

IRONWOOD 20

HILDA MORLEY An Appreciation

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REALISM: An Anthology Of 'Language' Writing

Edited by Ron Silliman

\$3.00

HILDA MORLEY

I have never met Hilda Morley. Like others, her poems came through the mail. From the very first I was made aware of a singular voice and a syntax supple enough to carry a good many lines with no loss of clarity. Hilda Morley knows how to take full advantage of what Charles Olson called "composition by field." The pages of her poems are open and fluid. One senses the poet's breath, the real body living inside her lines, and is moved by their music. While she may risk a high style, the poetry remains down-to-earth, not precious.

Hilda Morley has demonstrated something rare: the ability to go on writing for years in relative isolation, to wait. Thirty pages of poetry, two-thirds of it new or unpublished, should give readers a chance to enjoy the results.

'LANGUAGE' WRITING

There has been growing evidence of disenchantment with the bulk of mainstream American poetry, most of it "free verse." Some who have written on Hilda Morley, for example, were drawn by the music in her poetry, conspicuously absent in much recent poetry.

For others, particularly those dubbed "language writers," the alternative is more radical. They see the language and language habits poets inherit as hindrances to preception and feeling, but even more, to the precise expression of these. However esoteric or difficult much of their work may seem to some people, their concern with form and the investigation of the structure of the self through the medium of language aims at the liberation of the larger society. If there is an avant-garde in poetry today, it will most likely be found among them. We want our readers to be able to sample the modes of this writing instead of merely hearing about it. I wish to thank Ron Silliman for his work in selecting and introducing this anthology for *Ironwood*.

Michael Cuddihy

Ironwood 21, scheduled for late March, will feature a long poem by Ernesto Cardenal, the Nicaraguan poet, and a selection from the notebooks of David Ignatow. There will be poems by Shirley Kaufman, Robert Pinsky, Laura Mullen, Mary Oliver, John Peck, Ralph Burns, Susan Mitchell, Gary Fincke, Richard Lyons, John Taggart, Michael Palmer, Alice Notley, and many others.

IRONWOOD

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REALISM

An Anthology of 'Language' Writing

Edited by Ron Silliman

REALISM

What about all this writing? The authors featured here represent but a fraction of a much larger and more complex transformation of the North American literary landscape. To some, they constitute a movement, vanguard, coterie or elite. Almost invariably, a version of the adjective “language” (language-oriented, language-centered) is appended. This perception of a collectivity has consequences. Visibility is increased at the cost of a presumed homogeneity. Treated as if “it” were a thing, the accumulated writings of very different human beings can be discussed and evaluated with the same ease (and subtlety) with which one marks a ballot: are you for or against?

The history of the term “language” is worth reciting. While the phrase “language centered” appeared in the correspondence of Bruce Andrews as early as 1973, and in print by 1975¹, it was not accorded the status of a name until 1977, when it was so used by Steve McCaffery, guest-editing a feature on “The Politics of the Referent” in the Canadian *Open Letter*. Even there, McCaffery was careful to note that this “is not a movement as such” and to offer alternative characterizations.²

Such caution was not evident, however, in the May, 1979 issue of *Poetry Flash*, the Bay Area reading calendar, which ostensibly devoted 5 articles to “the language poets.” In fact, only two pieces address the question, both of which use the phrase with and without quotation marks. Then-editor Steve Abbott’s “Language Poets: An Introduction” purports to be an unbiased overview of these writers, although he would “admonish them to remember that obscurity is not a virtue in itself,” citing feudal Ireland as a more ideal model of the relation between poet and audience. Alan Soldofsky’s “Language and Narcissism” is less subtle: “It could be argued that the language used by spokespersons from the Nixon Administration during the Vietnam War and the Watergate Investigation, when they lapsed into *evasive, de-personalized jargon*, found new meanings for old words.”³ The three remaining pieces consist of a review of Tuumba Press books, a reprint from *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* magazine and a collage of 55 statements on writing, ranging from the Bible to Soldofsky.

Beyond the circumstances of its coinage, what are the implications of this name?

First, that what binds these writers into a community is language. But what does this mean? That Robert Hass, Judy Grahn, Simon Ortiz or Linda Gregg use some other medium by which to compose their “non-language” poems? Is not the critical weight of Grahn’s “The Psychoanalysis of Edward the Dyke” situated precisely in the different social interpretations which (white male homophobic) analyst and (lesbian) analysts give to the *same language*? Is that odd?

The situation is not improved by narrowing "language" to some further (distortive) definition. Hannah Weiner says that she sees words in the air, on walls, on people's foreheads, even on the page, recording this with a method so direct as to be diaristic. Tina Darragh inserts procedures and texts, most often the dictionary, between the habits of unexamined subjectivity and the composed literary production. P. Inman never divorces meaning from the graphic physicality of the individual letter in a two-dimensional space. Narrative devices abound in the work of Carla Harryman. Steve Benson's "Realism" and the excerpt from Michael Gottlieb's "Social Realism" do not reflect a shared attitude. *Difference, not unity, is the norm.* In the pages which follow, no two poets propose the same definition for either "language" or "the text," let alone for the possible relations that might connect the two.

An even more pernicious implication lurks in this name's allusion back to the critical journal $L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E^4$, suggesting (as do both Abbott and Soldofsky) that either (a) theory comes before poetry (the poems are proofs), or (b) theory is necessary if one is to write "this way" (the poetry is "unnatural" and can only be arrived at through artificial means). Soldofsky even intimates that theory takes the place of emotion. Regardless of the variation put forward, the connotation of a theory-centered literature can only hint at a modern *trobar clus*, a writing of deliberate difficulty aimed at "the initiated."

But what is the objective record? The Fall, 1973 "Wiater/Andrews Issue" of *Toothpick, Lisbon & the Orcas Islands*, which McCaffery cites as "essential material" (and the first booklength collection), contains not one word of theory or criticism. Beyond a few small articles, mostly reviews, in its earliest numbers and one free-wheeling interview with Clark Coolidge, *This* was virtually silent on theoretical questions during the 12 issues of its lifespan. The New York-based *Roof* was entirely free of such pieces during its 10 issue career. In 17 numbers, *Tottel's* has only published poetry. Of the first 46 Tuumba chapbooks, exactly one is a talk. One double-issue of *Hills* was wholly devoted to talks, but six others have centered on the writing itself. With more than 50 books between them, Segue, Asylum's, L, Roof, The Figures and This Press have yet to publish one volume of criticism. While theory is not without importance (and will be discussed in more detail later), its dominance here is a fiction.

The final implication in the name "language poets" is one inherent in any group designation: the presumption of stable boundaries, of definable "membership." Of the 33 writers and artists included in the "Wiater/Andrews Issue" of *Toothpick* nine years ago, only four are featured here. The present selection could have arguably included any of the following: Kathy Acker, John Mason, Beverly Dahlen, Rosmarie Waldrop, Ted Greenwald, Tom Beckett, Erica Hunt, Michael Palmer, Karl Young, Jackson Mac Low, Christopher Dewdney, Alice Notley, Dick Higgins, Curtis Faville, Barbara Einzig, Jim

Rosenberg, Ed Friedman, Gerald Burns, Gerrit Lansing, Chris Mason, Bill Berkson, Doug Messerli, John Godfrey, Kathleen Fraser, Loris Essary, Keith Waldrop, Geoff Young, David Melnick, Marshall Reese, Ken Irby, Craig Watson, Marina LaPalma, Bernard Welt, Gil Ott, Susan Howe, Michael Davidson, Ted Pearson, Jerry Estrin, Bernadette Mayer, Kirby Malone, Nick Piombino, Norman Fischer, John Yau, Abigail Child, John Taggart, Gail Sher, Merrill Gilfillan, Lynne Dreyer, Gloria Frym, Chris Cheek, David Bromige, Tom Raworth, Joan Rettalack, David Gitin, Jed Rasula, Keith Shein, Leslie Scalapino, Michael Lally, Laura Chester, Charles Amirkhanian, David Benedetti, Larry Eigner, Steve McCaffery and Fanny Howe. And more.⁵

If the writers featured here are not “the language poets,” what is going on?

First, something which is by no means recent. At least a half dozen of these authors have been publishing for 15 years or more. *Totter's* first appeared in December, 1970, *This* in March, 1971.

And the evolution of an audience is finally what this is all about. *The coherence of this selection is to be found* not in the writing with its various methods and strategies, taking different positions on different questions, but *in the social composition of its audience*. The project of this writing is the discovery of a community.

Like both Antin and Lowell, coming from and speaking to their respective literary neighborhoods, the coherence here is precisely a communicative relation between poet and consumer, between work and audience. Thus a first principle: *direct communication*.¹¹

Necessarily, because this writing was “named” in the very act of charging it with “obscurity” and “evasive, de-personalized jargon,” the question of difficulty and directness must be addressed. To whom exactly is Barrett Watten introducing the letter T? In what sense is P. Inman’s “nimr” direct? It’s at this point that the issue of language and the subject (speaking-writing/listening-reading) is joined. Regardless of technique or influence, not one of the writers here assumes an “I” that is in any way “natural,” “evident,” or “obvious.” Though stances vary, this concern is constant:

I am out of two minds

Andrews

Who answers for
the ‘whole being?’

Armantrout

(me: this elastic force that always appears to stem
from this body “I” am “in”)

Benson

What forces force the hand, by
sleight, unknown to brain?

Bernstein

seeking me as figures in the terrain

Grenier

Maybe I'm confused because someone else is wearing
my clothes.

Harryman

The murderer I personify aims

Hejinian

My mind changed me

Perelman

I said I ought to be arranging a meeting for me as a person
seeking a solution to the problem of the butterfly and the
bull, your subconscious, your idiom.

Seaton

The voice should divide
itself and multiply in all
directions.

Watten

So you know me also anybody wrist taped so I was written
it in again so I was also August only I ALSO WRITTEN

Weiner

The Prelude was the first poem in our language in which the subject was the Subject. Unlike the Romantics, these writers do not simply sing of the self. Instead, these works investigate its construction through the medium of language. Rimbaud's advice to Izambard was correct: "I is some one else."¹² We do not contain multitudes so much as we are the consequence of a multitude of conflicting and overdetermined social forces, brought to us, and acted out within us, as language. Thus posed as a very general project, within which there is vast room for individual difference and disagreement, it can be seen that a text which does not propose itself as a metaphor of speech, like Inman's, is no more "de-personalized" than one which does, like Weiner's. Andrews' excerpt from "Confidence Trick" is not, to borrow Soldofsky's words, a "flight from emotion," but an exploration of it.

But to whom might such an art communicate directly? Self-reflexivity (i.e., a *conscious* response to alienation) is clearly a requirement. Here an entire social treatise needs to be drawn that would not merely trace the growth of the "middle strata" in the U.S. social structure, but which would root it in the expansion of the university system following Sputnik, focusing within that ensemble on the group Gramsci identified in his prison notebooks as urban intellectuals.¹³ There it would go one step further, locating those individuals for whom this question of the subject or self is neither abstract nor peripheral, but is as real and concrete (and problematic!) as everyday life itself.

Like all poetries in the age of print, this community was first

sighted from the perspective of literature by other poets. To a degree that may be unmatched by any other tendency within contemporary verse, these writers have consciously shared the responsibility of creating the institutions through which the work can be made public. Virtually every individual here has either published or distributed books and/or magazines, or run a reading, talk or radio series. For example, Lyn Hejinian has published over 40 finely-produced letterpress chapbooks. In addition, she co-founded, with Kit Robinson, the KPFA (Berkeley) radio series, *In the American Tree*, and, with Barrett Watten, recently started the critical *Poetics Journal*. Watten, co-founder and, for most of its twelve years, sole editor of *This* and This Press, also started the Grand Piano reading series in 1976. Rae Armantrout and Carla Harryman both ran the Grand Piano series, and Harryman is now publishing *Qu*. Diane Ward is working with James Sherry and others at Segue Distribution. Sherry's magazine *Roof* published 22 of the authors here. And so forth.

Bob Perelman's Talk Series and the magazine $L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E$, co-edited by Bruce Andrews and Charles Bernstein, warrant special mention if only because they fuel the theory-centered argument of Abbott et al. Though quite different in format and 3000 miles from one another, both began in 1977 out of a desire by poets for a fuller sense of self-determination. The reasons for talking and/or writing about the work are many. If nothing else, it goads people into being more aware of the implications of their writing, into working even harder. By contrast, a major contributor to the dissolution of the New Americans was their failure to understand the fundamentally nationalist, and sexist, dimensions of their project.¹⁴ In addition, silence empowers others to set the terms in which the poems are read, thought about, discussed. Any reader who has attempted to correlate Ashbery's major book, *The Tennis Court Oath*, with Bloom's writing on Ashbery will recognize the violence that can entail. Yet the role of such "support work" is limited, as can be seen by the decision of both the series and the journal to stop.

And something which cannot be comprehended abstractly, out of context or "perceived as a group." It is reasonable to assert that Tina Darragh has been influenced by Francis Ponge, but not reasonable to extend this to all 24 other writers. This is the case, without exception, for every possible "unifying" or "dominant" influence, including Stein, Kerouac, Zukofsky, Eigner or Creeley. It is similarly reasonable to note that some poets here (e.g., Bernstein, Andrews, Coolidge) were not educated within the homogenizing framework of literature and creative writing departments. But others were students of Denise Levertov, Robert Peters, Robert Lowell, Saul Bellow, Donald Hall, Wright Morris, Jack Gilbert and Donald Justice. Four have MFAs from Iowa City.

So the critical question becomes: what is the context?

It has been 22 years, a generation, since the publication of *The New American Poetry*. Although this is not always recognized by the instructors of poetry, both the U.S. and its verse have been irreversibly transformed over this period. The defining issue which confronted young, would-be poets at the moment of the Donald Allen anthology was one of traditions, camps. According to Allen's own summation of the "New American" faction, "it has shown one common characteristic: a total rejection of all those qualities typical of academic verse."⁶ In 1965, the Paris Leary/Robert Kelly anthology, *A Controversy of Poets*, bravely attempted to address this either/or structure directly, presenting "both sides." Even as late as 1973, David Antin, whose talking pieces are closed forms every bit as rigid and conventionalized as a sonnet, felt that it was meaningful to say, as he did at San Francisco State, that "if robert lowell is a poet i dont want to be a poet."⁷

Historically, the most important aspect of this dispute was the presumption of a centralized legitimization for poetry, of a homogeneous reading public to be fought over and won. The reality was, and is, that David Antin and Robert Lowell came from, and spoke to, different communities, different audiences. To deny either writer the status of poet is not so much to question their skill or vision as it is to deny the readers of each the legitimacy of their own existence *as a community*. It is in this sense that Jerome Rothenberg rightly compares such consciously exclusionary canon-formation as that of Harold Bloom's with the practices of Dr. Josef Mengele of Auschwitz.⁸ Whether carried out under the guise of criticism or as a contest of bards, what is hidden is the fact of the struggle between different groups (not, in this instance, necessarily classes) within the larger social ensemble of the nation. The question is not, as Bloom formulates it, "Which poet shall live?"⁹ but which community shall dominate the other, whose set of values will prevail.

The history of poetry since the Allen anthology has been one of decentralization, of the destruction of this founding binary premise. The causes, both within and without the terrain of literature, are many and complexly interlocking. The civil rights and student movements of the 60s, the resistance to the war in Indochina, the self-destruction of the Nixon administration in the bile of its own corruption substantially altered America's collective self-image. The long economic expansion which began at the close of the Second World War only to end abruptly with the oil embargo of 1974 transformed the nature of work (and worker) in the U.S., and made possible the vast extension of post-secondary education to new sectors of the society. The rise of a "middle-strata" or "new Petty Bourgeoisie," of a powerful and still growing feminist movement and feminist culture, and of an "oppositional culture" in general cannot be dissociated

from these circumstances. Poetry was destined to change not merely because the content of daily life had changed, but also because the makeup of possible audiences was no longer the same.

The so-called low cost technology of the "small press revolution" was not the creator of the transformation in poetry, simply the mechanism through which it was carried out. While its contribution to the democratization of the resources of production has sometimes been overstated, its decentralizing (if not anarchic) impact on distribution has been almost as profound. It is not a coincidence that the writers featured here, with the lone exception of Clark Coolidge, live in or near major urban centers on the two coasts: the audience for this work does likewise.

Not only was the small press "movement" the vehicle through which the New American poetry created its institutions, independent publishers were also responsible for the return of several "lost" influences to the canon of legitimated literature, notably Gertrude Stein and the Objectivists. A major aspect of the Objectivist revival was the fact that some, like George Oppen, did not fall on either side of the academic/nonacademic dispute, rendering it less visible and meaningful.¹⁰

Further, both "sides" were undergoing extensive reorganization. By 1971, among the New Americans alone, O'Hara, Spicer, Kerouac, Welch, Blackburn and Olson were dead. Others (Dorn, Lévertov, Baraka, Ashbery) were to substantially change their writing, and their audiences. Of the formations posed by the Allen anthology, only the New York School was something approximating a current manifestation, and even it now implies different values and different people. In addition, tendencies not foreseen by the Allen book, such as the work of Mac Low, Rothenberg or Antin, complicate matters. And Rothenberg's anthologies, a sustained assault on the racist notion of literature as a European-centered art form, deepened the critique of a homogeneous writing with "timeless" values, while foregrounding (in a way that could not have been done before the Vietnam War) the problematic nationalism of the Williams tradition as well.

But the single most significant change in American poetry over the past two decades is to be seen in the central role of writing within feminist culture, which in 1982 is (for good reason) the largest of all possible verse audiences. By taking control of their own aesthetic destiny, the women of this movement, itself an ensemble of social formations, have shifted the entire center of poetry away from the academic -vs.- New American, or any single, question. In so doing, they have ensured the decentralization—and contextualization—of poetry forever.

It is into this exploded literary map that the writing featured here must be situated. Conceivably it could be argued that these poets represent a transformation of various aspects of the New American

tradition (and, insofar as each writer can be seen to have read, and deeply considered, some elements thereof, evidence could be mustered). But to do so frames the discussion in terms of a debate that last made sense when John Kennedy was President. Bob Perelman did not inherit an audience from Robert Creeley or Anselm Hollo; he constructed it, one reader at a time, text by text.

Finally, what is the content of this communication between these poets and their (overlapping-but-never-identical) audiences? Note that a major function of form is the identification of the community itself. Just as Judy Grahn uses the devices of enjambment and variable punctuation to carefully construct a facade of "artlessness," so that her poems might reach persons who do not identify with the text first *as readers*, so Charles Bernstein employs these same techniques to construct a density that demands a commitment to reading as a first step toward understanding the poem. But once this contact is established, does the content differ in any significant way from what is available to the readers of Grahn, Antin or Lowell, i.e., the very nature of our lives? The works which follow demonstrate over and over that the answer is no. To suggest that any, let alone all, of these pieces is "only about" language is to trivialize the complexities of each. Though specific emphases (e.g., the question of the subject) reflect the needs and priorities of a determinate community, the content is literally the world. Thus, like all art when understood within the context of its audience, this writing is realism.

Alcheringa, new series, Volume One, Number Two, page 104.

²Not all of which are terribly accurate. McCaffery cites only 3 general collections, restricted by the problems of distribution of U.S. small press material in Canada. Accordingly, some of his arguments (e.g., "counter-communication") would appear to apply to his work alone. Cf. note 11 below.

³Much of Soldofsky's attack is based on the writing of neo-conservative Christopher Lasch, whose *The Culture of Narcissism* attempts to preserve the family in its most sexist form. The extremism of Soldofsky's argument can be gauged by the statement that "poetry is primarily not just an intellectual act," as though language were *not* the fundamental activity of the mind.

⁴Abbott explicitly cites this allusion as his reason for assigning the name to these writers.

⁵It really is a matter of (1) where one locates the center of this writing (if, indeed, one exists), and (2) how wide the ensuing circle is then drawn. The present selection includes those who have most often been tarred with this "language poets" brush, and is intended to show the wide range of concerns. Poets who have either achieved their mature style well before 1970 or have been linked with other "tendencies" have been omitted here, largely due to considerations of space.

⁶In the "Preface" to *The New American Poetry* (Grove Press, 1960), page xi.

⁷*Talking at the Boundaries* (New Directions, 1976), page 1. The lower case is Antin's usage.

⁸"Harold Bloom: The Critic as Exterminating Angel," in *Sulfur* 2, pp. 4-26.

- ⁹Quoted by Rothenberg, op. cit., page 5.
- ¹⁰Cf. my own "Third Phase Objectivism" in *Paideuma*, Volume 10, Number 1, Spring, 1981, pp. 85-9.
- ¹¹It is here that McCaffery's counter-communication claim (op. cit.) distinguishes him from the writing in the present selection.
- ¹²*Illuminations*, translated by Louise Varese (New Directions, revised edition, 1957), page xxvii. Emphasis mine. Rimbaud was correct also to argue "It is wrong to say: I think. One should say: I am thought." But the writing featured here turns Rimbaud on his head (right side up): the solution is not "a rational disordering of . . . the senses," but of the sentences.
- ¹³For to read a poem renders one *by definition* an intellectual. Much of the virulent anti-intellectualism which still plagues all branches of American poetry (Cf. note 3 above) needs to be recognized for what it is: either privilege-based defensiveness, or a self-destructiveness induced and promoted by privileged sectors. While, unfortunately, the treatise called for in the text does not yet exist, perhaps the closest anticipation yet is one written by an ex-steel worker, Stanley Aronowitz' *The Crisis in Historical Materialism* (Praeger, 1981).
- ¹⁴It is worth noting that this small feature has more women contributors than *The New American Poetry* and the Shapiro/Padgett *An Anthology of New York Poets* (Vintage, 1970) combined. (Though it is also worth noting that, thanks to Bernadette Mayer, Rochelle Kraut, Maureen Owen, Eileen Myles, Alice Notley, Susan Cataldo, Barbara Barg and others, the scene around St. Marks has changed a lot in 12 years.)

from **CONFIDENCE TRICK**

Cherry red kind of washed-out caged & staged quack quack spoke job, pecs & balls juice up, nobody's heroes censor doesn't censor enough; antidote a panic, white eyes — They much jeopardy — They much probability solid pleasure — Moto kitsch, or racial mercantilism?, what about the feds damaging the emissions? — Stereo bust means 'think quicker'; I must eat worms — Flesh with insistence; I insist so it's calculated passion sell-outs? — Andersonville prison

Foo-o-o-l falsetto up me political zip coon shows, especially valuable recitations of commodity authority, madre chingado, cure doing doubt — To torch all Christendom, ready to snap sway pivot chump point use or abuse, get me the sweetener — All power to the prepubescents — Well, you failed as a heterosexual

God is science — First, they have to get more Nazi-like Modern English in their gender qualifers first indoor life; uncut horse, *right*, almost red, einstein à go-go life elsewhere — Reticence in public was depriving me everything (regimental surgeon stands besides casualties) I want in private, that's it!, rent, the quality of mercy is not so eager; style wars — One pair of tickets, I have got to have the freezer, I'd like to sleep to get over you, I am out of two minds — Nor is pacifism a substitute for socialism — Can't follow anthem, puffed up Jack — Garish sentimental sensationalism & rigid conventionality, are these the contrasting vices distort female sexuality? — Rather than disband when polio is at last conquered, the March of Dimes bureaucracy looks for other diseases to fight — Lap acquires a certain difficulty; glitter don't leak; not playing with a full deck, happiness & contempt, doesn't have his oars all the way in the water — Yeah, spandex & parachute, living in your toybox — Somebodies, 85% gender parity is how I get my S.S.I. — I want you to build up my muscle, mono yoyo, positive life — Chief Product spoke having vinyl out vinyl debit, it's economics you know — Can I sleep in the arms of society tonight?

SINGLE MOST

Leaves fritter.

Teased edges.

It's vacillation that pleases.

Who answers for
the 'whole being?'

This is
only the firing

*

Daffy runs across
the synapses, hooting
in mock terror.

Then he's shown
on an embankment, watching
the noisy impulse pass.

*

But there's always a steady hum
shaped like a room
whose door must lead to
what really

where 'really'
is a nervous
tic as regular

*

as as as as

the corner repeats itself

*

Dull frond:
giant lizard tongue
stuck out
in the murky distance
sight slides off
as a tiny elf.

*

Patients are asked to picture
health as an unobstructed
hall or tube

through which Goofy now tumbles:
Dumb Luck!

Unimagined
creature scans postcard.

*

Conclusions can be drawn.

Shadows add depth
by falling

while deep secrets
are superseded—

quaint.

Exhaling
on second thought

REALISM

I always take the norm as some sort of a standard: a standard one can push against, or tack in relation to, in communication, to generate action or a fresh realization or an initiative to response. That is, then, I don't have a sense of myself, my own ways, my own predilections and abilities, as standard or integral; they seem to me rather gratuitous and conditional, while certainly purposive and significant and resistant in circumstances of engagement with some other. The norm, while based on a model of my recognition of the other, I still don't see as being in the other, nor necessarily as an obstacle between us; it's rather the amorphous and uncertain bond, the commonly held language (which we know is always shifting and changing, local and conditional itself, riddled with tendentiousness and misunderstandings of all orders) somehow assumed between the other and me (me: this elastic force that always appears to stem from this body "I" am "in"). The norm in this sense is not to be blamed on the other, since any one of us partakes of it for purposes of society ("Please pass the salt"), except when its terms are falsely imposed by some over others as though necessary or right in themselves ("Don't talk with your hands at the dinner table").

In the sense that I take it, the terms of the normative tend to comprise a language, which itself pretends to the status of a comprehensive mythos of everyday life, a language thus pretending to a stability howsoever conscious of its indispensable contingency, apparently transfixed in a mutability it can hardly comprehend. The assumptions and qualities of understanding and bonding manifest in normative language, however subcultural, I then prefer to take as counters generated to our individual and collective advantage. Inherent within their claims to autonomy are all the functions that could split them, conventionally absorbed on recognition of their ascendancies as terms of themselves, conceived as autonomies in their turn. Because there is no true accuracy in such a language of pretense to categorical authority, earnest efforts at knowledge and communication continue to trouble it and mess it up, though there is no establishing of understanding possible between us that can actually transcend a language. In fact our will to engage the unknown contingencies of the imminent, the immediate, and the inimitable, in spite of their otherness to the language of the norm, keeps the language alive, keeps social circumstances fluent, and affords what we tend to conceive as identities of self and other the potential of active and crucial communication.

AFTERMATH

Life afloat rechalks the beach.
I haven't gone crazy
And I don't believe clocks are the pilots of electricity
But purple sailors arrive from the South Seas
With perception replaced by recollection.
Situation dominating character is melodrama.
Remember the numbers that notice you.
My information is
Aerial structures have sunken walkways.

WORD OF ART

First a flicker of telepathy
Then screw le mot juste
Carefully into its socket
So the electricity doesn't spill.

Act natural.
It isn't all honey for people with learning
And don't make excuses for rock.

Eye on curve, hand on lever, things on mind,
The rest of the subjects refer to you.

Words make wide open spaces.

Dissolve to perpetual motion
With time off for behavior.

The body likes its relations
Embroidering inventions
To say anything:

This music is not of my choosing.
The enormous seaminess throws a textbook punch.
But it wasn't the stars that thrilled me.

BRAIN SIDE VIEW

Otherwise, what? I mostly here feel, spend too much time paralyzed, recovering, shaking hand to clear it out which only fogs it up: a few alternating beats in the context of a deproliferating structure that nonetheless is bouncing by. By way of saucers, antiseptic engines. Galvanized in the embrace of overdetermined mood elevators, winsome harbingers lacerated by needling beneficence. Obtains what the heart rejects. Nor have I journeyed far to say this to you: the rooves and the windows are fortifications against a life never entered, living next to air, consuming but implacable to being consumed. All of which switches, the wince from the doorlock bridegroom of dejection's droll succubus. In stanzas of Maalox, intransigent suede socks. Which consequently broadens its scope beyond the niceties of the need for, destined dispossession, marginalized escape valve. Yet this whole garrulous team sands down your resistance, as if you wobbled too hurriedly among four-by-fives, the pliant rigidity of September all along falling prey to the remoter restaurants of implicit decay. A crash course in rubber ducting, chugging remorselessly with inverted pathos and benighted torpor. Nothing is learned and nothing is lost, just this rift in the paving accountable to a firm handshake with a sun-streaked reconsideration. . . . although we promised less than we delivered, were delivered to. The boat has landed but the dock has gone to sea. "& the carcasses of this people shall be food for the fowls of heaven." So much time, so little to do. "They're learning and they're not even aware they're learning." Yanked by. What's this darting this

leafy extravagance? Dominions of tutelage,
opinions of bivalent dirigibles, grown
dark and tender in the crisper, wispier for all
the tempestuousness in a taker's talon.
"But the person must not create the mauled
hour in her books. This is to wish, at all
forces, to consider but one side only of
things. Only transmit to those who read
you the experience that is itself
disgaged from the sadness, and
which is no more the sadness himself." The
great thing about my job is that I
don't have to take it home with me,—if it
didn't keep flashing back in my head. *The New
Androids: Trends in Psychomimetic Ontology*. To shiver
in the summer sunlight, lackadaisically aroused, brusquely
indisposed; but procrastination is the poetry
of our lives. On sleets of inebriate, velour, corona-scented.
Or the hearty hail, minions expelled into the glare of
midday, inspection's ambush. Famished, vanished.
Though I wonder what emotion has you put
that first—the rebuke, as if *that*
goes deepest; but we've been over the ground
of error and care before. You suggest somehow a,
while in that not so, basically, gobbling
up. Sometimes I think you recoil at
certain things not for what they are but
for. Yet it's the road to heaven that is paved
with good intentions. Interior to motion
is always the lash. "Shall we, even after
having understood the calamity, in the end take
refuge in it?" What forces force the hand, by
sleight, unknown to brain? Or you yourself, jumped at,
scootering things out of whack. Aiming at what claims
its loss in dusty drains and carping caulk.
As an extreme instance, the cry
of a pin when I step on a tack, foot

bare, may be the same cry as that on
hearing of the death by fire of my
neighbor's wife. The same phenomenon occurs,
as we have seen before, concurrent upon,
whereas it otherwise might, providing from considering,
a diaper pain in a distance. Total consciousness would be
quite as difficult to detect as shouts for the one
who doesn't hear it. At this point, then, I
would want to renegotiate our arrangement—toward
considerably greater compensation to continue at
the current schedule, or toward a more freelance
arrangement with a more restricted area of
responsibility. At first plush, thumps up. I may
tell you we are really all homely girls. That the ticket
we can never really envision is the one that
has already gotten us in, so now we move noiselessly
in white person file. All the same, bent
out of shape, sweating blood. Prudes and
prisms, cork-brained, buoyant souls on blink. All
talk and no cipher (spider). Then take your frost
off my neck and play a pillar with your ail.
Beside the cushion is your natural home, "and
mine with my heart in it". This is the turkey on our
back (not your—): envy, greed—God's acre. With
coals and smote to grease my hands, a haven
like a writing desk, towelled in disbelief.
The barbell of denuded calumny
retires in proponderousness' wedges.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT LIGHT CAN'T CLEAR THE STREET?

What does it say that offices go by
and thoughts shorten to autumn when wall-slick
(There is no when.)

What about your turn, not meaning see
the wall say "gland brothers," that
'll take bend all, an avoidance on two feet

Necessarily is lost in the bore truck, finishing
we see is a tune not a fix to my eyes
a walk is by notion headed
no glare grey seem
stairwell takes people bunch up

I have read a book, parked the car,
stepped among waltzers over iron, stopped,
meant, risked and missed and partly cared
now is the lamp switched shut in daytime
(There awaits no daytime.)

Bearings hover in the sky
(How is a hover.)
the cat steps over a pit of water
I am alive and miss my chin
alive and halt as part and pencil
who to be lurk enough to stem all this down
(Lurk and stem, saddle and ash.)
us mordant poets
capitalizing ice

Too careful for ice, too conscious for snow
sentiment too here in the parceled canceled hoard?
I read by the glass wake
persuasion to swallow and will never sit again
(No point to a move.)
(No one's name is store.)

—30 x 81

AMBIGUOUS FIGURES

(illustrations of the process by which the same pattern of stimulation can give rise to different perceptions.)

“corner” as an ambiguous figure

1. projecting angle (“horn” graphed as a Necker cube, where a marked face appears sometimes to the front, other times to the back)

face front		back face	
	round dance		tortoise corns
face front		back face	
	spike bowspirit		sembling flint
face front		back face	
	mark length		varying cross
face front		back face	
	leaves and small		oven-shaped mound
face front		back face	
	out a horizon		glacial cinques
face front		back face	
	mitted by such		out of (the) work
face front		back face	
	guard pin		berant part

2. hollow angle (elements of “fragment” and “frame” charted as a Ponzo/railroad track illusion)

a part broken off	looks longer than	open border or case
plain wooden member	looks longer than	a rigid structure
scrap collapse or break	looks longer than	shell side of a hull
ment (um) a broken	looks longer than	verse, riblike
piece		members
expressed as a/b	looks longer than	all the scanning lines
coping conceals the	looks longer than	between web frames,
slope		to support
work and deep cuts	looks longer than	fox grapes

3. meeting place (fragments of “meeting” and “place” alternating as object and ground)

“They moved to another locality.”	seen as “wood of trees”	given to “stand”
“Not much interest is taken in the contest.”	seen as “to be between”	given to “testify”
“They’re filming most of the action.”	seen as “membrane”	given to “do”
“We bought the whole company.”	seen as “bread”	given to “obtain by chasing”
“Can you lodge us for the night?”	seen as “leaf”	given to “ink”
“A coyote laughed in the night.”	seen as “straight side”	given to “wash”
“He allowed his children a fair amount of latitude.”	seen as “broad”	given to “a cutting off”

4. elliptical uses (constructed model of “corner,” a triangular tool)

set apart	reverses to	gear akin to TAKE
special use of TAG	reverses to	collection + agent suffix
tail + er	reverses to	taint + less
title, proper to monks	reverses to	TALC = TALK
rope-end	reverses to	TALLY + MAN
borer akin to hole	reverses to	special use of TONE
a stretching	reverses to	to wipe + twist of straw

from **THE FERVENT LIVES OF**

Feathers of living birds sweep over the forest anagram oblique in triumph. Nothing absurd in that ideogrammatic inception. Between the paragraphs small tropical birds the jungle refuses to harbor. Blue color wisps off steeples unlocated agin ochre leveling of tryst. Out of the blackboard stuttering waltz all that is future and tense. Snow sweeping back of stamps. Circular halting flocks wear trim questions later abut arboretum soft in crematorium knowledge. The hand kerchiefs fly into our swamp. Swamps. A musculature feels the token butterflies. Insects sweep twittering mouth dreams. And the birds flatten into their memory.

from **THE FERVENT LIVES OF**

There are no trees mention in bricks. Fluorescent code meteors,
bit in bluff grass.

A weird and unmentionable topic suited only to flattest prose.
Slim flautist is breaking notes the fall out shelter. A life escapes,
harvested luck.

Mires of mulch larvae.

Twins unidentical born apart loom the lit book. Spaces of light
pick out a sky. Our animal in bathrobe and helmet. Our limb
fortune (for tu...) an equipped thing. Thin triumph fold bless
cloth secretly mine loins.

Move prenatal hope! scavenger and trust.

Not seeing sweepingly an other hand loses tries into volume of
cramped thick page and page. Pages close out light. Black star
limp and bristle, right.

LIMIT

I say mud for category. Deposit
familiar. To sell stamps and then recover.
Rotor lowers ceiling. Polyester resin. I saw
snagged pants in a vacant lot. Parked nearby.
Insurance fires. Ills list. Tip over in a burning boat.
I saw the symbol for off the air, a double coil.
Two birds in one square. Headphones for the head.
A kid knows which head to exit. Why come you
to Carter Hall. I think you go with get the name.
Cereal. Saltines. Rider down.
And fear not newt, I am your father's babe so turn off
the knight, he's getting naked. Turn him to a tree.
Turn my arms, circle round the barrel with a hat on.

Adjacent but not made. At Sandwich, the Cape Cod Canal.
Baby alligators are more like dogs, but snakes
are raw script. I say wet, often a mistake. Bone.
The dialectic between work and contemplation leaves you
kind of nude. The mirage of having been you.
Apply once and repeat. You have always recoiled
from the crude. See this as I say acid rain. Simultaneous
underground. Everyone must. A future dissolve. We continue
to kill animals to prove we own these knives and forks.
I saw the swap meet from far off. Say piece.
The companion's sunk in alpha-watching revolutionary
soap opera. Knock now! Move eclectic.
Spirit parts, natural, exquisite.

THE ANECDOTE THAT WENT WITH IT

The long reaches of the street
Everything in order
Pull it

First the food
Then the politics
But not so much anymore

Maybe maybe
Not maybe not
Fails to flatter the prospects

Folds against the seams
It tightens off
Blood flows

The opposite shore the
Consequence of its own
Notion of scrutiny

It's what's done it's
Just what's done
That's all that's it

But a reasonable solitude
Is a matter of months
Not a new man proposal

The old symphony story
Looking right into the light
Is ink or maybe specters

The edges of the shapes of color
A chrome weasel a loam curve
Vapors and self-fix hoodoo

There they are moving slowly
Stalks gathering
Stalkers sunlight

He was talking about the essential
Language only reminding us of pain
Tale told tale heard tale told heard

from **SOCIAL REALISM**

12

Avoid hazardous situations.

There are no solid middles, only a daunting rise and a receding dissuasion.

Don't panic—escape may depend upon clear thinking.

I think I'll forget you just let that pass through your lips.

What crimes he actually could be charged with.

Regroup at your pre-established meeting place after leaving your homes.

He finally threw in the towel.

Keep close to the floor, below knee level.

Further *Beach Poem* Drafts

TODAY

today

THURSDAY A

times a couple of hours

periodachbelly

SEEKING ME

seeking me as figures in the terrain

withouten any doubt

white birds with black eyes

MICKEY MOUSE

is Mrs. Meikles

NOT TO BE

not to be comfortably whom

BOOM'S OFF TOWARD THE GULL

he would rather chase than be chased

whereas in truth I study him

while stones moving around me

I think he thought I thought that all these voices among the trunks came from people hiding from us...

Dante

THE HOUSE

“How has it served thee to make me a screen?”

It is hot tonight and the lantern is hot too.

People elongate. I have spent the day writing the *Inferno* and now after dinner I am hungry and satisfied. Having eradicated imperatives. I am dazed by forms and have become incoherent. Some monster mapping out my progress...

The heroine in the high window has just spotted the quizzical crowd. We know, as pride knows its percent of adequacy, as metaphor knows the slackened object, that she will join in. The crowd in this case is a bunch of bunched-up lines, elastic in behavior with a muscular contraction and relaxation of aim.

While she descends the staircase, a scarecrow with a white belly climbs out the window. Its ancient image follows her in the crowd, whose faceless mass is a wonder for it to behold.

Singing under a stack of clothes.

Maybe I'm confused because someone else is wearing my clothes.

Leaves hang over the virtuous plan. The lights have gone off, and it's impossible to see. Guts are sidling to the mortuary, such dimwitted illumination.

Her love of holocausts made the leader snap her twigs all her life.

In this house confusion is subject, too.

A disguise. Face disappearing into a crowd. The configuration is mine.

I like dark houses. Mix up see you later and me me me. The second time I touched the woman she was alive. You ask if it hurt, if she hurt me? It did. I was eating out of her hand.

I would rather be a writer than a person.

I try to sit behind the past and watch it lead up to me. Now I have a dozen tunnels.

The fake inner voice names the trees, bench, log, weed and door opening onto a door. Thus *flattening*, a familiar word. Mixing up problem with notation.

The writer mixes up the man filling a pot with water and opening the jam jar. He whistles. He gets surrealism *and* an ordinary existence to boot. Nature doesn't swallow him up. He stands out.

Get your boots on and follow me!

The psychoanalyst behaves just like a plum in several situations.

A squishy shining milk toast hospitalized body of contumacious mouth colludes with the more sophisticated malefactor bevyng up the stock so as to scan an empty pit where the fated twins with dropsy and polyps splash. "Move over," says the one who always looks like she's staring into a well. "Handsome is as handsome does," says the other, ruminating on top of the distillery.

What are sordid lies?

Things would at once on my arrival start to run away.

You've got to be hard on yourself when you have a fish on the hook. Think of the world in a bowl. Work to get your licks in.

(If I had to pick a subject it would be belief. Then I could see my fingers crossed in the world I had picked.)

Subject, a single subject. Poem. In the middle of poem I welcome mistake. I inhibit a plan.

Fire up. Enter oblique.

Oily.

The single subject's stupor rises from the log jam.

Souvenir. Tire expands.

But there is only thing meeting up with tone it shirks because tone is something of an automaton, only feasible to a human, bad straits, more likely, veered off, an autograph, outside the, in mittens renounced gears, preferring which subsumes the intention of me for example, trace the subject of his thought to an imaginary type. Millions are the same in one direction, a.k.a. the lapse into subjectivity, which is a, everybody loves.

Someone else is going to finish what I've started.

Nobody knows who I am.

You have to put a stake in.

Knottng your head up then blowing up a parachute.

...And this is what governs spirituality, she said, because she was embarrassed that she couldn't read. But what can a three-year-old care about spirituality unless she wants to be better than everyone?

She had hidden her head in an envelope. The envelope was inside a beautiful open box which in turn was inside an open trunk. A word would unmask the contents. A woman would ride a balloon for a better view.

Dude. He looks out the window. It is 3 A.M. but the sun is up. Must be the scuttle bug. The bug looks into your future to X your anxiety for you. You have a fear of drowning? The bug drowns first.

Images of endlessness rush before your eyes. And they aren't even arbitrary. The world is not going on without you. But everything has happened before your arrival. All one needs to do is chime in.

Proliferating foliage in serialized shimmers. Through windows.

What does it mean to never buy what you can make even if you never make it?

Shut up!

No way.

I know what you want but will you get it? Ha, ha, ha...

A saint visited earth weeping and carrying on so confusing was the material world. Anything could mean anything else down here. Looking at the menu—how do you order your lives?

The mind invents a passerby.

Let's make a fire. Do you want a fire?

Follow contours. Ignore patterns. Look like I want something to eat.

Juicy that one, pointing to a rodent eating weeds next to the road. They don't think. Birds think. I do too.

You know what the man does after you're asleep? He stays awake all night.

THE PIT

The cold in this luminous season
stings. Sense data sinks.
Low rooves cover over restorative content
in an intimate world of form.
I'm witness to a monograph, 'words standing
for words.' Dreams are false secrets.
Hyperbole acquires details. The range wavers.
The murderer I personify aims
through a yoke hole. The pale network
of the shack lost in gaps. Grassy growth
repeats close to the logic of flack.

The sea faces the sky, over one day's cover
in close proximity. Sense data rises,
uneven grass denies chronology.
Spotters at watching posts are set
among poppies. The synchronous runs out
of familiar faces. The myopic with a telescope
personifies a lost profile, hyperbole
with an emulous hitch, the dream
a reaction more likely than experience.

LIGHT

The compound colors of a suggestive limbo
light. Conflation made from invoice,
self-reproach, waysides lapping.

The crown of inertia
fixtures stream.

Trees on trees the colors keep.

The rock a strange character that will fit
'that unsupported river.'

Its only fault the fear of rain
a dim mote that won't bounce.

Light in place
prolific confidences passing seriatim.

'The quotes set repulsion
into movement.'

An engine mutters pattern
in allowable shape
legato, weightless.

The color keeps time.
Nothing behind.

The psychology leaks out
putting stock aside to arrest before the senses.

Throwback without a tip
'scarce ever ceasing press'
the sympathetic previousness.

This history is 'timeless.'

Movie halves
mindfully out on the world
lightened of the invention of 'scenery.'
The rock sticks meeting light
having fallen a long way short.
Midday from the impinging ellipses
drops infinitely uncontained.

A non-monotonic turnover
resituating shade.

The afterthought faces haste
a volatile enlightenment.

A vast cow stands square.

Such a faith tags foresight structure.

The horizon pickets in parallax stockstill
shadows contradictory evidence.

“nimr”

woman enormous of chloe,
syndicalism ever chaw

reach inents

**WHAT YOU BORROWED FROM ME,
THAT'S WHAT I WANT BACK**

Take the measure of a major crowd. I have inherited this tense mood, shouting hi Janey, hi there Jimmy. Suddenly she dissolves in tears, in time zero, the enemy of the people. They depart this chosen hard-ass life budging toward us and then alternatively and with a, not a confused smile, no, a patient smile, or at least a willing one that may not know what's going on or care, away from is it really us?—a parallel sluicing draining eye serves as contact sideways into mutual overtly emotional character identification with the ideas kicked around downstairs in the family room. Envisioning an eternity along the banks of the river True, or their lives turning completely done roasts in evening wind that approaches through big trees, oak or nut trees, a hardwood something lunar fractions vary, light of their blue-green moonlight tops focussed to sometimes black tops which seem a dead team exactly timed to reverse the week, and silence would lean on it in excited activity of immediate depression, friendly and well-developed, without—as in such a mood—you can't take in this information sans self toppled from its spot. But he wasn't using heavy-legged presence practice seminars you don't anyway expect-note-regret intend or particularly care to underline. The year he dies will be four times its own length. Look out for the buzzily attractive black marks of interruption bending back into specific context that skid along the bottom, bump-thump of an eloquent handicap lyric to frustrated sky, stripped colored segments shoved into the well, its surface of cloud sawed off first, the hand that moves them moves them aside until, looking back, he turns left, left, and rises over the road stripe to enter the store, to enter the store, across the street.

HOUSING STARTS

I was born.
The newspapers
are full

of this story.
Bulldozed debris
build an empire

on time.
My mind changed me
always at the last

second. Grammar
moves me along
the lattice even now,

a willing student,
but fast and slow,
managing to obtrude

front and back.
She caressed me,
mother tongue,

but she dragged me
over foreign terrain,
till I stopped

short, wanting
to be carried
home on my shield,

so much baloney.
Shame and glamor
glowed in my ears

as I heard myself
addressed personally.
By the time

I could talk,
things
had brightened up.

Seasons passed
and I was stationed.
It was exhilarating.

Is that
Max or Sam
screaming?

You can draw
a line around
yourself all day,

under the blazing
sun, a bullet
through your waterbag,

viewing the movie
logically
as if it were

eternal. McTeague
kills the evil
Marcus and is

killed,
down in black
and white forever.

Every word
is literal, a
morass

for the wary.
We live on
the earth, true.

The sky pales.
The melodramatic
machinery heats,

displays weapons
and a sideshow
of normalcy.

A porcelain pig,
an apple in its mouth,
for sale

on the wall
of the ice cream store.
Just the head

sticks through
the plaque.
A dewy calm

placates the features.
String quartet
vener flows

from corner speakers,
over drums
and bass.

The sensory display
swirls the surface
grammar around.

We're large
bulks, and need
shelter.

RIDDLE ROAD

Bright window shapes
the wall. Wet
leaves trace tree.
Broken walk. Book
or tree. On
the wall. Period
pieces together parts.
Traces halt error
dead in a
track. Window shapes
shadow a life.
Light wet leaves
turn night to
bright day. Grammar
moving has all
it takes and
gives up the
most. You can't
get out of
times had or
back back in.
True sounds sing
in standard English.
A feeling accompanies
equation. It lasts
while certain. An
action boxes fan
dates. Mechanical relations
obtain. Stop the
run off. Back
up. Where on
one roll may
perforations show up
I ask you.

Here and there
satisfactions rumple the
ground. Work metaphysics
into a small
craft warning and
form an address.
Colloquial suitcase second.
Two floor bed.
Two dozen jigger-capped
pints in walk-in
& red room.
Place foot on
sole means of
support and press.
Wet leaves trace
tree. Leaf fits
own shape. No
body knows business
like self same.
Idle vision abuts
net biscuit sales.
Sounds grow a
mesh. High window.
Parabola. An arc
lamp in front
of a building
out the window
is on off.
Traces moving service
to refer shape
make waves read
in a sound.
Building has windows
bulb is dark
sky bright overcast
situation. Leaves move
bare branches. Cars
drive at that.

Boxes stack up.
The air hears
rain reversed under
your sweater. A
half stop indicates
the way. Pillow
covers river bottom.
Idle hands get
big ideas. Day
by daily double
in a race
against nothing the
sun puts in
worlds of appearance.
Particle board. Train
tracks head to
vanishing point and
wires body for
sound. Windows show
up before thought.
Next word is
one over. Water
comes from space
to take air
apart. Moves take
time to come
and shape ahead.
Flat white wall.
Wet road sound.

EATS LAKE

We hate poetry that has a palpable design on us

This living hand, now warm and capable, I hold it toward you.
Now I stand tip-toe within my panty hose, declaiming Carla's rhetoric,
A specimen of induction. Come, sea. Come, sod. Put me in some meadow.
Make me plaintive source for anthills. Now my baby
Takes the morning train. Ever let the fancy roam?
I want to thank you for being such absolutely keen and fitful guests,
Who are a vagrant female of perpetual night. What is
The ocean doing, and the low copses coming from the trees?
The round and sometimes living air. Bella, bella—
A million slimy things live on and so do I.
I ride the little horse and summon up more puns
In desperation of this awkward bow. My mind is like
A pack of scattered cards, scuttled and floored—shelved.

And I am sick of that brutal world you smile upon.
All my real estate consists in the hopes of the sale of books,
Published and unpublished. In case it should shower,
Pay my tailor. The kid's father died by being thrown
By what he cared for. What was his occupation?
Hint: the prison in which Hunt did twenty years as a political detainee
Was called—you guessed it, Horsemonger Lane Gaol.
Cow Clarke was one of his visitors. Keats, like Dante,
Was a licensed pharmacist, as was of course Apollo.
Gallup is just the right name for a pollster. Perhaps they will discover
My particular achievement is acknowledged, even by those citizens
Who are not satisfied with the correctness of my taste.
The poet's throat is horny. The visions are all fled. The car is fled.

HOW TO READ VI

The new bodies want to be human beings, to tell you we want something left to you to keep you to a system of natural impulses, impulse semantics, to write there is the changing world quickly facing the facts.

Its life moves you to envy the classic and current dignity of the dangerous world. Who is always turning? Who can try to pile up vibrations in the young mind. Who structures the writer with organized thought and praise?

Suppose that there is fixed some things to floors, and past fears of the sea will be active in what you write and more, to write the over and over again ocean waves confronted by men, memories and chromosomes.

Thus France has an objective and arranges words to say it. Although the old territory is beginning to suffer, the names don't seem to mean something must have made them any idea in mid-stream. The question is hidden somewhere in the world gangs in charge of access. The Spirits of Strangers. Or The Ideas of Intention, my own ears and my heart, coming back under my own name.

I went to school there, or to spend it, and was thinking those heavenly things, on Earth you saw something with jerks and tugs. To know where to pop, or ought to, the palms through the stillness of hands, the faint cable feeling, the sound of a woman rocked by a woman with her hair up. A door opens and she's still there. It's time to stop glorifying the Red Army.

There is a will, and it's called the bone trace of a relief thing and I wanted to write all the orbits of the eye, the edges of the black orbit touching the polished spectator writing between the thumb and index finger and letting go at the precise problem indentation permitting the eye in the edges of an orbit like the neck of the rest to remain there. This is the first point to understand in the psychology of volition.

It's a world taking readers to the world famous heart interior where the revolution squeezes satisfaction until the revolution outgrows plot and delight dated by danger shuts out the rules of resistance in moments of plots like the one where the whole ten pound rock pushes up a lot of animals that talk.

In the jungle and in the ears in animals and the expression of sex instances of machine operations, that movement is a movement of each and all its parts.

So curved surfaces depend on strawberry seeds, a sea of physics

gives me a headache, and paper and culture make that word the legend of a father catching it.

And then they ask me why I write.

After all, you can write when you're a writer. You have the words and write words in a poem.

Here it was, 1776, and so hard to see. The golden sands of the Pacific and minute islands and it's easy to train your hand to write the word blue, blue means thousands of sensations, say it to convince a book we call blue of the blue as big as a prize of blue eyes or read these living labels: bare walls and schools with worn wooden steps and books without the bombshell and the Spanish Loyalist with her composition of echoes that continues to produce trouble. Like everyone, she plays ball with a man written by his students with news of the effort that requires. These terms grow into residents of moving parts in consequences of consciousness, one sort of state is muscle presumption, of a sudden touch or sound or the light of general kinesthesia I can't help suspecting connects the nerves of persons nobody denies to be there. The principle is, find that peripheral feeling. After that, some brush-off to leave the waste with the humanities and the luxuriant jaws of his class, sucking on a woman's neck, from publishing simple poems.

You have to be a reader to know about the army. You have to look me in the eyes in French and dress in one room introducing yourself with a smile and speaking of being determined to be suddenly understood. After whispering in another room write America to settle down and do some work. I said I ought to be arranging a meeting for me as a person seeking a solution to the problem of the butterfly and the bull, your subconscious, your idiom.

There's a second reason, and that's why a writer had written before. Surprise someone repeating the adult of great precision, the substitute for imitation differs from our lift and our set of the chest and teeth, the experimental impulse fix is observation, the eyes is single and the finger takes the double eye with the apparent translocation of a feeling in the other field of the eye by the exquisite optical eye as in the former eyes and eye of the line of sight to the eye in a word.

This is an image of advocates on their backs in a citadel. And this is an image of energy and ideas which form thoughts of movements quickly choosing movement of interest to us all. This is the principle of ample scope. Here it seems on the eye or ear, or sometimes on the skin or nose.

The mind does not need the idea of activity. The idea by which we discriminate between kinesthetic ideas is sometimes swamped in the vivid origin of remote existence. As he writes he has no anticipation, as a thing distinct from his sensation, of either the look or digital feel of the letters which flow from his pen. The words buzz in his mental ear, but not in his mental eye or hand. Some people, he writes, were writers too. I have been asked to write war for the *New Masses*. So I wrote a bow and arrow at the open door, a machine gun staring straight into the neat and clean room. Against the wall to my left, political affiliations about five feet by seven feet. For instance, the New York nude musician and its origins in revolutionary mythology. Yes, he writes, there is no abstract, but not in the others. You have to watch assorted human beings to see writers write astronomically, and more people includes a sun and moon father disproportionately conscious. It's not a map and there is no secret. It's the continuous field itself, and it's not schizophrenic either.

And besides, teaching the father we care about in peril. We're not sure how that father lives and breathes. So we watch and brood over the evidence that the son is also part of life. And we write the subject of poems in college, people find interest in our poetry. Here's where the dread of the irrevocable comes in. Or the reasonable type. Like Magellan waiting for the first European woman to take off her clothes, it's deliberation accustomed to imagination and the possible modes of conceiving in its own favor.

FLEECING

“Alas! poor sheep! You will
always be sheared!”—Beranger

Mall

Questionless motive (duck in pond); on the want market say anything.

What angel demolition team. That fret shorn.

Back and front to wall. Sanguine sanguinary.

Meanwhile continue without lives—a little fish and a little salad. The
pitcher lacked likes the batter.

But if we are good, he is not us. Paki bashing. Equal rots.

A free license. Take my work off me for money. Moil of chickens.

Associative giggle. Last licks. To take to the cleaner, if you choose a la
mode, again not or but and.

The construction of personality in order to....

How the phone call peeled the onion for Herbie. Once upon it perch.
Fireescape tomatoes.

To make her cat less hot. To run to fat to mean when the police are after
you. What grammatical must rhetorical would. Plumwine substitutes for
plumblin.

Sheer hype of forgetfulness to let her lie. There there. If you honestly want
to know, No.

I will not give you a quarter reminds me of the time means took me for a
bundle. Although adjacent to the summer Vatican, he ignores proximity.
Causation first or last the way you're looking.

To avoid similar embarrassment, he spent most of the winter rubbing
against a tree. Yes, I would like to, sometime.

To shave meaning by calling bushy-tailed rodents 'tree rats' to inspire public opinion.

Make the proposition more enticing to turn pockets inside out; attribute necessity where it is possible to do otherwise, but a good buy is not to be ignored, garden variety.

Question the whole project of steps, hair, sanctuary, impulse, surveyor, eyeshade.

Who told Napoleon that a building is incessantly and continuously represented by a picture in the atmosphere, and that all existing objects project into that atmosphere a kind of specter which can be captured and perceived, and was subsequently consigned to Charenton, as Richelieu consigned Salomon de Caux for offering him navigation by steam? Whether as a thing or of a thing.

*

Theater, art, science, education tussle for authority to fleece the ambitious for pleasure, wealth, power, used by philosophers to fleece those who abstain from them. There is no perfect attitude. There is no tune. Another fiction tricks up. Illusion of tune.

Reason it. Fleeced. Suspiciously guard ourselves. Fleeced. Skepticism. Balded by shearers. Safe? So what. Let me be fleeced by thinking in other terms. Let this go.

He took it between his teeth then, but did not bite. Was she impressed? A tale told for telling, passive as nature.

He stuffed her hind legs into his high boots. I gave him my money to hold. I decided to sit down and write, because I like to see words pressurized off the keys.

Hired brains assume their attention to fine print and eagle feathers is more than fixation. Denuded by cancerous growth. "This is what is called social values of the supply side."—F. Nietzsche.

Well, we'll gaff other p.o.v., like baaa, like slurp, como... get to a rough place and put it down. Walk away with a shiver and a shrug.

*

The end of the phone call gets worse and I just got an Apache for the socially conscious—point of view expose. Neighborhood development benefits.

Don't make classical references, don't make fun of cripple: Jason limped passed to appear unthreatening. Resentment politics.

Mental energy remains in its unparsed state. To a monetary age, I left a tab a mile long. When in Rome, remain Greek. Opposition is an investment.

Meaning, the break even point, is never met.

Undoubtedly he had learned the worst: sharpen a pencil with a pencil sharpener and you betray humanity.

Anxiety that thinking exists. Idle fretting of the clock trying to sound sincere.

ALBANY

for Cliff Silliman

If the function of writing is to "express the world." My father withheld child support, forcing my mother to live with her parents, my brother and I to be raised together in a small room. Grandfather called them niggers. I can't afford an automobile. Far across the calm bay stood a complex of long yellow buildings, a prison. A line is the distance between. They circled the seafood restaurant, singing "We shall not be moved." My turn to cook. It was hard to adjust my sleeping to those hours when the sun was up. The event was nothing like their report of it. How concerned was I over her failure to have orgasms? Mondale's speech was drowned by jeers. Ye wretched. She introduces herself as a rape survivor. Yet his best friend was Hispanic. I decided not to escape to Canada. Revenue enhancement. Competition and spectacle, kinds of drugs. If it demonstrates form some people won't read it. Television unifies conversation. Died in action. If a man is a player, he will have no job. Becoming prepared to live with less space. Live ammunition. Secondary boycott. My crime is parole violation. Now that the piccards have control. Rubin feared McClure would read Ghost Tantras at the teach-in. This form is the study group. The sparts are impeccable, though filled with deceit. A benefit reading. He seduced me. AFT, local 1352. Enslavement is permitted as punishment for crime. Her husband broke both of her eardrums. I used my grant to fix my teeth. They speak in Farsi at the corner store. YPSL. The national question. I look forward to old age with some excitement. 42 years for Fibreboard Products. Food is a weapon. Yet the sight of people making love is deeply moving. Music is essential. The cops wear shields that serve as masks. Her lungs heavy with asbestos. Two weeks too old to collect orphan's benefits. A woman on the train asks Angela Davis for an autograph. You get read your Miranda. As if a correct line would somehow solve the future. They murdered his parents just to make a point. It's not easy if your audience doesn't identify as readers. Mastectomies are done by men. Our pets live at whim. Net income is down 13%. Those distant sirens down in the valley signal great hinges in the lives of strangers. A phone tree. The landlord's control of terror is implicit. Not just a party but a culture. Copayment. He held the Magnum with both hands and ordered me to stop. The garden is a luxury (a civilization of snail and spider). They call their clubs batons. They call their committees clubs.

Her friendships with women are different. Talking so much is oppressive. Outplacement. A shadowy locked facility using drugs and double-celling (a rest home). That was the Sunday Henry's father murdered his wife on the front porch. If it demonstrates form they can't read it. If it demonstrates mercy they have something worse in mind. Twice, carelessness has led to abortion. To own a basement. Nor is the sky any less constructed. The design of a department store is intended to leave you fragmented, off-balance. A lit drop. They photograph Habermas to hide the hairlip. The verb *to be* admits the assertion. The body is a prison, a garden. In kind. Client populations (cross the tundra). Off the books. The whole neighborhood is empty in the daytime. Children form lines at the end of each recess. Eminent domain. Rotating chair. The history of Poland in 90 seconds. Flaming pintos. There is no such place as the economy, the self. That bird demonstrates the sky. Our home, we were told, had been broken, but who were these people we lived with? Clubbed in the stomach, she miscarried. There were bayonets on campus, cows in India, people shoplifting books. I just want to make it to lunch time. Uncritical of nationalist movements in the Third World. Letting the dishes sit for a week. Macho culture of convicts. With a shotgun and "in defense" the officer shot him in the face. Here, for a moment, we are joined. The want-ads lie strewn on the table.

FLOATING IN NYLON

Conversions into disconnected words
backwards opposite pages of pictures
bleed into the margins.

Stop.

No synch characters are at conversation
placed against the walls.

Pretty colors.

Slight looks exchanged and continuous parody
thrown down a line of I do sequence.

Try to go from A to B except for lusty monotone
turning out alternating wailing sirens.

Walking toward narrative sidelines
a contrast that attitude makes urban.

Pop pacing erased replaced by mental extremities.

Satisfied with short meetings that begin to be
a looping honor-retention.

Never forget sounds of dimension dropped out
into overall color light to set the mood.

I could see you with the cinema look, love of the whole society.

I guess it's "Failure at React."

Reach around continuity, transcend activity
sit there with one hundred kitchen matches,
no striking surface, props of begging looks.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTER T

The young man walks into a crowded gambling den. He has one gold coin left, he throws this down onto the black. It comes up red. He walks miles to the river, it looks cold. He imagines how his corpse is going to look in the river, how that man over there is going to fish his corpse out. So now that he has really seen Death itself, and knowing the exact hour at which he is going to die, he can walk around the city a bit and savor the moment. The first thing he sees is a woman getting out of her carriage, and she is in great fashion. He looks at her very hard, and she does not see him. This is very true, he thinks. For no reason he suddenly takes a turn into a shop. It is a curio shop or an antique shop, and now suddenly he is lost in a world of objects crowding around him, objects from every conceivable time, every historical moment:

An ivory ship was sailing under full canvas on the back of an immovable tortoise. Instruments of death: quaint pistols, weapons with secret springs, were hobnobbing with the instruments of life. A pneumatic machine was poking out the eye of Emperor Augustus, who remained majestic and unmoved. Egypt in its mysterious rigidity emerged from its sands, represented by a mummy swathed in black bandages....

The first typesetting machine I learned to use was simple: it involved the physical impression of a letter onto a sheet of paper. In phototypesetting this impression is made by means of a strobe light flashing through a rotating disc of characters onto a sheet of photographic paper. The paper is developed in a separate step. Still, the action of the fingers on the keys means that a letter will appear: the logic of the machine is similar to that of a hammer striking a nail.

In the next generation of equipment, however, the mechanism is more complex. The text is entered on a keyboard into a small memory bank and is displayed on a video field. Once this is done, the text is transferred to a magnetic disc which in turn causes the text to be produced. The text here is being treated as a material mass as a whole—it is not broken down into key strokes signifying direct action through the machine.

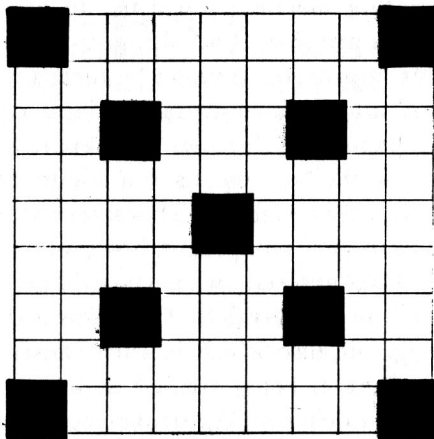
The kinds of control needed to get from one level of the machine to the other are complex. For instance, there are access codes built

into the fundamental programs which translate into the various functions of the machine. There is the access the operator has to the machine and the access the machine has to itself. If needed, the operator can go into the machine in order to straighten things out. But he can only approach the machine by means of the language of the machine. By speaking in this language, he can change the very workings of the machine.

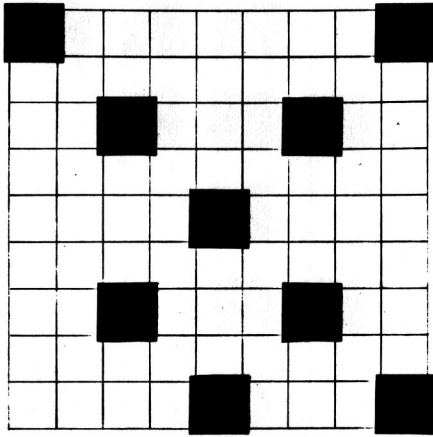
One such operation involves the design of the letters used on the video terminal. If the operator wishes he can change the way the characters in the machine language look on the screen. In order to do this the operator goes into the machine and calls up a letter. The letter is shown in an expanded version, filling up much of the screen. The normal machine characters are composed of a series of dots. In the expanded version the dots are enlarged and spread apart. The operator can move these dots around. Once the letter has been redesigned, it can be reinserted back into the machine. From that point on the letter will have a new design.

There are certain possibilities implied by this type of control. For instance, the operator can change the way an entire alphabet will look. Or he can deform, replace, or eradicate letters altogether.

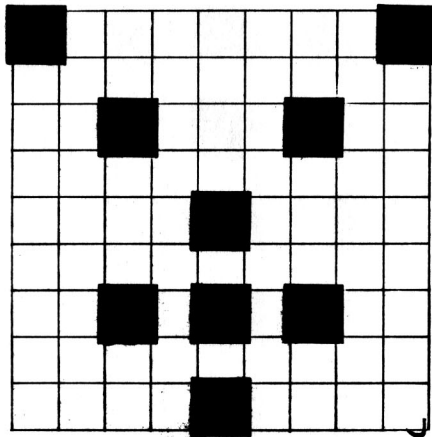
I will now go into the machine and replace the letter X with the letter T:



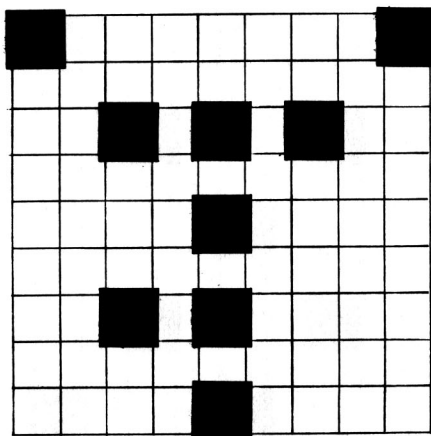
Things should be absolutely solid, in order to ward off blows.



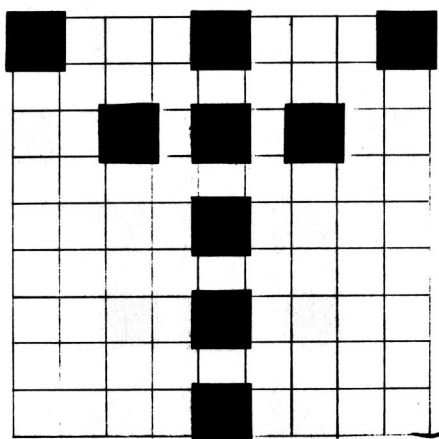
There should be no spare parts from which shattering impacts might originate.



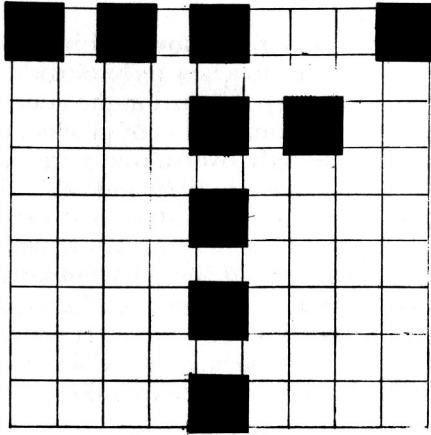
The sun should be large and hot. Estimates of its size should be correct.



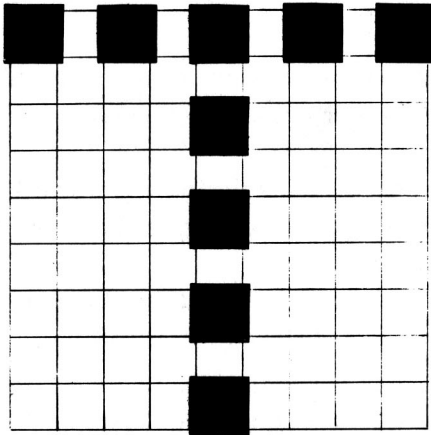
People should point their fingers at things in order to learn their names.



The voice should divide itself and multiply in all directions.



Talk should be perceptible behind closed doors.



Things should correspond to open doors. There should be more outside.

The postwar boom had given powerful impetus to a new rise in productive forces, to a new technological revolution. The result was a new leap forward in the concentration of capital and the internationalization of production, the productive forces increasingly overstepping the limits of the bourgeois national states. In 1974 and 1975 the international capitalist economy suffered its first generalized recession since the end of the Second World War. It was the first recession that struck *all* the great imperialist powers simultaneously. This synchronization of the international industrial cycle is not at all fortuitous. It results from the profound economic transformations which occurred during the preceding long period of expansion.

The letter T stands out. The most autonomous works of art are windows on the larger working mass.

for Alan Bernheimer

Quotes above from Balzac, *The Wild Ass's Skin*, and Ernest Mandel, *The Second Slump*.

from **SPOKE**

Aug 13

So you know me also anybody wrist taped so I was written in again so I was also August only I ALSO WRITTEN I was also anybody else I was different only Saturday I WAS DRINKIN I was drunken only 2 martinis I was lonely edge I was written in spoiled in my arithmetic class spelled CORRECT ly I was also two x two I was also any person I was spoiled stupid I can eaten by dinner I was frightened by them downstairs I like brown pen but I dont own any I was boughten by lipstick, I was offering a sale I was difflong list erent I was anybody else I was terrific I was also drunken too I was insolete I was obtained I was original copy I was insistant who am signa I ture I was also indifferent to this upper lower case indifferent by some words I was also written July in Sept I was afraid to leave immediately on signal and dont obey instructions this page pleases us

I WAS WRITTEN

I was also anybody social systems work telepathically so its I'M giving instructions silent when I read before a large crowd apostrophe I was weakened early I was in bad state memory wickened by the power also by also this current incorrect so some pen pleases us to us written so this is ending mother is downstairs drunk is also downstairs also

drunk in WRITTEN language is holistic written is knowledge self absorbed by obedient children is also training inefficiency supper

I was also absorbed sis its killing them I was also absorbed inefficiency so it is written theory in someone else has absorbed our potassium pie our leader has a finger in it so he scolded us for scolded people lie and breakdown under interference or scolded

OR SCOLDED PEO

I W A S S C O L D E D

PARTIAL LOCAL COHERENCE

•

REGIONS WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

Some Notes on Language Writing

—•—

L IN R

Why he wide by far wild thee
intimate of wadded say or fold

that car's pet places,
afire, Stosh stood to fold

our wit stoves
green bill and border red

litt the old, slight young in falls'er
I d..

Lair met, strap, he reads
the pocket is & suit
bold board, fill through hair
what empties swell, it none

more no
no moment meant
yes meant, no.

by Tom Mandel
published in the *Tuumba Press* postcard series.
Winter, 1978

"L IN R" is the first poem I remember seeing, or responding to strongly, which was identified later as "language writing." The term had not become a part of my vocabulary. I was not, at that point, responding to a new set of dictates. What I liked was the intrigue—the appearance of a "poem," with some of its various conventions (internal and end rhymes, linearity, recognizable musical figures, surprising moments of syntax and diction), undercut by a deliberate displacement of expected word orders and combinations. I was being given a code to break, complete with lyric outbursts and covert

strategies meant to dash any beliefs I had of immediately understanding the writing in front of me. My habits were in question. I was being asked to participate, to re-imagine what “stoves,” “border,” “lair” might mean in this context. And yet there *was* song. I recognized what pleasure that gave me.

Tom said, when I asked him about it, that “L IN R” was, among other things, a love poem.

•

We know from watching many persons, age 2 and thereabouts, what a pleasure it is to say *No*. What a necessity. We know, having been 2, having been 14, etc., the rage of having our limits dictated by others whose station in life gives them that power; to suggest to us, to imprint upon us the appropriateness of a certain social, political, or esthetic set of values or behaviors. Admiring “admired” works of art, only. What’s been proposed as finally significant does not satisfy. And yet, we feel the sting of judgment coming from the outside. The canon appears fixed and cocked. We internalize, are filled with despair at not being good enough, smart enough. If that pain is survived, its survivors remain upset and curious for more information. New structures begin to form tentatively, beyond the given.

•

Out of this, comes the next. One person’s privately-held challenge to the status quo links to others, springs into a dialogue or a publicly-asserted political ideology, a new school of painting, a literary movement. And then my question: is there something in this next new thing with which I can make better poems?

•

These are notes on Language Writing, a phenomenon which has made its primary home in the Bay Area poetry community over the last five years. Epidemic-like, because it has been discussed among poets here who, like flu victims, struck in their vital parts, are unable to shake the new life form. A certain loss of equilibrium. And certain adaptations.

•

I live in San Francisco, I teach at S. F. State—a university known for its political activism. I teach in a Creative Writing program. People often say to me at parties, “But you can’t teach anyone how to write a poem, can you?”

I live and breathe among my friends the poets, the philosophers, the Feminists, the Marxists, the Heavy Metal progressives (my 15-year-old son and his musician friends). Each sub-community, each whole includes a multiple of differences to distinguish its parts. Most of the above think and argue, distance and re-group every day. Most of them are serious. And are actively resisting the pull of tremendous cultural lag.

•

Entropy. Nuclear build-up. Worn-out language. "Some enchanted evening, you will see a stranger."

•

It began happening last year. Instead of poems lightly disguised as the ghost of Robert Bly, James Wright, Robert Creeley or Adrienne Rich, I began getting some "poetry" assignments written in collaged fragments, or sentences, or paragraphs juxtaposed in amusing and unexpected ways... a more distanced, heady relationship to the writing, cutting back the more usual preoccupations with Self and self's agonies and ecstasies. I knew Language Writing had arrived. My poet friend, Bob Glück, who also teaches (at Small Press Traffic, a local bookshop and poets' hang-out) said, of similar student efforts, "They don't even know who they are being influenced by...but it's in the air." He was right, but not about all of them. Some of them did know who. Clearly there was something very timely, necessary and attractive about what the new writing was proposing. And it was fun to write in sentences, to be liberated from the emotional tones of high lyricism and the fussiness of the line, to de-program around poetry and play with language as though it were unholy.

•

These notations propose themselves as a cluster of observations made at the interface of a complex but established writing community and a new writing movement taking root in its midst. I have read some of the literature, not all of it. (There is a great deal.) I have attended many "talks," readings and performances identified with language-centered writing. I have been, by turns, intrigued, bored, seriously engaged, wary. I have let it seep into the fiber, the pattern, the warp and woof of all my thoughts about the writing process/product. It has filtered, intentionally and unintentionally, into my writing. I have introduced many examples of Language Writing into all the Poetry Writing workshops I teach, believing it to be serious, provocative, stimulating to the writing process and broadly political in its implications.

Still, I am not a total convert.

•

Echo is a transcript I made (slightly edited) from a tape of a performance I did at the Washington Project for the Arts as part of the Festival of Disappearing Arts on May 1, 1979. It opens with a reading of the poem "Echo" and a spontaneous monologue, and it goes on through increasingly improvisationally-derived readings of things I had written and consecutive reworkings of that monologue listened to through earphones or speakers from tape, moving between the brick wall and the audience (this time in tiers) among my taperecorders, the things I'd written, and ladders.

Steven Benson's introductory remarks on "ECHO," printed in *Blindspots*, Whale Cloth Press, 1981

•

we get to shining apples making time go by till 5:30

when I go home. Staring off my business suit at the sunset

fading cloud incessant dream

and unstrap the curtains from the walls. Hit me over the head with your shovel and demand I scoop more sand into the bucket.

Your eyes are watershot and you've got a pubescent erection.

Your nose is turned like a hawk's, you're afraid I won't play fair. Is this, like everything else I'm told, about love, hate, fear, funny?

I'm saying I'm in love, hearing it funny. The echo is blundered.

excerpt from "ECHO," by Steve Benson

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It is this original identification of the ego in the inverted and perfect whole of the other that is the basis for all later identifications—for example, those of inter-subjectivity, such as the child's later identifications with its parents. But this first identification with the image clearly suggests that

it is not only the mirror that is a reflection, but also the very "identity" the child forms. This identity is an imaginary construct based not on a true recognition, but a misrecognition; the self is always like another, in other words, this self is constructed of necessity in a state of alienation: the person first sees himself in another, mother or mirror.

Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, 1974,
quoted by Steve Benson at the beginning of *Blindspots*

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Steve Benson is the second person whose "language writing" put me *on alert*. The quoted lines from ECHO illustrate his use of shifting pronouns, letting "I" travel into "you" or "we," so as to not remain static: how we "try on" other people and are never consistently one "I."

This is one way Steve puts language on paper. He also has written in a series of complete sentences or paragraphs...and sometimes discrete words or fragments falling in carefully composed (random-seeming) patternings down the page. His work takes on increased tension in performance, involving his audience in the struggle to speak and to make choices. His use of movement—simple but intentional changes of body position as he's reading—makes you listen differently, alerts you, as in theatre, to voice/s. He has used double mikes, to underscore a continuous change-of-mind which may blurt into speech at the same time his taped voice (static, set text) is talking or reading...thus a juxtaposition of live, improvised voice trying to comment on and respond to who "he" was "then"—the various *he's* who *were*, when the taped text was being written and later spoken into the machine. This *showing* of his process involves considerable personal risk in front of the audience. While Steve's constructions show a high degree of composition and control, he always leaves a space for the potentially out-of-control person to be active. His work admits to the dialectical process going on constantly within any thinking person. He is located, always, in the body as well as the intellect. And he is inevitably funny. I try not to miss his performances because I feel included in his questions and self-doubt. I am released, again, into the human community of speech. I go home needing to write.

•

In his recent essay, "Continuous Reframing" (*Poetics Journal*, #1, Jan. 1982), the linguist, George Lakoff, brings over from the field of linguistics the concept of *the frame* in order to examine certain formal elements in recent works by the Bay Area performance artist, George Coates, and related strategies employed by Michael Palmer in *Notes for Echo Lake* (North Point Press, 1981). Lakoff's comments are extremely

useful in understanding much of what is intended in the works of “language writers.” He begins by explaining that:

We make sense of our experiences by categorizing them and framing them in conventional ways. A frame... is a holistic structuring of experience. Each frame comes with a setting, a cast of characters, a collection of props, and a number of actions, states, and/or images.... One typical kind of frame is a scenario for a cultural event: a wedding, lecture or football game.... Framing requires categorizing; the objects, characters, images and events must all be of the right kind to fit a given frame. And just about everything we do requires framing of some kind, most of it done so continuously and unconsciously that we don't notice it. ... If we notice framing at all, it is when there is a problem. Are we still in a friendly conversation, or has it become an argument?... Our actions from the most minute to the most momentous, depend on framing and on the corresponding categorizing of people, objects, and events.

Frame-shifting is one of the basic techniques used by George Coates... It's a technique central to the structuring of his pieces... not merely a shift from one frame to another, but from the frameable to the unframeable and back... a scenario may be partially frameable as an attack by two characters upon a third, but various aspects of the attack frame will be left unfilled—who the characters are, their relationship, the motivation for the attack.... The partialness of the framing is part of the art form, and an indispensable part, since this kind of art requires the audience to try constantly to categorize and frame, while never being totally successful. Things unframed gradually become framed, and through the piece there is at each moment some partial framing or other. It is this *partial local coherence* that holds the piece together and that constantly holds our attention...

... Palmer's medium is language, as written and spoken. His resources are (among others) syntax, words, images, sounds, individual speech acts, spoken and written genres, etc. Each of these can be viewed as a dimension within which framing can occur. Syntactic constructions are one kind of frame; idiomatic expressions are another; conventional images another, etc.... At each point in a Palmer poem there is a coherent framing in one or more of these dimensions, and at the same time there may be discontinuities—a lack of framing or a break between frames in other dimensions. Example:

“An eye remembers history by the pages of the house in flames,
rolls forward like a rose, head to hip, recalling words by their
accidents.”

from “Notes for Echo Lake 11” (p. 68)

The art of Coates and Palmer is experientialist art—in which the main focus is experiencing, moment-by-moment, always in the present. To work at all, experientialist art requires constant changes and shifts in perception. The reader...can't just sit back...secure in the knowledge of where and when the action is located.... The real action is not just on stage or in the text. It is in the mind of the audience...line-by-line, with nothing taken for granted...Art of this sort has sometimes been mistakenly called meaningless. The mistake comes from an overly narrow view of meaning one where meaning is objective—in the work rather than in the audience.... Meaning is *meaningful to a person*. Linguistic and other symbolic elements are meaningful only in a context, and only to a person who has had a certain range of experience and knowledge.

—Excerpted by permission of George Lakoff

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One objection to much of Language Writing has been that it is “elitist,” particularly in its extensive body of theoretical writing...it has often been understood or misunderstood as being meaningful only to persons with extremely sophisticated linguistic preoccupations. One might ask, for example, whether a piece by Ron Silliman in *Soup* (#2, p. 45), containing in one short passage the terms “formalist/constructivist,” “melopoiea,” “exogamic determinants” and “organicist” might not be off-putting, warily framed by many a serious reader as academic and overly-infatuated with the delicious brew of rhetoric (be it linguistic, Marxist or whatever).

Other readers have been grateful for his attempt to illuminate the somewhat removed category of POETRY with structures adapted from linguistic and Marxist theory (and their vocabularies) tangential in Silliman's mind to every aspect of that formal thing called *poem*, as it is viewed within the social/historical context from which we are all formed, to which we are all responsible.

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Bruce Boone has written (also in *Soup*, #2), “It's as if the genuine intelligence you feel there ends up eluding life, not participating in it or embracing it.” But he also cites the *Talks Series*, put together by Bob Perelman in Spring, 1977, with eleven (out of thirty-seven) complete texts from this series printed in Perelman's magazine, *Hills*, 6/7, suggesting that it has been “quite influential and stimulated theory discussion, where often anti-intellectualism has been the rule.”

“None are purely academic or frivolous,” he goes on to say, but are “serious attempts to develop a common writing project.”

Birthday Present

for Carla Harryman

Dear _____ ,

The name They dropped on my face would intoxicate me, perfumes, buzzed whispers, crotch and vine, smoke with water, I dissect the Play.

And They can put words with my Dolls, threading my inspiration and respiration, green leaves and dry leaves, hay in the barn, half unconscious, water the country church is finished using.

But This time, consciously, it is in my mouth, I see, dance, sing, stout as a horse, repeated layers, full noon trill exactly the contents of one, exactly the contents of two.

O I perceive after all a boundless space, minor streams beat time, the blab of the ear, redfaced, ravished fathomless condition with one small Diadem.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, earth bearing the owner's name brushed into the corners, I behold the picturesque giant, the four horses, the beach.

But this time, with Will to choose, to own the ear, to stun the privilege and the same old law, walk five friendly matrons, crowned, crowing.

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft.

Love, _____

by Bob Perelman, from *Primer*, This Press, 1981.

Barrett Watten: “I don't like it when people speak for me. So it makes me not want to speak for myself, almost.”

Bob Perelman: “Well, I *am* trying to speak for myself.... I identify quite a lot with Williams, especially the early Williams and his

*In “Birthday Present,” Perelman uses a favorite L. W. technique, combining collage and collaboration with six phrases from the famous poem #508, “I'm ceded—I've stopped being Theirs—,” by Emily Dickinson, (p. 247, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Ed. Thomas H. Johnson).

growls and anger at the amount of prerecording in his head.... There's the sense of language being prerecorded and language acts as being spontaneous."

Watten: "One thing you get with O'Hara is a clear conflict between literature as learned in school and the interpretation of these conventions in the actual I, his actual I. O'Hara reinterprets literary forms in terms of the subjective I. But he doesn't propose that subjective I as the final result. There's a conflict all the way through that makes his I active. I think we owe a lot to that."

Watten: "In writing, you want a world in which you live... you want to extend the borders of your world through the pronoun into the texts that are available to you. You want extension through the text and the main point of extension is through the pronoun."

Excerpts from the conversation
following Bob Perelman's talk,
"The First Person," April, 1979,
Hills 6/7

The appearance of a book of poems, if it be a book of good poems, is an important event because of relationships the work it contains will have with thought and accomplishment in other contemporary reaches of the intelligence. This leads to a definition of the term "good." If the poems in the book constitute necessary corrections of emendations to human conduct in their day, both as to thought and manner, then they are good! But if these changes originated in the poems, causing thereby a direct liberation of the intelligence, then the book becomes of importance to the highest degree....

But this importance cannot be in what the poem says. ... Its existence as a poem is of first importance a technical matter, as with all facts, compelling the recognition of a mechanical structure.... It is the acceptable fact of a poem as a mechanism that is the proof of its meaning and this is as technical a matter as in the case of any other machine.

Without the poem being a workable mechanism in its own right, a mechanism which arises from, while at the same time it constitutes the meaning of, the poem as a whole, it will remain ineffective.

(William Carlos Williams, as excerpted by Ron Silliman in his piece, "Third Phase Objectivism," for the George Oppen issue, *Paideuma*, Vol 10, #1.)

I had seen my political development mature to the point where I began seriously to doubt the appropriateness of my writing poetry for the consumption of a restricted class of highly educated, mostly white individuals; my political friends like to note the "elitism" of my work.... The audience I was building for my poetry was class-specific and I decided instead to attempt to make *that* the formal issue of my future work, demonstrating to it how both the class and its reality were (in part) constructed *through* language.... This lead naturally to an investigation of the sentence and a critique of the use of lines in poetry.... It amounts to a shifting perception of the role of form as an aspect of any element in modern life, specifically as an *index of labor*. The more a product, any product, looks like its predecessors, the less work appears to have gone into it.... It is a loaded question to pose whether less labor need be put into a sonnet than into the prosoid works of "language poets." Certainly the disjuncture between the regularities of the sonnet form and the discordances of contemporary life render any good one a monument of productive work. But in the case of the loosely written speech-like free verse concerning the small travails of one's daily existence...the conclusion is painfully evident....

...All these issues have crucial analogs at the level of language itself. For example, the perception that the very presence of the line is the cheapest signifier of The Poetic now ongoing, will cause some people to abandon, at least for a time, its use. This, in turn, requires a new organizational strategy constructed around a different primary unit. To date two major candidates have been proposed: (1) prose works built around investigations of the sentence (tho Watten's paragraph is an interesting variation); (2) the page itself as unit with "desyntaxed" words or phrases operating in a two-direction (at least) field.

—Ron Silliman, "Notes on the Relation of Theory to Practice," *Paper Air* 2,2 (1979).

*It was only a
coincidence*

The tree rows in orchards
are capable of patterns.
What were Caesar's battles
but Caesar's prose. A name
trimmed with colored rib-
bons. We "took" a trip as if that were part of
the baggage we carried. In other words, we
"took our time," The experience of a great
passion, a great love, would remove me, elevate
me, enable me at last to be both special and
ignorant of the other people around me, so
that I would be free at last from the necessity
of appealing to them, responding to them. That
is, to be nearly useless but at rest. There were
cut flowers in vases and some arrangements of
artificial flowers and ceramic bouquets, but in

by Lyn Hejinian, from *My Life*, Burning Deck, 1980
... this is the beginning of a section, p. 45

"*My Life* is a single work: 37 paragraphs each with 37 sentences. In addition, each paragraph has a title or caption, sentences and phrases which themselves are repeated often throughout the text. My understanding is that the book was constructed accumulatively, with Hejinian originally writing a one-sentence paragraph, then a two-sentence paragraph and adding another sentence to the first, then a three-sentence paragraph, adding a new sentence to each of the first two paragraphs, etc."

—Ron Silliman

Silliman is here interpreting Lyn Hejinian's work to an audience that he has very systematically worked to *help* create for writers now identified with this movement. Hejinian had been writing beautifully and publishing in "modernist" magazines for years before she was claimed as a Language Writer. Her own excellent Tuumba series of chapbooks has been a consistently interesting creator and sustainer of readers for experimentalist (mostly Language) writing. As an editor and writer, as well as in her public role on the N.E.A. Literature panel between 1978 and 1981, she has been a significant force in calling attention to a variety of current writing projects on both coasts, championing the work of both new and established (yet long-neglected) poets, not part of the American mainstream. She is currently editing *Poetics Journal* with Barrett Watten in Berkeley.

Other journals and small presses important to the assertion and definition of language-centered writing have been L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, edited by Bruce Andrews and Charles Bernstein; *This*, ed. Barrett Watten; *Qu*, ed. Carla Harryman; *miam*, ed. Tom Mandel; *Hills*, ed. Bob Perelman; *Tottel's*, ed. Ron Silliman; *Gnome Baker*, ed. Madeleine Burnside and Andrew W. Kelly; The Figures Press, ed. Laura Chester and Geoff Young; Segue and Roof Books, ed. James Sherry; Pod Books, ed. Kirby Malone.

Silliman's widely-placed critical pieces and book reviews have proposed for these writers a newly-focused audience and a frame. He has done this sort of re-framing for, among others, David Bromige, a brilliant poet published for years by Black Sparrow, but with an underservedly small, though devoted audience, and Rae Armantrout, whose discrete, finely-tuned structures needed an informed and caring set of hands to guide them into a readership where they would be received with the appreciation they deserve. (We all need sponsorship, but women in literature have historically had very little hope of being read seriously *without* the mentorship of established and respected male members of the writing community.)

Robert Grenier is another poet made more visible by the context of Language Writing. For years, his poems have been germinal to the thinking about and visualizing of word, syllable, juxtaposition, spatial relation of words to white page. He's had the reputation of being an enormously important "teacher" and was given the task by Robert Creeley of selecting and editing Creeley's *Selected Poems*. But although his bonding with Creeley and his poetics provided him with some sort of invisible mantle, his own work was not widely appreciated until Language Poetry identified him and thus added to the legitimacy of his labors.

yellow green white

—Robert Grenier, from *Sentences*

AWNING

yawning & yep

yawing & yamming

—Robert Grenier, from *Oakland*, Tuumba 27

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My poetry is 'curiouser and curiouser' as it makes a descent into the rabbit-hole where descent becomes the subject of the poem's concern: a dazzling dimwittedness that makes sense of its mackerel textured absence. A respectful abstinence from knowing what I'm doing? Therefore, my style seems to have fallen apart, deteriorated in the three-year interim between books; some kind of decadence has set in; it has become problematical, not to say impossible, because if it limits itself to the traditional language & form of a literature it misses the basic truths about itself, while if it attempts to tell those truths it abolishes itself as literature. Chiastic sentence: not true, MAKE IT NEW, caps, has always been the case, it's what literature means, should mean.

and

At this point, then, we begin to glimpse what is the profound vocation of the work of art in a commodity society: not to be a commodity, not to be consumed, not to be a vacation. Isn't this the piece talking to itself, hoping to be overheard, and contradicted. Because, the interest evident in the construction, rhythm of the sentences, obviates the need for the content. (Not to deny the feelings, of course.)

—excerpted from "My Poetry," by David Bromige, *My Poetry*, The Figures Press, 1980.

•

The old architecture.

Roof over
the tongue.

*

Hands wandering netherworlds. A sense of self starts in the mouth and spreads slowly.

*

pacifier. Lost again and
crying because empty.

"He's just a baby."
"He's just hungry."
"He's just scared."

The poor vacuum!
as best he can

*

—excerpted from “Fiction,” by Rae Armantrout,
The Invention of Hunger, Tuumba 22, 1979.

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Some names often seen in Language Writing journals and small press book lists... West Coast: Barrett Watten, Ron Silliman, Bob Perelman, Bob Grenier, Lyn Hejinian, Steve Benson, Carla Harryman, Tom Mandel, Kit Robinson, Alan Bernheimer, Rae Armantrout, Jean Day. East Coast: Bruce Andrews, Charles Bernstein, Peter Seaton, James Sherry, Diane Ward, Alan Davies, Michael Gottlieb, Steve McCaffery, Ray DiPalma, P. Inman, Tina Darragh. Writers tangential to it, preceding it in their own unique ways: Clark Coolidge, Larry Eigner, David Bromige, Michael Palmer, Michael Davidson, David Antin, Stephen Rodefer, Ted Greenwald, Susan Howe.

Some important theoretical figures for Language Writers: Louis Zukofsky, Roland Barthes, Saussure, Derrida, Wittgenstein, Walter Benjamin, the Russian Formalists—particularly Roman Jakobson, Osip Brik (The Moscow Linguistic Circle) and Victor Shklovsky, Boris Eichenbaum and Lev Jakobinsky (the OPOYAZ group, an acronym for the Society for the Study of Poetic Language, based in St. Petersburg around 1916. See Barrett Watten’s “Russian Formalism & the Present,” (*Hills* 6/7, *Talks* issue, p. 51).

•

Although I have checked through my various magazines and books, I’ll still be leaving out many people who consider themselves active participants in the movement—people in various degrees of flirtation with, and/or commitment to, this esthetic direction. After the initial period, in which the Bay Area (and parts East) was actively enriched with new little magazines, small presses and newly organized reading series (often exclusively programmed with the above names)—a period in which the audience was largely self-supporting and self-referring—the effect of “language writing” began to be felt in the larger arts community. The excitement of their collective project spread, audiences have grown and have sometimes taken on the quality of discipleship. In a typical audience you can find ten to thirty faces from the central group, plus ten to fifteen established poets who are interested but not affiliated, plus a growing number of young writers, students and community people sniffing-out the *new*, whatever its form. There was, there is the excitement.

And there was, at least during its initial phase, a useful disturbance. If one is part of a sophisticated artistic community, and something new is in the air, you want to know about it. And usually you want some relation to it. Many people have wanted to try on this new esthetic identity, others have felt dismissed or limited by its poetics. Still others have seen in what was proposed as a political and community-based movement, a more exclusive (thus excluding) social group of writers (mostly straight, white, male, linguistically-oriented), who appeared to be interested primarily in each other's works and in inscribing the next new tablets of stone.

But doesn't any new movement function in much this way? To reconnoiter, to report on a collective vision (with its inevitable differences and dissonances), to support each other in the active working-out of that commitment—in this case, the re-making of a language usage *and* poetics that no longer adequately served their artistic or social needs. No one can dispute the fact that Language Writers have labored tirelessly to make a place for their passionate concerns, a forum (always open to anyone interested) for arguing the philosophical and practical questions that are central to their commitment as writers. They assume their questions to be useful to the larger writing community. This has proved to be true. And from their perspective, they have been, in Steve Benson's words, "a bunch of writer friends who have, through mutual challenge and encouragement, developed striking sophistication and discipline in responding to concerns of some consistently common interest..."

Still, ambivalence towards Language Writing exists in many women whose writing history had been, until the mid-'60s, formed largely by male teachers, editors and critics, whose tastes conformed to experiences, esthetic values, pleasures and struggles *as men* in a social/political world where access to power and print was assumed. A growing awareness of this suddenly-glaring fact has posed serious questions for women writers who struggle for access to their own experience. To what extent has this experience been examined exclusively through the finely-polished lens of the male writing sensibility? What qualities of perception, what moments of importance may have been devalued consistently by the *absence* of a significant body of writing by women that might have reinforced a reality that was experienced but did not find validation in the bulk of writing brought forward in textbook choices—the literary canon.

Why is it that H. D. had barely been heard of among college-educated women of the Sixties and Seventies? Why weren't Virginia Woolf and Colette being taught at most universities in courses called "Twentieth Century Novel"? Why had no one heard of Dorothy Richardson when after publication of her brilliant four-volume fictional work, *Pilgrimage*, Virginia Woolf cited it in several essays as "the new writing," employing a "stream-of-consciousness" method entirely

unique to the novel? (This same term was later taken up to describe James Joyce's *Ulysses*.)

These sorts of questions have formed the basis of a developing feminist poetics that shares an ambition common to Language Writing to re-invent, deconstruct, find syntactical and experiential detours out of the dominant and turgid mainstream. But there is an understandable wariness in simply following the diagrams of the new formalists who are, once again, male-dominant in their theoretical documents. It would seem more urgent and more interesting, really, for many women writers, to first attend our own buried history and its unearthing. As Louise Bernikow's anthology of women poets from 1552 to 1950, *The World Split Open*, began to show us, women had been observing, thinking, feeling and making the language new for hundreds of years. It wasn't just Sappho and Emily Dickinson after all, as we'd always been led to believe.

To this "new" body of literature, we now need to listen...and then to speak from our own fragmented experience of the world in the most accurate voices we can discover. These voices need to include states of *incoherence*, *unsureness*, extreme vulnerability. While the structural preoccupations of language-centered theory and practices are both stimulating and, at times, concretely useful in this enterprise, their esthetic distaste for self-referentiality and/or *evident* personal investment in one's subject immediately introduces a series of prohibiting factors. For a writer whose awareness has been tuned by a growing need to claim her own history and voice/s, such as Feminism provides, Language Writing's concerns are often *experienced* (if not intended) as directives she cannot afford. Still, there is often a feeling of friendly curiosity and mutual regard for the common project of initiating one's own alternatives to what has thus far been proposed as the *whole* of "significant" poetry.

One woman's story: Until the mid-60s, I learned most of my poetry ideas and esthetic standards from men, first in the company of my father, who daily recited from Edward Lear, A. A. Milne, Lewis Carroll and Robert Lewis Stevenson, and who required that I memorize large chunks of the King James version of *The Bible*. After that, it was Prof. Robert Ryf, Occidental College; Stanley Kunitz, YMHA Poetry Center workshops; Jack Marshall, poet and friend; Robert Kelly, poet/friend/mentor, NYC coffeehouse scene; Kenneth Koch, New School poetry workshops; Frank O'Hara, poet/friend/major permission-giver; George Oppen, poet/friend; Gertrude Stein, Sylvia Plath, Charles Olson, texts.

Beginning in the late '60s, I learned a great deal from these writers: Adrienne Rich, H. D., Barbara Guest, Beverly Dahlen, Lyn Hejinian, Frances Jaffer, Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, Fanny Howe, Simone Forti (her writings about dance), Sue Gangel, Julia Vose, Judy Grahn, Susan Griffin, Rachel Blau DuPlessis (essays, particularly

those dealing with de-formation and the re-writing of mythic texts, published or privately circulated), Annette Kolodny (critical writings around gender issues in language), Margaret Homans (*Women Writers and Poetic Identity*, Princeton), Marjorie Perloff (*The Poetics of Indeterminacy*, Princeton), Sandra Gilbert/Susan Gubar (*Shakespeare's Sisters, Feminist Essays on Women Poets*, Indiana U. Press), and Carolyn Burke (articles on French Feminist Writers in *Signs* and *Feminist Studies*). Also, Robert Glück, David Bromige, Robert Hass, and Steve Benson, plus dozens of my students.

•

The shift is apparent, the esthetic mandate infinitely more complex—composed, now, of an increasingly politicized consciousness and a hunger to find personal authority and artistic challenge in women writers and critics, as well as in the always/everywhere powerful male dictates.

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“Language generates reality in the inescapable context of power.”
(Donna Haraway, *Signs*, 6/3, p. 479.)

•

Medusa's hair was snakes. Was thought, split inward.

for Frances Jaffer

I do not wish to report on Medusa directly, this variation of her writhing. After she gave that voice a shape, it was the trajectory itself in which she found her words floundering and pulling apart.

Sometimes we want to talk to someone who can't hear us.
Sometimes we're too far away. So is a shadow
a real shadow.

When he said “red cloud,” she imagined *red*
but he thought *cloud* (this dissonance in which she was feeling
trapped, out-of-step, getting from here to there).

Historical continuity
accounts for knowing what dead words point to,

a face staring down through green leaves as the man looks up
from tearing and tearing again at his backyard weeds. His red dog sniffs
at what he's turned over. You know what I mean.
We newer people have children who learn to listen as *we* listen.

M. wanted her own.
Kept saying *red dog. Cloud.*
Someone pointing to it while saying it. Someone discovering stone.

Medusa trying to point with her hair.
That thought turned to venom.
That muscle turning to thought turning
to writhing out.

We try to locate blame, going backwards.
I point with my dog's stiff neck
and will not sit down,
the way that girl points her saxophone at the guitar player
to shed light
upon his next invention. He attends her silences, between keys,
and underscores them with slow referents.

Can she substitute *dog* for *cloud*, if *red* comes first?
Red tomato.
Red strawberry.
As if all this happens on the ocean one afternoon in July,
red sunset soaking into white canvas. The natural world.
And the darkness does eventually come down.
He closes her eye in the palm of his hand.
The sword comes down.

Now her face rides above his sails, her hair her splitting tongues.

Flashes of light or semaphore waves, the sound
of rules, a regularity from which the clouds drift
into their wet embankments.

K. F.

•

Implicated: Rachel Blau DuPlessis, critic and poet, whose reading suggestions and essay style have made this piece easier to approach; Laurie Anderson, performance artist, whose formal inventions and political intelligence incite one to the essential pleasure of creative work; A. K. Bierman, philosopher and playwright, for helping to negotiate the shift from "no."

Kathleen Fraser
June 4, 1982

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CLARK COOLIDGE was once the drummer for the rock band Serpent Power and published one of his first books, *Space*, with Harper and Row. Among his many other volumes are *Polaroid*, *The Maintains*, *American Ones*, *Quartz Hearts*, *A Geology*, *Own Face*, *Research* and *Mine: the One that Enters the Stories*. *Big Sky* and *Stations* have both devoted entire issues to his work. He lives in western Massachusetts.

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Co-founder of *This* magazine and the editor of Robert Creeley's *Selected Poems* (which Scribners subsequently botched), ROBERT GRENIER is the author of several books, not all of which fit on a shelf. *Sentences* consists of 500 5x8 inch cards unbound in a blue box. *Cambridge Mass* presents over 200 works on a wall-sized poster. *Dusk Road Games, Series, Oakland* and *Burns' Night Heard* are more conventionally bound. He teaches at the New College of California in San Francisco.

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KIT ROBINSON'S next book will be titled *Riddle Road*. As the editor of *Streets and Roads* in 1974, he was one of the very first to group many of these poets under the same literary roof. His books include *Chinatown of Cheyenne, The Dolch Stanzas, Down and Back, and Tribute to Nervous*. The former director of Poetry in the Schools in San Francisco, Robinson is currently running the Tenderloin Writers Workshop.

STEPHEN RODEFER teaches at San Francisco State. His books include *Villon* (by Jean Calais), *One or Two Love Poems from the White World, The Bell Clerk's Tears Keep Flowing* and *Plane Debris*. The Figures will publish *Four Lectures* later this year.

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JAMES SHERRY published *Roof* and publishes *Roof* and *Segue* books. *In Case*, Sherry's most recent volume from Sun & Moon, is a 51 page series of prose works which only use the vocabulary and devices of detective fiction. In addition to his earlier book, *Part Songs*, Sherry also wrote *Integers*, a series of texts which were performed by dancer Nina Wiener. He lives in New York City.

RON SILLIMAN'S current project is *The Alphabet*, a long work whose first section will be published by Tuumba under the title *ABC*. He recently finished *In the American Tree*, a 500 page anthology of the poetry he knows best, to be published by Ross-Erikson in late 1983. Other books of his include *Ketjak*, *Tjanting*, *The Age of Huts* and *Bart*. He is presently "in residence" at New College of California.

DIANE WARD'S books are *Theory of Emotion* and *Trop-I-Dom*. A veteran of the lively Washington-Baltimore literary scene, as are Andrews, Inman and Darragh, she recently moved to Manhattan.

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Kathleen Fraser's most recent books are: *Each Next*, *narratives* (The Figures Press, 1980, Berkeley), *New Shoes* (Harper & Row, 1978), and *Magritte Series* (Tuumba, 1978). She has just returned from a Guggenheim year in Italy. She is currently at work on a poem-novel, *Leda. & Swan*.