark blue, the smaller rectangles red against a gray ground. In later versions, the cross is orange-red, the smaller rectangles black, against a yellow ground.
minimalism and seeming penchant for “simple” abstraction has an ironic edge: the recycling of classical or avant-garde forms gives those forms a semiotic turn.

Take Finlay’s 1968 version of his concrete poem, Homage to Malevich, now assembled as a diagonally placed cross of identical word blocks, thus alluding to Malevich’s paintings of crosses. Each block alternates the lines, “l a c k b l o c k b l a c k b.” An early essay by the poet Susan Howe called “The End of Art” (1982) provides us with a superb analysis of this text. The right hand column of b’s, Howe notes, “seems arbitrary. Is this to be read horizontally, vertically, or all at once?” And she notes:

The two words lack and lock look alike but mean opposite things. Modified by a variable (b) they form two new words, block and black.

The b at the end which at first seemed arbitrary now makes perfect sense. An extra that has created something else. Carry it over to the left and begin with black. The vertical letters l, k, and b, positioned as they are, make vertical lines that pull the eye up and down, and that pulls the o, a and c letters apart (the o’s and a’s are the only ones that vary). The round short letters give a horizontal tug, which prevents the poem from being read up and down. The black (figure) and block (ground) balances with lock (stability) against lack (instability). Something open verses something closed. Are lack and black one and the same image, or exactly opposite? Are block and lock alike?... Do black and white open or close? Are they absence or presence? Sense or nonsense?

Such semiotic relationships between letters and words represent a curious spin on Russian zaum. Malevich’s poet-friend Khlebnikov examined the magic of etymologies, finding roots of unlike words that produced surprising conjunctions, whereas Finlay is interested in reduction—in this case, in what happens when one consonant of a given monosyllable—here the “b” of “black” and “block”—is removed, creating the words “lack” and “lock.” In both cases, “The Word as Such,” as the Russian futurists called one of their major manifestos, is central, but Finlay’s is a cooler, cerebral version of Khlebnikov’s more mystical word play. Another way of putting this is that Finlay’s impetus is more Wittgensteinian than Suprematist. And this brings me finally to The Blue and The Brown Poems of my title.

In 1968 Jonathan Williams of the Jargon Press published a large folio calendar, a long page with calendar of each month printed near the bottom and the upper part containing a lithograph of a concrete poem by Finlay. The verso of each page has a short commentary on the concrete poem in question by the critic Stephen Bann, printed as a small square. The publication, Williams tells us, was “conceived during a hike through the Great Smokies in July 1965 by Dan Haberman of Graphic Arts Typographers, New York, and myself.” On the first two-column page, the left has an introduction to the “Poetotypographer Ian Hamilton Finlay” by Williams, the right column a Foreword by the artist-critic Mike Weaver. Williams writes:

Finlay is not a “poet” in the narrow sense most have reserved for the poor souls who have to practice this vestigial occupation. Finlay is a “maker,” a man who puts things together—which is the real definition of poet in the Greek, as Buckminster Fuller has reminded us. He makes poems out of letters that have no sound in them, that function as objects to contemplate with the mind’s eye.

7 Ian Hamilton Finlay, Table Talk (Barbarian Press, 1985), 4, 9; Susan Howe, “The End of Art,” Stereo Headphones,” Number 8-9-10 (1982), ed. Nicholas Zurbrugg, 40-43; see p. 43.
8 Many, but not all, of the individual poems had been published in earlier Finlay books or as cards.
9 The Blue and the Brown Poems calendar was published by Atlantic Richfield Company and Graphic Arts Typographers with the calendar design by Herbert M. Rosenthal (Aspen 1968). Each of the twelve lithographs measures c. 21 x 13 inches.
And Weaver adds, “Concrete poetry is a new metre. [Finlay’s] sense of form begins with words—no other way for a poet—and what he seeks is their relation to a new constructive principle of modulation, variation and repetition of constants, often a single word.... The poems stand in a precarious space, where art is, between the decorative and symbolic. A heart-breaking place to work.”

But why is the calendar called The Blue and the Brown Poems? Neither Williams nor Weaver comments on the title, but it clearly refers to Wittgenstein’s Blue and Brown Books, first published in 1958 as the “Preliminary Studies for the ‘Philosophical Investigations’.” In the Preface, Rush Rhees tells us that Wittgenstein dictated the “Blue Book” (though he did not call it that) to his class in Cambridge during the university session 1933-34, and he had stenciled copies made. He dictated the ‘Brown Book’ to two of his pupils (Francis Skinner and Alice Ambrose) during 1934-35... the first lot was bound in blue wrappers and the second in brown, and they were always spoken of that way.”

It was in these notes and drafts, that Wittgenstein first developed his important concept of language-games (see page 17 and following), and came to insist that the meaning of a word is its actual use in the language. Indeed, the Brown Book gives us the first version of Wittgenstein’s critique of Augustinian language theory—a critique that that the Investigations will carry out more fully.

Finlay clearly had some familiarity with Wittgenstein’s teaching: the aphorism already cited, “That of which we cannot speak, we must construct,” for example, is a tongue-in-cheek response to the gnomic conclusion to the Tractatus: “Of what we cannot speak, thereof we must be silent.” I have already suggested that the poem “How blue?” alludes to Wittgenstein’s examination of the manifold contexts in which we ask such a question and how we accordingly answer it. But whereas Wittgenstein’s focus is on the difficulties of assigning meaning to such ordinary words as “length,” “read,” “pain,” and “light,” Finlay’s Blue and Brown Poems (which use blue sparingly and brown not at all) concentrate on the look of words—words we think we know and hence take for granted. Here is the Table of Contents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September</th>
<th>ho</th>
<th>horizon</th>
<th>on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td></td>
<td>ajar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td></td>
<td>net / net</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td></td>
<td>cork / net</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td></td>
<td>acrobats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td></td>
<td>wave</td>
<td>rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td></td>
<td>green waters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td></td>
<td>you</td>
<td>me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td></td>
<td>broken</td>
<td>heartbroken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td></td>
<td>wind</td>
<td>wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td></td>
<td>ring of waves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td></td>
<td>le circus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The link between month and subject is intentionally arbitrary: this is not a calendar that features pictures of little lambs for April or rainy skies for November. And the set of 12 prints [figure 9] begins with September rather than January, as if to say that, in a world of global communication, the seasons, so central to lyric poetry from Shakespeare’s Sonnets to Keats’s Ode to Autumn, to Wallace Stevens’s The Auroras of Autumn, no longer have a separate identity. Indeed, the twelve

poems are interchangeable. Here is March:

Green Waters
Blue Spray
Grayfish

Anna T
Karen B
Netta Croan

Constant Star
Daystar
Starwood

Starlit Waters
Moonlit Waters
Drift

One’s immediate response to Finlay’s lines and phrases is to read it as an Imagist nature poem: the four-three line stanzas invoke natural phenomena, from “Green Waters” and “Blue Spray” to “Moonlit Waters” and “Drift.” “Star,” furthermore, appears four times and “waters” twice. But who are “Anna T” and “Karen B,” much less “Netta Croan”? And how do these proper names relate to “Constant Star” and “Starwood”? The fact, as the use of capital letters throughout hints, is that Finlay’s poem is a catalogue or proper names. If we read it against related texts of the sixties, we soon see that these are indeed the names of particular fishing trawlers from Lowestoft, Aberdeen, and other ports. “These names,” Stephen Bann tells us in his commentary, “are a given material, derived intact from the real world... [they] lose the inertness appropriate to their strictly functional role. The poem restores their intrinsic delicacy.” Or rather, from a Wittgensteinian perspective, one might say that the context transforms all the words and phrases, showing how variable the process of naming is, ranging as it does from proper names with initials like Karen B to names that pay homage to the watery world in which the trawlers live. One is even named Drift. And further: note that the same combination of phonemes—ar—ra or at—ta—recurs, that “spray” rhymes with “gray” and “day,” and that “drift” echoes the it sound of “starlit” and “moonlit.”

Bann calls this poem a found text but the designation is not quite accurate. Finlay, after all, chooses his trawler names for their visual and sonic values and their semantic potential. The September poem ho / horizon / on, which takes the form of a pyramid discovers new words within its title; in the May poem broken / heartbroken, the cliché of “heartbroken” is redeemed by the use of letters and spaces: we see the heart being “broken,” losing a letter one step at a time and emptied out into a mere “h   t” space. But then the word “broken” is put back together and finally becomes a whole word again, defining the empty heart. Is a broken heart the same as being heartbroken? Or does it make a difference whether heart comes first or second?

In the July ring of waves, Finlay takes ten monosyllabic nouns, printed in green, and permutates the relationship of noun (in green type) to prepositional phrase, where “of” is always blue. The “ring” can be one of “waves” or of “nets” or, finally of “light,” the rhyming “string” is first a “string of lights” and then a “string of fish,” and so on. One would expect the instances of “of” to form
a vertical column, but they don’t because they modify words of different length. Yet everything in this seascape seems to cohere, or does it? Waves, nets, lights, fish, all in rings or rows or on strings: the design is coherent. But what are “roots” doing here? Roots belong to the earth, to that which is planted in the earth, not to the sea. But perhaps these roots are mathematical particles—square roots of numbers used in navigation. Or again, perhaps Finlay has in mind the homonym routes, a word quite appropriate for this harbor scene.

“That of which we cannot speak, we must construct.” Finlay’s The Blue and the Brown Poems, each one unique in layout and word or letter play, are among the poet’s most engaging works, demanding the reader-viewer’s most careful attention. “The Muse of concrete poetry,” writes Finlay in Table Talk “reversed Mnemosyne’s gift; depriving the poet of song, she gave him sweet eyesight.” But as so often in Finlay’s subtle discourse, the distinction is ironic. The reader may well be “deprived” of “song,” but to read these poems aloud is to marvel at their delicate adjustment of sounds. Say “net” over and over again (“November”) and it begins to sound like et and then et-cet-era—a statement fulfilled in the December poem, which begins with net-cork. And then there is the boat named Netta Croan.

“Concrete poetry,” as Finlay puts it in another aphorism for Table Talk, “was less a visual than a silent poetry.” In The Blue and Brown Poems, the sounds of silence reverberate.

*This essay originally appeared in The Present Order: Writing on the Work of Ian Hamilton Finlay (Marfa Book Company, 2010), edited by Caitlin Murray and Tim Johnson.*
If you read this I am dead."

Back when I edited Magazine that’s as far as I would get.

Bad first lines augur only worse. Dénouements. Whose only undoing is lack of appropriate accent.

Now that I’m dying I might as well tell you about the first Vietnamese Magazine ever “published.”

That was the last I’ll ever use quotationmarks.

Last time in my life.

But to begin, about Magazine. Which is always to be referred to as Magazine, never The Magazine. Anyone who says The Magazine is not affiliated with Magazine, not affiliated in any capacity, especially not in the capacity of rejection. I’m fairly sure we were created during the War or just before War’s conclusion, Paree! Paree! though I wasn’t involved until I was graduated from Yale (and went abroad). Yale is only better than Harvard because New Haven is closer to 42nd Street than Cambridge is. It was one night down in the Village, however, about a week before classes ended that a tweedier former professor of mine suddenly emerged from a phonebooth I was about to use to tell me he’d read—perused—a few of my poems in a Yale student journal and, why didn’t I send him a few others presuming I had them? He had a friend, he said, who was starting a review—a fraternitybrother from Harvard actually or who’d just taken a leave from Harvard English to work on Nazi scientist recruitment, though his personal interests were entirely literary. Hungover next morning I found the address scrapped on a matchbook: always check interior coatpockets, and from then on the wellknown history is wellknown (at least in-house, and, quid nunc, among writers). Of course I was rejected immediately, the SASE came back in usual fashion: with a sentence of fulsome praise, a sentence of polite demurral, and a oneway ticket to Paris. Rue de Tournon. The digs made immediate impression. Paris postwar was giddily faded but Magazine’s office was a splashy palace lately reconditioned from a collaborator Baron. Bright young American girls with tits: one tit a birthday hat, the other an icecream cone. And legs, clickerclacker typewriter legs, bold knees, capital thighs. They were sorting through submissions, rejecting everything, accepting nothing. Rejecting everything but reading everything, too. These girls were readers. These girls were also great whores and would blow your cock in corridors and bathrooms. French food wasn’t bad either. We talked future issues over horsemeat medallions soaked in meaux mustard companied by a finefumed cabernet—Plumptan my predecessor and I. He was emeritus serious even then. He’d publish only the best, the most deserving, he said, he was demanding but not in any intimidating way, but in the way that made you want to do well for him, to make perfect but also to produce. He was loved for this and this only and was feared mostly for the wrong reasons—mostly because Magazine paid so well. Took care of its contribs. Long story short Plumptan was proud of my unanimous rejection, hated what he called my new work (which I hadn’t written yet, which I wouldn’t write), told me how easy it had been saying the requisite decisive No. Try to say this in your head in his voice: you’re no writer, Dreiseroney (he called everyone by the names of American Realists), you’ve got redaction written all over you...that voice that Brahmin paarked-the-caar. Redaaaktion. We’d been talking chapbooks and broadsheets (broadsidies?), efficacy of pastoral verse in an increasingly technological society, necessity/impossibleness of any sort of sustainable suburban avant-garde, and he said he had a proposition. A job offer. He said, you could go places if you’d just do us a teensy favor, Steinbeck. Then he took from under his false moustache a photo. Phan, he said, deputy minister of culture and info for the Vietnamese Communist Party. A poet of significant education/pedigree, with talent to waste. He’s become ever so troubling to our hosts in this mess we’ve titled First Indochina. We’d be prepared to offer you junior editorship were you to go tonight at 11:59 pm to XXX Rue de Repos and publish this Vietnamese. Just then the maître d’ set down a silver cloche he uncovered to, voilà! an envelope. I still think it’s silly to pass a gun in an envelope. But that’s how it was done, simpler days!

* From the archive, &c.
EILEEN MYLES
SMILE

It’s just not as much fun without a good light and a sharp knife
I mean leaning into the peach of it. People find the time
and I am finding mine
to get theirs sharpened or use yours
that drip in the kitchen is like
someone I know. Today’s cold
is an affirmation of the purchase
of yesterday’s new shirt. I mean I knew the cold
would come some time but today.
I’m wearing that drip most of all.
My half made meal and even the space
that surrounds the incredible possibility
of hunger on and on like my favorite man Frankenstein. The drip has tones.
A relationship with the holding bowl that is only holding water.
All these rhymes all the time. I used to think Mark Wahlberg was family.
So was Tim but close to his death he told me he was adopted. Every
time he smiled he thought Eileen is a fool. Or that’s what love looks like. If I woke and my master was horrified
I would go out into the world with this enormous hurt. And I have carried mine for so long I now know it’s nothing special.
It’s just the fall and the sound of her sirens. It’s the agony of being human. Not a dog who dies maybe six
times in the lives of her masters. Everyone’s phony and made up. Everyone’s a monster like me.
Now I know everyone.
1. all things that rise are not necessarily
in transit. are not necessarily open and
also with interpretation. oh australia. oh
latvia and hearts with rainbows propelling
ever more hearts with rainbows from its
center. all the zen bastards in the world
couldn’t hack up a hoe wise enough to weed
this wood. tis fucked. tis wrapped like
a mummy. tis mamilicious and like the
telephone communicates for you. with ease
and a surprising grace.

2. there are horses whose heads, when
thrown back, wild and angry and mid neigh
and whose nostrils are soft and warm and
depthless like an ocean transplanted on
mars and whose eyes roll terribly round
and round with frustration and disbelief
and whose bit may be askew or pulled too
far back or too far forward interrupting
big wooden lincoln teeth and sweat there
is sweat there may be so much sweat though
it will not drip but discolor the red.
suggest black. there are horses whose
sweat, wet, instructive and psychic (or
what is the reverse of psychic) is and
are necessary.

3. because you are numbered i am wholer
than i had thought possible. i am here
with hands and also i am with now a written
word. because i am wholer now i am able
to do things i was previously unable to
do. never mind what the things are, don’t
pester. know that the things i can now do,
now that i am wholer than i had previously
been, are impressive.

4. there is no need and in fact it is quite
condescending to weep and moan and pull at
your hair and beat your chest and wail and
wail and throw your body on the ground and
pee your pants and in the walgreens stay
there on the shiny floor and cry mommy.
mommy mommy mommy over and over again
because of what you have seen roaming
the aisles. what you saw walking around
and looking at objects one can buy. what
you saw finger a bag full of spatula, big
spoon, barbeque sauce spreading plastic
black brush thing.

5. if not a time traveler why not a wing?
one must learn to make decisions and also
one must learn how to do this really really
fast. like an auctioneer rolling his
tongue around in his mouth for pleasure
and speaking is like psychic the way you
can really read someone’s mind when they
tell you what they are thinking. it is
magic. it is not the magic of the young
magician at the magic bar.

6. though he is young and was in china to
wriggle and dangle some sort of miraculous
way.

7. a ghost writer is a charger by the hour.
some lines are respite. there is so little
silence in poetry because when you stop
reading or writing it it is something else entirely (like washing dishes or working) and so it is wise to include some throw away lines in your poem. or if you are writing a book every fourth or fifth poem can be a throw away poem. it can be bland or just tediously folded or, you know, sort of a gimme (without the wanting that a gimme somehow implies — that word comes with a vague shadow-y figure lurking, necessarily, around). other words that have hanger ons are available, they are out there waiting. like master but that is too obvious perhaps though it is a very frightening and funny and button tie word i will like to think about quietly now.

8. maybe everything will finally start moving backwards. it has been hard on me these days so much life and always moving forward. it's so predictable. i am tired and i am disappointed. i let go of speaking with animals. it was hard but i have knocked off the wanting. i no longer think if everything is just perfect — in a forest alone and speckled light and so many many greens and temperature and feet and softness and alone — a deer will — but no. there is no point even explaining what i know i will not get. but backwards seems somehow possible. string theory never bolstered the conversational animal hope but — backwards. backwards. can you see it? can you feel it? i know how my arms will feel going backwards through gestures intended to plea (and again psychic is needed) and dazzle because i filmed myself and played the film backwards over and over again and i sort of learned how it feels. it is a little lighter than forward somehow.

9. wack job is the name for one of those. i think it is usually a woman who is a wack job but perhaps some men have been wack jobs too. everyone is not, at some point, perceived to be a wack job. it is hard to take but it is true.

10. they have taken out the japanese horse. i heard he cost 950 thousand dollars which i do not know how to write numerically. i like to think about how much money a horse is. some horses are probably not worth any money, or perhaps like 35, 40 dollars tops. there are probably horses that are worth in the thousands. i do not know how much money i am worth. i might be close to a thousand but it is hard to figure — though i am not saying it was easy to figure how much that japanese horse was worth. i should try to figure out how much money i am worth, it seems extremely important that i have at least a ballpark figure. i am picturing japanese horses as very small. like bonsai. i am unsure if that is or is not a racist thought. but it is so pleasurable to imagine. you try. use your hand, put it slightly rounded and with palm up in front of your face and imagine the tiny japanese horse prancing around.
It is the closed thing I want that it stay closed, That flightless feathers fail they stay furled. Nor want fitfully drive magnetic skirl On polished surfaces home like a beacon. Snap then the embrace and fling the dust Of affection that it convolute in lesions Kaleidoscopically opening, now would I drop.

Entities will not ingratiate, nor in other words Put out proxy labels, every joint unturned Has been stripped from their high-gloss Liplessness. My cheeks stay rough, unrazed By knife-edge fishtail vents. Appraised The parts shake back to the place at first This that mapping no parts corresponds to,

Their bulges do not mass to the apogee, nor Aspire to anything of that sort: as glaucous Pods liquid-filled have no lips to distort, Disconcertingly like Canada from the air Spreads a coverlet of bubble-wrap, tugs At its pockmarks, arranging these split Hairs and oxbows like nematode blind turns.

It is the closed thing was a fresh blinded eye, Whose nerveless tackle dropped supplies It could not right or invert or make stucco Intramural decor. A dissonance between Tears and wax stood out sharply, keen Blades coupling to the striped muscle. Here is the arc I short and short for I must.

Some found their métier here like Gauguins Of faked-up ceremonies, chewing plans Over in their lampless parlours, slots Kept empty for their dumbshow guests, Temporarily adjusted. There were stinging Sensory detectors, no replica could seem That cohesive. How doth the city sit solitary,

Lacking correspondence between sectors, Circular motifs run narrow hollow tendons Poorly clocked. It is the closed thing I want, Small raised structure houses finials for Dummy runs, slicing versus crushing, decor Caps churn ocean but I lamp out from The entitled box with my lightweight spear.

Thus a part foreseen had been discovered. A shell-like vacancy unprimed could colour As needed, likewise were the nonplussed Aestheticised, the slash and burn, the terror Served up in video. Decorators too purr Around the loft one red T-beam structures Minimally, so to consolidate the void glut

Juddering like a cistern replenishes its gut With yes/no denizens, their dazzle stripes Swimming through the commons unfussed, Then jerking by degrees along the downpipe They warp the gulf, comprise a variant Us In such arrangements, lozenges and dots Stream towards that puffed-up cumulus –

Flimflam presumption! This topographic I, On/off phosphorescent cells, blips of solder Sealing cubicles, grids of shrunked heads, Issues in a charge that when expressed Through oily mousse, electroplates and Glosses over bodiless. Forms out of ditches Lift but parts are flashing simple switches

Flaring on the lapsed sky in running stitches, Scheming and flipping. Fingers at a hazard Tap against the sternum, toughened glass Melts and in an underpass canoeists bump, Adventure through Missouri green sheen Whose currents warp their heads, its swells Bear four directional sticks, sentinels for
Toxins, remittance flows beyond the gulf;  
On its distant docks sun flares or sulphur  
Shimmer bowls. The same algal bloom floats  
On Mekong, on Mamberamo delta, further  
Archipelago twisters scour for openings,  
Its inlets and their landfall gaping, job lots  
Eased into the manifest, casked and bunged.

He hath hedged me about the deep boomed,  
And through catenaries of watchful spume  
Has an eye. Slathered down the viable  
Horizon, outlook massaging my eyeball,  
One for one. The visual cache had shrunk.  
What I embraced was but a smooth trunk  
Devoid of any reach or means to absorb.

How I dreamt the box store! How I dreamt  
Centres! Relics some fret over, arm buds  
In bosses, what are such abutments but my  
Cramps, trophies of stability. Dredged mud  
Shines up well to make an index merge,  
Brought together swept on a selfish surge,  
Caught upspringing, shut me up, shut up my

Mouth with blue strings like washing soda  
Guidance for encaustic inlays that in gashes  
Travelled out. Such is how the grid etches.  
Where did eyesight start from but evicted  
Legs to stretch on mud that burns or chills.  
These booms endure such pummelling  
They splinter, work loose, engage and crank,

Except a bent spindle was the crank, what  
Re-stimulates the outflow for a soil bank,  
The seed bank, the stick stirring up a storm,  
Booms are lowered into rifts that squirm  
With disorientated fish. Along their ridges  
Crawl our companies in close formation.

It is the closed thing I want that it stay furled

Like carbon filters, tight-packed corrugation  
Locking bud to body, phloem to a forest,  
Throwing out the compass points, polarity  
In circles, collapsing rather than adjust  
Time, space, effusive light, like props  
For carbon suits. Pleats trickle insect dust,  
Tar consolidates and steady heat composes  

Substance from foam and disdained scrub,  
By tomorrow rudimentary tails will flick  
Their bounden entities scuttling into shadow.  
So stuff that. So stuff that. Ex-post-vito  
Blocks the exit, you get stuffed, rostered  
Off-duty, flutter-tongued and stopped –  
Jump-start with stumbling jumps afflicted:

Jumps flop, these re-circulate by cranking  
All that, all that revolutionary express warm  
Planet swarms a crumb conventicle, dust  
Reception jack, unifying capsule which  
Of mud consists. Recapitulating mud. In  
Their nuclei the claims dwindle, datagloves  
Transmit the aftermath to stock death trove.

Feathers flock between the hulks of the city.  
The flightless don’t dally, going for it full-  
Throated, full-throttled interlace robust  
Flakes become attached, their own senses  
Cloak them and the pinions they pin on,  
It is the closed thing I want that it stay furled  
Clamped down and surging: it is their musick

Near close enough.
1. **SUMMA: TACIT KNOWLEDGE AND RESIDUAL READING**

Standing before one of the gouache and Indian ink works of Ian Friend, one notices the contrastive augmentation and overlaying of minute images that distend the object depicted in the image-complex beyond any singular definition. The works in *The snowdrift line series* could easily represent a bodily structure reproduced by magnetic resonance imaging.  


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1 The position expressed in this introductory note have been excised from the chapter ‘Tacit Knowledge and the Established Need for a Residual Reading’ as was published in *The Poetic Front* from Simon Fraser University, Vol.3 (2010). http://journals.sfu.ca/poeticfront/index.php/pf/article/view/40. Another significant portion of the original argument from the introduction and the chapter ‘Prynne’s Early Influences and the Development of Late-Modernism’ is contained in the article ‘J.H. Prynne and the Late-Modern Epic’ published by *Cordite Poetry Review* in 2009: http://www.cordite.org.au/p=7150
imaging. Friend’s works detail objects as they flourish in a “pattern of indefinite growth.” These works, which Friend has created in response to the poetry of J.H. Prynne, contain whole and fragmentary geometric shapes written over with an array of colour, in which increasing pixel mutation shrinks to the streaks of cloudburst. The resultant work is a synthesis of design and chance. Overlaying gouache smears give rise to natural illusion and depredation; the concept of the object appears as ruptured and eroded by the artist. The allusion of these works details a “starry and granular” image, an arbitrary expression of a body, or a landscape, whose design is effaced in slow decay (223). The organic process represented in Friend’s amorphous work has developed as a constant reflection on Prynne’s poetics. To give weight to the definition that the snowdrift line as representing the small crystals in the inner ear which allow the brain to detect the body’s kinaesthetic position, allows small fractures of this image to develop. The works of both artists are seen as functional commentaries on the liminal thresholds of the human body.

This is the establishment of a deepening relation of images connecting body and mind, detailing the threshold of the personal, and the continguities between the interior and the exterior. The images of Friend’s works land, “upon his lips curious white flakes, like thin snow,” to “set damage control at the same white rate” (223). If the referential integrity of the body is detailed in the liminal division between internal and external, the image denies the initial investigation towards a definite form and details the implosion represented by the minute divisions of capillary space, and delves into the cellular universes of the human body. Friend’s images represent an aided perception of this internal space, just as the pure tones referenced in the epigraph to Wound Response continually open the poem to macrocosmic potentialities. Friend’s images, as Prynne once wrote, represent, “the history of person as an entire condition of landscape.”

In a long running correspondence between the Australian artist and the British poet, Friend introduces his collection by detailing that, “all of the works investigate the possibility of a metaphysical experience expressed through an abstract process. It is a diachronic body of work, the result of an allusive relationship of history, poetry, speculation, memory and reverie.” The continual resistance of these artists to the idea of narrative is apparent in their works, both artists, at times, “vigorously obstruct naturalisation, whether by putative context or internal coherence.” In their correspondence, Prynne describes the expression of Friend’s work as a “tacit conversation rather than an overt illustration,” and this reference also implicates Prynne’s processes of detailing the internal and external experience of the body, and speaks to the creation of a poetic language as defined by these liminal boundaries.

The complexity of Prynne’s work is the result of his ambiguous representation of life as a conflux of images and lexical and rhetorical engagements. Poet and critical theorist, Veronica Forrest-Thompson asserts that, “the constant movement from one implied external context to another does not allow consistent development of image-complexes over several lines; they appear momentarily only to disappear again.” In Wound Response, the body forms an equationary system that is representative of the landscape, and through this metonymic device, details the relation of the human to society and the body to violence and external trauma. In addition to this, Prynne creates a framework in which the body’s reaction to a physiologic wound evokes the polyvalent connotations of a soldier experiencing harm in an act of war, the granular reaction of lignified tissue in a plant experiencing an incident of harm, and the hippocampus’s overlaying.

8 In the essay ‘China Figures’ Prynne extrapolates his own definition of the metonymic relationship to the following: “The systematic allusional framework of poetic figuration is a central characteristic of metonymy as it has come recently to be regarded as a mode of composition contrasted with metaphor; since a metonymic system depends on a pattern of figural components which are already associated together in the poetic discourse or context of formalisms from which combinations are produced, each local part of such a system pre-implying the larger whole. In this mode metonymy comes to include synecdoche, since the part which implicates the deleted whole becomes by convention the sign or name for that whole”
reaction and denial of memory in moments of extreme trauma. *Wound Response* expresses details through and by all of these overlaying constructs. Prynne’s lexical, historical, scientific, philosophic and poetic references add to the obfuscation of a singular identity within the poem. Prynne’s is a complex overlay of forms, thoughts, reactions, and philosophical arguments which inform the possibilities of form and kinaesthetic representation found in Friend’s works.

In *Distant Reading*, Peter Middleton writes that an analysis of a Prynne text should constitute a deconstruction of the text into smaller parts, which can then be cohesively arranged to form an understanding of the larger whole. In arguing for a distant reading Middleton has expressed that the comprehension of the poem should be a growing interpretation based on the accrual and accumulation of information. Middleton’s assertion follows along the lines of Derrida’s argument for a cognitive structure in literature. Derrida asserts that “the history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of metaphors and metonymies.”

The interpretation upon which Middleton relies, stresses a reliance on the continued accumulation of information provided by a close reading, mis-readings, fragmented readings, and retained imagery of the text against etymologic, social, historic and metonymic systems to ascertain meaning. While this presentation parallels much of contemporary reading practice, the resultant is entirely dependent on the capacity and subjective inferences of the reader. While Middleton does allow for an interpretation informed by misinformation, he does so in a manner which relegates the unknown facets of the poem to the basis of “textuality,” a condition of depth in the text, accessible to the reader only by means of a detailed analysis of poetic salience. The treatment of Prynne’s poems in a piecemeal pattern precludes the exposition of the intrinsic image and schema presented within the poem and therefore cannot detail a picture of the tacit knowledge which is being communicated.

To amend this hole, I will contend that concurrent with the structural analysis of the poem provided by the close reading and its alignment with Middleton’s distant reading, there is also a residual reading of the text, which represents the perceived images, ideas, phrases and assertions left with the reader after a completed reading of the poem. In short, a reading of this type would represent the proposed “textuality” which Middleton argues as fundamental to the text. This post-reading, residual effect, is the aesthetic reaction of the reader to the displacement of subjectivity, and represents the reader’s attempt to reconstitute meaning obscured by the vicissitudes of information. The creation and acknowledgement of the residual effects of the poem are fundamental aspects in generating an understanding of the tacit knowledge which Prynne imparts into every poem.

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10 Middleton, *Distant Reading : Performance, Readership, and Consumption in Contemporary Poetry*, 188.
11 Anthony Mellors, “Mysteries of the Organism: Conceptual Models and J.H. Prynne’s *Wound Response,*” *A Salt Reader.* Mellors previously utilises the jigsaw analogy, though in his interpretation the explicit force with which the reader must attempt to bind the pieces to fit an incongruous ‘gap’ reveal the imposition of the will of the reader on the interpretation of the entire structure. This exegesis suggests that a residual reading undertakes to allow the reader a post-reading effect cognisant of the information exchanged through these ‘gaps’ in the cognitive structure of semantic and semiotic order.
12 John Kinsella and Matthew Hall, discussions regarding Prynne and *Wound Response*, personal communication, through University of Western Australia (2008-2009). The definition of ‘residual reading’ in this argument bears a confluence to the ideas of Reception Theory, wherein the meaning of any given text is created between the reader and the text itself. For further readings see: Robert Holbub’s *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction*. London: Methuen, 1984. For discourse on John’s definition of ‘residual reading,’ see the 213-221, *Disclosed Poetics*, as it relates to Kinsella’s analogy of crop/weed-spraying and the resistance of this to the commonplace ethic of the pastoral. Here the residue is that which remains of attempts to ‘control’ the environment. Kinsella writes: “What is pivotal from a poetics perspective, which for me is inseparable from the ethical and pragmatic implications of this, is the corruption of any pastoral idyll. A negating or negative pastoral is part of late twentieth century English-language poetry, but the belief that such a negative pastoral is a denial of pastoral mores, should one remove the corrupting elements, is flawed” (Kinsella, 2007, p. 215. see also ‘Shitheads of Spray’ from The New Arcadia). The residue of this attempt to contain and control nature results in poison remnants filtering into the environment. As per correspondence, Kinsella has indicated the connotations of a ‘residual reading’ remain against the mannerisms of ‘close reading’ and derive much of the analogous implications from the transference of scientific knowledge to literary analysis. He relates this definition of ‘residual reading’ to: “what remains after a reading of a poem [which] enlivens the reader to respond to other readings in particular ways” (Kinsella, Hall, 11.05.09). In the analytic response to war, the residual reading works against the direct propaganda of war. Effectively the residual reading works to subversively importune a message to the reader that is not explicitly taken as propaganda and can bypass instances of resistance. An understanding of the effect of residual reading allows Prynne’s war based poetry to take the position of propaganda without explicitly being identified as such (Kinsella, Hall, 11.05.09).
13 Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967). Tacit knowing is a process of knowledge acquisition detailed by Michael Polanyi as representing a difficulty of transference, as tacit knowledge is subsidiary knowledge more often related to context, than explicit knowledge.
2. BIRCH BIRCH BIRCH: THE NATURE OF LYRICISM

While the definition of Prynne’s poetics is entangled in the development of a late-modernism, the poem, *Wound Response*, contains manifold ekphrastic references that link it with the pastoral and lyrical traditions. The most obvious string of these is the references to bees, pollen, and hives that actively place the poem in a referential system that engages with lyrical pastoral traditions that extend back to Theocritus. Bees are a poetic feature which create an equationary system of numerous possible ontologies and meanings. The auricular sounds which populate the poems may be doubly, the resonances of bees or planes overhead. Prynne writes of “the tone and sweetness [which] confuse in saline,” (216) replicating the whisper’s of Wordworth’s *Prelude*, which sound, “gaudy and gay as bees; / Some vapoured in the unruliness of joy; and with their swords flourish as if to fight / The saucy air.” The systematic framework of “The Rune Poem” allows a double definition, as bees appear as a “force of existence compose[d as] a colony of black spots” (221). The cleaned honeycomb reveals a colony of black spots, exemplifying the erotic in nature; “Darting and humming like bees we were at first/last confronted by the erotic!” unifies the ideas of labour at the centre of flower and the S**X at the centre of “The Rune Poem.” The erotic is interlinked with the establishment of home, created for the sake of procreation, the singular reward carved in stone, thus implicating the reader into Prynne’s hunt amongst stones.

14 ‘The Rune Poem’ above, is an appendix to Prynne’s *Wound Response*, appearing on page 244 of *Poems*.
15 Prynne’s utilisation of the lyrical pastoral traditions can be traced through his academic interests, stemming from Elizabethan lyric and his studies on Shakespeare, following onwards to Wordsworth and finally to Olson and Dorn and the Anglo-American lyric form. In this tradition Prynne’s poetic can be seen as a constant movement towards, and conversation with, the traditions of lyrical expression.
16 Reeve and Kerridge, *Nearly Too Much: The Poetry of J.H. Prynne*, 40. The use of bees also replicates patterns found in the text of Sampson and Delilah. What also should be noted are the connections resonant in Prynne’s use of bees, honey and stones in Wound Response as it relates back to the closing lines of Olson’s ‘The Kingfishers’: “I pose you your question / shall you uncover honey / where maggots are? / I hunt among stones.” Note also, with regards to ‘The Rune Poem’ that this collection of Druid Symbols would certainly be thought of as having been
and the storage of material goods (242). Prynne extends the sensory data into anthropomorphic fallacy, where, “pollen here is bright feeling, damp spores stamped down in the Eckman spiral of stripped earth,” and animals are imparted with the will and potentialities of humans (219). The absence of the subject, and the impaired condition of perspective is blurred as, “the white bees swarm out from the open voice gap. Such “treasure” the cells of the child run back through hope to the cause of it” (230). Prynne’s bees are indicative of a change in cognitive capacity that allow the pastoral tradition to expound upon alternate analogies, not only those of home, labour, consumption and order.18

In Wound Response Prynne implies that the demarcations between man and animals have regressed, to the point where “the bees [are] an intense provocation, metonymic selves in syllabic flow (-) towards the bright mirror” (242).19 The bright mirror, with its double connotations of the self’s desirous want in a capitalist society, combines with the bright flash of bombs exploding, and eradicating “the cells of a child,” implicating the capitalist system with the ever expanding war, and the destruction of nature in other countries (230). Even before the archaeologist-inspired translations of “The Rune Poem,” all nature has become, “the negative flower of the Cosmos, itself the recognition of polynucleotides streaming out from the epoch such as shyne in our speech like glorious stars in the Firmament” (242). The obvious satire hinges upon secular and religious concepts of life, and between natural and scientific explanations and ontologies. The line above, from “Plant Time Manifold,” concludes with a line from Peacham’s Garden of Eloquence that discusses the development of rhetoric and knowledge, as having been overrun by science, scientific data, and in this case, streaming polynucleotides (242). The conclusion of this line adds to the satirical discourse of scientists discussing the division between higher and lower forms of animal life, as well as the implication regarding repetitive instances of melanin and skin colour as differentiating and ranking races.

Reeves and Kerridge, former students of Prynne, whose book, Nearly Too Much: The Poetry of J.H. Prynne, was instrumental in articulating Prynne’s aesthetic of linking the internal and the external, describe the enjambment of ideas in Prynne’s poetry as re-identifying and re-orientating the subject. They write: “The switch from discourse to discourse in Prynne’s poetry might thus be small thetic events: movements of disruption continually repositioning the reader as subject in relation to new objects.”20 The divisions render the poems as a series of connected images with a continuously moving pattern of thought which reorients the subject towards new interpretations. Whereas, in Pound, these events would have been a series of static placements from where judgements could be made. Prynne presents the premise of Wound Response as a satirical joke, equating Pound’s “direct treatment of the thing” with Whitman’s accounts of field medicine, and the treatment of mortally wounded soldiers during the civil war.21 Whitman’s accounts generally implicate the inability of the field hospital to treat wounded soldiers. A Lacanian interpretation of trauma, fitting with Wound Response’s context of traumatic aphasia and memory reconditioning is that trauma is, “a missed encounter with the real.”22

Prynne’s continual use of pastoral tropes within the poem structures Wound Response as a pastoral deployed through the Romantics. This establishes the reading of the poem within the framework of lyricism as a modernisation of Wordsworthian modes of self-discovery. Just as the replication of the top and bottom line in “The Rune Poem” establishes a framework of definition on the poem, this device places boundaries on our interpretation of the whole.23 For the translation of these runes I have used

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21 Carpenter, A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound / Humphrey Carpenter, 197.
22 Louis Armand, “Ground Zero Warholing: John Kinsella and the Art of Traumatic Realism,” Solicitations: Essays on Criticism & Culture, 2nd ed. (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2008) 405-421. In relation to Prynne and the wounded subject of the poem, this Lacanian interpretation of trauma seems all the more fitting. Armand explains Lacan’s interpretation of trauma as “a rupture and a failed rendez-vous, a recoil at the very limits of the representable, an after-effect that is unable to account for itself. We might also say that this ‘missed encounter’ describes a type of nostalgia, an insistence upon going back over past events, a fixation upon particular instances in the hopes of isolating the very thing that can never be present here: the encounter itself.”
Peter Manson’s translations from “Birch, Birch, Birch.”

The opening and closing of the poem read:

BIRCH BIRCH BIRCH : ale : BIRCH BIRCH BIRCH :
distress of spirit : BIRCH BIRCH BIRCH : ale : BIRCH
BIRCH BIRCH BIRCH

Within this framework “The Rune Poem” expresses a ceremonious representation of the joy of life-giving, bees, intoxication, and the botanical cycles of life. However, within the opening and closing lines, Prynne establishes that the effusive forest of trees and flowers is creating both sustenance and a nectar (ale), which demand the continual attention and labour of bees, and only then can it produce an intoxicating effect. Prynne has linked labour for sustenance with the labour for intoxication, both rendering the bee a slave to his source. The fundamental result of this commodification of the forest and establishment of its products as natural, human intoxicants is the “distress of the spirit,” and the expression of human greed. This represents a typical Prynnian trope: establishing relations around the human, monetary and material value of objects. The continual reliance on the bees, reflects back to “Plant Time Manifold,” where, “The bees were an intense provocation metonymic selves in the syllabic flow (-) towards the bright mirror” (242). The bees are metonymic humans mimicking the intoxicating effects of consumption and acquisition and trying to look into a brighter mirror for an improved sense of self. The mirror reflects only the intoxicating effects of purchase, an ambiguity which gives way to the distress of the spirit and the perceived necessity of further consumption fundamental to the capitalist model.

24 Peter Manson, “Birch Birch Birch: A Short Commentary on J.H. Prynne’s “Rune Poem” (Poems, P 244.),” Quid 17: For J.H. Prynne: In Celebration: 24th June 2006, ed. Keston Sutherland and Andrea Bradey (Falmer :: Barque, 2006). Manson is also responsible for the initial publication of numerous insights into ‘The Rune Poem’ which informed this analysis.

25 Mellors, Late Modernist Poetics: From Pound to Prynne, 38.

26 Louis Armand, “Avant-Garde Machines, Experimental Systems,” Avant-Post, ed. Louis Armand (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006) 197. The culmination of overlaying referential elements at this point in the poem forms a fundamental automatonic relationship to describe the capitalist system. Merging the ideas of the ‘brighter mirror’ and the ‘trauma’ of the self (wounded, psychologically, by the constant bombardment of capitalist advertising) creates a reflected image in the mirror which represents a personal ambiguity. Armand writes that, «This ambiguity is firstly experienced as a disjointedness in the time of production as a figuring of the present as anachrony: the constant deferral of the to-come which mirrors the deferral of gratification and the alienation-effect of commodification as described by Marx [ in ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’]. Moreover, this movement of deferral is perpetuated as a condition, not as a departure from the norm or as a perversion of a teleological (ends-means) system of production-consumption.»


The brighter mirror and the bee-bread originate in the second line of “The Rune Poem,” specifically referenced when the bees come upon the cherry tree. The cyclic consumption of nectar (for energy, honey, and bee-bread) stems from the allusion to female menstrual cycles, provided by the image of the cherry tree. The pollen of flowers is then mixed with honey to provide “bee-bread” to the larvae. Thus all labour gives way to the birth and rearing of young. The abundance of the birch trees and the singular cherry tree may also account for the singular reward, both in relation to physical labour and the possibilities of finding human love and producing offspring.

“The Rune Poem” by design is resistant to a residual reading, but leaves the reader implicated in an historical and archaeological evidentiary-based search, attempting to ascertain the situation which existed and allowed the creation of these objects. The modern reader faces an unreadable series of ideograms, or Druid symbols, implying that a detailed, structured analysis is necessary to the reading of all Prynne’s poems. In Angel Exhaust, the critic Andrew Duncan writes:

These [the Runes] were surely meant to operate like a surrealist script, rather than gnomic utterance requiring the Cambridge University Guide to Druid Symbology. Conscientious lyric has, in Prynne, reached a point of occlusion: code to which we have lost the key. When writing refuses to give off meaning it is like a commodity without exchange value; we become archaeologists sifting the royal midden.

3. A NEST OF CATHODES: THE SUBJECT OF TRAUMA IN ZULU-TIME

The male subject at the centre of Wound Response, who has suffered injury in conflict and is being medically examined, slowly wavers between life and death. This is indicated as the poem moves between diagnostics, as the subject experiences, “a decrease in alpha-wave activity, an increase in beta-waves, [heightening] the appearance of paroxysmal potentials,” and remembrance,
as the subject recalls, in broken fragments, “shouting and laughing and intense felicity;” as he, “hears the child her blue coat! His new shoes and boat!”(230). In place of his immediate experience of the world, we have trace memories, fragments of information, sensory data, and the experiential reactions which constitute memory; these allow the reader to situate the subjective position in the poem. The ambiguity produced from contrastive and overlaying representations of the subjective leaves gaps where the significance of this indeterminacy can be measured, thus strengthening the importance of Prynne’s transmission of tacit knowledge to the reader. In theorising about the importance of subjectivity in late-modernism Anthony Mellors writes: “Any encompassing subjectivity proposed on its [the modernist poem’s] behalf comes into being through this “opening,” which is to say that indeterminacy is imbued with what I will call a determined opening.” Subjectivity, defined and utilised in this manner, opens itself to the possibility of indeterminacy, and as Mellors claims, the ambiguity becomes a site of reconstituted situations, images and referential patterns from which subjectivity can be constituted. Integrated within the semantic and semiotic frameworks of the poem is an implicit knowledge, presented through fragmentary images or phrases, which situate the subjective. It is through the comparison and contrast of images that the reader ascertains information about how the phrases of different discourses and narrative positions affect, amend and constrain the other. What Mellors presents in his argument is subjectivity presented as “another way of refusing any determinate identity, which is to say that it expects to open onto a transcendent subjectivity in the form of a sublimated self-identity.” The continuation of this argument forces subjectivity to be established outside of the frameworks of meaning as a conjecture of the reader. The framework creates a negative dialectic which limits the hermeneutic conditions of language to act as determinant of the structure of subjectivity, and again shows a reliance on the communication of tacit knowledge.

In Prynne’s attempt to define subjectivity as a derivative of discourse, it should be noted that Prynne constitutes experience as a collation of lines of perception, scientific data, secondary voices and memory. The ambiguous nature of any singular image or narrative within the poem is indicative of the non-identifiable nature of a fragmentary speaking subject. By constantly eschewing the condition of voice in the poem, Prynne works to destabilise meaning and to ensure that each scene functions as a condition of the images and fragments presented. Indicative of this is the section from “Cool as a Mountain Stream”:

> By this vane in the ground  
> The roots start to sicken,  
> Snow normal to zulu time stuns soft news  
> Of choice all over the earth.  
> You spin with erotic doubt, ah then,  
> Hysteric tenderness, is this  
> The mount of our youth  
> Or his body? He must  
> be eaten slowly, by autolysis of face  
> thus forced to riot, claimed  
> by soft hands in his shirt: not a beast of virtue (219).

In this small section of the poem, Prynne presents a geological strain, which appears to be placing detrimental stress on the “roots,” of growth. The media obfuscation of “snow” returns as, “zulu time stuns soft news.” “Zulu” as it is used in this incidence has multiple connotations; it historically ties this poem back to the Anglo-Zulu Battle of Islandwala, and ongoing discussions regarding primitive versus civilised societies and warfare. “Zulu time” can also imply a time denoting spatial relativity; as it is military parlance for Greenwich Mean Time.

Also implicated in Prynne’s use of this phrase is the fact that “zulu time,” in Vietnam argot, was the time in which the casualty report was read. The hysteria mentioned in the poem, contrasts with the tranquil residual effect of the title, which seems pathologically descriptive, but also indicative of subtlety distended Chinese themes within

28 The division between remembrance and diagnostic reference is paralleled in the titles, as noted earlier, with the sequence of: ‘Treatment in The Field,’ ‘The Blade Given Back,’ ‘Cool as a Mountain Stream,’ ‘Thanks for the Memory,’ ‘Pigment Depot,’ Of Movement Towards a Natural Place,’ ‘Landing Area,’ ‘Chromatin,’ ‘Melanin,’ ‘An Evening Walk,’ and ‘Again in the Black Cloud’ indicating the movement between one state and the other.

29 Mellors, Late Modernist Poetics : From Pound to Prynne, 177.

30 Mellors, Late Modernist Poetics : From Pound to Prynne, 177.


32 Experience, Vietnam Online: The Language of War.
the work.33 This dualism also adds an interesting context to the “erotic doubt,” and “the mount of our youth,” and the injured is “claimed by the soft hands in his shirt,” as if there was something intoxicatingly erotic about the attendant medical procedures. The subject is addressed: “You spin with erotic doubt,” and then the injury forces a question as to whether this is the apex of “our youth or his body” as if the divisions between one and the other were unnecessary and the two fundamentally linked. The injured subject and the narrator presented in this section are one and the same, united by potlatch to their military unit. The self-indicting phrase, “I struggle with cautery,” from the previous poem, implicates an insufficient medical skill necessary to save the injured (218). By “autolysis,” “he must be eaten slowly,” so as to give the other members of the group a time to accept his death, and their responsibility in it. The poetic voice presented, is both the injured, and an anonymous member of the group, struggling with injuries and the death of friends.

This is a significant example of the manner in which Prynne, as Friend does in his works, attempts to draw diachronic divisions between the internal body and the external reality. Prynne has located the subjective within language primarily, and secondly within a concept of landscape which the reader must occupy.34 Marjorie Perloff, in explaining the dominant nature of postmodernism, examines subjective relationships which subsume a singular subjective representation within contemporary poetics. She writes: “Postmodernism is about language. About how it controls, how it determines meaning, and how we try to exert control through language. About how language restricts, closes down […] is about how “we” are defined within that language, and within specific historical, social and cultural matrices.”35 The poem is an experience through language rather than a representation by it.

If Prynne makes the semantic function of language redundant, he does so in a manner which exceptionally challenges the notion of language to represent a cognitive definition of meaning. The reference to “zulu time” from “Cool As a Mountain Stream” can acquire no immediate contextual definition from the text. The secondary definitions add weight and circumstance only by extension of their manifold implications over the entire text and allows little circumstantial evidence to assess the implication of a singular usage. The individual idea, as with the subjective, has a primacy that is located only within the collective and therefore easily lends itself to a Marxist interpretation of ideological and subjective meaning. The individual, in times of war, is negated by the collective. If he exists, the individual is an agent of guilt. Singular consciousness is unnecessary to the collective of those actively engaged in the war, for it is the group that matters and suffers losses.36

Kevin Nolan argues that the autonomy of the poetic subject equates to the representation of language as reflective, not directive of meaning. The identity of the subject is intricately linked to the manner in which language is used to communicate. “Prynne’s work has become the site of attrition,” Nolan writes, “yet the idea of autonomy may be ineradicable, not because the dream of its eradication is the first evidence for its continuing presence amidst the debris of self-evidence.”37 By presenting subjectivity as a near absence, Prynne has theorised a measure of subjectivity which implies a position both self-reflexive and self-abnegating. Through Adorno’s concept of art as an act of negation, we are granted an autonomous aesthetic which provides a critical statement on the experience of reality by means of aesthetic abstraction.38 As a reaction to violence and in the face of changing human conditions, both the singular subjective and a singular definition of meaning, have been denied by Prynne in the poem, to create the site from which interpretations can be created.


36 Kinsella and Hall, “Discussions Regarding Prynne and Wound Response..”


This is the poetic voice which Rachel Blau DuPlessis discusses as the organised multiplicities, contradictions and projections of a contemporary subjective self. 39 This is a subjectivity which relies on the violence of the situation as an assertion of the self, creating a striking analogy for reading the poem, Wound Response. It is a subjectivity buried and almost driven to extinction by society and therefore one which must utilise a reaction to violence to confirm its self assertion. Prynne’s poetic response is a pluralist exemplification of the self’s reaction to violence. Acts of war and the immediacy of violence break the prescriptive constructs that constrain the expression of self, yet in a vestigial way, preserves subjectivity.

The body, as represented in the poem, functions diachronically as the nodal point upon which acts of war and wo/man’s engagement with nature is situated. Both of these situations are mediated and mechanised by the subject, who has little determinate influence in the matter. The soldier, as had been implied through the poem, has little or no agency in the theatres of war, but the trauma which has overtaken him makes him and his engagement with the external world of fundamental importance. It is from the site of trauma which the injured soldier must lash out, to re-affirm his position of power, thus instigating further instances of violence. The soldier’s body is the site of trauma which situates it in conjunction with both the act of wounding, the response of the body, and the language of recollection.

4. WAR AND WOUND RESPONSE

In exemplifying the constructs that Prynne has overlaid on the text, it will serve to examine the semantic possibilities of the title and the epigraph. As a function of contextual definition, the reader will find it demonstrative that the title, Wound Response, has a variety of separate, individual and contrasting meanings. The most obvious interpretation is a physiologic one, relating the body’s response systems to an external trauma. Making this preliminary definition more cohesive is the epigraph, which seems to confirm this possibility, as well as highlighting a variance in the response to this wound, based on physiological testing. From the epigraph, the reader understands that the variant responses of the body to the wound, allow the possibility of adverse and seemingly contradictory physiological responses to a given stimuli. The idea of autonomy starts to approach a definition of the pathological as the subject is driven towards attrition. As Nolan argues in “Capital Calves”:

Prynne seems to conversely reaffirm an Hegelian view of separation and connectedness by treating all wounds as potential metaphors of the unrepresentable gulf between natural law and history. 40

In relation to Wound Response this metaphor could be altered to represent the divisions between wo/man and wo/man, depicted though war and violence, and between wo/man and nature, as the body is defined by the landscape. The reader is presented a kinaesthetic perspective whereby wo/man is defined by his spatial relation to others. However, the poem is dominated by an immediacy which has totally enveloped the subject. It is the approbation of the self, defined at the edge of being, as a blurring between the internal and the external, where Prynne exemplifies loss. The subject in Wound Response is not eradicated completely, but is reduced to a catatonic state, physically alive, but without the ability to freely express his will. Thus the expression of detail and information exchange is reduced to a function of the residual reading of the text, which allows the reader to cognitively fill the gaps left in the framework of definitive meaning.

Trauma is an act which begets a definitive subjective reaction, proving that the self is, “composed of warring and fleeting impulses.” 41 It is the collation of impulses and reactions which Prynne creates, that allow the expansive insistence on the threshold of the body as expressive of the possibility of the self. This reflects Olson’s idea of:

Making the threshold of reception so important and by putting the instrumentation of selection so far out from its traditional place you have gone so far as to imply that the skin itself, the meeting of man and external reality


40 Nolan, Capital Calves: Undertaking an Overview. While Nolan’s metaphor seems apt for Prynne’s metonymies in Aristeas in Seven Years, the description seems lacking for Wound Response, which relies less on overt historical and mythological lineages to create the poem and focuses more on the immediacy of violent acts.

41 Duncan, The Failure of Conservatism in Modern British Poetry, 27.
By utilising this view of subjectivity, Prynne has defined the temporal relationship of the wounded subject’s relation to the outside world as reflective of possibilities of the self. The liminal boundaries of the subject are exemplified as fulfilling both personal and external conditions.

Another definition of the phrase Wound Response, originally identified by Anthony Mellors, is that “Wound Response” is a botanical term which designates a plant’s reaction to an external trauma. The establishment of this idea necessitates the reading of “Plant Time Manifold” and “The Rune Poem” alongside of Wound Response, to complete a comprehensive pattern. According to Mellors, the structural reaction implicit in this response, entails both intercellular and extracellular reactions. The function of reaction unifies the natural and the human, by exemplifying the mimetic relationship with which plants and humans react to wounds. While forgoing accession to a singular cognitive definition, Prynne utilises the idea of multiplicity by giving contextual connotations that Wound Response could also mean a complex array of physiological and biochemical reactions occurring when a plant is injured.

The active response of a plant that has experienced trauma entails a series of physiological and cellular processes which allow wound interaction with the external environment while the immediate reactionary process is initiated. The immediacy of this reaction presumes, “a detecting mechanism [which] must integrate across the population,” providing a synaptic-like response which ensures that in regards to wound reaction, “First intentions are the cleanest,” then, “local numbness starts to spread” (223). The immediate reaction to the wound is an episodic blockage of receptor sites, dulling the subject to “the crisis ahead,” by creating lignified tissue which “cancels the flux link” ensuring that “his recall is false” (227, 223).

The injured subject’s cellular response works by blocking apperceptive reactions to the proceeding recovery, as well as to the furtherance of the wound’s physiological effects. This is also reiterated by the claim that, “necrophylactic periderms, which include wound periderms [...] are thought to protect living tissues from the adverse effects of cell death,” a numbing of the senses which, “feels wet streaking down tree bark” (231). Mellors continues his botanist reading of “Of Movement Towards a Natural Place,” when he writes:

Prynne makes the human significance of the wound tremble. Thus when the subject “rises like a plaque to the sun,” he mimes the action of the plants; but he doesn’t photosynthesise like the plants, being in danger from the sun as well as needing its sustenance (thus the double- ness of “melanism” which, as natural skin pigmentation gives protection from the sun’s rays, but is otherwise harmful: “The force for existence/composes a colony of black spots.”) (219).

This basic description details the wound as subject to shock, being surrounded by beneficial periderms which will encourage closure, but have the affect of dulling the site of the trauma.

Simulating human reactions, the plant’s response to trauma is to impair sensory uptake to the wound and allows the cellular reactions a corresponding periderm response to protect the spot where damage occurred. The occurrence of melanin damage doubles back to “Pigment Depot,” where “the force of existence composes a colony of black spots” (221). The cellular response initiates the healing process which marks, “the entry condition a daze,”

44 A.R. Biggs, Anatomical and Physiological Responses of Bark Tissues to Mechanical Injury (University of West Virginia, Plant and Soil Science Division, 1992): http://www.caf.wvu.edu/bark/angiospe1.htm#Anatomy%20of%20Wound%20Response%20in%20Bark. A preliminary search on the topic of wound response lends the reader the following explanation, as expressed by the Plant and Soil Science division of the University of West Virginia: These responses may be categorised into immediate or rapid responses (depolarised of cell membranes, release of host or pathogen cell wall fragments) which occur within seconds or minutes after wounding and slow responses (eg. complex biosynthetic reactions, formation of boundary tissues) which occur over a period of hours, days or weeks.

45 Biggs, Plant Wound Response.
47 Here individual moments of trauma comprise the ‘black spots’ of traumatic aphasia on the subject’s memory. This is also indicative of the diachronic approach with which Friend investigates Prynne’s overlaying of the internal and external, in the creation of landscape pictures which initially correspond to the body, as reproduced by magnetic resonance image.
where, “Damage makes perfect” (230). While reflecting the anthropocentric possibilities of the plant’s reaction to wounding, there is the assertion that: “natural and wound periderms are basically alike in method of origin and growth. The basic difference between them is mainly in timing of origin and restriction of the wound periderm to the place of injury.”\(^{48}\) The physiologic definition of *Wound Response* denotes an anthropomorphic inference which allows the possibility of linking self-inflicted and external wounds. This framework identifies the precarious position in which the body’s natural reaction is both separate and inseparable from the self, just as the individual is a portion of the group, yet retains a separate identity. In instances of individual loss, the military unit acts in much the same manner, repairing the wound, or adapting to the loss.

An aspect of melanin which Mellors overlooks in this reading, is one Prynne sees implicated in the disproportionate number of African American men killed in the Vietnam War.\(^{49}\) Further, it has proven effective to use melanin to treat burns; burns, the reader can imply, that are the result of a bombing, where, “the hotel is the black phosphorescent price [...] frothing at the skin,” an apt metaphor for the reader to relate the excruciating burns caused by the napalm used in Vietnam (217), as phosphorous was one of the main ignition compounds used in the napalm bombs dropped in Vietnam. The unidentified subject struggles to deal with the act of bombing others and bearing witness to this destruction; “I struggle with cautery,” he says (218). Cautery, here, may represent the destruction of tissue by direct application of a heat source (OED). “Still the sky is yellow and completely with us, as if at birth;” a sky scorched the colour yellow indicates the burning of napalm, or perhaps the incendiary transubstantiation of phosphorus to sulphur, the compound created when phosphorus breaks down. The subject feels “glutted with ashen light” (226). Ashen describes a substance with the colour of ash; or, medically speaking, ashen equates with cyanosis, referring to a bluish hue resulting from a lack of oxygen in the haemoglobin in the blood, and the onset of a slow torturous death, suffering delusions and asphyxiation from within (OED).

The frameworks of definition by which the reader can affirm his initial inference of semantic and semiotic values is undercut by Prynne, and overlaid in polyvalence. The following line from “Again in the Black Cloud,” functionally dislodges the ability of memory to accurately account for details surrounding incidents of wounding:

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\begin{align*}
&\ldots\quad \text{who can see what he loves} \\
&\text{Again or before, as the injury shears,} \\
&\text{Past the curve of recall, the fields} \\
&\text{Double-valued at the divine point (230).}
\end{align*}
\]

The implication is that the incitement point of the wound engages a doubly expressive set of values and definitions. Mellors continues his examination at the moment where, “at a crucial point, the ‘moral trace’ returns as a figure of a ‘contre-coupe,’ ‘a repulse in the pursuit of any object’; ‘the effect of a blow, as an injury, fracture, produced exactly opposite, or away from, the part actually struck.’”\(^{50}\) Beyond this lies the relation of *Wound Response* to memory. The above lines imply that in the moment of the trauma the mind is preoccupied, and deadened to the external situation. In this case, the subject is held in contemplation of those he loves. Injury occurs while the mind is elsewhere, leaving the recollection of this instance of trauma “double-valued” as containing both memories of the past and the possibility of death. Thus the subject’s response to the trauma is transferred to a grid, at the site of occurrence, establishing a central position from which the subject notices, “cross-fire shewing fear of hurt at top left”; “the sun comes out/ (top right)”; the wound has lead “to an augmentation in the number of receptor sites,” and the “tenet” is left “cold in wide-angle blankness” (223, 220, 221). The opening lines of “Pigment Depot” show the subject waking, “back under his arch of blood, affirming his pulse” where, “suddenly we are overcome,” leaving, “the arch a template of blurred foresight” (221,222). The disintegration of the poem into bathos and the violence of war allows the inclusion of a further definition, that *Wound Response* was Pentagon argot from the Vietnam War, indicative of a successful strike upon an enemy

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\(^{48}\) Biggs, *Plant Wound Response*.


The subject in the poem *Wound Response* can be interpreted as a posthumous, residual artefact, created as a function of recollection and reconfiguration of memories. According to Prynne, the subject, as well as the object, need to be situated according to Olson’s archaeological evidence to establish their true meaning. Where the evidentiary substances does not designate a definitive framework of social and cultural definition, meaning is reified by the viewer’s acquisition of tacit knowledge, gained by a residual reading of the poem. In this manner the poem functions as the open pit of an archaeological dig, with tacit knowledge assisting in the identification, explication, and in denoting the interconnectedness of various, found objects. The framework established here, places all cognition of the self at the moment of the wounding as existing in an external environment. The mind imprints no agency upon the moment of the wound. Prynne’s usage of materials representing obfuscation (salt, snow, saline solution) can also be interpreted as a mental deterrent to precise recollection, creating false recall or disrupting the creation of memory altogether. Occurring in the same manner as the plant wound, this is a psychological reaction which denies subjective authority and results in an inherent separation of the capacity driven self and the physiological self. For Prynne, the representation of the trauma of war is two-fold, it is a Lacanian “missed encounter with the real,” as well as what Slavoj Žižek called, “the sublime object of ideology.”

Solidifying the idea of division is the inability of the wounded self to express a coherent understanding of the event happenings at the moment of injury. Nolan argues that self-knowledge is an archetype whereby, “the limits of representability co-extend with the boundaries of self-hood to enclose the ineradicable particularity of experience as value personally located as subjectivity.” What has been presented thus far is an attack against “the enemy” whose actions against the self cannot be recalled but the subject is constantly assured, have happened. The truthfulness of the initiating action, verified only by aggressive reaction, is implicit in the displaced truth of war. In *A Quick Riposte to Handke’s Dictum about War and Language*, Prynne exemplifies this maxim in his argument:

> Warfare between nations is most often waged across language-frontiers, as a fiercely linguistic event [ ... ] the mounting up of a war program, in advance of the hostilities and to justify their methods is a concatenation of intensely linguistic processes, in which the whole identity and propensity of individual language-histories are worked into the deepest complicity. By the time war “breaks out,” that is, is declared by one nation or tribal cohort confident of subjugating another, the cascade of positional alterations to language use has been largely completed.

A pertinent example of this appears in *Wound Response*, when Prynne states that: “Remorse is a pathology of syntax” (223). It is through an alteration in conception and definition that Prynne exemplifies the strategies of contemporary warfare which allows soldiers a lessening of guilt by semantic manipulation. Prynne mimics the propaganda of war by establishing the semantics of circumstance to engage a reverse-syllogistic response, attacking the enemy, based on an indeterminate past aggression against the collective. This creates an established, if undefined, precedent for open attack on the enemy. By these means, the subject, lost at the momentary incitement of trauma, must work to re-establish his own displacement. In this case, the response to the stimuli is an open attack against the enemy which establishes the subject’s lost agency. For Prynne, “the synthesis of appearance and validity is not determined by representation but experience, individual and collective, with the consequence that ethics is never entirely a matter of personal subjectivity.” If the subject has effectively lost his cognition of recall, then memory, by design, becomes a functional establishment of the collective.

It is Prynne’s contention that the smallest vocable utterance is always counterposed by the collective. Nolan argues that this context of Prynne’s represents, “the singular exigency of any habitus and simultaneously

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51 Nolan, *Capital Calves: Undertaking an Overview*.
53 Nolan, *Capital Calves: Undertaking an Overview*. Italics are Nolan’s.
a meditation on the domestic and historical placement of false consciousness.”

The poetic voice represents a subject fighting for expression against a homogenous structure of other dominant voices. This may be representative of a soldier’s conscious moral objections, arguing against a platoon of others, or a conscientious objector, arguing against a nationally representative decision. The moral voice of the individual is destroyed so that, “out in the snow-fields the aimless beasts mean what they do” (230). Within the poem there is also a traumatic resistance, which represents an effort to empty out the ethical discourse. The traumatic resistance in Prynne’s war is the potlatch of the group, and the overlay of collective memory on the individual. In this instance, Prynne’s subjectivity represents an account of trauma which expresses autonomy but is represented only conditionally, due to the continual attrition of personal accounts.

A residual reading of the poem “Thanks for the Memory” relates the manner in which memories are created, and presents a striking juxtaposition. The specialised knowledge of the scientific data presented within the poem resists, but does not deny, the acquisition of tacit knowledge required for a residual read. The information transferred is also resistant to an exchange of explicit knowledge because of the heavy scientific nature of the language used. Memories, the poem reminds us, have been “induced by acquisition,” as a reaction to the “activating substances [...] released from the VRS.” (220). The most exacting line of the poem is surely the last, the open ended, “There is evidence” (220). The premise suggested by this line is that there is evidential proof of the practise of using biochemical substances to alter the creation of memory in the theatre of war. The fact that the reader is never given this evidence, and the open, un-punctuated state in which Prynne leaves final line suggests that the evidence will be forthcoming. Perhaps the line foreshadows the injections of ethamivan (vanillic acid diethylamide), which are to follow in “Of Movement Towards a Natural Place.” The congenial expression of the title sinks into the mire of the implication of the final line. This is an ironic “Thanks” to be certain. The residual reading of this poem screams of the condemnation of the directors of war, for allowing the deletion and re-creation of memory by biochemical manipulation.

Because “remorse is a pathology of syntax,” the soldiers are categorised by their physical and mental conditions (223). They are branded by their trauma and given a pathological context to preclude the necessity of treatment. They:

(a) “tended to refrain from aimless wandering”
(b) “experienced less dizziness”
(c) “learned to smile a little”
(d) “said they felt better and some indeed smiled”

Most of the soldiers can be placed into one of these categories, and those who cannot, stay, “Totally confused most of the time;” a category that does not make the list in “Again in the Black Cloud,” but is found later on in the poem, set aside for the soldiers suffering delirium and mental breakdowns, expressing “pure joy at a feeble joke” (230-1), further implicates the deterioration of the soldier’s capacities. The question of precisely what object, “Damage makes perfect,” besides establishing a situation necessitating further control over the individual, is answered by “setting the reverse signs of memory and dream [...] the spending of gain [...] is damage mended” (231). The soldiers forget their wounds, are supplied with new memories, and return to fight again, the gain is spent. The wound allows for the condition memory manipulation, thus eliding the trauma and guilt of the individual.

Wound Response focuses its argument on the contestability of historical accounts of war, and therefore the personal subjective experience. Truth and subjectivity are augmented when the soldier first suffers trauma. The poem, “Thanks For The Memory,” ends by suggesting that memory is: “induced by acquisition / of transmitter / by receptor. / There is evidence” (220). For the wounded,

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55 And previous: Nolan, Capital Calves: Undertaking an Overview. This overlay of false consciousness functions in the same manner as propaganda, where the individual voice is opposed by a manifold, or collective, linguistic opposition.

Language usage reaffirms its position as a dominant factor of control in the war, in affirming the strictures of war, engagement with the enemy, as well as a control measure within each unit and group. Residual reading is attempt to cite and ascertain this undercurrent of resistance, and link this reaction to a personal experience within the consciousness of the collective, using tacit knowledge of the mainframes of linguistic definition and patterned collective thought.

56 Although undefined, if the VRS can be deduced to being a Virus Receptor Substance, it would imply that the controlling entity is capable of augmenting the sensory receptor sites and therefore altering memory, as easily as injecting an influenza vaccine.
subjectivity exists only at “the mute rim” (226) of the body, at the threshold between the wound and external reality; the acquisition of new knowledge extends this horizon. This is a subjectivity which exists at the temporal edge of the subject, its existence is verified as experiential, “where the wound smiles,” (219) and connects wo/man to the external world. The shock and augmentation applied to this conditional truth establishes the “higher causality conditions / setting the reverse signs of memory and dream” (231). Establishing a failure in the mechanism of recall allows the subjective position in the poem to be understood as a polyvalent and self-depriving function of discourse. If the locus of experience is subject to manipulation by the application of violence, and the collective voice always dominates the individual, then there can be no accountable subjectivity in war.

5. THE REMNANT
The application of matrices of information on the poem allows Prynne the assertion that each object and poem functions archeologically to bring a mass of details to the surface in order to establish a cognitive understanding of the poem.57 In Wound Response a preliminary definition is established as a manifold of the possibilities of truth, represented by the frameworks of meaning which overlay the object. For Prynne, the frameworks of definition and the archaeological are united. In the essay “Stars, Tigers and the Shape of Words,” Prynne writes that the, “literary nature of the literary text marks it for a reading with a heightened sense of the accumulated layers and aspects of association which form the significatory resonance of previous usage.”58 The meaning of any object or symbol is defined by its historical usage, its variant possibilities and its socio-historical context. The subjective self becomes an overlay of memories of the subject and the collective, gained by a convergence of patterns of experience, relationships, and attempts to codify and ascertain knowledge. Where the overlays of information do not mesh completely and there is an indiscernibly defined signifier, the referential reading of the text is supported by the residual reading. In a poem about the imposition of memory, the ideas, phrases and concepts that the reader takes away with them is of an equally fundamental importance as the thematic content of the poem. By establishing the memory of trauma as just beyond the attainable grasp of the wounded subject, Prynne enforces the reader’s reliance on the physiological and psychological reactions to the wound, as creating a source of subjectivity.

The physiological and biochemical descriptions which filter throughout the poem provide a new interpretation of, “the warmth of cognition […] starry and granular” (223). Mellor writes: “the word ‘granule’ has complex scientific significance: for example, the granule cells of the hippocampus—the primitive part of the cerebrum believed to be important in the laying down of memory traces—have been studied because of their greater excitement of activity according to frequency of input.”59 Prynne’s metonymic writing of the body as a condition of the landscape exemplifies the usage of a traditional ontology. By depicting a still central position wherein bases of knowledge expands outward in all directions, “like spokes from the nave of a wheel,” illuminating “the mute rim,” where the day “sparkles and shines” allows the acquisition of knowledge to sanctify the subject. This Wordsworthian depiction of the world leaves the scene, “calm is all nature as a resting wheel,”60 and in stark opposition to the scenes of warfare depicted in the poem. By juxtaposing the scientific with the lyrical pastoral Prynne incites the debate between contemporary forms of technological and scientific explanation and a traditional nature-based ontology, and between the capitalist model of life and one based on traditional social groups. This division also stands to represent the movement of Prynne’s own poetic, from the modernist proposition of Force Of Circumstance to the late-modernism of Wound Response. This change, Prynne implies, is also noted as representative of the attitude between primitive and civilised attitudes to the Vietnam War. In this manner the concept of war is presented as the complete destruction of nature, and therefore the denial and ultimate destruction of the subject.

The imposition of expression-defining limimiters demands that the poem and each individual word, be examined in

57 Olson, et al., Collected Prose, 205.
60 Prynne, Poems. This Quotation is from ‘The Oval Window,’ 337.
multiple contexts; thus these are substructures against
the singularity of expression. The substructures impose
a construct on the poem which enforce the endless
possibilities of meaning, correlating to varying matrices
of the poet’s imposition. The creation of a poem which
reflects varying meanings and subsumes any definition
to given analogical confines, leads to the development
of a complex image whose expression is encompassed
by a sequence of overlapping and interacting matrices.
By defining the subjective poetic voice as a personal
one—which is dominated by transient and ever-present
secondary voices—Prynne enforces a dialectic counter-
point to the notion of a singular poetic voice. The poetic
construct of the poem gives way to a poetic voice that
is successive, highly contrastive, and has indeterminate
origins. To solidify the indeterminate definition, the
poem has a decisive, residual effect on the reader, and
through these means communicates a tacit knowledge
to clarify the vagaries of experience and memory of a
person dealing with trauma. Prynne’s war represents a
late-modernist poetic which functions as an experience
through language rather than a representation by
language. For Prynne, the act of regaining the lost truth
and the reassertion of the self may be the only point at
which, “the wound smiles” (219).

Ian Friend, “First Notes on Daylight 2007-8,” Indian ink, gouache and crayon on Khadi paper. 23 x 30 cm. Private collection, New York
Are you kidding? Quarks, too, can choose?
Conway and Kochen, old dragons, well vetted, claim—no—prove, if given a free hand to choose their gear direction while quizzing quarks with questions, taking their measure, then, too, whim-

In fairness, it's the theory's “strong” (min, spin, twin) form—could they claim more?

Imagine haranguing electrons, just say no—
Imagine addressing zoomers sans apparatus. Up and at it,
again, are you, pairs of them grumble, maybe even hiss; gauging us, too, in their stinging way.
APPARENCY NOT

Apparency not eye-wash, as in hog-wash, a costume or mask of zero weight; apparency not eye candy, either, however much it is, at times—who would count all bower bird display, every stray blue twig switch, a reproductive cog? Apparency could be eye-wash, cleansing or smoothing glitchy codestreams, eye-and-eyemind finding an attractor, focus (filter) acting truly—usefully. At first. Indeed, appear as you are (as if it could happen) gurus advise tricksters, fakirs, posers; and Puritans say so, too, but mean the reverse, mean re-fashion (apparently finding soul a frozen, yet attainable (code) object, written just once).
FOR KAFKA

subtly the praying mantis shifts
its leaf-stick body laced with fire
glint—engraved tracing of dioxin

_a condensery become a crematory_

—_mint— was that_

_what was meant?_

“a book” succumbs
the sea frozen fathoms thick
axe handle porous—perhaps blight

Letter to Oskar Pollak, 1904: A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us.
This slow universe does not seem at all isotropic, on your back in tension it’s difficult to imagine at half the speed of light watching starlight and the radiation background coming toward you, from the direction toward which you are moving, with much higher intensity than from behind. Beyond this skylight window the universe is said to be the same all around, an isotropy precise in cosmic background microwaves traveling through you from the day of your conception, somewhat more difficult to speculate that you, or humankind, are in any special position. In formulating the assumption of isotropy, you could specify that the universe seems the same in all directions to a murmuration of freely falling neighbours, each with the average velocity of typical galaxies, typical brain muscles and simultaneously all of them might see conditions pretty much the same.

Surface tension of droplets electric pulse-pushed through perforations generates liquid-bridge adhesive, the shape of clouds, precisely recalled, a clarity of directional signals in the right entorhinal cortex correlated with the performance of autobiographical memory, with a specific neural representation in a network of regions in support of spacetime cognition, where landscape roughness and apparent quantum coherence result in slow folding unfolding and lucid harvesting of light. How observations of leaves in rainfall and the structure of clouds shape the memory that patterns knowing.

In slow irritation impatience deprived of light buffers an aberrant quantified shearing short of recognition, where shape demands a shell case of lesions dissipated with formative graphics, with entity, the appearance of fractional signatures in an escape from crowds, the rigid, precisely called, accelerates lipid membranes adherence, pushed through difficulties with gesture, tension limits communications. Any quantum system or human encounter remains subject to random phase errors that dramatise the fidelity of a desired operation or measurement or prediction of decoherence under realistic conditions making it tough to yield agreement between experience and theory. How determinations are conventional, to maintain Euclidean geometry and alter the results as needed, to keep the total system simpler.
1
To see, to meet. A formal consultation to obtain information and to evaluate flame. SUBJECT is left to a récit or reinforced concreteness.

Concrete, musique concrète, pre-stressed space between objets. Veshch Gegenstand Objet voucher: an editorial to the international community in units or states. To undergo a terrace for a difference in pitch.

Pre-stressed concrete fortifies romance. From where we stand the chamber prefers serenity fragile. We walk toward the outcome of the project. CHANGE OF STATE.

Authority accrues to fame and so authority is ascribed to him he who is not the AUTHOR. Up the ramp of anticipating free-form to be a contested site. Allowing the SUBJECT his OKAY we are preparing questions TEST that cannot be answered by Yes/No.

To inter to deposit a body in the earth to under an interval. CHANGE OF STATE SANCTION stare. To undergo a stare. To undergo a tonal object. To sound out an archive. To see or to meet an archaic smile.

2
What to do with a stranger?
Bathe her and anoint her in oils, permit her to feast. Then interview her.

Then interview her
Ask her name and from whence she came. Then how she came to this pass. This is a test.

This is a test.
END.

This is a test.

Permit her to live in the strange land.

END

What to do with a stranger? Bathe her and anoint her in oils, permit her to feast. Then interview her. SENDER is to issue a few central questions in advance, a preview to allow the SUBJECT a chance to think—I do not believe in ambushing the subject to achieve some sort of aggravated spontaneity. HELPER may indeed have three or four questions and fears. Also ours. A coincident prose.

Then interview her. Ask her name and from whence she came. Then how she came to this pass. This is a test.

SENDER: What is the relation of drawing to either of these practices?
This is a test.

One way to approach X’s practice is to coax ratio, proportion and measure through unpronounceable phenomena of nature. Do you agree?

Then, too, the laws of probability inspire form. How does this work for X in practice: how does an equation for probabilistic situations translate into either spatial studies or sound scores?

Considering B’s antipathy for X’s approach to music, I wonder whether B ever had invited X to IRCOM in any capacity? SUBJECT [Any answer.] SANCTION END.

What to do with a stranger? Bathe her and anoint her in oils, permit her to feast. Then interview her.

To issue a few central questions in advance of the interview to allow the SUBJECT a chance to think—I do not believe in provoking the subject to tilt at some sort of spontaneity in flight! HELPER may indeed have three or four questions also and ours, kindred may overlay. Infer her. Test test test test coincidence of number emitted in collapse.

Then interview her. Ask her name and from whence she came. Then how she came to this pass. This is a test. Color code streaming protocols, invading camps

What is the relation of drawing to either of these practices?

Plot sound stream along y-axis

To approach X’s practice is to revoke ratio, proportion and measure as laws of phenomena. Do you agree?

Then, too, the laws of probability inspire form. How does this work for X in practice: how does an equation for probabilistic situations translate into either spatial studies or sound scores? Raise pulley. Stop wave.

Considering B’s antipathy for X’s approach to music, I wonder how it came about that they appeared together at IRCOM? SUBJECT [Any answer.] SANCTION ateliers.

Then interview her. Ask her name and from whence she came. Then how she came to this pass. This is a test. Permit her to live in the strange land.

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Then interview her.

Within sound of floor characteristics confer
Permit her to live as a stranger or do not permit her to live as a stranger

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Glissandi per mit. Per mit per mute stranger to sound in a kinship with flooring, flooring’s voice box and festival. Permeate flooring with voice. Per meate clay permit clay to sound. Sound out stranger, hurl stranger at strange clay although she would prefer to be anointed with minutes. A permit ting ting ting sound nearly next to inaudible. Inaudibly permeable business per mil. Prefer your research to mine. SEND in any capacity.

This is a test.

3
We pause. Ever smaller transmissions lay in intervals i.e., space between ramparts; more at WALL

For family testimonials and tessera SEE, MEET

Probability, a frequency.

Unrelated new relatives vault incrementally—no, you lie here in intervals; more at EL

For family requiring an oath from shell SEE, MEET and mete out a pavilion.

Probability, frequented.

Any further thoughts? He paused: Algorithms?

Unrelenting new relatives lie here resembling an eternal die.

For your family’s elliptical references SEE, MEET an era. The door slams.

Probability used as a ticket, tally or voucher.

We pause.

Probability, a frequency.

RECEIVE further looks. We pause.

Our bodies were brought to sanguinary reverb

at a WALL, antecedent and emitting soundscapes.

Probability, frequencies of a fragrance.

Independence lived on, streaming glass
cadenzas unrelated to each other. Here lies a threat to plausibility.

For family test patterns and tessera SEE, MEET.
CATHERINE HALES

from CITY STATE

§ 1
chit-chat adorning to a turn filibusters
pollinating wags precisely purity of a city’s
dereliction it’s beauty in that vacant adept
this is merely a matter of impartial not
obviously anything of the kind a little
petulant perhaps wayward broken vision
membranes sounding out strings vibrating
ultimately by plot conjectured to a fault
stately the usual nonsequiturs abbreviated
on a plate aligned amid resisting concentric
raised like a hieroglyph against a bruised
pane she said for a bailout or thereabouts
whereas by these precepts only one of many
possible wavering sumptuous withheld

§ 2
cannon shot profligate across three lanes
the usual nuptials concur it was a very
good year impervious to glass shards among
willow herb anticipating such scenes played
out in a stream of moted light to abandoned
seats where too many converge they used
water cannon loaded with liquid deodorant
to hose away the stench in the streets a short
squeeze under way & the camera team is there
labyrinthine construction of light against brick
extrapolating from there her body occupies
a space it does not own an intricate facsimile
of future possibility all bets are off whatever
it takes to implicate with no guarantees
ephemera

finding what’s to hand & making the best of it
while maintaining plausible deniability—that’s
the trick there’s process too in magnolia’s
strange brief flaming going back to some star
ting point to seek empirical evidence to support
while elsewhere lads are blown to bits to feed
fields of poppies & the needs of corrupt governance
calling cards of we who may be inadequate!
guests who have outstayed well were never
actually invited human waste she read
deposited in antarctic ice will emerge into the
ocean in around 140,000 years dark clouds
edging in on prevailing winds she mourns
these fragile blooms about to be ruined by rain

relics

rhetoric assimilated to a grunt in the grass
collateral fallout in concomitant she
found a sixpence in the garden worn
silver with queen victoria’s head & the date
1894 a thing lost sixty years before
the house was built randomly turning
up fancy that the fields beneath
these tenements the doffing of caps
the sweating the calluses the creak
of a firmly-made bed a red-
undant creed blocking the stream (categoric :
: thou shalt not) delight in the present
rarely outlives the joy of its unwrapping here
the supreme object of desire is a polished jade axe
taking note of

the musical analogy can go too far although
it seemed like a good idea at the time       no hurry
tonight to take evasive action (bored
in his mansard the ephebe dreams of scent of magnolia)
the high latticed window tarpaulin jacks
a sonata repeating on the stereo suites
accommodating the slow movement of the dance
whether leipzig london gloucester or rapallo
a sense of place will       finding none sufficient
marking time & inhabiting antic forms
like treading water among astounding mountains
but caught in undercurrents       taking marginalia
for the essential thing & finding it is so
prevarication avoids the outright lie

legal fiction

onslaught of ordinance shooting up the sky
over the city by the river       the eye
is superfluous observing this       still
the water’s as pure as it looks       whipping
this language into shape is half the bother
for the rest a clause to hide in       (he whispered
away before I could confront him       with these presents
this chaotic assemblage of dark shapes stacked
what survives is random       of words       of art-
efacts       & what survives into text       books
accounting for       a history of the few       of coherence
here is heterogeneous not locality       what it asserts
not toxic       history changes depending on
where you’re standing       & whether you won
evidence of

hypothesis won’t bake a cake she says frosty out that particular morning & all the available men fighting the blaze snow shovelled aside like a trümmerberg the minotaur’s latest upsurge given scant media attention a face disfigured by a genetic hurl or acid attack embarrassing the power of a labyrinth to contain notwithstanding hints that intelligent life may be elsewhere making a play for the retina’s itinerary in the cross-bow’s sights identity’s up for grabs a touch of charm was all was needed fixing for re-adjustments in rude serried hems & looking ugly where the fabrication is the thread’s there to follow all the way to a bolt-hole with a credible stove

wintering in

nightlife is entirely a thing of the past there no-one goes out after dark willowherb stems poking from snow like sparse ideograms not to be assimilated not to compete but just to be dissociated from gaining the room & finding the page blank (the hermit crab is known to fill available space, the vacant parameters of form) a kind of anaesthesia as the bear’s teeth closed around tolstoy’s face waiting for snow to thaw & then refreeze sickles of frost conveyed through tunnels in yellow boxes a realignment of internal organs gravestones in yellow light a fox leaves its trail across untouched snow a line of script seed pearls strewn
MEZ
WORKS

1.

**microwurk 11: (storm_strata)**    08:35am 14/07/2010
__________________________________________________
[sliding + sky_r(j)umbling Turnerscapes outside the twin_glass_doors (storm_strata)].

--

2.

**microwurk 10: [[inte(di{late}u)rnal]]**    12:37pm 23/06/2010
________________________________________________________
microwurk 10: [inte(di)rnal.leaps.b(f)ound+ saline gj(r)agged .. (p{ink})_et_als+ strict(l)ures. t(f)ainted.by.the.grey.mouse.grind ..
.. my.time: my time: it _c(wh)or(e)por(ous+h)ate_ _experience_ ___he(u)rtz___.] [end]

[begin: again: (in)al(l)ways]..........................
[b:____][1stly: a “microwurk” is a (or equals, or “=”) microCosm condensation: discrete -x-pressions s(l)ip(=tongued)ped.thru.the.mi(A)nimal. u’ll find these wurks everywhere nowadays if u care 2 look (+.siphon-C). txt.is.the.new.v(L)i(quid)Zion.]

br:____[“internal|diurnal”: soggy_affect maintaining. in the face(tted_reality) of it, binding. ur.expression.in.tight.9-2-5.officialse.bit(e)s = knee_p(emotional.r)ain_jerkiness.]

bre:____[“saline gagged|pristine ragged”: medical allegories never go astray thru these w(et)alls scrawled with time.juggling.icons + lined with _SocioEconoCapitalness.straight.jackets.]

brea:__[“ink et als|pink petals” and “strict lures”: “ink and others”, indeed. “et al” binds in particular orangesque+canonBOOMic ways: candy-laced BLOOMs frizzle + frazzle in their monotone shrinkwrapped b(won’t)lasts.]

break:__[“faint|tainted by the grey mouse grind”: 3.blind.mice obvious. if u need this + subsequents unpacked: don’t bother.
--
3.

[microwurk 8 (in_4_p(h)arts)]: _the [Ulti]Mate>InTra[lala]>f[S]eminality_ .... 04:51pm 30/03/2010

... [ brought 2 u by _Point In This Fluid_ Productions (c) Lady DaDa V(P)er(vers)ion ] ....

... ::ho[T]r[e]mo[r]nal__[syntheti]Ca[u]lling:: [.put. .the. .temPor(e)al. .in. .ur. ache-lined. b(t{i}sktsket)t)asket.] ...

... ::[de]Gra[Del]phic__deSi[gn]ring:: [.mouth. .my. (bLush_lip)sInking. (s)Hips.] ...

... ::[pearl_D]Ro[p(e)]sy_need[|||le||||]_in[e]jections:: [.want(>stand>supine>turned2theside>)on. .fluid. .flick(er)ings.] ...

....[end].

--

4.

[twitte]reality_fiction: 17/7/09 - 28/7/09 09:33pm 28/07/2009

nope @lotu5 - is it available in byte-sized microformatting?;)[+seriously tho: attn spans r also morphing 2 fit flitter-com(scan)prehension]

me 2 @Gromit01 ...bandwagon currency is a “soc_media_expert”s wet dream:( [+ yeah i’m preddy jargony in augmentology.com but not-4-profit;])

acceleration=part of the lingual morph @rubaiyat fer sure: def acting 2 compact language 4rm previously elongated communication states?

heh @vesper_dbs [+ @gustavius]: betcha @GreatDismal is finding a way 2 wurk invasion boards [“MOAR RAIDZ!”] in2 his next novel as we tweet;)

_”Hello, Kevin Rudd. We are Anonymous. We have been watching you”_: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEe7qhlFNs4

nother-power-hungree-dark-sider bites the institutionalised dust + *then* tries 2 climb back in2 bed with the u[ba]nderground=[t]aint gonna.
tempted 2 start a _2001: ASO_ microblog. every1 would b called dave. [HAL] prompt would read: “Dave? What are you doing, Dave?”

watchin _scanners_ [again] @patrickherron @labfly @joncates. i suspect inspired 2 watch by kraft[werk]ing http://u.nu/8sbn [thx @andrhia!]

agreed @Gustavius. +good time 2 announce: _Social Tesseracting: Part 3_ is now live *phew*: http://u.nu/7dxm. insights/comments appreciated!

*parabolically zoomin along the horizon line, i spot [wot resembles] a hand-2-brow star[ing] @doggo jiggle_ running in place*...

[something vaguely horsey bout its gait? foot construction?(fetlock-like?)] _Running Humanoid Bot_: http://u.nu/24tm


*sonically smears @jrcarp’s persimmon-y morningscape with this: http://bit.ly/EDnoy 2 make e[ars+brain]yes pop open*

“<][mez][> GRATS! u’ve just reached total weirdo-freakazoidal-abstractzor status!<][mez][> u win...... MOAR!”

[head_tilt pondering: cut-n-run screenchair activism (iran vs china + honduras + etc + etcetc:/) ... ]

[ponderin: how emotion bludgeons + victim rhetoric can b as damaging as the acts that prompted them in the 1st place: http://u.nu/9qpm]

horizon[/off/on/off] is on peach+ebony_fire.

“Invitation boards like 4chan utilize shock networking* [where social content attempts to subvert social codas through deliberate agitation]”

“Encyclopedia Dramatica_ and the affiliated imageboard and meme propagation site 4chan showcase the challenge faced by narrative frameworks.

...+ i’ll have “a bag of bill murray” 2 go.

[s(cream)elects the appropriate blood-curdling murda-err tone] _HERE’S......COOKIE!!!!_ [via @ColinPeters @vesper_dbs] http://bit.ly/MAIKX

lap[top]_activism + tweet plastique + post-funer[e(ther.e)]al d[h]ealing.

new augmentology terms 4 2day: _troll play_ + _shock networking_.


placed in speed according
affording a chosen systematic vocabulary
for syllabic intensity
individuality is quickly sensed
shall we say intelligence
cooperation enhanced
besides having rendered
haphazard and another “almost” or music
if is opened it is made
word our this result
recognition the difference
of its known character
in alphabetic order
toward our letters
the reader acts
in theory, clear
distinction makes delivery
performing you will limit
own capacity to

extravagance is our credit system
form of as from
other unnumbered
copy of answer
often revealed
first draft nothing else
its brevity in wish
explanation personal
space as formal document
one oar even
two oars spell
“branches” inexact phrasing
consequence drawn on
over may open
own name same time
fraction of a year
or callings, pronunciation
increasing paragraph systems
upon information

*The day a monkey is destined to die, all trees get slippery.*  
—Swahili aphorism
RECYCLE NOW!

*(sign on skip [dumpster]*)
When I appeared on Rob Holloway’s radio show *Up for Air* in November 2003, the engineer at Resonance FM noticed how many references to radio there were in my poems. While one of my chosen records was playing, we set up a microphone for him to repeat these remarks on air. It was true, I admitted, there were references to radio (or wireless) in a number of my poems. For example, Book 2 of *The Lores* is a narrative of a fascist traitor who broadcasts for the Nazis, a fictional analogue of the real Lord Haw-Haw, the man I mention elsewhere for having broadcast the news that my father—Bomber Command rear air gunner—was a POW in 1944.¹ Perhaps—deeper than this—there was a serious analogy to be teased out. I spoke a little of the importance of mass communications in the twentieth century, but that was only half the story.

I said that I’d always been fascinated by radio, that I was a DX-er as a teenager. DX is code for (long-)distance. In other words, I listened to radio broadcasts from around the world. The log I kept contains entries such as these:

- Quite a few weaker hams.
- Radio Nordsee International doing old Caroline thing of flashing headlamps from shore.
- Radio Denmark’s last broadcast badly jammed on 19 mts.
- Radio Kiev (from Russia’s Ukraine) answering questions and playing music from the USSR.
- Radio Prague from hidden base at 113—fairly clear.
- Radio Pyongyang—or DX prog on 9—not in English—very bad reception—the 41metre band unusually workable.
- Radio Tirana: the people who bend the news.

From amateur radio, which didn’t interest me at all, since there was no content—the operators were expressly forbidden to discuss politics—to medium wave pirate stations playing rock. In some cases these were off-shore, in others, Sun Radio for example, it broadcast from a house round the corner every Sunday afternoon, louder than any other station on air! From short wave liberal democratic soft-propaganda to Soviet and Chinese hard-propaganda. Radio Tirana was the (literally) loudest Maoist mouthpiece on air. Such was the Babel I frequented.

The log shows that I listened intently between 1968 and 1970. Occasionally, I caught world events. The covert operations of Radio Free Prague (an incident from the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia that turns up in my short story “The Selected Bibliographies of František Tropp”).² Or Radio Moscow rather solemnly announcing that Apollo 11 had landed on the Moon, the Russians throwing in the towel in the Space Race. This is preserved still on the hours of media source plus independent commentary that I recorded for myself on cassette tape on the moon-landings, my own private radio documentary.

In short, radio was ubiquitous, and was suffused with ideology and historical questions of its own legitimacy, and sometimes legality. A whole history is encoded in my bland log entry on Radio Kiev. Amid the whistles, static and distortion of the short wave bands (25, 32, etc.) a plurality of voices spoke to me. If I wanted music, on the other hand, that required a more consistent reception, not one that made all songs sound like the

¹ This points to another (dual) thematic focus of my work: war aviation and prison camps, which met in the long poem ‘Schräge Musik,’ *Complete Twentieth Century Blues* (Cambridge: Salt, 2008) 20-36. (*The Lores* may also be found in this volume: 168-217, with Book Two located at 172-177.) Recently reading Ian Patterson’s concise book *Guernica* (London: Profile, 2007) I suspect that this material is not exhausted.

phased ending to Hendrix’s “Little Wing”! I listened to the medium wave pirates and the BBC for music. Although I remember tuning in to Emperor Rosko’s Radio Luxembourg (French) programme on long wave with his Franglais catch-phrase, “Maximum de musique; minimum de blah blah!” VHF (or FM) I disdained for being merely “local.” Indeed, I marched on BBC Radio Brighton with the Campaign for Free Radio to demand the repeal of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1968 that had banned the pirates which local radio had inadequately replaced in our opinion, a sentiment that missed the moral dilemmas posed by unregulated Capitalism. It was sometimes fun to tune into the police on VHF too, which I believe was illegal but I knew that they couldn’t track me.

It was strange and distant voices, in many languages, but predominantly in accented English, that drew me to short wave radio, for long hours, for many an evening. You didn’t listen in one location for long. Once identification was established, you moved onto another station, tuning this way and that within the designated bands. The scramble around the top of the hour was particularly intense. The stations would then briefly identify themselves and offer their versions of the news. I didn’t need lessons in Communication Studies to teach me about selection, bias, gatekeeping and ideology. Later, I always thought my own A Level students rather slow in picking this up. I was adept at recognising call-signs: the jaunty Swiss, the funereal Albanians, the confident Americans. The voice of.

The lone speaker in the radio studio became my unacknowledged image of a kind of isolated heroics, even of authenticity of being. The single voice, possibly in the night, in a distant country, from a secret location, from a ship on the waves, or from a North Sea platform. I remember an episode of Danger Man set on a pirate station, possibly the platform that housed Radio Essex, the one that became Sealand, an attempted independent state.

It’s not too much of a mental leap to see here an image of the poet. A solitary voice—I’ve always read my poems out loud when composing them, and revising them, even now, on tape—finding its pitch among the dialogic babble, uncertain whether there’s anybody listening. As Frank O’Hara said, “It is good to be several floors up in the dead of night wondering if you are any good or not,” particularly if you imagine you’re in a radio studio: dead acoustics, thick glass, gleaming equipment, anonymous listeners of indeterminate number. An image reinforced by the single-handed “broadcasting” I inflicted upon my parents, via microphone, record deck, amplifier, a long flex from my bedroom to the living room, and loudspeaker, as Radio Slugwash International. I invented a world-wide media empire with such implausible names. No wonder the last time I was on live radio, interviewed about Twentieth Century Blues on Radio Merseyside, I felt the unshakeable conviction that I was on the wrong side of the desk. But I have never thought of the poet as a radio set, as impassive medium, a metaphor famously taken up by Jean Cocteau and Jack Spicer.

It’s an obvious image, of poet as radio-voice, but for me it’s flooded with these memories, like strong radio signals seeping into and blocking the one you are trying to listen to. To those who’ve not heard it, it’s difficult to describe the shifting of the signals and their relative strengths as they jostle for prominence, distorted as they bounce off the ionosphere. The sudden switching on of a transmitter somewhere knocks all the others off-balance. Even Radio One on medium wave on the South Coast of England had to contend with an underbelly of call signage from Radio Tirana from the other side of Europe. You can hear it on the Soft Machine concert I taped in 1971. By that time, such interference was simply interference, as my interests shifted towards music, and tape recording engendered the skiffle-like “splod” music which my friends and I invented and recorded passionately. The image of radio became a submerged metaphor for the act of writing, the speaking of the poem into a transmission device, its encoding and decoding, and reception at unknown sources, to use the simplistic Communication model of Shannon and Weaver that was itself derived from radio, but which includes the interference of “noise.”

I’m not sure that the equation between broadcasting and writing is an analogy, since analogy implies a

4 Perhaps I felt something like that too, when in 1969 I was interviewed about Student Power of 3A, those of us who tried to take over our Secondary Modern School, though I would have been snobby about merely being part of a local OB (outside broadcast). I could more or less do that myself with my tape recorders. It’s no wonder that, when the opportunity arose, I took to teaching radio journalism like a bird to air, taping and splicing mini-packages.
consciously worked-out correspondence. It’s actually an experiential transference, of one of my experiences, temporally speaking, into another. It happened along with other pastimes, such as the use of that early cassette tape recorder, that itself had writerly consequences: the tape poetry magazine I edited in the mid-1970s, called futuristically 1983, and possibly the training of my voice for performance. And another, such as the taking of photographs, and the ingenious and impoverished use of an antique bellows camera as an enlarger for developing negatives, possibly led to the recurrent use of photographs as writing material. But I’ve never believed that writing poems is like taking snapshots, as some writers do. I don’t describe photos; I squint at them, steal from them, riff on them. That simple recording of reality is the opposite of the act of radio broadcasting, which is already in the medium of language and, at best, is a potential intervention or interruption of the real.

In the late 1980s, I developed radio quite consciously into a political analogy. I was reading of Félix Guattari’s association with the Italian radical radio station Radio Alice in 1970s Bologna, and I conceived a series of poems, “Radio Anna,” in which Anna stood for: ANarchism, Noise and Autonomy (I mistakenly thought Alice was an acronym). I conceived of the writing of poems as a radical radio station broadcasting avant-garde programmes: not programmes about the avant-garde, but noise (interference, jamming) as the message itself. Think: John Cage’s “Williams Mix,” which uses radios anyway. Think: William Burroughs’ tape experiments described in “the invisible generation.” (I’d read Burroughs’ suggestive piece by 1974 and I was sceptical. I knew from my own use of tape recorders that you couldn’t fool anyone that there was an actual riot going on by playing a tinny cassette player in a crowd!) In his article “Millions and Millions of Potential Alices,” Guattari says (or quotes): “The viewpoint of autonomy towards the mass media of communication was that a hundred flowers should bloom, a hundred radio stations should broadcast.” His neo-Maoist talk of “The guerrilla war of information, the organized disruption of the circulation of news” seemed an appropriate and quite conscious analogy for my poetry of the time.5 The original “Radio Anna” poem—never published, though I notice all of its best lines were cannibalised for later texts—reads

noise/each light flashes a voice/open
women’s voices between men’s language/
uncertain elements/distributive informatics/
speech act therapy/chora music/groundless
voices plot music footprints/vary call signs
catch desire/ANarchism/Noise/Autonomy/
magnetic storm tapes/demolition music/
noise imagination/culture belts/mistake
identities/internal exile/networks
and feedbacks feed in lines/flashlight
opinions/sexist blackspots/critical tuning/
deliberate fading/troubling wholes/
imaginary news/government building
yawing towers of voice

It’s a poetics for the writing of that time that didn’t quite find its way into the poetry itself, and it hangs around long enough to show up, as irony, in the poetics piece “Rattling the Bones (for Adrian Clarke),” from 2002-3, in which I say: “We interrupt/ This broadcast which is a broadcast of/ interruptions,” though its renewed purpose is “to bring you/ more complex nervous systems.” 6

The radio analogy—if that’s what it still is—is on the edge of antiquation, of course. Already with the development of push-button pre-programmed radios and with the advent of DAB radio, the frisson of straying off-message (to use a loaded phrase), the attractions of tuning away from the mainstream to find an unscheduled alternative, straining the ears to hear a weak but rare message, becomes an enthralment of the past. DAB is no more satisfying than closed-circuit hospital radio that I recorded some poetry programmes for in the late 1970s. The internet, of course, with its blogs and sites, offers wonderful alternatives to, advances on, this technology, but the internet is also the instrument for the downloading of radio programmes out of their temporal sequence, with facilities such as iPlayer, a term that one day will be as incomprehensible as QSL card. Even when broadcasting

5 Félix Guattari, Molecular Revolution (Harmondsworth: Peregrine Books, 1984) 236.

6 ‘Rattling the Bones (for Adrian Clarke)’ was published on the Softblow website but is now offline. The italicised passage is a quote from John Rajachman’s The Deleuze Connections (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000) 138. The full quotation reads: ‘Artworks… are not there to save us or perfect us (or to damn or corrupt us), but rather to complicate things, to create more complex nervous systems no longer subservient to the debilitating effects of clichés, to show and release the possibilities of a life.’
is not literally live, the feeling (illusory perhaps) of the formal necessity of listening in real time, at a particular moment, the sheer contemporaneousness of the act of reception, is paramount. There is nothing like hearing a station going on air for the first or last time, like Radio Denmark. Or hearing DJs on the now-forgotten early 1970s pirate Radio Nordsee International asking listeners in cars parked along the Essex coast to flash their lights out to sea towards their ship simultaneously. Both are recorded in my log extracts quoted above. All of that is lost in the multiple temporalities and slick convenience of instant playback. Radio Alice was lost in the end to the interventions of the state, according to Guattari: “The police got rid of Radio Alice—its perpetrators were pursued, condemned and imprisoned, and its premises ransacked,” but, Guattari optimistically predicts, “its work of revolutionary de-territorialization goes on unabated…”

The antiquity of the analogy arguably gives it renewed energy, and not just as revolutionary nostalgia. The nostalgia for valves that needed to be warmed-up before the sound of radio emerged provides echoes of its own. My radios were all old, built by my father from bits or bought from jumble sales where I also acquired piles of 78s and eclectic tastes in music: Frank Crummit to Frank Sinatra, Pinetops Smith to Les Paul. The image of the voice in the night, the image of noise interfering with reality, is a pregnant one. It’s not an image, actually, but an echo, or like the pre-echo that you can hear where magnetic tape has been wound too tightly and stored for too long, a ghostly impression. Or where the stylus picks up a vibration through the wall of a groove on a record. I think of Little Richard’s “Tutti Frutti” unintentionally cueing itself like this in the opening hiss of the brittle shellac of a long-broken 78. I am again diverted from the force of argument towards the signals of memory, broadcasting forever on wavelengths I keep flicking over on my way to authorised channels.

Echoes, the very acoustic repetitions that are banished from radio and recording studios by soundproofing. Echoes of these engagements with vanished technologies provide material for writing, already have, in this account, a radio talk with no station to transmit it, an echo of these echoes.

What is required for my poetics is a newer kind of formal interruption than I imagined in the late 1980s, though it is actually the globalised, capitalised mediatised flow that radio is part of, the “media’s inconsistency of images and commentaries” as Alain Badiou puts it, its “temporal carnival,” that needs to be stemmed. With the advent of what Guattari called Integrated World Capitalism, this is all the more urgent. Thus radio has lost most of its romance. With no old-style ideological divide to drive propaganda, I doubt whether there are stations broadcasting on short wave now, though I haven’t the technology to check. I do know the BBC is frantically countering both Al-Qaida and Al-Jazeera on world-wide satellite TV, but that’s a subject upon which I’ve uttered my own tape-”spliced” provisional “last words” elsewhere.

Badiou argues for a renewed “principle of interruption. It must be able to propose to thought something that can interrupt this endless regime of circulation,” indeed establish “a point of interruption,” born of a “retardation process … because revolt today requires leisureliness and not speed. This thinking, slow and consequentially rebellious, is alone capable of establishing the fixed point” of interruption that will allow, in Badiou’s thought, if not in mine, the “patient search for at least one truth.”

From this point of view, the counter-language of Radio Anna (and Alice, even) runs the risk of replicating the form of the mediatised flow of Capital(ism), while merely contesting its content, in a breathless onslaught of anti-slogans and counter-images. We must interrupt this broadcast of interruptions anew, but still with the aim to create more complex nervous systems (which, I take it, is the function of art). However, it is with three “images,” one of broadcasting, one of recording, and one of what I call “human unfinish,” that I wish to end.

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7 Rajachman, The Deleuze Connections, 241. This was also the fate of the canal boat of Radio Free Amsterdam, the fictional counterpart of Radio Free Prague, in my ‘Tropp’ story.

8 Alain Badiou, Infinite Thought (London and New York: Continuum, 2005) 36.
9 I am alluding to the final poem in ‘Warrant Error,’ which ends: ‘You receive my wild meanings/ and divine unfinish in his spliced last word.’ See Warrant Error (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2009) 116.
10 Badiou, Infinite Thought, 36-38. This move, according to Badiou, also hails the end of the prevalence of the linguistic analogy in thought and the end of postmodernism. Salt, pinch of. Of course.
Imagine an alien being out there in space, with Jodderel Bank ears attuned to radio signals. He hears nothing for centuries. Then suddenly he catches Marconi’s mouse heartbeats in Morse. Within alien-seconds he hears Peter Eckersley’s irritating “Writtle Calling” test broadcast from the BBC. By the time Harry Lauder is singing “I Love a Lassie” and Stanley Baldwin is talking about the War Loan, these voices are beginning to drown in a cacophony of words and music and sound: Goebbels, Arthur Askey, Alistair Cooke, Patrick McGee performing *Krapp’s Last Tape*, John Peel, Marcus Brigstocke, all more or less at once. This is interruptive interference well beyond the dream of any of the operatives of Radios Anna or Alice, but it’s complete chaos that cannot provide radical interference, because it is a homogenised homeostatic field.

A Roman potter—30 B.C., say—is spinning a pot, scoring in the still malleable, spinning clay a continuous groove from top to bottom around the bulb of its wobbly body with a taut stick. The potter is singing very loud, as is his habit, and the stick is picking up vibrations from his voice and recording them on the body of the pot as solid sound waves. The pot, if it survived intact, *could* be played like a Victorian cylinder to recover the sound of ancient singing, of value since there are but 24 seconds of music preserved from the whole of the Roman era, a fragment from a play of Terence. But the equipment upon which it would have to be played would need to minimise noise to a remarkable degree. It will never be invented, though it may be imagined.

In my third, final image, radio and poetry apparently co-habit. Both Marconi and Dante have tombs in the same church in Florence, the Santa Croce. Shadowy recesses into which the eyes, afflicted by the dust and silver glare of the sweltering piazza outside, seek carved shapes and memorial inscriptions. But whatever you see here cannot obscure the knowledge that Marconi’s tomb is occupied, whereas Dante’s remains vacant.
One can picture: a child on the curb of a street in Europe, elder German producer addresses captive peers at a Greek film festival, a young woman eyeballs a passerby in the Czech Republic where she sells puppets. An ekphrastic synecdoche for the filmmaker's procession of still images, adduced for a discourse e.g., this is a Europe thickly inhabited by an active, supra-generational zeitgeist.
from the boy's casual amazement at an ex-toddler's well-designed legs bold on the brink of the cobbled street to the animated producer's response to a question on his beloved creation, the others' reverence and the idea of hope or curiosity in the discreet surveillance of the marionettes' alert mistress. I see what the filmmaker's seen in the machine-ation of his camera's mimesis. And so I can't picture these: the boy's own view of the adult photographer, the provenance of the pale stain on his shirt, the meaning of the shirt's logo (another boy, malicious
grin, with a club/baseball bat at the ready) and I’ve been given no clue whatsoever re: the content of the producer’s rhetoric and isn’t it resentment for the bad-mannered tourist, her back turned to the bargain deal (“ONLY” 400 CZK for a hand carved puppet) encrypted in the black-haired woman’s posture with her horizontal, left hand holding the rod of her product, her neck firm, vertical, but her face turned away, opposes her body’s angles directed above and beyond at another unseen thing outside the picture, another absence, lacuna precluded by the image. What’s she looking at with her hanged puppets so morose, so morbid?
So he impedes my words’ intention
and his voids’ appellation: nothingness
in these men’s faces; nullification
of heads, like the executed; the dead
’s names glint in the black marble
and shades of the final stage. Europe
ages, exhausted, interred. Sleeveless man
with hip bag, deep in thought, or puzzled
tourist, bored, drained of cognition. Sad
-ness, despondence perhaps, the haggard
figure at the centre. Facile, routine flowers
persevere in the background, and erased
from the next scene: undetermined grass
blotches, hardly verdant, submerged
amid the plain cement, corpse-like atomized bodies. And entirely vanished in the plastic cadavers, fake bouquet. But I'll aim to unsettle the filmmaker's pictorial of loss. Something uncanny in the exposed arms, released buttons displayed lower legs of the bespectacled semi-sunbather: posing, sublimating urges to impress, attract (fe/male?) passers-by? The inchoate thing rushing out of view maybe an irrelevant motorbike, to me signals speed, escape from the concrete downcast, their resignation; and to be commemorated, even with unreal roses.
over a century after one’s birth, refutes mortality, undoes disappearance. Who were these occulted women: Czechs or Slovaks? Why buried together? Ashes or bones? These traces of their being name/date something which cannot exist in the photograph, the infinity of a story pegged by the pastness of their births: Gabriela and Valerie, born almost exactly a year apart – planned? with such precision? – and why another child two years later? Questions can’t be answered with certainty by an image or by words. The hard, sureness of grave stones can’t entomb the uncertainty of life.
And he sends me one more: with a title ‘Sky Over Volos.’ I’ll name the object bluntly: the moon, to surpass Volos, Greece Europe, the world. Down here things fail (bodies, desires, economies, words) but we’ve always aspired to detect up there: the ineffable, anti-terrestrial, the Real.

Photos (all 2009): Old Town, Prague; Thessaloniki International Film Festival; Old Town, Prague; Old Town, Prague; Omonia Square, Athens; Franz Kafka’s grave, Prague; the sky over Volos, Greece.
RON PADGET
THE BRICK OF BACH

Come ye joyful nations, rise
Join the triumph of the skies

Register upon register
of nations and nations of angels
seraphim cherubs all the gradations
of heavenly spirits dappled pink
that fade out into pure white light
and singing not through their mouths
but through their being there
clavier upon clavier stacked
and fanned up and out amidst
the architecture of heaven

Who would not want to be a brick
in this city made of music or a note
like the one that becomes two when *rise*
becomes *ri-ise* and *skies* become *ski-ies*?
Can a brick sing yes
if it is invisible
and they are winning, those bricks

So come ye joyful nations, rise
Join the bricks up in the skies
and have brickness so much
that you too are an angel
a visible one
though the other you
is a little above
invisible and singing
the exact same note as you
THE DEATH DEAL

Ever since that moment when it first occurred to me that I would die (like everyone on Earth!) I struggled against this eventuality, but never thought of how I’d die, exactly, until around thirty I made a mental list: hit by car, shot in head by random ricochet, crushed beneath large rock, victim of gas explosion, head banged too hard in fall from ladder, vaporized in plane crash, dwindling away with cancer, and so on. I tried to think of which I’d take if given the choice, and came up time and again with He died in his sleep. Now that I’m officially old, though deep inside not old officially or otherwise, I’m oddly almost cheered by the thought that I might find out in the not too distant future. Now for lunch.
BRANDON DOWNING
ON MASK AVENUE

1.

Bear
Reverie,

Dragon
Banter,

Both living like caved dogs

As ecstatic bibs, “Or purporters”

Why, was that a funny substitution I just made? I gotta re-up.

Hey so what ice cream flavor is yours?

“Bandages”

2.

A pretzel, and taco loop,
Knee-deep in water,

A tiny mound middling,
The moon heat on my touch hole

The lighting up steep, with
God down, among the shallots,

The lighting on my Golden Swap.
I can’t believe all your FX-driven chores!
3.

No!
My body goes
Into individual pipes,
And it’s the pipes
That are then
Woven into my giant
Mechanized anime battle dress

But
How many
Times she (my kid)
Gonna change
Shirts

Workin’ on
A fuckin’
Submarine?

4.

He was like a host-god,
Giving me the choice of $375,000 in
 investments,

Or a ladle of cool, ambrosial drinking water.
Though he did really pull off his silver jacket,

Dogs continually entering and leaving the stage,
Each with the marine, emitting eyes of Joe Namath.

5.

No such luck with a kid that
Ends up being a Hero General.

I’d rather kiss sulfuric sand,
I’d rather kiss helix sexes,

The highway to hell layered with animal eggs,
Where we place our women on pederasts,

They go over the top and boss, impersonate.
Sparkles hurl out their dreamy bods,

This charisma-inducing shamanistic ruinism
Jogs into a hot volcano cone – the volcano goes, enough!

Cooks you like a rabbit in red wine until everything comes off,
And there’s no magic in that!
excipient ties, like ell oh vee ee,
  leaving
  nothing to chance

I always
  wanted
to plagiarise you

sleeping, you were ill,
  and smelt like a mineral,
  but different

at the start
  your subwoofer
  shook me to my microbes,
  emergency exits
  opened in my night

I loved to you a woman
  as I returned your sounds
  from phone to morph

slippery gleams
  slithered into darkness,
your fermented prosody
  ripe for traffic
POWDERY

white frost,
walls and windows
streaky with condensation

if you can check your thought,
not speak,
eyelid skinflakes
spot your lenses

a cork placemat,
a 6B pencil, teeth marks,
(not yours, whose?)

cheated of natural aging,
aging quickly, medication
induced, a shadow,
a dry thin lip

bul buls peck
at the frost-dried grass,
their song

no alcohol,
weak sunlight, powdery
through a dirty pane

not didactic,
how can you continue
to learn?
LEAVING THE WORLD

is not as bad
as you’d think
the grand movement
masks
the small movement,
you pull your swifty
and disappear

* 

now in the habit
of taking evil
in your stride,
(thanks to you, 
US drones)

three years after the day
you shrouded
the Guernica replica

you find you have
no further questions
for the time being

along the LA freeway
black derricks
lumber up and down
like
Jean Tinguely sculptures,
only ominous
& witless
in a waterless world

*
we would like to clear the trees, 
enable the panorama

no longer photograph the coloured leaves tourists come to see

*  

men make man made, you can study them making memoir under the summit

eat up big, feed your hero, poke him, could become Pegasus, born from Picasso’s wound

*  

the way he never leaves himself alone and always disregards The Real

*  

he drank crystal-infused water all night long, for nights on end, then placed his body on a bed and went out of the room
The old white beard, George P., had come in from Kosovo, where he was much discussed for being the white-man hero of the Gypsy People of Kosovo. No one much cares about the Gypsies of Kosovo—or the Gypsies of anywhere for that matter—but George did, particularly the ones in Kosovo.

George had been 1948 Magnificent Mitts champ, middleweight division, and was, he liked to claim, on his way to becoming a married insurance manager before it all soured and he decided to ditch Saginaw for Spain and a new life as a bearded poet/activist/gravy-train technician. (Something about bad American wives, bad American food, bad American furniture, lousy American TV—he’d gladly tell you about it, until he would become just too pissed off and spluttering.) The Flies Buzzed Judas—that had been the chapbook that had vaulted him to the status of minor expatriate poet, printed 1986 in Portugal. And there had been another—Never Too Broke That I Couldn’t Leave Town (1992). This, at least, according to the flap on A Bowl of Rocks, his new tome on the theme of the torture of the Gypsies of Kosovo—3,500 copies of which had been printed and distributed compliments of the United Nations, complete with photo of a smiling George wearing a beret on the back.

Now around 75 or so, George allegedly lives in Kosovo full-time—American white-man hero to the Gypsy People of Kosovo. Truly a great and profound love for the Gypsy People of Kosovo. What seems to happen is, the Gypsies tell George stories of the horror of Kosovo—the terror of the murdering Albanians and Serbs, the sinister and double-handed depredations of the United Nations officials. (According to such research as I’ve done, it’s mostly all too true, unfortunately—the “temporary camps” for Gypsies located next to radiation dumps, the shootings, the stomping, pitchforkings, the polluted water, the forced sterilizations, the epidemic cancer rates.) Tales in tow, George then applies to the Swedish government and Germany to give him money to put out books and travel around Europe giving readings and testifying to the suffering of the Kosovo Gypsies, and to the fact that not a damn thing ever gets done about it.

“Gypsies will steal your socks right out of your shoes—while you still got them on!” George had said with a crinkly grin the first time I’d met him. “They’ll steal the rings from their grandmother’s dead hand—their fingers! You bet a Gypsy will tell the truth—after all the other options have been exhausted! The Gypsies themselves say it!”

I had been invited to a Hindu wedding at a French-vegetarian restaurant in one of the trendier downtown Prague enclaves. They had wiped a red sauce on our foreheads, given everybody a piece of coconut candy. The sad-eyed Hindu chief, who had the general expression of a medicine ball, had lit tall candles and performed the ceremony, everybody sitting cross-legged on the floor.

Then they had brought out the eggplant-cheese and broccoli-banana soup, the oyster-walnut farfalle, several platters of lettuce drenched in cauliflower oil, along with a number of yellow bottles of caustic chemicals, apparently otherwise known as Czech white wine. Finally there was champagne and French cream-puffs, and a Gypsy band wearing dark embroidered suits came out and began plucking away on ancient instruments.

I had been off in space drinking for several days previous, the usual reasons, and after dropping my crystal bowl gift, I lingered at the bar in my coat and tie, looking at myself in the mirror and trying to stabilize. I ordered a third beer, had another smoke, began to feel better. In another few minutes, the groom, Jamie, much esteemed expatriate superstar of art and poetry, came over.

“Hey, thanks for coming, Thor.”

“Aw man, are you kidding?” I said. “There’s no way I was gonna miss this. Congratulations, that ceremony was like a dream. You’re a very lucky man, Wanda’s the best. Bad news is: Hard part begins now. Marriage down, life to go.”

“Hey, you can save the crap!” said Jamie. He laughed and we shook hands.

“Well, check that out,” I said, pointing across the room. “I didn’t know George had a wife.”

George was sitting at a table, next to an older grey-
haired woman. Jamie grinned. “Yeah, right—which one?”

“Huh?”

Well, I guess I hadn’t even considered the possibility. Sitting on the other side of George, flipping through a book, probably George’s, was a beautiful young Gypsy girl. Couldn’t have been older than 22. And she was absolutely gorgeous, outrageously fine—glowing caramel skin, black hair flowing halfway down her back...

“You mean—huh?” I squawked. “Goddamn it, Jamie, you cannot be serious.”

Jamie nodded. It was apparently indeed the case. We stood talking a few minutes more—George’s way with the ladies, the apparently ferocious persuasive powers of bearded American poets bearing wine and money from European Union states—then Jamie took off. People to shake, hands to see—that kind of thing.

I ordered another beer, circled around. It was a very arty crowd, as to be expected. Near the bathrooms I bumped into the acclaimed young Czech writer Martin Zlovin and his captivating half-Persian wife, Monika, who was dressed smartly in pearls and a knee-length cranberry skirt. Marty had been riding high lately on rave notices for his latest book, Good Advice For Bad Skin. As far as I had read, the protagonist, Zlato, had nothing much to do except befriend and then repeatedly, daily, use his hand to masturbate a stray dog he had found. So intense was this man-canine relationship that Zlato continued on with the dog, even after moving in with Martina, an alcoholic single mother, and her son, Honza. Also, Zlato declined to sleep with Martina, but did enjoy her cooking and conversation about her ex-husband. Then there was the parallel story, which may have been a dream of one of the main characters, involving the “The Negro,” as he was called, who would enter a coffin to compose a symphony that had not yet been named. Well, but who knew—I hadn’t finished the book yet.

“I loved how you called the dog ‘King of Beers,’” I told Marty. “That was a nice touch, man. Sweet.”

“You’re not going to believe this,” he said, “but my dad gave that to me! He was in America and couldn’t stop talking about the King of Beers when he came back. He told me I had use it.”

Marty’s father was, of course, the famous Czech graphic artist Darius Zlovin, who had recently been admitted to the French Academy of Sciences for his career accomplishments spanning the 1960s, 70s and 80s. A selection of his images—which combined lush, comic book-style science fiction and fantasy elements, along with gigantic unctheshed female breasts and half-formed skeletal faces grimacing in exquisite agony—had also been made into a calendar in America.

“Wow, you’re dad’s a genius!” I said. “That’s really funny, actually—I mean, the King of Beers in America is Budweiser! I mean, as I’m sure you know... The irony is just... it’s over the top, man, it’s great.”

“Oh, thanks!” said Marty. “I’m glad someone got the joke.”

“Yes,” interjected Monika, “but who’s the joke on?”

Lord, was Monika delightful. Truly. We had another good laugh. Then it turned out that Marty and Monika were just about to leave. They had to go to the airport to catch a flight to London, where they had tickets for the third night of Leonard Cohen’s five-night stand at Wembley Arena.

“Hey, have fun, guys,” I said. “We’ll see you next time.”

I shook hands again with Marty, kissed Monika on both cheeks—and boy, did that smell lovely—and off they went. Oh, well. In my case, it was time for another beer. I fetched one, then went out to the garden area for a smoke. I hadn’t been there for longer than a minute when Nally, the drummer in Jamie’s band, came up and pulled a baggie of coke out of his pocket.

“Me and you,” he said. “We’ll do this tonight at the show.”

Nally was from the breed of guys who claimed to be from both New York and New Orleans. They were both extremely cool and groovy towns, of course—but some years ago he had read a magazine article about Prague and had thenceforth always wanted to live here. Wiry and intense and short, Nally was capable of weaving the most interesting and pretty much unbelievable tales of nightmarish drug abuse and rock and roll sleaze, scary run-ins with drug dealers, insane girlfriends and pit bulls, beatings by cruel cops and drunk, derelict fathers...

“Coke?” I said. “Are you serious? You’re a walking cliché, man.”

“Oh c’mon, dude...”

“Goddamn it, Nally. I’ll never survive. If I come home a coke-zombie, my wife will tear my teeth out. We’re hanging by the final thread right now.”
“That’s why you got to do it, dude. Can’t let her push you around, man. We’ll take this backstage. Me and you.”

“O.K., sure,” I said. “Count me in. Why the hell not. It might help.”

“Cool, Thor. All right, I’ll see you at the show. I got to go get my drums and call a taxi.”

“O.K., man.”

I went back in, found a quiet corner had another two beers, listening to the band, watching a few dancers. I had begun to sweat again and needed just a bit of a break. After a while I went to pee, then saw George alone in a wall booth, his table crowded with wine and champagne bottles. George, I observed, actually did look more than a little like Hemingway, in one of the later bearded phases—that is, if Hemingway had had a ponytail. I went over.

“George, long time no see. How’s it hanging, man?”

“Long and strong, Thor, is that what they say?” He chuckled. “Sit down and tell me something I don’t already know.”

“You know that’s impossible, George. In any case, my mind is blissfully blank. At this point, I think I just want to drink. It’s my time. My wife’s out of town with the kids.”

“Oh, no—you’re still married to that Czech woman?” I nodded.

“Don’t worry,” he said, starting to laugh again, “it won’t last much longer. You remember what Napoleon said about Czechs—”

“Sure, George, of course…”

“—the men are cowards, the women whores!”

He chortled, his red cheeks swelling just a bit more.

“That’s right, baby,” I said, “the Napster did nail that one. So what’s new in Kosovo, man? Did they kill all the Serbs and Gypsies yet?”

“Nearly—it won’t be much longer until they do. Listen, I was having my weekly lunch with my FBI contact last week, and—they still have no idea what’s going on down there. Guess how many FBI agents they have in Kosovo now?”

“Uh, twenty?”

George shook his head, chucked.

“One. Just one, Thor. And this guy gets all his information from the newspapers and the internet, and from talking to me. Then he writes it up and sends it to Washington. Then they go on television and claim they are fighting terror.”

George shook his head, rolled his eyes. I picked out from the table one of the cleaner looking champagne flutes, wiped the rim with my shirt and filled it from one of the champagne bottles. I grabbed a half-empty wine glass, emptied it into another glass, and wiped the rim. I set it on the table and filled it with white wine.

George was saying, “I told the guy, I’ve told all of them, about this Al-Qaida chief who is living openly in Djakovice. A Somali gentleman, who lives in a villa surrounded by a spiked metal fence. One day I went up and knocked on his door. One of his wives answered, dressed in black veils. I said, ‘I would like to speak to your husband, the Al-Qaida terrorist leader.’ ‘Oh no,’ she said in perfect English. ‘Oh no, he is not speaking to anybody right now…’ I told the FBI and the U.N. and the Defense Intelligence Agency all about it. They said they had to get clearance from Washington and Geneva before they can arrest anybody, even a terrorist leader. They said it was nearly impossible to take this guy in. If this was World War II or right after, or even Vietnam, that guy would be rotting in an unmarked hole right now. They would have taken him right out, no questions asked. But we are not serious. We pay these FBI guys too much, give them long lists of rules, and they are too scared to do anything.”

“Scared?” I said. “C’mon, they break the rules all the time—it’s what they get paid to do.”

George laughed. “That’s right—when it comes to me and you and all the other good law-abiding citizens. But Islamic terrorists—all rules must be followed so no Arab king in Saudi Arabia or Egypt gets mad at us and accuses us of persecuting Arabs and shuts off the gas.”

“So what’s the real plan then, George? What the hell is going on? You’ve got to know something. If you don’t know, nobody does.”

“Well, they haven’t told me what their plan is. You’re a smart guy, you can add it up. They certainly aren’t catching terrorists in Kosovo. They’re letting them do what they want.”

“Yeah?”

“Oh, sure! All this Saudi money that comes in—they’re building mosques on every square inch of free land in Kosovo right now, at least in the Albanian parts, and nobody is doing a thing about it. The Saudis pay the Albanians to become devout—250 euros a month. The Albanians do it because that’s a lot of money in Kosovo.
Then the Saudis pay them to become terrorists... What actually happens, though, is they join the Kosovo Mafia and go off to commit crimes in Europe and New York. The Kosovo Mafia controls organized crime in all the capitals of Europe, even right here in Prague. They’ve beaten the Russians at their own game, because the Russians aren’t as vicious as the Albanians. The Albanians make the Russians look like choir boys. The Russians might cut off your hand or break your knees. Their Albanian colleagues will just kill you. They’re very effective at disposing of bodies."

I lit a smoke, poured down some sekts.

“So you’re saying Kosovo’s becoming a mafia-terrorist state? They’re not going to let Albanian mafias take over Europe, are they? What are we going to do? Bomb ‘em?”

“Well, Kosovo already is a mafia-terrorist state—and Albania’s even worse. Most of the government money in both places comes from donations from mafia criminals. The media doesn’t report that, despite all the evidence.”

“So what’s gonna happen?”

“Well, what the West will do is let Kosovo declare independence. Then they’ll kick out of every European country all Albanians who don’t have legal papers, then seal the whole place off with a military blockade—Kosovo and Albania both. No one gets out. The only people who get in are the Albanians. The policy in Europe will be to automatically deport every Albanian as soon as they are picked up for any reason.”

“What about the courts?”

“EU law says they don’t need to go to any courts. They can kick out anybody they want, whenever they want. It’s in the fine print.”

“I don’t know, George. Doesn’t sound like it will work. The Albanians will just pay somebody off, or kill them. C’mon, they’re mafia.”

George shrugged. I refilled the champagne glass, took a gulp of my beer, then a taste of the wine.

“Of course it won’t work. Washington and Brussels created the Albanian monster. Now we are all going to suffer from their terrorism and mafia. They’re tougher and smarter than we are. They are willing to kill. Us—Christ, they hire the stupidest mentally deficient people to run the FBI and CIA, to run Washington. They’re all Mormons and Jesus-lovers who have never left Indiana or Utah before. That’s the only people they let in these days. They’re the only ones who can pass the morality tests.”

“Say it ain’t so, George.”

“I wish not,” he said, “but I know these people. I talk to them every week...”

At that point Jamie’s bride, Wanda, walked over. She leaned over and gave George a kiss on the beard.

“Hey, where’s mine?”

“Oh hi, Thor.”

Wanda leaned in, spotted me a soft one on the chin. She smelled like tulips.

“George,” said Wanda, “I just talked to Alice. She’ll have the letter for the doctor by Monday.”

George’s face had twisted up. He seemed irritated.

“You know,” said Wanda, “for the insurance?”

“Yes, I know, I know,” said George. He turned his head and grimaced, waved his hand at the air. “You’re sure the doctor won’t ask questions? She won’t have her passport. The last thing we need is an investigation.”

“No,” said Wanda, “he won’t bother. As long as the letter looks legit, he’ll let it pass. He says he doesn’t get paid to be a cop.”

“That’s good,” said George. “We’ll tell him her passport is at the embassy, getting the visa renewed?”

“Yeah. That should be fine.”

“You know,” he said, looking up at Wanda, “I am not doing this of my own volition. If it was up to me, she wouldn’t be doing it.”

“I know, George...”

“I just want you to know that, Wanda. It’s important to me. I don’t believe in this, this killing of babies. It’s what she wants, not me. I’m a 75-year-old man—but hell, that’s a real live thing down there inside her. It’s her right, and I respect it, but I just want her to know that’s a real live thing there...”

“I know, George...”

“I just want you to know.”

“I know, George...”

Wanda squeezed George’s hand, turned, walked off. George poured himself a little more champagne. He looked over. His eyes seemed bigger, more darkly blue.

“Sorry to bother you with that...”

“No problem,” I said. “I wasn’t really listening. Some kind of visa hassle or something?”

“Yeah, something like that...”

“Ah, hell,” I said. “What’s next? Bush has fucked it all up. The dirty little freak is really tightening the screws. I
just hope we can survive…”

“Ah, forget Bush! He’s just the front man, Thor. He just does whatever they tell him—”

At that point the Gypsy girl walked in. She had been dancing out in the other room to the band. George jolted up, banging his thighs against the table, causing the glasses and bottles to shake and chime. He stood and gathered her into his arms and hugged. She was a small little thing, little dark-skinned pregnant Gypsy girl, full lips and no hips. If you were Gypsy and were going to zap your baby, you probably wouldn’t want to do it in a Kosovo hospital. Oh, hell no. You’d probably wind up without a uterus by the time they were done with you.

“There you are!” bellowed George. “What are they trying to do out there? Kidnap you?”

George let out a bear chuckle. He looked at me and said, “To them Czech gypsies, a real Kosovo girl is like Brigit Bardot. I wouldn’t be surprised for a second if they tried to kidnap her!”

“You’re drunk,” the girl said, suddenly spinning out of his grasp.

“Oh no,” said George, “oh no I am not!”

George lurched forward, grabbing at her shoulder. She did another spin. George’s magnificent mitt fell away and he staggered forward, bulging belly proceeding the rest of him.

“C’mon,” he said, reaching for her and missing again. He grabbed on to the arm of the booth to steady himself.

“C’mon,” he said, a bit of an edge in his voice now, “let’s go back to the hotel. C’mon now, I’ve had enough of this place…”

She moved away, straightened her billowing aqua-blue blouse, her black eyes roving and fastening on me. Silver globes fell from her ears, the Hindu red sauce barely visible on her forehead. George stood there, belly hanging over his jeans, breathing heavily.

“Drunk old man,” she said, looking at him, “you’ll fall asleep. I want you to take me to the concert tonight.”

“We’ll go, sure we’ll go…”

George grinned at me, stepped forward and got hold of her again. She did not resist. George winked.

“We’ll see you at the concert, Thor…”

They walked off.

As it turned out, they were not at the show, and I did not see them later.

I stayed for awhile at the table by myself, taking knock-backs from the bottles. Would have been a shame to waste all that good stuff.

The clock said 6:05 p.m. Still pretty early. Well, I thought, I’ll just empty this last champagne bottle, and have a smoke, and then I’ll leave.

The place was suddenly nearly deserted. Workers came in and started sweeping up, clearing the tables. They spoke French to each other. Must be from France, I figured—come over to Prague to work in a French vegetarian restaurant. Probably better than Lyons or Orange, or wherever they had come from. New EU rules, so forth and so on—come live in Prague, the beer’s fine, the living’s swell. I couldn’t raise much interest. These folks seemed neither ugly nor happy, nor even particularly bored with their clean-up work.

One of the females walked by several times, smiling at me the first time, but turning stone-faced on the next passes. I could well understand the feeling.

I noticed a lighter laying on the table, up against the wall—dark green plastic lighter. Somebody had left it. What could it mean?

Money, luck of the Irish.

Sure, all of that. Yes, I would take it.

I went out. The wedding had not been that good, but it would be hard to call it bad, really. That would be unfair.

No blame. No praise.

The Prague streets were purple, pink and dark blue, split open now and then by rods of neon burning on the buildings. I walked past restaurants where the people inside were pulling and yanking at plates of meat. British fellows in baggy clothes and bad haircuts shuffled past, speaking of something or other. It seemed dull, it seemed hard to believe.

I caught trees, cobblestones, a tree stump. A chain of lights, a row of empty cafe tables. A swirl of little yellow leaves. Wechselstube and EUROGOLD. Taxi drivers standing at the curb, laughing and smoking.

A puff of pretty blonds and brunettes in skirts and collars walked by, smelling of perfume, flashing their eyes. They scrunched white leather jackets, clicked high-heels against the cobbles.

Well, I thought, that was all right. I’ll go back to the neighborhood and get a sack of eight or nine beers. I’ll go home and change out of this tie.
JOHN COLETTI
XPOOBUMPNK

tension more me
more martini

less defendy goon
typo baggies
mmm. mmm. yum.
bad possum. dialogue.

sexist mmm. gets me all gravitate hover
OK sure I’ll do

oops don’t
gardens plenty print that
move
not so much hug love?
move why? skip cats friend
won’t answer
try she will to
be beautified
make we win
sure ok
Christian smalljoy.
big collar.
retranslates oops.
no courage ask?
yes courage FAIL
lovely wifely
big
gauzy Bruce
big community touché

they like
him attentivy
suspiciously likeable
THE SEMPER AUGUSTUS

Though I nod off now
for natural reasons
stagger in let her fall
half asleep, removing my own hardware
the great sonnets were arbitrary
forms kept in place
by available species
Swan Lake is hard
feed your brain
when it hurts
I have an awful gift
it’s telling you stop

YOU ARE THE CURRENT.  I AM THE WIRE.

My child, yr point shoes
free of splinters
grizzle in
chicken claws
no sense of
history, make all profits frown
insecurity seems
like a luxury these days
this yellow buttercup light that reflects
my chin enabling a marital prediction
I cannot see the answer highlight
I must rely on my mother
She is particle and has a better perspective via space
umwelt of wave is a parrot is a salad
as is quantum mechanics
as is alien language to be initiated

Umwelt
immediacy importance

impossible experiment this matchmaking
event is also melody and corpuscle
you are so primitive allowing no distinction
between space and time

Indeterminacy
reciprocal mannerisms do not a lover make
the more accurate my energy the less distinct my time
the more distinct my momentum the less accurate my position
macroscopic bodies prohibit total abandonment
I cannot get far away enough to make an unbiased decision
must rely on my mother

Mother
small xylophone melody
over restless decision immediacy

Particles of the same species are indistinguishable
firstborns of chaos my love is unrecognizable
only from a distance
only by a mother
how can I seduce the dream
when it was given instead of earned
I am no mother and I am no average stasis
I wilt the buttercup and suck its juice
I am your love you have to know
TIME MANTLE NEGATIVE

Because it was 5 light years away on this very spot
that we occurred to have timelike separation

in event rockets flashed two beams simultaneously off beat
the astronaut and I would agree events are no multiplier
rather we’d both enjoy observing photon measuring stick
I guess it was more lightlike separation after all

None of this changes the problem of finalities
what is needed is an attendant release of primordial oceans
dead conscious is time conscious is not an issue of physical universe

Describe features of the judged world table
tachyon ticking lost energy speed increase
lyric living bookends birth <time> death
measure make comparison express results
I am she who does just like a clock is always doing
comparing measuring individual meridian

Because in that year the astronomical day still began at noon
atomic oscillations became recurrent cyclic phenomena
narrow romances of well-defined changes in energy state
distilled experiences of untold living generations
mathematical rules are tools for survival
SPACE MATTERS

The sun is warm even though it’s 8 minutes late
feels like love waiting for the tide to come in
peace beast I am more space than matter
it’s always been the silence between the notes that allowed
Poe to solve paradox of night sky
it is limitation and the past we witness
Maybe I am witness to anti-energy
force that pushes instead of pulls off polka
dances in galactic hay stacks
lucky in love unlucky in fruit encounters
I don’t have to say hello anymore
but I mean it always and instantaneous
I want to be cool bitch
but I’m swarthy and vaguely uncouth on the inside
birthing planets requires a fiery core
tumbling attraction towards bowling ball tabs
vibrating strings in conceit of conflict
I can’t remember the difference anyhow
thank me that the universe is flat and dynamic
I get saddles sores when the omega is low
My daughter universes pop like kombucha
now that the oscillation is adaptive
around the household we believe clean clothes clean planet
I am talking translation not autopsy
what am I going to do before morning
before there is even a morning
no dawn yet no dawn yet nothing
call is before god or call it 13.7 billion years ago
it’s all the same background radiation from here
HELUM

Scientists mistakenly thought it was a metal whose names usually end in “ium”
They named it for the sun Helios
but I knew it was a gas not a metal
and it dwelt in the night
it was heavier than stars
with it there was no horizon
faced with it there was nothing but my profile
imprinting unto itself I claim the bay for the clams
‘cause clams always know what magnetism we’re on
In one stroke the universe became vastly larger
all because a gas cannot be a metal
and I cannot view a horizon
we all know the further away a galaxy is
the faster moves the redshift
I’ve always admired star stretch
constant candle yogis reminding us of dynamic pasts
perhaps in another past I’ve excised this line
but no matter, it’s all in this room with me
vibrating and spinning in miniscule differences that charge everything
Multiverse appeals because it accepts defects
perhaps in the nearest verse a metal is a gas
and the fog is heavy with silver so all I see is horizon
instead of these stacked layers that confound
A mirror beautifully shattered gives texture to the world
Let me ventriloquize — with a bad accent.
What do you want?
Or, as in the title of my new book of poetry, You Can’t Have Everything... Where Would You Put It!
If Poetics is the art & science of making poetry, making a new object, who is doing the making? The framing, the selecting, the choosing?
Is the Reader simply being presupposed in our avant-garde, experimental poetics?
And if we presuppose the Reader, we’re missing out on resources we need for differentiating, for evaluating, or for editing texts.
Which creates anxiety — about what is necessary to be done at a particular time. How do we decide that?
Do we decide on the basis of neo-liberalism’s investments in ‘what’s new’ in poetry?
How to differentiate ‘us’ from the Workshop poets?
Is it on the basis of what is innovative, what is drastic?
And if it’s not innovation, but transformation — then transformation of what?
Or who?
Maybe the anxiety many have expressed over the weekend hints at this — not getting a significant sized audience, do we compensate by clinging to claims about the texts’ autonomous agency, or for the (courageous) position of the innovative writer?
Or to replace the position & experience of a Reader with a big rush toward the canon, the classroom, the validation by institutions (now, including the art world).
(Perhaps like Concrete Poetry’s ‘poetry for export,’ ready for a bigger screen, because not only does it require no translation, it may not require readers at all.)

When we think the question is Writing’s agency, not the Reader’s, we ask: ‘what do I want to complain about’? — what we can write, what we can do, responding to disasters.
What we speak, what we are; displaying a certain sensibility... that’s getting intimate with the mic.
Engaging in ‘verbing’ with quite delightful proliferation; changing language & the conditions of representation; using convention against itself; or repossessing materials & temporalities from other places; bringing in data streams to trouble the rhapsodic & activate inventories...
How does a poetic economy of negativity or constructivist form or the logic of productivity of a genre get to operate by itself?
Are we ‘enacting’ discrepancy or spotlighting what’s wrong?
But for who, if not for what?
Or, are we merely having a conversation with ourselves? Building systems & singing to myself while I do it?
Be careful what you say.
Is ‘echolocation,’ as a biological model or trope for poetry — the ability of animals to locate themselves in the dark—simply where Writing is bouncing off of Language, without a Reader?

Instead, what if we centered our avant-garde Poetics on the Reader? — from Reader outwards.
Thinking about what we produce in relation to the social dominance of Consumption.
If the text is reinvented with each Reader, ask:
what kind of poetry do you like to read?
So, repossessing spaces & relations & articulation, taking back what’s been taken away — is for the Reader.
Or, in a different version of ‘Ontological Pluralism’: many worlds, per person.
With the ‘know-how’ of Language for spectator & performer, often confusing the two, hopefully. Or as ‘poetry animals’ eating our nervous systems.
Where Language use isn’t standing outside; it is also standing within me — a familial connection, not an opportunity for abstract othering.
Putting the potential for concretion on the Reader’s side.
Along with the processual, intransitive, open-ended quality of Knowing.
Not ‘who speaks’ but: Listening is Speaking & torquing a subject.
Who knows? — given our methods of disorientation, of releasing ‘mad affects’ with the smashed-up playfulness of ‘I’ as part of a ‘patareading.’
We are your choice.
And it’s incompletely intimate.
You don’t get it.
‘My’ meanings are not as author, but as a result of editing in order to share ‘sparks’.
Even taking a future anterior focus, in a pedagogical trope about scenes of instruction & extension; but as an informal pedagogy, like a relatively wide-open individualized tutorial.
Not just letting Reading become ‘reception’ & collapsing into institutional critique, classroom, careerism, canon battles, etc.

What if we asked, about so many of the comments: what if we recast the ‘making’ verbs of Poetics & gave them all to the Reader, to a ‘Reader-centered Poetics’?
In English, to create that bastardization of Language which it promises itself to be.
If Languages are like eco systems, if the Text is a vast eco system, it continuously positions both Writer & Reader. Who is going to be the bottom feeder? Who is going to be the predator?

If social antagonisms ‘out there’ typically recur in the antagonisms of poetic practice, how does a Reader register them, or co-sign them?

Or create ‘Value’: based on affect/identification/pleasure, or on instruction/alienation & saying No to certain forms of pleasure.

If ‘estrangement’ is still at the core of what we all do; if estrangement always seems like a good thing: why?

Estrangement isn’t static; it has to be done again & again. Nor is it automatic.

Do your verbs! Or rework your diction, rhetoric, strategy, voice.

To make forms that impede business as usual. And open the possibility of instability, or ‘midrashic antinomianism’:

by who? for who?

If we do think we have to discriminate; if some directions seem more fruitful than others: why not think of ‘the between’ more? — sharing connective tissue with another category.

What is your principle of exclusion? Or, what’s so great about the call to defamiliarize, detourn, irritate, etc. — or placing disturbing language in bodies, in embodied performance or ‘enactments of reciprocal alterity’ or the ‘phatic’ slipping into noise.

Maybe the procedures need to be site-specific — but in relation to a Reader.

As, for instance, the agent of going back to fix something that was broken; of Memory — as a restored building that inherits the ruins of its predecessor.

With performance soliciting rather than ‘enacting’ a viable ‘shiftarama’ of social meaning.

Are we registering disjunctive or micro-temporalities — or are we soliciting Readers’ (complicit or critical) engagement with those temporalities?

If echolocation is coming into contact with an unknown environment, as a ‘textual sonar’ it is bouncing signals off Readers, as Reading & Writing keep adjusting their positions.

And where readerly affect is what activates the political stakes for poetry, its so-called ‘activism of the soul’; its ‘interrogation’ of markers of nation-state, class, ethnicity, gender; its foregrounding or privileging or deployment of ‘radical particularity’; its claims to be fashioning a new public or counter-public sphere.

If neo-liberalism involves capital’s continuing accumulation by dispossession, I don’t think we want to be stuck with a parallel dispossession of the Reader by Autonomous Text or Eccentric Author.
What happens when the Reader becomes the beholder of Beauty in Kant’s Critique of Judgment, the contained & yet limitedly capacitated Reader — as if in a reservation, a controlled space.
Can we help a Reader produce experimental knowledge & not just reproduce cliches?
Can we create a disruption in the transmission that would make us wonder about its conditions of production? (I really can’t explain it... that’s what disjunction is about.)
So if the Poetics of the Reader is a making — e.g., producing a relation to affect — it’s a bigger capacitation.
Or self-management.
And ‘phatic’ (or ‘scat’-ic) management of keeping channels open.
And keeping the future open.
With dopamine-sprayed attention, with the Search Function as a way of Reading — since even single words are in a state of wild fluctuation.
Or with a reframing — maybe related to Kant’s Judgment of the Sublime: with the Sublime as the system of Language — or of Discourse, Gesture, etc. — that isn’t totalizable.
With a process of reflection getting triggered, & not just with ‘data management.’
‘Look to the mountain’; take a broader view.
I do like field trips.
Or Frame Shifts.
Or being reminded that it all could be otherwise.
And that relations & channels which are usually invisible can be made visible, or bruised & multiplied.
Where antagonisms become occasions for self-reflexivity; for the undoing of the contained Reader, as a micro instance of detotalization.

But—it should be obvious — ‘the Reader,’ even if she or he is the focus, needs to be contextualized.
This would parallel the shift from Language to Rhetoric.
Since the individual only exists within a social context.
Readers’ affects make up a social structure.
To be not super interested in phenomenology — since it’s too universalizing.
Don’t assume this Language you care so much about is universal.
And ditto with the Reader.
What us are we?: most likely an ‘elective community’ (or the potential for it) as a new social formation.
Bring it on.

*A collage of notes for the final presentation on the final panel of ‘Rethinking Poetics: the Columbia-Penn Poetics Initiative’ (June 13, 2010).
Keep Uptight

Do Not Relax

Handle With Worry
DANGER

SURREALISM IS ELECTRIC: PUT YOUR TONGUE IN THE SOCKET
VINCENT FARNSWORTH

from POETIC EVENTS HOTLINE

FREE KITE
must move, please adopt
the adorable little thing
so I don’t have to
put it down

THERAPIST
WANTED
for my fear of telephones
please don’t call

FREE FURNITURE
TABLES, CHAIRS
FRIDGE WITH FOOD IN IT
MIRROR WITH
PEOPLE IN IT

IN THE MORNING STRETCH

in the morning stretch glimpse a message:
i would save a life
work flowed words crunched in mouths
led to oh a new lambrusco
treading prague sidewalk barrier reef
strangling bottle dragging it home
where after laps i sense in the other room
flies drowning in the forgotten glass
i go rescue with my finger
lay them carefully on cloth
soft like the wine
there
at least they can dry out
DOWNTRODDEN DOWNLOADED DOWN

a “loner” and a “loser,” FBI stakeout
took him out. his own rod and
home in the comedy. someday comes
the photo with his smile, local page one
hot mile of speculation, could’ve
been healed with neurolinguistics,
dianetics, selected buddhist olios.
a sanctioned and normal-common
american way out: barricaded condo
helicopter loudspeaker come
to the door with a gun
refuse to put it down.

son, I’m calling to say
when I get home I’m going
to punish you.

THE HELP LINE DIDN’T

she still felt like heavy, chipped glass, decorative candy holders
maybe. expensive and only existing in the catalogs. though
someone must know, the photographer. she wasn’t born
deformed, she didn’t have to make constant trips to the doctor.
she wanted to take apart the phone. make it ring more. more
people. less sound of clothes rustling for the bored and lonely.
dry. loud radio that hurt her ears but the sound didn’t seem to
exist. nothing amounted to anything. there were satisfied people
somewhere, unreachable. here were empty husks, eyesight that
only went two inches outward.
MARK TERRILL
IN THE ALBERT CUYPSTRAAT

Gracefully auditioning for my attention in the street in Amsterdam at the Albert Cuyp outdoor market the big herons so contrapuntally out of context stalking boldly on stick-like yellow legs there between the fish stalls soggy cardboard boxes and garbage in anticipation of a fallen fish head or a string of bloody intestines before swooping up over the rooftops and returning to their hungry broods—their breast feathers a hoary garland ruffled in the early morning breeze dark shiny eyes looking out from beyond the last primordial wisdom with airs of stoic avian nobility—and like a rusty boxcar I am shunted through various stations of psychic transmigration in awe of the herons’ bravado and their cool calculated temerity and Darwinian ability to adapt while at the same time fearing for their fate hanging naked in the balance for all to see like van Gogh’s ear outside the bordello just before a drunken Gauguin lopped it off with a clumsy swoosh of his fencing sword and sailed off to Tahiti leaving van Gogh to make up the story about the razor and self-mutilation while Rachel the prostitute took the bloody ear she had been lovingly bestowed with and tossed it in the garbage with an impetuous flick of her fine-boned wrist.

UP ON THE HILL

Up on the hill I’m heading into the post office but first I have to step around this older couple in their eighties or so just on their way out now standing outside the entrance & as I look at them in passing I see that he’s dressed in an old beret & gold-rimmed glasses & corduroy jacket & jeans with both hands gripping the handles of one of those walkers-on-wheels that old folks sometimes have & I glance over at her & see she’s wearing a hat & jacket & white ruffled blouse & a skirt & leaning on a gnarly old wooden cane & together they make a fine picture of elderly dignified sophistication that contrasts sharply with all the farmers & local yokels going in & out of the bakery & the post office & right away I feel a sudden surge of empathy for them & am not even perturbed or bent out of shape because they’re standing there clogging up the entrance & just as I’m stepping around them I see the woman looking up at the man with a weird vacant expression & she rolls her eyes & then shuts them & reaches out with a shriveled trembling liver-spotted hand & grasps one of the handles of his walker-on-wheels apparently having a dizzy spell or a moment of weakness & I’m wondering if she’s about to faint & whether or not I’m going to have to get involved but then she’s just standing there with her eyes shut collecting her composure & gathering her strength before continuing on & in that very moment as I’m passing behind her I look into the man’s face to see how he’s reacting & dealing with the situation & in the few intervening milliseconds that pass I simultaneously see the deeply felt concern that a loving trusted partner has for another in such a situation as well as the obvious annoyance that is stirring in him as he thinks Oh and now she has to go and have one of her spells right here in front of the damned post office but also visible is the disconcerting naked realization of his own helplessness in the situation himself a little unsteady on his feet with both hands grasping the walker &knowingly unable to catch her if she should fall & the way all those different aspects & emotions & thoughts were all being expressed at once in the eyes & furrows & folds of his lined weathered face & suddenly I’m choking up with the realization that that man could be me & that woman could be you & how just last weekend after seeing Zabriskie Point & we went to Vasco da Gama for dinner & you were having trouble with your circulation going all white in the face & I was already considering the possibility of leaving although we’d just snagged the best table in the totally full restaurant & no way did I want to leave & how I was feeling all those same exact things that I was now reading in the old man’s face & how that was inextricably binding
us all together & yet offered no solace whatsoever but rather an ominous taste of all that was yet to come so that finally I had to tear away my gaze from the old man’s face but not without a quick final glance at the woman who was opening her eyes & licking her dried lips with her tongue before steadying herself on her cane & taking the first step forward that would lead the two of them down the sidewalk & into the rest of the day with their faltering but true & inexorable determination.

THE AFTERLIVES

So you live long enough to become a memory in the minds of those who know you and when you die that living memory is your first afterlife and when all those who knew you die you then enter the next afterlife in which no one ever actually knew you but may have heard about you or read about you second-hand from those who did but are now also dead and when finally all those people are dead and no one is alive that knew you personally or even virtually and nothing remains of you as a memory living or otherwise you then enter the final and ultimate afterlife which is very much like the life that you lived before you lived the life that you’re living right now as you read this which is really just one of an infinite number each one following the other forever for a while and sometimes for a very long time.

A POEM FOR PARKING LOTS

We’re pulling into the parking lot in back of the pet store in Itzehoe & over in the corner of the lot is a young man sitting on a curb with a rucksack at his feet drinking a bottle of beer—maybe some homeless guy—or a Polish laborer killing time between odd jobs—& I nose the car into a parking place & out of nowhere you start saying how actually it’s a good thing that we all get old & die & that life eventually comes to an end because as you get older & are faced with the ongoing prospect of your own slow decay & the falling away of friends & loved ones it becomes ever more apparent just what’s actually in store for you & the thought of dying is no longer fraught with fear & grief but something more like a reprieve & even something you could gradually start to look forward to & as we get out of the car I’m thinking hey wow this is pretty heavy & profound for a Wednesday afternoon in Itzehoe picking up a couple of spare reflective collars for the cats but then yeah why not & if not now when? & wasn’t I just thinking the very same thing just the other day? & I say yeah everyone needs something to look forward to & as I’m locking the car & turning toward the back entrance of the pet store I hear you saying that’s a nice little piece of property there & I turn to where you’re looking & see this empty lot wedged between the back lots & gardens of the surrounding buildings & houses & the whole lot is totally overgrown with nettles & blackberries & weeds & ivy which is crawling up the trunks of the trees all totally neglected & forlorn & yet it’s also a perfect picture of nature just left on its own & somehow reassuring in its own weird way & not without a certain morbid charm & suddenly I see how it ties in exactly with what you were just saying—although maybe not even intentionally—as & then even the guy sitting there waiting on the curb seems to be a part of the entire metaphysically charged scenario that I’ve suddenly been thrust into with all these signs & signifiers of time & age & what happens to everyone & everything in the interim & I say yeah it is & we turn & head toward the door of the pet store because it’s autumn now & the days are getting shorter & the cats are running around out there crossing the street in the darkness & besides all this other stuff we’ve still got their safety to think about too.
Yesterday I walked against a bitter wind miles along the coast alone with the gulls. I am living in a house which sits on a jut of land between the river which ebbs and floods under my eye out the east window and the sea which moves and pushes and breaks against the window to the south.

—Charles Olson, Letter to Waldo Frank, March 25, 1940
The shop smelled of old books and brine. Sunlight pressed through a tint of dust on the front window, and the cry of gulls was audible in the poetry section, where I knelt looking for *The Maximus Poems* to replace the photocopied version I owned Prague. Late July, 2009. A month before, my father had retired after almost 40 years as an engineer on an oil tanker. He and my mother joined me on a Sunday drive to Gloucester, Massachusetts, 90 miles up the coast from Plymouth, my hometown, where my parents still live in a brown shingled house overlooking the harbor. I was curious to finally visit the place where the poet Charles Olson had lived, and written most of *The Maximus Poems* between 1957 and his death in 1970. I’d grown up close to the town Olson immortalized in his series of more than three-hundred poems addressing his adopted home, but had never read his work until I moved to Europe.

Walking through the brick and granite city center, it’s easy to imagine the splendor of 19th century Gloucester at the whaling industry’s peak, before over-fishing decimated what had seemed an endless resource. Mansions mark the hill that rises inward from shore, and each has a porch squared around its brick chimney—widow’s walks, where the wives of sea captains could see to horizon and, hopefully, their homecoming husbands.

Closer to the water, the hardtack lives of fisherman, many of them Portuguese immigrants, are still evident in the murky bars and clamshells crushed against asphalt parking lots where iced crates of fish and lobsters are loaded onto 18-wheeled trucks for shipping twice a day. Squat houses with dusty, chain-linked yards border the lots, many of them peopled with bathtub Madonnas: Virgin Mary statues pitched in claw-foot bathtubs.

The name of the bookstore, Dogtown Book Shop, derives from a settlement on the edge of Gloucester, now abandoned. For me, the name conjures dogfish, and Captain John deep sea fishing trips my father piloted out of Plymouth harbor when I was a child. Dogfish, hooked, swim in circles, and will, given time, tangle every line on a fishing boat, making a mate’s life misery. Dogfish are enemies therefore, and deserve the harshest treatment.

“The Gumby,” they called it. Grabbing a caught dogfish by the gills, pressing four fingers and a thumb in, the deckhand would force back the square nose until it snapped. Then he’d stick a lit cigarette into the dogfish’s gaping mouth and throw it overboard. Each time, the dogfish would swim a few small circles, broken nose stuck above water, shudder hard and stop moving.

There wasn’t a single book by Olson on the shelf. The owner of the bookshop, a man with goatee and long, gray hair, an old salt of a man, admitted that a steady stream of customers come in asking after the author of *The Maximus Poems.* The problem is, he explained, most are either scholars who own everything Olson wrote, or young students who can’t afford the rare editions the shop carries. He did, however, have something to show me: he peeled apart two sheets of cardboard, revealing an olive-green, hand-bound, limited edition chapbook printed for a reading Olson gave with Stanley Kunitz at Boston University sometime in the 1950s. 100 dollars. I asked if he could point out some Olson sites nearby. On a blank receipt he drew a rudimentary map to Olson’s Fort Point apartment, just a few blocks away.

**Maximus, to Gloucester**

...as I sit
in a rented house
on Fort Point,
the Cape Ann Fisheries
out one window,
Stage Head looking me
out of the other
in my right eye
(like backwards
of a scene
I saw the other way
for thirty years)
Gloucester can view
those men
who saw her
first...

Charles Olson lived at 28 Fort Point for 13 years, on the top floor of a humble split family apartment. The building is literally on the edge of land, one of the southernmost tips of Gloucester, where the Annisquam River meets the ocean. From his living room, Olson saw fishing boats sliding out to sea in the predawn hours, passing Tenpound Island, a green hump shrugging the tide just

beyond Gloucester harbor. At night, boats return to land
guided by the Eastern Point lighthouse, whose beam
telescopes through Olson’s southern window.

Directly across the river from Olson’s apartment sits
the Gloucester Sea Jacket Marine Paints Manufactory,
housed in a faded red wooden building with white block
letters emblazoned on the side. Down the street, to
Olson’s left as he looked out the window, a shipbuilding
yard: ribs of empty hulls poked the wind. From Olson’s
front steps, I watched the ocean stretching toward
Europe. The city of Gloucester pulled back, inland farther
west. I was thinking of a film clip I’d just seen: Olson
reading a poem from *Maximus* in his kitchen. Poems and
maps thumb tacked to dry wall; the poet’s bear growl
voice resonating as he gesticulated enthusiastically in
horn rimmed glasses and black, bushy eyebrows, sweat
beading on his bald head.

**Maximus to Gloucester, Letter 27 [withheld]**

I come back to the geography of it,
the land falling off to the left
where my father shot his scabby golf
and the rest of us played baseball
into the summer darkness until no flies
could be seen and we came home
to our various piazzas where the women
buzzed
To the left the land fell to the city,
to the right, it fell to the sea...

Affixed to the white brick foundation of Olson’s apartment,
a small bronze plaque emblazoned simply: “Charles
Olson, Poet, 1910-1970.” The plaque was added just
a few years ago, during the filming of “Polis is This:
Charles Olson and the Persistence of Place,” by Henry
Ferrini, whose father, Vincent, was a poet, a close friend
of Olson’s and the original recipient of Maximus’ letters.

Snapping a picture of the plaque, I suddenly noticed a
huge seagull, mottled brown, perched on the peak of the
roof. It gawked down and shuffled its webbed feet. I
couldn’t help but imagine Olson himself, hulking, pale
and bald, keeping watch over his beloved city.

**I, Maximus of Gloucester, To You**

...when even our bird, my roofs,
cannot be heard
when even you, when sound itself is neoned in?
when, on the hill, over the water
where she who was used to sing,
when the water glowed,
black, gold, the tide
outward at evening
when bells came like boats over the oil-slicks, milkweed
hulls
And a man slumped,
attentionless,
against pink shingles
o sea city)

My father worked for nearly 40 years as the chief engineer
on an oil tanker, sailing as far from Massachusetts as
Egypt and Greece before settling into a usual route
between Texas and California. The summer I graduated
college, I sailed with him on *The Brenton Reef* from Port
Arthur, Texas through the Panama Canal, to L.A., and
finally on to San Francisco. Each evening we sat on the
bridge outside the tanker’s steel wheelhouse, nursing
chamomile tea as the sun dunked luminous into the
ocean. Hundreds of miles out to sea, the horizon is a
ring, 360 degrees unbroken. Out there as no place else
you are aware of the curve of earth. Sailors say the sun
flashes green the moment it disappears below water.

Olson worked on a Gloucester fishing boat one summer,
but never took to it; at six-foot-seven, he was far too tall
to be a sea-legged sailor. But he referred to that summer
throughout his life, and always felt an affinity for those
who chose the sea.

Today I’ve been in the bars with my friends the fisher-
men, the skipper Cece Moulton, an old
mastheadsman Walter Burke, Jim Mason, and an old
striker (Gloucester for harpooner) whom we call Long
Ranny—he has two inches on me but he’s been so
stowed in the peak of so many vessels he’s bent like a
cadaverous Atlas.

—Charles Olson, Letter to Waldo Frank, March 25,
1940²
Jody was his name, I think. I remember his Popeye forearms and the constant lump of Skoal in his lower lip. Deckhand on the Captain John fishing boats. Filleting a fresh caught cod for a passenger one trip, he cut with a long, brine-bitten knife the fish’s heart out—pink, somewhat pyramidal, beating—and swallowed it. Then, digging knuckle deep in the fish’s skull, he said all cod over 25 pounds have a pearly stone between their eyes. I see him pulling out lumps of brain and finally, finding nothing, throwing the carcass into the wake, wiping his gristly hands on rip-kneed jeans, and lighting a Marlborough.

A quarter mile off the tip of Fort Point, a pier stands about 15 feet from the water. Jutting out was what looked from the beach like a telephone pole. A dozen teenagers swarmed around the pier, huddling on top, scaling the side or floating in the water below. One at a time they walked the plank to see who could get out farthest, and one at a time they fell to the tide. Balancing and heaving they walked, arms spread, grasping air before slipping, to hang a moment, silhouetted against the sun, and splash into the cobalt tide.

I set out now
in a box upon the sea

The memorial for drowned fishermen lists the names of hundreds of Gloucester men who have been lost at sea since 1623. The current memorial was built long after Olson was shuttled off Fort Point in an ambulance and

3 Olson, The Maximus Poems, 373.
died of liver cancer in a New York City hospital. But the original memorial—where people still gather each summer to drop wreathes into the water—was erected in 1923. A statue: bronze sailor in heavy storm gear leaning into a ship’s spoked steering wheel keeps watch. New names are added each year.

**Maximus, to Gloucester, Sunday, July 19**

...and they stopped before that bad sculpture of a fisherman
- “as if one were to talk to a man’s house, knowing not what gods or heroes are”—not knowing what a fisherman is
- instead of going straight to the Bridge
- and doing no more than—saying no more than in the Carybdises of the
- Cut waters the flowers tear off the wreaths
- the flowers turn
- the character of the sea The sea jumps the fate of the flower The drowned men are undrowned in the eddies...

I’m not sure what I was looking for in Gloucester—a trace of Olson beyond what he left in his books; an anchor perhaps, some insight into the leviathan of his life’s work. Did I find it? Hard to say. Evidence of Charles Olson in Gloucester is limited to a six-inch plaque. But perhaps, ironically, the city is the wrong place to look for this poet so concerned with geography, with polis. Olson attempted, in *The Maximus Poems*, to become the city of Gloucester, to sink so deeply into his location as to become inextricable from it. Olson is Maximus is Gloucester: a man, a position, a point of reference.

Get by the way The Maximus Poems: I live actually on the dot exactly of the i in Point in Fort Point on the cover. I never noticed it until this moment and it felt like news, to tell you. Also, I was raised in a house which is the ear on the g of Stage (Fort) on the back cover, of the same.

—To Joyce Benson, June 14, 1966

“This will be and this has been.”
Roland Barthes

1.
She being “trapped,” she said, on a long ride to a faraway place, lights dim or are blown out, strain of the journey’s not-quite endlessness, the bus is a shipping carton on wheels, the continental road fiercely straight. The woods on either side darken the bus, the pines hardly broken by flashes of light, a stolid endless unrolling zone of black-green. As the light changes, the pines change from shaggy to backdrop flat. This being a very long ride across much of the country, she doesn’t want (always, or now, how did she say it?) to return to that version of home where she is implacably heading. Who does? Where is the zone of the long write, the ride as if in neutral, all anonymous travelers quietly napping, all the vulnerable laid bare, hats pulled down so no one can see in, and music humming into their plugged up ears, as the silver-slushy bus goes down roads that all appear the same. A coolish dusk-hue dimming fast to fade. It was a long journey, yet perhaps not long enough.—

Poetry
accentuates the void.
Should it soften it? How much stark is actually wanted?
Words hang there (meaning here),
mite by matter, “but” by bit,
cannot by canto, etc.

Sentences inside sentences

I am interested
to represent time in words, awkwardly articulated.
time’s passage,
where a little swerve
translates what we have
into what we
(suddenly-abruptly) were.
This has been consistent
from Day One.

2.
Found in a thrift shop, old notebooks. Old date books, other peoples’ agendas, with former appointments scribbled in. A scrapbook with pasted postcards. Where once someone had been. A there. Someone had long ago used the give-aways from an old motel, thinly colored rotogravures they were, to advertise where she or he had stayed, to send this message to a friend, yet about 10 cards spliced and extended in this notebook, so that the image itself was spliced and extended, pasted down, elongated across a collaged page of repetitive rectangles. Sliced up. Ruled down. Unsendable. Unique. Out here, some one had been making something once, and here it is. Or was, but

what artifacts less randomly
survive? That sounded
desperate fast. I didn’t count on feeling that. Yet noting the collective presence of absence is not for everyone.

*It erases “the” specificity of each of us, anti-sentimentally; it over-generalizes, it even paralyzes.*

*It is a flat black wall maybe with a few names.*

3. There is generally a lack of verbs, but not always. There is a discussion of verbs. Again, inconsistent. I looked out at the woods. One could get lost there, all too easily. It was a long walk, neither signposted nor very well blazed. What did I expect? The path is the one that a rich neighbor had cut further and with no particular insight, so with all her money, she blocked the spring, and water, finding its way as it will, has now undermined the path she thought she had controlled. Verb has to be thought through. Agency is all very well and good, power can be exercised, but then there is the land. Its forces. A lost specificity found. The ledger’s incalculable underside declares itself.

On the small trail of the path in the middle of the woods of my time—well... it all seemed reasonably familiar.
Suppose another world where this was changed— suppose I disappear.

4. Tch tch zt, zt, Jetztzeit width, length bias, height. And the tock part of the tick.

“The reader will find that the categories named ‘trivial’ and ‘important’ are inextricably mixed.”

I couldn’t, once upon a longish ago time, tell any difference twixt
those “big hands”
second and minute.
Said to be simple—It wasn’t.

Even in retrospect,
even now,
learning to “tell time”
remains difficult to do.

Tell it what?
For telling time has shifted to
the question of a so-called
“living hand”
piercing upward from
fast beneath the earth
stark beneath the page.

Nothing grand
here finally. A touching
smallness. Punctum.
The future of the past.

5.
The city sparrows zoom around this
corner now, their staging place
that new, well-growing pear.
We planted it.
We watered it.
We cared for it.

The detail
is a spiritual instrument.

6.
All of it (a suggestive rhetoric, untrue)
—the gesture, the space,
the boomerang throw,
the reflection a hundred times
over the piled layers of substantial bone once meat—
produces strange changes of scale.
In the staining there is coloring
in the draining is drawing
in the dripping is fraying.
There was a full body, cooked. Covered with brown gravy and a little extra stew meat. In a big trencher, a flat trough, rectangular shallow pan just long enough for a body, lying in brown meat gravy. Body fully done, as brown as the gravy, just a bit eaten off or into already. Nothing distinguishing—no face, but still this was a real body, lying in gravy stewed with the stew meat. An antique body, a zombie figure. Distinctive, but all changed. Unprepared, the little hungry wanderer comes to here, to face this meat, through the ghost side of the path. Should the hungry wanderer nibble it? She weighed the options. A considered, if reluctant, finding (because she was quite hungry)—eating this was too much. Too much like cannibalism. But not implausible. A choice. Thus one might eat or decide to eat, the avatar of one’s own pure cooked meat.

7.
The words insisted on
    wily mourning, wily pleasure,
    verb! verb! verb! and combination!

Combin—looming. Intoxication.
    Storage in rectangles, shelved or splay and reach,
    dramatizing space behind, in back, beyond.

I dreamed I bought a dress (a dress? a me?)
    marked down forty-odd dollars off—
    $114 to 73.

What’s meant by this? my poem? my life?
    Capricious and sibylline is spent
    such striking number-dredging night.

8.
There you are, you bees, homeless clinging whirring
to the face of the destroyed –the tree was rotten, but and yet perhaps
we can move the chunk of trunk for you
retain the hole wherein is hive
which now you know you hardly want
so changed it is from something that we do not understand
since pesticides assist the murderers, and those up to their wrists
in simple political blood, charged blood, the blood cast forth
were forced to drink
from the bees’ bowl,
to share with bees
a fate,
the rim is busy, twitching, they talking
all about it.

It looked as if they were
a simple buzzing music box
and we could wind that spring
again
whenever it ran down

but found
a deeper wound of what
we only had one symptom of
and nothing
more of this was known.

9.
...how cool and lovely.

Time, the strangest thing that’s going on,
the looping thing that happens in syntax,
subjunctively, conditionally, articulately
but never to return organically.

That fact means everything to us,
eventually being startling:
our own drowning.
Our dissolution.

The random! fallen into reality! just this way! look at it. A cabaret. What have I done—it’s yet again! More electronic dust? More phoneme pulse? How much information do you need in the game of information? How many proportionate subsets of interchange might be suggested? Can the tiniest points be marked? I will reconstruct them, sized to the moment, while the evanescent loft of otherness surges with a cresting flash-flood, into this very narrow, inescapable spot.

10.
Why are elegies mainly
so busy, fussy-gussy like an over-fancy gown?
Figures coming and going, multiple
deities, songs, leaves, creatures’
account books, nymphs, other random,
mythological and allusive stuff,
often wordy, chock-a-block
with names, parades, and
ceremonies, with elongating lists,
syntaxes that spend time looping
around in all plausible directions
while nonetheless
traveling from this backwards
backwoods to forward?

Duh. Rhetorical questions.
11.
It was a perfectly clear night
over the lake.
Perfect sight for sky.
The grey-ish smudge
began, a little dirty
slowness. 21:30.

Soon, but not that soon,
because this was, as always,
boring in its stateliness,
the curved shadow, brownish,
seeped, tidal, arching
from the bottom of the moon.

At about one half, you,
seeing the red edge
(light-red, coral, yet
translucent) spread,
the coral-reddish color thickening,
could call it bloody.

The moon became heavy—
no dime-thin silver disk, this!—
it was green, solid, globular, clear.
Hanging, fully spherical, there.
Thus was, and is.
Will be.

Past midnight, logy,
dropping off suddenly,
I didn’t see the waxing lunar shore.
It was enough to prove one
axiom of sidereal time.
I could not take many more.

February 2007-July 2010

Notes to Draft 103: Punctum. The concept of the “punctum” derives from Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida; the epigraph is from p. 96. Gray’s “Elegy” lies somewhere behind the generation of this poem. The prose of section 1, with thanks to Erín Moure. The citation beginning “The reader will find…” is from student Donovan Tann. “The living hand” is, of course, Keats. The eclipse occurred in early 2007, over Lake Como. This draft is on the “line of eight.”
BRIAN KIM STEPHANS
FOR MY OLIVETTI

Why a machine
without memory? an extension
of man? made of
pulled teeth,
retired hobbyists, parts
of a discarded
oil tank, katydid
wings, surplus
lancets,
and the controversy over foie gras?
Only a way
to begin, my
friend—nails
in the sandbox—play “uncluttered
with the commonness
of speed” (how’s that
for poetics haiku manifesto?)—William
Morris
mending coils
in a pair of ripped, button-fly jeans.
OY! TOY

So this is the song the sense blows, sailor, huh? So sick of making fun of you, and finding in my sex earrings, it’s plain as torts—*they’re watching you* telling the re-felling, decades on on the Cosby show (such high living) it takes me to know you care about—decades after the ploy was on. But stand apart like a Band Apar—that’s Anna K.’s skirts you’re inhaling on sofa ‘twixt Bibulous and Clyde Pate (she’s hot like a minaret), the Grinning Man meming this serenely as history charnel (even screening us, eeling in cuffs in these odds odds).
VOYAGER

If the goal is to be terrifyingly free, then
why the rhetoric of haircuts, moods, and oil prices?
—let’s be Classicists. Most of that shit is free
since nobody, in fact, reads it.
Let’s be free, and forgotten
on a vegetable coast where Eno is “passing out numbers,”
where no one is berated
for a lack of proper knowledge
about anything, since, Vizsla,
there is nothing left to know—but

the pulse of your hothouse breath on my neck,
your paw a claw paperweight
on my arm—you look at me,
and I wouldn’t exchange that sourpuss for anything, not
Jackson Pollack’s “Number 6,” or a human.
You whimper, and run off (you have to take a pee).
I let you go, since you are, after all,
free, and like all dogs of your species,
for you, running away is prelude to years of delinquent alimony, so
you do—you are free. But I never got to tell you

how much I loved you:

the sky tepid—purple and tangerine—my skin
taut as a tablecloth—the readiness
of the wind to upset our thinking—
stuff spread about me like so much maligned trout—
which I capture on videotape
—I send it to you
buried under the sand in your own inscrutable consequence.
SANDRA DOLLER
EGGPHRASIS

eggs
eggs
baby
legs space chair and
eggs
a communicator
in the center of the space chair
clear chair
eggs eggs
eggs are grey
eggs are grey the legs of the chair silver chromatic hoary
eggs are legs
there is no dog in this picture
there is no university
there
eggs
there there
eggs
space chair could hold a person even
eggs
hold a person look like persons
in the absence of eggs
missing the eggs that once
were legs
left behind the chair molds a behind
in the dream there was a cutie
from an egg

Note: “Eggphrasis” is from Sarah Hobbs’ Untitled (eggs) chromogenic print, 48 x 60 inches, 2004 (part of her 2006 show at Hollins University).
ARLO QUINT
plastic skull deluxe

bent scalpel subgenre
heaving toward wealth
horrors of typical bullshit
Thanksgiving ninja balloon
speaks for me today
tomorrow however
standard subspace
visiting poet thing

stretching out on various detail ranch
the notebook has a notebook etc.

structure and function
form the pretense
whatever working
continues the way

glamorous nightly stealth

elusive keepers rain problems
unmade shifts at the helm
all star traveling light sleep
creates space imagines life
against the variance of Y

luminous stretch of reflex
inland murmur double loss
clear field power lines
drone craft distance learner
unformed under strategic high

superior to fate delivering a syllable
a door just opened on the street—
when the late sublation twirls free
a hand for outlasting dark ages
continual defects

Fifi prefers the rubber Wall Street Journal while failing to keep the opening number in mind
failing to come up with an image for mixed emotions while preferences are set to The Crystal Lithium
go ahead and try being happy to be alive now move forward with the plan for some minor domination
ask for an order to reveal itself in everything only to be synchronized in perfect wave response
receive preferential time-warp conditions then fail to materialize then plan for the city then go forward then ask only to be remembered while coming up with an image for air

the floral high ground

as it turns out we’re mostly space the gardenia curry is excellent not even little hell broke free
great big tree house in the sky
waiting so paint rock portrait driftwood spatula art in the basket by the sink
the troubles they go to the little elves in the forest the very instant passed over the methods non-standard the buildings unreal
Bought an apple
walked through
Eixample dusk
crowded sidewalks
bright lights glowed
from shops, but
didn’t stop, seemed
so drab and lifeless

City, though, had
energy welled
from sidewalks
portals, lofty
iron gratework

Continued to
Fundacio Antoni Tapis
leering sculpture

*fin de siecle*
face to torn
trousers fronting
stretcher tongue
blown out

Walked back
distant from city
saw things
but could have
ignored them
car honk incessant
attracts crowd
his desire
wanted to call
attention to himself
everyone
found that natural
autopia

tubes of ribbing persistent analog to desertion talented gymnasts
swede inkling forego linking lawn sprinkler didact supposed dumb
DISTANT ALEMBICS

Just catch little shut-eye. 
Can you see the poem forming? 
A slight spray of semen. 
Lie down under an oak.

Caught the sunlight right. 
Perfect day for driving. 
A hollow holds the trees. 
Crossed nook in blends.

Baby crying near the pool. 
Car starts up, pulls away. 
Timed cries grows nearer. 
Leaves fill up the flute.
DENVER

that’s outside it’s not a hallway
now we’re happy inside this La Quinta
that’s how the rhyme goes:
now we’re talking

outside the big city
the ballpark lit up at night
highway’s endless hustle
trains lumbering through downtown

city where great writers
ground down dirt and lay
tipped mirror tells the story
tall and beveled but precarious
“Savage thought,” in Claude Lévi-Strauss’s once familiar dictum, “can be defined as analogical thought.” Analogical because inhering in a grammar of to, with, between—hence a predilection for, and dependence upon, tropes of similarity, parallelism, imitation, resemblance, and all forms of correspondence or, to give it its proper etymological inflection, proportion. It is on such a basis that the complex totemic structures which fascinated Lévi-Strauss are said to have evolved: a radicalization of analogy to the point of a direct causation between things otherwise arbitrary in their remoteness—mediated, somewhat magically, by what Lévi-Strauss called the Totemic Operator. Analogy—foundational for the operations of logic and reason—here tends to perversity, a paranoiac method that inflates and generalises itself into an un-reason (an ideology). The demon of analogy is thus to the “savage mind,” what the Cartesian theatre is to the rationalist mind, each to some extent a reflection and distortion of the other.

In her 2001 book, Le coefficient d’échec, Marseillaise poet Véronique Vassiliou exploits Lévi-Strauss’s double analogy between “savage thought” and “analogical
thought” by way of a system of propositions about “la pratique de la pensée sauvage.” The book—an investigation into the nature of both “la pensée sauvage” and La Pensée sauvage—adopts the mannerisms of a forensic anthropology. Organised into “carnets,” “listes,” “lettres,” “images,” Le coefficient d’échec proceeds—via documentary observation, genealogy, taxonomy, transcription and so on—towards an exposition on method, which in turn deconstructs itself, allowing the constituent ambiguities at work in Lévi-Strauss’s anthropology to generalize themselves into a poetics: a poetics at the limits of analogy. For the most part, the propositional form Vassiliou’s writing adopts achieves its effect by accumulation and exhaustion, but the paradox of the situation exposes itself from the outset—in the relationship between analogy (as trope), on the one hand, and the analogical (as a mode of thinking), on the other.

If the mind of every investigator harbours a secret “demon,” so too the mind of every anthropologist (or rationalist) harbours a savagery (or un sauvage blessé: “Un sauvage blessé est un sauvage qui a oublié que le monde n’est pas peuplé que de sauvages” [30]). This parallelism sets in train a type of analogical spiral, from Vassiliou’s early observation that “Les sauvages pratiquent la collection” (10) to the formulation “Les sauvages aiment la pensée. La pensée est sauvage” (63). The work of collection, or “totemic classification,”3 includes, as we come to see, collections of or about thought (pensée) itself (the book is everywhere punctuated by lists, above all of syllogisms)—the whole process at work in Le coefficient d’échec is reflexive. This reflexivity extends to all levels of Vassiliou’s construction, from the more schematic engagements with Lévi-Strauss and rational discourse in general, to the tropological foundations of such discourse (the taxonomies of rhetoric).

If Le coefficient d’échec bears the appearance of an orchestrated paradox, it is no less an examination of the status and nature of paradox itself, in thought. There are echoes of Bertram Russell’s attempts upon a set-theoretical exclusion of paradox—between types and classes (here, of propositions, clues, artefacts, linguistic objects). Virtually every “notebook” (carnet) begins with the formula “Les sauvages + [verb] + [noun],” or a variation thereon; while within each “notebook,” initial propositions are subjected to permutational stresses by way of a battery of rhetorical manoeuvres: chiasmus, anagram, antanaclasis, etc.4 One example, from Carnet 16:

Les sauvages s’engagent. / N’est sauvage que celui s’engage. / L’engagement est nécessaire à l’état sauvage. / Le sauvage s’engage souvent dans des voies sans issue. L’engagement du sauvage est aussi aveuglement. / Le sauvage peut s’engager sans s’engager dans une voie. Le sauvage s’engage seulement. Dans ce cas-là, le sauvage n’est qu’engagé… (50)

Elsewhere, lists of pseudo-random details accumulate (by class, by type):

les boulanger/ les jardiniers/ les bouchers/ les maçons
/ les mères de famille/ les pères de famille/ les agriculteurs/ les couturiers/ les voisins/ les Italiens/ les Américains/ les Français/ les Cubans/ les Espagnols/ les Allemands/ les poètes (plus rarement)/ les bricoleurs/ les pêcheurs… (39)

11 tickets de caisse/ 16 coupons de transport/ 1 récapitulatif/ 1 Reçu passager/ 6 cartes d’accès à bord/ 1 billet de transport bus/bateau/ 3 étiquettes pour bagages/ 4 billets de bateaux/ 1 pochette de transport des billets de transport/ 19 cartes postales/ 1 programme de la fête de la maison de la littérature/ 7 prospectus publicitaires et dépliants… (41)

lien/ attache/ brou de noix/ carrée/ cubique/ prolongement/ carotte/ salsifis/ topinambour/ pli couché puis étranglé/ élément irréductible… (55)

It is possible to say that Le coefficient d’échec tracks the

1 Véronique Vassiliou, Le coefficient d’échec (Montigny: Voix éditions, 2001) 65.
2 In La Pensée Sauvage (1964), Lévi-Strauss rightly observes that the “opposition between nature and culture, ... seems today to offer a value which is above all methodological.” (See below.)
3 The particular logic of totemism reveals, for Lévi-Strauss, a pervasively analogical but also discursive relation between individual and collective epistemologies, so as to describe systems of transformation whose “classificatory schemes ... allow the natural and social universe to be grasped as an organised whole.” Claude Lévi-Strauss, The Savage Mind (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1968) 135.
movement of such elements, whose multiple “singularity” causes the totemic/taxonomic logics of Lévi-Strauss to deviate from analogy to metaphor (pensée [est] sauvage). Indeed, this tactic of enlisting éléments irréductibles is common to almost all of Vassiliou’s writings, for example Appellation Contrôlée (Marseille: Fidel Anthelme X, 2001) which includes twenty seven transcriptions of product labels, and Seuils (Corbières: Harpo &, 2000) which reproduces the “texts” of thirty real estate agents’ descriptions of apartment interiors, whose corresponding “titles” are listed only at the back of the book, in an “index”; titles such as “Les sauvages aiment les paysage” (5), “Et la nature sauvage et cultivée” (6), “Les sauvages aiment les seuils” (16), “Les sauvages sont sauvages” (30), etc. In each case, the indexical simulacrum itself becomes the irreducible element—the mechanics of pointing which henceforth “describes” the objectless vector of a poiēsis.

The irreducible element, being that which can neither be summarised nor paraphrased, exacerbates the production of linguistic simulacra in the compulsion to determine that (not what) it is LIKE. This inflationary movement exposes a radical arbitrariness at the heart of analogy: contexts randomise, proliferate into extreme generality (Lévi-Strauss’s totemic/cosmic systems of micro-macro affiliation), spawning equations of open-ended variability, \( S = P \), where \( S \) and \( P \) can be any two terms whatsoever. Analogy, as Roland Barthes says, “goes wild [sauvage] because it is radically exploited, carried to the point where it destroys itself as analogy: comparison becomes metaphor.”\(^5\) And yet, at the same time, as Vassiliou asserts “La souvenir de la pensée sauvage n’est pas la pensée sauvage.” These two orders of signification, of rememoration, remain irreconcilable, \( S \neq P \) (souvenir \( \neq \) pensée), and just as analogy destroys itself in the urge towards its own facticity—from the AS to the IS—so too metaphor, balanced upon the aporia of simultaneity or self-identity (les sauvages sont sauvage), deviates into analogy—from the IS to the AS. This process repeats by détournement (not dialectics): “the metaphor turns on itself, but according to a centrifugal movement: the backwash of meaning never stops.”\(^6\) Ana-logs becomes poiēsis.

Totem? Objet de rituals? ... Ainsi les sauvages sont aujourd’hui une tribu sans limites géographiques, sans totem, avec des rituels dont l’objet serait une divinité qui aurait existé, qui aurait disparu et que tout porte à croire qu’ils cherchent. (23)

This ritual élément irréductible, shrouded in its own myth, nevertheless presupposed an analogue, some thing which once existed (even if only by negation), whose origin and original meaning is now lost, unattestable, remote—absorbed into the singularity of the élément irréductible—thereby achieving a certain exemplary status, a certain divinity, we might say, a certain omnipresence, by virtue of the fact that it is, in one sense or another, sought for. The logos of logos, for example, by which, as Barthes says, “meaning is diverted towards another meaning, somehow cast beyond itself (this is, etymologically, what the word metaphor means).”\(^7\) Hence metaphor (too) détournes itself, becomes, as it were, the contrary of a denotation, its indeterminacy giving impetus to a type of secular transcendentalism. The trope of equivalence remains caught up in the momentum of deferral which causes it to constantly spiral back upon itself until we (the purported agents of this hermeneutics) are no longer even able to assert what it is that is being searched for (“observer les pensées est un exercice difficile” [64]). And it is precisely between the horns of this dilemma (one common to anthropology and philosophy) that Vassiliou situates—always playfully, always with a “measure” of savage humour—the “defining trait” of analogical thought:

Les sauvages sont seuls à mettre en pratique le penser sauvage de la pensée.

C’est le penser sauvage de la pensée. C’est la pensée sauvage en pensée.

C’est la pratique de la pensée sauvage. (65)

The remainder of Le coefficient d’échec is made up of


short manifestos, notes and a “Post-propos,” containing a brief genealogy of Vassiliou’s own writings (notebooks) on the subject of “savages.” Two items are of particular interest. The first, “Notes d’Angèle en marge des carnets” (67), which contains an exposition on a certain “ELLe” (“sauvage et libre”); the second, “Transcription de l’enregistrement” (73), addressed to “G.G.,” containing a permutational series on the word “poème” (which echoes and expands from a similar series in the word “pomme” in an earlier published work-in-progress entitled N.O. le détournement).\(^8\) Both inform specific concerns of the author in her own pursuit of a poetics of “la pensée sauvage,” mediated by the figure (and work) of the artist Gérard Gasiorowski (“G.G.”).

2. By choice an increasingly solitary and marginal figure during his life (he died in Lyon, 19 August, 1986), Gasiorowski remains virtually unknown outside France. Abandoning an early preference for hyperrealism, his work after 1970 is described as constituting a type of “pictorial suicide”—an explicit rejection of any mimetic “equation” and, at the same time, a “critique of the Western pictorial tradition and the art market.” He founded a quasi-fictitious institution—AWK: the Académie Worosis Kiga (an anagram of “Gasiorowski”)—for the purpose of staging attacks on the culture industry at large. A series of exhibitions in the early 1980s deployed a bogus “ naïve” primitivism in a gesture that can be read as a critique of the corporate fetishisation at that time of such “neo-expressionist” figures as Georg Baselitz and Julian Schnabel. These exhibitions included groups of paintings, drawings, and sculptures composed of excrement and organic matter, purportedly by “Kiga the Indian” (the letters K-I-G-A comprising the first and last syllables of Gasiorowski’s name), and placed within a pseudo-anthropological framework evocative of Lévi-Strauss and others in which the system of binaries predominates (civilisation/nature, rational/savage, advanced/primitive, symbolic/totemic, technē/physis, and so on and so forth).

From a level of linguistic “primitivism” (“Kiga” as a type of particulate substance of “Gasiorowski”) to a generalised schematic of analogical reductions (the “primitivism” inherent in the whole “system of values” underwriting the commodification of culture etc.), Gasiorowski’s AWK installations appropriate a totemic logic which is already that of an anthropological system. The availability of this system to such appropriation or détournement is already implied in Lévi-Strauss’s own observations about the Totemic Operator (a quasi-autonomous agency analogous, in effect, to the situation of the field anthropologist) as a “conceptual apparatus which filters unity through multiplicity, multiplicity through unity; diversity through identity, identity through diversity.”\(^9\) Indeed, what announces itself here as a system comes to resemble nothing so much as a methodology, in which the logic of the Totemic Operator avails itself of a certain rationalisation, or “structuralism,” and in which both Gasiorowski and Vassiliou recognise a critical poetics—one which détournes. Structure here is always a matrix—but not only is it generative of modes of systematisation, but of modes of signification. Its entire “rationale” is that of a poiesis, of a poetics in its fullest sense.

Starting from a binary opposition, which affords the simplest possible example of a system, this construction proceeds by the aggregation, at each end of its two poles, of new terms, chosen because they stand in relations of opposition, correlation, or analogy to it. It does not follow, however, from this that the relations in question have to be homogenous. Each “local logic” exists in its own right. It consists in the intelligibility of relations between two immediately associated terms and this is not necessarily of the same type for every link in the semantic chain.\(^10\)

Originally conceived as a screenplay on the life/death of Gasiorowski, Vassiliou’s long poem sequence, N.O. le détournement, develops the idea of “Kiga the Indian” into the feminised object (ELLE) of a type of poetic anthropology, exploring a number of tropes at work in Gasiorowski’s project—the exoticisation of the feminine (in a male-dominated art industry), the cult of authenticity (primitivism, expressionism), and the reification of art as a form of commodity totemism (à la Baudrillard’s “system

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of objects”). For Vassiliou, substituting “poetry” for “painting,” the question that presents itself is what do we seek when we seek the “essence” of poetry? And as with Lévi-Strauss’s foundational distinctions in the elaboration of a structural anthropology, Vassiliou contends that any such question always points us to an underlying “pensée sauvage”—not as the “primitive” form of a poetics, but as the reification of poetry itself (“C’est une ENTRÉE EN MATIÈRE” [22]). Hence the anthropological “turn” of Lévi-Strauss and its observation-paradox become the locus of a détournement...

The first publication of N.O. in booklet-form (1998) foregrounded the problematics of the anthropological method (“ENQUÊTE”) in both its structural arrangement—as an investigatory procès and récit, commencing with the short entry (it in fact corresponds to section 40 of the final sequence): L’histoire ne peut se dénouer. / “Entrer en rupture.” / INDICE ÉNIGMATIQUE—and its subsequent depiction of “artefactual evidence,” as (at various points) énigmatique, troublé, perdu, mauvais… etc. In place of a table of contents there is instead a list of Énigmes—which is to say “indices” (clues, items, exhibits, evidence) of the text’s missing parts, among which an “index.” An actual index, however, is included, printed on page 35, which—in addition to entries for “indice” and “indices”—provides a seemingly arbitrary list of items, many of which appear in the book only once: Arbre, Arum, Assiette, Avion, Avions, Azalée, etc.

Indeed, the enigmatic character of all indexicality is at the very heart of Vassiliou’s project. And just as the play on the meaning of “indice” doubles the function of the list (index) and the object-status of what it presumably points to, or thereby makes evident (accumulation as a means of lending weight to bare facts; as a proxy argument), so too the presumed object itself is “doubled” (ambiguated) in the figure of ELLE (analogue? to Gasiorowski’s Kiga). ELLE, capitalised, a reflection effect (EL-LE), stands as a type of universal signifier of the anthropo-poetic “object.” Like Nietzsche’s “woman,” ELLE seduces, “averts truth—the philosopher. She bestows the idea. And the idea withdraws, becomes transcendent, inaccessible, seductive. It beckons from afar. Its veils float in the distance.”

ELLE est toujours déplacée. Décalée. En marge…” (15). It is precisely in the figure of ELLE that analogy goes astray, exceeds itself; it metaphorises itself in the figure of ELLE itself/herself. The phantasm of a “truth in nature” (the feminine primitive) shifts from being a simple object of anthropo-philosophical investigation and generalises itself/herself in the very status of the object: “INDICE (ELLE).” In short, this “ELLE” invests the entire grammar of indexicality upon which the evidentiary system is founded, no longer merely as a type of enigmatic object, but as the very “matrix.”

Like Gasiorowski’s “primitive” Kiga paintings, Vassiliou’s investigation into the pensée sauvage of poetic language troubles not only distinctions pertaining to facticity (to the very status of the fact), but also to those aspects of “figure” and “ground” which anthropology and philosophy are obliged to adhere to in order to maintain their particular discursive contours, at a remove from their respective objects (hence for Nietzsche, the “feminine” signifies a type of philosophical death; she, truth, seduces (supposedly) because “promising” oblivion, the “slumber of reason”: “indices of an order of existence,” to paraphrase Merleau-Ponty, about which we cannot think). It also troubles the distinction between anthropo-philosophical “knowledge” and poetic “knowledge.” From the beginning, N.O. engages with the ambiguities that must arise within any form of critical discourse that seeks to locate, outside itself, a type of coordinate object. The AS of analogy is always (and not by exception) compelled towards the IS of metaphor: the discourse of reason is thus implicated in its so-called object, which in turn is “discursive” (sauvage?). ELLE is thus both “indice” and “histoire” (object and [subjective; “sujet écarté”] narrative, so to speak), just as Gasiorowski’s “primitivist” paintings are themselves the “prima natura” (excrement and organic matter) in which the alchemical mindset of Western metaphysics has more often than not tended to seek its truths (even if only by negation). “C’est dans la terre qu’il faut plonger les mains. Dans la terre brassée. Et s’encrasser les ongles” (21).

N.O., as Vassiliou writes, “c’est no, c’est le refus, c’est
ce qui ne se résigne pas, ce qui lutte et ce qui cherche,
c’est la fuite, c’est la morte et ce qui meurt, c’est la
marge encore, et ce qui s’y joue” (28). Series or system
of investigations, of clues, indices, no longer pointing but
articulating, constituting the locus in quo; the “scene of
the event”; the détournements and evasions of ART, of
POETRY, of LANGUAGE—metastasised in the “figure” of
Gérard Gasiorowski’s death... (“G.G. meurt à Lyon d’un
infarctus. L’enterrement a lieu dans un petit village des
A., en présence seulement de quelques intimes qui on pu
être prévenues. Sa mère fera revenir le corps pour qu’il
soit enterré à S.-J.-du-S.” [32]). Where does this all lead
us?

I want to propose that Vassiliou’s *N.O.*, “like”
Gasiorowski’s paintings, is NOT the deduction of a
text in which a concept appears or can be retrieved
simply by placing one’s faith in certain conventions of
“reason.” There is a particular difficulty we are required
to experience, foremost of which is in determining—in
fact—how to go about reasoning, deducing, reading.
Nothing is “merely” critiqued, nor is any argument simply
rehearsed or re-elaborated. Insofar as we may speak
of artefacts, these are not given objects, self-evident
and so forth, but things made. If there is a rapport
between poetry and philosophy, or between poetry and
anthropology, it is by means of a generalized poiēsis—in
the generative tensions “brought-forth” by a language,
a syntax, a general textual arrangement that demands
thinking; that calls reason into being through a proto-
typical act of “writing” that verges upon the impossible.

3. But what is this impossibility? Firstly, it is the
impossible distanciation of analogical thought itself, of
the spiral into metaphor, of the recursivity of the “object”
under inquiry. “Où est la vérité?” “La VÉRITÉ est dans la
quête” (17). But what is this quest? This inquest? This
in-quest? Mouvement circulaire et répétitif... it (the in-
quest) terminates only in the inauguration of its own
process. “Conclusions de l’enquête: // Je continue de
chercher. Comme lui. Il n’y a qu’à travailler” (34). This
work, this writing, is both open-ended (so to speak) and
radically finite. The serial structure of *N.O.*, framed in 61
parts (is it an accident that this is a prime number?)—
each part “divided” into three, delineating the histoire
of this in-quest—exaggerates the inductive character of

an empiricism directed at a “truth” that evades inquiry,
definition, summation (“la texture imaginaire du réel,”
as Merleau-Ponty says).12 Such (non-) truth is thus
“factored” into the work itself as détournement.

Insofar as Vassiliou’s writing resists the de-suturing
of philosophy (or anthropology) from the poetic, it
demands that we relinquish any claims to immediate
intelligibility—of something subtractable from language;
a “pensée sauvage” demonstrable to the point of being
demonstrative. A certain “primitivism” is at work here,
not in the embellishment of an aesthetic ideology, but
in the construction of a critical poetics; the step away
from an aesthetics of the consciousness of the self,
as Althusser puts it in his essay on Brecht, along with
its “classical derivations: the rules of unity.”13 Neither
expressionism nor formalism, the poem “as such” is a
type of pensée sauvage...

CODA

In the final section of *N.O.* (1998), a certain anagrammatical
play between POEM and POMME invites analogy between
the work of poiēsis and the act of rumination. ELLE,
archetypal woman (ELLE mirrors the palindromic EVE),
returns (through circularity and repetition) to the tree of
Eden, primal scene of the “fall of man,” the invention
of reason (and its contrary [as below, a tourte is also a
dumbo]), and the “birth” of anthropology:

Je mange des pommes. Des pommes jaunes. J’en mange
L’une après l’autre. J’attaque leur rondeur et je les ré-
duis avec mes dents, avec ma bouche. Je prépare aussi
les pommes. Je les épluche et les fais cuire. Les pom-
mes que je fais cuire sont celles des pauvres. Alors je les
mange, informes, laminées. Les pommes deviennent ma
merde. Et de ma merde, je fais des tourtes.

We have reached that point in which the raw and the
cooked coincide, it is left to mange des pommes, to
sublimate in reverse, from poetry to materia prima; once
more the metaphor turns on itself in this peristaltic centri-
fugal movement: “the backwash of meaning,” as Barthes
says (again), “never stops.”

13 Louis Althusser, “Notes sur un théâtre matérieliste,” *Esprit* 30.12 (December
1962).
I maintain the stage is a tangible, physical place that needs to be filled & it ought to be allowed to speak its own concrete language.

—Antonin Artaud, “Production and Metaphysics,” *The Theatre and its Double*

“Even before looking, before seeing … They grab the price list and scrutinise it. Only then do they cast a glance at one or two canvases. Then they return to the catalogues, make enquiries with the dealer about the artist’s development and, finally, go and take a bit of a closer look at what’s on show.”

ELEVENTH CLUE (GESTURES)

“...the waki, the one who observes and recounts, who doesn’t perform, who takes no part in the story, who remains in the margin.

Another Clue

N.O. is nihil obstat, that which permits whatever is permissible, which authorises and prevents, the frame and its limits, the constraint. That which is before being imprinted, before being given to be read.
“Her body drags itself along, unravels. Narrow haunches, flat stomach, the body slight and outstretched. The face expressionless. Her body stretches out on a bed roll. It leans forward completely blank. What remains of speech? Its presence pervades our space. It slips between us. Her stomach rioting against me.”

**YET ANOTHER CLUE. HERE, THE INTRIGUE FORMS A LOOP**

“I am following in her path. Her traces. It’s HER I’m pursuing, who I’m tracking. It’s HER I want and who shies away. I’ll have her even if I have to die for it.”

**ABSENCE OF CLUES**

Account rendered: the drama comes to the surface. It seems that he has disappeared. Is he in the process of dying?
Yesterday, Jacques came. He was wearing a grey hat.

NEW CLUE: THE HAT

“I mechanically repeated the illustrations from an old dictionary:
wagtail, sallon car, cement mixer, biceps, doe, bicorne, connecting rods, Bigouden, hoist, bagpipes, biplane, bison, bollard, badger, blazon, buckwheat, block diagram, boa, bobbin, bobsleigh, beef, bogie, antlers, gear box, boletus, bombard, bombyx, writing desk, davit, billygoat, mouth, buoy, bougainvillaea, birch, bulldog, cannonball, ibex, bumblebee, Bourguignotte, hamper, compass, bottle, wallstone, buttercup.

IMPOTENCES.”

THE CLUES DISAPPEAR
Yesterday, Jacques came. He was wearing a grey hat.

She was a savage. SHE killed the professor in revolt, “Wednesday 2 September 1981, at about 10:30 AM.” There had therefore been a murder. Who is dead?

Hands in shit. I squelch about up to the forearms, I plunge my fingers into it, I impregnate my skin with it. I can’t smell anything anymore. I can’t hear anything anymore. My nose, my mouth, my arse, it’s all one. I knead and I engender. From my shit, I make a body. I fabricate, I confect. In this way I round out, mould the figure. I season jubilantly. Olive oil, mint, oregano, thyme, honey. I’m alone, which is good. I’m poor, too, which is necessary.”

A GOOD CLUE

N.O. meaning Nô, that is a basin. Perhaps it was a lake. It’s shallow, barely encrusted. Hollowed out by diluvian rains, and then by more rain, and still more. We no longer know when, in Sudan. It’s still the earth and these are its hollow, inscribed, empty, female forms.

“Bow before entering.”

FORTY-SECOND CLUE
What could be the meaning of this strange list? Why such a list? Not to forget to note that: the list was beside a tape recorder with a cassette in it.

.............................
The list:

PEEMMO
MOPEM
EOPEMM
OEPMEM
MPEOME
PMEOME
EMPMMO
MOPME
POMEEM
MPOMME
PMEOME
OMMPE
MOMPE
PEEMOM
MPOEM
OEMPM
EOPMM

“I am the discarded subject.”

CLUE WORTH NOTING

“Useful things are necessary to me. Shovel, pickaxe, spoon, bucket, broom, table, chair, armchair, glass, plate. Both to use and to look at. When it comes down to it. While SHE is naked and filthy, devoid, rid of all accoutrements.”

CLUE

N.O. stands for Nord-Ouest (not North-South, North-West), it stands for orientation, geography, the earth. Not for the light of the South, which tears everything apart, but a pale light which leaves all the colours untouched.
POSTSCRIPT
This text was begun at the request of a friend who was planning to make a film about the painter Gérard Gasiorowski. I was supposed to write the dialogue for it. This is how I came to discover Gasiorowski’s proteiform work. His fantastic quest for Painting and its personification as Kiga the Indian, Gasiorowski’s counterpart.

Little by little, this quest for Painting became mine. I took hold of it as a means of finding my own way towards Poetry. I assigned myself a double role, as an observer of the pictorial and fictionalised journey of a painter, and as an accomplice. On the one hand an investigator, and on the other a thief: I was the author of a détournement and of a pillage.

I deviated from the initial idea and drew out the story of the painter. It all served to benefit me and to benefit my own inquest. Since I was setting myself in pursuit of Poetry. An anonymous inquisitor.

The dialogues for the film became the investigator’s notebook, combining personal notes, observations, reflections, questions, juxtaposed with the body of accumulated evidence, clues: the remarks (which are therefore placed within quotation marks). Entirely invented. The ex-dialogues of the film. Some remarks from it are included and some aren’t (intentional). Sometimes restituted, taken note of. The result of a fictional inquiry. These taking the place of photographs (the investigator takes photos). The titles given to the clues thus becoming title cards (one exposes the clues so as to put them in order). Their illogical succession becoming the deployment of the enigma in advance of its resolution. Absent. When the accumulation of clues don’t make sufficient sense for designating a guilty party. Were they to make sense.

What is the object of the inquest? It’s troubling. Is it poetry?
Who is dead? What is it that’s dead?
A matter then of a savage act (cutting up the work of a painter into little pieces) for the benefit of one cause: that of Poetry.

An inquest that I have directed slowly, over several years: from 1993 to 1996. The film about G. was never shot.

Translated by Louis Armand
DAVE BRINKS
DIGGING FOR EARTH
(FOR VINCENT FARNSWORTH)

taking short strides
through scumly watered daffodils
watermelon weeds
little old ladies lose track of things
for reassurance
interlocking lovers
spare livers
anything that doesn’t have an expiration date
I’m finally getting all used up
each morning the smelling salts
work less & less
the house keeps filling up with water
sunflowers are nesting under the bathtub
the raccoons haven’t returned
the clean air act is eating my lunch thermos
the earth doesn’t have to kill us
it’s the same thing as loving something
why bother

THE CAVEAT ONUS ::: FIFTEEN
(FOR PIERRE JORIS & NICOLE PEYRAFITTE)
in a taxi or an old shoe
what you are and what you do
who would guess
there’s some kind of luck
that chooses
the pure filth of devotion
this book isn’t reading itself
I start to mutter a sandwich
and dream of my high priestess’ toes
she dreams with a lisp
and for all the fish
sleeping at the bottom
of the ocean
PIERRE JORIS

from MEDITATIONS ON THE STATIONS OF MANSUR AL-HALLAJ

33. REFLECTION: TAFAKKUR

1. could it be that time again?
after the doing, the reflecting.

But I have done nothing!
that, they say, is just it.

Don’t think of it
before doing it

: sounds like bad
advice. Thought-

lessness as principle of action.
Or is thought indeed only re-

flection, afterthought, post-
burn after the muscles get

flexed? Too platonic?
In Mansur’s mind

the tafakkur will have been
the recitation of the divine

names, dhikrullah, because
the names are the energies

of God. Contemplation then,
rather than reflection.

Forethought, it is said, militates
against inner stillness.

2. tafakkur for an hour
is better than a year’s

worship. It is a lamp
in the heart.

3. The Nur Ashki Jerrahi Sufis teach:
“Let’s take a practical example.
We are angry.

We make tafakur by
looking inside & seeing
who the angry person is.

This ‘person’ is really a figment,
an illusory knot of disappointed
expectations and energies.

It is not who we truly are.
If we can see this
we are already healing.

We then drop deeper into
the heart level and see
how the angry self is
drawing its energy from
the ocean of our heart.
Now allow the limited self
to dissolve, as consciousness is
drawn deeper and deeper.
Tafakur is like the bee
hovers around the flower
then finally buries herself
completely in the heart.

If we continue this practice
we will reach the state of continuous
tafakkur, whether we are

‘standing, sitting, or lying down.’
We remain centered in
the arena of open consciousness.”

4.
I’m just faking this—
this is not reflection
or contemplation

this is just writing
which is when all is
said and done (I mean

thought and contemplated
— the one thing truly
interests me.

34. PATIENCE (TASABBUR)

whose patience? the mother’s
immense, eternal

patience for her child,
an absolute of species, it is

life-long (her
life’s length, that is)

or the child’s frayed
patience with the aging

parent—the mother already
beyond time, out of time,

time-lessness of forgetting
alzheimer’s folly

I forget I forget she says
be patient with me, child
even as I am impatient with
my own memory, mother

says I hear does she
hear what

she says what I say
the distance of impatience

with her now who am I
to tell her.

“This is fatal, the disease
is called Remember”

RK “The Death Goliath”
I
At first sight, they are only incoherent games. Grotesque fillings. Exhibited non-sense. Even an impression of banality. Formal variations for the pleasure of an elite. An elixir! Today’s reader is bored faced with the complexity of the techniques put into play. He understands nothing of all these sassy-smart experiments with language. The newspapers speak differently to him. Each day a new catastrophe engulfs him in anguish. Blood splatters the reported stories. A tapestry of unforeseeable elements that make it difficult to recognize the golden threads of the embroidery.

II
The practiced constraint falsifies syntax. Intervals insinuate themselves into the distortion of the vocabulary. The narrative obeys no causality. Events follow each other without any change. This amuses some stylists who see in it an exemplary freedom. But such juggling is incapable of silencing the empty bellies. Everywhere one bumps into dubious meanings. One looks for words with an edge to get the upper hand. In fact, choices remain limited. Nouns prevail over verbs and adjectives. Terrible toponyms. Chiseled obscenities. Irremediable blasphemies. Unhealthy scatologies. Repugnant names of animals or people. The earmarking of certain body parts. All of which wallows in a triviality that provokes a slight disgust.

III
It borders on a macabre polyphony. One doesn’t listen to the others in the middle of the tableau. There’s something in it for everyone, he says. But it doesn’t add up. It is not a question of a simple stroke of the pen. You see how heavy the slightest word weighs down on language. To ferret it out hasn’t been a picnic. You suffer faced with the contradictions of the lexicon in the ever slighter hope of finding a way out. Language is never free or profuse despite signs of an opening up. It is a bleeding that can’t be staunched. A local color without the emphasis of time.

Beyond that, an apparent emptiness produces an effect of contrast.

ON RAÏ

For a long time, raï was considered an obscenity. One couldn’t decently listen to it in a family setting, unlike andalusian, cha’bi or saharan music. Around the meïda (the low table that gave the indispensable exotic touch to indigenist literature), the Algerian family indulges in the pleasures of the belly without refusing those of the mind and heart. Postcards guarantee it. In the good bourgeois homes shame (hashma), the cardinal virtue of the linage, forbade a music judged to be depraved. In those days, in the poor quarters of the city, it had to be mentioned at the entrance, on a wooden tablet hung from the lintel, in order to avoid any possible confusion that could have bloody consequences—for death was rarely idle. The razors’ searing intensity. The blood boiling over in the gutter as in
Lorca.

Of its origins—ripe with controversy!—raï has kept the acrid harshness and murky glitter of the dives and brothels of Oran, Relizane and Bel Abbès. For the good city dweller of Tlemcen or Mostaganem, a certain bad taste—that of the bad boys and lost girls, of the rootless invaders of cities—transpires in every note, every intonation, every movement. All he can see in raï is the uncouthness of shoeless goatherds, the base exaltation of vileness, the triumph of instinct over soul. Which explains its repression.

In my early childhood I heard all tones indiscriminately. The moorish cafés of Tigditt, those of the lower suika or of Qadous el Meddah, broadcast the songs without worrying about the scratchy phonographs. The exclusivity of membership and the jealous care lavished on distinction ensured that one did not mix the genres; thus each place proudly confined itself to a music imposed by the taste of its customers. No matter the genre, the highest quality was required. There were constant arguments about some minor detail of the melody or about an inappropriate word. The specialists made faces.

The struggle for independence has hatched other sounds in the fracas of revolution. Before all it has imposed the silence of the augural expectation.

Today, as another silence grips the algerian landscape, I begin to see the painful and tragic consequences of the measures of austerity taken in those early days. (Certain perverse exegetes, due to impaired hearing no doubt, have always considered music to be the devil’s invention...)

Native grade school and then high school taught me to appreciate other sonorities by slowly draining the inherited ones towards folklore. My late meeting with raï was due to chance. Perhaps I can speak to it, but to transcribe it seems pointless. Oran had never looked as beautiful to me than during that spring of 1987! Captive, I jubilated. The various elements came together in a sudden bedazzlement. I was immersed in raï, a passionate drama, similar to what had happened with the blues during my adolescence, except that the intonations of raï scoured the depth of my memory. I enjoyed the moment deeply with the troubled sense of reliving it half in joy, half in pain. Banality of the great moments of tension. Interior distortions! Wahran, Wahran, ruhtî khsâra (Oran, Oran, what a waste!)

The mediatisation of raï since the 80s, first in Algeria, then in France and throughout the world, corresponds to a social phenomenon. Which doesn’t explain much. This kind of phenomenon rightfully scorns any explanation. “The facts are hard-headed,” Lenin used to say, but what does the hard-headedness of a music mean at the moment of a debacle?! The fear of a savage flood from the working-class suburbs may not be foreign to the interest invested in raï, rap and other marginal forms of expression. But the essence of raï is elsewhere!

“Ana bhar ‘aliya wa ntiya llâ” (I’m screwed, but you’re not ...) This leitmotiv of the raï song—it arises unexpectedly from each text like a collective signature—translates the cry of love and existential revolt of an algerian youth that is lost, idle and out of work in an quickly disintegrating urban space. It is from this crumbling younger generation, trying to grab life with both hands without worrying about any other form of identity quest, that raï draws its power and brilliance. A youth that no longer revels in big words, but with eyes and ears wide open. Idle, by malediction. It does not want to lose itself without having spent all of its resources.

Indeed, raï is the music of the young ones, the chebs. They are numerous in Algeria: cheb Hasni (assassinated in Oran in February 1995), cheba Fadila, cheb Khaled, cheb Mami, cheb Sahraoui, cheba Zahouania, etc. Many leave the country, not understanding why they, who dwell at the core of their public’s (people’s?) frustrations, have become targets. Exile is their trade.

When questioned, raï singers deny being politically motivated. They say all they sing is sharp desire and amour fou,
the definitive crossing and the daily problems of the young. “Problem” is a recurring word of Algerian parlance which they pick up on ad nauseam. They recite the Shahada in their concerts and naively confess to not understanding anything about the ploys of politics. Far from being stupid, they are aware that singing has become illicit. They go on singing because they enjoy it, because their public demands it and because, deep down, death means nothing.

Once upon a time, during the colonial era, the masters (cheikh and cheikha) of Oranian song, such as cheikh Khaldi, cheikh Hamada, cheikha Rémiti were the keepers of traditional beduin culture whose mode of artistic expression was the poetry called melhoun. They had a double repertory:

— The sayable, dealing with didactic and religious matters, questions of love and praise, and with the perpetuation of the group’s unadulterated values. This register was that of the votive feasts of the tribe’s saints, of marriages, circumcisions, etc. It was the site of living memory and of the underground resistance to colonial occupation. There the masters communicated with their audience in shared aesthetic representations; the values remained solid.

— The unsayable, the forbidden, the repressed, what is unleashed when language bursts forth raw, brutal and proud of its transgressions. This register was reserved for small, limited audiences and for the places of bad renown. There the innovations were numerous and often illegal in the eyes of the censors.

That’s where the roots of raï lie, which will develop in the seventies just as traditional Algerian society starts to disintegrate.

“Where does the name ‘raï’ come from?” I had asked the taxi driver on the road from Oran to Mostaganem. The car’s radio-cassette player was blaring. “It makes you lose your head!” he had answered automatically. Châb al bâroud crackled on the player. It didn’t bother the driver. He upped the volume and shook his head as a connoisseur would. Today’s version, sung by cheb Khaled has nothing to do any longer with the nationalist epic of the thirties, which conjures up the “baroudeurs,” the fighters that were the companions of the Emir Abdelkader.

Raï is the desire-scream of that which can never be: the searing intensity of the moment that leaves no trace one could contemplate later on in a nostalgic unveiling of the soul. It is an open wound that never scarifies. The most diverse references come together here: a crossbreeding at times successful, often hybrid, but always bearing witness to the disjunctions of an Algerian youth starved for life. Here love walks on the wild side. The brutality of desire lights up the flesh without any other intention than the imperfect jouissance of the occasion (as an example, the famous provocative refrain sung as a duo by Hasni and Zahouania: Derna l’amour fi barraka mranaka / We have made love in a shaky shed).

But the lack of manners and of courtesy in no way prevents the total gift of self by the one—boy or girl—who is gripped by love. An unexpected love, defying all efficient planning. How not to be enthralled by the beauty of this plaint: Galbi bgha l’bayda wa zerga ‘lâh djât/ My heart desired the white, why did the blue (black, brown) come? indicating the struck lover’s surprise at the sudden apparition of the unexpected loved one. This simple question unfolds the surprising pain where bad luck pitilessly hammers the disoriented young man.

The violence of the scream breaks all chains, all barriers; it scares the thirsty bird above the head. Raï stands solidly on the ground where one has to dance.

But already blood and exile call us to other dérives...

Translated by Pierre Joris
AARON LOWINGER

HOMELESS

The milk space between
buildings worn strong
ancient black rats
and legends of homeless
squirrel down to the courtyard
between courts
the story reads yawn
boy born
at considerable taxpayer expense
home on yard
that spreads plantains
pales clover
black plastic weeds
for the years of landlords
to trim down to dry heaps
spreads the power of neglect
we go out of the handmade screen door
behind itself

SUGAR

Bottle up the acorn syrup
in places that sell hair extensions
Big Basha
the door always open
just push it
driving south of Tifft
on Hopkins
looking for a junkyard
for my Mazda
there’s a scrap metal place back there too-
deer cross landfills
and look tiny, elegant
go on back home
and scrape missionaries
out our ribs
watch the world dissolve, again

GREEN HERON

Surprised in time
red green limey yellow hollow
eye hole backwater of urban heat
swampland own plastic colors
mountain dew beak car horn beep
flutter on the abovelands descend
only at will when from rush
a silvery shine or staring stone
every opportunity to bring it forth
bury all waste and give back sirens
wait till dusk sharp pain calls
wide sight neck hairs stand
reach deep into finite explode
bottoms up jump off low water
exploring defiant coasts which remain
Imagine putting a video camera into the hands of a Death Valley outsider artist convinced that the mother ship is about to land at any minute. Imagine, too, that when it arrives it brings with it a new phase of human evolution in the name of the reptilian mind and the hormonal earth. Pretty predictable fare when you think about the long and disrespectful history of New Age new beginnings for the human species, from the Heaven’s Gate cult, Erich von Däniken’s *Chariots of the Gods* books, to Extropianism and the various nuances of trans-humanist thought. But what if that artist hailed from the Antipodes and brought a colder, pragmatic eye to the very idea of transcendentalist thought to do with human evolution. Australian media artist Ian Haig has consulted the manual on transitional thinking and done something unspeakable to it. Haig’s most recent work, *Chronicles of the new human organism* (2005-2010), is a film that takes the viewer on a journey through a range of ideas, systems of knowledge and questions relating to the origins of the human species, global warming, new forms of human sexuality, sacrifice, parasites, communication with the dead, and alien evolutionary technology. Did I mention Martian communication?

I met up with Haig somewhere in the astral plane to talk about his most recent project. “*Chronicles* is a science documentary gone wrong. It is a perverse hybrid of educational video, new age recruitment campaign and cult manifesto: the *Mondo* movie genre with a good dose of fucked up pseudo science”. They don’t write film trailers like that anymore. “I’ve always been critical of some of the more utopian ideas surrounding technology, evolution and cyberculture, particularly of the shameless futurism that presumes that technology is an intrinsically positive force”. One of the aims of the film has therefore been to make a work that defies categorization, that short-circuits ways of looking at the categorization of the human itself, especially with respect to questions of technology and its impact on notions of the human. As Erik Davis has said of the work in this sense, it is an “uncanny and unsettling hybrid of future consciousness and mutant flesh, and therefore true to the real transformation of our times.”

Inspired by numerous visits to the Museum of Jurassic Technology in LA during the mid 1990s, Haig was fascinated with its ambiguous take on the representation of natural and cultural history that “presents itself as being real, partly real and clearly not real”. This slippage, known in literary circles as fabulation or magic realism, is in a weird way the foundation of speculative thinking about radical models for trans-human and post-human futures. It invites us to postulate the possible in the context of what we know can’t be possible. This confusion (is it real, fake or bombast) was for Haig an “interesting device to engage the viewer for 50 minutes”. The film takes a po-faced approach to sonically and visually document five stages in the imminent transition of the human species: evolutionary thinking, the reptilian brain, the human body, the hormonal earth and time and space. It feels like a program on the Discovery Channel from another dimension. There is indeed something plausible about the urgency and sincerity about what is unfolding. A soothing voiceover by an anonymous narrator describes the details and logistics of the emergence of the human species’ transition (“The next phase in the human transition is slowly unfolding”). With the cautious prudence of the surgeon’s words before the commencement of a sex change operation, we are advised of the benefits of new reproductive organs and detoxification, experimental surgery, parasites and communication with the dead. The persistent invocation by this voice of unseen “evolutionary operators”, and their offers of assistance to those of us “feeling the new waves of energy”, adds to the sense of human biology’s unwitting commerce with alien, otherworldly presences. The soundscape, designed by PH2 (Philip Brophy and Philip Samartzis) heightens the sense of portentous strangeness afoot. But also, in referencing the otherworldly sonic atmospheres of sci-fi cinema (Jerry Goldsmith’s *Logan’s Run*, Louis and Bebe Barron’s *Forbidden Planet*) and the freakiness of the Italian *Mondo* exploitation films of the 1960s, it insinuates the fabricated nature of otherness and alternative belief systems as style, gesture and affectation.

Haig is fond of invoking J.G Ballard’s idea that everyday life is the strangest form of science fiction we’ve got. Apart from some found footage very much from the *Mondo* catalogue of store-bought oddity, Haig shot most of the visuals for the film in some of the weirdest places on the planet, from the mud pools of Yellowstone and the thermal springs of New Zealand, to the La Brea tar pits in California. Peeling back the
“heritage” and “untamed world” connotations of such natural wonders (apologies to Marlin Perkins), the film actually underlines how primordial, elemental and weirdly volatile this “clonic Earth” is (thanks to Samuel Beckett). We don’t need aliens to queer it for us, thanks very much. The film’s sampling of earlier civilizations that also aspired to otherworldly transcendence is no less cynical. The traces of ancient Egypt and its iconic interstellar monuments, such as its pyramids and temples to its deities, were sourced from the Luxor Casino in Las Vegas: a kitsch hyperreality that rubs uncomfortably against the nuances of extreme belief systems in trans and post-human futures.

In this sense *Chronicles* satirizes the genre of futuristic thinking itself, defamiliarizing its desire to escape the gravitas of the human as we understand it. But it also reveals how visionary or trans-humanist thinking is a perverse revival of the modernist project, with its zeal for continuous progress and improvement. Haig is one of the great contemporary skeptics when it comes to acquiescing to the promises of technology and its potential to transform and heighten things for the better. An earlier online, interactive work of 1998, *Web Devolution*, exaggerates to Rabelaisian proportions belief systems such as the Heaven’s Gate cult and its use of the new medium of the internet as a promotional and recruitment platform. *Web Devolution* targets “notions of ‘digital evangelism’ and techno-utopian rhetoric, as the ramblings of a desperate, crackpot, fanatical culture promising the new utopia”. This hysterical embrace of techno-futures is for Haig a form of devolution, rather than evolution, in human consciousness. In this *Web Devolution* is the ultimate piss-take on any form of hope in “alternative” thinking.

*Web Devolution* is a presence that haunts *Chronicles of the new human organism* like a shadow of bad faith amid the sincerity of an Appalachian Pentecostal snake handling church. Its kooky, labyrinthine-style of hypertext leads, ultimately, to dead ends and failed promises of transcendence. *Chronicles of the new human organism* similarly invokes a trance rather than a transition, the spell that invests new age thinking with the hokey sincerity that anything is possible. I think I hear the mother ship coming.
IAN HAIG

CHRONICLES OF THE NEW HUMAN ORGANISM

An uncanny and unsettling hybrid of future consciousness and mutant flesh, and therefore true to the real transformation of our times. —Erik Davis

Imagine putting a video camera into the hands of a Death Valley outsider artist convinced that the mother ship is about to land at any minute, and that when it does a new phase of human evolution and reptilian consciousness will begin. Chronicles of the new human organism is such a film.

Taking the form of the nature documentary exploring the strangeness of the world around us as a starting point—Chronicles of the new human organism takes the viewer on a journey through a range of ideas, systems of knowledge and questions relating to the origins of the human species, the significance of the reptilian mind, new forms of human sexuality, parasites, the communication with the dead, and alien evolutionary technology.

The work references and cannibalizes ideas derived from Al Fry, J.G. Ballard, Rudolf Steiner, Wilhelm Reich, The Heavens Gate cult, Carl Sagan and Oscar Kiss Maerth. Delivered with a portentous, yet strangely soothing voiceover, Chronicles of the new human organism re-interprets the history of visionary thinking about the human species through the po-faced filter of Erich Von Daniken’s Chariots of the Gods and the shockumentary style of Mondo Cane.

One of the aims of Chronicles of the new human organism has been to make a work that defies categorization or another way of looking at the categorization of the human itself. It is a perverse and compelling hybrid of educational video, new age recruitment campaign and cult manifesto: the Mondo movie genre with a good dose of fucked up pseudo science.

The sound and music for the video was composed by PH2 (Philip Brophy and Philip Samartzis). Like the visuals, it draws on a range of references in its production from Jerry Goldsmith sci-fi scores such as Logan’s Run to pulsating electronic noise from Forbidden Planet and textural location field recordings of some of the weirdest places on the planet.
1. shanty & tow-rope out of patriotic balladry
eschews imitators of
parliamentary crises. tonight we sooth our
televisual ache, endwise
knowing (as you cannot) that misspelling is only
half the solution. as one, given preference
for guileless holepunching
on the frontiers of good sense or bad taste
sallying forth like albumen from
inflammatory prostates. or riding high in the
saddle, lonesome cowboys
squared-up john wayne-like to the camera’s
all knowing eye, federal watchdogs at the gate
& windsocks flapping. the complex
of sentimental foodstocks, bonemeal &
rawhide, fire branded (grammatically
modified texts at 13% gdp ...) citing non-
existent returns as immuno-deficiency, to stem cell
growth & rebuild low in body-
bags — domesday confetti spilling over the
harbour, replete with progressive bankrupts
strapped in glamorous warhols,
object name image
(or story), being what we read...?

2. we read political realism — we read roughshod
over lamé upholstery, fedoras & collect calls from denver
kowloon kingston johannesberg —
we read complimentary hoax, forget-me-nots &
scaled replicas of the USS Maine — we read
double-dealing translators, agents
of global saniflush & pseudo-dionysia. what damnable
hope? what shot-apart wingspans across the
prairie — this angel wreck, this prepossessed hydraulic
love? cut out & set down
in blood & wire: if you will not censor me, how
can we go on? a mouth waiting to be
stuffed, run up on the target range
& casually sodomised like child crusaders led aboard in
marseille & palmed off for a soprano — left
with a grin or a grimace, but not
on account of the one
unsolvable dilemma: to hold an umbrella up
to the ruptured gall-bladder of the
cosmic dwarf, finger plumbing
the wiped scratchplate. such circum-
spection in the face of a medial
post-operative veneer — the idea’s weightless
architecture, filled up with air. the unspeakable shapes of
airport baggage reclaim carousels. styro-
packaging & lambasted
molecules. re-digestions of 1979 sitcoms
on the closed circuit — working the surveillance pattern through
the small of the intestine, though it will not stay down

3. ...................................................... & so it went in unseasonal
humidity, one-eyed jacks scurrying up-
ended, making light of the rafters: cascading, cuckolding
visas & war bonds, oilslicks as wide as
nation states & as salubrious
    gauche inspectorates, prima
farces in which there resides “no lasting
interest” beyond the starred
agenda items; this sampling the cipher, ridging out
cell walls, solvents
    on the drying rack. pyrex
speculae, leech drains
& concupiscence — as bred in the greed box
the siblings mutter, to make hay, ho
wind & rain, each day ending up the one after the other day

4. or lesser banalities, ‘though these too surprised us

being what we expect & for that reason
prefixes of adjustments, in tantalising overlays
more unlikely. the too-believable sham, its gorgeous &
taxed, fistulas & tektites
altogether immaculate patsy set-up for the
rotunda, gazebo, pergola
knock-down — mae west of lower
    gusset & high vantages, mopes about
manhattan all smoking thighs, smith-‘n-wesson-like
    operas, reviews, arias of
holstering the grand-standing “fake me” now before it’s too late
to take the shadows, silhouettes of
what’s your name? fifteen minutes & we’re already
caked with lint & goo
down on the replay, to occupy
cascades of redolence
the mind between advertisements, lapping up the
smegma, stuff left over from tooth-fills
commode fetishism of talk shop
& lingerie, uncensored cyber-sex &
dolls & slapstick poodle puffs, strutting their stuff
poop-scoops, beachside manners in
designer beige, botox & stiff upper ratings limits with
iron butterflies &
figures to cry for
in, the garden: of e— ...

5. ergotic, as artificial
time-share / additives, dextrose, superannuated
retro-phosphate-absorber,
in rabbit redux of headlights
as written in the hills, along “back roads”
glopped at, at disastrously close
to shilling-sized catastrophes, close-
range (counting out superfluous
ramshackles & contingent
milliseconds
sprayed fractionally—— accorded the time &
star treatment / planetariums
as brusque as metallic gleam
revolving in cranial half-light,
those electric teats clashing at dAWN,
fissure & frac
ture stretching against tinc
ture lines muted on impact with
allergies & contra-robustness,
flesh or latex or latex
mixtures in extra stomachs,
working the wrist in aztec-like
churns, the second-hand pyramidism
to retrieve the
loss of empire, the imperialists loving the
severed ventricle / stuffed up into the glory
of cameras, scripts, maps, star charts, white hole
spreading against the grain
6. constabulary

... cut down to margin width, rotoration, facsimile smudge
relieved
  & temperate,
as optical recoil affects in slow motion to
  flick & factionalise, strings
    uproot by the
loop of span & digit,
  necking
    amongst foliage & nasturtiums
/ a textbook play / the next move
  a bitter-sweet leaf
    less conspicuous
than our entourage,
  looking out the
press conference
  rear window in greeting of un-
disclosed scarifications.
pleasant sight
  the lusty barges
to say the least ... scenes
  of imperialist vigour
beginnings &
  nuptial
    endings
as oilfields flow
  in poured concrete,
capped like teeth
/ these boots were made
  to talk their way through dandruff,
for stalking /
  epaulettes shining &
    peeling out the human
conduits, pressed
disguise though virt-
ualisations, as pulses cas
usually nothing / to say /
  a brick, a real brick of a guy

7. macaronics

sac à couchage, replete but these can be con-
sidered legitimate types, specifically
representing the city fathers a subgenus with elongated muzzles from a comic strip rifle range — torpidly falling from the mechanised branches of that sole arabian tree according to a note from, de patavinis &c coughing up for expenses over & above the usual mis-

adventure viz. tessellation & lung-stuff; the blackout zones of mucousoid geo-graphs or cranial sections suspended in liquid nitrogen scanning the frost bitten tongue flap for what in dog latin translates as instep (a sign of their bipartisan unbidden divinity?) exorcising the wish of unreasonable fulfilment & biting off more than either one of you could eat

8. je est un autre

unreasonable base paint being the covert operative conditional. exquisite scalpel hacking inner pulp, letting flower tidal drift & planetary commotion, drilling bedrock in searchless idiosyncrasy — gossiping down along the long line apartments, window box sets, porcelain white elephants crazed against bifurcation: the lowered horn of card-carrying normals & status quoits … double parked outside the back entrance — these are clues — buying back our lost fetish-bone to point blank at the spirit jargon man, the weatherman, the sunday man — still another idles war crap since we last met in dis-

figurement, delay work, connerie: best to tell what we’re not, what (we) hope to prevaricate, if only to hazard a guess

9. firepoint or index slides & downsizes gallery’s shooting rules: one down, three across — service issue right down smack bang in the sweet of it, re-
trenching oedipals & luscious
landgrab, sit pretty until the last lease
kills outsources, usurps lawn filings:
what do we have to say to each other
lined up & concordant, stranded
city walls, gates wide-open,
down in manuscript welters? white gods
keep tabs on the tax file register, guarding
the ins & outs of
oil filters, opal glimpses, cavities
we root up & void. i tell you, it bothers
the randomiser

10. strictness rovers
the oedipus switch, a philologist’s
pet laughing abomination, supported by a private joke —
no shows of derivation, no
concrete symbol — did we ever get to the end
of the drought? clarifying
entrances to caveats of
body image memory, grass lightly growing

on blues hills — this musical umber taste
for memorising, & lies
bandied about the onus; gloomy or obstinate, day by
day making the “it” new — any decayed virtue

cast upon any pale footy coach’s couch
billeted against harsh hot sands

of the old hamstring, or playing possum somewhere

up shit creek, up where the wrecks brew — the palatial termite mounds
crispéd in opposition to the sacred

11. but how obstinate, how therapeutic? a point where the mot juste
becomes unjust — a logarithm of after dinner mints

& distraught viewpoints, marriages, treaties
broken, better &
better DVDs,
roads being impassable for most of the year, bang-up barbecues by the pool, directio voluntatis a recurring theme for army families, camouflage kids, swimmers, pitter-patter of armament industries: tech-glock-fuck up, amplitude of musters: coterie

12. burntout repetitions, flickering
signspace — necro-grade shooting
dead-stops like
domesticity hollowed — getting a sock in the eye for a wash-up
soaping off the longest seasonal run in history

spiked bets, lacklustre
in remonstration’s hand-held dish
a bell-shaped resonance
tight as
his master’s run of luck, miss
El Dorado ‘78
pinned out coquillage burning
the tax file at both ends

crossing barefoot, celsius overload — panes of super-hardened glass interrogating,
giving us the flick,
saying you’ve a responsibility to close up shop, to quit.
Milton enters the left foot of Marinetti to start his grand epic
Ephebic Consequences of the iambic pentameter
Visual Sonnet: Queen to Bishop's 1 Check!
(Mechanism of the second chess player of Leonardo Toros Queverdo, 1920)
Projective Verse I

"A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it (he will have several causations), by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader."
Projective Verse 2

"Then the poem itself must, at all points, be a high energy-construct
and, at all points, an energy-discharge."
Projective Verse 3

"It is the advantage of the typewriter that, due to its rigidity and space precisions, it can, for a poet, indicate exactly the breath, the pauses, the suspensions even of syllables, . . ."

First annual Projective Verse Convention, Columbus, Ohio.
Immersion braze is to dip a thing in solder (a feasible alloy, tin and lead) and flux (limestone or chalk). Then hold the thing in the fire a little while to heat. When it is lowered into the solder, the latter will flow in the joint and firmly attach itself. Before dipping, the thing to be brazed is coated with a special anti-flux graphite, covering all the surface except that which is to be brazed.

Thing then pared with a draw knife.

Reacts along the hallway, back and forth.

Trailing spelter, un-set a stream of it.

Run down cell, fitting, spent hours

Hours on the shelves, for ages, tidying.

Some injury. Pity the snow fell so soon.
“the horse is surely listening to me”...it has a skull on its underside, eyeholes gyring down... rounds of ink.... on ink of a shadowpool....Socket an inkbody photocell....so-called body open to a deep chamber, a go-between

glow absorbed
utterly back and forth. Repeat....of what happens in a cell....its own rebound, own throwback and...“behind the rider sits dark care”. Post equitem sedet atra cura....imaginarily near.
Inscrutable its wings....Of dark care enfolding, someone...in mounted condottiere....& there’s signs from a dark care....horse a skitter....a pendulum...horse a planchette....magneto....contact brush/bruise

of a galvanometer heart
shape....its heartshaped magnetic....creep....cross fluxfire....the lineto measure....don’t forget a rèculons....
through a condulet....conduit....early horse a spring....listening, its holes....throwback holes....nose, wings, hooves....scratchtap....drum....cardiographic flutter of, yes, a....& fortune sitting there....a just sitting figure....zincy bluegrey lowflashed....seam....seeme....it takes no time....the plenum....the mirror
APORIA POEM

1. Délire de negation
2. Deliquescence dissolving of
3. Sinusoidal current free of polar effect
4. Negative cell with spongy surface usually of a color
5. Worm coil (spiral gearing)
6. Smell of copperas/ferrous sulphate/green vitriol
7. Iron pyrates in the air, then
8. core, core and shell, cored carbon, coreless armature
9. lady lazarus
10. dec—
11. Tem to Temu (entrails buried elsewhere)
12. Soap on gums (lamictal)
13. Posturing more (sodium amytal)
14. Set the fire alarm off twice (clozapine 300mg)
15. Pyramids and Palm Trees test 50/54. Normal
16. Corsi block span one or two less than digit span, low.
17. Say cogito without ergo sum again.
18. Merely a pause, properly so-called.
19. Self-formula, unary
20. Shale pared away, a jigsaw in reverse
21. All foveae fallen. Hymen ruptured?
22. Well-kempt and rather sleepy
LAG

jewellery/jewelry (depends)
soft food/paraffin/—dark vinegar
ruinous roll walk dead-end guyed pole
on the tracks, trains don’t go/knot me/kilo me—
ter/or me i have to end somewhere, a

pharmacy/chemist/how you’re
too ambitious said woman on the way
it’s a recoil of dis-rup-tive discharge
what are you doin out
on steatite roads-crumbling— (soapstone)
fade-into storm valley of four corners
soak it out residual /all yellow here
and this the only hill
snap/switch loop the plier
plastic bag move-able
through a long run/should be taped
hook of a snake felt in the neck

—shunt motor breeze, —it’s coming
mainline-as-not-yet/not yet
core pins on the ground
globes silver cyanides silicon bronze
on a bar table/odd how cheap

raceway is a metal casing
electrolier is to hold up incandescence
the house i live in now is so called/
and made on account of that
—that & its hysteresis (loops plotted, cycle curves
waste waste waste)
STACY SZYMASZEK
from HART ISLAND

†
someone left the bolt
unlocked but he played
midnight sentinel with his
book I closed my eyes
and dozens of poets were
unable to speak this sapling
restores an aura of dignity
down here there is possibility
dead wood isn’t dead figures
swim together claws don’t rush
to fill you for a second fall
in love with the light

†
you’ll eat bread till you return
to the ground fingerless
gloves fingertips around hot paper
cup you doubters you steam flows
from the theater of my ribs
where I dragged a compass
to retrace my area an army
of those who survived themselves
define ecstasy as breath
tinged with a story how I would
offer it to anyone tonight

†
recused in hallway just happen-
stance a man just expects to find
warmth in a church he’ll search
for her in five hospitals follow
her epileptic path extended mass
of her body let’s degrade the space
between us the alcohol gets
inside a space heater in Siberia
mesh becomes exposed just
one part piled on another

†
how a body becomes unwanted
yet everywhere touched
buried in married memories
index starting with ear how an ear
becomes unwanted and wears
that indignation whereas hand
hides its information how a hand
becomes unwanted and works a hoe
with steady pulse it is unwanted the
cargo of bodies cross the Long
Island Sound

†
who’s under whose wing
make a pantomime of loss some-
one made Aspiration a new
arm from sticks and papier-
mâché he’s holding a bouquet
so furtive this is flip phone to flip
phone only a white whale
away here is my card I am not
working is what I will say
here is my card I am not working
today wish friends would re-
populate quickly as the fields
become one who gets infections
of the ear how to glow during perfect
sorrow storm cotton wick in flirt with
and the cries of muscular
naked babes muffled then
understand the value of your crowned
organ not effective to use fire
in the hypothetical when
it has already burned

walk up avenue with memory
circling regime query the polyclinic supposed to be very old
but that is effect of maalstroom
felt as a douche on the mood
of a divided city one can adjust
to anything a child’s filled teeth timed
to destruct post-coverage a pile of lime not calm of a site where something
was settled but flooded with hinged creatures “too much information”
shuns a history of abjection
when she said we don’t want to bleed you but I myself was bled

and you
can’t re-
generate a
It was life during war time...crossing borders and boundaries.
—Ivan Kadey
One afternoon, during a jam session in a wealthy but crumbling residential district in Johannesburg, in the long, tense months after the Soweto Uprising of 1976, a certain sound came together. It was the result of the simple combination of distorted electric guitar with African hand drumming. The sound was rooted in marabi, the distinctive South African groove that provided the basis for Abdullah’s Ibrahim’s “Mannenberg,” the township anthem of the era. But this was edgier, more dissonant, a sound that echoed the sirens and rumbling of military vehicles off in the distance, evidence of the growing police presence in the streets. Within the sound, the heavy downbeat and liberation cadences of reggae were coming to the surface. And underneath it all, the sound of the raw anger of the rebel rock music emerging from London and New York—the sound of punk.

“The Sixties” never really happened in South Africa. Massive social upheaval and seismic change would come only in the 1970s, the beginning of the country’s coming period of political and cultural clash. The confrontational sound of punk—from three-chord anthems to militant hardcore, dissonant post-punk, and upbeat ska—provided one of the ways for its youth to first find a public voice for a submerged frustration with the social conformity of a state whose racist policies had kept its own citizens stifled, repressed, and segregated for decades.

As a result, it was easy to stand out amidst the political insanity, social confusion and suburban tedium that characterized South African life in the late 1970s, simply by being different. But in terms of presenting overt political engagement within popular culture, nothing was ever going to present such a contrast to the established system as a politically engaged, multi-racial punk-reggae band who were equally at home in the rock underground and the township nightclub circuit. Miraculous as it may sound, such a band actually existed: National Wake, the result of a creative confrontation not just between the worlds of punk and new wave with those of reggae and African music but between the unique personalities of its founding members, Ivan Kadey and brothers Gary and Punka Khoza. The band came together at the end of the 1970s, finding common ground at a musical and political crossroads defined by a mixture of optimism and anger. Central to this was the search for an authentic South African identity unburdened by the strict confines and artificial boundaries imposed by the inhuman laws of the apartheid system.

The band survived by existing almost totally outside of the system, eventually releasing a single record in 1981. This sold an estimated 700 copies before being withdrawn under government pressure, or “gazetted” in the euphemism of the time. The band subsequently disintegrated under enormous political and legal pressure, but their traces could still be found in the fanzine and cassette trading underground then emerging in South Africa.

Matt Temple of the reissue label and influential blog Matsuli Music recalled encountering the album for the first time on a cassette copy, calling it “uncompromising, frenetic and loud...it struck an immediate chord with many people like me searching for any way out.” This clandestine medium eventually reached young conscript soldiers fighting South Africa’s illegal border wars. Among them was writer and journalist Deon Maas, who first heard National Wake while in the army and later described the effect of the band as “like a vicious orgasm... it’s only history that has recognized the incredible groundwork they did, not just for punk but for the whole music scene that followed.”

Despite the groundbreaking nature of the band, during the subsequent chaos of the state of emergency of the late 1980s and the euphoria of the post-1994 democratic era, National Wake were almost totally forgotten. Memory of the band faded over time, to the extent that they were left out of most histories and accounts of South African rock music. It was only the emergence of specialized music blogs and a new evaluation of the role of the early South African punk scene in particular that eventually led to the band being rediscovered. Craig Duncan, a specialist in global alternative music at Czech State Radio, places this unsung legacy of the band today in an even more radical perspective, as “perhaps the most dissident music scene of the 20th century: a multi-racial punk-reggae band operating in a fascist police state.”

Guitarist Ivan Kadey grew up as a disaffected Jewish orphan in the suburbs of Johannesburg feeling radically estranged from the daily reality of the country from a young age. As a teenager he had developed a deep interest in protest-oriented folk music, performing in small folk clubs and eventually beginning to compose his
own songs along similar lines. Arriving as a student at the liberal University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg in 1970, he came into contact with the radical politics of the era and began to develop even more of a politicised consciousness.

As the decade went on, Kadey took an active part in student opposition politics and the non-conformist activity at the school, staging performance art actions to express his innate sense of revolt. He soon became part of a network of alternative lifestyle communes that had started developing in the decaying neighbourhoods near the university. Kadey remembers: “Wits was largely a commuter university. Parents had near breakdowns when their kids left to move into one of these ‘dens.’ It was seen as a complete rejection of the conformist way—which of course it was. Communes became a way for the more independent and rebellious to break away from their parents’ control, or to get away from the university authorities.”

I lived in a Parktown commune, a large old house dating from when this part of the city had been the domicile of the richest strata of the booming mining town. At that point in time the area was in transition as the old houses were being transformed or demolished. Our neighbours on one side still maintained their estate in fine colonial fashion, with a manicured garden replete with swans. We were left alone to pursue our alternate lifestyle as long as we could meet the monthly rent...we inhabited a crack in the city’s evolving culture, a fissure between a distant past and a slowly approaching future.

There was an active alternative culture dating back forever in Joburg, most recently manifesting as hippies, and sharing the sacraments of rock music, marijuana, and free living people. Literacy groups producing materials for worker education...carpentry co-ops, living according to the principles of Robert Owen... ashrams, rock and roll bands, drug addicts, artists, free-thinkers. The network really stretched throughout the country.

Ivan Kadey’s commune began existence along similar lines. “It started as typical white kids seeking a non-conformist communal pad. The members were artists, musicians, dancers, Buddhists, students. Being a haven, non-conformist and racially open, we also had a few black people wandering in and out.” Due to the requirements of apartheid pass laws which controlled movement in and out of areas racially classified as “white,” some of like these acquaintances, such as the jazz guitarist Allen Kwela, began staying over at the house on occasion. As a result, the house inevitably began to attract the attention of the police. Kadey remembers that one day “police dressed in jungle camouflage...went through a quick inspection of the house. Nothing serious developed, but it was the first time I saw cops in military riot squad dress, and it led to my song ‘Orange White and Blue (Mayhem)’ with the lyrics “arrange, derange, classify colour, send the jungle to the city, take the children from the mother... blue-grey men are doing it again, separating the dark from the light, in the black African night.”

The political situation in South Africa was worsening on a daily basis. From Kadey’s point of view it now seemed that “the apartheid state was actively becoming more repressive. There were reports of people dying in detention, ‘slipping on soap’ and ‘jumping’ out of sixth story windows. The government finally introduced television in early 1976, possibly believing they would be able to exercise even more complete control of the population by feeding a diet of propaganda to the masses.”

On June 16 of that year things finally came to a head. In protest at the introduction of Afrikaans as the primary language of instruction in secondary schools, mass protests among schoolchildren broke out in Soweto. What had been planned as a peaceful rally in support of a school walk-out turned violent after police barricaded the route of the march. The resultant rioting brought a heavy-handed police response that left hundreds dead, and the images of the event broadcast around the world definitively changed both the already tense situation in South Africa and the general perception of the anti-apartheid struggle outside of the country. It also marked a turning point for Ivan Kadey. “The example of the children, their resolve and steadfastness, made me examine my own resolve and commitment to change. I knew the nature of the struggle had entered a new phase, and the days of white rule were numbered.”

One of the regular fixtures at the commune during this time was Mike Lebesi, a Sotho percussionist and well-known street character affectionately known around the neighbourhood as “One-Eyed Mike.” Lebesi was originally
from the highly traditional rural area of Thaba‘nchu in the Orange Free State but had spent his adolescence in Parktown, living in maid’s quarters with his grandmother and getting to know the Jewish family she worked for. According to Kadey, “He had the Parktown culture down, and moved quite freely between the city, Soweto, and the countryside.”

The similarities in their backgrounds inspired a certain rapport between the two, and music became part of their connection. “I got my first electric guitar in 1974. The playing of Phillip Tabane and Malombo captured my imagination, the example of solo guitar with African drums alone. This led to my jamming with Mike Lebesi for hours on end.” During this intensive burst of activity, in the long, tense months after the Soweto Uprising, a certain unique sound began to emerge, the result of the simple combination of distorted electric guitar with African hand drumming. Over the course of these afternoon sessions, the idea which was to become National Wake began to take shape.
As punk and new wave came down the pike, things just seemed to come together to make the musical climate more conducive to the possibility of my contributing to the scene, from the tradition of protest I was rooted in. You have to understand the state of near paralysis that living in a fascist society produced in me, as I’m sure it also did in others. At what point does one just say “fuck it, I’ll take a fucking bullet if I have to, but I’m going to get up and sing my fucking song?” I think that point is “punk.”

For Kadey and his Parktown friends, the nascent rebel rock of England appeared at exactly the right moment. In the period after the Soweto Uprising, South Africa had all the right ingredients for a genuine revolution—political unrest, racial bigotry, radicalised youth, and a long-repressed need to speak out—and with this new music Kadey heard something that matched his own feelings. “The whole sound, the attitude just reflected what I was feeling at the time, about living in South Africa, about many things. The idea of just putting something out there without any formality appealed to me.”

Another formative impulse arrived at roughly the same time, the “first Third World superstar” in the person of Bob Marley, whose mid-70s albums made a strong impression on Ivan Kadey. Marley’s juxtaposition of bass culture and social commitment resonated strongly in Southern Africa, and also found echoes in the musical ferment of the Parktown commune. When reggae-influenced punk bands like The Clash and The Specials appeared, their politically-charged music reverberated deeply within the increasingly tense situation in South Africa.

That rising anger soon found a perfect vehicle for unprecedented expression when Lebesi introduced two new members to the Parktown jam sessions—a rhythm section consisting of brothers Gary and Punka Khoza on bass and drums respectively. Kadey remembers that “one day he arrived with the Khoza brothers and we got into some really exciting music. I had been putting material together with another Joburg musician, Paul Giraud. We started jamming as a five-piece with Gary on bass guitar, Punka on drums, Paul on lead guitar, Mike on congas and cow-bell and myself on rhythm guitar. We worked up a set of songs with all of us contributing, and decided to stage a gig. Without any overt discussion we all knew what we were embarking on, and were totally charged
up and ready to go.”

For Ivan Kadey, “things came together to make the musical climate more conducive to the possibility of my contributing to the scene, from the tradition of protest I was rooted in.” Kadey already had in mind the concept of a protest-oriented band called National Wake, the name derived from an ironic subversion of the South African political ideology of the time as espoused by the ruling National Party and the embodiment of the four elements within the word WAKE—water, air, krak (fire in the form of lightning, a common feature of the Highveld landscape around Johannesburg) and earth. The notion of “wake” also contained a dual meaning in the sense of signifying both funereal and uplifting.

From the beginning, the musical backgrounds of all the members came together to define the unique sound of National Wake: punk rock, protest song, reggae, funk and traditional African percussion. Kadey had a longstanding interest in folk music including Irish rebel songs, Afro-American freedom songs and calypso, as well as a keen awareness of the underground rock scene. Gary Khoza was a well-respected multi-instrumentalist on the Soweto Soul circuit, having been a child star at the age of twelve in the hit township act Flaming Souls and more recently playing with a funk band called The Monks. His younger brother Punka had a background in radical theatre, a potent cultural force in 1970s South Africa, also bringing to the band his growing spiritual connection to Rastafarianism. The early repertoire of the band reflected this musical diversity, and National Wake soon evolved into a deeply nuanced, hard-working live band with equal emphasis on fiery punk anthems like “Black Punk Rockers” and “International News” and the sweaty tropical funk of songs like “Wake of the Nation” and “Kalabash,” all oriented heavily towards the dance floor.

The band saw themselves as harbingers of a new, optimistic South Africa, bringing together a multi-racial audience in an atmosphere of good times and positive energy while still conveying strong political content through their lyrics. Unable to perform legally in most traditional rock venues, the band forged their own eccentric touring circuit on the fringes of society, playing in the more liberal and open Johannesburg neighborhoods of Yeoville and Hillbrow as well as township nightclubs and rural homelands. Over time the band built a strong, dedicated following that stretched across the racial divide, at the same time linking up with kindred spirits on the nascent South African punk scene. In the summer of 1979-80, the band joined forces with punk bands Wild Youth and Housewives’ Choice and new wave rockers Safari Suits for the ill-fated “Riot Rock Tour” of the Western Cape. Kadey recalls that the band “arrived after a 1000 mile journey across basically enemy territory and were greeted by the promoter informing us that he had applied for permission for us to perform which had been denied. I told him to shove it, that we were playing whether he liked it or not. He braced himself through the three initial concerts, finally losing his nerve when we played the last one in the conservative enclave of Vishoek, where the actual contract governing the hall expressly forbade any mixed-race gathering. We stood our ground and took the stage despite his threats. After the first ten seconds he pulled the plug on us and closed the concert. Riot Rock indeed.”

Stung by the experience, National Wake refused to retreat and instead moved into total self-sufficiency. Already living together in their communal base in Parktown, which had by now been essentially turned into a sort of headquarters from which band operated according to an almost military protocol. To further their independence, the members assembled their own mobile sound system and formed their own production company, DMZ (for “demilitarized zone”) as a means of circumventing the country’s arcane racial legislation. Paul Giraud left the band and Mike Lebesi became an increasingly marginal figure, while the core members of the band continued gigging and writing new material as a three-piece outfit. Moving increasingly into reggae and African elements—with Punka contributing several songs in the Shangaan language—National Wake became more and more driven to take their music to a wider public. The more experimentally-minded Steve Moni (formerly of Cape Town-based band Safari Suits) was recruited in as replacement lead guitarist, bringing his mastery of slide guitar and new musical influences including Krautrock to the band’s sound, and soon thereafter the township jazz saxophonist Kelly Petlane was added to the unit as well.
By now, National Wake was not only a tight, professional outfit with extreme dedication to the cause of their music, but had evolved a highly original hybrid of punk, reggae and township music to go along with their increasingly incendiary lyrics. Songs like “Stratocaster” and “Bolina” reflected the tensions and paranoia surrounding the band, which by now sounded unlike any other rock outfit in South Africa. Their power as a live act attracted the attention of the local branch of WEA Records through the company’s adventurous talent scout Benjy Mudie, who approached the band with an offer to record an album in early 1981. “The band when I met them were already fully formed,” says Mudie. “A lot of that was the combination of those four guys—Gary and Punka were so skin tight, coming from a real African perspective. Steve Moni was a melodic guitarist with all these nice lines. And then Ivan had this frantic punk-folk guitar and vocal style. The combination made National Wake the defining band of the time.”

National Wake had already been considering the idea of capturing some of the more than 20 songs that made up their live set list at the time. Steve Moni recalls that “Ivan and I were talking about doing a recording, to get the new songs down. We basically got sponsored for studio time by friends, and the sound engineer (Graham Handley) offered us a slot at a reduced rate after midnight in Satbel Studios in Commissioner Street, one of the leading 24 track studios. To save time and money, we put everything down at one time with very few overdubs and in just a couple of takes, which gives the recording its live feel. Kelly Petlane played all the horns. Some of the other guys around the band played ad hoc percussion, cowbells and shells and whistles, that sort of thing. Ivan then took the tapes to WEA. I went to watch the pressing of the vinyl. The record came out with some empty space where the unprintable lyrics should have been…”

Benjy Mudie explains further:

the album was recorded and then mixed in two or three days. I then put it into production only to be met with a stern phone call from upstairs saying we couldn’t put the record out, because of the lyrics. But I said we had to make a statement. We then got legal advice that the line in “International News” about the choppers going into Angola, under the current censorship laws, was committing a crime. We changed the lyric sheet to have the lyrics blacked out but made it look deliberately stupid, then put it out anyway.

The album was released in 1981 to what initially looked like encouraging signs. One song, “Time and Place,” began to receive limited airplay on local radio, and the band were booked to play a high-profile weeklong showcase at the Chelsea in Hillbrow. Plans were made for state broadcaster SABC to record a video of one of the shows. But then, just as success seemed within reach, things began to fall apart. The pressures of playing for what was essentially a segregated audience in front of the official media heightened underlying tensions within the band itself, bringing an overwrought Gary Khoza close to breakdown. As Steve Moni remembers the situation, “after the record came out, we played for a week at the Chelsea. And as the week progressed, things deteriorated to the point that Gary wanted to leave and just be an ordinary citizen of Soweto. National Wake was not cohesive at that point, at least personally. It was a question of whether we could even last the week.” After Ivan Kadey made a dramatic daybreak visit to the Khoza family house in Soweto, Gary agreed to continue, but the end was approaching. Benjy Mudie received a threatening visit from the Special Branch of the police, and the record was essentially blacklisted from broadcast. Worst of all, the band were about to lose their safe haven in Parktown. “After the album release things got more intense,” Kadey recalls. “We were dragged down to the Hillbrow police station to meet with some plainclothes officer who was obviously from some state security intelligence division. He advised us to leave the country immediately, expressing his considered opinion that if we re-named ourselves Exodus we’d probably make it big overseas. In the final days we were being visited about three times a day—cops simply walking through the house, looking in ashtrays, poking around, never saying anything, just coming and going at will.”

The record was released in the UK by WEA’s British subsidiary, but without promotion, financial support or even the remotest understanding of what the band actually represented, it sold poorly and disappeared almost without trace. However, among those who did hear the album were such luminaries as Ahmet Ertegun, the head of Atlantic Records, who sent a telegram expressing
interest in the band, and BBC radio personality John Peel, who played “International News” on his influential new music show. A meeting with a representative of Richard Branson’s Virgin Records, the home of the era’s defining UK reggae label Front Line, also produced a positive response but ultimately led to nothing.

In the end, all that remained were the songs that the band laid down in those frenetic few days in Commissioner Street. Seen from the perspective of thirty years later, these stand the test of time remarkably well and in several cases invite comparison with the very best of their post-punk contemporaries. “Wake of the Nation” brings the ragged, Clash-in-NYC street funk, occupying a place that is neither distinctly punk or reggae but which hints at and in many ways precedes the 1980s music scene’s emerging identification with trans-Atlantic black dance music, incorporating experimental guitar, dub space and world-beat percussion. The tremendous “International News” today seems hardly to have dated at all—despite referencing the Soweto Uprising and South Africa’s illegal war in Angola—with its clarion call of internationalism and urgency, bringing together angular punk-funk in the manner of The Clash or Gang of Four with African elements and preoccupations. “Bolina” displays the reggae side of band, also incorporating the strong influence of the band’s experiences touring...
neighbouring Swaziland. It also reveals the role of Kelly Petlane in the making of the album, his playing showing the influence of traditional Southern African folk wind instruments. The drinking song “Kalabash” sounds like a funky township hybrid of Sandinista! and “Soul Makossa,” displaying a rhythmic complexity far beyond that of punk rock or new wave. “Student Life” references Ivan Kadey’s interest in calypso as well as new wave in the style of The Jam or Blondie, fitting easily into the soul-mod side of punk and revealing National Wake as almost exact contemporaries of the English 2-Tone movement, rather then merely an African reflection of it. “Skango” with its Shangaan lyrics and haunting vocal by Punka Khoza, sets the template for his later band Dread Warriors, who predated Lucky Dube by several years as the first openly-identified reggae band in South Africa. Steve Moni’s role as the most consciously experimental member of the band is apparent in his original composition “Mercenaries,” where his setting of pulsating riffs against a background drone shares a close kinship with the post-punk sounds emerging at the same time from Manchester.

Apart from the music preserved on the album, National Wake committed several other songs to tape which reveal some of the directions which the band might have evolved in. Among them is the ominous “Stratocaster,” which is perhaps the most angry and provocative of the band’s overtly political output. With lyrics full of references to explosions and weaponry, the song represents an attempt to explore the mentality of the political terrorism of the era, mirrored by Steve Moni’s Stones-type slide guitar shifting into a full-on noisy punk freak-out at the song’s conclusion. Another intriguing piece from this same period, “Vatsikateni,” recorded live in Swaziland with a group of local percussionists, radiates this same sense of dread and urgency, with Punka Khoza’s lyrics speaking of “measuring time with bombs and burning.” Running close to twenty minutes in length, the song reflects the band’s awareness of the ambient and sonic potential of dub reggae, but re-cast in an organic and thoroughly Africanised context.

The band’s growing affinity to reggae is also reflected in “Walk in Africa,” which is perhaps the penultimate National Wake song. This represents nothing less than an epic re-visiting of the early colonial history of Southern Africa, or “history Wake style” as Punka Khoza used to say in introducing live performances of the song. Here the three main musical strands of the band—reggae, punk and traditional African elements—all come together seamlessly in what Ivan Kadey describes as the band’s “underlying belief in letting go and walking to the indigenous rhythm of the continent.”

After the release and subsequent failure of the album, National Wake effectively ground to a halt, a casualty of the mounting political and police pressure on the band and internal personal problems. The band
imploded over the remaining months of 1981, and by the following year its members were all pursuing other movements and careers that would eventually carry them all over the world. Gary Khoza continued to work sporadically as a musician, traveling to the UK with the Malopoets and living briefly in London before returning for good and finally achieving his private goal of being an ordinary “citizen of Soweto” who played at church functions and gave music lessons before tragically ending his own life after a long battle with severe depression and mental illness. Steve Moni relocated to Rome, where he set up a small recording studio and composed soundtracks for experimental films. He worked in journalism and the local film industry before returning to South Africa to produce a documentary about Italian prisoners of war during World War II and writing a screenplay for an abandoned project with noted activist poet Don Mattera before withdrawing from the film world and moving to the Czech Republic, where he resides today.

Punka Khoza went on to form the pioneering Dread Warriors as well as playing with Kenyan guitarist Simba Morri and numerous leading figures of the South African jazz world. Encountering a number of legal problems including a lengthy court case that ended in his acquittal for manslaughter, he finally found peace by relocating for a time to rural Ireland, eventually returning to become a relatively successful businessman running corporate drum seminars in Johannesburg with fellow percussionist Steve Newman. He died of AIDS-related causes in 2003. Ivan Kadey inherited the National Wake sound system and used the equipment to co-found the influential South African 1980s alternative music label Shifty Records with Lloyd Ross before suffering severe injury from a near-fatal electrocution and emigrating soon thereafter to California, where he lives in Los Angeles, working as an architect and specialist in acoustic architecture.

It has taken history a long time to finally catch up to the legacy and music of National Wake, but it becomes increasingly apparent that their importance transcends the South African context and is of truly international scope. Their album should be considered as not only as a stellar musical accomplishment but also a significant moment in the international history of punk-derived global protest music. But Ivan Kadey summed up the band’s legacy best:

I don’t know of any other band with quite this mix and sound that the album has. I know there are certain accidents of place, equipment etc., but I’m thinking of the “flavour,” the “taste,” the “tang.” I think the Wake had a sound that was trans-genre. And that sound was a unique, authentic blend of who we were and where we were, and it runs through all the various genres we present on the album. That is our mark.
MICHAEL FARRELL
frida lost wages

an image of a bird diluted

by a verb (&
WE SHOULD GET THE SAND
not in the way youd think). a flash of
DETECTIVE WITH SOME SORROWS TO PROVE

“chestnut puree? from france?” a red prism was said
to be involved. i scribble in a

parallel action. sharks psych the boat.

tomorrow will be
WEVE ENTERED PHASE THREE OF THE MYSTERY
fine. going crossways to sharonas. the

non-event has already begun.

“they blabbed what will happen next week.”
THEY JOSTLE THEN ASK ME TO SPEAK
youve gone beyond poetry &

still think youve a soul. finger puppets have their morbid side.
perfect people

... collapse. the detachment in the town where the genius had lived.

an itch returns / the song plays between

thoughts. in the garden a party in rugby tops. &

when the brazil-

ian anthem plays ... the doctor finds
HED FOUND A TOY ON THE GROUND OF THE AUSPICIOUS KINDS
a new boy to be ‘fath-
er’ to: like another man had been to him.

[another character ‘spins off’ to the

clouds.] books stacked at ten degrees. the blue
RUNAROUND ID NEVER SEE AGAIN OR ITS DRIVER TRUE
sun likes every-

thing ... the system included a band

called the lime stripes. his name was annie, ‘annie’.
words are words

“im yearning.” like a sphinx in his trough,
ox in her bath.

causing feeling / selecting colours for the foyer. &

the alternat-
AN ELEPHANT SHRUGS BURN IT
ives a

form of chaff. denial

of text, of quote syndrome, of join the dots

a la sontag. that is not someone, name of

someone. “did you have any oxygen?”

the fan belt waves south a river

of reprieve. the commentarys eclipsed. wont

be found in the drafts. move

away from the art, sir –
THE CHARMS IN LETTING IT BLUR

reading [ ...] with the light on

after the escalators –

metaphors became metaph-
ors. ‘[ ... ]’ [my translation.] & ‘ive always been a

rebel’. i survey

the experimental fencing. the word

‘poets’ in black, on pineapp-
le; the fuchsia in the freezer.

‘chasing’ a sound

down george st: a drag

queen with the name ‘fay doubt’.
THE LONELY SCOUT
‘moving away’ seems too obvious. youre in

the gardens, suddenly conf-
ronted by an expanse of sonnets.

they take your weight.
shift register

hush. results

flood in.

my [ ... ]

spread on

the carpet. wont you

come [ ... ]? ‘we take a good song & splice

it with a bad, creating a half …’ the softness

of expense / the vernac-
I LOST A JUMPING JACK
ular monarchy. ‘all’ hail the ice king. apathetically

authentic … someone with

a computerised voice wants a word? skeptical
DYSPEPTICAL
towards anyth-

ing you havent read about (you read the pricetag

&

without thinking, put

it in your

[ ... ]). for todays [ ... ], i select a

plastic

angel. ‘knowledge, do you know ..?’

the happiness [door] swings

to. its a ‘lunatic’, enjoying retirement.
ANDREA BRADY  
SEA SERPENT (1937)*

Twin spindle moons announce the horizon as a cut in gloss; the base is columnar and deep into the silt coordinate Mexico. Nearness is more complicated, mushrooms the shore and a bone headband can pin itself into an ear there for showdogs to jump in native flames. They are shadows to water. The body scaffolded on 15 forked claws, veins the cannula hand is moistened, organising the leaf-back on improbable crisps. That’s just Margaret, wailing for her cigarettes in acute gynaecology: so the end is mockery, and all along pegged to the burden of the past.

A backline stick a razor mocks the chained horizon by swerving upward as far as it likes. On it, three ice skaters. Crystal pets from the Christmas market, their eyes advanced in dumbness, swam forward under great antlers. The antler tuners. A cast-away dots the free moon. If it is sea it swims in the air: the moon tucks in the wake, gives hospital corners. The scene is odd, a toy, unserviced by the human, though she made it.

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EULCHEN MIT SPIEGEL (1945)

Ah boo. Confused by the balloon creatures who levitate in the garden, their eyes floating on sticks in their middle, too big for harmlessness but they are like that. Wilful in that, she’s a Venetian widow listening to a story. This arm-candy to the goddess occults the sentimentality of clouds: clouds perforated by thumbs, like a financier. Its moustache beak is pure dime-store. Check out stupid, she thinks we’re looking at her. The mercury is creased, the material can’t be abandoned simply by wishing on the star of imagination. No inspection can thicken the image in the glass: as flat as the earth’s moral compass. Someone shoot that villain out of the sky before her invention allows her forever to manipulate the ordinary evil of the weather.

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*The following poems respond to photomontage works by Hannah Höch...
NUR NICHT MIT BEIDEN BEINEN AUF DER ERDE STEHEN (1940)

Strawberries are a metaphor for bad inexorability. Earth becomes their infinite net. The fine root tips painfully around cubes of wood: Massine has a weeping ballerina on his hands virtually every hour on the hour, and they weep in all languages and for any number of reasons. Because of the cat-bird, the orchid, and their infamous plumage; because of the toy-box, that utopia tipped into a classificatory drive. One class is on the possessive adjectives. Start with the parts of your body: tripe. This is why you were given two. And the death mask in the weekend magazine makes you weep for your father at Coram Fields, his lips swollen around an orange. Exotic, as in dancer. The orchid a beck brace. Even feet are female, and the hand of Aron Rolston rhapsodizes his childhood in Blue John Canyon; so to cut and cut back is a limited gesture against the tenacity of the remainder. We live on buoyant fragments.

Do you ever try to explain love to yourself by imagining a gun pointed at your head, and you’ve got to decide which to save, the painting, a person, all the paintings or all the poems, this person, the one you grew or up with? I had a bag like this flamenco once, it was an heirloom, but not my family, I could put nothing in it. What would it mean to love her as I love my mother? In the eyes of the law we are saved, but not Catherine. Her hair floating in a millennial pool of myrrh. I doubt she’d like it. But this head will give you no guidance, you can scrap it for one of the Millibands. Like the baroque excess of legs, its cool inbred antiquity gives nothing away: certainly not exuberance. I allow my mood to shift to positive vengeance. The sky is mackerel, the field bracketed with ordinance. Try explaining your hatred of modernity as you stand over a flushing toilet.

UNGARISCHE RHAPSODIE (1940)

Strawberries are a metaphor for bad inexorability. Earth becomes their infinite net. The fine root tips painfully around cubes of wood: Massine has a weeping ballerina on his hands virtually every hour on the hour, and they weep in all languages and for any number of reasons. Because of the cat-bird, the orchid, and their infamous plumage; because of the toy-box, that utopia tipped into a classificatory drive. One class is on the possessive adjectives. Start with the parts of your body: tripe. This is why you were given two. And the death mask in the weekend magazine makes you weep for your father at Coram Fields, his lips swollen around an orange. Exotic, as in dancer. The orchid a beck brace. Even feet are female, and the hand of Aron Rolston rhapsodizes his childhood in Blue John Canyon; so to cut and cut back is a limited gesture against the tenacity of the remainder. We live on buoyant fragments.

Do you ever try to explain love to yourself by imagining a gun pointed at your head, and you’ve got to decide which to save, the painting, a person, all the paintings or all the poems, this person, the one you grew or up with? I had a bag like this flamenco once, it was an heirloom, but not my family, I could put nothing in it. What would it mean to love her as I love my mother? In the eyes of the law we are saved, but not Catherine. Her hair floating in a millennial pool of myrrh. I doubt she’d like it. But this head will give you no guidance, you can scrap it for one of the Millibands. Like the baroque excess of legs, its cool inbred antiquity gives nothing away: certainly not exuberance. I allow my mood to shift to positive vengeance. The sky is mackerel, the field bracketed with ordinance. Try explaining your hatred of modernity as you stand over a flushing toilet.
RESIGNATION

Hey rhino-face, you spook me
I’ve seen you before, in the movies
you were just a baby then
It is the element of the contemporary
never to give us peace.

This lot all grab at the Miami Vice background
Something dreadful about looking for Oahu
like a financier’s Dix in 1930.
This is the theme played by the left hand, nails duplicated in caulking,
not even slightly aesthetic.
We are in the midst of a campaign
A dream makes room for
Birdseye frozen peas
Something evil about saying

Flower a classicist pterodactyl
on stems of rubber-coated wire!
When you give up and they go,
you lose also all the memories
which hung on to the intersection
like drunk bees, naked at the end
of a difficult season. Remember this
is a reason to work harder.

TRAUMNOCHTE (1943-6)

The orchid has never looked more human.
Its mandibles cleaned with a nail file,
it is ready to sting you with leopard-print
as you lay in waste on a couch of fur.
These nails are of all remembrance,
about as big as they would have been,
you can feel them moving up your leg
ice-cold as a magician’s calliper.
The man you are waiting for is watching
through that sphere made of fantasy metal
like a dead sun, and hung over the credenza.
Was it always there? Have the plants
grown legs while you were sleeping,
to pull down stalks of rotten medicine?
In matching metal, in tin pan
tympanic shallow bate sedation,
the tray begins to spin. What’s that
hum and scuttle? Will you ever get
to lie there, and whose pleasure
is that speaking?
It’s the best time of year now: plague and pest subsided, the trees bloom like accordions reaching back towards the second road. You can use lilac for cocktail sticks, and hair frosting turns a dandelion clock to perpetual noon. Above the recent mania of bluejays the sky is clearly white. When Iceland blows, we catch sonic freedom from the locusts. The blue tit, released now from the tyranny of its smallness, looks with authority from the business end of an English egg cupped in paper to take away, to eat with a spoon chained to your watchstrap. Even the flowers masquerade as something else, Maritan, delicious, they park themselves on the leaf vaguely threatening to spore. Water stands up finally for itself, forming a lacquer on the rose wood brachia. Day, like the lime green furring the new ivy, seems to go on for ever. But don’t ask Nefertiti to pass the anchovies. Where she leans among the planets, spring has frozen on a broken tock. Her immortality puts the lid on your intrepid, you big up eating: it is flat, it is heavy, it is death by everything you ever wanted.
their own confession
their memoir
you will remain outside
you to all eternity
surely u understand they

those words
let’s leave it at that
not the same
are
I am feeling my way
each one evoking its own

will disappear
which
emotional reaction
less becomes more
instead of the usual flood
of general details

like tears
paragraphs
of single-sentence
you get a slow drip
...there it is
a castle
a big castle

In the rain
a real castle
sorry, your seven minutes is up
this is your life but processed

what's my next step
what's next
It was like walking through the vanquished streets of a city that had tried to impede the march of time, and finding yourself overwhelmed with a strange feeling.

* 

It was like the moment of recognition that the strange feeling is nostalgia, for a past not your own, a nostalgia all the more potent for its double displacement.

* 

It was like slowing your pace and then gradually coming to a stop, stopping to mark this moment in time, in recognition, this moment of stoppage, of halting the march.

* 

It was like accidentally glancing down at your watch, and then accidentally up at the clocktower, and feeling the doubleness of time, the stoppage and the ticking—the ticking, the ticking.

37 

It was like the little group of tourists on a walking tour trembling with excitement when the tour guide points out the bullet holes from a long-ago war still visible in the parliament building.
It was like the group of tourists on a walking tour dutifully observing the new buildings, the carefully renovated historical buildings they walk by, but only trembling to life before the buildings pocke with bullet holes.

* 

It was like the little group of tourists trembling with excitement at the bullet holes, as if the war might start up again imminently, trembling with excitement at this apparition of evidence—that history is real.

* 

It was like the little group of tourists feeling the bullet holes rip through their own peacetime lives, trembling with excitement at the realness of wartime, so close they can touch it, put their fingers in the bullet holes.

44

It was like watching the implosion of a building captured on film, watching the brown façade implode, slide down, its windows elongate, distort, slide, and sink down into the unbuilt in a film.

* 

It was like watching the built slide ecstatically into the unbuilt in a film, and feeling it, as you watch, as voluptuous but violent, a violent voluptuousness sliding past the tension of the built.

* 

It was like watching the tension of maintaining walls and floors, ceilings and stairwells give in to the ecstasy of windows sliding weightlessly down into the brown billowing dust-clouds of the unbuilt.

*
It was like watching the building implode in the film and feeling ecstatic and voluptuous oneself, wanting to press ‘rewind’ to watch the implosion over and over, its slide into voluptuousness, its fuck-you to the built.

It was like traveling to the model city and finding yourself in a museum looking at architectural models of the model city, moving from model to model lost in thought.

It was like moving from model to model of the model city inside the museum lost in thought while actually in the model city, and finding yourself lingering, reluctant to go back out into the real model city.

It was like shunning the real model city in favor of the idealized model city as offered to the visitor in a series of pristine still lifes of the model city set carefully atop pedestals in the museum.

It was like understanding the models of the model city as ecstatically static, and examining one’s own desire to be incorporated into the model, to formally reject the triumphs, and disappointments, of the real model city.

It was like watching swallows crisscross over the plazas of the Alhambra and thinking of the expression “bird’s-eye view,” and wondering aloud if birds take any enjoyment in the view.
It was like watching the swallows crisscross the Alhambra while posing an absurd question aloud to the person with whom one has just shared a first kiss in a hotel.

*  

It was like imagining all the bird’s-eye views enjoyed by all the birds crisscrossing the Alhambra, threading in and out of the rectangular towers and the fortress, whose entrance is carefully hidden.

*  

It was like walking in the Alhambra feeling absurd and desirous, posing nonsensical questions and kissing the person no longer in the hotel—which welcomes anyone—but next to the fortress, which welcomes no one.

47

It was like walking past a building that had been built by one regime and then used by three regimes in succession, and thinking about the idea of ownership, of a building as an exoskeleton of a regime.

*  

It was like thinking about the building that you call home as an exoskeleton you do not in any sense own, unlike a snail’s exoskeleton; about the ownership of attachment, the attachment to ownership.

*  

It was like remembering pulling empty snail-shells from wildflower leaves one summer, and remembering that even snails don’t own their own homes, that one doesn’t even own one’s own skeleton.

*
It was like straightening up one’s borrowed skeleton while entering the exoskeleton of the building, knowing that one is only a regime moving into the abandoned homes of previous regimes.

48

It was like walking through the perfume department of a department store in one’s adopted city and smelling exactly the same perfume-clouds as those that hover in department stores in one’s native city.

* 

It was like walking through the perfume-clouds and feeling overcome by both sentiment and repulsion, as the sickeningly sweet perfume-clouds cushion, and then smother, one with thoughts of home.

* 

It was like walking past the row of smiling women in white coats proffering perfume samples amid the discreet hush of commerce, which is exactly the same hush in one’s native and adopted cities.

* 

It was like breathing in the perfume-clouds of commerce in the store feeling drawn to and repulsed by the sickeningly sweet sameness of artificial jasmine and rose; clove and mimosa; narcissus and ylang-ylang.
My mom is a picture of health. Every inch a child where I used to be. We have a turtle that lives in the fridge. In the vegetable tray. In the bottom. Sometimes we feed it cabbage but mostly its life is there in the empty tray. A hard shell. A bald head. One day I come home and see that mom has cleaned my luggage like she said she would. I’d been away on a short trip. My 18-piece luggage made of thick wash-basin porcelain had accumulated dust. It is extremely heavy and awkward to maneuver, its bulk outweighing its purpose. But it protects unusual items that need protection. Upon my return, my mother saw the dust and the frustration on my face. She said, “I’ll fix it.” I came home. Each porcelain piece had been wallpapered with fake wood grain so that it would appear lighter. “Mom, how did you do that?” I marveled. “It’s only luggage,” she answered. My mom saw that I was hungry and said, “I’ll fix it.” I went to wash my face, came into the kitchen and there was mom, serving me green soup in the huge turtle shell. “Mom, when did you record this?” I asked. “It’s only music,” she said. On the airplane my mother calls me on my cellphone. “Did you get to the airport?” she asks. “Yes, you dropped me off,” I remind her. I keep her on the line and return to the crossword puzzle waiting on my seat. I ask her if she knows of a six-letter word for fixative. She hangs up. The stewardess notices my perplexed face and places an envelope with the word “now” on my lap. I open it. Inside is a note from my mother. I think to myself, how did she do that? I read the note. It says, “It’s only a puzzle.”

The stewardess notices my perplexed face and places an ice box on my lap. The word "now" etched in frost on the outside. I open it and there's a note from my mother inside. I think to myself, mom how did you do that? I read the note. It says, “It’s only a puzzle.”

The stewardess notices my perplexed face and places an ice box on my lap. I open it. Inside is an envelope, and a baby turtle eating cabbage. I open the envelope and eat the note. I think to myself, how did I do that?

The stewardess notices my perplexed face and places a baby turtle on my lap. I look at her and she walks away. I think to myself, mom?

The stewardess notices my perplexed face and removes her gloves. Her face comes close to mine as she leans in. She strokes the left side of my face and whispers, "mom."

The stewardess notices my perplexed face and removes her gloves. Her face comes close to mine as she leans in. She strokes the left side of my face with her left hand. She places her right hand on my lap, unzips my suitcase and lets her fingers find their stroke. She gently prys my teeth apart with her tongue and pulls my turtle out of its shell. And I think, mom?

The stewardess notices my mom.

The mom.
MAN-SECT

have no think, to contribute
no seed display, wasn’t expec
ting perspective for show
or other find, less an arrival—in time
of answer or reason, for anyon
e’s view but mine that is
to call an entire species, or less a tree
than man, to witness taken accomplis
hment as gathering for one — yet
a total run, as failure meant
to be scarcely mentioned
as minor key, fount or eve
n scale—half watered down delinque
nt half illusory outpost, to gain
(re-) of you, or other cog
nitive blank, as claimed self—cleft
apex surrounded, as one and only
arrow, how mangled

der by, reject
all, or less any—what’s pinned, what
title gives, to right stand say
ing to speak, for open or else
voiced shoulder, were it lenticular
oracle, but right ther
e—see, how not even th
is perambic trail, not even final offering
preludes entirety wis
dom, that you of your kin
d, exclude winged
elegy, smelled attack on brushed fe
eel, or posit height, as tac tic, ex
cuse—for when, in any mark possi
ble, is space its, chance—gain, what man
most realist, wouldt climb most p
anoramic excursive, as if statistic
were pretender of, in
sect
WORD-SECT

note to
self—save, if
or else, not
for many wh

at steals
attention, by stray
ing—gridless
milestone

stolen, by con
nective, tremble
that, who giver
wants—gived by

not selving
in
spired—or easy
placem

ent—shut
shudders as fringed
ecto policy
if, made to
tell to listen
on, a leer
to safe—person or
here
& yet they did put them down

any sex breaks a law

I read the books
of discoveries
of men

if the law is meant
to keep us proper

I look up
to find the whole
Quarterly aglow

and our bodies clothed
and unpenetrated

their ratting talent
and unique bond

What happened
to the relational empire
of the never-ending gaze?

I breathe wanting
the interlocked grills
to open me
to the festival
but have not been
present properly attired

The death of Lazarus
precedes the death of Bummer

If sex is a market
splinter it
A NICE QUIET MOMENT FOR MOM
(REMIX)

The girls help ice this cake and we make quite a mess. The big tanks above the two working men completely disintegrate into masses of fluff. This is the operating room before I try to restore milky need. These look like the people that will be dead. I don’t believe in necessity I love that sagging overhang, the other cars, the chair has wheels on it to move the patient about. This is my mother the heaviest bloom tied up along the shore. You can see her badge and me in my feather plumes doing something with the horse in Aisle 1 Bin 13
on its man-made hill, serene as a Greek temple
tonight is proud, even the casual visitor is
alive, withdrawn and waiting, the spider-crane,
endowed silver flashes contrasting the silence

sideburns that would not disgrace a Western desperado
completely dressed and ready to answer wartime,
the mulatto barber labors an hour,
this spray of bougainvillea in the clean morning light, like
meat just off the butcher’s hook

from muskmelon to red cabbage and Rebel cotton pausing,
fears justified against how to make the high-hip amputation,
an invitation to rock the bullet in his head, last clot hindering
vision,
logic escaping the surface of the dazed moment,
murderous glow, that unexpected charge
HE WHO WHISPERS

much a part of moss
as rock perhaps
a little stodgily

on or of the soil

at the leather thick
business passing fancies

to join was awfully nice

nodding as though she could
as only she could

my ears ring clever

a long journey
this throat never remembers

no invention to puzzle

it was out of hand
two birds in league with sheep

THE TURQUOISE SPIKE

a heel was the weapon
and

a heel was the victim

bled men in comparative splendor

to the rub of perfect unzipping flies

picture risky calculus

until the protective dusk falls
twice little wise

torn down dim villa

no exception in the rule

pecked Eskimos showtime

bender shattered kneecap

dress another touch higher
TIM GAZE
shapes which are difficult to name

Here are some abstract images which I made with cheap paint on ordinary paper.

I hope that fragments of Chinese, Russian, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic or Roman writing (as well as others) might be visible in them, as well as tiny pictures.

For some people, these are visual poems, and therefore a form of literature. For other people, they are abstract shapes.

What do you call a shape which isn’t something common, such as a circle, or a rectangle, or a gridwork of straight lines? We often end up saying that it looks like a such-and-such. For example, a fuzzy edged blobby shape could be called cloud-like.

My shapes contain many components, in non-linear, asymmetrical configurations. I challenge anyone to succinctly and thoroughly describe any of these creations in words. This inability to briefly describe them implies that they are information-rich.

If something can’t easily be named, then it can’t be safely pigeon-holed in someone’s memory.

I believe that these in-between unnameables have the potential to stimulate us to think in new ways, away from words.
hello jen hofer,

yesterday was snow and it seemed promising—big fat flakes shuffling for positions in the rising mounds of covered cars and trees and piles of baltimore garbage but i just went out to mail a letter and it is mostly now just that dirty sludge and a few sort of dirty coffee cake like lumps left. you are in los angeles and perhaps you don’t remember what snow is. it is slow soft white rain and makes everything ok for a little bit—like a trumpet mute.

i am pretty interested in weather and disease. i worry that when i turn 80 i will be obsessed with pop music and my career. a freaky friday for one. i do not know if interest in weather and disease is a question of age or a question of generation.

‘a generational question’ is part of a line of a poem of yours: “day twenty-four” in the book condition of anonymity. i love the poems in this book and i love the book itself (have i ever told you?)—it is one of your books which function as a book and as an art object (which is such a funny concept as if any of these things have any ‘function’—it seems precisely the reason it is so important to make art—this lack of function). re ember (with dan machlin), going going, as far as and i’m sure there are others which i don’t know about—ones which have poems which i have never read or even heard about. perhaps there is a poem in one of these books i don’t know anything about which i might like more than the poems “2 foxes.” the way this poem keeps coming around in slightly different iterations much like the wonder and magic of such a sighting. perhaps there are more of these small, beautifully constructed books holding your small beautifully constructed poems?

do you know, when writing the poems which forms they will be sent out to the world in? do the poems have preferences? do the poems in perfect bound books feel haughty? or square? jealous of the wild lives of those bound in antique postcards or shorn business envelopes? safer in their officially covered modesty?

i can be whipped into an eleven year old catholic girl’s frenzy over the unfair emphasis placed on appearance and reception and yet, it is integrally bound with all art making. i find it difficult to remember there is not a thing which is the thing (like the thing which must be seen or understood through the earthly (dirty, shallow) finery it is wrapped in) but that the thing is the thing. it is basic and like grappling with the present is one of the lessons one must learn over and over again—or it is less like it is learned than it is smelled. as soon as something is smelled it is immediately evident and identifiable—obvious, but the very ethereal abstraction of this sense makes it unpocketable. you know?

love,

stephanie
it rained most of last weekend here except when it was blue-hued and sun-swept and in perfect inverse logic
i rode my bike to chinatown for the brian holmes “continental drift” conversations on the day of most rain
while the afternoon of most sun i had to deliver 7 folding chairs to a friend’s birthday dinner so had to drive
my car instead. the car got way more use than usual this week, as i spent monday and tuesday visiting a local
high school, co-facilitating conversations with a non-biking friend so carpooling instead; then wednesday &
thursday dolores dorantes was here from ciudad juárez, to visit otis college (one of three institutions where i’m
currently teaching) where we read work in translation alongside the amazing gale force wind of creativity that
is the writer sesshu foster. i didn’t have time to borrow a bike to fit dolores’s way-shorter-than-mine legs and
in any case, not everyone delights in the 2+ hour each way bike commute between my cypress park house &
otis, which is as close to lax as you can get without being boeing. at the high school, jen nellis and i facilitated
workshops about live film narration techniques (also sometimes known as “neo-benshi”) with a friend’s high
school art class for their unit on media literacy. konrad steiner (amazing instigator, curator, collaborator) calls
it “talking back to the talkies,” and of course i can see how this has direct links to media literacy, though
lately i feel i suffer from the literacy (or illiteracy) of overwhelm and avoidance—that is, i find myself so
inundated with things to research, think about, explore, and investigate that i sometimes feel as if i have no
access at all to actual thought about the information i encounter. the “continental drift” conversations began
this way, actually, with a collective musing about brian holme’s theorizing (after guattari) “disassociation” as
a contemporary manifestation of what marxists might have called “alienation” post-industrial revolution.
the atomization of our supposedly “autonomous” work spaces (the way that word—”autonomy”—is valenced in
so many—teetering—directions—and its relationship to precarity, in both the negative fear-based sense and in
the positive possibility-opening sense) and the ways that “work” invades our consciousness at all times of day
and night and whatever else time might become in our information-soaked digitally-produced (and reproduced
and reproduced) age.

i’m paraphrasing; wonder if that makes any sense. i think this relates to “a generational question.” i suffer the
ills of my generation, and yet feel those ills and that suffering as if they were unique to me. which i suppose
they are, in a generational, social and cultural way.

as for the weather, lately i’ve been collaborating with a visual artist friend, hillary mushkin. we’ve been working
on a piece that has to do—partly—with cloud seeding. if you look online in the archives of the “oog” section
of the dutch newspaper volkskrant, you’ll see a brief animation we made, sketching out the beginning thinking
of the piece. the skies—the very air we breathe and the water that falls (or doesn’t)—are sinister. a permeating
toxicity, both figurative and literal, we cannot help but breathe.

lately my writing has been stalled in the extreme: a drought of work-work and self-doubt and doubts about the
efficacy and aptness of poetry as a response to the difficulties of the world-as-it-is. more on this later.

perhaps the hallmark of a poet is inability to write. which perhaps means that the inordinate difficulty i’ve had
in responding to your original missive may be poetic, but that doesn’t make it any less annoying.

do you ever make tiny lawn poems on the little strips of grass found in the middle of cities? something like ari
kletzky’s islands of l.a., but with poems?
do you ever question film as a mode of speech, a way of understanding the world? what are your thoughts about audience? to whom are you speaking, when you make films?

i used to feel that i was in a sense speaking to myself when i wrote; as lyn hejinian would say, writing as an aid to memory. and it is that, of course. and it’s also a way of participating in a larger cultural conversation (even if sometimes that “larger” still feels too confining). lately, though, i just want to listen.

and yes, i try to listen to the poems and other fragments. to see where they might want to live (between two postcards or in a repurposed office supply or in a perfect-bound book). i don’t know that i privilege one form of “container” or presentation over another—though my proclivities run strongly toward the lo-fi, home-made, and labor-intensive—it’s just different ways to get the work into the world, with different potentials for distribution and reverberation. it’s odd to be asked these questions right now, as i’m so much on the cusp of something new i can’t quite articulate. perhaps more questions would help, and by the time we’ve written more letters i’ll be at a different swoop on the sine curve of this cusp.

what instigates you to begin a new film, or a new poem?

xoxo

jen

oh autonomy and cypress parks! oh alienation from one’s own work due to one’s need to work! and oh oh the suffering. the ills of our generation—this cultural intussusception (my friend aparna, a doctor, is suspicious of my broad use of this word outside of its actual, medical meaning but i hold fast—it echoes invaginate which no one wants to read or say cuz it makes ‘em squirm and think about cats) of information about information. i suffer the opposite ill—that of feeling out of step with my generation. i feel confused by the casualness with which humans conduct themselves, aghast at the cynicism displayed in the skewering and dissection of concepts like so many hard won scalps on a twined necklace. though, this is not, of course, always true but is sometimes. is right now. work about work and ideas about ideas. a cultural hyper-reflexivity which seems to frown on autonomy actually. needs a strong armature (sanctioned academically, financially or through sourceless fame) to strap on to. (guattari?). so that to muse one’s own wondering is dismissed as quaint unless attached to an established giant. i am for calling back all the armchair philosophers and hoping they sit around and wonder again just what their physiological intrusion on matter means for the future.

it is not that i find it displeasurable to grapple with and react to the work of other thinkers and writers it is just the ubiquity of this tact right now which feels unbalanced.

i suspect this is not exactly what you are referring to but it is part of it part of it. and funny to think of the labor of thought (philosophy, art) through marx’s idea of alienation from your product. are the writers who write on the writing of writers feeling the sting of the assembly line?

i like to see a good amount of wiggle.

and oh self-doubt! wicked but some sometimes the progenitor of daring and change?
cloud seeding sounds wonderful. funny like stem cells. will you call up puppy dogs and the mustaches of cartoon characters?

i would love to do some lawn poems on medians. that is a perfect spot. it is very labor intensive and slightly expensive though. this summer installing the lawn poem in Wisconsin was one of the most gorgeous times i have had. i had to work fast (one week) and all but two days i worked on my own. stenciling the field with flour and digging out letters. precision and muscle SPF 45 and still as tan as can be. when all the letters were dug out i took the gallerist’s truck deep into farm land to pick up the sod. i got so lost i had to flag down a farmer in his field on a tractor—there was no one to ask. i was at the corner of RT. Q and RT. Q. i was late and friends were heading up to help with the final steps—cutting and laying the sod. when i got to the sod farm they let me come out with them as they ‘harvested’. it was the most beautiful thing i have seen. acres and acres of thick green short chemically muscled sod being scooped up by an ingenious machine. grass is just terrible as a plant—roots too short to exist without additional watering and strains too vulnerable to every disease so chronically reliant on pesticides but i have the fondest fond spot in my heart for the sight and feel of it. a weakness. where did this come from? the love of lawns? perhaps the mansions in Southampton where i would accompany my mother to work as a child. or just the green. anyway i filled the truck with rolls and rolls of sod and headed back to the exhibition space. the last song on the classic rock sated radio waves as i neared the field was Sabbath’s hole in the sky which i turned up up up and then, odd miracle, saw my friends crossing the street about a mile away from the site. they were a motley crew against the fields and felt like the cavalry arrived to save the day with funny colors and awkward shorts. they road on top of the sod the last bit to the field and we worked for the next 7 hours.

there is a lot to be said about audience. or there is a lot i think about in terms of audience when making films or writing. my film dogs is partially a treatise on my want and need for an audience. (Spike says “i think it’s always conversational to me. i am always aware that i am trying to say something to someone and that someone is always my dream viewer. i mean, like the most sensitive, funny, aware audience i can imagine.”) in this way it is also a blueprint of the audience i most want. i want super receptors and i imagine they are there. in my film total power: dead dead dead the film asks the audience to repeat phrases like “i will die and my body will cease to move. there is much i want. i love you.” so in this instance i am very directly addressing the audience—imploring them to help complete the piece.

how about you? where is your reader?

love,

stephanie

i don’t know what it says about our desire to **get shit done** or ***fuck shit up*** (as a generation or as persons or as artists—or as artist persons of a certain generation, which we certainly are) to transpose the term intussusception onto our practice or our ills, though it does seem apt to think of our difficulty as one of having the telescope partway closed when what we need is for it to be extended open as far as possible, to provide the broadest and most distant, most telescopic perspective. or perhaps it’s not distant perspective we need, but more real local interactions on the ground—as your lawn poems are literally on the ground or in the
ground. I like that you create work that might be stepped on by people who just happen to be walking across a particular field. Perhaps we need the microscopic and the telescopic: how does that blade of grass look to a bug? How does that lawn look from the edge of the ozone layer?

Some further questions occurred to me in the middle of the night Friday night (headache like an ice pick seeing bloody claws at redcat where I absolutely love to see film but generally do not love to see music, as the utter stillness and good-girl-sitting-in-seat atmosphere makes me squirm in the context of most music) after I sent you my first responsive missive:

given the state of the world (and here I could be more specific, but I’m thinking of structural underlying foundational challenges that institutionalize inequity and attitudes of submission and lack of agency and lack of space for invention and joy in so many lives—rather than one particular issue)—

given the state of the world, why this?
why this now?

I’ve asked these questions before, in other contexts.
I think of them as questions that keep asking, whose answers are further questions.
I like to ask them a lot, and listen to many different answers. What are yours?

Why do what we do? How do these sorts of films, these sorts of texts, molecularly or texturally or in other ways shift the terms of the world as we know it, so we can know (and experience) the world differently?

What kinds of speech acts and acts of analysis and criticality are meaningful?
And to whom?

What languages do we speak in our work, and what do those languages make possible?

I don’t know if this constitutes “completion of the piece” but I did use a quote from the film *total power: dead dead dead* as one of the epigraphs to one of the texts in my latest book, *one*, which I’ll give you when you get here. I have no idea where my reader is, but I am trying to instigate spaces for poetic (i.e. critical and radical and non-conformist) thinking outside the confines of what we might call “the poetry world” (though that world can sometimes be a wondrous space to inhabit and find truly superb conversation and company—without that world I probably wouldn’t know you, for instance). Here’s the insert (attached) I stick into the front cover of *one* when I send it out, along with a stamped envelope self-addressed on my grandmother’s olivetti lettera 22 typewriter.

I just googled “stephanie barber jen hofer total power” to see if I might have published a version of that poem online (I haven’t)—was going to send you a link—but that search did turn up an article titled:

Knowledge of Stimulus Repetition Affects the Magnitude and Spatial Distribution of Low-Frequency Event-Related Brain Potentials

That seems apt to both of our work!
i think part of what i want is to engage with folks who do not perceive themselves as a “poetry audience”—who did not even mean to be part of an art experience at a particular time on a particular day. i want to listen to something different than what i know how to access in my own daily routines. i want to access the random, the accidental, the unexpected, the provocative, the adventurous. and i want to make spaces for access to those realms not only for myself—for anyone who’s curious.

here are some more questions. perhaps i am couching my responses to your questions in the form of other questions. perhaps i am simply in a moment (a cusp, a transition, a transgeneric anti-everything moment) where i am not sure at all what it is i want to be or do or inhabit. an excellent and generative place to be, if also thoroughly uncomfortable.

what makes us think?
what makes us think differently?
what is the difference between armature and scaffolding? (something to aid in construction)
what is the difference between fame and being in the conversation? what i want is to be neighborly—to be someone from whom people want to borrow what they might need, to provide sustenance (edible or otherwise) when desired or needed, to be a friendly face in a too often unfriendly world. i’m not sure how this intersects with art practice, but in my mind somehow it does. as does the problematics of poverty linked to racism linked to immigration issues linked to all kinds of forced labor or dispossession or disenfranchisement or alienation. on the one hand i feel that if someone needs a college education to “get it”—whatever “it” might be in relation to a particular text or piece—then there’s something wrong with that piece. on the other hand, i spend a great deal of energy helping folks who don’t have a college education get one if they want one, and i see the skills such an education provides (principally skills linked to excitement about learning, knowledge of how to access resources and information, critical thinking strategies and practice articulating one’s thoughts in critical and creative ways) as important tools for anyone and everyone to have in order to be better equipped to move through the world, and radically rebuild it as needed (and how!).

perhaps my questions are to some extent questions of venue. i think your acknowledgement of the lawn as a problematic love is extremely apt. nothing is holy, no one is immune, we are all complicit, and there is much to love even in the manufactured atrocities that permeate our air.

as for out of step with my generation, when you visit and are reminded of my 22 manual typewriters, you’ll see just how out of step (clickety clack) i really am!!

xoxo

jen

hello jen,

it has been more than a week since your last incisive email graced my inbox and i fear i have lost some of the thread. i love how all these questions tumble one on top of another and, in some way, answer themselves or—perhaps they do not
answer but the fact that many of them are being asked disputes the need for asking. Like if this world has produced a you, attempting or wanting to de-twine these threads of (habit? social response? culture?) then perhaps they are not really so tightly wound. At least not so tightly wound that we can not see them.

If the this you speak of is the art work we make then I would say that this now is still important, is part of the opening of the door to imagining, empathy and action. I am assuming you are asking in regards to that question that comes up through frustration and the incomprehensibility of creating an art when wars are raging and people are starving to death and disease runs rampant and the ocean can’t even produce fish that would be considered organic anymore. When something like a poem looks ineffectual or luxurious. I am not without these thoughts but I feel like art is one of the few things which make people want to be alive. Art, love...what else? And the wanting to be alive is what stirs people to cherish this strange (creepy) gift of life, and it is in the cherishing that people want to take care with themselves, the earth, each other. So now. And again. And our making and sharing shifts the world in that—for a small moment—the receivers of such art must suspend their own voice and give themselves to someone else’s language, time, meter, imagination, idea etc. and in the process grow or react or dream. It is this meditative reception of something which is not trying to sell them anything which serves as a trampoline for their own thoughts and actions and pathos.

Art is necessarily revolutionary. Asks to be specific—challenges a listener, reader or viewer to think differently than they might have. It is like heart and brain yoga—the strength and flexibility one attains from the reception of work can be used in all aspects of one’s life. (Sounds like boosterism) (Go art go!).

I find these speech acts (analysis, criticality) meaningful for the same reasons. It is the rousing which produces awareness and through awareness people become engaged and it is this engagement which makes all the difference.

There are so many other questions and exact opposite responses to these questions I’ve stabbed at (like perhaps we make art because we don’t have wars or starvation to contend with and need the gristle of challenge to chew on?)—some of these, though, are questions of the questions—fine tuning the asking. But I will not get to them all.

I love your notion of neighborly here and this metaphor really resonates with me. I think this is a perfect summation of an ideal. One which you seem to have well mastered in your magical life. This sharing and building up—I am thinking of myriad hands constructing the giant art pyramids of our planet. Psychic and actual objects which build on each other and react to the future. (Retroactive dancing lessons pulled tight and taught*)

Here in Baltimore the sun is coaxing small buds from the ground like a giant snake charmer in the sky. Spring makes the worry a little less dire.

Yesterday I heard a man on his cellphone saying “I thought I missed it—I thought I missed it” He thought he missed the rapture—he went to church at church time and the door was open and there was no one inside. He said “It was eerie man—I thought they all been sucked up and they left me here” finally he found the deacon down in the basement and told him about this missing the rapture fear—the deacon said “Well what were you gonna do” he told the deacon “I was gonna hold tight” but he told his cell phone friend “I figured I might as well go and have a drink.”

*From Hofer’s small book going, going
dear stephanie:

“I say it is time the empty lots and suburban yards are able to express the halting pauses of human existence.”

it tickles me to think that the guy on his cellphone thought he’d missed the rapture, rather than potentially thinking that opening the door into an empty church filled with silence and the absence of people is the rapture!

perhaps art-making is the halting pause we need in order to exist.

in rapture we become de-selfed, move elsewhere. it is a gap into which we fall? i’m not sure i believe in the rapture, though i have experienced rapture and hope to again.

the spiral jetty is rapturous, but not more so than the oil company jetty jutting out into the water just a few hundred yards away.

the museum can be rapturous (or at the very least enjoyable); the street more so. and even more so when the museum is doing its job, to shift (molecularly) our awareness out to the edges of things, so that once we’re back on the street heading wherever it is we might go, the textures and parameters are completely different.

“The indiscriminate exactness of description seems so apt a metaphor for existence.”

we describe and describe and describe, never arriving at substance yet always substantially palpable. to rub an experience or vision between our fingers, to balance it on the tip of the tongue.

we tell ourselves about ourselves, respond to the world by saying “world.”

patience is limited. what are the poetics of impatience?

if we were to practice revolutionary description—or simply revolution—what might that look like? what then would we balance on the tips of our tongues?

xoxo

jen

jen,

oh revolutionary description seems a stellar goal. our fingers would be sticky and larger than expected as the remains of these experiences and the descriptions of them—the switching descriptions—would linger and grow atop each other. the

** quotes from barber’s *For A Lawn Poem* (Publishing Genius, 2008).
resultant haptic interface a sensory/memorial thrift store. big chaotic hands reaching out and in describing and becoming something a hand never thought it could be.

love, stephanie

dear stephanie,

i think of thrift stores as museums. and perhaps all museums are memorials of a sort. thrift stores certainly are, as they are often where the things of the dead show up. things in thrift stores are sticky.

in his ugly duckling presse book *the theory of everything (abridged)*, ben luzzatto writes:

“These clouds have indistinct boundaries that are made to look distinct because we are so far away from them. This is the way language holds the world. All definitions and distinctions between things would be blurry if you could get close enough to them, even the ones that look hardened and fixed.”

in describing we recognize.

in describing we recognize we cannot describe. we can only approach, or make another attempt, or try to further describe the description.

we approximate.

is description distribution? so to redistribute (wealth or whatever else) would be to redescribe?

love, jen

i have had the distinct feeling of flailing my thought hands around in the dark of my mind looking to find out how to say. and as i say i realize. distribution YES. i like this cloud idea that it is proximity which makes things diffuse. something i have felt in terms of intimacy. the blurriness of those closest to us. i enjoy this blurry feeling and think it is somehow so generous. this allowing those you know and love to be strange and strangers but i think it gets tricky as there is so much pressure to show love via understanding or knowledge. do we put this same pressure on language??

sometimes. i have found myself playing both sides—using an inappropriate word simply for humor or musical resonance (etc.) and expecting its acceptance but also being a bit of a stickler at other times and not wanting definitions to shift (nonplussed—don't give in to the pressure!).

we are making minute re-descriptions with every context we throw a word into and we are also re-describing if the initial description is the neurological/sensorial way we interface with the universe. we then redescribe when employing language to describe.
de scribe.

break it down little scratches, help us process smells and sights and warm soft fur and share this knowledge with our kin. (and ourselves! this is what is perhaps most perplexing this soothing, cooing impulse to let ourselves know what we are thinking and feeling!)

dear stephanie,

translation is a use of language that allows us to be other than ourselves. we might say the same of reading. we are blurred, dissolved, even as we remain intact.

i deeply, passionately, electrifyingly want the world to be different than it is. i become frustrated when language cannot make it so.

i believe that languages (not exclusive of intuition, feeling, imagination, blind perception) are the building blocks of thought and articulation. without different languages, we cannot envision or enact a different world.

what do i mean by “different languages”?

i mean speaking more than one, that’s for sure. the humility and compassion (toward self and other) and tenacity and openness required to learn another language, another culture. i also mean literally reconfiguring what is possible to say. and therefore speaking in ways that make new configurations possible. when i’d just finished graduate school, i was so frustrated and alienated by what i perceived as widespread willingness to use language in ways that maintain the status quo (wheel spinning without even that slight movement), i began to write not nonsense exactly, but perhaps utterly sonic sense. i didn’t want to speak the language of normativity and acquiescence. i wanted to write an epic that would pique. i abandoned ship mid-stream, partly because i moved to mexico and became immersed in another language myself, and partly because i was worried that the only audience for such torqued textual forays would be an audience with which i am already in conversation. i want to speak to the person i do not yet know. and more than that, i want to listen to the person i do not yet know, and to the people i already know and love.

xoxo

jen

dear jen,

this “deeply, passionately, electrifyingly” calls for the preface of dear. it touches a space in my heart which lets longing for anything sit alone—guarded and mocked by a cruel false buddha with a chicken grease chin.
is it sidestepping or translation at play in the non verbal mediums expressing thought and emotion—like music, dance, painting etc? sort of presupposes that everything starts as language or impulse towards language. opposable thumb, bipedalism, language. these are the biggies which saddle us with wants like change or desire.

i am wanting to, with this written language, express my excitement over these ideas—respond in careful kind and open yet other doors off these big doors but am preparing to leave town—to head to california where i will see you and talk via mouths and hand gestures—setting these clackings to rest for a short while. until i see you in a very short while i will say goodbye with this scantest of missives which says only “oh yes, i hear you and am excited and perplexed by these thoughts”

love,
stephanie


p.s.

succulents — a type of fractal — grow more exponentially in containment than in open space; there is a lesson in this, though the lesson may relate only to succulents.

such succulence! and fibonacci over on the side looking like a cat’s paw blocking a sunset.

accumulation or attrition? collecting or colliding? quantum leaps or quantum sleeps?

a kind of holler that means hallelujah mixed with a deep and abiding shame.

bodies are porous, as are days, utterances, sunsets and intentions; there is a lesson in this, though the lesson too may be porous.

so many lessons and gap toothed caveats, porous in the extreme and the extreme is a melody, as are cats, whose softness and magnetic sleeps are a sort of porosity or propensity.

propelling the paw lightning of horn sections into the occluded ballads of alleys and the tedious serengeti coexisting with unnamed militarized deserts we visit against our will, vast face pocked with misconstrued retribution.

or unshaved debt collectors dressed like shirley temple, smiling and curtsying and kicking up their heels, all to no avail, lollypop juice stickum chins slowing their movements. yes, ghastly and unavailable.

our landscape dotted with salesmen like correctly apportioned i’s, criss-crossed with mega-churches like t’s with their cross-beams hung out to dry.
The backs of male shadows amidst the stink of urine.
Like some firing squad, staring
At the multiplying ceramic tiles.

The wall stretches out in front of you, too.
A fish is pushing her white head through
From the other side, doesn’t penetrate.

She wants to drink up the whole world, which she carries,
To release the surplus human weight.
Who knows, perhaps she already did so long ago.

And aren’t the faces of the men urinating
Reflections of Jonah’s, squeezed between fishy spikes?
What is here, what there?

What kind of human voice is on the other side of the urinal?
Are people happier, more timeless there, fish Fa?
Or there is no other side,

Only the visions of drunks, tensed in fear
That you don’t close your thirsty mouth, Faronika,
As fair punishment for grinding your yellowed teeth,

And castrate us.

Translated by Brian Henry

Note: Fa is a popular brand of soap in Europe. Faronika is a mythological fish common in old Slovenian folk songs. Faronika carries the world on its back, and when there is too much evil in the world, Faronika will dive into the cosmic sea and thus destroy the world.
LINA RAMONA VITKAUSKAS
“"I AM THE COMPASS THE ROSE
OF THE WINDS THAT FADES
EVERY FALL”
(from Huidobro’s “Eiffel Tower”)

Maple rubber shudder,
man through meter,
my small boy Petir gazes
upon seven grain sands.

The drunks pour from church.
My boysenberry ventricles valve
names, my moth body melts as
phosphate in reticulation.

The mirror through which the fruit
of my last fall reflects upon
my father who spoke for Victory,
pasted solitude upon waning skies,
feigned his thunder in December
crying “all should weep
telescopic tears!”
EACH DAY A DEBUT

“A film so new it looks confusingly as if it might be a failure…”
—Truffaut on Renoir’s La Regle du jeu

This feature a “love-and-guns-on-the-run.”

Upon the oily saddle, an automatic outtake.

Nine minutes and forty-six seconds in the Louvre.

This sequence: they dislocate a clarinet, get confused.

Each day frames a father, director.

So this Lapland satire returns, your love still the winter,
traveling guardedly like a country truck in the distance.

This shot shaded in Gaussian parameters.

Angle left, angle right.

We keep making stories for when we go like programmed lambs.
Genocide belongs to the category of natural, and not aberrant behavior. It follows that those who commit genocide are not bestial but human...[and that]...there must be a secular understanding of genocide.*

in the jungle in the darkness with | ts e| es there with | ts e| es there was a girl
+ she was passsing she ’s passsing they’re no more.

they’re in the jungle in the darkness there ’s a law there ’s a Lord
who has no breath
| t’s all been taken by a sp| r| t who’s been
awed by what’s been stolen what’s been taken from his airs
WHO has a v| s| on?
+ his vO| ce | s + his sOund | s
+ his tOngues can barely pass
around the space
where words are torn
from out h| s mouth + out h| s lungs
by those WHO master
+ COMMAND h| m| as
they’re prey| n’ on h| s vO| ce
if he can’t br| ea the he cannot br| ea the
he can’t inhale he can’t respire
if he cannot br| ea the he cannot br| ea the
he can’t exhale he will expire.

but this Lord he’| s in RESISTANCE with an ARMY
in the jungle where the sp| r| t “WHO Are YOU?” commands
+ masters all our fates
where are the children who are stolen are the weapons are they prey| n’?
to the sp| r| t “WHO Are YOU?” commands
" t’s never bee| en so bad.”
he cannot br| ea the he cannot br| ea the
he can’t inhale we will expire.
he cannot br| ea the he cannot br| ea the
he can’t make his
mou| the to...
MOVE!

CHRISTINE WERTHEIM
MADONNAS AND CHILD
As she was passing, she was passing as the order speaks, he will!

"You must breathe the last," it said.

"Please don't make us die!"

"As he is watching, he is drinking up the sights of all the tears they're in her arms, they're in her neck, they're in her eyes.

We are the children, we're the weapons, we are prey!

"Who's in resistance, who's trying not to breathe with a word out, loud is her mouth?"

"Who's watching, he is steering his flesh up the sights of all the tears, they're in her arms, they're in her neck, they're in her eyes."

"We are the children, we are blinded by the breaking of her blood."

"Please don't make us die!"

"As he is watching, he is drinking up the sights of all the tears, they're in her arms, they're in her neck, they're in her eyes.

We are the children, we are the stolen, we're the weapons, we are prey!"

"She's watching, he is steering his flesh up the sights of all the tears, they're in her arms, they're in her neck, they're in her eyes.

We are the children, we are blinded by the breaking of her blood.

"Please don't make us die!"

"As he is watching, he is drinking up the sights of all the tears, they're in her arms, they're in her neck, they're in her eyes."

We are the children, we are prey!"

"She's watching, he is steering his flesh up the sights of all the tears, they're in her arms, they're in her neck, they're in her eyes.

We are the children, we are blinded by the breaking of her blood.

"Please don't make us die!"

"As he is watching, he is drinking up the sights of all the tears, they're in her arms, they're in her neck, they're in her eyes."

We are the children, we are prey!"

"She's watching, he is steering his flesh up the sights of all the tears, they're in her arms, they're in her neck, they're in her eyes.

We are the children, we are blinded by the breaking of her blood.

"Please don't make us die!"

"As he is watching, he is drinking up the sights of all the tears, they're in her arms, they're in her neck, they're in her eyes."

We are the children, we are prey!"
Who has the voice? + the voice

We are the mouths that make the tears that are the holes

Through which he’s drinking
He’s sucking
He’s breathing in the air

Now he’s suckling with our mouths
That make the tears
They’re in her flesh
He’s like a babe they’re
Now he breathes now
He can breathe he won’t expire

+ as he’s drinking he’s gazing
At the tears they’re in her eyes they’re
He’s the

We are the mouths that make the sounds that he can hear
That we can hear him
We can hear him
He’s breathing

(shhhhh)
BETSY FAGIN

solved equation

measurements note an increased production of possibility—
detect acceleration. excitement at this is wrong thinking.

standards that underlie ignorance cannot embarrass—
light becomes everything heavy. everything thought.

continuum loosened thought to consequent measurement,
wondrous truth. the weakness of will and live equations—

form following concentrated energy to solution. to amazement.
turned out regional accents through warped dramatics—

spread the very universe. space be not the same as space-time.
stuck in our own geometries, we can never interact. always true—

our viewpoint is the dimensional light outside the floating world.
travel becomes stuck—an appearance of insanity.
**mid-century**

loss washed ashore to surround seawall terror. whims over-liberating floodwaters’ demands.

half-alien, unadorned technology fused local harvest mind–generations of built environments.

faced flushed at exteriors’ flat wood. let the shore, precarious, structure the possible– wasting. close the sea.

**an outer text**

worship my mouth. drink from descend and betray. everything else is so center of the circle, powerful periphery–nothing more.

the neglected core removed, evermore captured. darkness only. she is gone when she is external. shining is merely focused attention.
above ground

empty of unlit desire
tasted safe.

digest. got away with
known risks. in the park.

staid. crowd time awhile.
look. down. chance ache:

tremble flows– wakened
path well run.

below sheen, I see you
some days. sipped

communal thought
faded. insoluble.

echoed touch
into possibility.

probability.
like rain. let me.

as wind
or a flash of light:

close to sweet,
mended.
AMANDE IN
A FOREST FOR THE TREES

Vacation, since 2009
in collaboration with Noelle Papay
biscuit porcelain, each nail is handmade, length
approx 7,5 cm. A tribute to the concept of holidays.
Photo: Barbora Kleinhamplová
Some might consider a notebook equally empty, whether its pages are white or filled with lines. While thinking, I trace some lines into notebooks.

Photo: Michal Novotný
Hungarian variations, 2004-2010
re-assemblage: 8 notebooks from Hungary, each with a different pattern of lines, are deconstructed and re-constructed (keeping the original alignment of the staples-holes and re-using the original staples), variable dimensions
Photo: Tomas Souček
This space is a kind of huge corridor shaped in an arc, punctuated by six columns, ornamented with two tracks of neon lights, a floor of marble tiles and three entrance doors; to sum up, this is a “white cube” which looks nothing like a “white cube” and whose features are already sufficient to exhaust the eyes of the viewers. Therefore, I use the space itself as the raw material for my intervention. Neve (snow in Italian) is the result of a gesture both simple and difficult. Using a very smooth sandpaper, I caress the whole space. Ceiling, walls, columns, gently shed their outer layer, which “falls” and covers the floor with a fine white powder. A snowy landscape emerges both in and from the white cube of the museum. The visitors leave their traces in it, departing with a little of this space clinging to their shoes. At the end of exhibition, there is less space than at the beginning; regardless, a feeling of emptiness persists.
Photo: Linda Leccese
you’d like to get back in the air, but you are adding to the mission in this crucial way. you stay with the program.

heh! ready! uh-oh he fell he’s trying to lead them now if you go directly west approximately 100

you are committed to your job. you are a patch-wearer. can you hide the sounds of your propellers? you map out meters you’ll see a single hotspot there, that’s the cave or tunnel entrance heh! ready! try again cleared to

a rescue plan on a bar napkin. you watch it all the way to impact. it’s like data entry. you wind up and throw it in fire standby ok you’re in the box rock em down just fire direct hit right there heh! ready! not the air. a raven. outfitted with hellfire missiles. it needs to be nimble. the streaming data while you chat via certain could be a howitzer guy’s moving guy’s moving got him no box no box they’re coming out

keyboard. you are the sensor. enter coordinates and see its airspace. using a joystick on a high hilltop. half-way there you got it heh! ready! see the other guy yup back on the other guys already got that other guy
around the world and ordinarily a mess hall cook. sitting in a trailer just outside las vegas. suited up. you throw the

that one’s still crawling there ok still moving the one up to the south yes! heh! ready! left side

bird up when you want to throw it. you can see around corners and over hills; a god’s eye view. it flattens the org

holed up and look around here I know those two guys I saw them flying apart yeah I got that guy too

chart. is it a plane, a camera, or a gun. no need to face your quarry. drop your payload and fly off. your outer

I saw him die earlier he was a 40 round direct heh! ready! that guy’s moving yeah he is he went down

skin has no metal. the belly is a rotating sphere of optics. in the clouds, no fixed orbit. fly a hexagon. fly a

that embankment he was protected direct hit heh! ready! don’t see anything moving permission to go

racetrack. fly a bowtie. who operates the ball? the screens sweep you into the world. you give the customer what he

back to compound yeah go ahead and head back to the compound

wants. an aerial stakeout. you get spun up and then called back. you track the heat signatures and create a narrative. sparkle the target in infrared. you’re above the weather. everything relies on visual confirmation, action no longer the territory of the mind. you can see more; you can feel less.
JAROMÍR TYPLT (text)
JAN MĚŘIČKA (images)

BRAINCREASERS
FROM THE HEEL UP, SINCE ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THE HEEL
FOR THE BRAIN TO RECOGNIZE A DEPICTION OF THE BRAIN
WHEN OUTER IS SO OUTER
FROM ONE WALL TO ANOTHER FIRST AND LAST
NOTHING COMING OUT OF NOTHING, PROVIDED IT
IS ROUNDED OFF
FROM THE NECK UPWARD

FROM THE HEEL UP, SINCE ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THE HEEL
and the feet suddenly give way, something somewhere off, and so
a stumble, and in that instance all you’ve had behind your back
retreats like soft flesh beneath a carapace
Hard fall onto the concrete,
dry snapping
The heels
used to fall better

that you lived

that you live

that you lived

that you lived

that you lived
FOR THE BRAIN TO RECOGNIZE A DEPICTION OF THE BRAIN
only a hint at a few folds suffices, two three lobes, or merely an accumulation of grey quagmire, and we’ve already measured which convolution has higher blood circulation & glucose intake by presenting the images to persons tested. But for you, it seems to me, that which doesn’t splash the wall isn’t a brain, you want to see penetration and shattering, let it flit! Just like your crafty ancestors who let themselves be heard

\[\textit{a blowe so forcefull e his brayne out of his skull e outfallen}\]

WHEN OUTER IS SO OUTER
and you can’t catch-on inside,
it keeps dodging away from you, rolling-up, falling-through, slipping-out & drawing-in, the blasted mollusc; unless you give-up the pursuit, shortly, you’ll be stuck, and it’ll dawn on you only after the fact that you’ve gone too far, that you won’t scramble out of here, that you are, from all sides,

\((\text{surrounded})\)

hypophysis and iniquity
to suffer a sign

\((\text{in the angle of the skull section})\)

some kind of trench war

vascular bundles, blood relations

and the next cobrainage
FROM ONE WALL TO ANOTHER FIRST AND LAST
up to that which is downtrodden and scattered around and mixed-in and blended-in and lost, neglected and
outgrown again
up to that which is downtrodden and scattered around and pressed-in and
so that one can point out to it any time and disbelieve: — You meant this?
— You meant by this?

you won’t even think
you won’t even notice
you won’t even blink
you won’t even

here sight

will move the thumb
twitch the head
a cricket

belt-like convolution

utter
blank

will have clenched
will have scented
will have stiffened
will have resented

NOTHING COMING OUT OF NOTHING, PROVIDED IT
doesn’t lapse by that shift into memory

full of
all that
worth reflecting upon
overcrowding of heads

IS ROUNDED OFF

the main thing however
is not to slash

FROM THE NECK UPWARD

you catch a flicker

translated by David Vichnar
“I want to see you.”

I pale. Don’t know what to say. What she wants confounds me. But I’m thrilled by the way she’s expressed it; the words that seem to exclude her, as if they belonged to a language not hers, to her, one dead and buried; and the smile opens her body to mine, including me in that body, as if inviting me to her shadow, more welcoming than mine. Than my light.

“May I?” she asks, raising her hands toward my face, toward my lips, which until now have merely framed a voice.

“Of course.”

She touches my face. Feels it. I imagine her sensing the warmth of my skin as I sense the warmth of her fingers. I even think I feel her blood pulsing close in the wake of their live, very present tips, not prints, absence. Or perhaps I’m feeling my own pulse beneath her skin and mine?

This is and is not a caress. She draws, gauges. With both hands simultaneously. Her palms on my cheeks; extended upward, her fingers, oriented quickly by my breath, touch my lips, separate them, cross from one lip to another as if over a bridge, squeeze my nostrils, seeming to measure them, then join over the septum; after confirming the sockets, her fingertips press my eyes closed, lightly, as if the pressure were only the weight of that rosy dawn, the ribbing of an almost imperceptible breeze as it refreshes first my eyelids, then my eyeballs, concave like marble pupils, denting slightly after yielding to the momentary pressure, as if this were light embracing the empty gaze of a shadow; now the play of her fingertips brushes the base of my supraorbital ridges, each fingertip pressing gently in order to reach the eyebrows and traverse them at snail’s pace, from their point of separation to their silky edges, fanning out until they again touch skin; from there they ascend, advancing over my forehead until they reach my scalp, which they furrow, as if to comb it, or dishevel it; then they move toward the sides, the cheekbones, temples, sideburns, the lobules and helix of the ears, finally to slide, as if in retreat, along my cheeks, jawbone, chin, always downward, all the way to my neck.

“You’re handsome,” she tells me, always smiling, as she withdraws her hands.

“But I’m your work and you’ve signed my skin.”

Caracas, 24 August 2009

* Profiled by this mirror—the only one that’s ever caressed me—, I saw myself in the touch of a blind woman. Decades ago. Yesterday. Recalling it—yesterday, decades ago—I had the sensation that my face was Braille and that she erased it as she drew. As if to ensure that I would not drown in my image but that she would absorb it. Or drain it away from me. Eyes closed, facing a blind woman, for an instant I felt light. No ideas, no identity. A pleasant beheading for which I thank Marie, not Nemesis.

translated by Carol Maier
SELF PORTRAIT

Sightless
into a sightless glass
I gaze at who I was
and who I will be.
They don’t know me.
In the water
as it slips
through my fingers
I seek who I am.
Not there.

10 May 2009

translated by Carol Maier
HENRY HILLS
INTERVIEW

LA: I’m interested in the relationship between editing and subject matter in your films. In *Radio Adios* (1982) and *Money* (1985), and also *Plagiarism* (1981)—in which you work with New York poets, dancers, musicians including John Zorn, Diane Ward, Sally Silvers, Ron Silliman, James Sherry, Abigail Child, Charles Bernstein, Bruce Andrews, Hannah Weiner, Jackson Mac Low—there is a highly kinetic use of cut-up techniques that is structured by certain cadences or tempos that emerge from within the montage. Particularly in *Money* there is a type of dialogue with Sally Silvers’ choreography and Zorn’s music, with the rapid “turnover” of images echoing the idea of commodity, monetary flow, etc. To what extent would you say that the film was an act of collaboration, or an articulation of a collective “poetics”?

HH: Sure, I’d like to make the world into one big poem, but “cut-up technique” (although it’s something I was interested in and informed by at a certain point in my development, along with other aleatory methods) is not an accurate description of what I do. I shoot almost all of the footage which I use, and most of the shot lengths are determined in the shooting. I don’t shoot long takes and then cut them up. I do favor a certain level of rhythmic intensity, but it would be incorrect to say that I impose this on the footage; it is the footage, my preferred way of gathering moments from the constant flux of life. I think my cutting is very sculptural in general, but especially in the sense that I allow the material to ultimately reveal itself in its perfection by spending enough time with it and paying close attention, especially at the periphery. Choosing the actual frames which conjoin is essential. “Collage” might not be a wholly incorrect description. Perhaps my work also has a “process” orientation: I improvise in the shooting and then there are layers upon layers of improvisation in the editing. I leave in evidence all of the phases. I do always start off with a fixed idea. I generally write it down, and then, when I’m finished, it amazes me, when I go back and read what I had written, how close the final results are to the initial vision, because it seems like madness and diversions and winging-it, constant problem solving and questioning at every step along the way. When I look at my own films, which I always do if I am present at a screening, I feel a strong sense of physical comfort. This is because the rhythms are mine, the rhythms of my body and mind. I think my films are very physical in that sense. I hone them in the editing until the rhythms are perfect and I can tell when this is because I finally relax. So it’s especially gratifying when the audience is with me. Though this is a dynamic I think which operates below the surface.

Not that the surface is inessential. I don’t want to discount the documentary function of film, for instance, which not only is unavoidable and totally manifest at every point, but is also that quality which avoids abstraction. It distinguishes moving imagery from music, the world’s favorite art form. On the other hand, it is not the aspect that is most of the time at the forefront of my mind while composing a work. It’s always there at the beginning, as what one thinks one is doing, and it is there at the end, often as a source of fear and discomfort, since moving imagery is all-revealing but those aspects which are being judgmentally noticed are constantly changing with evolving societal mores and the flickering tastes of fashion. There are so many other aspects of the surface to consider. Everything is on the surface in fact! But most of the effort in the making is involved in delving into and revealing motions of consciousness and this is what makes films re-viewable and different every viewing with an active participation. The ever flowing consciousness of the audience is banging up against this exploratory model of a moment of a maker’s flow of consciousness.

I had begun filmmaking primarily focusing on the basic unit of film, the *frame*, but I soon discovered that it was the *interval* which gave it propulsion. My silent, single-frame (San Francisco) movies were basically dynamic landscape studies. I think I retained this intense consciousness of the flow of frames after I started holding the trigger down. Moving to cacophonous New York, I felt the need to make sound films and I decided to learn how sound films worked by making *sync* sound films. With video everything is automatically sync, so today
this might seem obvious & a tautology, but soundtracks in film have always been constructions. It would be typical for a low budget 16mm filmmaker to create the image and then add the audio afterwards or sometimes to begin with a piece of music and cut the image to it. Shooting sync sound in film requires more equipment and generally a crew. In my case, however, I was using a recently retired 16mm television news camera which recorded a track of sound onto a magnetic metal coating on the edge of the reversal film strip being exposed, so the situation actually was somewhat like with video today and I was thus able to shoot and record audio by myself and so work intimately.

When I decided to start working with sound, I was painfully aware of the limited amount of material I would be able to afford to generate with my fixed and finite bank account, that a relatively small amount of footage would comprise my entire vocabulary for an extended period of time. I went to my friends who I took to be experts in their fields at that time, at least to the degree that I could be said to be expert in mine, looking to the three traditional elements of movies, musicians for sound, dancers for movement, and poets for language. Trusting in a continuous flow of interesting noises and words and motion from my cast, I would stop listening after I had set the levels and turn the camera off and on as if I were shooting silent, just focusing on the visuals. Editing is generally approaching a finite and fixed set of material and giving it concision, coherence, and rhythm. My films are truly made on the editing table. I would transcribe the words and make various scribbles and notations to help me recall the sounds and gestures and then create new writing moving across the various voices. Radio Adios was like a poem (the text was published and I gave a reading once); Money was more a prose piece where the fragments were re-formed into sentences. The dance was cut in a different manner, however. In Radio Adios footage of Sally Silvers was used to fill holes in the visuals (I had not been happy with the way Plagiarism looked, my works usually have a certain driving visual acuity, so after I finished assembling Radio Adios on the flatbed where I edited watching the motion, I spent some time working on the filmstrip on rewinds; whenever I wasn’t happy with the visual rhythm of the succession of frames on the strip,
the material unprojected, I replaced those frames with other footage); in *Money* the improvisations of Pooh Kaye and Sally, on the other hand, were synched to tracks from music performances which were underexposed (the idea for SSS grew out of this “contingency”).

As for the “cadences of montage,” of course I begin here with speech rhythms, but people speak faster on a crowded Canal Street, say, than in a quiet apartment, and there must be additive adjustments to make the varying voices fit together into a pleasing rhythm. I think, especially in *Money*, I was as concerned to make a musical composition (although it is mono) as a literary one. Zorn, just shortly before this, in works such as *Pool* and in a lot of his improvisation, was playing little
discreet bleeps and I cut bits like that into the mix to adjust the phrasing and tempos. It’s funny how (Williams Mix notwithstanding) musicians hate editing; they like to flow on and on; you can see this is the basic design difference between ProTools and Final Cut or Avid. I recently re-mixed the track for a 35mm blow-up and was kind of amazed to rediscover the number of single frame and even half-frame audio cuts I used to create the fullness I wanted.

I do like the idea of a “collective poetics.” We were the same age at this particular intense locale and period & for the most part at a similar place in the development of our personal aesthetics, but still developing, although many of the participants didn’t know others’ work and
maybe still don’t. I saw aesthetic parallels and tried to make them visible, and even hooked various artists up. I’ve always in theory liked the idea of collaboration, but it’s so hard in actual practice. Money is almost like a historical document now, but maybe it’s my fiction of a lost glorious period of collective endeavor.

A few weeks after I had filmed Hannah Weiner on her roof reading from the notebooks which ultimately became *Little Books/Indians*, she gave a reading on WBAI of some of the same pieces. They were almost twice as long, with new sentences woven between the earlier sentences, phrases between phrases, and words between words. That was pretty much the way that I was building my rough cuts on these film; I think the Russians must have worked in a similar manner in the 20’s. It was a delight for me to listen to her changes, because editing the film was sort of like “audio-visual education,” I basically had the poems memorised in their earlier form, so I felt I could peep into her creative processes. I think in cutting her, in particular, I was informed by her compositional methods. I felt a very strong affinity to the “language writing” thrust in those early exploratory years, especially while the poets were writing short works—I’m still making short works myself! As she explained, she saw words (she took a very analytical and structural approach to her schizophrenia, her muse) on her forehead, on the TV set, certainly on the page as she gave readings, and so she read what was new alongside of what was typed out (sometimes in her books she represented these different levels of seeing text as different fonts or font-sizes).

Peter Seaton used to come watch what I was working on in the editing room. Back then he was the best person to show work-in-progress (I somehow frequently have the temptation to show people what I am working on, I guess because it takes so long to finish, and it’s almost always a mistake or even a disaster; I think my work is kind of a balancing act and the balance has to be perfect and whole or it just seems chaotic) because he would project and even fantasize on where it was going and what that meant for the development of the poetic consciousness and ... it’s just so sad how enthusiasts crash. When we heard he had died a few weeks ago, no one knew how to feel, since he had dropped out of our lives so many years ago so definitively.

LA: In 1953, Amos Vogel organized a symposium in New York on the topic of “Poetry and Film.” You yourself have worked with a number of innovative poets—what sort of relationship do you see between contemporary investigations into film form and poetics? In *Kino Da!* (1981), with Jack Hirschman, you make explicit reference to the work of Vertov and Eisenstein, and much of your own favours the concrete qualities of montage and the contingent quality of its “subject matter” (including found material, as in the music video you produced for John Zorn’s *Naked City*, *Gotham*, in 1990). There’s something Iain Sinclair once said of J.G. Ballard, that his work succeeded in forging a poetics out of that which contained least poetry (in the conventional sense). Is this a task you see yourself actively undertaking?

HH: I recall as a student reading about that Vogel symposium with Arthur Miller and Dylan Thomas as being just the old farts trashing Maya Deren. They all seemed drunk and the more they rode her, the more pretentious she became. It made a very bad first impression on me and I never looked at it again. It made me feel sorry for Marilyn Monroe.

I had always felt there should be an affinity between poets and experimental filmmakers because neither could possibly earn a living from their work and so they both could be honest. They both deal with material that everyone feels that they understand but both make constructions that most people don’t feel that they do understand and are thus often hostile towards. Maybe they have a shared martyr complex. Now that the curators are the stars, though, I no longer trust filmmakers to be honest.

What do you mean “the contingent quality of its ‘subject matter’”? In *Gotham* the subject matter seems if anything over-determined. The band is named after a Weegee book, a famous photo from which is on the cover of their first album, and so most of my images are either re-creating Weegee pictures or using stock shots (gangsters’ corpses, Weegee himself puffing on a cigar) in the same mode, though there’s much less found footage used here than you may imagine. I shot most of the images and degraded them to look like found shots, in the same manner that I had degraded the imagery of *Kino Da!* to make it look like an old Russian
film. Jack Hirschman had written me a poem to cut up into “zaums” which he read in both Russian and English. But, of course my thoughts on and practice of editing is somewhat informed by the silent films of Eisenstein and particularly Vertov (and Griffith’s *Intolerance*, which was a major influence on both of them) and also the way these ideas went with Brakhage. I don’t think any of those four ever felt their subject matter was contingent. I mean it’s unavoidable anyway.

LA: In 1997 you began an as-yet unfinished project with the late Emma Bee Bernstein, entitled *Emma’s Dilemma*. The film includes a series of “interviews” with Susan Howe, Ken Jacobs, Richard Foreman, Tony Oursler, Jackson Mac Low, Carolee Schneemann, Kenny Goldsmith, Julie Patton, Lee Ann Brown, among others, framed by, and interspersed with vignettes from the life of its “protagonist,” Emma Bernstein. The film seems to pose a number of questions—the most obvious one being about the status of so-called documentary, cinéma vérité, etc. It would be hard to describe *Emma’s Dilemma* as documentary in any conventional sense. If it records a series of “real” encounters, it does so on the level of cinematic reality alluded to by André Bazin. Bazin, however, was unsympathetic to montage, and it’s through montage and other techniques of editing that the encounter with a cinematic reality is brought about in your work in general, and in this film in particular. This encounter isn’t narrated from within the interview format, but from within the cut: as Godard says, “simple juxtaposition, makes it possible to tell a story.” My question would be, when you were editing *Emma’s Dilemma*, was there a particular rationale at work? Did the film’s structure evolve out of any additional considerations—for example, for the formal concerns of the artists being interviewed, expressed in their own work? There is, for instance, a certain dramatic/choreographic element in the section devoted to Richard Foreman and the Ontological-Hysteric Theatre, in which—among other things—soundtrack is used to support the tempo of the edit. Foreman himself says at one point: “Art is built out of contingencies.” Or elsewhere, in the section devoted to Susan Howe, the footage is edited in such a way as to emphasise the vowel sounds of Howe’s speech—something she herself identifies as a concrete element of language that has preoccupied her as a poet (“open letters that sound in an open way”). Interestingly, Emma Bernstein says only one line in this section—“you have to back it up now”—which is replayed three times. Would you see your work as exploring, in a sense, what “backs up” the documentary realism of the “image,” of “sound” or “language”? I mean, in terms of what comes to the fore through the editing process—what’s unexpectedly “revealed,” so to speak, of a type of cinematic unconscious?

HH: *King Richard* with Richard Foreman, *Nervous Ken* with Ken Jacobs, and the Susan Howe section, which I feel are among the more successful of the sections I’ve completed, clearly reflect in some way the work of the artists involved. Not all of the shoots lent themselves to that sort of manipulation, however, and, as I worked on this piece off and on over a very protracted period of time, I explored a variety of impulses. This is the first piece I ever did wholly on the computer; I was exploring a new way of working. I’m still working on it.

*Most of the films discussed here are included on Hills’ 2 DVD’s produced by Tzadik: SELECTED FILMS 1977-2008 and ASTRONOME (www.tzadik.com). Also, many are available for viewing or download at http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Hills.html.*
The narrative retells the famous story of “The Raft of the Medusa,” in which over one-hundred people perished off the coast of Senegal in 1816. This excerpt follows twelve characters, who find themselves consigned to a raft built from the remains of the sinking Medusa. Their provisions are running out and their chance of survival has been cut—they have been floating for three days. They are: Lope (the ship’s doctor), Jin (a young woman), Sol (army sergeant), Mon Suet (cook), Rope Boy (deck-hand), Dog (ship’s dog), Ern (carpenter, raft leader), Ratchett (infantryman), Boyle (infantryman), Wills (orphan boy), Norma (singer, wife of Chippie), Chippie (husband of Norma).

CHIPPIE
Okay now. What’s this? (reads)

Our raft turned and tipped windblown as a hat
something. something. something.
in an unpredicted storm and more than two
hands trying to reach and clasp the blown brim
to hair, meaning the wet slippery ocean that improbable head that which,
to be quite honest is quite unsuited to a hat. Is quite provoked in fact by our hands dangling or clapping or combing....
each hand pair with its own face and each face somehow worn

faceless. Talk about a uniform grimace all puck-bittered
and un-wormed a pug of complaints the spoilt tea parties
quoits only slosh damp ening wits the damned dirt that’s all
golden but sands off the skin it’s not a tragedy when
things are this close it’s farce. This hat, this rakish slapdash, thing does not
stay on and the wind roars and roars with what can only be called
hysterical laughter shrieking and slapping at the thighs,
of the raft it’s wood, only wood ha-ha-ing and haw-ing as mad
as a Sphinx gone to natur her captives can’t stop going back
and forth staggering to the vessels in their foreheads show how
fast the heart goes and the dead ones stacked like sandbags against a flood

Meanwhile, there is a dog a young boy... and others that come and go
there is a roll call but not for the dead some names they don’t get known
for days, some never we’re just cook, pig, slapper, dish. It’s a struggle
to remember anything the waves slap slap there’s von Hundert
the cut rope slap slap the last day on the Medusa is faint
and lack-lustre as someone else’s dream. Before being rafted
we watched the hours pass, nothing but staring the ocean looked gone just a thin cover of glass over sand that was as you watched
it kaleidoscoping up and up into tiny silver fish flipping in to the Medusa’s hull then fanning off
all split and cut and quick as mercury I found the unfolding disaster just riveting the ocean looked on as
the ocean looked away The people were bent over, the people were chucking their per sonal, tins, cufflinks, hammers, boots

plip plop everything seemed tragic slow as if we were acting
with our minds on the end.... Does it matter how I got here? The date, the time, the place of my birth? Of origin, no-one knows, but they could if they asked. Jin is murmuring, holding some heirloom the star of it looks like silver another century the maker’s mark
her dream, if I may be so bold is to get under her veil of....
hair and ball into her grandmother’s hand hammered shape. The mark of her maker to remember things like poetry, or the beginning of the admission of guilt. Whose admission? She never finishes what she starts I try to keep her from dreaming from going off but I must keep on it. The idea of a new raft I am adept as any other at artful scams, rescues, theatre but to offer the drowning public the weeping women orphaned sons not so you’d notice, but here, take a look at this. I’d show Ern but there’s no reason to pretend artists and fiddlers ever got on. Ha Ha, as someone once said, we have abandoned them!.. Something. Something. Something. A sworn and truth ful account signed, and co-signed— (stops) What’s this?.. Norma, wake up! Norma! He waves an arm across Norma’s eyes… He looks down at her closed eyelids. He pauses. Norma, do you remember? Do you remember what they did? Bloody mongrels. Nothing about it in this note. He spits Norma, you saw. You were singing. I heard you. The water was filling me trousers, me shoes slipped off, I couldn’t breathe. And you screamed and screamed. Norma [coughs. Chippie cups sea water into his hand and offers it to her. The water drips through his fingers. Norma, They went mad. Jumping around with swords and blades. Then Ern, or the white coat saw me and pulled at me hand. Got me up. I was blue I was choking. You were singing then. They said you sang all night. all night long

NORMA
Of course I was I was singing of such nice things. Lovely little things. Our lady of Lux made an appearance she was smiling down at me sort of meekly she held out her hands like like she was going to lay them on an’ her eyes was streaming like twin rivers Chip, she was pulling me in to her where it was safe an’ the clouds were lit up and golden like mini-suns and there were fields of bleating lambs, all the ones that had been saved from the chop. She starts Chip, look there’s land! Look We’re on land! No response… Well, it looks like land. Miles of it. What a trick. Like a painting by Chip. She pauses, trying to recall the name of a painter anyway, one of those with the real life perspectifs. Chip. No response… Chip. It’s a trick. Hard to believe you can’t just walk out—there. Pause. Chip, I’m so thirsty. I must have sung all night. Chippie? No response.. She looks at the water. It’s just that our Lady of Lux, I got the feeling that we should make a little offering, a gift, you know, to get in her good books She waves her hand around indicating the fellow raft passengers. They lie in a stricken pile, writhing or gasping. Chippie, whaddya think? No response… What about fer instance, her? The rope dancer. No response… Chips, I’m telling you, no-one knows her from all we know I could have dreamed her up. Look! Have a look in her face. Chippie looks. He says nothing. Go on, look again. She waits. Well, don’t you recognize me? She could be a phantom of my youth… Pause. No-one will miss her Chips She’s just some fancy Chip? She’s just some Jin on legs she even sings the songs I used to wailing on and off with her watery lips. Remember the special one… She hums I don’t recall it fully but it was something about a fig and her pomegranates some dirt like that. Remember? No response.. now don’t pretend to pretend Chip-Chip I know your tendencies, but hear me this gift, it’s a small down payment no one will notice there’s no court out here, and besides, it’ll get us in right in to the eternal garden of eternal delights Chip, there’s fields of lilies, I heard that and shining trumpets and, er, winged babies and our own kind all lying on carpets of wool made from the lambkins and what I’m talking about is being put in the good book, Chippie, on pages made of clouds… She sighs.
In the night tree bark sticking my legs are wet || indecipherable from raft what holds what | holds the water up and then down
That cracker with the vocals belching and dragging through waves || unwilling as seaweed strings
she is crooning, I am you you are me… || dotty old bitch it’s too much.. when last night I || saw the piles, the dirty face up rag faces whole baskets of them so many crushed collars || and ties no-one touches them but the heads pop || up balloons or monsters just to hide
wanted to hide even wave blankets || would do yet nothing holds, except that old ear | wig buzzing out tunes. She poses like a siren smashing our fate in the rocks if only there were rocks…she is crooning, you are, we | two and the third one is gone wave upon wave the wind cups the words back to surf yet last night the dark || ness turned all words to snake hiss…I saw. I tried to | stop looking. But the edges crept in the piles I thought it was land banks of sand but when I || thought my stomach waved up green
I made to move but my chin stuck the smell of the piles was wet rot fish heads gangrene in || my throat, in my head, I made to move but there was a man hand in my hair I unfurled one || aged claw.. sticking sticking maw of corral maw of hell get it off off then || Sol was roaring his men roaring and row || ing their fists the whack of oars noses skulls all beaten up flesh it all piled up a new steam|| ing stink I remember when I don’t have time || to remember a dive one of those damp ones …. in another time with a beady landlady || tucking secrets away in the eaves atop || the mantle coiled in stinking doilies…… the new pile….. shirts over heads soiled || soil how the sea soils just the same
dirt is dirt I must forget || everything Wills was under the arm of Em who was hiding behind a pile. || His rubbery lips were moving was he || praying? Not the type too wooden, he’s made for a raft. I’ve heard him groan shake his lame leg || a-scuttle from one patch it job to the next || That Wills nesting in his shadow, soldiers warned me about him the king and Lope wasting his || bottles of bromide ipecac opiate || chink chink as if things could be saved
there is no use in the night the doctor || bagged a few I saw it all the wind/ wave/ || white coat concealing sabre Em bleating a group of them bleating/ bleating no wool in their || eyes rational action blues just the same || white coat opens on sabre/ insert in heart/ stop/ twist/ pooling arteries/ chambers quartered/ next || insert in windpipe/ stop/ thrust/ stop/ snapping neck/ snag || of/ head. Next insert above belt/stop/ liver melt/ flail stagger/stop. I saw how they plan || to keep the numbers down Sol’s roaring his men || ’re roaring at night with no more fingers to count now the piles the piles number twenty || thirty Sol’s men now must pay for the wine, || Mon Suet says, with their livery livery blood stop how did this what about Em’s rules || what about what sea law what could I || do I lay there blinking it down wave / I wave/ battle thrust wave /thud I || tried to screech/wave /stop it stop it wave /Em behind || Lope behind Boy, behind he who was not there wave/ wave/ the night as long as a rope || wave/ I was tree logged, screeching but what is one sound dotty was singing.|| She kept singing. Dog was sleeping between || the killings, always at night, the peerless night the night, with no moon about it || no words || only whispers huddlings no one trusting || no one. Hand to gun, gasket, sword and then what?
Lope claimed there were threats… to the leader… || dotty sang his words: The unseen waves of terror the unseen but growing.. || melee… The leader is in danger || as such All threats were considered acts all acts were not just unreasonable, but treason able and all charges were brumby-mad.|| And dotty stops. But nothing stops. Everyone got it Rope Boy charging Lope charging || Sol charging Em screaming off you ……
off you Then Lope pulling out a red rose || fist from someone’s side so bright, bright red his || fist dewing blood the unknown man falling falling.
Ern sliding his leg to Lope’s side… Wills || dribbling Counting themselves a feather of white backs crowing what luck || the organs mush mushing
underfoot what now this petal is || someone’s tongue || or anemone of hair || that pocket watch is beating time I saw I saw. How the eyes, the grubby eyes… || get sore from too much……..seeing

WILLS
Ma, it’s been a whole century ‘n’ I’ve heard not|| hing from you ‘n’ I’m tired from walking the planks || ‘n’ calling ‘n’ calling ‘n’ your name ‘n’ on top of all my eyes hurt from squintin-out spray || ‘n’ salt all day all night ‘n’ stepping on backs fronts || ‘n’ the moans from the piles… ‘n’ yesterday or.

whenever it was Rope Boy came to me ‘n’ || said I was to go to the man with the bad leg,|| Ern’ll watch your back, he said, but the man that hit me said and who’s watching Ern’s back?|| Rope || Boy pushed me somewhere ‘n’ then I couldn’t see ‘n’ || ‘n’ the raft went shaky ‘n’ all black ‘n’ there was smoke ‘n’ ash ‘n’ what looked like fire pink ‘n’ || orange ‘n’ colours so hot they burned the face. Ern || caught me by the shirt tails ‘n’ he carried me away he said it was the fight ‘n’ I smelled food || being cooked up. Then I saw the owl lady ‘n’ || I said you look like Sissy ‘n’ ‘n’ she didn’t say nothing ‘n’ Norma piped in || ‘n’ said that girl’s me deary and the owl made to || get up ‘n’ there was no room ‘n’ the corner was sinking again ‘n’ her hair went || seaweeding in her face ‘n’ I said you don’t have || a character lady, do you? ‘n’ ‘n’ She blinked her blob eyes ‘n’ is that because || is that because you’re foreign I said ‘n’ Ern grabbed || me and moved me towards him ‘n’ dryness ‘n’ end

RATCHETT
—so the night wore on. But who’s countin’. I || reckon we did alright wonder how King will sum || it up Reckon we’ll have another night of it a bit of flash a bit of ra ra || them ones with the touchy stomachs need con || vincing that the piles as they call em the formerly with us are not no longer || with us. Two days from now they’ll be giv || en to the upper crew they’re already cranking their appetites eh Boyle, || convincing themselves that meat’s meat fair’s fair But listen, what are we but || someone else’s bleedin pink meal…………

Am I right am I right bleedin’ oath, I am || Norma’s always jibbering about it—lamb ||kins she says little lambs….you can quote me little lambs with big soft eyes… picture it || for a bit no pressure….

then tell me if that Jin Jin ain’t || real succulent meaning ||…..prime

BOYLE
Ratshit, Ratshit, all of it. Lamb for brains. What a || crockery. Who’s been feeding your ears, Ratshit? See || what’s going on, our dirty flip knives our sod- forsaken slit up the shitter shirts || our thumbnails torn off our faces blank as three || ply friggin coffin lids knock knock that Dog rod-eyed me that’s what he read me, you know, dog to || man. Dog’s tongue was hanging, his tail was sort of half || mast, he was looking right into me as in wink to the wink I found it impressive, || Ratshit a bit of magic but still things || are troubling me why? well thanks for asking:

It’s a nice day. The water’s still. The sun’s stewing || our nuggets but Dog gave me a presenti || mento…… that we’re on some list compiled by Doc and that Mon sweetbreath Suet || Ratchett how many did we grief last night? It’s not || the in and out, but the witnesses ……whole clouds of witnesses Sol is pacing in a brew of || despair not that he’s given to it but || Ratshit our brains are no use to the likes of them I mean to say we’re just || strips of brawn ….advertising certain threats bones holding up our poxy || still lives, like easels get me? You’re too fat too || ready with the bayo, brain’s a little looser than expected, a bit sparky you || don’t know when to turn it off.

Dog’s hackling day and night I watch him Ratshit,|| this rescue stuff, this land-sighting crockery , it’s|| straight outta grimm, not that I
—You know I don’t like to blow my own horn, but like, it’s generally said that I started it the boil last night, the bloody big bloody show, it was boiled up in my head first, and that nodder, I mean Sol, just waved through all my battle plans formations plots as if he couldn’t give a Ratshit... It’s it’s as if he’s got a touch of the troughs. Trouble being, there’s no real leadership here no-one’s going out on a limb, I don’t hear no trumpets tooting no sea shanties or pretty ditties no flags no bloody lips blowing on me cheek even a nice portrait would do capturing me boiling mind me rough man hands you’d feature in it of course, as a background figar holding a stone you’d be the threat or the menace either way, you’d be holding a stone no need to thank me Rat, I’ll get Sol to arrange it, a man could do with diversion, whadaya reckon Ratshit? Norma’s too busy feathering her own to give us a wink and Jin, Ms. Prime No man could ever fill her up get my drift... and that genius, everyone talks about, I haven’t had the pleasure, for all I know he’s just a vision..... one of Sol’s embellishments to get the crew all jittery and ghosted up on the idea there’s a free roamin fop fabricating things up under their eyes, another raft, fer instance. Imagine. Problem being, them mealy tits, them faggettes don’t know how to handle real quality, Ratshit, their expectations are too low, let’s face it, they’re a lot of common profis and stinktops.

Shhhhhh! I’m not the one who should feed your rat ears but. See how they slump See? like bleedin day flowers they’re all hung over and they don’t even drink...the wine just wets their tongues, or dampens their old wits, see that, it’s enough to bring tears to the eye, them coddling and comp aring their bruises. They got shot, last night, the fight got in their ears, mouths, up their orifices.... They think they see reason. I’d like to see that, but...I’ll give you a clue, Rat, the sun’s sweating holes in their head, big ones, so that, and here’s another clue...no amount of thinking could bag them up they’re off Ratshit, a clack of tongues slurring history or redemption As if any of us could be arsed to lend an ear to the upper deck. And Mon Suet, the flamin’ rope slitter is lying around with his hand on his gut stuffed with continental tripe, on a bed of trollops it’s a nice day alright. It’s a nice day, Rat. Ratshit?

No response... Rat-Rats? No response......—Be ready. My word. Tonight. Those left i.e. us—we’re boiling for another strike. Doc and Ern, that slagbag Chippie. The nodders and the coddlers. They’ve gotta go. Gut em. At night see.

ERN
All my wits to keep hold of the boy still Wills to be honest, I’m glad to be of help. Glad for the opportunity to display my abilities even in this life and death situation. Deft under pressure I’ve been called A few spoilers though one or two expressions of disenchantment, granted but that’s to be expected out here. Mutinies are common as Rope Boy says only Sol and his sidekicks land rabblers... that they are...can’t hack the idea of watery death. Not on their contract Lope has ideas for dealing with recalcitrants. He opens his bag and winks He’s going to let on more no doubt no doubt A good bloke. Always giving the ben ef of his experience. Not that it’s vast but it’s varied alright he’s done things you wouldn’t Doctor, I call him sometimes a bloke’s coat gets in the way of his name Doctor’s got no shortage of brains but still he thinks with his feet .. brings to mind Dog or some swinging ape still a good bloke.

All in all I got through, I was surprised but then I always seem to be surprised. Like a child I’m built that way, an innocent in a way a bea con I remind myself of the warning light blinking above the rocks or the crow crows ing Hawk Hawk not that I know more or bet ter ...but I seem to get early impressions a bit like that genius and before you could say Jin Jin I’m up and at it responding. To stuff. Before it’s even stuff As it happens, the light woke me the boy in my arms still, he’s quiet I’ve got that effect calming, a balm if you will. In my own
way I was immediately aware of the grinding sun poking over the waves. It’s on time that’s something. Not that I have a dial myself, only Lope has record of time, but for the briefest moment, the yellow backed me into myself, I was on holidays with a boy I’d forgot, ten about how it looks, the sea from the sand, no, no, happy times, I won’t deny it, and the boy’s laughter it played like a scale, and fit right in with my old man’s trannie barking out the form of the dogs, the track, the smell of grey bacon crackling in my ears, the pork fuzz going through my whole body and I woke, I woke the cloy of the local Ross on my nose….

Wills? He’s quiet. The yellow. There it is, the sea from the sea. Only view for miles. No, no, shouldn’t let myself get dreamy, it’s the start, isn’t it? Don’t look forward to dreams, Lope says they’re your quickest ticket to Tantalust. Not an idea that I am family with personally but I mull it over when I get a second. Not much time for mulling though now I’m protecting the boy, watching over him, if you will. I try not to dwell on that especially as the boy’s so squint and slumped, who put him in these glad rags? No, no, it’s none of my business I must admit that’s nasty scarring down my arm from last night…….price of being popular I expect. The boy does that make me his father? I’m having a peek at the new est ones over fifty stacked on each side…

left, right, front, back who stacked these men? No official word Lope says, you must let it go they’re just sandbags against the surf should wave em. In my humble opine I must admit, the rot and stink is on the rise, reminds me of no, no, the nose gives you ideas against your will like hot-potting your mate only it’s not quite on, is it? Mon Suet’s tin of wine, didn’t know they put wine in tins still, there’s only enough for no, no, we must make figures, tallies who’s who, what’s what. The fallen heap of soldiers juiced and lolling, a sprawl of manky cats if you ask me. I wouldn’t spend my days and nights sleeping, waking, bothering men it’s a fever they carry. Arms on their arms. I must assess all claims. Lists. Tins are rattling Mon Suet’s whine. Lope’s standing by wouldn’t be surprised if he measures with the eye still no wine for Wills, unless I give it. But rationing? In heat that drags your skin off no road, it steams in two seconds. I slurp mine fast it’s not right, is it? But Wills is quite out and I must admit, I need the strength I already have one lame leg, it’s not exactly fair but I shouldn’t start best to focus on results one, my makeshift sail, a bit of a dishrag but some thing at least, a white hand on the horizon two, I admit it, my platform’s a real beauty a world above the wave slap and tickle, the bloody riots three, Wills? Stop rattling on my tin stop licking his snail tongue is sticking to the black metal, daubing it against some fire his skin is turning a little, to be honest, if I wasn’t colourblind, I’d say close to puce. Soon people are thronging us complaining, sobbing inspecting wrecks disputing measurements searching in pockets for lockets, crumbs, marbles I move away, stumping the old leg at right angles Wills at hand. Good. I’ll kick and boot. I will, I warn but just to show the boy is my priority life, and then the boy. That’s right. It’s a surprise, but everyone’s bending to me waves of green rise up I’m on the soap box, the boy is quiet……

damp-faced… the sun boring my eyes yellow, he’s fluttering his thumbs in butterflies. I have to hold him my leg is aching. I put Wills in its nothing space The crowd is jumping. Little waves foam over my feet I push back the pork fuzz Wills is making a thin strangled sound. I look above. I always look above there she is, the white sail wrapping around itself… she’s a bit unsure of her surrender slashed Lope says. Open mouths. Gasps. I don’t know, but I must admit we’re drifting Wills but it would pay off to imply towards land.

**MON SUET**

Burn hot in some infernal kitchen. Some kind of that little worm and his worming friend creeping this way or that way always about my back sniffing as if they had the sense the sun is pounding **pudding chop pudding slop** I hear it the rays are going in the voices singe and sear spit roast my flesh I move I move the sun spots two little piggys sniggering where are they? How can I see? The rays are now raying me **Pork it over mon crackling, mon creeping suer.**
Some kind of kitchen no pans no pots || hot plates my two hands I am pressing them onto my cheek red red || welts I am sure of it ironing my cheeks || I am in the fat I know it, how do I know it? I close my eyes but the color are the same they are nothing new.. reds turmeric ||ic-yellow two pigs on a spit I open my eyes the sun oven is slow || cooking the waves simmer and simmer to || a rolling boil.. also our skins they are still on, spots of dirt grit birth || defects I would never choose such flesh. I move I move || my cheeks are guts turned to brisket. Basted basted salt water, weeds flipping fish. Have|| I got any? The creatures come pawing, also || they are picking up my hands also .....some tins are rattling somewhere in the oven || two little worms worming away Pork it, pork || it over mon swede chop chop. I tell you my little knife my wet hands || so much movement required ..... for such little things I cut I cut || I am slicing your pork, lads. Chop chop they snigger ger. Rope slitter they are looking right in me the little knife slides and slides wet || fingers... I wipe my eyes planks rive ... apart I am separating pork sausage || from blut sausage lads, I am undo|| ing the little knots between the pork and the twine it loops around my fingers. || plank sausage from plank sausage the worms worm on me. Saboot her || Saboot her the burning in my ear. The knife slides and slides, and || the twine it loops my fingers in a mit. Lads, there are movements in the oven, || there are flapping things flapping wings squawk squawk someone gets me by|| the neck lads, I am being trussed.... arms to ribs... don't truss me not like that|| my juice trickles on my legs I cannot reach the planks|| jiggling under and this infernal liberty bell the little boy is|| jumping on my shin my foot, Mummy he|| is calling Money my pockets are empty still, I say to him look little ||turkey here are two golden coins if you shut|| your eyes you will see them shining on top of your lids can’t see, can’t see|| he is screaming shut it he is whining things are being thrown || impossible it is impossible...... articles of clothing || a shoe burning stones That's not your money someone whispers a bird|| in the top rack is confited even|| tually the boy shuts up... fat drips the sun it turns on darker heat there are dead things || the oven is full I tell you, this is not|| my kitchen not my idea no kitchen has a sun oven like this, lads undo|| the planks, I am screaming cut the twine.. not|| my words if no-one hears them no-one comes I should have stuck it out on the Medusa, my|| word her skirt full of coins and no|| particular claimants this I know A shower from the sun upon a wreck || I would say, but as I said... how can it be || that I am tied up and Dog is free....

LOPE
Middling to the middle I am the ||only white collar onboard aside from chef || there is a clapping in my ears... the usual theatre of knife hide organs wish|| upon a bone Things must be said: you're in a dirty and unfortunate|| condition, Mon Suet scrub up I|| suggest we study the effects and condition of the men account for who is|| and who is not and also not quite|| To order to order I open the bag prod about the tinctures...|| the pincers snuff tins today there must be a list of the saved|| which may include if it be of remark|| some variation of the following {to be decided} and the unsaved which may|| include some variation of the following|| {to be decided} some earnest consultation of course, some consider|| ation must be made to total benefit|| net gains loss of rations the question of use what of it I must|| advise a serious entreaty to the weak who will face the father the sun eye .... to eye the blind reckoning I am in the middle the measure transducer the only || white collar aside chef I must advise a restive hand upon|| those who will enter their own image face in|| the face of the sea they will {I am perfectly sure} drag their cracked mirror about in the deep,|| backs picked and hacked wading for judgment|| on reflection, let’s see, finally, if there is time, a special ritual for those|| who forgo last word and sentiment the can|| sorts who cannot be accounted for and those who
consider the sovereign king ||{to be decided} Notes, not in pen notes inked in lips ||how many how heavy how to administer quick burial for ||go mourning forget not remember. A ||task for the reasonable: to round up, {yes, good} whoever knows their own name, ||| their own whereabouts, movements those present on the night of the big sink those present on ||| the night of the first battle those present|| yesterday and today and tomorrow {yes} those claiming to reap and sow those willing||| to plow the living Certain things must be clarified. I am ||| a healer I check my coat it is ||| white insignia rationalis I look inside the doctor’s bag potions ||| gleam the horizons fold promise |||{and the promise of promise} … |||into squares..      and these will be pulled from a hat.. for example, on my rounds| | there must be a record of this there must| | be a nurse, a matron, a muse, a shadow of benevolence or malevolence |||if equality counts a powder||| will be metered on the finger to the left nostril of it is not sand, although it||| is white a brief prescription to inhale||| as one would welcome dawn from the inner lips the freshest lily  or enter| | fields devoted to white only life could come||| from the colour of blanching expunging of wringing denial here, ingest, imbibe||| this sweet elixir of {contents to| | be decided}..  with a modicum of calcified sawn off deadman’s bone as I see||| it, everyone will be in some way.. |||grateful what with that Sol behind me, as orderly as orderly | I check.  Sol’s||| gloom upon my white back | I check. Round and||| round and round. I check. They call me Doctor.

[CHORUS] THE VOTE

Ern. (looks down at the crowd). Order! Here, here! To order! I don’t want to|| have to  raise my voice fair go
Lope. Ern. Ern. Thanks. But I'd like to begin if|| you don’t mind… a quick intro……………
Dog. (groans)……
Ratchett. We want King! Where’s our bleedin’ King! |||Boyle. KingKingKingKingKingKingKingKingKingKingKing
Jin. I’m sick. I’m going to be (wave) Rope Boy. Shut up. Shut up. Look at Dog, he’s quiet…… .
Sol. Who’s in charge? 10 9 7 |||Quick or I’ll shoot! 5 4 2
Wills (sobs). One!
Norma. Now look what you’ve done, it needs a mother’s touch.|||Chippie. Sing, go on love. That’ll bring some cheer……
Mon Suet.

Norma. I know a song it’ll be just the thing|| Chippie. Is it a sea ditty?
Jin. It’s a dirge, coming from that mutton. |||Rope Boy. Keep it down. If dog can shut it...
Dog. ……………..(yaps).
Lope. Ladies and Gentlemen. Scruffs, insurgencies. Just|| two words meaning “rumour mill” If someone says scruff||, stop up your ears. Insurgency? Step away.
Nothing happened last night. Nothing at all.   |||And if it did, my coat should be ……………………………………..gut-red

Boyle. That’s noise. I mean to think of all that || all that trouble we went to…
Ratchett. Not to mention the hole in my boot. |||Mon Suet. None of this is interesting…
Wills. (sobs)…………
Ern. Gut red. Thanks Lope. Men, and other |||members of the Raft! Hi Ho
Sol. Who speaks? (looks around) Answer me |||Who speaks hi ho? (raises gun)

Mon Suet. The lame duck…the duck who put me in this twine |||Boyle. He’s onto something. There’s a whiff
Ratchett. Imagine all that water going in. || The rot. Relentless……..
Norma {begins to warble}. Nobody knows the trouble I’ve {wave} nobody knows but nobody

Rope Boy. Shut up. Shut up. Can’t we just have a bit of peace and bleedin’ quiet

Sol. This is relentless. Rotten state | | Ern. I buzzed in too soon. Lope has

Dog. (snored)……

Lope. Men. A few words.. I am here as your | | as your EMERGENCY AUTHORITY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Jin. I’m not standing for this. | | Chippie. Jin love, lie down. Listen to the blue fins

go’ forwards and back. Let me assist- | | (he grazes Jin’s fingers)……

Ern (clears his throat). If I may say…. By way of a polite | | little intervention

Sol. Who speaks? Who’s conducting this meeting? Speak | | or I’ll pop one! (waves his gun)..

Lope (steps in front of Ern). Stop. Stop. I am, as I said, your EMERGENCY AUTHORITY. I repeat.

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY! | | Wills. I’m going to die….. I’m going to die…

Norma {brightly}. Sometimes I’m up and sometimes I’m down.. | | Jin. There are sharks under the raft I hear fins……

Rope Boy. (listens) It’s just the water pitching. | | Mon Suet. It is at a rolling boil.

Ratchett. A flamin’ shame to lose a boot to a hole. | | Boyle. Or a boat to a shoal.

Dog. (pants)……

Lope. Men, the facts: 1. I am a Doctor. 2. I pronounce who is dead. 3. I can save lives. 4. The cook has informed me that there is no more food. 5. Based on current numbers there is only enough wine for another day. 6. Murder is punishable by death, or as…. (wave)…. determined by “the Raft’s” best interest. 7. Matters pertaining to “the Raft’s” best interest to be decided by privately conducted, random polls. 8. The daily art will be given a tasteful sea burial al at three… (smiles) 9. No stealing of provisions. Thieves will be executed. 10. We can survive out here if we lie down, keep calm and drink our own waters or piss as you call it. 11. Do not entertain fantasies of rescue, hope is poisonous… 12. My name is Lope, your Doctor. Look for the white coat……

Ratchett. Permission to off him! Sir! | | Boyle. Permission granted! Off him at once, Rats!

Mon Suet. The oven, everyone in the oven! | | Wills. I won’t go in the oven. I won’t I won’t………………………………………………

Rope Boy. Shut it shut it (wave) no-one’s going in the oven. (wave)

Dog.

Ern. What to do? What to do? It’s quite a mess. | | Nothing I can’t get around.

Norma {warbles}. Sometimes I’m almost to the ground. | | Sol. Lope’s dead. I’ll make it fact. (points gun at Rope Boy).

Jin. Stop! Stop! (to Chippie) You’re hurting me | | Stop what you’re doing under there.

Chippie. I can’t stop, oh, oh my Jinny

whinny…………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Rope Boy. I’m not Lope- Look, you can see I’m not. | | Sol. Who’s that? Speak! (waves his barrel). Speak, if you dare…………

Dog. (growls)……

Lope. Steady on (steps towards Sol) that’s Rope. | | Not Lope. I am Lope.

Mon Suet. No I am Lope. Get in the oven. | | Wills. Mummeeeeeeeee!!!!Mumeep!!!!! I won’t do it, I won’t

Ern. Shhhh. shhhh No-one has to worry Ern’s here | | Look! If you look over there you can see if | | Mummy’s coming (he points to the horizon).

Jin. Get away from me- (moans) | | Ratchett. Bong jaw, lovebirds! (winks at Chippie). Lovely love!

Chippie. Did you see old pops? Did you? Up and at it I was. Boxed that tit, eh- eh then I rooted around her four corners. Old pops eh-eh?

Norma {croons}. Yes, you got here before I did | | Boyle. Bong on, Pops. Nice work. Did you get her number?

Chippie. Doc! Hey Doc! I’d like to thank you for for | | you know rescuing me (wave)
from uncertain death last night. (Smiles at Norma). || | You, plus plus the wife’s
singing were me only hope out there. || Ern. Hang on a second. That was me………………
Lope. Now Ern. Chippie’s under a lot of || stress. Let’s try to wrap this meeting up shall we? I || see this a lot: It’s hot. People are burning
up
Mon Suet. People are burning up!
Boyle. Love, this man’s got a hole in his boot!
Rope Boy. Just a case of mistaken identity Sold||ier happen to anyone. Don’t jump
Dog. (whines) (sniffs Sol’s hand, then his gun)
Norma. Come on people, belt up: GlorrrrrryHallelujah!!!!!!!!!!!!
Wills. (squints at horizon) (sighs) || Mummy’s never coming over that line………

Boyle. It’s King! It’s King! Eh, show us yer crown. || Ratchett. King! (turns around and bends over).
Rope Boy. Boot ’im! Put the boot in! That’s disgraceful|| Wills. Mummeeeee! A man just mooned me.
Sol. (looks at gun) If there was a point. || if there was half a point (half pint?……. full pint?……)
Jin. Please. (moans) Will you help me. Please ||(she looks at Ern) I was grabbed by
Chippie. You’re asking for it. (she’s asking for it) || No one grabbed you you trollop
Dog.
Mon Suet. No one grabbed you you trollop || And then Pop goes the weasel..
Norma (claps). Oh Lord, tell all my friends I’m coming too- || (stops) No-one’s singing with me….. Aw!

Lope. (whispers to Ern) (pats Ern on the shoulder)…|| Ern. I’ve just conferred with the Doc….

Seems he wants me in the spirit of dem || ocracy, mind to take a vote Hands up|| Who is a raft member? What special qualities, habits, attributes, ailments, mental or phys || ical size of hand speed of foot.. tone of|| voice, what talents, gifts, background etc etc., should they possess? Don’t think too hard.|| It’s a gut thing. So look around. Make a choice. || On or off! Mussel or Man! Yes or no!

Ratchett. No faggot bags!!! NO F’N F-BAGS!! || Boyle. It’s a deal!!!! And no slaggy tits!!!
Sol. I’ll off you all!! I’ll off you right off || Chippie. Doc, I’d just like to touch your hand if I may………………………………
Jin. I’m in no state to do this || Norma. Okay Lovey. But listen. Today’s not || about you. It’s about the right to vote….

Don’t take offence, but I feel, as a woman, some || things are more important—Wills, hey Wills, did you like || my little song? Wills? Wills? Aw, I sung it for you
Mon Suet. I found it belittling. || Wills. I don’t care. I want to go out there……
Rope Boy. I’m not much of a brains man, but we can’t vote || on human life—can we? (He looks around at the|| blank faces). I mightn’t vote for any of you.
Dog. (exits)………

DOG
Relief means yellow ribbons streaming out the || back hole tail up, eyes sunk, no front no front. All|| whiskering for clues stop stop yellow’s out. Stop
to perk up or lie about? Stop.|| wave crash wave big wet
start whimpers shakeshake stop || stop fur’s-up, hackling nose off nose off
nose on the twitch copy the smell on || that—earthmuck—worms—frog giz smell of skin flaking,|| bit of shadow coiling recoiling stop
copy that movement shift left | shift right nothing wave lap
wave ocean snores stop copy the | wave motion on that smell shifts
to high up hanging | shift up up | one albatross—emit growl—sea floods maw
wave maw salt sopping now what | | whiskering for clues high
air warbles send alert stop. sharp turn | teeth out. stop. no. Shadow brightening stop | drop to planks its dripdrop love its tail to chop
chopchopper. it’s Rope roll over loll ov | er it’s all over—froth froth froth mouthing
through flesh stop | | the alb | atross gut cut stop | cut gut goes up stop knife, hand, Rope gum spliced red
| | red runs out copy that, stopstopstop
copy that no road just one dog pegged. | | over. over.

ROPE BOY
The only one who drinks of his own fluids | Doctor advised against it but there’s not | hing wrong with salt. Done worse. Worse done. Let me think
Best not to judge the sea. Bit of faintness | at first, get through it and the heart swells, the lungs | inflate the blood surges the brain does a start-up. Dog? No response..... | ....They say I’m just a boy, but I’ve got seamanship
racked up my time in the great sea blanket | can’t sleep with it covering you can’t stay dry | either ...sun peels your skin right off, to blister-
pop that and you’ve reached meat and I couldn’t for the life of me remember my surface colour | | once I got an eye full
of my own meat. Dog? Dog? | ...They say I’m just a boy, but it stays with you...the inner-picture... | you can’t rub it out but you can add things the cords you can pull on with your hands just like oranges, until there’s nothing to the picture but pulp. It’s not so bad then. I can’t get too tight or loose about it They say I’m just | a boy but I’ve got history being wrecked | I know all the ropes. Dog? No response.
Can’t see anyone that would know my heart broke | doing it but they would have done it first | | given the chance. Was fully lucid, see I’m not asleep haven’t had none of those fancy dreams yet | I’m not with the soldiers or the thinking | men first ones to be ignored are the sailors....
...we remind them of... Dog? No response. Geez I’m cut up... this is no place
for you no reason is there no rights just | what? a few songs by that old dottery living off her fat...she’s alright but I reckon
this is no place for tunes they get into the ears and weevil your reason into sand you find yourself humming some sentiment like a... silly girl Dog? No response.... I’m delaying I can’t help it...the confessions of a... the fur it just... opened like fruit gone soft, gone bad and I kept holding onto the paws but they were stiff as old knobs the knobs of an old dresser- I couldn’t see the moment of it....I swear I must’ve been humming some sentiment, and fur was coming off in my hands I couldn’t think till it stopped crying

SOL
Some of us have had a gutful I have | | a speech for what’s left of the men............
Some of us think that there should be | | a revolution That’s a bit much The correct idea is mutiny.. | but that failed too Now what—?

Men, we’ve seen our best foot soldiers get throughed | | Some of us would be better off making our own | course as the army is known for its tactical juice freedom fighters who needs this | | cursed lummy of planks tripping us
up like a gaggle of gags This is not land Men, we’ve seen the last
of her. But think with me we’re not deprived of our land’s end she’s there……
stretching for Homeric bloody miles, right under us. Its true that she’s……
……covered by some pretty dense riff raff but our mission is to make contact with lady land right under us. She is ours. A resting place for our soldiers of war Men, we not of the sea… a) we are not wet b) we are who we off Men, we have the right to stay at war….

This is our job but there are no unions for soldiers lost at sea. we’ve seen the last of our work dry up. What are we s’posed to do? The dawn of peace is our dusk Let them have it, the dreamers………… and poets………… poe ts of the bleeding useless But first, there are some fixings to fix..

The correct idea is sabotage but we failed that one too

Mon Suet pipped us at the post cut the rope next he’ll cut our throats
And he’s only one of them The enemy never wears uniform………..

Some of us think we should form battalions and mow the mob down at night

The correct idea is mass death a bloody old fashioned war

but two nights of blade to blade combat has left us pretty low Men, our reserves are extinct. I may end the speech with a little pep talk one or two ideas for those who choose to raft it. Some of us will choose to stay with the sob- mob.. they will be choosing the most dangerous path of all—
to those men.. I offer you my heartfelt utmosts You will be choosing (here I’ll pause) the uniform … of the un-uniformed you will be entering the theatre of the flip flops, the Hamleteers the bleeding absurds As your commander, I will be one of those who remain I’ll stop here, it’ll be real tragic. But won’t those fecks buy it. My excuse, and feel free to use it, that Medusa, she got into me…. smoking her way in, then charming out my heart

How could I leave her? (here, I’ll give a wink) Men, what allegiance holds out here? (pause) Men, there is Nothing but oily waves, a score of wet limbos, and two singing gins. (here I’ll make some lewd comments ….for morale) Oink Oink .
JOHN GODFREY
STEP AWAY

All the mischief the imagination
Post bills missing persons
Guess what sends the spark
Paradigm crushes your day

I remember well the argument
Changing over by night
The table all littered
The candle gutters

We are joined by some element
Flight on the edge
Lofty or not
I am the one unbrushing your hair

No more worried for you
The train skips a beat
What decorates every station
Brown sugar melts and shines

While it lasts
Step away for a minute
A week goes by
I remember how peculiar

Can’t tell from a
distance if it’s her
If it’s not I
must be someone else

CAN HUSH

Rocking gait as rain pelts
Trousers weigh, heart decompresses
toward the surface
Precipitate ghosts, the seaward sky
Those who plunge in coming home
I am ashamed of the umbrella

Wet finger of wind
Curl pastes to her forehead
Such won’t let me die
You have to look up
to your body
It can hush

Splatter’s all the sound
The precipitants melting
Flood of those passed passing
My wet feet alive
Sewer collects its storm
Light changes for
half-blinded drivers
Like a funeral cortege
They all turn right
THROUGH THE CLIMATES

Wobbly as her rotation is
Don’t be abused
of the notion
Skirt short lips
fire orange on brown
Eyes that take you
through the climates
Make a pothole
beautiful and watch
snow fall
Her step is sure
Scarf blows
four ways in one
 Gets a little nutty
A music that meets
the demands of
as little light
as there is

ESCORTED AWAY

Nocturne of wiper blades
Sky so disturbed
as to be heavens
Hand touches its way
to the sepulcher
It’s dry there
I feel fingers in
my hair, of that night
Umbrella, cold, the motel
Then escorted away
Direction turns us apart

Going deep is not
to take the low road
You are that way
How seamless now
your cheek, how
scarred your gaiety
How sly like a fox
like an unarmed dame
ALLYSSA WOLF
FRENCH COLDWAVE 1983

The scale is fixed
Your face sealed
Smirking down as the old gods smirk
Upon my white eyelet
All organs
Church and synthetic
Undeveloped
Anything
The hair’s in a fist
Pull my head away
In an arc

To make my mouth
Open wide
Contemplate snapping
The neck
—
No union
Only a unity of materials
The movies teach us
Violence is slow
The violence that returns to you
That’s my love
Toothed feint queues weird
a molecular schism close up
splash one per unit word wound electron stipend
frgt ~ fragment or fragrant or forget
arbitrary heat methedrine crazy bubblier than ever
the periodicity chaise langue haze chemo
anagram’s whammy blobtempo underhanded quickie
proton moisture benz boing silky intervals scamming us
hyper go go connective smear mush too late
details unsubordinate tempest in the tempi
gant^ele
tal^glot
nic^iro
mocha-versal cake softens butter to kill the honey
trampoline fireball interstitial gibberish tremens in situ
word juicings an undercurated syntax a holocaust of letters
rollercoaster coy venomatic & volatile
boffinistic posteriorized even at a cellular level ping-pong vowels without ‘tude
ultra-random periodosage brakes jammin’ misapplied
dopamine obloquy
jiggle the under the jig is off
vating^acti
per^pa
tside^ou
tle^gen
able^un
ochet^ric
matic^auto
slappy incremental hybrid squish–brink matter brink brink
chemically french micro whammy psychocandies’ impromptu & pulverizable plush
moveable parts: adverbial antsy plot ruckus, vein toke fluff motor
mess-up subatomic nano-intervals
remove tact perhaps a premature move to the micro
latent sizzle fluxionists’ fibrillating, brooding, beaty texterity
revere the pinwheel
unconstant sultrier serial guff plaid
joy caprice jag thumper taunting the tense–
bring the internal word investigations—
speeding bullet:
anyone that
keeps a steady pace is bad enough

B 1–2

somersault behind the
SKINSECT velvet blob of protocol
nightmarish slinking vast pizzicati
a whoa flit on its flagellants
laceratability per lahlahlah syllables in touch
glottal tequila pre-dicked buenos errors
tantalize specifics
braille differential microdot proton perverts
portamento ickier than haiku disjunct thumb
oops sauce feral boxspring minutiae on its muffs—
Paper: no, you can’t write with an X-acto knife
seismic ultraslewing edifizzy willingness in the platelet
toots minim shock on ditto
neurons sting invalids of materiality
hex
ABC slick shhh for a little while blood-soaked
the klutz funnel cake at random
whiz pinhead lube errormancy
puffy a cute spasm or error slamming the belated
granular violence pureed on the beat—
what if you could reposition the dots over all your I’s & J’s .... ?
bang on crisco germ daguerrotype
blabbing surface impedance follies—your sentience is up
wiggle room tussle tickle randomized on the fulcrum—
Zxero pogoing stealth tremendo bubble & squeak
iffy gentle boom
font crack redder salsa powderpuff partiality
yes, yxes xes cratch eejay bullshark speed
loose on our triggers, 2% flutter
pressurizing smallest charming ditz dirt sucks on zero
crashtest gotta stutter
aggravate oops the anti-slush
word to word obstinacy, neutrino puce thumper
at its utmost syllabic
blot in bunny doldrums—a.k.a. spasms—
erections from lavender amp spore
plif
xaoh
soahc
undertweeted ink darkly cellular midgets
get your freq pejorative throbs little braziers
curves that suggest: pinch hard, hard, hard, harder fatter tremolo
scythe slit jittery matter sparks candyapple gism
please don’t prose berserk as a flavor
fingerpainting the enormity of the diddly
gorgeous epidermal idiotica noise jujitsu rematerialized
output pandemonium: flexing fatty havoc go-fer
deferv chunking fizzier systematic quickfire
hellish octave schizo segmenta
lettrist amok pink divvy jitter hump
“abrupt”
icky softy impala shrooms

B 1–3

liquid heat raw quirks blue
manic happen to thump
good, queasy menospasm, eclectic pulse generators
sparkly pink mitosis clots
tools iffier oopsy
more sensual antibiotic contents
skittish dazzling twists & turns in its
dolly beauty wet lab
doodling with syntax pinking at them
inflammatory predicate trauma less-3D
euphemspasm iffing the undone
feral gash squeezably sudden & mammontarily syrup-flaunting-
biter tights @ the crazy-8
there is a rhythm to spasmic insistence shimmer
the liquid is the slow one, takes time
blobby shorthand thrillseekers / moodier when wet
 crunchier impromptu oops, huh
oven cell zoom kong, schemier cut-ups perfectly lubricated
these motion sensors trip the alarm
the horizontal muse-a-thon appreciated cud-beat-
magnetism lacking a flow-chart
orgone fluff abortiprescient amboimprovagress
trashed neurons: the thrill is amped / the thrill is gone
the unbutton institute, the snapping fetish
no more musk-squirrel ticklish taste the hex up
hornet-stung vascular embolization trick libido up—
originary & carefree & desire flatters gag on ganglia
scamp plot smoothness–proprietary neuro–primordial comma finesse
backwards wordiest pricking the prior
formant id protection–stick to your lick
verbs squeezing my tinsel
calamity [lust] metonyms in flash frozen form
nerve gain gooier than
oval honest heat–formlessness
ovial biogrammatical hunchbacking for pleasure:
frustration is boring
antistatic presto phase the clinging re-slurped
I’m not about to get instincts
blood gunk substructural penetration: maniac–jitsu the flatter the syntax
piezo babeier shame of lack of emotion
wiggle tricks sugary vorticist
scalar cooties, alarm clock inside your ear
loss eek zipper thump–creamierest neutral shimmy
lunacy loves density
mousse deficit honey crease
night-time skinning, one non-hump
gigglecrack transitive loveburns
reorganize the sexual molecular

B 1–4

kink off
less humidity, write more—uh oh, oh uh
ransacked fun cavort insouciance officially jacked around
covetous impulse slippage on the git-go
paid confetti
delinquent gapping postyet liquidity props
enzyme raptor all about its prestidigitation
cell-scramble pampers signs to spawn TOY CHALLENGE
any seizure’ll do
polyaxial aberrant cadabra cream zest triage
tantalize with
visceral sanctification, funny mishap–plot, that booze
kickish positive grammar without the cheerleaders
salacious snared with sugar as noise
contact improv, random-generating the silly brothel
misinformatives, explosive lazier protocol pranksters
sloppier than nominal vestigial heartbeat
flipmag locale syringe sulky as syphilis
cathay juxt okay unres tuck in the radiation
all cattled up pleasantries overzipped
upset eyelet whoop ovarian
snooping saltlick around nonsequiturs
fringe punto hodgepodge bend rev up
quickstep elimidate
ipseo-cardio morsels that can mate
scatter mach outmaneuver rapture
collaging sugar tangier fangs that wink tears of hooka lambykin lurch
desire is not encursived, crotch-weaseling random resigns
pandemonium fortuneteller puberty: the arbitrariness doesn’t listen
the haunted petticoats, the real multisyllabic interference structure
doff the quickie bump in the night
headless nice-guy yoyo gobble
pell-mell skid too etcetera-nonchalance
amok tongue, toss me the bacteria—
are cascading style sheets the answer?—
wink pez spore ahoy pique [pronounced PK]
niche defang a combustive sparking dreamwork
variokopter deficit bedded lexically
—is all meaning incidental?—
disjunct & dismay, hot vex hump unproperty
ziggurat whiplash impulsive trouble
you need a swab
capsize slurrier game form
cruise the celibate hectic aesthete
weird fumbling litmus iffy glitch–tic-tac?
cuddlylocks affect honey naked politesse
processual tagteam, spasmode hopscotch ultra-cling
reindeered into disjunctive banging
BABY PERIOD
a density of deflowerings stripped to the jism
fruitish combinatory minihumjob, a seizable psychic dingdong hell
sparks dittoing witness to the exacerbation—
can you empty your gestures a little more?—
slake the feint
hung to marry up

B 2–1

Tiptoe / against
serrate the silly
void flesh slits last crapshoot on lyrics
ooze knife proton slippage
dizzy goofus, nano-prototype—maybe it’s the haircut
powdery privacy unanalogically to envy mouth (cuticle)
bustier letters crusade the letters
whimsical all betrothal scissor sordid assorted
scalpel boys freefire early like normal
bonus gills, goosefleshy polydiddledaddle
sting font animal fonts’ scalar furor–unicorn trickflap
fabricant prickling MOLEXICON–schismatter
hem throttle floppishly flaunt monad
deluding the hormones...
particle-fever: lure the trance, strangle this avalanche
ninja blur accidentally classic the cracks shimmy redux
tussled in, bring about duds between engorgements
smoother ultra sulking slink smeary smackdown
tubby your own noise
non-frenzied vexing blocks of gobbledygook futique
torchy inslashable themes made of gumballs
liminal mop-up as lax as you want it
dry clean the blood in
syrup daydream zombie terrorized particle
is there neon in serif?–[valorize the cutting]
eextricution bleeper gel-pak
pattern with fang all operated on–
how hypotactic can you make your random?
what is licious?
fractive poling nano imps on the bias
really load on the fixes, pre- & suf–, proto-auto-da-fé keystroke lava
a little slaphappier scoop pop-off subatomic grunge
hot-headed punch on orderly teeth pizzazz
austerities of rampancy
the mother squish, a limb to its prawn
integer gloss tough absolute weirdo atom at first jerking
gigglebyte hyperblade
mo-mo discombobulated resumé sandblaster micro-surgery
picador razoringly more-mark-throughs
philomonoglottals, belly up rough cuts
who’s pixier?
jelly laud dice roar worked up asymptotically
bit-sized hun lilt squint meringue–
protein trapeze, a viral glaze
squeegee your way to the secondarily dumdummed
has all the toys tighten all the nuts
paint clouds / put screws on
immediacy soup meaning another lipstick jag
schist next fleshy spook upper ginza
don’t scrub my lexicon, you bogus ejaculate sample
sleepbox electrofurtive
optional porterhouse devilry slurp
decon losers, tiny hairs full of venom
tigerish boot up some pathology
call to arms—fakery ferocious neuter
go down lethally christened sexy trauma git-go
sense—naugahyde hemorrhhoid—fiction muscularity
open-lipped, supermodified, disconcertingly delusive
it is isn’t, insteppish stuns per gram
a squirrelescent lumpy holistic stutterish horror
kamikaze tops judas off your clothes
“tonight we’ll stop him dead in his tracks” (hosiery ad)
rock-grinding kittenish sepia tool of signification
or may I call you One Punch?
pseudo-snappish physo-diablo gratifactionalism
catatonic trick or treat machine-born nuttier than a praline
lingoistics-burstthead
hostage silly
very
dais micro like expels like strict cardiac
ghoulians notice me a gash
crapsshoot adequacy’s quant apache
infocrutch antimatters, mini-sluts referentially foxed
an externalized nervous system, too big a bruiser
that is not anti-present
stroke as in / book
homelessness is a framework
secret fête fact claws preheat your growl
goof demo poutier blabs
invasion & violation of all kinds
faux bubble tweeze bleep bug precepts
flurry rude pixel ilk
rara avidity plastika
intoxicant facilely kickish stud
heft blurt blubber dwarf
shrinktest: noir liminal effort punk deliteralism
goose-outs cellularize this blame
now, just to enumerate is surrealism
atropine coif phraseologic heats up mistake
decodes play seam of the crime to demean your hardware
a butterscotch sentiment [compared to] a chocolate sentiment
this spazzy lingo problem wets your pants
the bother-word high up boomboom sign-like signer lingerie
illogique bossiness vie with
vie with
shrapnel in its uglier smackfest phase
a micropastiche bikini by hand
mooch over, episphobes
smackset sashay resurfacer in lowliest self-hating crime
vocabulary that bleats: thing-no squirrelly
stutter ditto defacto
dizzy beesting
insecurity start here
invade this sentence

B 2–3

duh myself
buxxed up torque sleek & buttery akido
mentor porous blurring of syringe
tugboat ego flametracer fleet
silly genetics, flesh who wants vintner when
cranial tourniquet clown musk in a rack gland
feint & slink cave envy
codename: an emptiable strap-on
fuzzbox choice got skinny agentry hot
preemption feign the popper
seam semen curl scars kisses
candlelabiate saucier roar
papoose neon-carefulness turns down the bed
the polyp of mental sacred heart kept ringing
reckless once-over thong pathetic little killjoy ovaries
amino suckling namesake talk
self into text downer neck
ambrosial say-so-insider-y subhuman redundant insider ape
ex-husband-lite lick on its babe-magnet transformer
onionskin me some lucidity, hon
vulvaland the kamikaze shift
name kabob: precarious adolesce hybrid mayhem
you act-hole, spongiform self-outing
labially goodlookin’ person on the mulch
inebriate lipo-stun
say-so, pinkie cap off
corrosive self-regard, centripetal pride—
cocksure quiksilver culpability conscious with
boite preferential to the knees, turbulence without pride
let a man be well-broiled
a doll’s breath preemie chassis novia
nosebleed
a biomorphic spuriousness the breeding blimps
flunk your fruit, faux-gobbler
autopilot nomenklatura—ramses remedial
first taste of fist
mace the heat, neck heightened prance
ridicule stalking the REM misnomer
stuff ain’t love underskirt surname munsters
tremens oomph
the cyberskin fleshlight: smell this, has-been
koochie-trainable doll brute gets to the variables
conformity derelicts of disobedient vehicle, affordable equilibrium—
you are the referential fallacy
opus carefree reality turn on its bed
cherry & choosy, blue job rapt stet
dusting the holiday for prints

zeal zero—scam diff
a carefree choosierness catapulting hammier ducts
squalid help me counter-dementia
gerrymanderable verbatim mr. syllabus
bravo ambulative uranium close on the lead dog
necropolis
acrobat, let’s do this!
anti zok snuggle up to drillbits
an aberrant structuring of an abashed one—nonchalance partition
cocksure disorganizing progeny in flames
face against fuzzy upchested potlatch:
get a flashier italic
night-sighted whippings in the mist
thing bio-mech style manqué
unanimously pilled & sybil-ized the pre-labial blame
quasar, kiss me
provo standard ick am so buried
proofreading real estate twinkie for meanings
disconnect—freedom’s just another word for
albatross, niceless
telltale rubbing a slobber choice tithe
selectomorph, touchier archive
surrender wishes me demo pop-ups
phonetic-matching cannibalism’s kamikaze lack of confidence

HERE’S MY SCRAWL  [sans-serif caps]
sine wave forgiveness repieced kingdom
chez crease the hug choir bedlam rancor
cutie torso imperfect code glop
face
space is an ambush for mummified allegiance
pansy–binge on, binge on
the lyrical committee, the paras, suture honeys
rabid hybridization, mutate your activist thumbscrews
unpert roboshuffle not-not

crush tongue a competence as delicacy gamin ilk
partner-poignant fragranced p[r]edo
goof chat semantic begrowlment
manaic hemorrhoidality, toss a hotdog at the clone
misbleed ironic as pure belonging
nymphatic & exaggerated a sexually active transparency
buzzard abrazos to stun the stutter–enamor the fix fuckable famine
something loathing, nothing gained
proto-sympathetic FUNSET VIEW, surgery as morals

coy vox
jitters of envy pander ghoulish melisma as task
slab alter ego mistakes as nuptials
a judas kiss pronominalizes venting–dilated eagerness
spermatozoa screentest winking placebo
fundamentals of lechery junk your quiz
McYield yearning urinates to ejaculate freak
cuckold nowhere asterisk
lateral twinkie thruster icon = rotten dot com
pussyfoot avid drowsy risk vs. reward
outré un-automatic, allegiance-proof pressure on kabob
funkier than loner fingertip science

teasing ashamed of but quirkier semantic
ink or blood splattered masculinity

forget to coopt
choosier quid pro quo hysteria, that old stand-by
headbangery inverts one butch constructivity

accomplice
snaps mess
stirrup in syrup cortege silliness
change fixes
breakheart connective gender singe
binge blink & accessorize morph sexcetera
amiably furtived
galvanic vertigo—misty hymen fracture freeze—
INTRANSITIVE banging up the spores
equilabrupt transistorization, maidenhead jumble
closure grabs the goof
tongue beneathless soupier boys’ half cardiac
primitivo word a creamier cathetic
Nothingness / Better luck next time
kink fu, to live off the in-between
pleasure in its formulaic phase
verbs crank grammar schism nonchalance
atomizing or onanizing dislocational limb
melodies metastasize vindicated by loss
am phero-binomial stuff puff along unserrated cheek
neutered gematria eat concoct, the odd is meditative
defloctionary & portamental to posttempt
precious = strange lang tech
goofy blooded melancholy toolkit
a disconnect is plush bunk on a spasm
swirly math puppets on bio-iota
hotspot eunuch unit bustier than synapses
inertial law ghost slur well-disorganized
a poof of torso psych: glossola[lia]bial
genome beads humping shinyboy of the
pattern elasticize to dwell in a mistake
pong tilt instantizing the enlivenenerier—
munchier sudslessness... tender tropism
fianchetto to your equilib storyboarding a crapshoot
openupended climax button a stuttering suture
nerves slappish naked anal surface subjunctive
structuralize the [Bellissima!] creep
a little constant juicy insiderism
prom gland iterative in reverse
undercrank the codest code, the spontaneity arrest
verb trickier trauma cute procedural arriviste
stem-wounder’s clot of affection
or perpetually temporalized hellcattish suddenness—
pliancy of the glandular beekeepers of suddenness
a beaut all zipped & accessorized more cuddly
tense foxier structure toy-gratis
the disequilibrists’ torchy breath-cut
dyslexic response kickstart condoms
incendiary quickstep

B 3–2
dodgem sperm
curio in its prop mush
authentically insincere all... poutable heartfelt materiality
book-sconsed tip of tha tourniquet to us
grip-headed heat on winch with attitude
spasm—is activity meaning?
lipids: crime pays, hormones under vanity arc
wastes his brain cells on motivation
devil-may-cud oxymoronic thrombosis
cunt or Kant?—love as condiment
dicks versus blood goth transitive natural
gas needle ascetic oncology ahoy-introvertster
lazy goosing branding honey
good luck is unpasteurized
crimson sweetheart V-head letdown showdown
puppetry midwife, delta tart cuchi-cuchi psychoplasma
send me your bone marrow
funtop hearts witched aquatic robotic
self-governing fiat mannikin blood
the oral wizard: handshake incorporealized paperwork tongue
A: pelvis / B: always do
id per proper farces of beauty
forcep genetics: that he doesn’t know he didn’t do it
tweak name fabricute a future misnomer
all wedge-tipped errata for blame
cuddly absent sovereignty bubbles I love sucking on
big warm bags of flesh-coated liquid silicone!
fop as self-rutting scale, baby autopsy escapade
fangy steroids stunned on the tit
hedlam bonbon pretty mouthy
hormonal blood gawk lactate hormonal imbalances at will
coochie-ready, spurious on its kickstand
to vulcanize gonads for diapers
LIGATURE LIGATURE—ninja so bads
fetishizing buzzy me hula, a shot across the bowels
the antiballetics of pleasure hammer to a larvae
embouchure—vocal tickle gulping a smashtest
the nooky as ice cream mylar pussification
a dorky nod all gussied up to spasmodic chagrin
a yearning puppyish romanticism
heart storm iodized puritanical nipples
glee dress up furtive on its dirt
priapic pollen wonk eeriness
spellcheck my catastrophe
iffier gel autocreation, one-sided ovulation spurt
skin smirk bed solipsism
draculaic tissue variations materialize the gash
bend to your will, bend to your willy—
voluntarism rules!—
the mush of the possessive volcanic corporeal
needlesharp dentata squeezing out the spunk
bull shark levels of testosterone menstrualized materialism
self titled parental discard—
sorry, nipples, I apologize
unshirt verb tooth some lulus of
amicable concoctability, micro/macro placebo
affect emit the curves that bind
pout pert—afraid of being hurt—ends up alone
a diet champagne, fcuking
sexual glucose revenge as a gunshot wound
orthlong musork I.D. pervasive body
chorizo sluicing intent butch to bunch
gets extra tickets
the affect rogue
you jack off too fast you fall down
egotistical fun’s inner-sourcing boxes
all they know is how to protoplasm yodel-per-affect
remotion, that recycling of flesh
closed circuit of redemption as self-cannibalism
unmarked feline testicles
cardiac glamour plunge
clone the succubus
plushy syringe

B 3–3

the animal within
micro-macro happy
kissing fête-y tool sired by puppy chow
didn’t you oops it up
uterine chrysalis, sperm church iffy strut
fado summa brideshead carnatic cara mia
process whooppee—to be is to be crushed
put shot hearts to bed, fire up the old autoclave
Fate
Reanimator—exploit the milk in it
tourniquet or firewall down your neck
immunoglobulins’ butterish centrifuge—repair artery from the inside
self-lap, self-symptom woo to the Nth degree
the centripetal is tenor
log in in envenoming, the daughterless secret psy-pop
swarm my neck, rub the coition...
bubble crux up schizzy serotonining charm—
well, crèche me out!
juicing subliminal when—when I when did I
the anti-strangulant non-narrative suspense
sugar fix of self-crustaceaning
body cavity surfers go spinal—
is it pleasure as freedom or pleasure as connection?—
Cache Coeur Naif unrest genital verb
flush with formality, too happy for anal
mammary recall as prefab as psychic gets
cherry duty face segue giddily final
nucleus gobble unitard, spermier constriction (sic):
click-ballad thighs on the Conform to Deform purloined letter
Attack of the Giant Leeches 1959 promo—
“until every nerve of your body explodes”
a munched-up skillset mannerism bumps the heart as
lipogrammatical model of price or price of model
sugary donors touch my slump
ex-marinated E Z viscera—the seeds are bisexual
surprise surrogate trust the ‘ Feeleffect’ umbilicals
jismatical incubus suture death’s embouchure
placental the anti-crust, value a saucier bedlam
how’d you get your wife’s self install kiss own penis
really glad ovulate heart
happy, that IMMEDIACY TRIGGER
disturb scorched equilibrium

B 3-4

osmotic queer angina giveaway
Alterism: multivaginal Acperience
a visceral low-balling limitlessness, that shuck
lovish on its womb’s-eye view
jubilactate softie plus Vulvic Yonification
any limbs that’ll have me
scare eggs off to shill the tampon
repetuition
pareto optimality first aid self-sufficiently sugarized
emotion as game plan ovum turnpike
meaning made eats diagonalizing for pleasure
unmaze
suitor schlepped para-gravity tit-for-tat
hermaphroditty lyric stilts to the wang-doodly fun
funhouse medication, mood-altering earth to meat:
cocktails & laughter are what comes after
contra naturalizing insideout
sisterly nerves, cardio-gofers, suctional sofa
globby redux croon & bleep
the mutant vascular vernacular zipper
pussycat magic more morphic less orphic
layers of delinks built-in romance your heart is quitting
to make heat plural fond posthoc insected viscosity
stoke boudoir drugs, the machinery, the begismid kicky hoping
thalassal repro-
receptualism: slobberize the dosability
flange lips pervert the inter-human inherent bistro
I Freak Techniques
ovulating laryngeal scooters’ flattery
I only give birth to girls
posttonal positional humping a verb with a mission
cathexis on your hindsight’s priapic ectopia
sucking on unnatural tit
the cinematicized lumpen body, the insurance coverage of your psychology
a force of nurture uploading queer bait
avoiddupois darlingual kissy-face
invaginalization: hive on purpose
pregnant rapid response runs for sexual congress
an ethnography of the sudden “coffin birth”
the expulsion of the fetus during the mother’s decomposition
autarkic messy bliss-out
pixilated winners, disposable implants:
< I > I < I >
motivation means choices both creamy of you
hope skinned weapons of amorous destruction
hypo inside outside coax croupier neckish orbits
How to Operate with a Blown Mind
bodies on the trigger, your toy-tossing inner child
topsy simulant—all smooched up the mammary theater
did you DNA him back?
under the ‘relativize your fuckfest’ is a perfect hormone ice cream—
what’s the difference between addiction & puppydogging?—
to wholly cartoon a kiss, clairvoyance needs interpretation
& interpretation is a reverse social positioning
self-help novitiate—
cheat on love test

B 4–1

participatty
upendedly hurt your candy
boxing boing boing threepeat glam
mellowed by methodology ampules
letterspace your possessions
just kidding around
is against the law
misrandom in its fandangoing
transtummy the text jinx ponging tumultitude
phrasal gumbo pogo-ing orthographeme craps
cryptomaniac fawning appropriative fairy dust—heebie-jeebies
CAREFREE
replicant mitochondrial fraud retorque
tricknology
ifference^d
itinerary squeamish hung & restless
restless howdy subsidizzly
spidery tool, slurriest studs on gash bedwetting gamut
cursive intercreeping poltergeistery
taffy up your longings to apostrophize the gyp
foam slang goodie vibe bastardize marking
send the thigh flowers, a spider-hole of bigbeat cut’n’paste reversal
lithe ointment, jinx-hearted funk without form
reckless petting larynx backwards spelled backwards
difference caress, self-actualizzy
what if you were comfortable writing with both hands at once—
all exceptions no norm, the send-offs of goosing

I never developed a prose style
skip placebo dose turnstile, pucker up—
welcome to that kingdom of change
isomerizing ions at a party
vicarious stoli gel, girlish hissing with tongs
blur the crank–constraint-based splintering
besy (busy) all jigsawing Pluto Lithops
Polyfusia when rhyme becomes penitent specialty ooze
torquier... roughing up the pindrops
dudes, spurt on!
proximity to inarticulatory indeterminacy’s palimpsizzle
undertaffy counter-dyslexia–vocab works outside
re-vatic puppet kabobbed on & off its goof
recombin, fun bites—
who fucks custody cathexes on the go
a typical Arabic sentence might be 750 words long !?
filthy, poppier shackled up wiggly
inkier idiom... am all giggles
tongue-tied queue charming skanks—
the sped-up is god

B 4–2

abandon—we have a signal
agonist stirfry sentiment gobbing
insatiable transgenic swamp kind of lips
burn X in effigy, nozzle up subpersona romance thang
R + B is not R & B–paraspace uninhabitat
touché defer anxiety kickbacks: night blouses me
tourniquets for the betting man skin power plant—
on which channel?
show me how much you want to make it up to me
hushing augmeaning the blushing kitbuilders
envy suits up how how how how how
a real goof-changer: eat the mic
urinal per suture, the L word I kid because I love
proboscis big big oral jamboree belt works upside-down
pacemakers in drag personifying species
narcissism, the narcotic promise to misbehave tenderizes shifters
openly swerving–Poke Party
UNQUOTE
exculpate the flesh-eaters’ virtual smart mouth, little man boing
multi-mannixed curvy bias
residential leading into the mouth solo werewolfery
all over you like blue on sky
& exhibit the forgery molds as sculpture—
buck up, hermeneuts & learn how humps care
a pick-me-up regime–enthrall your...
& I don’t need to
ever did this
fax oral perry mason sumptuousness
hover over names headlines bite back
the anti-tourniquet, the delectations of youth
cake tested positive—sulky rights kiss all intuition
how the caption flirts breath as sausage
free will, that exotericism
namby-hanky pamby-panky expressionist pilldrop
Value > Sense—flip to too heart stinging law
hermaph metaph, when you get right down to it
cranial furnacing sounds so uncaptivated
gong show of cock & balls looks backgroundy
hammer the thetic moon over provost
gender test: bobbin—sewing or fishing?
bone pro-risk relativizes lower body on stilts
love the rook—priapic override
insubstandard ragouted beyond
cauterize oxymoron protoplasm via flirting
palavalamp: sexual emphatics’ parody of misapprehension
bejesus all mouth Amplexus think at extremes
a monster bash, a neurotic jealousy thing & then
associative virtuosity: research the cuckoo cuddly beast
busted-up dolls fire up your kilns, boys—stripsearch possessiveness—deep puppets
dopamine or bust
Your Arms, Our Opium
laughs own you

\textbf{B 4–3}

sass in spore form cut
out its heart & make soup
hopeless homey sublime climax engine
stop wearing your head on your body
snow-crusher—urnormal—
huggy filth contradicts that lipjob
catching the skinny hands around my throat
lowercase cling to change heart
palpitations huge seroconverted from socking sugar in its comeuppance
heartbeat orient saliva, that treat
abbreviate cuddle conditionerier animals on wheels—
est of pluperfect level freaks tattoo betweener
conniptivity intenser than night
hot & omniscient in the bright vaccine: sexually farmed out party beds
lactattler wow box
penis = POOR ALMANAC
outsane... the self-magic breathable panty liners
there isn’t that much our bodies aren’t telling us
shit about, tearjerkingly pretty effective early warning systems
dyslexic...—... I might
all I we
Dubbie ‘K,’ Dubbie Cares—jiltish poly-excitable incognito
insouciant ponzi schematics as plasma
why can’t I create the reassurance
that others need
that I need
a spartacus of verbs pillowing bereavement
epicurean—& that’s making me connect to that
force down artificial heart in mid-air
trapped in night biocompatible with diegetic panic
did the daddy flamboyants?—hypertexting clamor
Interpretation / sugar cube
plasmatically closer as the snap-queens say
multi-lathered lips as corridor fondle
voluptuo ovarian buyout: dot the Kapital I
carnivorous lambykins threaten to need me—
values make dessert
when identification grows illegible
DNA butter unstilt imperfectibility
bungee-jumping the selfing perk
no nevermind pulse
fang the orifice
only symbolically suck into prepaid sadder than unisex:
MOUTH
CROWD
do you
talk to yourself
about permission?

B 4–4

meta-curry co-mangling
smash the autoerotic bottle
bust up generic flippant switcheroo
honeymoon factories—the infinitive to dolphin (to sheep)
if having sex requires ‘making love’ then
you aren’t available for that, can’t ‘offer’ love, etc.
bang the unworld, traumatize the spreadeagle liplock impersonal
interlocutory filo-generosa mugshot–paraleptic
facework cootie itsier-off
we are the dream sequences in your conventional cultural life–
neutrality fakes failure & fingers somebody
girls that reek girls that wink girls that sink
misdude, decrypt another you–
amok metaphor cooperation gets invisible
used lesbian fiction, lather up the parity
friend / [rhymes with] spite
chaperone for a fire engine, a structural charisma of exaggeration
immature co-agentry: you’re everyone else’s partner
texthaustercize House of Poon, meta-delirious wreckage donor
the race is on to perform facial transplants: Tonight @ 11
antipode, the roar of infidelity voraciously impertinent
he never listens to me
thanks arraign me
everyone looks like somebody else
ply thee with queering the trad repartee gumbo
spandexical hooch camaraderie–intervaginal interclitoral circumdwarf
spread yr tangs or interoperable treats
sugar-painted swallow one whole every all else
plurivamping plurilurid polygonal boning
quanta fondle two-some spasm
piling up vectors sociably honeyed
viral filial gaying epidemic relativism’s obverse suture
bubblier polysemic ooze to other
greimas or bust, normatively gilding the loser
the G-Spotter, alias capacitater, baptize insouciance
when I grow up, I want never to be alone
translator is lawyered up
blood trail: ambidextrous eccentric opportunism
the experiences are not “greater than I” so much as wider than I
crosstalk bonds burst in air
velcro voice-off your preening non-identification
DISCUSS
extrafilial crazycases, mutate them
planets colliding
ugly antiauthoritarian
Autobiography–Duh
Friends, an exchange of energy, care, warmth, standards, drives & drifts
laugh sparks
ELIZABETH GROSS
QUESTIONING ROOM, POST-FALL

No, we aren’t what we appear. The dangling light bulb
yellows us, fixes our shadows to the floor. Let our shadows
be forgiven for what we cut out of the light. What other part
of a living person goes without a pulse? We’ll stand here, yes,
naked, even, as if that could help. You promised power
over language and animals but every word calls out
your distance, you, who formed us in the image
of a question, but, no, never promised to answer.
DISTANCE MACHINE MALFUNCTION

There is nothing to say without wires
from this treehouse life.

The system groans against the wind,
each line trying to hold

the necessary tension. They say,
the lines are crossed.

They say the wind in other places
tears out trees. They say,

these birds lining up like teeth
to rest here interrupt

the transmission. Not even breath
echoes back. I want

to cut the lines, but need the current.
I’ll ask again,

Has it always been so quiet?
what deliberate is
prayer is
the hand to stars
accepts.

in the boat.
at night the boat.
maintaining touch
with the boat.

not to get tossed
but teased then see.

about later than it is
the hand shines

upward then in.
BATH HEAT LAMPS:

a touch of heat, mounted in the ceiling desirable
circuit hot, black
nocircuit established when de-energized
noconnection

no matter how high you go
RELOCATING FIXTURE OUTLETS:

c o n n e c t  h o u s e  t o  e a r t h
  i n a d v e r t e n t  t o u c h i n g
  y o u r  b o d y  c a n n o t  b e  a  p a r t  o f  t h e  p a t h
  w e t  s u r f a c e s ,  s k i n ,  a n d  c l o t h i n g
  a r e  h a z a r d o u s
  a n d  p o t e n t i a l l y
  c o n d u c t i v e
ATTIC LIGHT:

an unaware person
in an attempt to turn on the light
ganged the switch.

impossible to locate
in a darkened room.

a light is supposed to be burning.
ILLUMINATE THE YARD AT NIGHT:

You’re making a trip to the tool shed and see an object irresponsibly left in your path. Stumble, trip, and fall. Adjustment to each arm held firm at the right spot. Tighten an elbow screw, then engage mating teeth on each side of the adjustable joint. Wiring is concealed within the arm. Screws into the porcelain socket forbid the entrance of water around the bulb.
TOOLHOUSE WIRING:

If you encounter a pebble in the rock lath angle the saw forwards and backwards to help clear it. This is suggested: keep ragged edges smooth, shatter the extra thickness of the glass, expose to cold rain. Expected to break, the floodlamp will remain intact through all seasons.
DOORBELLS:

Fish cables through attic crawl space.

The house is an older construction.

With relation to joints, stripped.

Someone holds the wires up against the ceiling.

While you go nail it in place.
TAMPERPROOF FUSING:

make certain the battery doesn’t get charged
with too much current

tightly connect electrical energy
  like an old fashioned egg beater
  like a pivoting line of Rockettes
  like slowly spinning a wheel

by placing your hand
  lightly along the rim.

Source: Harry J. Edwards’ Residential Electrical Wiring