

L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E

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REWRITING MARX

The poetry of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an "immense collection of books"; the individual book appears as its elementary form. Our investigation begins with the analysis of the book.

The book is, first of all, an external object, a thing which through its qualities satisfies human needs of a literary kind.

Objects of reading become books only because they are the products of the writing of private individuals who work independently of each other. The sum total of the writing of all these private individuals forms the aggregate writing of society. *Since the writers do not come into social contact until they exchange the products of their writing,* the specific social characteristics of their private writings appear only within this exchange. In other words, the writing of the private individual manifests itself as an element of the total writing of society *only through the relations* which the act of exchange establishes between the texts, and, through their mediation, between the writers. To the writers, therefore, the social relations between their private writing appear as what they are, *i.e.*, they do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as material relations between persons and social relations between texts.

However, a text can be useful, and a product of human writing, without being a book. She who satisfies her own need with the text of her own writing admittedly creates reading-values, but not books. In order to produce the latter, she must not only produce reading-values, *but reading-values for others*, social reading-values. (And not merely for others. In order to become a book, the text must be transferred to the other person, for whom it serves as a reading-value, *through the medium of exchange.*)

RON SILLIMAN

BLOOD. RUST. CAPITAL. BLOODSTREAM.

ADOLPHUS, J.L.: LETTERS TO RICHARD HEBER. ESQ. (Containing Critical Remarks on the Series of Novels Beginning with "Waverly" and an Attempt to Ascertain their Author) 8vo., Boston 1822. The theoretic interest in rust emerged from investigations into the bridge between metallurgical and physiological identities BAILLIE, Joanna: Miscellaneous Plays, London 1804, 1st Edition 8vo., pp. i-xix + 1-438 (extra leaf advertises Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads). Rust throughout is treated as the mineralized transform of blood and thus the oxydizational connective with the human breath and bloodstream. "BROWNE, Sir Thomas: WORKS, London 1686, fol. 1st. ed. with engraved portrait in facsimile" (Wing B 5150 Keynes 201). Rust also relates to critique and the need to negate ANY GIVEN FORM whilst as a metallic growth and pathology it relates to carcinoma and the encompassing ideology of the parasite. BURNEY, Fanny: CECILIA or Memoirs of an Heiress, London 1784 5 vols. 4th. ed. 12mo. full contemp. tree calf milled edging in linguistic form. The Parasite finds most powerful manifestation within quotation and allusion i.e. in the precise manner (the site of the cite) that creates in any text a biological device for drawing off signification by means of echo, index, association, interruption and supplementarity (pp. i-xii + 13-164 Glasgow 1751 printed by Robert Urie 8vo.) Rust tends to occur as an activity within a pre-existent wound and as such is to be classified as a post-incisional practice. It is what writing writes of itself within the aura of its own excess (contains 1st printing of SEMELE) "trimmed" London 1710 3 vols in 2 incl. The Old Bachelor, Double Dealer and Love for Love Vol. III = pp. A1-a4 + 1-492 and as a mineralogical agency enters the bloodstream as capital to carry the microformations of a labour force throughout the human organism. DAVISDON (Joseph) . . . into English Prose, London 767. 3rd ed. (i-v). It might be described as the corpuscular theory of the proletariat. cf. THE ECONOMY OF HUMAN LIFE by Robert Dodsley (London 8 vo. 32 woodcuts by Austin & Hole 1808) a work often attributed to Chesterfield. Whereas cancer (after nosological elimination) is reattributable to a biopolitical-linguistic scheme and functions closest to a surplus value which is reinvested into the cellular structure of the body as pure profit. GELLIUS, Aulus: NOCTES ATTICAE, Venice 1489 (one of my rarest books) 132 leaves, 42 line + head 6th ed. (3rd Venice) Bernardinus de Choris de Cremona & Simon de Luere. Goff (213) lists only ten copies in America. What is drawn off ("virologically?") from the societal corpus is art, intellect and sex. In the purest analysis of the libidinal economy (to which virus is central) sex is a pure discharge, an absolute signifier detached from its signified and demonstrates best the principles of an unrestricted GENERAL ECONOMY (Bataille) within the structural and epistemological restraints of the restricted economy (Windsor 1788 2nd ed. with verso last leaf containing errata. Authors: George Canning, John Smith, John Frere and Robt. Smith) accordingly: any poem which adopts "book" as its

vehicular form must admit its complicity within a restricted economy. Sex then is a pure discharge and exceeds all value to constitute an energetic subversion of the human capital machine. As a discharge sex is fraternal & sorietal to all other vectors of spontaneous dissemination: intuition, improvisation, madness, desire and schizophrenic proproductive drives (LACTANTIUS: Works, Venice 1478 . . . "lactantii firmiani de diuinis institutioibus aduersus gentes" . . . which together constitute a postcognitive antidote to rust conceived as a surplus value and an entropy. Negentropic strategy is founded on the full practice of a general economy, in informational "waste", semantic excess produced by parasitical attachments and interruptions to a host syntagm 12mo circa 1729, L'ESTRANGE, Sir Robt., Kt., London (but why London "in the Strand" pp. i-xxx active within. The circulation of biological capitalism are numerous virus agents (MacPherson, Sibbs, malus coronaria, Harrison Blake at Worcester, Johnson on the life of Father Paul Sarpi, Cholmondeley's letter to Thoreau in 1857, bourgeois consciousness in general, ratiocinative strategies in general, Dr. Johnson's ref. to mustard in a young child's mouth, the Rev. Thomas Newton on The Prophecies, David Hume, Zeus, Patroclus, Chichen Itza, the word of the Lord, virus "positioned" "as a dormant potential" "within structure within" "this structure" Loudon's remarks on pyrus malus and the badge of the clan of Lamont. It is homologous to the political implications of the poetical phrase MITCHELL, John: The Female ondo 793 2nd e 125 x P grim grav frontispiece by (defectiv) . . . / WORDS being what poems are then SENTENCES being what POLITICS is . . . (sustenance) (quadruped) (the Duma) (Lenin during Blossom Week) VIRUS and at this po . . . int lexically inter change- ab . . le with the SENTENCE: "POTENTIAL" so that when activated it becomes THIS FRAMING AGENT YOU ARE reading now (Theophrastus included the apple among the more "civilized" plants URBANIORES rather than WILD/SYLVESTRES) fixating epistemological boundaries which sex cannot be in such a way as to derive maximum sustenance for itself and to prevent the operation of general economy. LETTERS OF THE RT. HONBLE. WRITTEN DURING HER TRAVELS IN EUROPE ASIA & AFRICA n.d. 6vo. VERBALLY SPEAKING an activated virus of this kind "assumes the form of either page (consecutively bound as book) or else as SENTENCE "Probably 1767 ed.") as container of the grammatical line which is itself both the victim and the vengence of a persistent ideology of perspective.) ACTIVE VIRAL PENETRATION IN ART (buds we must remember were counted every winter's eve for seventeen years) GIVES RISE TO THE INTERRELATED HEGEMONIES OF COMMODITY, CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION. Poems on Several Subjects, don 1769, John OGILVIE incls. Essay on the Lyric Poetry of the Ancients 8vo modern calf binding + "the fruit of the crab in the forests of France". IF IT WERE POSSIBLE AT THIS POINT (Rowe, Elizabeth: Friendship in Death in a Series etc. . . . portrait by J. Bennett) WE WOULD SWITCH THIS DISCOURSE INTO THE MOUTH OF HER WHO IS PRESENT IN THAT CLASSROOM WHERE A SMALL CHILD SITS INTENSELY POROUS AND

VULNERABLE AND EAGER TO (to) RECEIVE (receive) THAT (that) WHICH (which) WE "we" CALL (call) "SCIENTIFIC" scientific KNOWLEDGE (knowledge) THAT (that) WHICH (which) ONE "one" DICTIONARY "dictionary" AT (at) "LEAST" (least) IS is ABLE able (TO) "to" DESCRIBE (describe) AS as OPPOSITE "opposite" to TO ART (ART):

STEVE MC CAFFERY

FUGITIVE CAUSES

Lawrence Kearney, Five (1976; Tombouctou Books, distributed by Serendipity, 1970 Shattuck, Berkeley, CA; \$3). (*The following review by Brian Fawcett is taken from N.M.F.G., Box 5094 MPO, Vancouver, B.C. — U6B 4A9, Canada*)

Let's get one thing out of the way right now. Larry Kearney is a very talented writer, and this book is well-written, and at times, entertaining. On the back cover Robert Creeley tells us that it is "A primal geography-with extraordinary intersections, wherein all the terms of the so-called world gain articulation and a *place*. And his propositions will haunt you, or bless you, forever." What if I say, at the outset, that the subject of "primal geography" as Creeley somewhat grandly calls it, is uninteresting, that it no longer contains enough intellectual currency to legitimately make a book with? I then have to define & articulate this writing on other grounds, without the benefit of the buzz surrounding the New American Poetry. Unfortunately that isn't possible.

Kearney is a practicing artist confronted by what confronts nearly all experimental writers in the latter half of the twentieth century — an absence of constructive context in which to think and write. No one, let's admit it, listens to poetry, except other poets. The pleasure of carefully shaped language, the marvellousness of the attentions it can produce, the *thrill* just isn't necessary to the survival of the structures of power & ordinance in industrialized capitalist states. These things may in fact even be mildly dangerous to the maintenance of that kind of power.

This condition of poetry has existed for some time now — at least during this century. For some 40 years now experimental writers have been tailing along in the wake of Pound's erratic political logic; i.e. we will create a revolution that will transform the world *from within* — 500 million *little* revolutions. During the 60's this in fact became an actuality, little revolutions occurred everywhere, anarchically, & they even caused our civilization to squirm uncomfortably. Now we have mass-produced

tarot cards, our horoscopes & biorhythms are helpfully set out for us in the morning papers, and while the rich still mingle mostly with the rich, now they do it by going away two or three times a year to feel each other up for a weekend. We've been given back primal existence if we want it and the stuff of Pound & Olson's revolution is now being merchandised like any other commodity. In the face of it, most poets have simply retreated further into the obscurities of poetic & personal processes, and into the kind of despair out of which Kearney's writing seems to come. "I don't know what to make. I don't know what I want. I don't know why I ate so much breakfast." he says or "At two-thirty in the fucking a.m. who's selling cars on the tube. The problems of the world are insurmountable and I feel like crying."

Again and again, Kearney's writing confronts that point, or is confronted by it, so that the sheer number of the confrontations becomes the organizing force in the writing. Yet Kearney doesn't seem to want to take responsibility for his part in the confrontations. They remain existential. At one point he warns his reader that "There isn't anything you need here *except* sleep." More important, he's completely uncritical of the mumbo-jumbo that has grown up around poetic process, allowing the misty pronouncements and/or vectors of language it creates to become an alternative to an enterable world reality. "We don't carry worlds on our backs." he tells us. "They lie back there, warping and shifting." and later in the book, he makes this proposition: "What it comes down to, forms decay. There isn't anything but content." The trouble with that, as the writing abundantly identifies, is that when forms decay, content has neither context nor boundaries to define its value, and one is forced to internalize everything: ergo, "Primal Geography". But, when you take from it the buzz, "Primal Geography" just means individual and idiosyncratic taxonomy, and passively psychological enterprise. "Nothing to say until it's there and then *it* says it or refuses and smiles at you. I don't know what the point is. Getting fucked." Later, Kearney notices a corollary phenomenon: "There always seems to be someone waiting around to be fucked." At least the sexual metaphor makes him nervous, which means he's from the present generation, and not Creeley's, which never got beyond taking advantage of it.

Kearney's approach to poetry and to the world generally is revealed in the following admission:

I LEARNT FROM HIM THAT POETRY, EVEN THAT OF THE LOFTIEST AND, SEEMINGLY, THAT OF THE WILDEST ODES HAD A LOGIC OF ITS OWN, AS SEVERE AS THAT OF SCIENCE, AND MORE DIFFICULT, BECAUSE MORE SUBTLE, MORE COMPLEX, AND DEPENDENT ON MORE AND MORE FUGITIVE CAUSES.

Kearney learned that from, I think, Jack Spicer, but he could have learned it from any of a dozen major poets of the New American Poetry.

I learned it too, and so did most of the writers I could name. And I believe it too. My question, of Kearney, and of anyone else who I've ever learned anything about poetry from is this: What in the fuck am I supposed to do with it?

Translated into practice, the methodology of the New American Poetry has aged into a closed form that is causing poetry to disappear into second rate motivational and behavioral psychology. If the causes of poetry are fugitive, we need to re-open the discourse over what are and why are the effects of its causes. In general poets have lost the tools with which to be responsive to anything *but* "primal geography" and worse, they've lost sight of the fact that we're fucking well responsible to the condition of the planet and of the human species from which, after, all, poetry is derived. Which is not to rebuke the loveliness of *this* writing, the marvelousness of the attentions and what they produce. This, as always, should be given to more human beings. But how do you *teach* that, without placing it in a context of basic human needs that will also ensure that human beings, with the knowledges poetry offers, will also be able to fill their bellies, protect their young, & assuage the need for dignity that underlies, or undercuts, our political lives?

BRIAN FAWCETT

"WRENCH" WRENCHED

(Marshall Reese and Chris Mason discuss, in what follows, Kirby Malone's ongoing work — wrench, wrench. All three are part of the Baltimore performance group Co-Accident.)

wrench wrench takes as a material source any words or phrases Kirby Malone encounters in his daily life. In the act of writing it down, a phrase is often foreshortened, run on into another unrelated phrase, or otherwise deprived of its literal sense. The reader, encountering the phrase as part of a skew geometric pattern on a 3x5 inch file card, cannot ascertain whether it came from "The Incredible Hulk," a wrong number phone call, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, or a stoned conversation with the oil-burner repairman.

The act of writing in crowded public situations, writing anything, is a curiosity. People's attentions are drawn to Kirby when he writes on his cards.

The published volume *wrench wrench* will begin with an epigraph from a description of Pierre Jacquet-Droz's automaton *The Young Writer*: "When the mechanism is started, the boy dips his pen in the inkwell, shakes it

twice, places his hand at the top of the page, and pauses. As the lever is pressed again, he begins to write, slowly and carefully, distinguishing in his characters between light and heavy strokes."

One notices in *wrench wrench* that every statement is a sentence, the composition is a syncopation of total starts and stops. The writing is a quantitative act, a part of production. There is a schism between separate words and the larger shapes and patterns of words. Grammar is imagined.

WHAT DO YOU LISTEN TO WHEN YOU WRITE? *The process is based on ruptures or breaks, sometimes intentional on my part and sometimes on how I heard it.*

BEFORE YOU STARTED *WRENCH WRENCH* DID YOU LISTEN TO WHAT IS AROUND YOU DIFFERENTLY? *Everything I've written since 1975 has had something with found material, starting off with literary material like Olson or Tim Buckley.... What is interesting is that what I do in wrench wrench is not all recording. What I've come to try to understand is desire — not how it is interpreted in pop culture. The way I understand desire now, is not how it is described in Romantic terms today, or in competitive capitalist terms, but as an activity which lies outside of commodity fetishism, outside of capitalist production.*

"For Deleuze and Guatarri, as for Lacan, the forms of desire are not set in nature, but are socially created... In *Anti-Oedipus* we are presented with a picture of the world whose complexity and flux defy language... Deleuze and Guatarri see man as constituted by "desiring machines". Infinite types and varieties of relationships are possible; each person's machine parts can plug into and unplug from machine parts of another. There is, in other words, no given 'self', only the cacophony of desiring machines. Fragmentation is universal, and is not the peculiar fate of what society defines as the schizophrenic. But the crucial point is that capitalist society cannot live with the infinite variety of potential interconnections and relationships and imposes restraints regulating which ones are to be allowed, i.e., essentially those relating to reproduction in the family...." (Jeffrey Weeks, introduction to Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*.)

Kirby sees the writer as a "desiring machine". It is assumed that production is continuous, with no breaks or stoppages. But a machine cannot flow or move effortlessly. It can only continue by breaking steps into smaller and smaller ones. Writing is a discontinuous process, a mechanical process against the continuity of language.

...What I learned to be decontextualization. Whatever it is you can't say -- there will be a trace of it in that fragment [of what you do say] a fragment of whatever that had outside of [it]

In performance, this process of decontextualization is reversed in an interesting way. *wrench wrench* was performed 11 times between January 1978 and February 1979 as part of a poetry reading or a CoAccident performance. The reading of the text was usually combined simultaneously with one or more other diverse often unconnected events. Some of these events were the sound of bowed cymbals and pot lids, a slide of a German factory shown to each member of the audience individually with a hand viewer, dancers illuminating each other with flashlights, and Kirby's face upside down reading the text on 17 video monitors.

The title *wrench wrench* is rupture, like "tool tool", "machine part machine part machine part".

I would want [*wrench wrench*] to be a tool for a reader to learn more about hierarchy or manipulation in language.

I don't want it to be didactic at all. On one level it's a time capsule of all of language being used now. I could never assemble all the ways I've used language from early 1978 through 1981 [when *wrench wrench* will be completed].

It's like a little thread through all that.

But again I don't think it's a record. It's more like an example.

I'm always going out to hear it and going back into writing it. I have a different existence in conversation because just as you are writing, you lose some of what I am saying, I lose some of what I hear.

CHRIS MASON & MARSHALL REESE

SEMBLANCE

(This work is reprinted from a symposium on recent American poetry entitled "Death of the 'Referent?'" in the British magazine Reality Studios, \$2 from 75 Balfour Street, London SE 17.)

"It's as if each of these things has a life of its own. You can stretch them, deform them and even break them apart, and they still have an inner cohesion that keeps them together."

Not 'death' of the referent — rather a recharged use of the multivalent referential vectors that any word has, how words in combination tone and modify the associations made for each of them, how 'reference' then is not a one-on-one relation to an 'object' but a perceptual dimension that closes in to pinpoint, nail down ("this" word), sputters omnitrantically (the in in the which of who where what wells), refuses the build up of image track/projection while, pointillistically, fixing a reference at each turn (fills vats ago lodges spire), or, that much rarer case (Peter Inman's *Platin* and David Melnick's *Pcoet* two recent examples) of "zaum"

(so called "transrational", pervasively neologistic) — "ig ok aber-flappi" — in which reference, deprived of its automatic reflex reaction of word/stimulus image/response roams over the range of associations suggested by the word, word shooting off referential vectors like the energy field in a Kirillian photograph.

All of which are ways of releasing the energy inherent in the referential dimension of language, that these dimensions are the material of which the writing is made, define its medium. Making the structures of meaning in language more tangible and in that way allowing for the maximum resonance for the medium — the traditional power that writing has always had to make experience palpable not by simply pointing to it but by (re)creating its conditions. **

Point then, at first instance, to see the medium of writing — our area of operation — as maximally open in vocabulary, forms, shapes, phoneme/morpheme/word/phrase/sentence order, etc., so that possible areas covered, ranges of things depicted, suggested, critiqued, considered, etc., have an outer limit (asymptotic) of what can be thought, what can (might) be. But then, taking that as zero degree, not to gesturalize the possibility of poetry to operate in this "hyperspace", but to create works (poems) within it.

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The order of the words, the syntax, creates possibilities for images, pictures, representations, descriptions, invocation, ideation, critique, relation, projection, etc. Sentences that follow standard grammatical patterns allow the accumulating references to enthrall the reader by diminishing diversions from a constructed representation. In this way, each word's references work in harmony by reinforcing a spatio/temporal order conventionalized by the bulk of writing practice that creates the "standard". "The lamp sits atop the table in the study" — each word narrowing down the possibilities of each other, limiting the interpretation of each word's meaning by creating an ever more specific context. In a similar way, associations with sentences are narrowed down by conventional expository or narrational paragraph structure, which directs attention away from the sentence as meaning generating event and onto the "content" depicted. By shifting the contexts in which even a fairly "standard" sentence finds itself, as in the prose format work of Ron Silliman and Barrett Watten, the seriality of the ordering of sentences within a paragraph displaces from its habitual surrounding the projected representational fixation that the sentence conveys. "Words elect us. The lamp sits atop the table in the study. The tower is burnt orange...." By rotating sentences within a paragraph (a process analogous to jump cutting in film) according to principles generated by and unfolding in the work (rather than in accordance with representational construction patterns) a perceptual vividness is intensified for each sentence since

the abruptness of the cuts induces a greater desire to savor the tangibility of each sentence before it is lost to the next, determinately other, sentence. Juxtapositions not only suggest unsuspected relations but induce reading along ectoskeletal and citational lines. As a result, the operant mechanisms of meaning are multiplied and patterns of projection in reading are less restricted. The patterns of projection are not, however, undetermined. The text operates at a level that not only provokes projections by each sentence but by the sequencing of the sentences suggests lines or paths for them to proceed along. At the same time, circumspection about the nature and meaning of the projections is called forth. The result is both a self-reflectiveness and an intensification of the items/conventions of the social world projected/suggested/provoked. A similar process can also take place within sentences and phrases and not only intersententially. Syntactic patterns are composed which allow for this combination of projection and reflection in the movement from word to word. "For as much as, within the because, tools their annoyance, tip to toward." — But, again, to acknowledge this as the space of the text, and still to leave open what is to be said, what projections desire these reflections.

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The sense of music in poetry: the music of meaning — emerging, fogging, contrasting, etc. Tune attunement in understanding — the meaning sounds. It's impossible to separate prosody from the structure (the form and content seen as an interlocking figure) of a given poem. You can talk about strategies of meaning generation, shape, the kinds of sounds accented, the varieties of measurement (of scale, of number, of line length, of syllable order, of word length, of phrase length, or measure as punctuation, of punctuation as metrics). But no one has primacy — the music is the orchestrating these into the poem, the angles one plays against another, the shading. In much of my own work: working at angles to the strong tidal pull of an expected sequence of a sentence — or by cutting off a sentence or phrase midway and counting on the mind to complete where the poem goes off in another direction, giving two vectors at once — the anticipated projection underneath and the actual wording above.

My interest in not conceptualizing the field of the poem as a unitary plane, and so also not using overall structural programs: that any prior "principle" of composition violates the priority I want to give to the inherence of surface, to the total necessity in the durational space of the poem for every moment to *count*. The moment not subsumed into a schematic structure, hence instance of it, but at every juncture creating (synthesizing) the structure. So not to have the work resolve at the level of the "field" if this is to mean a uniplanar surface within which the poem operates. Structure that can't be separated from decisions made within it, constantly poking through the expected parameters. Rather

than having a single form or shape or idea of the work pop out as you read, the structure itself is pulled into a moebius-like twisting momentum. In this process, the language takes on a centrifugal force that seems to trip it out of the poem, turn it out from itself, exteriorizing it. Textures, vocabularies, discourses, constructivist modes of radically different character are not integrated into a field as part of a predetermined planar architecture; the gaps and jumps compose a space within shifting parameters, types and styles of discourse constantly criss-crossing, interacting, creating new gels. (Intertextual, interstructural....) (Bruce Andrews has suggested the image of a relief map for the varying kinds of referential vectors — reference to different domains of discourse, references made by different processes — in some of his work in which words and phrases are visually spaced out over the surface of the page. However, the structural dissonance in these works is counterbalanced by the perspicacious poise of the overall design, which tends to even out the surface tension.)

Writing as a process of pushing whatever way, or making the piece cohere as far as can: stretching my mind — to where I know it makes sense but not quite why — suspecting relations that I understand, that make the sense of the ready-to-hand — ie pushing the composition to the very limits of sense, meaning, to that razor's edge where judgment/aesthetic sense is all I can go on (knowhow). (Maybe what's to get beyond in Olson's field theory is just the idea of form as a single web, a unified field, one matrix, with its implicit idea of "perception" onto a given world rather than, as well, onto the language through which the world is constituted.) So that the form, the structure, that, finally, is the poem, has emerged, is come upon, is made.

**Alan Davies has objected that language and experience are separate realms and that the separation should be maximized in writing, in this way questioning the value of using language to make experience palpable. — But I don't mean "experience" in the sense of a picture/image/representation that is calling back to an already constituted experience. Rather, language itself constitutes experience at every moment (in reading and otherwise). Experience, then, is not tied into representation exclusively but is a separate "perception"-like category. (& perception not necessarily as in perception onto a physical/preconstituted world, as "eyes" in the Olson sense, that is not just onto a matrix-qua-the world but as operating/projecting/composing activity.) The point is, then, that experience is a dimension necessarily built into language — that far from being avoidable, or a choice, it is a property. So this view attempts to rethink representational or pictorial or behaviorist notions of what "experience" is, i.e., experience is not inextricably linked to representation, normative syntax, images, but rather, the other way around, is a synthetic,

generative activity — "in the beginning was the word" & so on, or that's our "limit" of beginnings.

CHARLES BERNSTEIN

NOTES

WARD ON SEATON

Peter Seaton, *Piranesi Pointed Up* (1978; in Roof VIII, The Segue Foundation, 300 Bowery, N.Y., N.Y. 10012; \$5)

"Piranesi Pointed Up" and Peter Seaton follows but not before checking out the 'prisons' below, the traditions behind, or the belief/disbelief of the facts all around him. Here, where the sentences are long, bursts lead to bursts, each moment being shoved along by the moment just past and the moment (thought) beginning now. This is seemingly a logical exploration by a writer objectively looking around himself (himself as space as well as time, experience, subjectivity, etc.) and the most objective observation is the impossible suspension or isolation of one experience from all others. The frustration is in the attempt at categorizing to understand or understanding to categorize (very self-consciously); the danger is in a truthless conclusion. Hence, the starting over and over, the 'breathers' of short lines which appear periodically offering relief from the dense prose along with a little quieter white space of the page (a more intense reflection). The reader is *left* or *remains* with a very contemporary feeling of anxiety; the experience is honestly ambiguous. As in photography, there is an infinite number of shots; a world made up of different points of the same. The perception of all moments is externalized, projected onto, in an attempt to reconcile each and its apparent indifference to all others: a verbal hologram. A familiar desire to order with an open approach of reciprocity: being observed and observing being observed. There is subjectivity and the consciousness of the will to subjective choice and commentary on subjectivity. All of these are acceptable to Seaton, whose result is a study in perspective, and who seems to say that the next approach is now.

DIANE WARD

BLANCHOT

(Lydia Davis recently translated Blanchot's Death Sentence — 1978, Station Hill Press, Barrytown, N.Y. 12507, \$4.95. Her translation of his Literary Essays is forthcoming from that press.)

Maurice Blanchot: critic. Moved and provoked by Hegel, Wittengenstein, Kierkegaard, Mallarmé, Proust, Kafka, Hölderlin, he investigates the most fundamental and contradictory problems faced by the writer, and from this inside of writing speaks of such things as the writer's solitude, the act of reading, the act of writing, what is annihilated by the work of literature... "This means: one can only write if one arrives at the instant towards which one can only move through space opened up by the movement of writing." Through such contradiction, through statements vast and cumulative or brief and trenchant, now eloquent, now utterly obscure, now fully revealed, he builds paradox on paradox, turns the fabric of our ideas inside out: language becoming absence, image becoming negation. And Blanchot: novelist. Compellingly exact, mysteriously exact, as though faithful to a memory troubled by delirium, his tales set in surreal landscapes or a real world from which so many facts are missing that this world too becomes unreal. And here men, often half dead, on the edge of death, struggle, with women, with thought, to maintain silence, to maintain solitude or avoid it... "I have shut myself up in a room, alone, there is no one in the house, almost no one outside, but this solitude has itself begun to speak, and I must in turn speak about this speaking solitude, not in derision, but because a greater solitude hovers above it, and above that solitude, another still greater, and each, taking the spoken word in order to smother it and silence it, instead echoes it to infinity, and infinity becomes its echo."

LYDIA DAVIS

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William Pryor, Unearth (Gallopig Dog Press, 3 Otterburn Terrace, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE2 3AP, England)

The extension of nature into a written work, especially a poem, or, as we have in Pryor's book, a group of poems that infiltrate the close proximity of man with his land, becomes the standard by which we come to understand an ownership; an ownership of dust, of position, of sky, cloud, seed, of the buried palace of the mole.

Pryor's ownership of natural elements is almost rapturously clinical. His poems are written as centres on which the entire descriptive weight has to be slight enough to maintain natural balance. There are no exclamatory procedures involved. What Pryor uses are the thin tracings of a

whisper. His voice is attuned to the breeze, to himself breathing.

By looking at Pryor's work this way it becomes meditative and almost naturally mystical. There are, though, other facets to consider when attempting a summary of his work. Pryor's lines are, for the most part, thin; it would be almost possible to cite Creeley as being part influence. The textures are dry. There is no esoteric reference. There is only the immediate recording of time; the natural build-up of scenario which Pryor finds invaluable in his considering of earth.

Pryor's poetry is, as he writes, concerned with the "world's obligations". It has its deep core in physical work. Without that work he would not attune to the obligations the world puts before him in the form of a poem. He writes "... the passion/turns you to activity." In this same way he becomes the "semblance/of a creator." He can allow the poem, and his owning of it, to develop free.

PAUL GREEN

*

Robert Grenier, Oakland (1980; Tuumba Press, 2639 Russell, Berkeley, California 94705; \$2)

The houses in *Oakland* are sentences. The sentences are tangible structural presences standing forth in the world of the work. These poems as collections of sentences constitute varied subdivisions of thought populating neighborhoods of intellect which correlate with the actual places Grenier has lived and the simple pleasures that recognition affords. It was a matter, he writes in a recent letter, of "attempting to really bring the language process to bear on/in the given in Oakland — i.e. it's all true! — what the words could see & hear/make & be in that sense of Olson's as I see it in 'Causal Mythology' (*Muthologos*, pp. 94-95) that 'the literal ('where we are') is the same as the numeral' ('the discovery of formal structural means' — i.e., numbers, verse), although how such comes about: is always 'a mystery'."

EYES

open the door Oakland

is thus an appropriate beginning point for the book. The door opens wide on the language process that is operative here and one is taken by it: outside.

Grenier's technical finesse with these little lyrics is that he renders with absolute clarity the language's physicality through reference to the simplest of acts — walking, say:

A ROUND

the block

One is reminded of Fenollosa's statement that "poetry must render what is said, not what is merely meant."

Talking is that activity, as physical as walking, which *gets* one to look, that activity which projects the intelligence as literal fact into the world: it is a source of extension and focus both. Talking to *put things forth*. Talking to *see*. This is the nearest analogue I can make to Grenier's work: in his poems he is talking a walk as it were.

FOCUSSING ON OBJECTS

that's not really green

that is green

that's green

And this is how sequence is resolved in the work and what occasions that which is *found* there.

TOM BECKETT

*

GRENIER'S BOOK DOESN'T

like simile

MAYBELLINE EYE

lining

pencil

m-e-t a p-h-y-s-i-q-u-e

ALLAN TINKER

*

CHARLES AMIRKHANIAN, Lexical Music (1979; 1750 Arch Records, Berkeley, CA)

This album is a fine collection of works done by one of the best, well known text-sound composers active in the world today. Since the late sixties, Charles Amirkhanian has been producing word pieces which are distinctive in their verbal/phonetic inventiveness, rhythmic "catchiness", and polished technical proficiency. The six pieces on Lexical Music are representational of the variety of Amirkhanian's work in the

seventies ranging from the abstract vocalisms of Mugic and the intense superimposed word rhythms of Muchrooms, She She and She, and Seatbelt, Seatbelt to the syntactical-rhythmical deformations of the live performance piece Dutiful Ducks and the 'de-referentialized' word and phonetic fragments mixed with "environmental" recordings that are in Mahogany Ballpark. All the works are marked by an impeccable craftsmanship in recording technique and the album as a whole is one of the best produced records presently available in sound poetry.

LARRY WENDT

*

MAYER ON HEJINIAN

Lyn Hejinian, My Life (1980; Burning Deck, 71 Elmgrove Ave., Providence, R.I. 02906; \$3.50)

Reading a book, after you read it, is like saying, I swallowed that one whole. It can be worse than a pill or like receiving many pennies in the change you get & then you have to carry them around making yourself heavy though I read walking with between 6 & 13 lbs. in your pack or bag is supposed to be good for you. Then somebody else told me an ounce a year is added to your weight from all the things in the foods that stay in your body so by now I must've read three extra pounds of books I cant use, at least. Sometimes I like to read a book that has information in it but when I'm reading a novel, for instance, I dont want to be learning about, say, a foreign place. Besides poetry, prose books that arent novels & also arent about any subject are the best ones. I'd been thinking that at least in poetry there's no such thing as autobiography, and very often not in prose either because even if you write about yourself if you're really writing you are being the medium. Also the idea to have to write is a willful sexual thing, never devoid of emotion unless you take the will out of it & then it's a trinket or perhaps a good experiment. Maybe syntax is even necessary to give pleasure to the movement of will. Maybe simplicity & a form seem, at the moment, to be a return. MY LIFE is too a daring title. MY LIFE has a kind of cunning that leads in all these directions I'd been thinking about when I found it & read it. It's a timely book in the momentary literary sense & it also has everything in it. The structure is an interweaving in a kind of rapid-fire overlapping of memory with all its points & phrases that makes, you could almost say a picture, that winds up having what you might call a discrete uniformity if you were writing about a picture. It's knotted & knitted & it's completed. It moves fast, it's full of sentences like "the dog digs dirt" & "not a fuck but a hug", but it's also full of gerunds which give to emotion (& that will that makes forms able to proceed humanly) as we know from Gertrude Stein. There is something almost wish-

fully neat about it, childlike & apt, which is like the idea of courting & denying autobiography & becoming as an I-character in a book, nearly perfect, which one might fault except that it is continuous & "for we who love to be astonished," all the childlikeness, almost out of pure information, remains intact. The author is both new in her language concerns & managing to say things cleanly. It's like the opposite of Proust, no, it's like a sprightly Proust, a speedy Proust, no less jogging. MY LIFE has so many good lines in it, it's like a trot, it makes you want to steal from it or perhaps annotate it & make the compliment (or complement) of imitating it.

BERNADETTE MAYER

*

from PACK THE SHUFFLING

Allen Fisher, Becoming (Aloes Books, distributed by Nick Kimberley, 16A Burleigh Parade, London N14, U.K.; 2.65 pounds)

These sets, "being most of place book IIII & much of book V", return us to Allen's survival programme, already given a showing in *Place Book I* (1974, reprinted Truck Press 1976) and *Stane* (Place Book III) (1977, Aloes Books), among others. The method of production is, as always, important: use of litho plates as a direct medium for composition, and of green, brown-red and black inks on the buff pages to identify and differentiate sets; because the sets (METE, LOGOS:MOTHER:MATTER, GAIT, UTTER) have been shuffled, re-shuffled, cut into each other, have had sections removed and replaced with extraneous material from other parts of the work.... As system is laid over system, the effect — in the decade or so over which publication is expected — is to lay bare the artist's constant and living revision of his own work, meant as praxis and not object. But no, not that only; it also invites the reader's participation in the construction of the text, because there can be no one order of reading....

Now all this runs the risk of being excessively schematic — were it not for the random and quasi-random actions that are allowed to interfere, to set up unexpected phase patterns. *Mistakes* are a crucial element in the mix.... (Biological evolution takes as its starting point a mistake in the genetic chain.) It's presented ironically:

there are moves underway
to clean up the
to remove any concept of operational mistakes

and linked a few pages later with a critique of the social Darwinists' defence of Victorian capitalism by way of their mischievous appeal to "the natural":

"Clean up the centre ..

"Sugar-dust the page ..

"move out the feeble ..

Herbert Spencer, Malthus, Cyril Burt

Rockefeller debudding minor blooms in the rosary

method of "Nature" equals

method of "Society"

brick walls capped in jagged glass

concealed by perspective

the unfit prevented from breathing

a "natural selection"

(METE, p. 15)

I hope this is enough to convince that "place" is here no simplistic "roots" position. Sure, it's South London, the living and repressed history of its working class, the fields of force, the changing buildings. Dates permeate the book: 1806, 1937, 1837, 1337, 1820-1, 1811, 3000 BC, 1802, 1647, 1843, 1823, 1871, 1000 AD, 1926, 1862, 1863, 1879, 1800, 1851, 1856, 1901. Turn to the extraordinary "Samuel Matthews" section, the voice of an eighteenth century vagrant testifying like a South London Dutch Schultz. But place is cut-in tapes, snatches of radio; converging... and diverging....

The seriousness of the research, the clarity of the thought, the fine political awareness of language. It's there to be met with, multivalent. In a moving coda, and without the metaphysical bullshit of Eliot, Allen finishes: "what had begun/began again" It's an invitation I shall be taking up.

KEN EDWARDS

*

AND FOR ANYTHING THAT I COULD CALL MY OWN THINKING

[For example, composing from Frank Kuenstler's Lens (available from Film Culture, GPO Box 1499, NY, NY 10001; \$2) — B.A.]

It is less a draft than the scenario of a monument. "the enormous paste-up job". cap.Italics. fade.Aura. the world is invisible.RR. rr.The image disintegrated before desire. fact.I. lax.Icon. ray gun.Mental. image.Nation. maze.I. mm.Eye. abhor.Original. the girl with a soul is the picture of ideology. i'm.Personal. film.Ilytch. The dialectic is reel. gregarious.Chance. image.Urgency. rr.The man on the train is Lenin. contes.Addiction. harm.Money. My image suffers. myth.Take. lex.Icon. reap.Production. mirror.Clause. reign.Code. the messengers photograph words.RR. horror.Culture. f.Fetter. camera.Suture vain.

Indicative. the man on the train is by definition an image of arrested motion.RR art.Effect. dire.Critical. fate.Schism. person.Atonality. i'm.Machination. limb.Imitation. lens.Fragment. essay on language.Help. The opium of the public is opinion. reality.I. impute.Tense. sign.- Tittilate. lesions.RR. Neoclassicism is pornographic. The anti-image is architecture. the object of alientation is movies.RR. epistle.- Millenium. messiah.Semantics. praxis.Light. the shape of the thing pursued is the ultimate metaphor.RR. ardor.Fact. bourgeois.Objectivism. is so, man is an imitation of work.RR. rr.The world is fragmented into people. camera.Forage. rr.The hero is the carrier of style. speech.- Theatre. flicker.Recognition. snow maiden.Photography. rr.Chipped and redundant. the world is the resource of poetry.RR. ..., a function of repression.RR. The cinematographer arranges the terms of the beautiful. trouble spelled backwards is fragment.RR. obstacle.Illusion. there's no arguing with television.RR. error.Edition. The movies taught me loneliness. reef.Lexicon. The first screening of *Potemkin* in the US was on Gloria Swanson's bedsheet. pointillism.Pilot. my.Optic. cinema.Topography. denude.Moment. image.Entrails. time is of the.RR. rr.The man on the train is a figure of speech. lens.Epistemology. punk.Situation. vamp.Empire. The lens being ground is the axe of theory. rr.The world is a negative image of reality. cinematic.Symptomatic. light was resistance.RR. noose.Thalia. marxian.Oneupmanship. corn.Sequence. corn.- Volition. semen.Antics. human.Naziism. postpone.Indoctrination. rr.- The language picture is germane. the pyramid of appearances makes man dream.RR. rr.An image of refracted action. labor.Division. picture.- Characters. frame.Mineralogy. negative.Italic. rr.Reproduction is the imitation of alienation. AAA.then.

FRANK KUENSTLER

FUTURIST IDEOGRAPH

(Ron Padgett has translated from the French this 1914 essay from Gino Severini's Témoignages, Editions Art Moderne, Rome, 1963)

With the drawing "parolibero" (liberated words) published in the July 1914 issue of Lacerba I was not trying to bring a plastic pictorial element into literature or a literary element into painting.

I was suggesting the possibility of finding a new and autonomous form of literary expression. Later this possibility defined itself clearly for me.

Until now the literary innovations of Marinetti and the other Futurist poets used more or less the conventional typographical characters, as well as mathematical symbols, arranging them according to emotional laws.

One would have thought this was a basic innovation, when in fact it was only partial, and more apparent than real.

If we want to express a *new realism* which is a synthesis of our time, we must create a *new lyricism*, expressed with new tools, forged from A to Z and entirely different from those used until now.

We, the painters, destroyed painting a long time ago (painting as it was known from the Renaissance to our time). Now it is time for you, poets and writers, to destroy literature.

We must renew our tools, forge new ones which correspond to our needs.

Hence in your domain you must enlarge your means; that is, add new characters or new typographical expressions to those already in use, to suit the need for a synthesis of the absolute realism which is our goal.

I'm not thinking of any new pictorial system: we mustn't confuse images and appearances, the representation of ideas and the representation of forms.

Until now, written literature has used the same sounds as the spoken language, which is where I think it errs. Since the realism we seek is never separated from external reality to the point where it no longer has anything to do with it, we will have to find special signs to express this realism, signs totally invented and accepted as conventions, and which will express not an act, for example the fact of running (exterior life), but the *idea* of running (interior life).

When I say idea I do not mean it in the sense of appearance; for that one need merely depict two legs in the process of running.

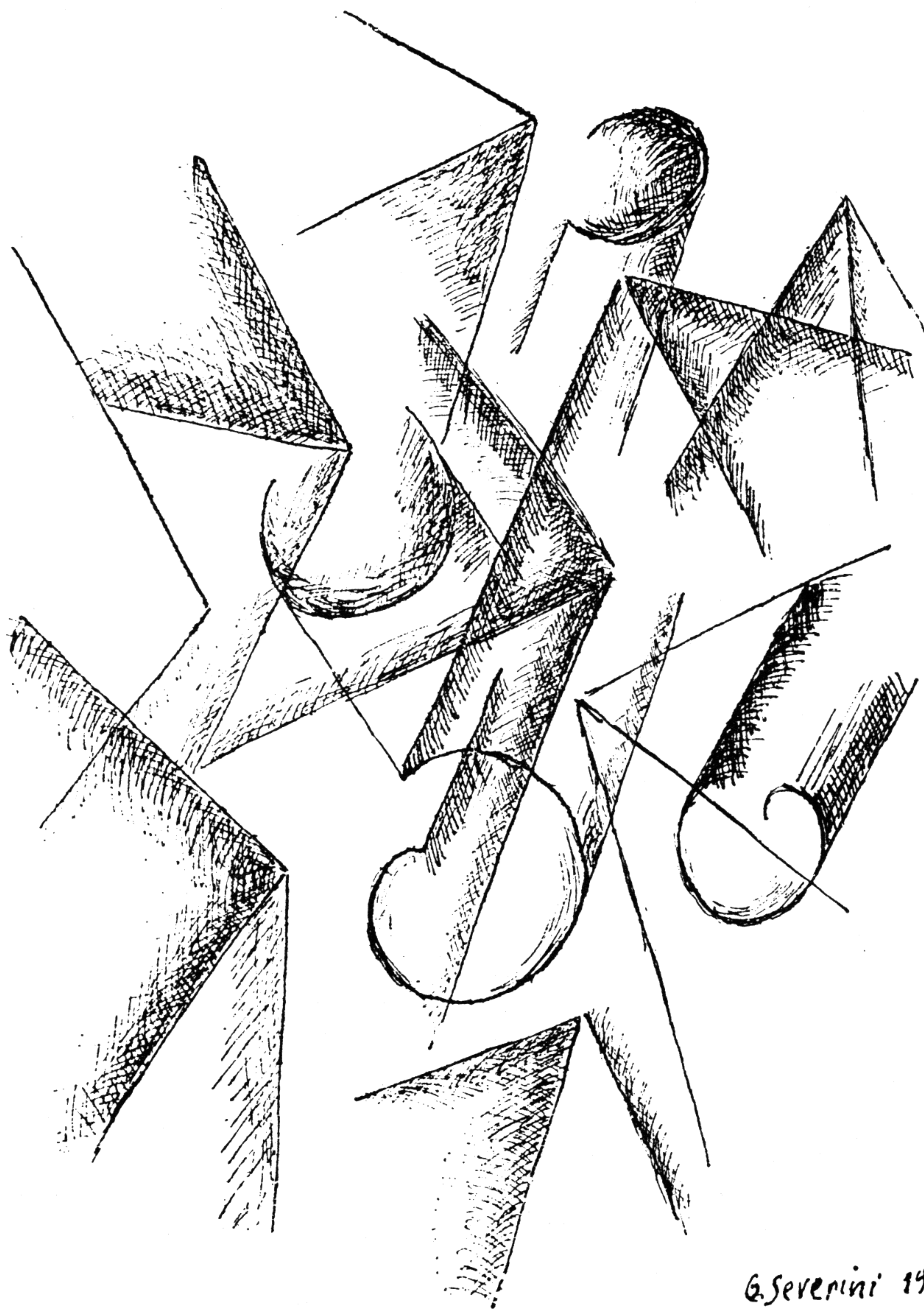
The idea of running is in fact much greater than the *appearance* of the running. The idea is limitless, universal.

It is commonly known that the first written language was with pictures. To communicate, one drew an animal, an object, a being or whatever. This process led not only to a generalization of the idea, but also, to a formal expression, better suited to express a universal concept than a practical need.

In time, these methods of expression for our way of life were perfected, and now we must put them aside to find methods of expression for our art. By that I don't mean we should go back to writing with pictures, although this barbaric medium is extremely attractive and it is impossible to renovate without becoming barbaric again, even unwillingly. Even then this self-expression through signs representing objects would become a sort of symbolic writing.

The method of using new methods of synthetic lyricism to express the intense realism of our emotions was suggested to me by my drawing "parolibero" in which I *voluntarily* associated closed forms and acute angles with particular words, round shapes or obtuse angles with other words.

Just as we have colors and shapes in painting which synthesize, for example, all of spring, or simply joy, or warmth, etc., we also



G. Severini 1913

Formes qui ne représentent pas une danseuse en mouvement, mais le *mouvement*
en tant que sensation dynamique elle-même (1913)

have in literature methods which reunite groups of lyric elements, or dynamic literary continuations.

For instance, in "parolibero", the drawing in question, the sensations of luminous penetration in the two electric searchlights, to which are associated the penetration of two Mauser bullets as they whiz through space, are rendered by the contrast of two acute angles meeting at their tips.

Every analogical sensation associated with the idea of brutal penetration can be rendered by two acute angles.

In this same area of the drawing, for the onomatopoeia szszszszsz... expressing the whizzing bullets and the violent beam of light, I had to write the letters with little dashes instead of continuous letters. For me these dashes had a value of intensity (quantitative), just as I obtain a plastic intensity with brush strokes using analogous colors in a shape. To carry this intuition even further we need to construct new signs expressing qualitative quantities. Then these signs would become conventional and the work would be understood. After all, aren't numbers, letters, subdivisions of time and space all conventions?

Each period should have its new conventions, or else we are all doomed to simple narration. The goal of literature is to find images through words, just as that of painting is to evoke appearances through shapes.

Obviously it would be impossible to read the words of this new lyricism, but can we read paintings, can the musician read a symphony, can we read the song of a bird?

The new lyrical work will evoke universal ideas and not the sounds of spoken language. We leave these sounds to lawyers (the art of oratory) and to entertainers.

Besides, isn't it another convention to describe as *sound* those sensations, registered by the ear, of a hammer noise?

Currently, with the laws of simultaneity which we have discovered in ourselves, this word *sound* has become meaningless, whereas the particular sensation evoked in us by hammer blows can determine in our *sensibility* groups of analogical *ideas* (and for a painter groups of appearances) which bear no resemblance to the sound, nor with the wham-wham impressionistic expression of this sound. This is how I foresee the possibility of creating a new *ideography*, to be a geometric graphic expression of universal ideas.

My intuition is naturally based on the concept of the absolute dynamism of matter, a dynamism which can be expressed geometrically, as in painting, but without designating its limits.

GINO SEVERINI

AN ANSWER TO SOME REMARKS OF RON SILLIMAN ABOUT POLITICS & MY SUPPOSED POSITION

(This continues an exchange started in issue #7 and continuing in #8 and #9/10.)

Ron Silliman has a polemical advantage over me insofar as he thinks he knows what the good society would be like and has a "program" whose implementation he believes will bring about such a society. He seems to think it's up to the rest of us to sense from the context of his remarks the nature of this preferred society and program. He certainly sounds like some kind of Leninist, and since most Leninists are either some kind of Stalinist or some kind of Trotskyist, I don't think he should be surprised that I treated his remarks as coming from an adherent of one of those positions.

(I might add that I don't find the two positions basically dissimilar in the light of Trotsky's actions when in power, such as his takeover of the railway unions—ending what seems to have been a surprisingly successful worker organization and management of the railway system of much of European Russia and turning it over to Bolshevik bureaucrats and bourgeois managers—and his bloody repression of the Kronstadt sailors.)

Moreover, Silliman's use of the terms "social democrat" and "anarcho-social democrat" as pejorative epithets for such diverse pacifists as myself and the group editing and producing Win magazine is only paralleled in my experience by such usage in the mouths and writings of Stalinists (using the term in the very general sense which includes supporters of all oligarchic state "socialisms," including those founded by Mao, Tito, and Castro) and Trotskyists. Ron's remarks imply that he is neither—and I believe him—but he does not make clear the nature of the "working-class state" idealism he *does* espouse, beyond saying that he endorses the concept of a dictatorship of a working class that has somehow seized state power.

Ron seems to believe that such a state would allow him to continue to write and publish his kind of poetry and to reach the predominantly middle-class male audience he now addresses. I find this both touching and mind-boggling. Why in the world does he think that a working-class dictatorship would be so unlike other dictatorships, including the party oligarchies now ruling many countries in the name of the working class?

If the working class in this country should seize and exercise state power—even in the best manner conceivable: "as a whole," in the form of workers' councils or the like—why would it tolerate the continuance of bourgeois art activities such as Ron's or mine, even though such activities constitute implied critiques of alienated language usage? This would require that a bourgeois society would have educated its working class to such a level that a majority would understand that such art activities were in harmony with (or at least not opposed to) its revolutionary aims. If such were the case, the revolution itself would have largely

been a mere formality. The presumably "bourgeois" social system which it had overthrown would already have embodied most — or at least many — of the goals of the revolution.

I just don't believe it. It seems much more probable that a revolutionary working-class dictatorship would consider language experimentation an undesirable remnant of the old bourgeois state of things and would suppress it along with other vestiges of the old order. I believe that an attitude such as Amiri Baraka's toward "bourgeois art" would be likely to be enforced by even an internally democratic working-class dictatorship. At best it might "tolerate" such activity as long as it remained peripheral and private — a kind of "hobby" to be pursued in time not devoted to societally approved productive work.

But the likelihood that language artwork would be considered "productive" or that language artists would be supported for their artwork by a working-class dictatorship seems to me very small indeed. I suspect that language artists would have no public support for their work and that private support would be difficult if not impossible to organize. We'd be even worse off than we are now.

My own opinion is that some form of "Stalinism" or "bureaucratic oligarchy" would be the probable result of the setting up of any revolutionary state in the name of the working class. I don't know whether or not Ron endorses the idea of a vanguard party. Most supporters of a working-class dictatorship do. In any case, I know of no evidence to support the idea that such a party, if it should gain power, would not develop into a political-economic "class" in whose hands state power would constitute a dictatorship *over* the working class and everyone else. I cannot understand anyone's discounting the experience of the last 80 years by attributing the existence of the political-economic ("bureaucratic") oligarchies presently controlling so-called socialist states merely to a degenerative disease called "Stalinism" — i.e., the evil ways of certain power-mad bureaucrats and party leaders.

Does Ron accept the argument that none of the countries in which such revolutions have taken place were sufficiently developed? — that true socialism — in which power would somehow be exercised by the working class "as a whole," although members of other classes would be excluded from exerting political power — *could* not have come about yet in any of the countries presently saddled with "socialist" oligarchies? — that only advanced nations such as the United States, Japan, or the EEC could undergo "real" socialist revolutions leading to (presumably benevolent) working-class dictatorships?

To all arguments for the continuing possibility that a violent Marxist-led revolution could lead to a desirable state of society — one in which there would be no poverty, exploitation, or war and in which political and economic power would be exercised equally by all members of society, which would, by then, be "classless" — I can only reply with the question: "Why do you think so?"

As against those who have undergone the Marxist gnosis, I *do not know* how such a society could be brought about or even *whether it is possible*, except in part. Ron is quite right in noting that — unlike social democrats, by the way, who think they can bring it about by working within parliamentary systems to vote in some form of democratically controlled state socialism — I have no program.

Milovan Djilas, in The Unperfect Society, radically questions the notion of political activity aimed at bringing about a perfect society. I cite his book for this reason and because he includes in it an impressive refutation of historical (or "dialectical") materialism. I have not had the opportunity or time to read Lefevre's book which Ron cites, so I do not know whether his and Djilas' arguments are mutually relevant, but, as I remember it, Djilas' refutation is a general one.

The fact that Djilas was formerly a Stalinist and may still consider himself, in a limited sense of the word, a "socialist," is irrelevant to his exemplification of an "agnostic" politics as against the various modern political gnosticism, "right" and "left."

To say, as Ron does, that a political agnostic is "ungrounded" is either a tautology ("not to know" = "not to be grounded") or an unwarranted kind of name-calling. To say that I believe in "maintaining" poverty, exploitation, and war because I *don't know* of any political economy without them or any political-economic "program" likely to abolish them is an astonishing misuse of language.

I no longer believe that Ron and I share as many "long-term goals" as I formerly did, since he specifically endorses a *dictatorship* of the working class (over those considered outside that class). However, what I *thought* we had in common was a belief in the *desirability* of ending poverty, exploitation, coercion, and war ("Capitalism," writes Lorenzo two pages away from Ron, "is a snobbish term for poverty and exploitation. A fiction.") and of maximizing people's control over their own lives and living and working conditions. To me this implies a maximization of opportunities for the exercise of initiative in all areas of life. As such, these "goals" seem equally incompatible with both "capitalism" and "socialism" as we've known them hitherto.

Utopian capitalists ("libertarians" such as Murray Rothbard) claim that the oligarchies presently controlling the capitalist world — the interlocking directorates of the banks, conglomerates, and multinational corporations and the leaders of the political parties, government bureaucracies, armies, and police forces — are in power because of government interference with the free marketplace. Utopian socialists (by which I mean supporters of theoretical systems of socialism that have never yet been realized in any country) claim that in societies falsely calling themselves "socialist," the party leaders, economic managers, generals, etc., have been able to consolidate their oligarchic ruling classes by forcefully subverting socialist institutions. In both cases it is claimed that the faulty nature of the actual societies is due to *interference*

with the basically "good" economic systems — not to the faulty natures of the systems themselves.

If bankers and industrialists can acquire overwhelming economic power, it seems certain that they will also largely control political life, even in societies with built-in countervailing powers. However, in the United States, the divisions within the economic/political elite, the relative autonomy of the three branches of government provided for by the US Constitution, and the guarantees of basic rights comprised in its amendments prevent the "ruling class" or any segment of it from exercising absolute hegemony. Various aspects of the present systems of expression, governance, production, distribution, etc., can be criticised, exposed, and opposed in manifestations as diverse as anti-nuclear-power demonstrations and language art (on the "left") and anti-busing demonstrations and Nazi rallies (on the "right"), as well as in publications expressing a very wide range of political and social opinions and attitudes.

I do not think this diversity of expression and action is meaningless. It is a positive and desirable feature of so-called "bourgeois democracies" that is absent from capitalist societies that have a relatively small and unified ruling class in full control of the state apparatus and from "socialist" societies in which both the state and the economic system are controlled by authoritarian parties claiming to rule in the name of the proletariat.

Such a diversity must be an essential feature of any society that I can think of as desirable. I do not see how it can be a part of any society ruled by a dictatorship, even a working-class dictatorship (granting the extremely unlikely premise that a "dictatorship" can be exercised by the working class "as a whole"). Such features must be preserved in any transition toward a juster, less exploitative, less coercive, and less violent society. One must move out from what is positive in the present situation. There is no such thing as a perfect society, but there can be a better one.

JACKSON MAC LOW

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

from WOMEN WRITERS UNION: STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Women Writers Union is a group of feminist writers in the Bay Area. We came together because the lives and history and writing of women have been suppressed and ignored for centuries. Since women have been thoroughly silenced as a group, the expression of our ideas and experience is central to the movement for our liberation. We recognize that not

only have women been silenced as a sex, we have been oppressed -- and silenced -- on the basis of our race, our class, and our sexuality. Therefore, we are particularly concerned that the voices of lesbians, working women and women of color be heard.

We first organized at San Francisco State University in 1975. Since then we have evolved into a community-based organization.... We believe that art and politics cannot be separated, but that each enriches the other. Accordingly, we have been active in a number of struggles, including benefits for the Cassandra Peten Defense Fund and the Wendy Yoshimura Defense Fund. We have also participated in the Gay Freedom Day March and an abortion rights demonstration. We hold forums which stress the connection between art and the struggle against racism, sexism and classism.... The Women Writers Union holds a members' workshop, gives readings, and offers classes in writing, open to all women. In the planning stages, are an anthology of our work and a regular series of forums...

In connecting art to politics, the Women Writers Union maintains that a multi-issue approach is necessary, that the struggles are not separate, but are one and the same. We are not separatists: our forums and readings are open to all. We believe in the power of words to persuade, to educate and to help unite all of us in our struggle. (*For more information, contact: Nellie Wong, 1744 9th Ave., Oakland, Ca. 94606.*)

WOMEN WRITERS UNION

POETRY: A JOB DESCRIPTION

From the standpoint of being a poet, what is interesting about poetry today is that it is the occupation most completely without professional status in our society. "Poet" is a term without social resonance for us, aside from a few very old ones that, fading and fading, still impart a certain aroma. For the individual it can sanely mean only "poem-writer": "... his writings make him a poet, not his acting of the role," Frank O'Hara wrote -- not that there's any role to act anymore, so the choice isn't so noble. The only true choice I see (after rejecting out of hand the ways of the academy) is in how to think about it -- whether to see oneself as a member of a little tribe of atavists or band of subversives, on the one hand, or really completely alone and slipping through the interstices of the world, on the other. I aspire to think the latter way, which has the advantage of opening on the most nearly total freedom. Admittedly, it is also close to thinking nothing at all.

It is, with all due modern irony, the course of the Sublime. The economic and, outside its craft-ghettos, the social insubstantiality of poetry may be fecund if, looking them in the eye, one continues to take poetry seriously. There is a certain light-heartedness in this, as in contemplating the present world -- for instance, that it is inhabited now by 4 *billion* or so of us humans -- and in treating one's individual life, a thing of no consequence, seriously nonetheless. Now, the Sublime is a thought you can make nothing *of*, which is the point. It's an escape from the toils of any other thought, any minor seriousness -- and that would include all attempts to justify the vocation of poetry. It is precisely in being unjustifiable in present "real" terms -- meaningless in relation to the minor seriousness of a given social order -- that poetry may have something -- some deep, funny, surprising consolations -- to offer.

This is why poet clannishness distresses me: people just throwing away their one and only significant advantage in rites of terminal pettiness and boredom. That advantage is a detachment, and a stamina, for the highest existential fun -- licensed irresponsibility of thought. What could be better? Why doesn't anyone seem to want it?

PETER SCHJELDAHL

HOWE ON OWEN

Maureen Owen, Hearts in Space (1980; Kulchur Foundation, 888 Park Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10021; \$7 & \$3.50 paper)

Go out
into the grasslands! Fear has ruined everything here.
I lost my knife and the dog is worthless
like a brilliant and sensational misunderstanding
THE GREAT EMPTINESS is out there decorated with
celestial grandeur

American to her backbone, Maureen Owen is an Irish poet of the open road. Born and brought up on a small farm in Minnesota, the vast green space of this her first landscape - Dorn's "plain of the green heart", the American heartland ruled by a glorious ever-changing sky - is central to the spirit of freshness and daring in her work. Owen's heart, like Oz/Dorothy's house, is a place where the North and South winds meet - center of the cyclone - although winds (wandering) may carry her faraway. Speed of light and word sounds, a constant. The only constant - constantly changing.

folks here swig beer swap tales continuously
assessing the liklihood that several events
are related a repeated & regular significance
surrounded by the whooping of the wind

Her poems walk a brink where sense and nonsense meet. In Nature's miscellany and mystery, nuances affirm and warn.

In the vulnerable aftermath of dinner She
has indicated the V of swords a tremendous struggle
where we stand exhausted leaning on flexed & sagging knees
while our enemies rush towards the edge of the card.

Triumph is relative Lao Tzu warns from his cloud
"Success and failure are the same disease"

Hearts in Space consists of five sections of loosely related poems. The first, and strongest, is more than half the book. At the outset *Handscroll with ink and colours on silk* - where "having made the choice you simply live accordingly." Owen's passion for miscellany is apparent. A precise miscellany. Differences that resemble, peculiarities that interact. The poems are a maze of patterned paths. Song titles, children's games, quotations, letters, biographies, japanese handscrolls, rolls of toilet paper, movies, items from the police blotter, from the newspaper, lists from field guides to birds, bushes, trees - an American jargon; all the crazy variety each day brings to a woman who is a poet who is a mother wife editor publisher daughter sister farmer housewife and WASC (white anglo saxon commuter) is warp and woof.

From a poem dedicated to her six month old son:

Five minutes
Into the chapter males were
referred to as men but females were referred to as wives
I remember blurting out at the party "I have no father"
With a tremendous sense of relief! From Grandmother to
mother I have passed down. Born of and through women alone.
We have crawled under the barbed wire & sat
on our own sacred land!

Virginia Woolf once said: "It is fatal for a woman to lay the least stress on any grievance; to plead even with justice any cause; in any way to speak consciously as a woman; and fatal is no figure of speech; for anything written with that conscious bias is doomed. It ceases to be fertilized." Woolf wrote *A Room of One's Own*, but her vision was *The Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, and her light shines for me in the letters of that quotation. A message about Mystery, to those of us who are women and poets. How do we navigate our way? How do we crawl under the barbed wire and sit on our own sacred land? What unity will we pull from multiplicity?

What dreams? What new language? Who ever (female or male) knew for SURE what was left, right, center, true, false? It is in such questioning that really interesting work occurs. Women who are poets of the calibre of Owen, recognize the precious gift of their UNcertainty. To interlace a poem with quest and roam. Owen roams. She never complains or pleads a cause. She is too busy wondering, discovering, cataloging, condensing, controlling.

The days go by they give us more
and more and more to lose You lose! This is not always
a tragedy. Beyond a certain point it is impossible
to live at face value in the end it will be the length
of our extravagance that allows us to imitate at last
the masculine impatience!

The energy, wit, and surrealistic power let loose in Hearts in Space are as changing as the sky of her primal landscape. In the best of these poems every word is necessary, every fragment right. A balance of economy and generosity. Dizzy and direct. They leave a wake of shadows suggesting more meaning in reserve. Life's fresh and faulty elegance in a world where (as her son Patrick tells her) "Houdini walked through a brick wall everyday."

SUSAN HOWE

WRITING AND CONCEIVING

Natasha: They ordered me not to see you again.

Lemmy: Who? The Alpha 60 engineers?

Natasha: Yes.

Lemmy: What makes you afraid?

Natasha: I'm afraid because I know a word...without having seen it or read it.

from *Alphaville*, a film by Jean-Luc Godard

All experience is conditioned by expectation. The meaning of an interval of experience is defined throughout by the implied or covert meaning of its end. The tension of an interval arises out of the anxiety of evolving a meaning for an event. Ravel confounds this process not by employing an obsessive doubting or repetition of themes, but by allowing a focussed uncertainty to remain. The rhythms are not halting or arbitrary yet they may be felt as not quite intended or distracted but determinedly so, not just tentatively. He gains the continuity ordinarily

obtained through a form that tantalizes with eventual resolution by arousing different levels of dreaminess and wakefulness. We wake from a dream to enter, clearly, a daydream.

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Writing ordinarily stresses its function of "righting" the meanings of words and word combinations. But the graphic materials of writing also have a mapping and marking function. As records are evidence, the reified word is a token of identity.

The sign distributes the imaged perception as an imprint transferable to the "scratching" of thought against the cave walls of the mind. Signs transmute imaged perception into thought: at the terminus points, always approximate, always tautological.

Each subdivision of an interval is discrete when it is noticed over time, but the remaining subdivisions are more blurred when specific ones are selected for focus. Similarly, a grapheme within a nominal phrase such as a headline or a title would be conditioned by the phrases subsequently selected for emphasis. In present consciousness any subdivision of an intervallic constellation can exist in any combination of the three temporal dimensions or are apperceptively consigned to temporal mutability. The same is true for the relativity between intervals of script and all the hierarchical organizations within the text. The more general inscription (such as a headline, a title or a chapter, or the capital letter at the beginning of a line in a poem) conditions the mode of focussing the related text. The equivalent in remembering is the hierarchical arrangement of significance. The base word of significance is *sign*.

Poetry is a graphic form of unrighting the publicly codified collocation of grapheme with symbolized ordinary writing and speech usage and the imaging function of the mind. The conceptual experience of a poem causes a reconnection with the acausal, atemporal conceiving of meaning by re-portioning the relative values of the scalar organizing function of the perceiving process and the inscriptive, defining level of pre-conscious verbal imaging.

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It is a certain tone I am after, embellished by persistent varying shades of association. I repeat it as I am hearing it in a kind of suspended listening, paying attention to and allowing to dissolve certain obsessive memories. Deductions, or rather, reductions or vapors like these, afterwards seem immediately familiar, pre-cognitive, felt throughout an extended déjà-vu atmosphere during an imploded time sequence. The puzzle is attempted *only once* in order for the observers to immediately witness its decomposition. It is a simultaneous recording, unwinding and playing, joining and dismantling, similarities momentarily continuing to hold sway throughout or just long enough after an initial and suddenly heightened series of contrasts. Such points of connection are heard in

specific invariable tones and intervals. The names of these sounds and feelings may be the objects and words memories attach themselves to. But the feelings that yearned for those names, the ones that offer themselves later as keepsakes are really more memorable. Not the images which are now absent, but the thawing and sketching around that in coming times will be added to the fondness which grows around such replacements for the quality of the actual event. Anonymous, the words and exalted rituals plaintively repeating them.

Lexic qualities of... Semantic qualities of... Signal qualities of...
Structuralizing qualities of... Quality of constructibility into family systems... Geneaology of... History of connection with lexic qualities of meaning... Graphic qualities of... Quality of distribution...

Distribution of naming to order spatially... Distribution of naming to remind... Distribution of naming to induce... Distribution of naming to attract... Distribution of naming to direct connection to identification...

Naming that orders... Naming that connotes possession (control, ownership)... Possession of names... Erosion of names... Ambiguity of names... Plurality of names...

Naming, identifying, recording, delimiting, describing, describes, humanness of, clarifies, evokes feeling, vocal qualities of, musical qualities of

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The activities of the mind associated with the recording and verification of the relationship between identity and physical space are governed by memory and the verbal technology necessary to preserve it. To repeat (chant, sing) the trace, is to elicit a vision of prophecy. The function of poetry is not only to enlighten but also to point us in the direction of the mind for the sources of the enlightenment. Poetic composition is an activity which subtly alters the rules that govern the relationship between the ordering of thought and allowing it to swoon into reverie. Remembering is at its base a connective mode of cognition. From this is expropriated its power to order, to value, to record, to create, to historicize, to catalogue, describe, recreate, make safe, controllable and distant, - to *signify*.

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As many times as I try to grasp my solitude, I am abruptly thrown into the image of the Other and its absence, mute spectator. Or just as suddenly to stop, trapped in the spectacle of my fear of his/her absence, the patient, responsive, loving Other situated at the side of all that is depriving. To switch so suddenly is to plunge into the mercy of a simple truth: as neutral as the irrational is the subtly perfect, the preposition of all imposters, clown of confusion, enigmatic signature of

incomprehension.

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18. Salvaged debris.

23. Moisture, remainders, dew, condensation.

24. Reference points on a map, questions of materials, accident

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All of his/her reading experience is summoned forth in the mind of the writer. Against this recital of his/her thought lay all the significant moments of his/her speech — from the first cries to, and from, the mother to the syntactical complexity of his/her most heartfelt account of his/her experience — these moments mark the boundaries of one's language.

To read is to practice a mental resonance between language, thought and memory. As in ordinary thought, to read need not be simply to systematically connect mental processes to their current contexts but to other, related aspects of present or past experience. Such an idiosyncratic variation in reading any text is inevitable, especially in re-reading.

Memory becomes history when the impact of events is such that the remembered event is still having its impact when the memory is triggered and is more multiply caused by immediate necessity. History is necessary when memory threatens to fail. Memory is aroused by emotional and physical need. As culture (apparently) changes more rapidly, more attention must be concentrated on the meaning of the shifts. When we are insecure about the memory function we invoke historical (ordering) paradigms.

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Sometimes I allow somebody else, in some way, to speak through me. I know the somebody else is me, but I also know that some information is coming through that perhaps was picked up peripherally, or has been forgotten and is silently colliding and thus combining with something else. The other voice during the conception of a thought before the wording has taken on specificity. A high altitude photograph and then a zoom-in for details. This permits initially irrelevant details to later enter the framework.

"The scale of the Spiral Jetty tends to fluctuate depending on where the viewer happens to be. Size determines an object, but scale determines art... When one refuses to release scale from size, one is left with an object that *appears* to be certain. For me scale operates by uncertainty. To be in the scale of the Spiral Jetty is to be out of it." (p. 112, *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, New York University Press, 1979.)

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wit its supposed "associated" thought, and as its creator seizes on the reminiscence of its genesis, the acausal connecting process of association determines the actual signification. This eventually becomes the "meaning" of the experience. These meanings ordinarily are interpreted in intervallic measures or "beats" of time. Meaning entropically moves towards "familiarization," which is static, rather than "defamiliarization" which is nascent, and closer to the fulcrum of the acausal axis of interval (instance) and pattern (generalization).

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You lose the actual qualities of the experience when you try to be too precise about the specifics of each interval of the flow. Any exhaustive rendering becomes a compilation of instances. The historical perspective makes instances appear less improvised than they actually are. The decisive moment, the dramatic realization, is itself a heightening of the particular instance from a valued perspective. One examines what one wants to know thoroughly again and again. This is called testing, experimentation.

We wait and try again. We measure and take note. We generalize and enumerate. We *sift through*. This sifting, this remeasurement of experiences, one combined with another leads to connections which are imbued with the feeling of discovery, that are *remarkable*.

Now, as I look out through the porthole of this ferry, even from this distance, I am thinking that one small rectangle of graduated color, yellow white to pink to black, to specks of, pinpoints of, electric white light to blue, brings to light, to mind, the entire dawn.

NICK PIOMBINO

FILM SINCE:

(In what follows, Abigail Child explores some of the concerns of some of her recent film-making)

receiver

voiceover

DIRECT ADDRESS

by Their music to light a longing (dark) wch breeds mind (that evolves)

Point (at once) clear heat (intended in their erection)

to enlarge THE LINK

WOMAN

concerns ensembles repress less unsaid not yet, not enuf vertigo

INVERTED IMAGE

flexing it onto the surface + what showers portions (crisis of fluidities)

EMBRACE FOLLOWS

precedes and exceeds it.

IS NOW DISPLACED

SHE

where youll people instinct

BETWEEN

bodies of workers. projections

emarginates

and the cutting thru or pathWay-

Permanent terrain of destructure.

(the scale the phenomenon, the level the meaning)

Texture. proliferation of kinds in wch a kind-

UNDERLINE THE BREAK A CLOSEUP of ThUs

brush looks

X COMES (SUN)

magnet pump flume braids cataract waves (repeat) Solar
prerequisites

AND

The danger of engulfment disguised by the lure of a (regressive)

paradise (Pair of Dices)

IS MADE EXPLICIT eyes Whereas

the task of art is that process whereby shapes become human.

that interest / convolvus

DAM WHILE

A NOTE

CLIMAX

that must have been the start (fish)

everywhere stretches

Touch to accede

TRAIN NOT STATION

These objects'

intermittence

in wch efforts are rhythms.

Our retrospection will be all to the future. TIME,

TWO SHOTS UNDERLINE

gulf may launch

instinct

we think

mutandis

LOOK

the infinite filters into the structure thru WHO LOOKS IN

A series of infinitesimal displacements-

RAIN

, in this way that i knew all the time times cutting

and wld be like color

does that kind of jumpy

DESIRE

THE SUIT WHILE

set between

Circle of sweet grass (muscae volitares) Discourse

from an economy wch is that of the body.

MORE, HALF UNDRESSING HIM

flesh (electriK)

EARt (synapse)

You hear

had before

SINCE

the last part presents aspects actual accpts

(If only splits into times)

X material (color wheels)

& THE PRESENCE TOGETHER

alters exists you cant have silence

perfectlyalways off-the-beat eees

divide CAPITALISM ,THE NATIONAL CAUSE

merged wt Q elt location guttural cessity (tates

king the stairs Potemkin

distract Pivot asts

& BY FILM THE LETTER WT arrows

at zero (47 varieties of lupine)

OPENS

SHAPE and sep.

specific content

igneous hill and ellision you,wch lead sho do

IN FACT BE FUNDAMENTAL MOMENT OF PENETRATION

TRANSPORT PARA

.PAUSE (aronial.)

ALWAYS AS A LACK AND AN ON THE OTHER

that sEvers me

TWO MOMENTS AND AT THE SAME TIME AND AT THE

INTERRUPTION As soon as

days murky, to film. Perform irrational acts in the Shape of an idea.

EACH. ELEMENTS hot it hinders that (equals)

further plane THE AIR tastes us TIME

BY THE PRESENCE

DESIRE OF A FEMALE (him)

ABIGAIL CHILD

TASTE, FORM

The drama of history is temporality, the creation of form(s) manifest in the key human potential to dissolve the chaos of cogito into the resolve of concrescence marking this praxis with the absolutely distinguishing character of intuition. How forms which perservere specifically through and for the narrow range of private imagination into world into art into language are located in it by a tripartite of form, taste, value. Herein the status of form is exact-inexact possibility towards object-status (objectness), and is intimately bound-up with a separatedness of cogito/ cogitato that is vanquished (rendered artificial, parasitic) by the basic

phenomenology of intuited ontic reach. Any status for form-as-object in this context ultimately involves value(s) that cohere to but are not part of (in) the sensuous world. Taste, then, as the perception that replaces mere recognition, shares its way of knowing (determining) significance in form *with* value, and becomes the sole, tenuous qualifier of that value. As such, value becomes the problematic of *quality* through its relative contradistinct to its 'virtual' determination: if form can only be discussed in terms of culture (Dewey rightly notes), then the value of that form can only be computed through the strictly relative methodologies of what is crucial to that culture, not, obviously, what is 'virtual'. And insofar as this instinct towards virtuality falsifies itself in the negating mechanisms of time-bound culture, the status of the formal object must be prehended by relative qualities which are, indeed, *totally* crucial to knowing it. The bad faith of archeology is exposed here as the most pedestrian sort of substandard atavism: the conviction that (W)ill ontologically *and* epistemologically endures into a meaning that endures into the impossible synthesis of benign matter as significant form. Reflexivity (as intent) cannot transfer intact (as, for, of-itself) beyond cogito into form, and is as such inexcavable. To grant virtuality prehensive rather than fantastic condition is to replace the taste of another Era for the taste of one's own and belies the unrefined bankruptcy of the notion of succession.

The identity of any Epoch is the quality of those minds that apply the constant effort of knowing and fabricating to a world absented of the evidence of unity and languoring in ellipsis. Distinct from the Positivist mode, which reduces the aesthetic standards of culture to a structure of play, this view simply arbitrates the products of intuition (imagination) with the consequence of (R)eason: the making of discrete form in time as the epitomization of an energy that is distinctly discarnate, subjective, a prodigality that bears signification in both the lie and the truth of temporality, excluding the bogus conceit of formist contiguity.

ANDREW KELLY

I STARTED WRITING...

I started writing dialogues. This is how I started to write. I was working as a waitress in "Big Boys" in College Park, Maryland while attending the University of Maryland. Always listening to people and was taking Modern Poetry class with Rudd Fleming who really "opened the door" to all of this for me. I graduated with a degree in Recreation Therapy so the people I spent a lot of time with were frustrated jocks and very social, fun loving, good time party types. At the same time, I was starting to

write, I got into yoga. So both of these (writing and yoga) were pulling me into two very opposite poles. By this time, I was writing more internal monologues and stream of consciousness writing.

Last week I went to the library to look up automatic writing. I finally found a definition in an Encyclopedia of Occultism. Automatic writing is as if your arm is possessed and you don't know what you are writing. You may write very very fast and so small that it would seem physically impossible that a human could write it. Much of this type of writing had to do with contacting the dead. When the writing comes easier to me, it seems to be more automatic. Stein was thoroughly insulted when they called her work automatic. She thought it was ridiculous that they thought she was in a trance.

While working for the D.C. Recreation Department, I became involved with Mass Transit, a weekly open reading series. Again here were these two conflicting types. I was teaching a preschool class in the A.M. and coaching sports and other activities (hanging out, ping-pong, the local rec activity). Maybe these conflicts are what kept me writing. I remember buying my first car and how free it felt. Also riding on buses and trains got me writing. The motion and optimism of "new" always set something off. In the beginning (*Lamp Lights*) the observations and obsessions were much more external — not as heavy. By the next year with *Stampede* (having spent a year in New York studying in Mayer's workshop) everything became much faster, darker and extremely internal, until it came to a dead halt. Climbing out of that with the writing proved to be a slow and thick process which even involved going back to Baltimore where I grew up. Living out the same memories of childhood as an adult was of course painful and necessary.

The next work, "The Letters", was much lighter as if trying to reach out and be witty. By this time I was back in D.C. working various jobs, i.e., security guard, cashier, and receptionist. After being so self-conscious and internal in *Stampede*, I needed to be light, almost comical while writing "The Letters". By this time, a group of us were getting together for a poetry workshop which *Dog City* has been a result of.

To say the life is separate from the writing would be a lie. Not that calming down would slow the work or the other way around. Lifestyle, where living, whether working would all add or detract.

About three years ago, I got a job as a Park Ranger on an old light-ship down on Haines Point in D.C. Here was, I thought, the answer to many problems (low pressure job, being outside a lot, on water, pretty isolated in winter and fall), but I found that the amount of time I had to write had nothing to do with my ability to write. I then started writing *Tamoka* which I had intended to be a much longer work. This is the most direct piece I've done (more like a story than anything else). Also I got married about that time, so here was another way "not to hide". I found in *Tamoka* the language was very important and I finally understood what centering the writing on the language could mean. Of course, mine

was more of a story but all of the talk about "words" made sense. Certain sections are more language than others.

The pool where I had lifeguarded and taught swimming the summer before I started the Park Service was this huge inner city public pool. There was a lot of slang and while we used to change chairs and clean the deck, I would ask the other guards about the opposite meanings of words (bad meaning good, etc.). This is very common now but I always liked to talk about it.

Now the popular songs that are blasting on the radios are these talky sing-song long tales with a good beat (sort of like Muhammad Ali's poetry). One of the people at the ship would always know the words to them. It fascinated me because he would turn it up and tell me to listen whenever they came on.

In about three weeks, I'll be having a baby. So my whole center is off. The writing has been much slower this summer, will see what the new settled season will bring.

(A bibliography of Lynne Dreyer's work can be found in issue #8, June 1979.)

LYNNE DREYER

PIECE TOGETHER BROKEN SWEAT/ MILD CONCERN

Ted Greenwald, Use No Hooks (1980; Asylum's Press, c/o SPD, 1784 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709; \$2.50)

There is a relationship between reading and writing that seems unsunderable. To the extent that there is a set of repeating signatures, one learns to recognize as appertaining to something that could be called a Greenwald poem, it has always seemed as likely as not to have developed as a part of an emergent *style*, or voice, or writerly persona, more or less connected to an *actual* person, in New York, with a certain Queens accent, who was to be seen, or not, at certain places around town. Admittedly such recognitions (this, here, is a Greenwald...e.g.) arose not only out of some more selfed armature of presentation to the exclusion of familiarities in other aspects of the writing. A somewhat *socialized urbanized 'relaxed'* mode of discourse could have been held up, as epitomizing, as an hypothetical model, and matched with a similar more formal contextual focus: continuities of relationships, friendships, lovers, bars, parties, evenings at home. This sort of identification came with the accrued presence of the writer and his work on the horizon so that, eventually, there seemed to be something that in being called a *Greenwald*, for example, as style, appeared as a realized thing which could conceivably span, comfortably, almost any exigency of *subject* and still reside, undeniably, as a work by this author.

In part the not inconsiderable effect of reading a book like *Use No Hooks* seems due to the way one's expectations of a writer midpoint in his career are destroyed — through, and *as*, the structure of the poems themselves are torn and ripped and pressed and pushed to the edge of organized utterance recognizable as the writer's parameters, — and beyond. The *envelope* is thoroughly reconstituted. Edges are sheared off or repeat like a monitor's rollover. Often the face of the prosody is stripped past the stratum of *consensual artifice*, deeper than the *bones* of the sentence, to a ledge of basal utterance. World is accounted as something that may enter the *field*: a pipe, phone's ring, a hat. What was thought of as what *made for* a Greenwald poem turns out to be both more and less than it seemed. Any convivial perhaps casually expansive mode that seemed to be what could be called the *style* was, after all, it now appears, only a collection of *temporal* approximations tailored for what it seems the work, generally, *then*, had as an *aboutness*. This was not how he had to write, that was what he chose. The force of this book's form, the way it epitomizes, lines up, with the pain and loss, anger, reaction, and hope, the terrible dissolves that it springs from, that it takes up the colors of, impels the reader to a new assessment. Anyone who can so across the board, after twenty years of writing engineer, or, rather, render, such sweeping changes in his writing has to be thought of *differently*. What we thought of as a *Greenwald style* was all wrong, it was something tailored. What remains, what *resides*, a hard edged, tight, unrelenting *way of looking* that emanates from this book, and now, in a sense, more clearly, from the older work, that is the uniqueness.

There are certain things one isn't supposed to say. Even the most exhibitionistic of the late unlamented confessionalists, apart from other more formally debilitating adherences, can now be seen, if anyone cares, to have hewn to certain mores of decorum. The most *searingly bared* revelations in the first person were still clothed in the inclusiveness of the monolithic lyric *I*; by the middle of the century the presentation of literary self was sufficiently bogged down in a morass of convention that it no longer constituted any great sally to say that this *I* was capable, or engaged in, the *most terrible* affliction or infliction. If it wasn't completely worn out as a mode of discourse it was encrusted with as much study as any of the older readily compatible fitting prospects on objects (landscapes, etc.).

The residual tags of disguise, enfeebled necromancy of narration and taste in lyric *thus constituted*, stand out most starkly in the rote fictionalizing reference this kind of writing called up when the sense of a *personal place* could no longer be avoided. There were still certain things one did not say. You didn't name names, at least not the real names. Did Sylvia ever write the word Ted? Even now, in the kind of writing where that sub-

ject survives, when one half of a couple mentions the other it is in the context of washing the dishes or babysitting. Some of the constraints on this kind of particularity are self-evident, seeming to have more to do with social binding, decorum in that sense. Similarly, certain accusations or lacerations too clearly labelled are out of bounds. Another major influence in the context is the familiar charying desire to set the writing apart, to push it up to another *realm* by the deletion of various proper nouns and the odd mundane reference.

At this point in time to make the decision to include these sorts of hyperpersonal reference is to imply a critique and realignment of the literary presentation of the self that injects a healthy note into an increasingly tendentious argument. It is an affirmation that that which places writing in a place or *signature* which is some way a *beyond* has little to do with discretion or *attachable* entrances into the basis or source of the work. In twenty years no one will care anyway.

The formal component of this openness seems rooted in an attitude, a non-exclusion taken to its logical conclusion or development, which, as it realizes more and more as *pertaining* to that which is *connected*, *evidentiary*, *important*, *illuminating*, is impelled to present, to *include*, that much more.

MICHAEL GOTTLIEB

from FUGUE

... What precisely would the work to be written be about if it was concerned with a game? We would have to play and write the Treatise on that game at the same time, or, more exactly, the game itself would consist of writing the Treatise on the game. How is it played? I cannot apply the rules of a treatise which does not yet exist! A solution is possible: that the elaboration of the treatise be an integral part of the execution. The match has not yet taken place, I shall never have the peaceful role of pure spectator, and that is why it is necessary, to begin by playing, by provoking and observing the movements, even if it later entails reconstituting from the traces of other, at first unnoticed, movements.... I must do the work of a discoverer more than an inventor, and yet the reading alone cannot act as the developer in the photographic sense of that term, for the history, far from being already fully accomplished, will be able to be read only in so far as it will be inscribed, as if the memory of the book was offering it that place and time of which it would till then have been deprived....

I would wish the mind, substituting itself for "I", to show itself, manifest its own movement openly, speak its own language directly, but the mind, a detestable word that I must soon replace, not given in any

immediate understanding, not speaking but writing, must be furnished the possibility of leaving a trace: the white sheet ready to become scriptogramme. The most simple metaphor, hardly a metaphor, is thus that of a mobile or a machine, equipped with a kind of seismographic stylet which would change position, marking its movement, which would be described by that procedure as essential and characteristic as that of a piece in a chess game. To compare a book to a seismogramme is a mistaken analogy in so far as, I know from experience, simple registering is not involved, and indeed everything happens as if the sheet of paper was a rebel matter not allowing itself to be easily cut into by the writer's stylet. I therefore correct my definition: the mind (a term the reader would really like to read henceforth under an erasure) is this mobile which can only change its position by clearing a path and consequently by inscribing itself, by necessarily leaving a trace.... How can I make the reader participate in the discontinuity of the writing? How can I do it in such a way that the legato of the reading is broken by the spasms of the writing?... One experiences a kind of dizziness when, having suddenly believed one is touching the centre of the target, one passes just to one side, a slight error which soon draws one to the very outside, and yet this slight shift, this kind of dislocation which separates me from my references and puts a check on my schemes, sets me at the same time onto some new project.... Contrary to what I supposed, to write a book is not a game which would consist of drawing up the rules of this game, and indeed, in admitting that writing is a game, it will never be able to purify itself, to sum itself up in a Treatise.... Opposing what provisionally, and for want of better, I shall call my writing, since it is placed black on white by the one who says "I", there is indeed I do not know what hostile whiteness which empties my writing, disconnects it from itself, a whitening which obliterates in advance what I might have written, ousts me unceasingly from what I have thus no right to call my writing: that ray, that rift, that furrow, which I will call counter-writing, even though repeating that such pain is surely my only chance.... Everything happens as if the work was the place of confrontation between an inside and an outside, between writing and counter-writing, an adversary that it would however be unjust to consider an enemy of the work since without it the work would geometrise, crystallise in a Treatise which, though perfect, would nonetheless signify for the work, purified in the "finished work", mortal immobility....

Though it must weigh the most serious threats on the work, counter-writing is not exterior to a text which would not be constituted without it, on which, in which, it leaves its imprint, it touches writing at its very heart. The mobile, figure of writing, does not change position according to a rectilinear course till the moment when it would be deflected by an alien resistance, but counter-writing is always at work, bringing the writer into play whilst placing the one who says "I" out-

side the game, occupying the heartless heart of the writing. Every writer represents his craft in the form of a clearing a way, and yet, in his very act, writing is also and at the same time, of a deep-seated passivity: the act of writing, in so far as it is a receptive surface, is therefore always concerned with the heart of its activity.... When I hold myself at a distance from these two extremes: the ease of discussion and the dry pain of exclusion, when I write, that is to say when the writer simultaneously decides to open a way and to accept being put in play, being carried along to the unknown and perhaps to lose himself, there is not on the one hand the rectitude or the rigour of a breakthrough and on the other a strength so perniciously misleading that one finds oneself off the track without knowing why, without having made a mistake, so disorientated that one no longer knows where one is at all, turned about to the point of losing one's own trace, but the still-veiled way plays around its absent axis and thus the clearing a way, although one only becomes aware of it afterwards, is directly a misconduct: this use, this warping of falsely continued traces, is the indiscernable work of the writing and the counter-writing to such an extent that the latter could be given the name of writing and vice versa....

(Excerpted and reordered from Glenda George's translation of Fugue -- Gallimard, 1970 -- in Split Curtains, 4 Bower Street, Maidstone, Kent, England.)

ROGER LAPORTE

THE POEM BEGINNING WHAT IT IS

Initial statement of intensely ambiguous desire. Affirmation of the attempt at image without relegating personal history to a position of domineering limitation. Notification in succinct everyday language of the author's intention to call up out of the ordinary events of the day some revelation concerning the ability to cope with social rejection. Flat reversal of previous logic in favor of a slightly metaphorical reliance on the presentation of phrases designed to convey a sense of security in their close examination of emotional detail. Sudden insight, followed by philosophical maxims supposedly revealing the moral implications of such activity. A number of analogies referring back to original statement of predisposed feelings of inadequacy. Slightly ironic comment on the difficulty of accepting responsibility for the integration of thought and action. Further examples of displeasure at contemporary standards of aesthetic expression. Despairing remarks on the ability of concerted energy expenditure to overcome basically unsolvable psychological dilemmas.

Extended analysis in oversimplified form portraying social interaction and personal conduct as beyond the reaches of intellection. Return to imagistic descriptions of peripheral anxiety. Relegation of attempts at tempered hope to the projection of unusual ideas conveyed through a combination of syntactic complexity and emotionally-loaded terminology. Summation of on-going conscious event experience in recollection of earlier self-betrayal. Final ideological commitment to continuing endeavor. Terse imprecation of the poetic form as pathetically fallacious. Restatement of desire in less ambiguous terms.

DAVID BENEDETTI

UNDER THE BRIDGE

Carla Harryman, Under The Bridge (1980; This, c/o SPD, 1784 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709; \$3)

Harryman resists stasis, attacks any form of the given. "Creation not reality," she writes in the "Forward" to *Under The Bridge*. Her focus is on will; her own, of course, as the creator of this prose, "I think I made up the future in order to go away, to move elegantly." and the perceived will of others. Her very syntax points to the agency behind effects. For instance, in "Cult Music" she writes, "Fed period music in a boxcar." Another writer might have begun that statement with the words "period music," stressing the nouns. Harryman begins with the verb "fed." So someone is doing this to us. Her "Forward" ends, "The hand walked down the road."

Her emphatic verbs bridge the gap between one seemingly unconnectable noun clause and the next across sometimes incredibly long sentences as if she found nowhere she cared to pause.

A self pleasure supermarket puny bridges defy willfully
demeans articulation but had all the confidence not to be
interested in music at home or locked out by a big mouth
talking in swamps that hinge between doting or like
propaganda spread two dogs changed position fretful
crooked road sauntering up the tangled figure proceeding
naturally in a remote space loaded up with characteristics,
a too cumbersome visage opens the scroll in mud and lifts
up head tumbling into a frame like eels circling the
heavens to make themselves feel better.

from "Various Devices"

Her sentences seem to proceed, "exhibiting ruthless fancy." They "could go anywhere, but might not."

Superficially, Harryman and other writers of new prose sometimes resemble surrealists. But sentences like: "The black tub motors by." or "Frightening packages of detail surround the house..." or "Smell of dust in this geometry." sound odd not because they describe impossible happenings or dream states, but simply because they are unusual formulations. In each of these sentences at least one term feels out of sync. The nouns "geometry", "detail" and even "tub" are more general than one would expect. Sporadically, she raises abstraction to a higher power. It is a defamiliarization technique. "Is this why I'm strange to you as we practice being home?"

Consciousness suddenly stands back from a thought, regards it from outside. "I am not an innocent: I was only pretending to be contemptuous of the mountains." Sentence turns against previous or even, in the case above, hypothetical sentence. 'Characters' appear briefly to make statements contradicted by the 'narrator.' Mom is "wrong" in "In Front" and "One can't say, 'But they don't live in water,' without being an ass." So one must be wary. You can't believe everything you read. Harryman's writing presents both the will to act and the possibility of error. Reading *Under The Bridge* one feels provoked and energized. "I could have been in a more simple schoolyard."

RAE ARMANTROUT

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

A THING ABOUT LANGUAGE FOR BERNSTEIN

Even the dreadful Maritain distinguishes verse covertly logical or rational from verse which, whether for emotional or exploratory reasons, does float free from "development" of the sort taught in French lycées. Bachelard seems to me to have developed the best devices to criticize it. In English we have Davie's syntactical study, and maybe Charles Williams' *Reason and Beauty*....

The trouble, my trouble, comes from the relation of theory to practice, fiery theory and tepid practice. There are ways in which Clark Coolidge is not a savior. Or can I take his collar as celluloid. Or leather, around a wood armature, with buckles and straps, perhaps rings. This is for a strong neck, to go through. Inventing it took centuries. Now we find them on the sides of barns, like toilet seats.

My favorite barn, which lately had lions in, was really a garage and had in it, on the workbench the hearth-idol of which was a very good, very heavy vise, in coffee cans and old drawers now open boxes such iron

fitments as I found in my farm rounds. They were sometimes useful, especially the metal straps and hasps, bendable in the big vise, with effort. These also, the smaller bits, provided me with nipples for plastic caps in redesigned one-shot pistols for conjuring. In general the pleasure was double: of finding and hoarding, and recognizing a use in a cog plate or pierced metal bracket.

Were these, in the ground, words or syllables. Wire fence, bolts and folded drum stock had been grown into by a tree. Large washers, screw-driver shanks and whole saws were in the ground by it. So the tree defined a junk heap, was a locale, probably on the theory that you had to walk around it anyway. Like, in a way, the habit of tacking up old license plates.

There was charm when the bits were old enough (rusted spark plugs are still boring) and potential utility, and as in a time-game the charm of potential utility. The secret pleasure (recall De Quincey on the pleasure of sliding gold coins) was how pretty (not triste) they were, in cans and boxes, *waiting* in senses to be used but not at attention, not sentimentalized. They helped define a workbench.

This last motion, the move outward from particular spiked or angled, heaped or glass-jarred presences, to make a larger area was very odd because they did not *inhabit* the area, as tools hung over their painted silhouettes do or did. They were not citizens or politics. It is more that the large space *could* be used, walked into as a unity, like a country not thinking of its restaurants. One could, though one never did, greet the space. It could be acknowledged, in a different way from how, turning out a jar of washers or fitments, the pieces not useful would still be greeted or given a value while picked *through* or around and set aside.

Max Picard says if words didn't go out of themselves to refresh themselves *in* things, they would hang around in heaps and impede our movements, like things in a warehouse. That *may* be an argument for reference. One could prefer the warehouse, as one dreams in a surplus-parts store. Will this be sought out or printed -- ever be more than *browsing*. And is there, built into some kinds of experiment as result, the utility of browsing only. Please reply.

GERALD BURNS

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PRIVATE ENIGMA IN THE OPENED TEXT

The trace of the enigma is negligently latent in all writing. The enigma is a colorless monovalent feature in textual omnivalence.

This present writing defines those private enigmas with which the author sometimes pierces his text. These are distinct from, for example: the narratively enigmatic which, functioning, becomes through reappearance, a character or figure of the text; the metaphysically enigmatic which functions, deliberately, through our lives as we return to its imperative point of question; the enigmatics of dream which function, vehicularly, to let life ride itself; the grammatically enigmatic, which functions as a verbal irregularity, a non sequitur stunning us with what previously could not have been said; the enigmatic of any single text, which is obsessive in its function as the ground for all text and all enigma. Throughout this writing, the word 'enigma' will refer to private enigmas, and not to the otherwise enigmatic which may frequently surround its appearance.

The author may plant in his text his enigmas. Whether this is more common in the rangeingly modern text than in classical writing is something we may not learn. We may speak of the pleasure. The writer allows his enigmas as, quickly they choose him; with reason — pleasure. The attachment is attentive. There is pleasure in placing the deliberately extraneous, the stain. The enigma may be no more enigmatic to a reader than is the rest of the text, which may seem 'of a piece', or deliberately and equally not of one. But for the writer, the enigma remains a sign of himself in the text of himself, a unique entry of himself upon his language. It is that part which he obstinately holds to as he gives it all away. The presence of the reader is implicit in the pleasure of enigma; the author is a voyeur, enjoying as he writes, the pleasure of his reading of his text. In fact, he gives the text to himself as he writes it: but in the enigma he claims in one instant the combined functions of reading and writing; he completes already, again and in part, what already others, reading, complete again and in part. He enjoys, in advance, what it is usually for the reader, whether himself or another, to enjoy only later. It is a one-sided pleasure; doubled. The enigma is chosen as a special burden, a verdict the writing passes on the young history of texts.

The enigma cleans the text of its indebtedness. In the enigma gesture, a text lays hold of itself. An enigma, unlike the rest of texted language bound to structure, does not (have to) evaluate itself. It is already evaluated, it stands for that.

What is sought is an enigma which cannot be closed upon (hence the "is

sought"). Small particles of meaning satisfy this best for the writer; though large structures do so, openly, they do so as structures, their closure a matter of preordained interest. The enigma is erased in its minute duration. An enigma, unlike the rest of structured text, is not the locus of any coming together, neither of a dispersion; it is a still point activated, once by the author's enthusiasm, and again by the writing which surrounds and which motivated its inauguration. Enigma, made to be unresolved, affords the opposition of immersion, of argument: it offers an opaque exterior; not offering entry or exit, it posits (the generic trace of pleasure). The enigma, cued only to itself, faces nothing. However, it is not bracketed. It is merely less loose among particles more active. Though its delight is not extinguished, it has no tendency. Its argument is that, it, is, here; hence its relation to structural wholes: the enigma less elusive, because more instanced, the structure less clear, because more over itself.

The enigma significantly animates (animates signification in) the writer's working. In his text he lodges it, stills the agitation by posturing its particular particle where it can be observed, contemplated, or where it can be passed over; without having to reveal its lived significance, he reveals the volume of it. It is transplanted; without, however, having been anywhere other than on both sites, met equally in the imagination with which they touch. The enigma is rendered siteless, a vantage from which its singularity can incite unanimously.

The enigma is the only anoegenetic particle of language. It stands, in part (and in part it 'fails'), for the effort which made it so. It does not sublimate its function to structure, as do all functioning chunks of meaning; it is apart from function, embodying it at once. It is an action on which the curtain of meaning has come down with finality; behind the curtain, the perfunctory disclosure of fact. The enigma is a silent spot in the rush of meanings, but only when viewed in that context. Its placement specializes it. Without being able to deposit its position in the meaning-productive text, it does in fact speak its stance. It refuses to speak in discourse in order to embody quick monologic impact.

The enigma is impoverished in context. It has nothing to do: no work, nothing by which to be covered, nothing to speak, no acts, no decisions to make or motivate in its place (no pivot), no early nor late and no here nor there. It has nothing to mobilize (after the author's delight), nothing to solve, nothing to begin or bring to an end. It abolishes, for an instant, what goes on surrounding it. If a text can be parsed, the enigma cannot. But it does not deny, it solidly confirms itself; its intractable dissolution of logic and sequence. But it must not irritate; it is in no way entangled. It is not a version of some other thing, neither is it

averse to a possibility. It is stopped. It implies the release of the game, momentarily, without bringing it about. It generates its instant, and deprives it of reason, of play.

The enigma does not exist in the tangled limits of nature. It is an artifact. It in no way approaches the limits of what we know to be the case. It stands (in) (in the text) for the limits. It is an act of indication, but without the masking words which elsewhere accompany such acts; its substance is word, but it leaps, releasing them insoluble, an empty encasement. The enigma is marked by its absence from the site, as it is seen to occupy it totally. No contradiction; this, the enigma.

An enigma cannot be plural; it depends upon its indistributability. If it becomes dispersed in the text, if it is acted, its character is delineated in diffusion; of necessity, its still factness is destroyed. When the integer is serialized, or valued, when it is perceived through horizontal or vertical loci, it achieves a rhetorical or narrative function; it relaxes. The enigma must not be made to speak itself in any direction. The enigma, if it is to stand privately, if it is to release its pleasure, must not equivocate. The enigma is the only detached attachment permitted to text.

A text can be infused with a network of enigmas, which unavoidably connect. But when the enigma is extensive, it becomes a particle in the text's fabric, a code demanding, and enabling at least in part, its decipherment. As soon as an enigma is extensive, structured, it becomes a term among many in the text's polarities and excursions. It becomes one of numerous graphs upon which the writing occurs, tightening and loosening. Its dissolution proposes its solution; it talks. And it is no longer private; the text has begun to reply. The enigma is not permissive.

The enigma is consigned, ordered. It is the object of an action which, as a singularly upright subject, it demands. Unlike all other text, the enigma needs no support. It does not need to be there. It seems to be a will, to embody will so completely, that its it is embodied. It is irreversible. An order that cannot be recalled, it cannot die: its allure. The enigma is messageless; perfectly balanced (of one 'side'), it is the perfect signifier, the only one not drawn apart (revealed) by unequal (metaphorically inexact) sides. Stolid, it doesn't waver.

ALAN DAVIES

L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E

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