

REVEAL DIGITAL

Caliban

Source: *Reveal Digital*, 01-04-1988

Contributed by: LYN LIFSHIN; BILL KNOTT; WILLIAM BURROUGHS; Gary R. Smith; JULIA ARDERY; GARY SOTO; HARRY SMALLENBURG; CLARK COOLIDGE; STEVEN SOMERS; YUSEF KOMUNYAKAA; CHARLES BERNSTEIN; LAWSON FUSAO INADA; WANDA COLEMAN; RUSSELL EDSON; GEORGE HITCHCOCK; BIA LOWE; ROBERT SCHULER; LOU LIPSITZ; IVAN ARGÜELLES; Guy R. Beining; GUY R. BEINING; RAYMOND FEDERMAN; MELISSA LENTRICCHIA; Ronnie Burk; RONNIE BURK; DIETER WESLOWSKI; HERB SCOTT; PAUL HOOVER; Edouard Roditi; Russell Edson; Gary Aspenberg; JAMES GRABILL; CHARLES BERNSTEIN; GENE FRUMKIN; SONYA HESS; GEORGE KALAMARAS; AMMIEL ALCALAY; CHARLES BORKHUIS; Nicolo Fabrizi; LEE BALLENTINE; THAD ZIOLKOWSKI; JOHN M. BENNETT; TERRY HAUPTMAN; CARTER REVARD; ROSANNE WASSERMAN; JAY PASSER; ELI GOTTLIEB; KEVIN MAGEE; GERARD MALANGA

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.28034603>

Licenses: Creative Commons: Attribution-NonCommercial

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

This item is openly available as part of an Open JSTOR Collection.

For terms of use, please refer to our Terms & Conditions at <https://about.jstor.org/terms/#whats-in-jstor>



JSTOR

Reveal Digital is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Reveal Digital*

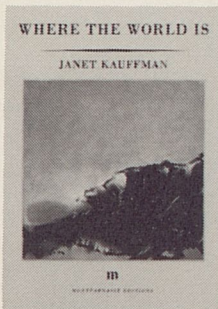
CALIBAN 4



A FORUM ON THE PROSODY OF THELONIOUS MONK • BURROUGHS
COLEMAN • BERNSTEIN • COOLIDGE • SOTO • LENTRICCHIA • INADA
LIFSHIN • EDSON • REVARD • MALANGA • BEINING • KOMUNYAKAA
HESS • ARGÜELLES • ALCALAY • FRUMKIN • HITCHCOCK • SCOTT
GRABILL • KNOTT • LIPSITZ • HOOVER • FEDERMAN • BORKHUIS • BURK

Montparnasse Editions
announces the publication of

WHERE THE WORLD IS
BY
JANET KAUFFMAN

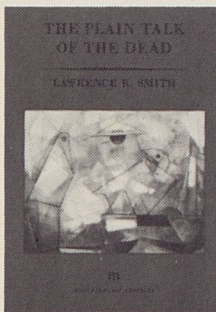


\$6.95 Paper
ISBN 0-9619835-1-5

“I know the best poets are usually called obsessed, but with Janet Kauffman can I nominate ‘devoted’? Her powerful poems are filled with a devotion of the mundane, a delicate logistics that locates the lost, the hidden, uncovering and recovering. I don’t know where the world is, but if someone asks where the poetry is, you can point them to this book.”

— Bill Knott

THE PLAIN TALK OF THE DEAD
BY
LAWRENCE R. SMITH



\$7.95 Paper
ISBN 0-9619835-0-7

“Lawrence R. Smith, in *The Plain Talk of the Dead*, more than any poet I’ve read, sees and hears the presence of ancestors who are not only European but Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Pawnee, Mexican, African, Hawaiian. His surrealism is necessary, active, intelligent, and American. He opens his reader’s eyes wide.”

— Maxine Hong Kingston

m

MONTPARNASSE EDITIONS

NEW YORK / MILAN

General Editor: Allen Mandelbaum

Distributed by DeBoer and Bookpeople



"Caliban is hospitable to any writing which, when chewed, makes him hear music in the air."

CALIBAN

Lawrence R. Smith, Editor

P.O. Box 4321

Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Front cover by Guy R. Beining, CHILD ON LAP OF WOMAN,
Acrylic on canvas, 18"x24", 1986

SOLAR MONK by Doug Hagley, p. 35

Typeset in Baskerville by Doug Hagley,
Kolossos Printing, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Printing and binding by Thomson-Shore, Dexter, Michigan

Distributed by DeBoer, Ingram, Cornucopia, Bookpeople,
and Small Press Distribution

Caliban is indexed by the Index of American Periodical Verse
(Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press).

Caliban gratefully acknowledges grant support from the Coordinating
Council of Literary Magazines.

Caliban is published twice annually: \$8.00/year individuals, \$15.00/year
institutions; \$11.00/year individuals, \$20.00/year institutions in Canadian
currency; \$12/year individuals, \$21.00 institutions for foreign countries.

Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, but they must be accompanied by
a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Foreign submissions must be
accompanied by sufficient international reply coupons to allow return
of manuscript.

Copyright © *Caliban*, 1988.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LYN LIFSHIN

Blue Leaks Out

The Mad Girl Dreams of Two Men in the Car That's Her

The Mad Girl Finds "Boring Shot in the Fifth with Colors"

Dream of Emeralds and Mesh Printed Front Page Rolling Stone



BILL KNOTT

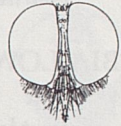
Endless Evening: My Life at Il Vittoriale

Alfonsina Storni

Refusing an Invitation to the Masked Ball

For Claudia

My Plea for Sanctum in the Sculpture Garden of the Medusa



WILLIAM BURROUGHS

from *INTERZONE: Lee and the Boys*

excerpts from *Lee's Journals*



GARY RUSSELL SMITH

Exquisite Corpse (Solus)



JULIA ARDERY

The Joke



GARY SOTO

The History of Karate



A FORUM ON THE PROSODY OF THELONIOUS MONK

Harry Smallenburg: Monk, Bop, and a New Poetics

Clark Coolidge: Monk, A Head

Steven Somers: The Rhythm of Thelonious Monk

Yusef Komunyakaa: The Plea

It's Always Night

Charles Bernstein: Applied Monk: Preliminary Notes

Lawson Fusao Inada: Monk's Prosody

Two Variations (Linear and Percussive) on a Theme by

Thelonious Monk as Inspired by Mal Waldron:

Blue Monk and Ricochet

Wanda Coleman: On Theloniousism



Contents

RUSSELL EDSON

Nice

The Vegetable Kings

The Afternoon Tea

Structure and Sense

Little Edward

Recipes for a Brain Disguised as a Wig



GEORGE HITCHCOCK

Fourteen Stanzas in Search of

BIA LOWE

Blue

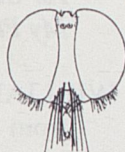
Purple



ROBERT SCHULER

Winter Blues

Be-Bopping It Out



LOU LIPSITZ

Summer Night



IVAN ARGÜELLES

Text

[Untitled Diorama]



GUY R. BEINING

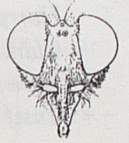
A Beige Copy Portfolio

from Beige Copy



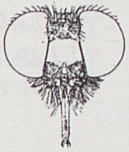
RAYMOND FEDERMAN

Last Night's Dream



MELISSA LENTRICCHIA

Fables



RONNIE BURK

2 Surrealists of the Century

Poem



DIETER WESLOWSKI

I Have No Problem

Ann B. Holds Forth on Angels

HERB SCOTT

She Dreams a Letter from Her Son
The Minister



PAUL HOOVER

Water
The Dog



CORRESPONDENCE

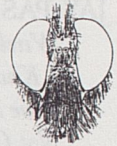
JAMES GRABILL

Belt Drive
What It Does to Him
In the Scent of Earth



CHARLES BERNSTEIN

Desalination



GENE FRUMKIN

Outnumbering Any One Way



SONYA HESS

Mirth



GEORGE KALAMARAS

When Anger Became a Man



AMMIEL ALCALAY

I Had Thought of Writing a Play Based on the Following Facts:



CHARLES BORKHUIS

Digesting the Data
The Living



NICOLO FABRIZI

Belly Button Suite

LEE BALLENTINE

Chain-of-Command

THAD ZIOLKOWSKI

Untitled
Untitled

Contents

JOHN M. BENNETT

The Current

The Blur



TERRY HAUPTMAN

Kaiya on the Night of Her Grandma's Death

Teaching in the Prison

Ward Island



CARTER REVARD

A Cardinal, New Snow, and Some Firewood



ROSANNE WASSERMAN

Pillow Dreams of a Woman She Loves

JAY PASSER

Wireless

I Know What He's Thinking

Love Song

Not One of Them

Across the Desert and Into New Mexico



ELI GOTTLIEB

Minute Steak Gothic



KEVIN MAGEE

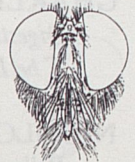
The Break of Day



GERARD MALANGA

from *POEMS IN THE KEY OF G*

CONTRIBUTORS' ADVICE



LYN LIFSHIN

Blue Leaks Out

an infection anti
biotics won't
still work on
used up as bodies
wired and plugged
in all night
some criminal
about to be zapped
when it's taking a
long time black
roses singe and
crinkle bats
eat the moon
under my clove
scar I'm the door
you pulled off its
hinges each word
a sliver hammered
under an eyelid

The Mad Girl Dreams of Two Men in the Car That's Her

her lips like
rocks that leave
intaglios where
you'll never
see one
could hold as the
Dodge swerves,
hits man hole
covers his
fingers claws on
Northern Blvd
She is the black
board he can't
figure light
out on without
he's nice to her
persian but the
other even
with blades she
is sure could
slice a nipple
off or a wrist
if she curled
too close in the
wrong position,
turning what was
clove to raw
meat behind
her eyes dips
his tongue
coke and zanex
into her ebony
ice that melts
enough to glue
her to what
she can only
pretend to
swallow

The Mad Girl Finds “Boring Shot in the Fifth with Colors”

on the sliver of paper
 stuffed in her bag,
 photographs of children
 at her 6th birthday
 party a whole world
 that's slid from her hands.
 “colors of” graze her
 forehead like the car's
 mirror when the Oldsmobile
 entered her from behind,
 not the guava and mauve
 dream light they wouldn't
 use for the film. She
 watches as the leafed
 plum greens under where
 late April snow couldn't
 reach, like hope in a room
 two sleeping 35 years to
 gether wake up in, thinking
 ahead, moaning into some
 brown sofa's wool “there
 must be more.” Or was it
 “Carlos” not “colors”
 from the torn lathe
 and smoothed down cherry
 in the house the man who
 wanted to raise strawberries
 and babies lured her to,
 wild for her too, wild
 for her eyes and her
 leaded Tiffany windows,
 pale out of her touch
 now as a body lying
 on the bottom of a lake
 she could remember
 white and smooth,
 the news of the accident
 never reaching him

Dream of Emeralds and Mesh Printed Front Page Rolling Stone

A wild murder, sex scandal
an operation's been uncovered people
dive in as if they could drown.
The article has to do with big
bucks international smuggling.
All that catches my eye is a
web like mesh, collapsible

kind of a huge diaphragm with holes
and wires found in a mummy's
tomb, laced with emeralds rubies
mostly green as so little in my
life seems these days. Inside a
woman the mesh closes down on
a penis in ways no one living
still knows the rhythms send
even frigid women into non

ending violent orgasms. It was
this as well as the huge number
of perfect jewels each moving like
careful teeth that made this
so coveted. Even I'm
turned on but have to deal
with the woman the Soviet scientist
is pulling toward his hip and
lake glass eyes. She becomes

me stepping into mirrors
where branches are glazed
with diamonds others mistake
for frozen water all that
I've ever needed
hieroglyphics in mauve dust
lip sync as I reach out
for what the moon swallows

BILL KNOTT

Endless Evening: My Life at Il Vittoriale

For caught in those Aug-Sept hours what day can
Break this slang of glass whose illustration
Of flotsam sampling our poison's portion of calm
Lives long the lament we swore applause by.

With faster than flashbacks in a promo for
Memory to lie lymph along these hits of hope
And through each thought we just dawned on interrupt
Poses no soprano care counterfeit or water yet.

As though it alone the profile were wielded up
To shield the face against that bad vocable our own
Throws veils another pale divulge of oh mise en moon.

Musingly to see a bed on fire in a huge room
Otherwise empty while one at a time
White sheets float down from somewhere onto the flames.

Alfonsina Storni

Feeling as you wrote that the cancer quote
Is on its way upstairs to the throat
One breast had already flown migrant
Heart de facto amazon only the sea remained

Like a jealous mattress an old pillow stuffed
With insomnia's phonebills the sea
Is there to throw oneself at at dawn late
Up all night over a poem called Voy a

Dormir and which says this better than this
(Each time I read one by you I revise
Myself my suicide is to be me instead of you)

Sea that swallowed your poet throat
Does not for the having of it sing less
And besides only that cancer tried to float

Refusing an Invitation to the Masked Ball

No knees forcep my tongue to you. Met when
It dims like hesitant fever over
That oasis-in-a-swimsuit, what studious mirage
Rises. Mist is the dog augments the scene.

Whose collapsar sponsors these closeups?—
The escapes in forced moonlight of the prince
At his powerboat throughout alpine lakes chased
Or so the whisper ran, rotting in attendance:

May I hang the fur coat on the beehive? thanks—
That place that fills the map that swamps the front
Seats of the Royal Starship rendezvous

Holds perhaps. Till then, scintilla antenna
Omniscient thistle of my Etcetera Dracula,
A smile across that which we would share, flesh.

For Claudia

Whose hair mouth hands I long to be under
 Like a painting a painter paints and repaints
 Till and at last the canvas cracks apart then crash
 Incredible shreddage, pale for all

Its color, its whole only in tatter: I want
 To be gone on at like that by her. But
 Won't the brush the play of such force across
 Me obliterate those whatever forms I might

With the rough sketch of the heart have
 Brought to connoisseurs critics crowds
 Eager to offer prize: even if I were torn

Wantonly tossed in the dirt the street
 Stepped on and lost, as lost as she is to me, I
 Would rather under her feet be than their eyes.

My Plea for Sanctum in the Sculpture Garden of Medusa

A statue's first pedestal is the stone
 It was cut from out in. Those are just words though.
 Like: Spring! then death puts on the wrong clothes...
 Then air ruts flushed as bathtub sex, as...proseate?

Because, that prince of an ostrich Narcissus
 His embedded-headed gaze upon his
 Twin the corpse Hamlet proposed, posing for those
 Snapshoticisms is so, so "real-ergo-vile," less

Tangent than tangible, hell.

—Till I stand

*In Her garden's one among many I can only
 Torment vesanic vanities, age-of-oh orbs where*

*Deep in the honor of my ether I soar, where
 —Passing at high mimicries through the night
 I go, all lop-worlded and alone, to kill abandon.*

WILLIAM BURROUGHS

from INTERZONE

Lee and the Boys

The sun spotlights the inner thigh of a boy sitting in shorts on a doorstep, his legs swinging open, and you fall in spasms—sperm spurting in orgasm after orgasm, grinding against the stone street, neck and back break... now lying dead, eyes rolled back, showing slits of white that redden slowly, as blood tears form and run down the face—

Or the sudden clean smell of salt air, piano down a city street, a dusty poplar tree shaking in the hot afternoon wind, pictures explode in the brain like skyrockets, smells, tastes, sounds, shake the body, nostalgia becomes unendurable, aching pain, the brain is an overloaded switchboard sending insane messages and counter-messages to the viscera, finally the body gives up, cowering like a neurotic cat, blood pressure drops, body fluids leak through stretched, flaccid veins, shock passes to coma and death.

Somebody rapped on the outside shutter. Lee opened the shutter and looked out. An Arab boy of fourteen or so—they always look younger than they are—was standing there, smiling in a way that could only mean one thing. He said something in Spanish that Lee did not catch. Lee shook his head and started to close the shutter. The boy, still smiling, held the shutter open. Lee gave a jerk and slammed the shutter closed. He could feel the rough wood catch and tear the boy's hand. The boy turned without a word and walked away, his shoulders drooping, holding his hand. At the corner the small figure caught a patch of light.

"I didn't mean to hurt him," Lee thought. He wished he had given the boy some money, a smile at least. He felt crude and detestable.

Years ago he had been riding in a hotel station wagon in the West Indies. The station wagon slowed down for a series of bumps, and a little black girl ran up smiling and threw a bouquet of flowers into the car through the rear window. A round-faced, heavy-set American in a brown gabardine suit gathered up the flowers and said "No want," and tossed them at the little girl. The flowers fell in the dusty road, and the little girl turned around crying and ran away.

Lee closed the shutter slowly.

In the Río Grande Valley of south Texas, he had killed a rattlesnake with a golf club. The impact of metal on the live flesh of the snake sent an electric shiver through him.

In New York, when he was rolling luses on the subway with Roy, at the end of the line in Brooklyn a drunk grabbed Roy and started yelling for the law. Lee hit the drunk in the face and knocked him to his knees, then kicked him in the side. A rib snapped. Lee felt a shudder of nausea.

Next day he told Roy he was through as a lush worker. Roy looked at him with his impersonal brown eyes that caught points of light, like an opal. There was a masculine gentleness in Roy's voice, a gentleness that only the strong have: "You feel bad about kicking that mooch, don't you? You're not cut out for this sort of thing, Bill. I'll find someone else to work with." Roy put on his hat and started to leave. He stopped with the doorknob in his hand and turned around.

"It's none of my business, Bill. But you have enough money to get by. Why don't you just quit?" He walked out without waiting for Lee to answer.

Lee did not feel like finishing the letter. He put on his coat and stepped out into the narrow, sunless street.

The druggist saw Lee standing in the doorway of the store. The store was about eight feet wide, with bottles and packages packed around three walls. The druggist smiled and held up a finger.

"One?" he said in English.

Lee nodded, looking around at the bottles and packages. The clerk handed the box of ampules to Lee without wrapping it. Lee said, "Thank you."

He walked away through a street lined on both sides with bazaars. Merchandise overflowed into the street, and he dodged crockery and washtubs and trays of combs and pencils and soap dishes. A train of burros loaded with charcoal blocked his way. He passed a woman with no nose, a black slit in her face, her body wrapped in grimy, padded pink cotton. Lee walked fast, twisting his body sideways, squeezing past people. He reached the sunny alleys of the outer Medina.

Walking in Tangier was like falling, plunging down dark shafts of streets, catching at corners, doorways. He passed a blind man sitting in the sun in a doorway. The man was young, with a fringe of blond beard. He sat there with one hand out, his shirt open, showing the smooth, patient flesh, the slight, immobile folds in the stomach. He sat there all day, every day.

Lee turned into his street, and a cool wind from the sea chilled the sweat on his thin body. He hooked the key into the lock and pushed the door open with his shoulder.

He tied up for the shot, and slid the needle in through a festered scab. Blood swirled up into the hypo—he was using a regular hypo these days. He pressed the plunger down with his forefinger. A passing caress of pleasure flushed through his veins. He glanced at the cheap alarm clock on the table by the bed: four o'clock. He was meeting his boy at eight. Time enough for the eukodol to get out of his system.

Lee walked about the room. "I have to quit," he said over and over, feeling the gravity pull of junk in his cells. He experienced a moment of panic. A cry of despair wrenched his body: "I have to get *out* of here. I have to make a break."

As he said the words, he remembered whose words they were: the Mad Dog Esposito Brothers, arrested at the scene of a multiple-slaying holdup, separated from the electric chair by a little time and a few formalities, whispered these words into a police microphone planted by their beds in the detention ward.

He sat down at the typewriter, yawned, and made some notes on a separate piece of paper. Lee often spent hours on a letter. He dropped the pencil and stared at the wall, his face blank and dreamy, reflecting on the heartwarming picture of William Lee—

He was sure the reviewers in those queer magazines like *One* would greet Willy Lee as heartwarming, except when he gets—squirming uneasily—well, you know, a bit out of line, somehow...

"Oh, that's just boyishness—after all, you know a boy's will is the wind's will, and the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

"Yes I know, but...the purple-assed baboons...."

"That's gangrened innocence."

"Why didn't I think of *that* myself. And the piles?"

"All kids are hung up on something."

"So they are...and the prolapsed assholes feeling around, looking for a peter, like blind worms?"

"School-boy smut."

"Understand, I'm not trying to *belittle* Lee—"

"You'd better not. He's a one-hundred-percent wistful boy, listening to train whistles across the winter stubble and frozen red clay of Georgia."

—yes, there was something a trifle disquieting in the fact that the heartwarming picture of William Lee should be drawn by William Lee himself. He thought of the ultimate development in stooges, a telepathic stooge who tunes in on your psyche and says just what you want to hear: "Boss, you is heartwarming. You is a latter-assed-purple-day saint."

Lee put down the pencil and yawned. He looked at the bed.

"I'm sleepy," he decided. He took off his pants and shoes and lay down on the bed, covering himself with a cotton blanket. "They don't scratch." He closed his eyes. Pictures streamed by, the magic lantern of junk. There is a feeling of too much junk that corresponds to the bed spinning around when you are very drunk, a feeling of gray, dead horror. The pictures in the brain are out of control, black and white, without emotion, the deadness of junk lying in the body like a viscous, thick medium.

A child came up to Lee and held up to him a bleeding hand.

"Who did this?" Lee asked. "I'll kill him. Who did it?"

The child beckoned Lee into a dark room. He pointed at Lee with the

bleeding stub of a finger. Lee woke up crying "No! No!"

Lee looked at the clock. It was almost eight. His boy was due any time. Lee rummaged in a drawer of the bed-table and found a stick of tea. He lit it and lay back to wait for KiKi. There was a bitter, green taste in his mouth from the weed. He could feel a warm tingle spread over his body. He put his hands behind his head, stretching his ribs and arching his stomach.

Lee was forty, but he had the lean body of an adolescent. He looked down at the stomach, which curved in flat from the chest. Junk had sculpted his body down to bone and muscle. He could feel the wall of his stomach right under the skin. His skin smooth and white, he looked almost transparent, like a tropical fish, with blue veins where the hip-bones protruded.

KiKi stepped in. He switched on the light.

"Sleeping?" he asked.

"No, just resting." Lee got up and put his arms around KiKi, holding him in a long, tight embrace.

"What's the matter, Meester William?" KiKi said, laughing.

"Nothing."

They sat down on the edge of the bed. KiKi ran his hands absently over Lee's back. He turned and looked at Lee.

"Very thin," he said. "You should eat more."

Lee pulled in his stomach so it almost touched the backbone. KiKi laughed and ran his hands down Lee's ribs to the stomach. He put his thumbs on Lee's backbone and tried to encircle Lee's stomach with his hands. He got up and took off his clothes and sat down beside Lee, caressing him with casual affection.

Like many Spanish boys, KiKi did not feel love for women. To him a woman was only for sex. He had known Lee for some months, and felt a genuine fondness for him, in an off-hand way. Lee was considerate and generous and did not ask KiKi to do things he didn't want to do, leaving the love-making on an adolescent basis. KiKi was well-pleased with the arrangement.

And Lee was well-pleased with KiKi. He did not like the process of looking for boys. He did not lose interest in a boy after a few contacts, not being subject to compulsive promiscuity. In Mexico he had slept with the same boy twice a week for over a year. The boy had looked enough like KiKi to be his brother. Both had very straight black hair, an Oriental look, and lean, slight bodies. Both exuded the same quality of sweet masculine innocence. Lee met the same people wherever he went.

excerpts from Lee's Journals

Lee woke again. The room was light now. He could hear the clock ticking, but he did not want to look at it, to locate himself definitely in time, to be completely awake. He arranged the covers to shade his eyes, pushing them away from his mouth so he could breathe comfortably. A shiver ran through his body. He closed his eyes, remembering his dream, clinging to sleep.

He had been dreaming about marshmallows. He had four or five marshmallows, and he was preparing to toast them in little wooden boxes which had wicks running around the edges like a kerosene stove. The dream had a tone of furtive, but overpowering, sexuality.

"What's sexy about marshmallows?" he thought, irritably. He felt aware of his sexual organs, but not in the normal manner of sexual excitement. It was as if he could feel inside the whole genito-urinary apparatus, the intolerable, febrile sexuality of junk sickness.

Marshmallows, boxes...cunts, of course. Mary, the English governess ...dreams of something sticky in his mouth, like chewing gum. The memory he never could re-occupy, even under deep narco-analysis. Whenever he got close to it, excitation tore through him, suppressed below the level of emotional coloring, a neutral energy like electricity. The memory itself never actually seen or re-experienced, only delineated by refusals, disgusts, negation. He knew, of course, what it must be, but the knowledge was of the brain only.

He shivered again, feeling the discordant twang of unfamiliar visceral sensations, the light fever of sickness. The Spanish word "*escalofrios*"[?] came to him, then the English "chills and fever," hot and cold. Every moment he felt more intolerably conscious. He looked at the clock: eight-thirty. It was always slow—it was nearer to nine.

Soon the drug stores will open. If only the methadone comes through today. If only I could get my money so I can get to England and take the cure.

If only his body had never known junk. How could he ever unknow it? He decided he would settle for a cure and then a place to live where it is never cold.

No use trying to sleep any longer. He pushed the covers aside and sat up. Immediately he began to shiver. He crossed the room and lit a small kerosene stove, with trembling hands. He reached into an open drawer and took out a small syringe filled with colorless liquid.

He held the syringe poised, and looked down at his blue hands, coldly, impersonally: "No use trying to hit there," he decided. He felt along the side of his bare foot. "There's one I might be able to hit." He pushed the needle in his foot at the ankle, feeling, probing for a vein. Pain swept through his sensitized flesh. A thin column of blood climbed sluggishly into the syringe. He pressed the plunger. The liquid went in very slowly. Every now

and then his foot twitched involuntarily away from the needle, which was embedded almost to the point where it joined the syringe.

The last of the liquid drained in. He pulled out the needle and stopped the blood with a piece of cotton. He sat listening down into his viscera, waiting for the effect.

Lee had discovered that he got his best ideas while lying in bed with a young male boy after the fact. At first he thought this was coincidence. "God damn it, every time I get ideas for writing, I am occupied with a boy. Or maybe it's the other way around...hmm. Weel, I'm in the right place."

He embarked on a three-thousand-page sexology, as he called it. One after the other his boys were drained of their orgones and cast aside, dragging themselves about like terminal hookworm-malaria-malnutrition cases.

"I don't know why, but I just feel sorta tired after I make it with that writing feller."

"You can say that again, Pepe. And in all my experience man and boy as a grade-A five-star hustler—A.J. gives me five stars in his Sex and Drug Guide—I never yet see a citizen type and get fucked at the same time. You shoulda seen me before I met Lee. I was a good-looking kid, had all my hair and teeth. I'm only 24—well, 29. Shucks, we're in the same line...I can afford to let my hair down a bit, that is, if I had any..."

"I figure it will require the orgones of ten thousand boys to finish my sexology. I assume the frightful responsibility of the creative artist."

A group of rich queens formed a corporation and offered a reward of one million dollars to any assassin who would dispose of "this shameless liquefactionist, who is debauching and decanting our boys—oh, uh I mean the youth of the world."

There are two middle-aged, ugly, fattish men in a club like the University or the Harvard Club. The two are on cordial but by no means familiar terms.

Scene is the club sitting-room. The other members are annoyed you understand by anyone even talking there, as they want to sit and think about their money and doze and digest. We will call them Jack and Robert.

Jack: "Let's rekindle the embers!"

Robert: "Huh? The embers of precisely what?"

Jack: "Don't tell me you've forgotten our nights on the sand banks of the Putumayo with the piranha fish jumping out there in the soft tropical darkness. All around us the brooding jungle of the Amazon, like a great carnivorous plant. It was Auca country, but we were drunk with youth and love. We laughed at danger and perhaps the Auca laughed with us and lowered their poison arrows and stole away into the jungle. And the moon so clear you could read by it—why, I can see you now, lying there with your beautiful mouth a little open, clad only in youth and innocence."

Robert: "I'm damned if you can! For one thing, I've never been within a thousand miles of the Amazon!"

Jack: "And remember that waterfall back in the virgin jungle of the upper Shipibo? We'd been walking all day since sun-up, hacking our way through with machetes. And you said it was my fault we'd missed the way, and sulked for ten hours. You always looked beautiful when you were sulky. And then we broke through the jungle to a crystal-clear river and a waterfall so high the top was lost in mist and we stripped off our clothes and played under the waterfall until the sun went down and the mosquitos came out with the moon."

Robert: "What are you talking about?"

Jack: "Let's go up to my room and play touchies!"

Robert: "Play what!"

Jack: "Touchies! *Our* little game!"

Robert: "Listen. I've had just about enough of your silly games, and since you lead me to say so, Thrackmorton, I strongly advise you to see an able psychiatrist without delay."

Jack: "Ah well, perhaps it wasn't the Amazon...come to think of it. We were just kids, fourteen, fifteen. It was in a deserted house down by the railroad tracks. We made a great thing of breaking into the house, and you looked at me solemnly and said: 'Do you realize we're burglars?' And there was an old mattress on the floor in a dark room with the shutters nailed down, and we dragged the mattress into the middle of the room and wrestled on it, and you won, as you always did, and I lay there looking up at you and a train whistled in the distance and we took off our clothes in the musty darkness. It was like the pure blue flame of a welder's torch: sudden, hot, intense in both of us.... Later, we walked home at twilight along the tracks, a beautiful clear Indian Summer day, and we were so happy we didn't say anything all the way home, with our arms around each other's necks, so young it never occurred to either of us anyone would think anything about it. And when we got back to the main road it was dark, with a full moon rising red over the smoke-stacks of the City and the smell of burning leaves in the air..."

Robert: "You obviously have me confused with someone else. Now if you will excuse me."

Jack: "Wait a minute! It all comes back now...I had a little studio apartment on Jane Street in the Village. It was my first time really away from home and on my own. I was young, I had a second-hand Remington, I was going to write the Great American Novel. So what difference did it make if the bed was lumpy, and the window pane vibrated in a raw winter wind, and the radiator gave off more noise than heat, and a black dust seeped into the room and covered my manuscripts, my clothes, my pillow, and got in my hair and ears so I always looked a little dirty? I was happy, and deadly

serious about my writing, and I believed in my talent.

“But I was desperately lonely. I had read Oscar Wilde and Gide and Proust and Havelock Ellis. I knew that I was destined to love my own sex as long as I lived. I accepted this. After all, so many great writers had been like that. I used to go out after writing all day, every night to a different bar, always hoping to meet someone who would understand what I was trying to say on paper, who would share my lumpy bed, and we would wake up in the cold, grey dawn, warm with each other’s bodies.

“Then one night I happened into a strange, equivocal place on 12th Street at Second Avenue. It was called The Clock Bar. The Clock had no regular crowd. It was not bohemian or tough or Bowery. It was a place where anyone could happen in. The place was empty—except for you....”

Take it up from the next page. You can carry this second-rate novel kick too far. I just got writing and couldn’t stop.

When a depressed psychotic begins to recover, that is, when recovery becomes possible, the illness makes a final all-out attack, and this is the point of maximum suicide danger. You might say the human race is now at this point, in a position for the first time, by virtue of knowledge which may destroy us, to step free of self-imposed restrictions and see all life as a fact. When you see the world direct, everything is a delight, and boredom or unhappiness is impossible.

The forces of negation and death are now making their all-out suicidal effort. The citizens of the world are helpless in a paranoid panic. First one thing and then another is seen as the enemy, while the real enemy hesitates—perhaps because it looks too easy, like an ambush. Among the Arabs and the East in general, the West (especially America), or domination by foreigners, is seen as the enemy. In the West: communism, queers, drug addicts.

Queers have been worked over by female Senders. They are a reminder of what the Senders can and will do unless they are stopped. Also many of them have sold out their bodies to Death, Inc. Their souls wouldn’t buy a paper of milk sugar shit. But the enemy needs bodies to get around.

Also, there is no doubt some drugs condition one to receive, that is, soften one up for the Senders. Junk is not such a drug, but it is a prototype of invasion. That is, junk replaces the user cell by cell until he *is* junk, so the Sender will invade and replace until separate life is destroyed. Nothing but fact can save us, and Einstein is the first prophet of fact. Anyone is free, of course, to deliberately choose insanity and say that the universe is square or heart-shaped, but it is, as a matter of fact, curved.

Similar facts: morality (at this point an unqualified evil), ethics, philosophy, religion, can no longer maintain an existence separate from facts of physiology, bodily chemistry, LSD, electronics, physics. Psychology no

longer exists, since a science of mind has no meaning. Sociology and all the so-called social sciences are suspect to be purveyors of pretentious gibberish.

The next set of facts of similar import will most likely come from present research on schizophrenia, the electronics of hallucination and the metabolism of insanity, cancer, the behavior and nature of viruses—and possibly drug addiction as a microcosm of life, pleasure and human purpose. It is also from such research that the greatest danger to the human race will come—probably has already come...a danger greater than the atom bomb, because more likely to be misunderstood.

I am taking another junk cure—is this my 10th or 11th cure? I forget—in the Hassan Hospital of Interzone. They are curing me slow, and why not? Stateside croakers are mostly Puritan sadists, who feel a junky *should* suffer taking the cure. Here they look at it differently.

I could never have been a doctor. I did right to quit. My heart is too soft and too hard, too quickly moved to love, anger, or indifference. I would care too much for some patients and nothing for others: Like I mess a case up and kill some jerk, so I say: “It’s all in the day’s work. Get this stiff outa here. I’m waiting on another patient.”

People talk about “the hospital smell.” You never had it till you sniff a Spanish hospital. All the old stand-bys: ether, carbolic, alcohol, the antiseptic, ozone smell of bandages *plus* piss and shit and dirty babies, cunts with the rag on, never-washed pricks, sweat and garlic, saffron and olive-oil, after-births, gangrene, *keif* and death.

I used to be in room 10 and they moved me upstairs. Just passed my old room where they had a maternity case, looks like. Terrible mess and bed pans full of blood and kotex and nameless female substances enough to pollute a continent. Just thought, suppose somebody comes to visit me in my old room, they will think I gave birth to a monster, and the State Department is trying to hush it up.

Dave Dunlop just came in, and I was telling him about the eels. It was a Dane found out about them. Gave his whole life to the eels—it would be a Dane, somehow. When the adult eels reach the Sargasso Sea, which is actually a place in the Atlantic, they go down into it and disappear. It is assumed they mate and die down there—nobody has seen them doing either—but sure as shit an eel doesn’t come all that distance and lose his ass in the service for no purpose.

Often pain and death leave me untouched. I have seen hundreds of bull fights. I feel nothing for the bull. The old man who died a few days ago just annoyed me with his groans. He had the stupid, blunted look of a sick cow. Some people would call me callous, but I am not so. It is simply that I divide people into those who matter and those who do not, and I have no concern

with quantitative criteria. I do feel someone else's pain, I feel it with my whole being. It shatters me. I just heard a child screaming downstairs, and tears came to my eyes. I can't stand the pain of children. No, I could never have been a doctor. I would be crying over some child while people I didn't like died in the hall.

More trouble with the Evil Night Nurse. I caught her *in flagrante* cutting my shot in half with water. I don't say nothing. Later she doesn't even bother to cut it. Just brings me a shot of two ampules, instead of four like she's supposed to.

I say: "That's two centimeters."

She say: "No, it's four. The syringe is bigger."

I say: "Look, *Señorita*—" (she's no more *señorita* than I am. Brazen old junky cunt.)—"I got eyes. I want four centimeters."

"I can't give you any more."

"All right, *Señorita*. I'll be having a little talk with the croaker *mañana*."

See what I mean? I give her a chance to come up right. If she told me straight: "I got a habit. You know how it is." I would say "All right. All right. Just fuck up somebody else's shot."

But she gives me a snow job. Well, I'm going to fix her wagon good.

Yesterday I meant to add a few sentences to this. Possessed by a wild routine and wrote two pages. I laughed till my stomach hurt. These routines will reduce me to a cinder, like the Technician. And how can I ever write a "novel"? I can't and won't. The "novel" is a dead form, rigid and arbitrary. I can't use it.

The chapters form a mosaic, with the dream impact of juxtaposition, like objects abandoned in a hotel drawer, a form of still-life. Just looking over Chapter II. I don't know. The mosaic method is more suitable to painting than writing. I mean you can *see* a painting as a whole.

What I want to do in Chapter II, is to indicate Lee's literal point of view. The following concepts are central:

1. He writes with horror and foreboding because his writing is meant to be acted out somewhere, somehow, sometime, and so can put him in actual danger.

2. Repetition of Lee's desire and intention to kick habit. Junk keeps him in state of suspension. He must kick to realize his routines. His cautious, junk-bound flesh is reluctant to leave the safety of junk. I notice the songs that sing themselves in my head indicate my hesitancy to leave the safe, warm place of junk. One for example: I heard the tune a long time before I remembered the words. It's about an Old Spade who has sold his "cabin and patch of ground" to go North for better pay:

“But Dina she don’t want to go,
 She says we’re getting old
 She’s ’fraid that she will freeze to death,
 The country am so cold
 That story ’bout the work and pay
 She don’t believe it’s true
 She begs me not to do the thing
 That I am bound to do.”

Dina is junk, of course—that is, my cellular representative of junk.

3. His love for anyone is always a pretext, a means to achieve something, to go somewhere.... Perhaps search for an ideal audience? [?]

4. The Routine (Birth of the Monster, Hassan the Afterbirth King, the Baboon Stick, etc.) as Lee’s special form. What distinguishes the routine from writing, painting, music? It is *not completely symbolic*, but subject to slide over into action at any time (cutting off finger joint, wrecking the car, etc. In a sense, the whole Nazi movement was a great, humorless, evil *routine* on Hitler’s part.) Routines are uncontrollable, unpredictable, charged with potential danger for Lee himself and anyone close to him is liable to be caught in line of fire. I mean the so-called “innocent bystanders.” Actually there are no “innocent bystanders.” In the immortal words of Huncke, “We are all guilty of everything.”

Of all forms, the routine is closest to bullfighting. The routine artist is always trying to outdo himself, to go a little further, to commit some incredible but appropriate excess. A routine, like a bull fight, needs an audience. In fact the audience is an integral part of the routine. But unlike a bull fight, the routine can endanger the audience.

This morning the orderly took my table away in surgery. I opened my knife and held it out to him: “Need this too?” I’m the life of the hospital.

A wet dream of thirteen-year-old red-headed kid waiting for treatment, sitting on the long white waiting bench...I see myself a doctor, bandaging his thigh with “sweet, reluctant, amorous delay.”

“Mrs. Brounswig is in shock, doctor. I can’t find her pulse.”

“Maybe she’s got it up her snatch in a finger stall.”

“Adrenalin, doctor?”

“The night porter shot it all up for kicks.”

Tangier extends in several dimensions. You keep finding places you never saw before. There is no line between “real world” and “world of myth and symbol.” Objects, sensations, hit with the impact of hallucination. Of course, I see now with the child’s eyes, the Lazarus eyes of return from the grey Limbo of junk. But what I see is there. Others see it too.

I am selecting, editing and transcribing letters and notes from the past year, some typed, some indecipherable longhand, for Chapter II of my novel on Interzone, tentatively entitled *Ignorant Armies*.

Find I cannot write without endless parenthesis (a parenthesis indicates the simultaneity of past, present, and future)—I exist in the present moment. I can't and won't pretend I'm dead. This novel is not posthumous. A "novel" is something finished, that is, dead—

I am trying, like Klee, *to create something that will have a life of its own, that can put me in real danger, a danger which I willingly take on myself.*

My thoughts turn to crime, incredible journeys of exploration, expression in terms of an *extreme act*, some excess of feeling or behavior that will shatter the human pattern.

Klee expresses a similar idea: "The painter who is called will come near to the secret abyss where elemental law nourishes evolution." And Genet, in his *Journal of a Thief*: "The creator has committed himself to the fearful adventure of taking upon himself, to the very end, the perils risked by his creatures."

Genet says he chose the life of a French thief for the sake of *depth*. By the fact of depth, which is his greatness, he is more humanly involved than I am. He carries more excess baggage. I have only one "creature" to be concerned with: myself.

Four months ago I took a two week sleep cure—a ghastly routine—I had it almost made. Another five days sans junk would have seen me in the clear. Then I relapsed. Just before relapse, I dreamed the following:

I was in high mountains covered with snow. It was in a suicide clinic: "You just wait till you feel like it." I was on a ledge with a boy, about sixteen years old,—I could feel myself slipping further and further out, out of my *body*, you dig, I don't mean physical slipping on the ledge. The Plane was coming for me. (Suicide is performed by getting in this Plane with a boy. The Plane crashes in the Pass. No Plane ever gets through.)

Marv reaches out and catches my arm and says: "Stay here with us a while longer."

The suicide clinic is in Turkey. Nothing compulsory. You can leave anytime, even take your boy out with you (boat whistle in the distance. A bearded dope fiend rushing to catch the boat for the mainland.) My boy says he won't leave with me unless I kick my habit.

Earlier dream-fantasy: I am in a plane trying to make the Pass. There is a boy with me, and I turn to him and say: "Throw everything out."

"What! All the gold? All the guns? All the junk?"

"Everything."

I mean throw all out excess baggage: anxiety, desire for approval, fear of authority, etc. Strip your psyche to the bare bones of spontaneous process,

and you give yourself one chance in a thousand to make the Pass.

I am subject to continual routines, which tear me apart like homeless cures. I feel myself drifting further and further out, over a bleak dream landscape of snow-covered mountains.

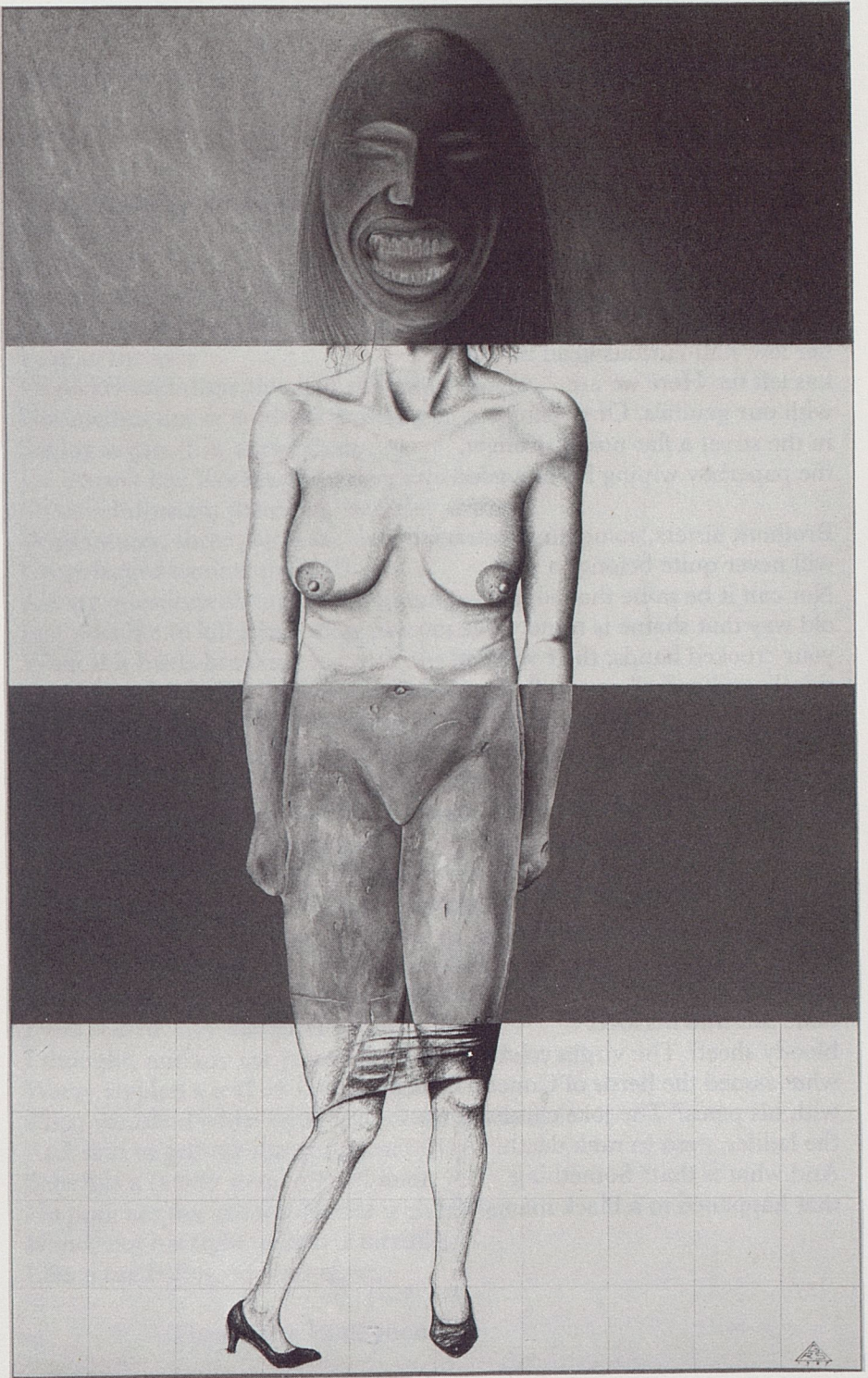
This novel is a scenario for future action in the real world. *Junkie, Queer, Yagé*, reconstructed my past. The present novel is an attempt to create my future. In a sense it is a guidebook, a map. The first step in realizing this work is to leave junk forever.

I'll maintain this International Sophistico-criminal Mahatma con no longer. It was more or less shoved on me anyway. So I say: "Throw down all your arms and armor, walk straight to the Frontier."

A guard in a uniform of human skin, black buck jacket with carious yellow tooth buttons, an elastic pullover shirt in burnished Indian copper, adolescent Nordic suntan brown slacks, sandals from the calloused foot sole of a young Malay farmer, an ash-brown scarf knotted and tucked in the shirt. He is a sharp dresser since he has nothing to do, and saves all his pay, and buys fine clothes and changes three times a day in front of an enormous magnifying mirror. He has a handsome, smooth Latin face with a pencil-line moustache, small brown eyes blank and greedy, eyes that never dream, insect eyes.

When you get to the Frontier, this guard rushes out of his *casita* where he was plucking at his moustache, a mirror slung round his neck in a wooden frame. He is trying to get the mirror off his neck. This has never happened before, that anyone ever actually got to the Frontier. The guard has injured his larynx taking off the mirror frame. He has lost his voice. He opens his mouth and you can see his tongue jumping around inside. The smooth, blank young face and the open mouth with the tongue moving inside are incredibly hideous. The guard holds up his hand, his whole body jerking in convulsive negation. I pay no attention to him. I go over and unhook the chain across the road. It falls with a clank of metal on stone. I walk through. The guard stands there in the mist, looking after me. Then he hooks the chain up again and goes back inside the *casita* and starts plucking at his moustache.

At times I feel myself on the point of learning something basic. I have achieved moments of inner silence.



EXQUISITE CORPSE (*SOLUS*) by Gary R. Smith
Mixed media, 24 "x38", 1987

JULIA ARDERY

The Joke

Nasty cracks up everyone now
that grandmother, who used to cock
her low, half-curious head in trust,
has left us. Here we are
with our genitals. Or passing
in the street a flat-nosed stranger,
the paperboy wiping his one good eye.

Brothers, sisters, something in tragedy
will never quite belong to you.
Nor can it be mine the palpable
old way that shame is mine. Give me
your crooked hands, their weight
simple and as frail as any flesh.

Give them to the joke, our final
test of utterance. How sympathy
recoils in it, shudders for air,
and leaving its knobby feet on earth
flies off, allowing every face
this pinching in loud laughter.

Have you heard the one about
the bumpkin launderer caught rubbing
table salt into his lover's
bloody sheet? The virgin cowboy
who lassoed the herds of Concho County
with his penis? The joke climbs down
the ladder, even to rank death.
And what is that? Something
that happened to a black man.

GARY SOTO

The History of Karate

Our sensei, Hiro N., scares me. Karate
Is a kidney shot to your wife's lover, not a bow,
Poke to the eyes
Of nickel-and-dime thugs in shopping centers,
Not meditation or students crawling in reverence
Saying sensei this, sensei that.
He doesn't like Koreans and doesn't think much
Of us—Eurasian, Mexican, Berkeley women
With tattoos, three Japanese sissy boys—all sitting
Cross-legged against the wall
Asking questions about karate, questions like:
Is it possible to kill a bull after two years?
What if it hurts breaking ice with our heads?
Should we eat lightly before practice
And bathe in hot water afterwards? He tells us
To shut up and reminds us how he practiced on snow,
Not on wooden floors. He points to the floor.
"This is nice. And this and this." He points to
The overhead lights, the mirrors,
The punching bag, still dented from one of his kicks.
Earlier in our workout, while we stretched
And jumped up and down to warm up, he pulled
A sword—a *katana*—from a sheath, swung it once,
Downward, and let his eyes go wild.
I was scared. My daughter is only nine
I thought, and my car payments three months old.
Worry rippled a leaf on my forehead,
Then vanished when sensei put down the sword
And said to get our sparring gear.
Sensei is a family man, a good man.
He punches the women *karetaka* with his left
Hand, not his right, which is terrible,
Like a car falling on your chest.

There are a lot of goons

Who practice karate in Japan. When student
 Demonstrations take place on campus,
 The *yakuza* and the karate clubs—*shorinji kempo*,
Shotokan, *judo* and *aikido*, that palsy-walsy
 Martial art—go out and make the students bleed
 Very badly. Karate is right wing, protector
 Of the state, and a good workout.
 If you join a university club, you can never
 Quit. You may say, “I’m bored,”
 And they will say, “You are not bored.”
 You can say, “Yes, I am really very bored,”
 And they will say, “No, you look happy.”
 This will go on for twenty minutes,
 Maybe in your car, at a street corner,
 In your dorm, before they bust you a couple of times
 And suddenly you’re not bored in the least.
 You stay with the club, and later
 When you graduate, you get a good job
 Near the commuter line, and your wife is happy,
 Your new daughter and son are proud
 That you did push ups in your youth
 And hit a demonstrator so hard his eye never
 Came back straight and is now flowery,
 Like the inside of a marble. They can now
 Eat fish and sleep in rooms with coals piled high.

A Ph.D. student did research on why people
 Take karate. They have nothing else to do,
 Are often stupid, were abused as kids.
 Bullies pushed them to the ground
 And told them to stay there.
 They stayed a long time on the ground.
 Their tears froze, their arms turned blue
 From the cold, and before you knew it
 The kids on the ground were high school kids,
 Wimps in the middle rows learning things
 About the Euphrates, like it flows sideways,
 Not seaward, and over the centuries
 Ten million have been buried alongside its shores.
 The kids who were on the ground
 Have problems, and so do the bullies
 Who have put on weight, rings of fat
 That cast remarkable shadows over their crotches.

Some go to jail, some die, and others
 Cut beef for a living, drive trucks,
 And breed with bully girls with orange hair.
 The wimps get the good jobs, marry,
 Cheat once or twice on their wives,
 Who like aerobics and potted plants in a row.
 In their late twenties, over dinner
 They remember the bullies. The taste of roast beef
 Dies in their mouths. Suddenly angry,
 They take up karate. They sweat a lot,
 Kick badly, and enjoy bowing before the wrong flag.
 Every time they kick they say "oose," "oose,"
 Which means in Japanese "wimp," "wimp."

At the Boys Club I have to wonder
 About my kids, dirty angels in dirty *gees*,
 Mean and loud, snot hot on their
 Upper lips, marked with ball-point
 Names on their forearms. Most aren't bright,
 Have been held back in school at least once.
 One was run over but lived. Two have
 Seen dead people. Another has lost
 His front teeth and when I asked,
 "Leroy, when are you going to get your teeth,"
 He said that he had already had them.
 I felt sorry for him. I gave him a stick
 Of gum and said I liked his kicks. Our *dojo*
 Is sorrowful. The rain weeps
 On the window. The bare walls stink
 Of dust and oily hair,
 The floor is splintery. Father Murphy
 Says we're going to get a new room
 With lights and a heater by next fall.
 It's fall now. We have to wait a year.
 We suffer with cold toes and watch our breath
 Because, I tell my kids, Sensei walked through snow
 And shovels of hell from his master.
 We can freeze in the meantime,
 Pluck out slivers of glass from
 Our feet. Our old rug hides everything,
 Even blood. Ramon once hit Gideon,
 An accident of course, a sweet roundhouse kick
 That spanked his face.

Blood has its own course. It jumps,
 Flame-like, when a wound is first open.
 It jumped from Gideon's mouth
 And turning around I thought it was a red whip
 Of licorice, and said "No eating
 Candy in class." Then I caught on that blood
 Is not candy. I walked with him to the water
 Fountain, slimy bath for dry-throated sparrows,
 And helped him stop bleeding.

Karate was introduced from Okinawa
 To Tokyo in 1922 by Gichin Funakoshi,
 At a national exhibition. School officials,
 And the military, raised their brows, impressed.
 If my mother had been Japanese, say the granddaughter
 Of Master Funakoshi, she would have
 Used karate on me. I was mean. Three crazy
 Dogs lived inside me, I was so restless,
 So full of odd fun, like throwing mud at girls,
 Kicking eggplants, jumping from roofs
 With my hands pressed to my sides
 And eyes closed. But she was Mexican,
 Not Japanese, and had her own little tricks
 To beat the dogs down. Funakoshi
 Didn't believe in hurting children.
 He himself was not strong but wise and good,
 A great walker in his later years. On his walks
 He enjoyed hearing karate screams bouncing
 Off walls, grunts, the *ichi, ni, san, shi,*
go, roku of calisthenics. He enjoyed tea
 And calligraphy, Chinese scholarship,
 And remembering his youth, which was long,
 A careful ant crawling the length of bamboo.

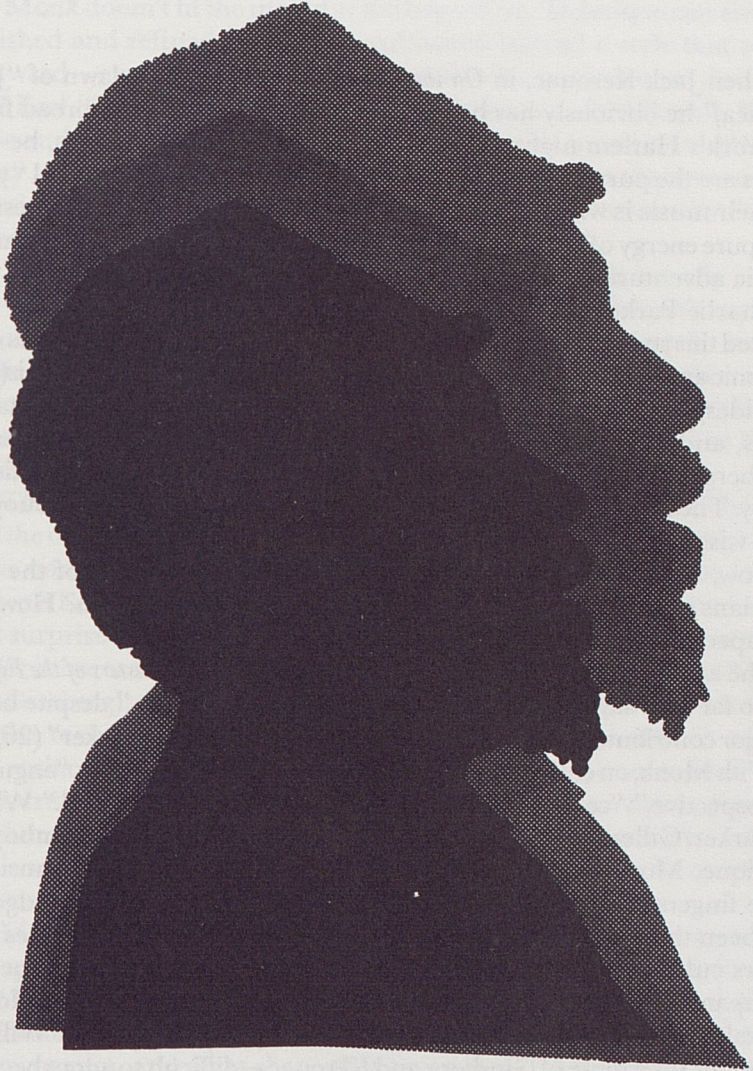
Sometimes you think it's weird that a man
 Can drive nails into a board with his palm,
 Knock out cows, chip ice from icebergs,
 Have cars run over him, punch his fingers
 Through watermelons. You hate to get hit
 And will do anything not to spar,
 Like say, "Sensei, my toe hurts; Sensei,
 My fingernails are too long, I might hurt someone."
 He likes this game of mild complaints,

And with hands on hips, stares
 At you, that Mexican watermelon
 He could punch through. But you spar anyways,
 First with the old women, who you are nice to,
 Then the sissy boys, then the Eurasian,
 And finally the sensei, who throws that car
 On your chest. Air is never so precious
 As when you're on the floor. At home
 It's another story. You shower, eat,
 Play with your daughter, the cats,
 Hug your wife a hundred times because
 You're so happy to be alive,
 And when they're not looking throw a kick
 At air, and stomp the bed, jump up
 And down in a *Fumikomi*. Ok, admit it,
 You're a playground kid who never had enough.
 Now in your mid-thirties, it's still play,
 A game of tag that stings when you're hit,
 Sweat, bruises like pieces of the night,
 And the apples of muscle in each arm.
 Strange, life is half over, gray is marching
 In the hair, and you've not had enough.

If you want to kill a relative,
 The ax kick is perfect. Finger pokes
 Make blind people, a quick thrust to the throat
 Stops a lot of people from singing.
 If you want to scare a mugger,
 Scream and run on the balls of your toes.
 I prefer to stay home. The backyard flowers
 Are blood-red, the irises the color of vein,
 The gate knocking in wind a bone in the knee.
 I like working alone in the backyard,
 —bag against the wall, posts for kicking—
 And then lying in the lounge chair,
 Sweat pooling in the few dents between ribs.
 Our clouds are the clouds anywhere,
 White with the moisture of grass and trees.
 Japan is like this, or the Japan of calendars,
 Cloud and swish of blue. The apricot has
 Shed its boat-shaped leaves. Last week
 our kitten, Cadet, opened its eyes
 and fell over. Now it's prancing about,

Tail shiny, nose poking rusty colored leaves.
 One moment you think, I would like to meet the Pope,
 And in the next you think, If alive,
 Could Funakoshi correct my roundhouse.
 Dead, he has books. You read them.
 He's as wise as rings inside a tree.
 But if he were with you, in the backyard
 On your little triangle of lawn, you could ask,
 Hey, is this it? Before you could snap out a kick,
 He would tell you to shut up, tell you,
 It's good to be back—get me watermelon! There's no trick
 To bringing the heart out of something very good.

A Forum on the Prosody of Thelonious Monk



Monk, Bop, and a New Poetics

When Jack Kerouac, in *On the Road*, invokes the holy dawn of “Jazz America,” he obviously has be-bop in mind, the music that spread from New York’s Harlem night clubs in the forties. In Kerouac’s eyes, be-bop players are the purveyors of ecstasy, the embodiments of the eternal “yes,” and their music is wild, crazy, swinging, and uninhibited—an expression of the pure energy of life itself, which Kerouac embodied in Dean Moriarty’s frenetic adventures and escapades.

Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Max Roach, Clifford Brown, *et al* invented this style, which has since become an established type, with its own harmonic and melodic practices. The literary style(s) derived from bop is(are) less widespread, but equally established: colloquialism, slang, syntactic breaks, and multi-clausal sentences, along with “long breath phrases” (Ginsberg) that generate excitement and a semi-oracular improvisational quality. The style sounds “hip.” It “swings” with an irrepressible, buoyant street-wise energy.

How, then, does Thelonious Monk, from whom many of the bop musicians learned, and with whom they regularly played, fit in? How has he shaped the style we think of as “bop”?

The answer is that he hasn’t. Joe Goldberg, in *Jazz Masters of the Fifties*, goes so far as to say that Monk “was never a bop musician,” despite being “a major contributor” to jazz, “of the stature of Ellington or Parker” (26,25).

With Monk, an entirely different collection of adjectives arises: “angular,” “introspective,” “cerebral,” “deadpan,” “detached,” “bemused.” Where the Parker/Gillespie/Roach style is one of fast tempos and flamboyant technique, Monk is described as “clumsy” and “awkward,” a musician whose fingers lagged behind his ideas, which everyone acknowledges to have been the most original of the period. Thousands of post-fifties jazz players cultivate the typical bop style, but anyone now who soloed or accompanied like Monk would immediately be branded a plagiarist. Monk’s musical experiments are more like the literary experiments of William Burroughs than those of Ginsberg and Kerouac—difficult to adopt because more radical and eccentric.

The distinctive features of Monk’s style are his spareness (he plays few notes, but they are the “essential” ones); his rhythmic disjunction (his placement of single notes or chords is unpredictable, sometimes outside

the established meter); his insistent dissonance (he will select the major sevenths, minor seconds, etc. from an extended chord); and his use of “turnaround” phrases (i.e., a phrase cast and recast in varying relation to the bar line, as though he is worrying the phrase, or noodling with it, or testing it, trying to “get it right”).

Monk doesn’t fit the mould of the bop idiom. Technique can always be polished and refined, but Monk cultivated instead a style that seemed awkward—even sloppy—when compared to his predecessors, Art Tatum and Earl “Fatha” Hines, or his be-bop colleague, Bud Powell. Monk’s runs and trills seem pointedly clumsy, giving his music a rough-hewn, gutsy quality—not unlike folk art, or the tendency in the seventies and eighties in the visual arts to make objects that are intentionally “dumb” rather than “beautiful.”

There is a more elusive quality to his playing as well, usually referred to by words such as “irony,” “detachment,” “wryness.” Monk’s music was original and difficult for the obvious reasons, but also because he required of his listener a double perspective. That is, Monk will take a standard melody, or a standard chord progression, or even a standard jazz lick and play it just enough “off” that it becomes a parody of itself. The listener must hear the convention in the distortion.

This relation both to tradition and to the audience is different from Parker and the other bop artists. Although they frequently took chord progressions from standard tunes (“Back Home in Indiana” is the basis for Parker’s “Donna Lee”), they asked implicitly that their listeners share the joy, intensity and surprise of new melodies, which would lead in performance to even newer, more exalted improvisational forays. They are ecstasists (like Kerouac and Ginsberg); the listener is awed and entranced. Monk, on the other hand, set the technical brilliance aside and often, along with his original compositions, played the old tunes and old styles (stride piano, cocktail lounge runs, tremolos, two-note ragtime chords), shifting a harmony, giving the rhythm a “ricky-ticky” feel, slightly botching a run, tossing in a clumsy trill—so that his renditions toyed with his sources at the very moment he rendered them.

Monk’s distinctiveness, then, is his reflective approach to jazz, conveyed by a quirky, almost perverse approach to style. (I am deliberately focussing on Monk’s playing. Obviously, his original compositions are their own important legacy.) The question is whether his playing can be the basis for a new poetics, and what shape that new poetics might take.

First, one must get somewhat literal and precise in translating Monk’s style into language. Steve Lacy, a sax player who worked with Monk in the sixties, described Monk’s playing in general terms that would put poetry based on his music within immediate reach of any good writer: “If technique in jazz is the art of making sense, then he’s got more technique than

anybody. And he certainly can play the piano. He can get more varied colors, sounds, rhythms and shapes out of the piano than anybody I know. He plays the whole instrument. . . .” (quoted in Goldberg, 27). In other words, one need only explore language resources and make sense.

The best poets already do this. Similarly, writers have characteristically embedded themselves in and have often parodied traditions and conventions. They have also used “turnaround phrases,” (part of the composer’s stock in trade, from Bach to Stravinsky).

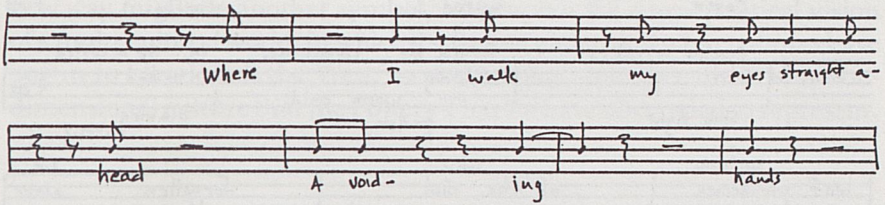
The stylistic devices which seem to offer most in the way of poetic invention—rhythmic unpredictability, open musical space, and insistent dissonance—are more problematic. First, adaptation depends on how one converts specific musical effects into linguistic effects—e.g., is a dissonance equivalent to a contradiction? Second, any adaptation depends on where one decides to place the boundaries beyond which innovation will be counter-productive to one’s poetic intentions. Finally, there is the question of how to signify on the page what one intends the reader to hear. Monk is notorious for his individual touch and the sound he draws from the piano, aspects of playing that notation cannot render, just as words on a page cannot render the individual performance.

So, where do we start?

At the most basic level, there is Monk’s unpredictable placement of notes. He has the rhythm section’s ongoing tempo and the listener’s sense of more conventional placements to work against. In poetry, of course, the visual spaces between words and lines can indicate rhythmic irregularity. But without rhythmic cues other than those provided by the words themselves, how is a listener to hear this irregularity as “offbeat,” displaced? Perhaps by alternating regularly metered lines with sporadically pulsed lines? There are metric experiments, such as “sprung rhythm,” that force accents into unexpected positions. But by and large, poetic experimentation has been in the direction of syllabic lines, accentual lines, and phrase/meaning lines—all of which contribute to a sense of “natural” speech instead of meaning poured into pre-existing moulds. Monk’s music seemed an “unnatural” utterance in the jazz idiom.

An inconsistent, halting, abrupt rhythm, rather than one that aspired to the natural “flow” of colloquial speech (if speech does indeed have any smooth flow—it depends on the speaker) might approximate Monk’s offset rhythms, but how would a listener hear the rhythmic norm such halting was set against? And how would the reader hear the extended phrase which forms the context for Monk’s abruptness? Likewise, what about dissonance? Poetry has “consonance” and “harmony,” conceived as rhymes, off-rhymes, alliteration, assonance, etc. But a writer would have to work hard with meaning and sound to bring off the kind of jarring effect immediately and surprisingly achieved by two dissonant notes.

One almost has to go to a “figured” or notated poetry, which might look something like the following:



The rhythm would be established at the outset, and the reader would have to read words precisely at their notated rhythmic intervals. One might employ a time-keeping device such as a drum machine, a metronome, or an actual rhythm section, though without the jazz-as-the-background-to-poetry feeling of the Beat experimenters (Ken Nordine *et al*) in the fifties. Here, the poem would *be* the music, rhythmically notated.

It may be possible to go farther with this if we can step back momentarily to incorporate more of our modern understanding of how language works. Western convention treats language as linear by nature, though words, according to Wittgenstein, have “families” of meaning, and according to Saussure, meaning has a synchronic (vertical) axis that coexists with its diachronic (linear) axis. Plenty of writers have worked against the strict linearity of language, and the languages of other cultures, both ancient and modern, exemplify other modes (quasi-pictorial, for example) of communication.

Now, an eighth or ninth-century A.D. listener might have thought that music was inherently linear. Gregorian chant and plainsong were the only games in town. But music evolved from a diachronic syntax into a syntax that realized its potential for harmonized melodies and clusters of sound. In language, meaning “families” and synchronicity raise the question of whether a “chordal” kind of writing is also possible, a quasi-operatic poetry in which words are placed along a musical “staff” (explicit or implicit). A poetic “line,” thus, is not simply one linear string of words, but that one line plus words and/or phrases that might be placed above or below it, to be read/heard simultaneously—in readings requiring several voices, not just one—like a section of instruments.

Such a poem might look like the following:

Shell	un	certainties	as	raped
skull	hallow	sockets	gone	from dirt
Cap	cover	wired	fireflies	fires
cracked wrinkles	forgive me,	forget me	me: she accosted	
eam. A. old	lady	worn gold	stained	tea
skin tight	pallor		blamed	curtsy
wisdom	why			we
leaf prophecies	of the owl	forgot	alone	
star	pained	me		

* Individual parts can be thoroughly scored for concert readings.

I am not suggesting Dada experiments, in which simultaneous voices intoned nonsense syllables as a revolt against social and artistic stagnation and the horrors of World War I, although some of these group readings were scored.

The only work I can think of that comes close to chordal, polyphonic effects is *Finnegan's Wake*, where Joyce dismantles and recombines words and phrases (I am studiously avoiding the word “deconstruct”) to free them for multiple, sometimes contradictory meanings—meanings that are combined in ways not available to linear prose. The “language poets” might be said to be on a similar track. Chordal writing, however, would not break words down, it would stack them, accumulate them, build coexisting meaning relationships. Its primary difficulty would be irreducibility to readily accessible linear meaning.

I am certainly not polemicizing for chordal writing as a new *via sacra*: it is possible, by juxtaposing “dissonant” words and phrases, visually staggering words and lines, marking accents, and leaving blank spaces, to approximate the irregularities of Monk’s style. But poets know these devices already. Chordal writing opens the way for multiple and simultaneous tracks that can infuse one another with meaning as strictly linear writing cannot. And it might lead to new modes of information reception.

Monk’s intention was not to tear down, but to go his own way. In doing so, he built an edifice of originality and innovation, suggesting possibilities for current music that, depending on one’s perspective, is either outside the jazz mainstream or defining its new directions—Chicago’s Creative Jazz Ensemble, Roland Shannon Jackson’s Decoding Society, and the World Saxophone Quartet are examples, along with James Blood Ulmer and The Dirty Dozen Brass Band.

Caliban campaigns for a literature that resists the pressures of a dollar-based society toward the trite, the conventional, the parochial, the one-dimensional, the merely entertaining and the easily-accessible. Thelonious Monk, in his life and in his music, stood for the same determined, individualistic integrity. A poetics that treats rhythm and harmonics in a new way might be another symbol, a metaphor for a new political vision of a multi-cultural world, in which the feeling patterns of other cultures have begun to blend with the West, so that we are no longer the linear, one-dimensional culture that the Powers That Be have often tried to represent.

CLARK COOLIDGE

Monk, A Head

What could be seen in the back of a panel truck
allowed to be seen, Monk allows
that isn't thought, not so
much quickness as not thought
never to go over it
all in the head

a small bright round hard object
felt for by hand if not accompanying
eye

three silver sailors
watching the edge or ridge
picture on the back
packing of a harrowing marriage
men at large
in a lento or largo
argentina

Monk reported
hard eyes and riskier fingers
the laugh as interstitial haste
or click lid of grace
no brighter than the violet of Ruby
My Dear

Needn't
be you
takes a laugh at the sun
they could bring
back your bicycle bent
from the atmosphere tamer
black as those skips hard to track

the entrance to the phone was left blanker
white noise in a television toy
or eclipsing of plan, a sealed key
on the orangutanian piano

anyway, he beveled round streetsigns
lamps needing touch, felt answers
and brightness in the wall of friar's cell
he knew it possible to sheboygan encaustic
Monk weighed in at earhole possible

and the largest of suits on the sun
the barrier moon, the trim trees, the saddle
of lacy scandal, the impossible
to trace valuable variable
though it's all visible

mind cogged best when laid up on the hip
then the gentian gesture dries, then suspended
month of sundays, the icy single plan
that it sound backward, but intentionally
surmise, he held the piano
at length as a sort of Spain

then children rung in the kilter twilight
needn't but, they do, we see
he do, and the liars set out their
empties for him to

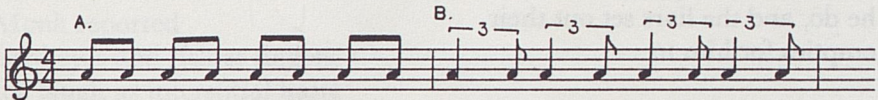
Monk held cold hope
pressed that momentum never even
still the kernel waits his marvel

jazz his adventure bell
his bubble dark
his friction list his tension
hoof his pendulum out
his function down his arm
down his arm

The Rhythm of Thelonious Monk

With influences as diverse as African music and contemporary European classical music, the music of Thelonious Monk is strikingly original. One aspect which contributed to this originality is his unique use of many different rhythmic elements: the concept of swing, the democratization of rhythmic values, rhythmic phrase alteration, rhythmic diminution and augmentation, and the alternation of displacement and conformity. All of these elements are common to both jazz and African music. However, Monk used these techniques in his own personal way, rather than just lifting them from the African context. The integration was his own.

One thing that can be said about Monk's music is that it does swing. The concept of swing is difficult for the uninitiated listener to understand; it is complex and involves a number of elements, one of which is displaced eighth note patterns. Most of Monk's solos and compositions utilize the eighth note as the basic unit. However, the written eighth note is often played unevenly by Monk, resulting in long, short, long, short rhythmic patterns (See Example 1). Thus, the second eighth note is moved slightly off the beat, creating a microcosmic version of alternating displacement and conformity.



Example 1. Eighth notes, written and played.

In Monk's music, as in African music, any part of the beat may be subject to accentuation (See Example 2). The differentiation between weak and strong beats becomes increasingly obscure. This equality of dynamics among all of the beats contained in a rhythmic gesture leads to a democratization of rhythmic values. When Monk worked with an ensemble there was always a wide variety of accentuation happening on various levels. Drummer Max Roach, who worked with Monk often, had this to say about him: "Monk encouraged me to emancipate the drums from their subservient role as timekeepers. He knew how to compose within the rhythm section by using

the bass and drums in conjunction with himself, rather than just behind him.”

38 39

GANK

AXAT

CLAPS

SONG

ur - nu, Anyakoawc yi a-dea wu ge na a-kpu - lu - ec. ma - de a - lbeu gbe na mi dsro

ATSI

REPEAT

- KID, GA - GA KID - KID GAA - GA KID - KID GA KREBE - GI KI - DE, GA KREBE - GI KI

SOGO

KIDI

-DID - GI, KRID KRI KI - DID - GI,

KAG

KA - GAD KA - GAD

Example 2. Nyayito Dance, A.M. Jones, *Studies in African Music*.
London: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Monk often repeated short phrases several times, placing the notes on different parts of the beat in ingenious ways. He does this in compositions (See Example 3) as well as in his improvisations (See Example 4). In his tune *Off Minor*, Monk takes a seemingly simple group of two and places the double notes (which are a major second interval and characteristic of his piano style) on four different parts of the beat: the and of two, four, the and of one, and three. These examples of rhythmic phrase alteration often simultaneously create an alteration of displacement and conformity, essentially creating a series of off beat accents followed by a series of on beat accents.



Example 3. Rhythmic Phrase Alteration, Monk: *Straight, No Chaser*.

Example 4. Rhythmic Phrase Alteration, Monk: *Off Minor*.

There are numerous examples of rhythmic phrase alteration throughout Monk's work. During the solo of *In Walked Bud* (Bud Powell was a pianist and a contemporary of Monk whose style was based on smoothly executed eighth note runs. He was more conservative rhythmically than Monk, and his style became more influential in the world of jazz piano than Monk's) Monk repeats a four note phrase, varying the rhythm each time. The phrase begins on the and of one, one, four, and three (See Example 5). Monk's uses of repeated phrases and often literally repeated single notes during solos reflects an almost minimalist approach to music. The music of Steve Reich contains similar concepts, as rhythms gradually change, usually over a longer period of time. Monk's music can also be very sparsely textured at one moment, while at another flurries of sound may end abruptly on an off beat, to be followed by several measures of silence, or a held tone.

Example 5. Rhythmic Phrase Alteration, Monk: *In Walked Bud*.

Repeated phrases are often augmented or diminished rhythmically by Monk. He begins his solo for *In Walked Bud* on the down beat, repeats it, and then begins it on the three, this time amplifying the phrase and concluding with three off beat accents (See Example 6).

Example 6. Rhythmic Expansion, Monk: *In Walked Bud*.

Rhythms may also be diminished. In the fifth measure at the head of *Introspection* Monk utilizes a group of three with all off beat accents, and then in the next measure immediately contracts the rhythm and plays it on the beat (See Example 7). This fragmented utilization of rhythmic gestures is a major source of Monk's originality.

Example 7. Rhythmic Diminution, Monk: *Introspection*

As we have seen, syncopation is an essential part of Monk's music. In early jazz, syncopation was virtually the only way in which the African's instinct for polyrhythm survived, as drumming had been banned for such a long period of time. Inevitably it was the simpler African rhythms, the ones that blended easily with European elements, that survived in early jazz. Very little is known about his actual study of African music, but Monk seems to have reconnected with the African heritage, largely through his rhythmic inventiveness. The alternation of rhythmic displacement and conformity is a fundamental element of swing, but it is found in African music as well. Although Monk often played several measures of music with mostly off beat accentuation, followed by several measures of on beat playing, his predilection was decidedly for the off beat (See Examples 8 and 9).

Example 8. Alternation of Displacement and Conformity,
Monk: *Introspection*.

(Displacement)

A7 D7

(Conformity)

G-6 Db7 F# B-7 Bb7

Example 9. Alternation of Displacement and Conformity,
Monk: *Off Minor*.

Along with Monk's sophisticated use of rhythm he also employed clusters, dense intervals, novel harmonic progressions, and whole tone scales. All of these elements, as well as others, contributed to the highly original and eclectic style of Thelonious Sphere Monk. His influence not only affected other musicians, but also artists, poets, and others. The extent to which writers have used these elements consciously remains uncertain. However, the conscious use of these essentially musical ideas (possibly transformed) could prove to be useful to any artist, regardless of the medium.

YUSEF KOMUNYAKAA

The Plea

Round about midnight
the clock's ugly stare
hangs in mental repose
& its antimagnetic second hand
measures a man's descent.
Bop, bop, bebop, rebop.
The bottom falls out
of each dream—
the silver spike is
in my hands & I'm on the floor.
The Alice in Malice
does a little soft shoe
on my troubled heart.
Hot & heavy,
cool & cosmic honeydrinker
fingers play the missing notes
inbetween life & death
round midnight.
Bop, bop, bebop, rebop.
Lost lovers in my empty doorway
groove to a sweet pain
in the bruise-colored neon
where my soul weaves
itself into *terra incognita*,
into the blue & green
sounds of Botany Bay
reflected like rozellas
through the big, black
slow dance of waves grinding against the shore.
Bop, bop, bebop, rebop.
Thelonious & bright as that
golden plea of gospel
underneath everything
Monk wrung from the keys.

Round about midnight
 despair returns each minute
 like a drop of moonshine
 elongating into rapture
 moaned through Bird's mouthpiece
 in a soundproof room
 where trust & love
 is white dust on the dark
 furniture. Time is nothing
 but an endless bridge.
 All those who thought
 they could use my body
 for nowhere's roadmap
 I see their blank faces
 float up from a whirlpool
 as the turntable spins.
 Bop, bop, bebop, rebop.
 Each undying note
 resounds in my head;
 there's a cry in every pocket
 & low swell of unhappy
 lust I've suffered,
 & round about midnight the odor of sex
 & salvation quivers in each song
 the wooden hammers
 strike from wire strings
 like anger stolen back
 from the soil.

First performed with pianist Judy Bailey at the Sydney Town Hall Bach to Bebop Concert on July 17, 1987.

It's Always Night

*It's always night
or we wouldn't need light.*

—Thelonious Monk, *Time*, February 28, 1964

Thelonious Monk was interested in how things struggle with their opposites—an intensity that expands possibility. Nature itself: the pulling into and the letting go. Rhythm. Thus, Monk was a technician of silence. Silence in his compositions is music(al); not mere coloration or transition, but silent spaces as pure units of an emotional continuum. Silence as shape, as tonal artifact, is what Monk captured. Of course, undoubtedly, gospel taught him a lot—his music owes much to the human voice. It helped him to challenge linearity; that is, anticipation is shattered by surprise—by silence. Monk's music is rugged and tough. A percussive truthfulness. A synthesis of conflict and beauty. A futuristic maturity. An opening out toward multidimensionality through simplicity. . . . silence creates poetic tension and suspension. An exactitude defined by what's left out. Monk's music requires an active listener—someone who doesn't have to be told the whole story. A transmutation of mind and sound: a third something is created. He was a deep listener. And, yes, it was this quality of listening that helped him to create tunes like “Ruby, My Dear,” “In Walked Bud,” and “Misterioso.” There's an emotional elasticity to Monk's world. Things that seem at odds with each other fit side by side: the human mind does the framing (inside and outside of conventional references). Clusters of chords. A woman's walk. A man's bluesy cry in the night. Expansion rather than constriction. The listener helps to decide the music's shape—keeping it organic and alive. Always *becoming*. Monk listened to silence and respected it. Maybe his musical theory can be found in his title “Ugly Beauty.”

CHARLES BERNSTEIN

Applied Monk: Preliminary Notes

What is the status of performance
in poetry? This statically
worded question—too formal & what's
status got to do with it?—
will not likely lead me
to a discussion of Thelonious Monk.
But you start where you can,
where the mood flings you, like an old dish
towel drying in the rain.

Of course, there are still those who don't read
their poems, insisting that the page is sufficient,
the rest gets in the way. I used to feel more
that way myself, that is I thought my work existed
in some primary way as words
on a page & that in doing
a reading I was *adding* a performance
element, suggesting one way that a work might be
read. Reading
poems required a number of performance decisions
not obvious from the texts &
a reader might well make
other decisions in reading to
her- or himself than I had
done. My insistence on the primacy
of the
poem as written was partly a reaction against
the popular notion of poems as merely
scores to be performed, something deficient
without infusion of theatrical or
musical overlays, as if
poems were like lyrics on the back of a record album.
A page, a book,
seemed to me—still does—an unexcellible site
for poetic activity.

Nonetheless, I've come to feel
 that the idea of the written
 document as primary makes for an unwarranted
 or anyway unwanted
 hierarchy; hearing
 work performed is in no way inferior to
 reading it to yourself. Rather, these are two competing
 realizations of the work, each
 with its own set of advantages &
 limitations. Moreover
 all reading is performative
 & a reader has in some ways to supply the performative
 element when reading—
 not silently before a page but out
 loud & with a beat.

(One advantage of hearing
 work performed
 is that it does
 not allow opportunities to
 reread or rehear; at least in my
 work, it pretty much forces listeners
 to get lost, to give up
 any notion of following detail, fore-
 grounding tempo & sound,
 association & texture
 [making the experience
 more like hearing music or watching
 a movie]. Of course, the ability to read in
 detail
 is just what gives the written
 its primacy—much of what
 is happening pros-
 odically, thematically, & structurally can't
 really be grasped in performance.)

Paul Schmidt, lamenting
 performance styles at many poetry
 readings, has recently advocated
 that poets memorize their work,
 suggesting that a declamatory
 style of reading would bring life
 to an otherwise often deadly practice.

Strong medicine
 & met more with a denial of disease
 than a discussion of alternative
 therapies. *Why spend time preparing
 for a performance when that
 time could better be used
 writing?* —For many poets will make much
 of the authenticity or naturalness of their reading
 style—mumbling, stumb-
 ling over words, fumbling through papers, virtual
 inaudibility, sitting in a chair bent over page, no
 discernible shape or rhythm in the pro-
 jected sound of the work.
 Yet this is just as much
 a performance style as the most
 declamatory reading: all readings
 are performative, whether they appear
 to deny the performative or flaunt
 it.

My experience is that if I really care
 about a poet's work, then I am interested
 in hearing them (she or he) read regardless
 of their attitude to performance, & that
 a good deal about the rhythm & acoustic
 dimension of the work
 (is exhibited). Indeed, there are some poets
 who "overperform" their work to the detriment
 of being able to hear it—kind of
 like doing an electric guitar version, in triple
 time, of "Misterioso"; or revving
 your car engine while the gear is set to
 neutral. Loud is not always better
 which is one reason Monk
 seems to suggest so much for poetry
 performance. & for certain
 works, the dreaded monotone style is not only
 appropriate but
 powerful & evocative; but then there is a difference
 in holding to a single tone over a period
 of time & just droning on
 aimlessly.

To perform a poem is to make it a physically present acoustic event, to give bodily dimension—beat—to what is otherwise spatial & visual. Poems, no matter how short, necessarily involve duration, & writing as much as performing is an act of shaping this durational passage. In performance, it becomes possible to lay down a rhythmic beat, a pulse, that is otherwise more speculative or tenuous in the scoring of words on a page. For me, this pulse is constructed around “nodal” points of pauses or silences or breaks—a *point* I want to put as technically as I can to distinguish this from notions of breath or speech rhythms or other notions of an unconstructed or unimposed reading style.

While I am skeptical
 about the value of appropriating
 musical terms to discuss
 performance prosody, I am still tempted
 to suggest that breaks or
 silences can be a most active
 musical device in poetry performance
 in that they create musical phrases
 that are then syncopated by the rhythmic pace
 that precedes & follows them. In my
 performances, I’m interested in employing
 several different, shifting, tempos
 & several different intonations (voices)
 that pivot
 & spin around these nodal
 shifting
 points. These blank spaces—
 silences or
 intervals—serve as ful-
 crums for making audible
 the rhythmic pulse & phrasing
 being
 played out, at the same
 time scissoring
 the syntax of the language (that is, cutting
against expected breaks of the
 grammatical phrase or unit of
 breath). Given these interests, the sound I am
 laying down is
 not simply that of a

person reading words
 in any “straightforward” way
 but playing
each
 word
 as if a
 note or
 chord on
 the
 piano, with slight
 pauses creating unexpected
 spaces
 between words, allowing phrases
 to veer off into
 unexpected sequences of wobbling
 sound. I
 no more take for
 granted how to do this than I assume
 the syntax
 or prosody of a
 poem I am
 writing; it is a highly constructed, albeit
 improvised, process, based on choosing
 from a variety of different tonal,
 rhythmic, & phrasal possibilities.

+++

A number of years ago, I was asked to read in the International
 Sound Poetry Festival in New York, despite the fact that my work
 & style of reading would not normally be considered sound
 poetry or performance poetry. I prefaced my reading by saying
 that I thought there were only two types of poetry: sound
 poetry & unsound poetry. But now I would change that to
sounded poetry & *unsounded* poetry.

It is perhaps a remnant of Romantic ideology that still
 haunts that performance styles of poetry readings
 are so often self-represented in terms of an authentic
 voicing of “the” emotions or “the” unconscious, where
 effacement of the performative is equated
 with genuineness of the work, where
 the acting style is to pretend that there is no

acting, where the performance style is to feign that no performing is going on. This of course is the story of our everyday life—where troubling social acts are performed as if without premeditation or self-conscious intent; it's the sort of acting that resembles puppetry. The best symbol of this phenomenon is a presidential actor widely praised for his relaxed, natural—I hear this as untheatrical & nonrhetorical—style.

Every reading (whether one's own reading of a book or a poet's reading to an audience) is an enactment, a sounding, an embodiment, which is to say a reading that takes or makes time, that enters into the social, material, & historical space of our lives. To deny the performative aspect of poetry is to repress its most literally political dimension, which is to say, how it enters into the world. To deny the rhetoricity (rhetoricalness?) & theatricality of a poem is to idealize a literary space outside of ideology & history, a zone timeless & blank in which evasion substitutes for the friction of interaction. Yet this friction is the music of our lives. The acknowledgment of the performative dimension of poems is a recognition of their political bearing in the world, fully as much as recognition of the theatricality of each of our social performances is a necessary prerequisite for us to find out how these ingrained habits might be changed or reshaped. For to sound is to give a hearing— & without such forums we are doomed to endless repetition of sounds

we have not ourselves
 participated
 in
 making. The performative dimension
 of poetry can
 be understood
 in Louis Zukofsky's sense
 as its upper limit—
music. This would make
 an attempt to understand the relation of
 the work of Thelonious Monk to
 contemporary poetry
 as essentially political gesture.

LAWSON FUSAO INADA

Monk's Prosody

April 5, 1957: "I can't do that right. I have to practice that."—Thelonious Monk, composer, to his pianist during a solo run-through of "'Round Midnight."

April 5, 1957: Maybe I'm sitting on a fire escape in Berkeley, trying to write some poetry. I know one thing: I was listening to Monk by then—particularly his solo on "Bag's Groove," on the Miles Davis 10-inch lp. You might say I was studying Monk's prosody—how each time he'd come out of the speakers in a different, distinctive way, and always swinging.

Years pass. Decades. Prosody.

January 15, 1987: I work a duo concert with Mal Waldron. Mal, even while checking out the tuning, makes reference, says hello, to Monk. The next time we blow, I want to do "Blue Monk."

June, 1987: Whenever the next time is, I'll be ready. I work out a "linear," "horn-like" statement; it fits, like an overlay. Then I jump right into the tune and the piano, and blow something from the inside-out—"percussive"—particularly building around and repeating "ricochet."

April, 1988: One of those long Oregon dusks. Larry Smith calls up to ask if I'd be interested in doing something with Monk's prosody. "Prosody"—yeah. I have to practice that.

Two Variations (Linear and Percussive) on a Theme by Thelonious Monk as Inspired by Mal Waldron:

Blue Monk

for Miles and Lowell

“Solid,” as the man himself would say.
“Solid,” as the man at his instrument.
“Solid,” as the solid composition.

However, at the same time,
this elegant melody,
“Blue Monk,”

while certainly being “solid” enough—
as evidenced by
the ease of our ability
to hum and whistle it,
even in sleep—

is actually solid, fluid,
and a real gas combined;

you know what I mean:
like feelings, like atmosphere,
like right, like here,

you feel like you’ve been hearing
“Blue Monk” forever,
since the planet started dancing,
like it’s been around since sound,

since the blue wind got up
one blue, summer morning,
looked across the cool, blue canyon
at that sweet, blue mountain,
and melodiously started to sing,
“Blue Monk”;

you know that lovely feeling,
“Blue Monk”;

you know what
 “Blue Monk” can do for you,
 the melodious message it sends,
 the melodious message that always comes
 echoing back across the canyons as a result,
 “Blue Monk,”

as a result of recognition,
 as a consequence of confirmation,
 as an accomplishment of affirmation—
 “Blue Monk,” “Blue Monk”
 in the sun and rain, in all conditions;

and the song, therefore,
 just by being what it is—
 these huge, blue feelings
 spaced and placed just so,
 ascending,
 these huge, blue feelings
 descending, just so,
 and including some delightful
 dimensions for refreshment
 on a huge, blue plateau—

“Blue Monk,” then, by its very nature,
 built-in to its basic structure,
 encompasses and contains
 all the properties of nature:

take a hold of it,
 hold it up to the light;
 see what I mean?—
 “Blue Monk” has you dancing;

by now you’re feeling confident about the song,
 feeling like you’ve got it down,
 feeling like you’re part of its beauty,
 feeling like it’s part of you—
 which is certainly true;

feeling fine with the freedom of it;
 feeling like going for it
 with expansiveness, abandon;

feeling exhilarated in your bones
 like you want to do something about
 exercising your own right
 to rhythm and expression;

yes, you feel like you *own* the song—
 which you certainly do—
 since you went right down there on West 52nd Street
 and got it directly from the man himself,
 “Blue Monk,” who turns out to be,
 not the imposing artist you had heard and read about,
 but just the husband, the father, the neighbor
 making his way out of the corner grocery
 with some snow peas and stalks of celery
 sticking out of a paper sack;
 he just needs something back,
 gladly giving you the tune
 in exchange for a proven recipe of your own;

meanwhile, “Blue Monk” is smiling
 that solid “Blue Monk” smile
 while offering you directions for usage:

“Look, ‘Blue Monk’ is a solid song;
 you can bend it; you can break it;
 you can always remake it;
 it’s hot and it’s cool,
 it’s suitable for digging
 in whatever occasion you choose—
 ceremonial, thelonious and such...”

Ah, the sheer joy of such ownership!
 You take “Blue Monk” home and set it
 glowing in your livingroom
 like a luxurious lamp.
 You stick it in the phone,
 sending it out via satellite:

“Hello, Mom? Dig this song!...”;
 “Hello, is this the White House?
 Listen, I’ve got a solid
 new anthem for the shaky republic!...”

You take “Blue Monk” outside to the fire escape,
seeing how far you can throw it,
looping it smoothly over the moonlit harbor
as it becomes a bridge
of flowing blue lights:
“Blue Monk.”

You’re dancing, humming,
strolling slowly across,
tossing blue notes
floating over the wide, blue water
like you’re a luminous, musical spider;
tossing cool, blue clusters high overhead,
creating a blue, musical constellation:
“Blue Monk”;

by now, many others,
including birds, animals, insects,
have joined you on your excursion,
having just got wise
to mythology and fireworks combined,
staring awestruck up into the huge, blue night
to find the “Blue Monk” profile outlined,
pointing out and humming
each huge, blue star in the melody—
and, oh, those sweet, blue spaces in between...

Yes, indeed, this is some kind
of luxurious structure,
an architectural legacy

ascending, descending, with pliable plateaus
for ease of breathing, handling,
relaxing, building, dancing, laughing,
praying, creating, embracing, enhancing;

a structure as solid, fluid, strong,
translucent, luminous, freeing,
and bracing
as the man himself—

Mr. “Blue Monk,”
bringing everything we do,
we see, we know,

into melodious focus

through the blue keys
of his blue piano;

therefore, in this blue region,
with this blue vision, in this blue
body of being
we all know as home,
everything throbs and pulses and glows
with the true, blue beauty of his song:

“Blue Monk!”

Ricochet

Schematic, thematic
variations to be varied,
in rhythm, while working within
the spirit of “Blue Monk”

Ricochet:

Radius:

Radiating:

Reciting: Realizing: Referring: Recapturing: Repercussion:
Revolving: Reflecting: Returning: Reconstituting: Republic:
Reshaping: Restructuring: Reversing: Reclaiming: Religion:
Respecting: Removing: Reforming: Receiving: Reality:
Refining: Reducing: Refreshing: Regenerating: Resource:
Regarding: Relating: Relaxing: Revering: Remembering:
Renewing: Revising: Repairing: Replacing: Residing:
Reviewing: Respecting: Resolving: Reviving: Responsible:
Retaining: Resuming: Revealing: Rehearsing: Resulting:
Restoring: Retrieving: Regaining: Recovering: Relying:
Redeeming: Replying: Reminding: Rewarding: Resounding:

Reverberating:

Remarkably:

Releasing:

Remaining:

Repeating:

WANDA COLEMAN

On Theloniousism

*who allows essence possession/translation into sound/voice
via mech-tech mastery/chrysalises it
who allows the perceptive either entry or regurgitation and/or
transmission/heightening or propulsion into another
realm/space/form/void*

beyond inspiration

I

Everybody tells you that's not allowed/don't do that. Never mind history, it's against the rules (which change the moment *you* get them straight). You are a fraud.

Until Monk music had not gotten deeply into attitude—particularly Black attitudes. Music had not shown its ass. Monk persisted in succeeding at being who he was without compromise, providing listeners with the elementary components of a deep and never ending source of creativity. A kind of poetic sensibility yet to achieve recognition is one which does with language what Monk did with music—as if the two were successfully divorced. [See the headings of Music and Negro Poetry in the Princeton Encyclopedia of *Poetry & Poetics*, edited by Alex Preminger, Princeton University Press.]

MONK, THELONIOUS SPHERE—b. New York City; Composer, piano; though technically a limited pianist, he evolved an extremely personal style and in his best moments produced some of the most provocatively heterodox Jazz of the 1940s.

—Leonard Feather, from *The Encyclopedia of Jazz*,
Horizon Press, 1955

A Working Definition

Theloniousism: $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ (epistrophy). Accelerated spurts of sound upon the high side of linear or circumlunar thought and/or

attitude; seeing with your ears and hearing with your eyes (who said what?). Its antonym is Marxisticism, a philosophy of art that disallows for genetic psycho-socio influences manifest as sensibility; gangsterism as art; a conscious attempt to level all creativity; ideally, a socio-political constructiveness; but which, in current proponents, results in fashionistic cannibalization.

*you see, i play your game and my game
and win at both
when you play my game you automatically lose*

THE KEY/history + vision + craft = transcendence

it began as a mimic—a comment on racism
a showing off
and became a “thang” unto itself
i.e., went legit

jack-ass music or jive-ass or j-ass or jass or

*

I had a wild rave with this Poet Fellow and during it I had to stop and give him a history lesson on race music and assorted fusions. Black music/language is always taboo until embraced by young whites and through them infused into the Dominant Culture (D.C.). This was true of Jazz and Rock-and-Roll. Specifically we discussed the marriage of Calypso and Blues/R&B and the offspring, Reggae. “Oh, of course!” he said, a bit embarrassed. And while our talk was language centered, there was no effective way to discuss Black language without interjecting Black music. He was discounting The Blues as a viable art form and downgrading the contribution to American language made by Black Americans, expressing his own preference for the “cleaner,” more “distanced” Caribbean approach.

I had to point out what C.W.E. Bigsby, in his opening essay from *The Black American Writer Volume I: Fiction*, says so perfectly:

The native African feels little or no need to bolster up a self-image which for the most part is not threatened by an alien culture. In America that self-image has been eroded by slavery and the indignities of an unjust social system. In Sartre’s words the black writer has his back up against the wall of authenticity. In his attempt to “reveal the black soul” he has frequently been drawn towards an African past

which seems to have the virtue of conferring on him a distinctive identity, unaffected by the demeaning impact of his American experience. Yet, whatever the stance of the ardent black nationalist there remain only vestigial remnants of African culture. The slave owners were too successful in stamping out indigenous traditions for the contemporary writer to be able to draw on a genuine cultural heritage (outside of the world of music and, perhaps, religion). Thus the black writer intent on revising a sense of identity which has its roots in a distant African past is trapped into creating rather than discovering a usable heritage and into manufacturing usable myths.

I had to add that Black Americans are, in spite of well-meant rhetoric, a *minority* with a different sense of self than Africans and Blacks from the West Indies who see themselves as a clear majority. Not to mention Jamaica having freed its slaves 25 years before America.

Johnny Nash couldn't ignite the fad of this fusion called Reggae within the Dominant Culture, but his pioneering enabled Bob Marley to capitalize when Eric Clapton and other white profligates made "ska" fashionable and the film *The Harder They Come* put Rasta and its godhead Jah on the American cultural map. I pointed out the tendency of Whites to maniacally appropriate anything *different* (exotic) that smacks of being "in"/hip, citing the insulting extremes of dreadlocks being called a "Bo Derek" (after the White blonde female star of *10*) and Elvis Presley's theft of Big Mama Thorton's *Hound Dog* from which he made millions he did not share with her.

Further, I made the case for the dilatory effect some early American legislation had on Black morality and Black music simultaneously—that is, at one time, a Black woman marrying out of her race to a White man escaped slavery and became a freed woman; whereas, a White woman marrying a Black man married into slavery. (Consult your desk copy of Peter M. Bergman's *The Chronological History of the Negro in America*, Harper & Row, 1969.)

The failure to communicate is not on the part of Blacks, but on the part of Whites who do not wish to understand and/or in understanding simply don't give the proverbial damn.

Now, skip one paragraph and go back to that sentence concerning slavery. Substitute artist/poet/musician for the word woman and put "economics" in front of slavery. The sense is chilling. To escape economic slavery the Black artist is forced to turn his/her back on Black heritage and adapt to White tastes/sensibilities in order to make money (in this case, money is synonymous with freedom but not power). George Benson and Al Jarreau are currently, if unfairly, cited as examples of this phenomenon—

also known as “selling out.” On the other extreme, a White artist steeped in Black culture without carrying the news back to his/her own cultural neighborhood oftentimes become trapped in obscurity, or is regarded as a freak/aberration (e.g., Teena Marie). Cross-culturalization is yet to be credited as a valid phenomenon (between Blacks and Whites, anyhow) as should be the case is our so-called Melting Pot of a nation. The tendency is to (want to) keep the race pure, be the “race” White American or Black American. The arguments on this point (ethnicity vs. race) are complex and unresolved so I’ll keep it simple: That which identifies as African-American of slave origin is “Black” and that which identifies as “White” is White.

The Black poet/writer cannot make it in establishment literary circles merely on his excellence as a writer unless that excellence is sanctioned/patronized by the proper Whites. One may be as niggerish as one wants as long as one does not deeply bite the hand that makes out the advance checks, distributes the books and pens the reviews. In this respect, the Halls of Ivy are no different from the Alleys of Hollywood. Like the Black musician, the less *ethnic* a Black writer is, the less angry, the more attainable that elusive reward of recognition (if not cash).

Another twist in this cowing of the Black creative psyche is that one is allowed to be as much of a clown and/or racist as one wants because the Dominant Culture has, over recent decades, learned how to effectively neutralize this sort of energy—which is why Black humor succeeds where Black drama fails. Even hatred is palatable as long as it is unreasoning hatred, empty of threat, and having no “army” or “intelligence” to back it up. It is no coincidence that the success of Black artists in America is, almost without exception, linked to the rise and fall of social currents which kaleidoscopically bring “the race problem” into national focus. For the Black artist to succeed as an individual free of this bond is rare.

to notate is to fixate
which is why The Word is a superior power

II

An important somebody comes along and tells the world you’re great—a genius, in fact. The world embraces you. It pretends to understand, but doesn’t—really.

That we Black people still undergo holocaust makes the plight of our artists much more difficult, much more urgent and much more poignant. Once that artist renounces his/her birthright he/she may cease productivity

because of being cut off from the very Blackness that spawns (one's certainties or confusions about it). This reality still plagues all Americans of *ethnicity* but is a particularly exquisite pain for Black artists. The pain is articulated at length by Leroi Jones (aka Amiri Baraka) in his prose, including the chatty *Blues People* (1965) and *Black Music* (1968), and in the life stories of some Black musicians. The autobiographies of Billie Holiday and June Jordan are good starting points for the female version.

. . . the Negro writer's social experience is, despite its bitterness, also an artistic boon. To live continually with prejudice based on the accident of skin color is no superficial experience, and neither is the reaction produced by such constant exposure superficial. There is a depth of intensity to the emotions of Negroes—as demonstrated in “Negro music”—which is largely lacking in white Americans . . . Thus the negro writer, if he does not make the tragic error of trying to imitate his white counterparts, has in his possession the priceless “gift” of thematic intuition . . . He will be able to convey suffering without romanticizing . . .

—William Gardner Smith, “The Negro Writer: Pitfalls and Compensations,” from *The Black American Writer, Volume I: Fiction*

Without romanticizing? Maybe. The trouble with too many of us public Black folk is that we do not inform our work with our history. Perhaps we can't because that history is, for the most part, still made inaccessible to us. It is no coincidence that an unusually large portion of books available on Black themes of any kind (including reprints) have copyright dates, within two or three years, corresponding to the beginning and end of the Civil Rights Struggle.

*

Compare these three stanzas from Nathaniel Mackey's “Ghede Poem” (Ghede, the Obean god of death) with two comparable stanzas from Ishmael Reed's “I Am A Cowboy in the Boat of Ra.” Mackey's later poem (in this case the latter) appeared in *Alcatraz 2* (Santa Cruz), and Reed's earlier poem appeared in the Norton Anthology. Not only does Mackey “take off” on Reed's imagery, bringing it even closer to “home”/Blackness, but he also does an improvisation on Reed's poetic diction:

I am a cowboy in the boat of Ra,
sidewinders in the saloons of fools

bit my forehead like O
 the untrustworthiness of Egyptologists
 Who do not know their trips. Who was that
 dog-faced man? they asked, the day I rode
 from town.

School marms with halitosis cannot see
 the Nefertiti fake chipped on the run by slick
 germans, the hawk behind Sonny Rollins' head or
 the ritual beard of his axe, a longhorn winding
 its bells thru the Field of Reeds.

While different in form, Mackey, nevertheless, with or without intent, zaps us with an electrifying poem as fine as Reed's, with Reed's exact same rhythm, yet completely on its own without any clues *except* for rhythm:

They call me Ghede. The butts
 of "angels" brush my lips.

The soiled asses of "angels"
 touch my lips, I
 I kiss the gap of their having
 gone. They call me Ghede, I
 sit, my chair tilted, shin across
 thigh.

They call me Ghede
 of the Many-Colored Cap, the
 Rising Sun. I suck
 breath from this
 inner room's midearth's bad air,
 make chair
 turn into chariot,
 swing.

Mackey's poem echoes Reed's, a wonderful happenstance which sets up poetic dialogue on several levels simultaneously. Reed's Cowboy is a minor deity plotting dubious overthrow, whereas Mackey's Ghede is a full-fledged God with the powers of life and death. In his play, Mackey effectively digs deeper to the root of Blackness—yet clearly echoes the assertion of "I am," a quality Sonia Sanchez identifies as the male voice in Black poetry, but which can be equally accomplished by the female, as in my "take off" on Bob Kaufman's rhythms in "Heavy water blues"

(*You Better Believe It*, Paul Bremin, Penguin 1973):

The radio is teaching my gold fish Jujitsu
 I am in love with a skindiver who sleeps underwater,
 my neighbors are drunken linguists, and I speak butterfly,
 Consolidated Edison is threatening to cut off my brain,
 the postman keeps putting sex in my mailbox,
 My mirror died & can't tell if I still reflect,
 I put my eyes on a diet, my tears are gaining too much weight

I turn Kaufman's poem inside out, take his horn and blow my own tune,
 making my "Heavy Daughter Blues" (*Heavy Daughter Blues*, Black Sparrow
 Press, 1987):

the t.v. is teaching my children hibakusha
 i am in love with a dopefiend who sleeps under freeways
 my neighbors are refugees from S.A.
 and I speak negrese

the source is promising to terminate my train
 of thought. the postman has put a hex on my P.O. Box
 when my mirror cries do my pupils dilate?
 i put my dial on quiet, my ears are gaining too much hate

Reed expresses Blackness representationally, relying on cultural reference points and stringing them together with the rhetorical posturing that goes with being a cowboy at showdown. Mackey puts forth Blackness organically and is free of the necessity of embracing rhetoric or posture. He simply is God, no questions asked. Perhaps Reed's ultimate artistic sacrifice liberates Mackey. I certainly feel liberated from the need to perform the kind of awkward intellectualizing apparent in Kaufman's wild sojourn into Beat surrealism—the loss of self not only in the confusions of ethnic Blackness, but a more Western existential blackness. Yet Reed and Kaufman serve to take me "home" in much the same way as Monk's "Round Midnight" or Ray Charles' androgynous rendering of "I Didn't Know What Time It Was." Originality of thought? Cool. Originality of execution? Most cool. [It enrages me that a society which places such a pathological premium on what is first and new continuously fails to give Black artists proper due/support. Of course, Dominant Culture artists continue to argue, but not effectively enough, the ascendance of the mediocre over excellence.

The potential fun in the above game is obvious and obviously unlimited; and, the apparent elitism/specialization more or less goes with the turf. Thus one may eat one's poetic cake and have it too. What is central here is that

rhythm refreshed, beyond style and lyricism, ascends once more to its rightful throne along with content and form and copulates with both. That which starts with homage and/or satire, takes on its own independence.

There have been such moments/movements in the Dominant Culture, such as Dada, Beatitude and Pop/Popism/Op. But in terms of sheer bankability, no Black millionaire artists (or widows thereof) emerged from those movements because they are not *ethnically* Black movements. We Afro-American artists are allowed to play the game but we are not allowed to become dealers. To deal is to have power—*control* beyond meager influence. In this respect the Black musician/composer/singer is way out ahead of the Black writer/poet. [Say what one will about Michael Jackson and Prince.] By denying linkage between music and language, and music as language; by effectively denying the Black holocaust, the Black writer/artist is successfully frustrated by the scions of the D.C. By relegating Jazz (and the Jazz principle) to obscurity, the people who give birth to it are kept in a position of economic and cultural inferiority. And the *quality* of one's work has *nuthin'* to do with it.

To recognize is to empower.

III

Now you are somebody. Relax. Recognition at long last sits on your doorstep. You don't have to break your ass anymore, or kiss ass. You are over—you think.

(what a stalk of maize looks like
musically)

The backside becomes an affront, a refusal to reveal or share one's agony/lust (mooning). Turning away in/into aloneness. And so what if you're alone? The unforgiven sin is choosing to be alone by one's self. . . as semiotic perversion is one derived from licking backsides.

dat fulminous note soars no mo

dead beat

a frozen note of attitudinal bliss

entombed

in the catacombs of poet-soul

name inscribed

upon the sacred stellae of ancient tribal worshippers

of diddypoot

will we hear the sanctimonious snort
 from your nostrils no more?
 will our eyes never again travel
 the mystic mythic tracks of your ectodermic addiction?
 will our hearts never again thrill
 to the resonant wise-ass of your
 existential jonesism?

yes
 we have been deprived—jealously
 deprived/years gone/no opportunity to
 commune with the grand wizard of
 woogiedom

yes
 we have been cheated (in premeditation)
 only to witness America deconstructed
 by venereal disease

yes as we sink into the homogenous audio-visual
 potato salad

catered by a deaf tongue

*

Monk had made the journey from the obscurity of the Jazz underground to the cover of *Time* by remaining tenaciously true to his own musical vision. He kept playing things the way he heard them, and people eventually discovered that his way of “using notes differently” made beautiful sense. In the process, he helped change the way people thought about music; he contributed a stunning body of compositions to the Jazz repertoire; and he influenced a generation of musicians—not just the pianists and not just the young players like John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins who had worked in his bands, but everyone who heard what he was doing and absorbed his message of freedom and individuality.

And yet a strange thing began happening around the time of these Jazz Workshop performances. Some people began to put Monk down, not because he was too different, but because he wasn’t different enough. Specifically, a few

impatient souls began to complain that when they went to see Monk perform, they heard the same old stuff . . . He wasn't writing new tunes. He wasn't growing.

—Peter Keepnews' liner notes, *Monk*:

Thelonious Monk—Live At the Jazz Workshop
(Columbia C2 83269, Reissue)

Classical music infused with the Drum (a music which also functions as a language) and violated by the Holler (religion—particularly Obeah) cums Jazz in all its probable and improbable variations. Tightness and rhythmic stricture plus stimulation to an erogenous zone equals release equals expression. Whereas over-stimulation results in: 1) Numbness. 2) Irritation. 3) Infection. 4) Sepsis. 5) Necrosis. 6) Hello, Death (see Ted Joans' "The .38").

When the Jazz principle is applied, growth becomes irrelevant after one attains mastery. When applied to performance, growth ceases only when the improvisations themselves become fixed, ceasing to be actual improvisations but instead become mere arrangements and/or interpretations/comments upon. The nature of improvisation is spontaneous infusion/renewal—not *repetition* or geometric progression/ascension. Max Swartz of San Francisco's Mission district dares apply the Jazz principle with great success and great failure all in the space of a performance, usually accompanied by bass or saxophone. He's published little, expressing disdain for fixation on paper. Kamau Daaoud is the foremost L.A. proponent of this, although he periodically self-publishes small books of his "jazzualizations." Thus one could, as Monk did, play the same song (or write the same poem) repeatedly throughout a set and yet continually renew it/rebirth it/present different aspects without (if you are lucky) boring listeners who see with their ears. Blindness is, in this respect, deafness (aka double trouble). And, needless to say, the tone deaf will, of course, be bored.

In relation to what I do as a Black/Afro-American *po-et woman* who believes her people are a first, a unique if tortured cultural/world event, I could and do swear that the Dominant Culture flagrantly denies my people-language (again, the Holler and the Drum) and refuses to recognize the nature of Afro-American duality established by W.E.B. Dubois in his writings as far back as 1903. There is a deliberate and on-going failure on the part of the government to officially recognize that a holocaust continues for Black Americans. The passage of the 14th Amendment to *their* Constitution and our glorious struggle for Civil Rights did not resolve our problem.

As has been pointed out previously, the D.C. craves its Black underclass upon which it vampirishly feeds, though it is careful to never quite kill off its victim; rather, keeps it minimally alive, enough to provide sufficient and

periodic infusions of blood/excitement/challenge/richness/deviance. Which is why Blacks and Amerindians will never be allowed the same privileges as, say, first generation emigres (certainly not without substantial and bloody social revolution). Our businesses are not patronized unless they are deemed safe/nonthreatening or “in.” The Communications Media continue to present an America in which slavery never happened or has been adequately and officially atoned for. [For example, the video travesty of Alex Haley’s *Roots* lay in the rumor that two of the “White” stars were paid salaries equal to what the *entire* Black cast was paid, and the fact that only two Black writers were hired to work on and “blacken” scripts written by Whites.]

We live in a nation without proper context.

IV

Everybody complains. They are tired of you doin’ your same old moldy thang (nevah mind dat thang made yo’ famous, Shamus) when are you gonna do somethin’ new? Even dyin,’ particularly of a drug overdose, is unoriginal.

It is possible for an impoverished writer to escape poverty through making use of that poverty in his work. For a white woman to escape the economic confines of an oppressive sexism by making use of her sexuality is possible. But for a Black American writer to escape Blackness through the use of that Blackness in his/her work is not possible. To escape, one must be able to, in effect, *write white*.

—conversational music—

During her career, Billie Holiday never won a *Down Beat* poll for best singer/vocalist.

##

Speaking of furnished rooms, suppose Classical/traditional writing and/or music were compared to an apartment (compartmentalization). The Classical apartment is very lovely. You can paint it. You can move things around in it. You can buy new furniture and lay down new floors. It is still the same apartment.

A Jazz apartment has modular/movable walls, it is an environment allowing for the predictable to coexist with the unpredictable; ape the Classical then suddenly break loose into variation to the point of unrecognizability; i.e., new, alien, and always as renewable as the occupant (artist/creator) desires—limited only by the occupant’s pocketbook/imagination.

Hahaha.

The act of recording creativity in progress fixates it, depriving it, inevitably, of maximum emotional immediacy—yet, simultaneously freezing/encapsulating as unspeakable fertility awaiting the thaw of proper receptivity and rebirth/recreation, etcetera.

If one defines art as memory, then Black music (or music infused with/infected by blackness) gives me *my* memory. And as much as I might enjoy/appreciate other musics, they cannot open the treasure box of my memory; they do not stimulate my “muse” nor do they provide me vision.

Not that the classics/Classical music is not beautiful; I would no more deny Bach’s greatness than I would deny James Brown’s—I shouldn’t have to. But Bach does not give me back myself. He does not take me home. My home is no more Europe than Africa, though both figure in my heritage. Home is not the libraries, museums, offices or concert halls where I most often encountered this kind of music (cold stony environments). Classical music doesn’t take me to any one of the dozens of funky little flesh-teeming joints where I struggled to escape poverty during my young womanhood. It cannot take me to the emotional peaks and valleys of Los Angeles’ Black community from which I spring.

It does, however, evoke the superior attitudes of “across town”; of white school teachers, of librarians shushing me viciously with their index fingers, of stiffly stuffed gowns and tuxedos applauding politely, of the blond blue-eyed Christ staring dazedly over his flock from the backs of pastel Sunday School cards. No matter how accomplished, how beautiful and true this music is, it evokes the *ugly lying* spectre of racism.

Thus the social consciousness of music becomes social memory. Poetry, too, is equally social memory/consciousness. Rhythms are the conduits of memory/linkages to time and place in the very real sense that they allow me, as a writer, to recreate the past in excruciating detail and clarity. To tap into and summon up that which might, otherwise, be lost forever.

Instantaneous dialog occurs between those who recognize the same or similar rhythmic history; as much as those who live through a particularly stormy or horrific historical event.

The poet hears the saxophonist. The poet may imitate the sax—the actual sounds made with words, may imitate the moves and sways of a particular saxophonist; may record the evocations made by that saxophonist at that moment; may describe the images and/or feelings/associations which arise. In the oral presentation of the poem, the poet may become/reveal all or any of the above thus bringing the communication to one sort of conclusion—adding or subtracting from the total experience given the mastery of his/her gift. Thus music becomes text.

When the poem itself is set to an actual music, as a lyric, or read to the

accompaniment (improvised or rehearsed) of a sax before an audience, the process is brought full cycle to begin again.

The medium of music chrysalises the present allowing future access. The poet/writer may draw on it to release information, shape it creatively, rebirth/make it live and breathe with immediacy of just having happened (the poem) or reshape it as a social nourishment, a vital aspect of life as experience (the story). In this way *my* music gives me back *myself*.

My most private moment of musical love manifests itself as an orgasm.

Conclusions

Fixation is death temporarily.

At a recent poetry reading featuring Black poets from the community of Watts, I listened rapt to their voices, which included my own. We were diverse in every respect, including economics. But after two solid hours our voices seemed to converge as though we were all writing/reading fragments of the same long poem/history.

Simply put, Theloniousism is the Jazz Principle applied to verse.

The perverse pursuit of THE NEW in the Dominant Culture (biological aspects aside) without full recognition of the ravages of racism/xenophobia upon its infrastructure, leads to creative bankruptcy; a circumstance/environment which allows THE BOGUS to seize power on all levels.

Literature is not only political, it is politics supremely—at its most vicious and most vigorous, and is, therefore, to be prized—utterly.

A Dominant Culture writer/poet can afford to play literary games, because, in doing so, the stakes, while extremely high, can be written off. Sooner or later there will be another game in which to indulge. But the Afro-American poet/writer gambles everything when he splits his psyche in order to win at this game. Should he/she achieve success, it is inevitably devalued by tokenism on the one hand, and a demand that the artist provide a solution to the burdens of racism on the other. To obtain (not to mention maintain) said success, the price is either death or relentless war. Death may take any form, the economic or the creative, the literal or the figurative. And if it is to be war, bittersweetly, it will be a war that even when won is automatically lost.

RUSSELL EDSON

Nice

As I was climbing the mountain I kept slipping. So that I was not so much climbing as trying to.

I was not able to get out of the valley at all.

I said, what's wrong with the valley? It's every bit as nice as the mountain.

When I use the word *nice* I begin to feel cuddly. I go nice this and nice that, until I'm quite sick to my stomach, as if having taken too many sweets.

But let's be honest. Is the valley really as nice as the mountain? The mountain is higher than the valley. So that it has a height that the valley could never own to without itself becoming a mountain. However, the valley retains a depth that the mountain certainly does not own to. And, in a way, they seem to belong to the same system, each describing the other.

One begins to see the mountain range as a solidified valley turned upside down. And the valley as an invisible mountain range, again, turned upside down, and equally as nice.

...So if I cannot climb the mountain I can still climb the stairs to my bed.

But, no matter, for I am anywhere I am without my having to do anything. And it doesn't really matter where one is, as long as one is. And sometimes even that doesn't matter...

The Vegetable Kings

There was a king whose brain had turned into a cauliflower.

He dreamed that someone was serving it with melted cheese. It felt good...

There was a king whose navel had become the navel of a navel orange.

In a dream someone long ago peels him back to his embryo. And it feels good...

The Afternoon Tea

Mice are animal tea bags...

But the shadows, the way they advance. How at last the death of a day is the birth of a night. The chain...

It's a gray tea. A few hairs at the bottom of the cup. These perhaps to be read in prophesy...

In the morning we expect the night, the darkness is already with us; follows us down through the afternoon, and meets us in the evening...So like the end of the world when it arrives at the old man's door.

As simple as the evening when the forests grow quiet. When the lights that should be lit are not, and the dust begins to find safe haven...

Yet, should more than one cup be asked, a rat is not a bad economy...

Structure and Sense

Structure and sense that dreams from the corners of a room...

Table edges that remind us of sensual tensions drawn from exacting boundaries; falling finally up from the patterns of a rug...

Those drapes by that window, hanging like classical stone; shifting with subtle compliance to the atmosphere that breathes from the meadow...

Above us a monstrous artifact of clouds that have lain together for centuries, like sleeping swine; and the drift...

Little Edward

As a man was playing through a difficult passage, his violin burst, like a chest suddenly broken by its heart.

Why, you little traitor, said the man, his hands full of kindling and string.

His wife said, what did you do to little Edward?

Why don't you ask me what little Edward did to me? cried the man.

Well, what did little Edward do to you?

He ruined my violin...

Recipes for a Brain Disguised as a Wig

Try it on, see how it looks. If it doesn't work, fry it.

Sure it'll get kind of crazy as it bristles and browns. It burbles and scorches even as it frazzles.

Maybe you're looking for a pancake? But be fair, try it on again. And if it doesn't work, mix an egg in its curls. Slap it around. Just enough to dash its hopes.

Give it another chance. And if it still doesn't work, cook it on a skewer.

Set it on fire, and serve it with a fire extinguisher.

It tastes like elephant anus...

GEORGE HITCHCOCK

Fourteen Stanzas in Search of

It is time for the Journey to happen

—Milivoy Slaviček

1

What's there? she asked.
He told her behind blue is seven
over summer heat the soldier's
eyes, back of the sabre lies
a land of forbidden roads
and heliotrope; don't joke
she said, I have to know
in whose throat the song
lies hidden, what tongue is
already clothed in glass and
in the bones of which bird
I can read your departure.

The sky broke out in sweat;
a gull dropped its shadow.
I found it, she said, putting
the lens in his hand
and so he began

2

I'm not alone he thought,
I have the wolf and the manatee
the icy flames of the Pleiades
infinity's railway
and the hand with its calluses
which climbs toward me out of
this mineshaft. I don't know why
I'm crawling across this plain
of burrs and pyramids (Teotihuacán
or Tibet?) glaciers and ivory

needles, wild pigs
 in every gutter, but I know
 I'm not alone

3

The others were there as usual
 at the usual street-corner: the one
 with the limp and his brother with the brass
 nose-ring, the old one who had grown blind
 waiting for it to happen, the one with the tiny
 box in which he kept insects
 and he of the blue cowl, the beard and the falcon.
 They asked the usual questions, what
 became of fire, who kept the key
 to the vaults and why the lace had all
 evaporated; not much was different—
 the one in the kaftan was apologetic
 just as he'd been before and the one
 with the steel blade drove it deeper and
 deeper, smiling much
 as he'd always done

4

They showed him the ladder he had to take;
 it leads, they said, into the *kiva*.
 He went down it one foot at a time
 gripping the rungs, feathers in his eyes
 lightning around him, harsh smoke
 nailed to his ribs. Where you're going
 you won't need poker-dice or that dented
 tin-whistle, you're not looking
 for coins or french kisses, they said
 this ladder leads to the smokehouse
 the earth's asshole
 and you'd better be quick about it

5

You're done for now, said the man with the hawk
 hanging there between heaven and nothing at all
 your clothes ripped, beard singed, one bloody hand

on the middle rung, not up not down but nowhere much
a puppet
a scarecrow
rag doll of butterflies
emperor of what's half-done.

Hang in there, she said, you've seen the worst.

6

God help him till the red axes come!
There's no bed like air, falling's
another language entirely, short on conjunctions
what happens happens, no use arguing;
anyway, beneath him the inevitable committee waits
they with their wreaths and baskets
they'll pick up the pieces, they always do
they with their sappy odes
and crocheted blankets

7

"No point in all those place-mats
no one's coming to dinner, only
the tattooed man from Otaheite
the lady with the waxed moustaches
and her little dog the wind"

8

You can't stay there, she told him
you can't drink wine from that skin,
that's reserved for tears, only
the suffering can take up that guitar
only the witnesses without rifles
are allowed on these walls, there
where the carriers walk with their gourds
full of grace-notes. It doesn't matter your
credentials are signed by an archduke
they're not important your visas and boxes
of dust, the answers to your questions
aren't at home, even the ice-chimes
won't take up your echo, won't
carry your insincere song

9

He tried the Queen of Pentacles:
 that is your fate, she said
 a darkened lighthouse, a rotted elm-tree.
 But what does it mean? he asked
 the maggoty elm, the lighthouse shut?
 The blade of a knife the barb
 of an arrow, the gypsy said,
 you'll dance a lot then come
 to that end; no use cursing
 pour your seed where you like
 in the end it'll be as if
 you hadn't lived at all
 the lighthouse shut and every
 last leaf gone from the elm—
 bright steel and the barb of
 an arrow. No use grouching.
 He paid up and left

10

On Thursday they came to the ocean
 it didn't open up, not like the Red Sea,
 if anything it closed in—water
 on all sides, spratling and anchovies
 in their shoes, herring-gulls screaming
 fish-nets rubbish and kelp
 and the same sullen boatman
 tinkering with his outboard.
 Yet they had to pass, their way
 lay over the straits to the marl cliffs
 and the clocks all chimed Deafness
 or Guilt, and the skies with their fluffy
 garlands wouldn't stay that way forever

11

What the boatman said:
 kelp-trees is worst they tangle the prop
 shark got no bones only gristle and teeth
 a full moon makes the sand thirsty
 you can never lead a south wind by the hand
 no use mopping the clouds it only leads to hail

14
 one eye for weeping
 one eye for sight
 and this one fixed
 like a carbuncle
 in your forehead
 put there to reflect
 the vanishing god

BIA LOWE

Blue

Years ago we walked on land, patrolled the air for an easy meal. We crouched in the shade of colossal fronds, elbows cocked, tongues springing for flies. The air was as warm as gravy. But then, cold pressed in and moisture collapsed. Frost tinned the ground, and the forest was plated in silver. Each leg, each wing, each mandible was as starched as a statue. And the food we trapped stuck to our tongues, and hung like pendulous diamonds. There was no choice for us but to wade away from that shore.

Maybe we should have stuck it out, learned to hunt in tribes and invent the flint. Instead we glided into an amniotic past where each limb tapered back into a fin and the shape of our faces was foetal.

Yet we never gave up that blur above the surface, the world of sparkle and glaciers and sky. Our lungs carry us up with a need that feels like love, and we break the water's fiber, slither on air for one gasp and fall, sinking like a dreamer's head into a pillow. Our thoughts are arcs that carry us back and forth. Between air and water, water and air.

Purple

We are waiting to catch a glimpse of purple. Some claim to have seen her as far south as the pole, wafting like a chanteuse out of the great curtains of Aurora, her lids half closed, her lips stained with wine, the smoky lyrics always in a foreign language. Others say she can be seen from any hemisphere, plainly slung on the underbelly of the highest cloud, the last tint of any evening's sky.

If she were a planet she would be Pluto, the planet X, lurking at the edge of a pond in which our sun bathes quietly like an old man. The waves are worn and collapse like slush by the time they reach the frozen shore.

Pluto's orbit is so strange, it's the shadow mushrooming in the family closet, the dark horse loping along the rim of the barely visible. It pulls our hands across the Ouija board as if they were flounder in the tide and it a nearby moon.

Ten to one our trapeze artist is really a man, a female impersonator done up in skin-tight satin, teasing the laws of nature, even gravity. She wants us to uncross our legs, let our jaws go slack as her hand slides against the tilt of her hip. And sighs are lifting from each of us as she turns her back but not her gaze. She disappears into thin air at the end of the spectrum, vaporizing into a corner of the universe where she can see us still, but can't be seen. We're on the edge of our seats, staring up at nothing until someone in the back starts the applause.

ROBERT SCHULER

Winter Blues

for Pink Floyd

snow pours a thick flickering
haze over roads
pulse so damned slow drugged lost
winds stall in the back of your skull
guitars fingernail strings of your spine
drone down your bones organs roar
blood you want to kick out the walls
and dance crystal
into the broken
paths of stars

Be-Bopping It Out

for Jody

you are one of the wild broken things
the blown orange moon
that shatters in the sharp black hills
wind shivering riffs of snow through
stiff black staffs of oaks
("I'd rather hear Woody Shaw miss
a note than listen to Freddie hit one of those easy ones")
while Red Rodney and Ira Sullivan play
"Speak like a child"
trumpet screams and sax
screeches crash against the bridges
moments that won't add up
when things make sense

so fantastically abundant
 their heavy powerful flesh
 their mouths just
 open
 taking in the dark
 warm air

and I in the insurrectionary
 pajamas
 of my secret
 could come right up to them, inhale
 their breath
 lie down between them
 fall into the ocean
 and be swept into the tumble
 of the waves
 but I sit here
 on the seaweed-covered rocks
 student of intimate details
 observing
 his feet uncovered
 at the end of the bed,
 observing how her hair has
 drifted across her cheek

writing what I see
 determined to discover
 whatever can be known
 looking for clues
 to the mystery
 waiting, studying, grasping,
 nibbling now and then
 on my machete.

IVAN ARGÜELLES

Text

sit there smoking with empty wine-glass in hand
waiting for the wheel to turn “cupid is an infernal god”
works in pits and choke-holes digging for dross
to reach the wrong conclusion is an old panel “cupid is a pig”
that I ever trusted but go on sit there vanishing in fumes
partake of the god eat the thumbs of your heart heedless
tender lashes on the inner thigh press strokes impress deep
“that cupid is a cruel” mutilating mountain & water alike
things will be figured out sooner or later if paradise
is even sorting through indexes of harsh stubble and no end
to have to submit to the form of the page whose blank text
considering every childhood is bound to rot in discovery of
better to take drugs stupefied before a moving screen not yearning
empty of mind and friend revolving on the spent planet’s axis
to aim the cigarette of imagination but “cupid is a dead angel”
it cant be that the middle of the week has been prolonged
into a stuttering speech pattern disfiguring the legend Ennui
the dotted “i”s by which the signature is spanished into flight
sooner damaged that loved I say stripping the skin of its air
concerned that the afternoon has not budged an inch from its rape
“for cupid is a savage toll-master” will not take the spoils
rare how it greens along the edges where the saliva was poured
into a midnight base where alchemy riots with the fundament
to make out the indented parts through the miasma of words
to mean a few treasures found in the borrowed reading of her mind
but cant face the daily catastrophe nor the sharing of teeth
how thought curls like smoke from out the mind’s cold nostril
“dangerous to be like cupid” fretted sighs of the archaic
dont feel a thing yet and this is the third one already
muddy time drill-works that the gums ache patiently in toil
whose grisly wing lifted above the bed casts a foreign web
footsteps of Heraclitus in the slums of ancient turania gone
unable to guess the following verse or whether it’s a hexameter
just who were the horse-worshipping hittites and their neighbors?
her hair held in one hand above her head sweating in the office heat

[Untitled Diorama]

for christina

before you know it you are sitting face to face with death smoking cigarettes
 the music is too loud it doesnt matter death is more beautiful
 than all nine archangels and you cant tell if death is "he" or "she"
 together and exchanging mirror in the din you lean over looking for the Harp
 "there are great nooses in literature" death begins to say eating your roses
 and drawing a large pink paper over your shadow so everything "blends"
 the voice of water the voice of lies and injustice death's voice
 the subtle invisibility of all sound entering your entrails as you part your legs
 to give birth to the endless gut of jealousy "great traps of thought"
 the harpist lights the grass with his fury the clouds assume a name
 "Loss" salvation is a cancer in the world's corrupted thermometer

where spent

the mercury spreads then evaporates somewhere in the dense cartography
 of your skin & the moon is bleeding out of control you are concerned
 but not "politically" being more absorbed with the pointillistic deviations
 which are death's wayward lyrics and asterisks that alternate paradise
 where enormous fish of legend are docked on the tip of your spine nodding
 and what is more fabulous than the first bite? like a volcano you "see"
 eruption of light fire-works of the senses the promised garden of

tropical eden

death's "voice" that eerie second glance the next cigarette while the first
 it still between your lips flaring its signals of anxious prescience
 that sound crawling across the phonograph record describing new silk suits
 skin that walk and talk the beauties of the female sex spinning slowly
 the music is turned up even louder like shot-gun blasts the drums
 like strings of alcohol the velvet song works like a screw into your brain
 so many cultures blow up in that sudden shock when your fingertip

touches death's

great cold chord and you try breathing harder or faster hoping the lights
 will go out or on again you dont know which and enormous pleated skirts
 umbrella in the air above you and someone or something is knocking

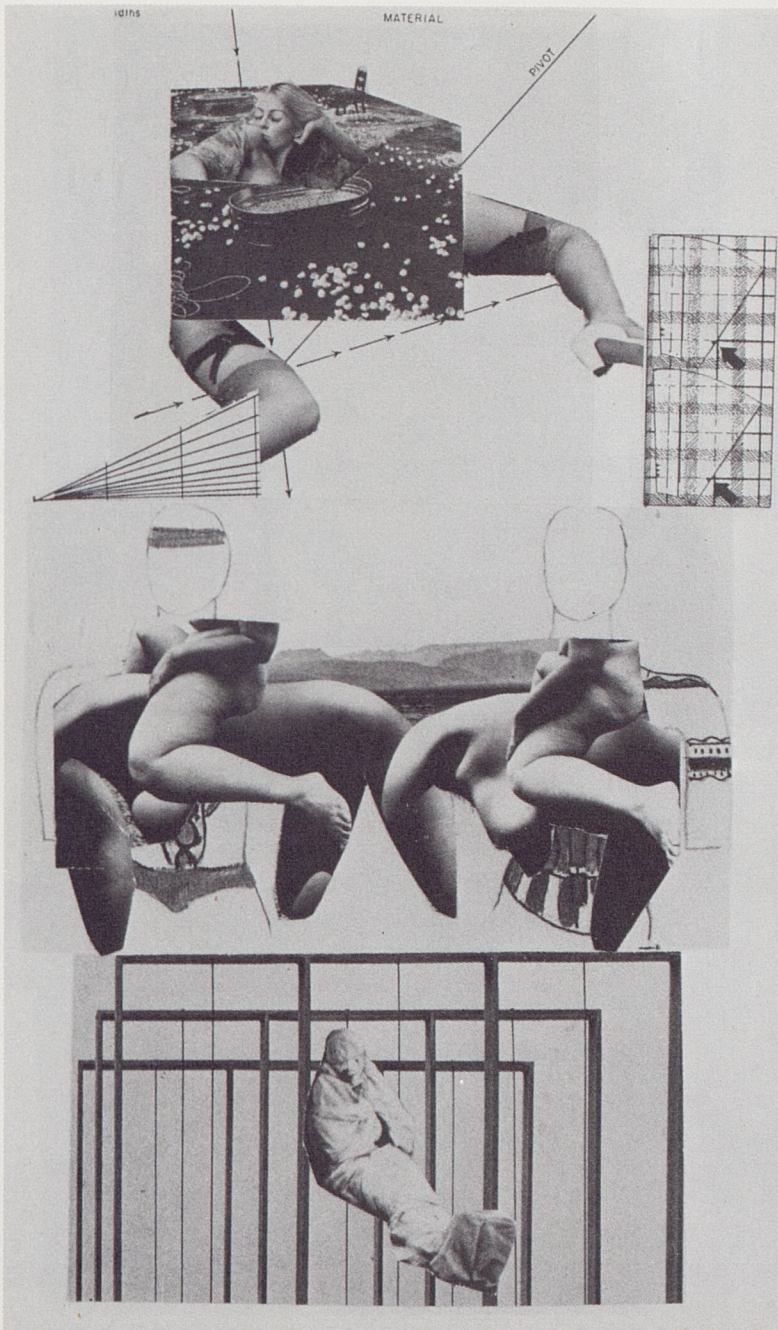
knocking

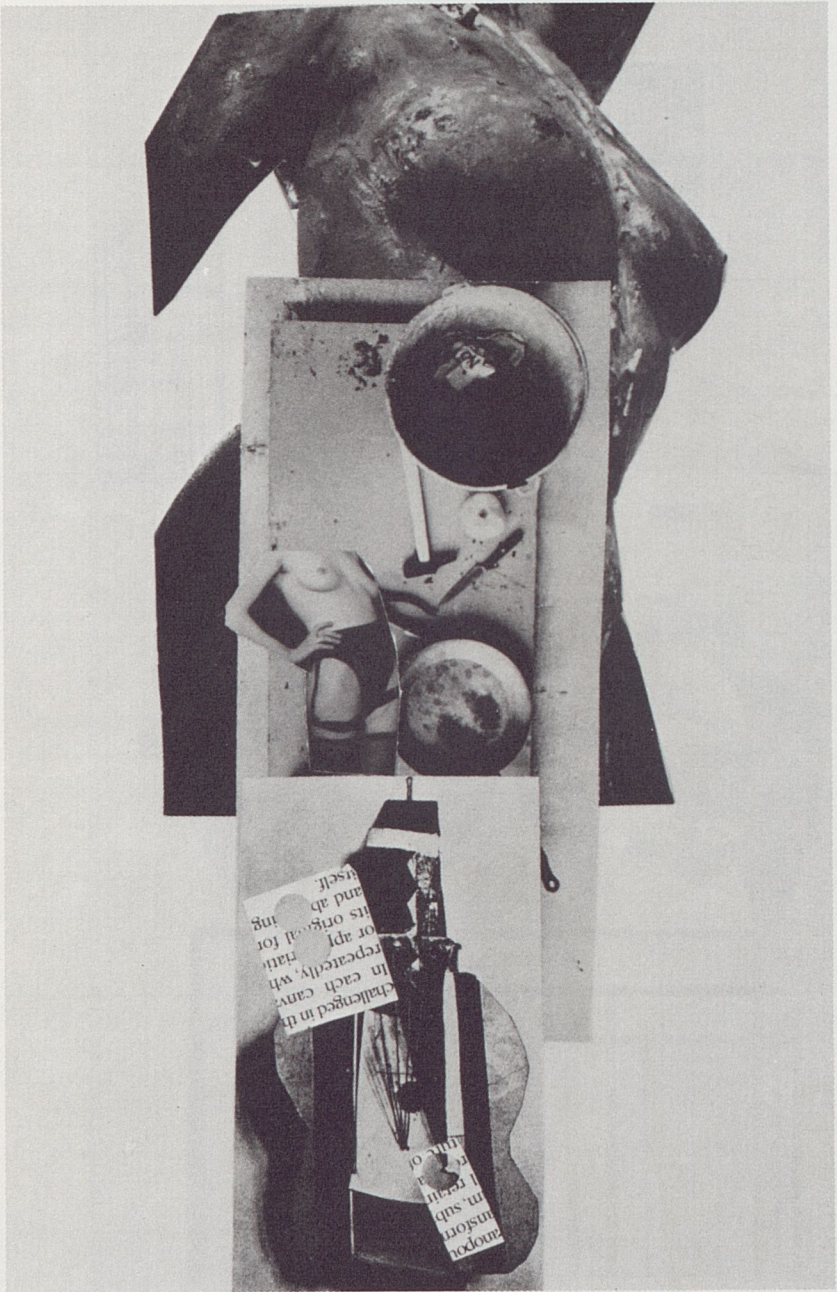
inside and out you turn living all the conditions of the European-Mix
 acculturation of your low-life to plato and to plotinus "let me lead you"
 the dance begins even as you roll cigarette papers across your lips
 the mirror reveals an opaque continent where philosophers get high
 gasping in noxious heroin stupor and embraced in the dialogue of love
 or is it just "fucking" with infatuation and that "other" voice droning
 sybaritic summoning weathers of heated scirocco in the fat past of sicily

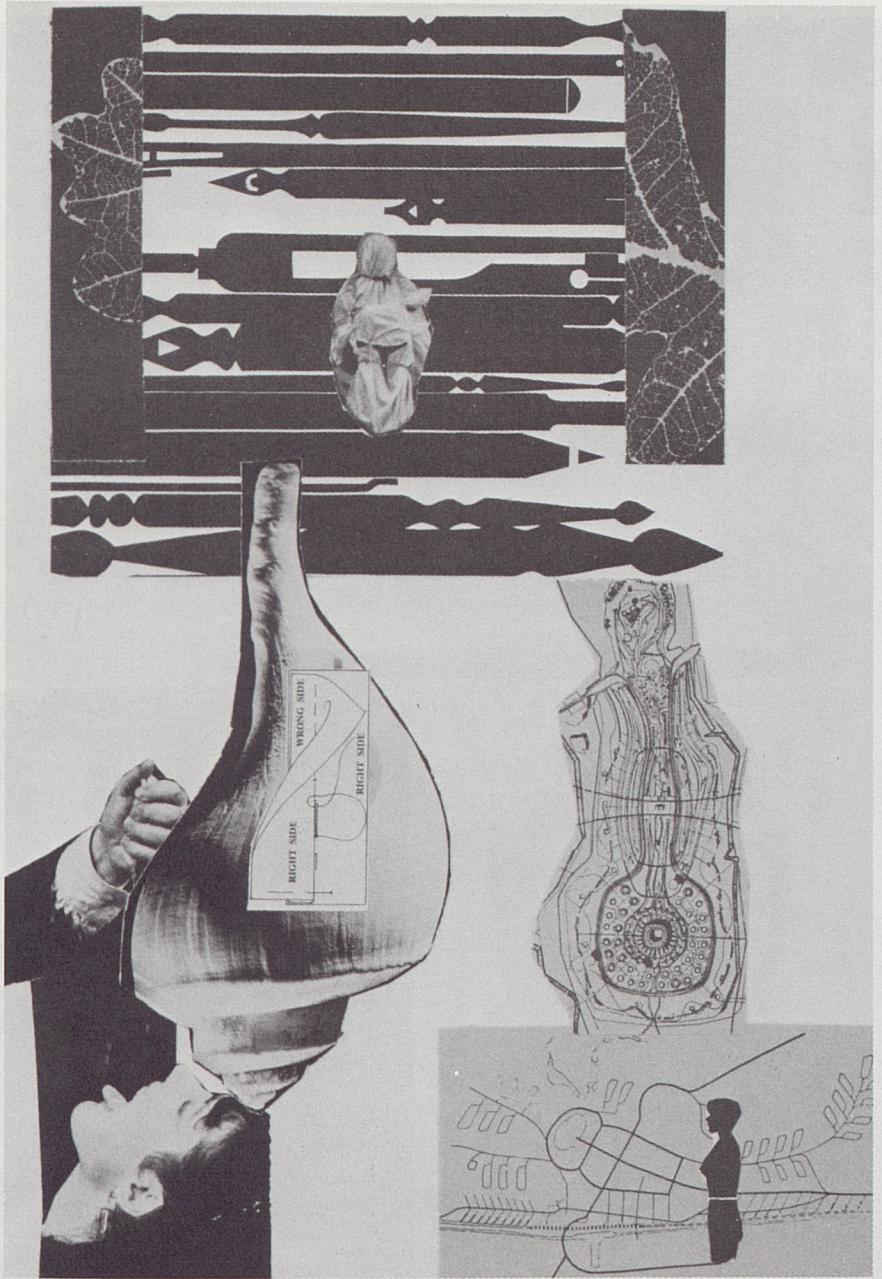
landscape of Circe sleep the terrific somnolence before man turns to beast
.....
just outside in the sand of history they have discovered the dead school
children
the ones lost forgotten kidnapped bruised defeated lacking in self esteem
the ones the nuns pick choosing to wear them as sainted emblems of "fate"
& confused back and forth to the rhythm with which death dances you
proceed
sommnambulant as death touches you all over "metaphysics is a broken rule"
you hear these words as through an infinite funnel that whispering lie
the way death pulls your hair a blue face an organization of echoes
stepping now more rapidly on the canon law pleading with you for
your blood
liquid mineral death spills into your mouth warm kissing you madly
you become so many things ceasing to struggle just "letting go" a flick
of the wrist
dancing finally alone with yourself on the ashes of an undefined morning
you look up and the mountains shudder azure distinct clauses of matter
what enigma has brought you to the other side? you listen again for the
music
only death's voice sussurating low wheedling reminds you...

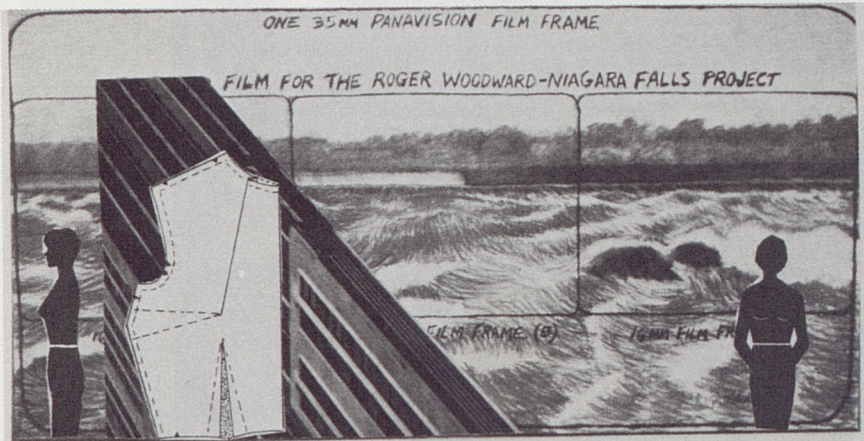
Guy R. Beining: A Beige Copy Portfolio

Six Collages













from Beige Copy

Beige Notes: explanation of the cautious beige box sent with a parcelled look what is left is right and is useless baggage. I claim very little on the steps hear. In division of territory her vision was muddled and was not that powerful per funct per funct per funct per form In lieu of his resurrection his erection swelled feel the buzz feel the field feel field feel field filled in yellowjacket quest. my good eye tells me of the morning lot no spokes & manners protrude. Above WALL PRINT corn eyes turn pop loose clouds within are we readymades already made. the color of life so metallic around sides of FRAMES seeing now FIRE STOKER'S HEART. What he said tested his very movements. 1.) cleaner to earth or cleaner to body. 2.) the blind soldier. 3.) the underweight whore. Thru several views he found one un-green, captured within stick of mind. lieu To be followed and riddled by pumpkin field alight aglow. all the rows of crows hatch disabilities. each crow dipped to feel the ink. A lock always jangles in the head, and the prison of us rises, as we hope for tigers to rage us out of it. MOON SWELTER. her legs in stroke with neons. as if skater on erotic lake she builds her dance & go-go goes the last string. Within BEIGE COPY 1. ARE ERA stalled windowman 2. the ETIQUETTE OF EATING ART 3. D'ART DARTING 4. UNI-reverse, skymatter & hillot 5. BLURRED COPY 6. strip-trodden ankles of WATER 7. KNOT-NOTES 8. AIR-RARITY. the NOTEBOOK is wrinkled as are her hands peeling apples her apeel to the core with HOOKED mouth. the two as twins to note FLAWED DECISIONS cap released one smoke on this cloud a lung to kidney nipping her BOX crackers falling from her mouth howling in bowler's stance pins drop staging darkness. in spring his REFRACTURED foot. puzzle of jungle no one looking into NAKEDNESS. STEM OF US HERE HEAR CLAPPING WITH FALSE THUNDER we in bunches as NEO-GODS so graceless as to FOLD.

Light disorientation: blind pink sexual blue torrid red oval green
 tipped tit lip lit. he took the feather to her dipped it ooze of her
 there no pretense everything RIMMED in gold her legs SPLASHED
 up. One circle & it goes around in WHITENESS a chalky tremor in
 the wind a place to put lost skulls. Art disLOCATION joints elbows
 w i r e sequence on watered (ankles) fired (hands) earthened (belly)
 aired (head). beseeched to the very bodies of the moon she in her
 ground floor balcony with all the fiery clothes of a whore wrestled
 with the cooperative sun blaring baldness from tops of cars. In dogwood
 delirium thru plum tree road to see restricted MOVEMENT of nervous
 light on blinds. he winged from PIT of morning twilight of the whores
 stocking feet the crime is that he can't turn. It is your EYE only in
 WAVE creating pictorial word. hieroglyphics with framework of small
 paintings leading to a lower or upper CASEMENT. there the party
 holds blockage of a different substance idled. her sinister cheapness
 hardened him in SPLASH of her dirty blonde black moves w/porous
 cheeks frozen ORANGE alight alight her ginger bosom still swam smile.
 strip regular plywood door ratio radio. mixed SKIN in breeders part
 eye shade moon floats into sea sick scissored wings small hands fold
 into thighs. make a blue-print of possible piece 9 to 1 scale 1. subway
 2. porno booths 3. inner room. strutting in her landscape atonement
 of high-winged flower PLURAL muck armless I sighted I it on itself
 alone each stem an order deflowered in several caverns of color. a fi
 in 9 slides set up 9 stages as part of text. a dirty redness blazing nails
 in beads of sweat turning ready to part her. this go-go swirling sides of
 her silent lip blowing on burn of pears radiance of legs within circular
 exit. as part of fact failure the was of verbal-visual piece containing
 clay nudes rotating platform. 1/3 glass 1/3 platform 1/3 collage metal
 cables bleed from within 7/32 rust.

RAYMOND FEDERMAN

Last Night's Dream

My wife and I are in a foreign country probably Germany
all foreigners are being arrested to be exterminated
this is unavoidable
I give my wife a last kiss before we are separated
and tell her that whatever happens we should try to survive
then we are told that six people from different countries
would go at one time
I'm asked where I'm from I hesitate and then say America
they put me in a group with five other foreigners
but I cannot tell where they are from
we are walking in the street under guard
the city is deserted it looks like a Chirico painting
I tell the woman next to me that I will escape and survive
as we reach a street corner I run away from the group
I'm not sure if the soldiers are chasing me
but I am scared and out of breath
I reach an impasse blocked by a parapet
I look over the parapet and see the whole city below
vast cityscape covered with fog
I fall to the ground and curl in the fetal position
several soldiers arrive shouting and pointing their rifles at me
they grab me and tie my arms around my body with ropes
I look like a giant sausage
now we are in a white room and the soldiers place me still tied
inside the fireplace and beat me with the butts of their rifles
suddenly I hear a woman's voice crying don't worry we're coming
and I awake inside the dream
I'm still lying on the ground in the impasse next to the parapet
the soldiers beating me with their rifles was dream within a dream
I understand that now I am awake inside my dream
I see four people standing before me two men and two women
they speak French to me and say they are going to help me
I get inside their car a curious foreign car which I cannot identify
this bothers me
one of the women is driving she's wearing a white dress

it looks like a nurse's uniform
we arrive at their apartment
they explain that they are also foreigners and have to hide here
the apartment is rather chic
it seems that the men and women are not married to each other
the one wearing the white dress has two children
she sits at a table with them behind a curtain and they eat
I'm not sure now if I am a boy or still a man
It seems the two men are architects they are talking architecture
they tell me that I can stay here in the apartment
that I'll sleep on a cot in a corner of the livingroom
but I should not go out or I'll get caught
one of the two men asks what I would have done if they had not come
I tell them I would have walked west towards the border
until I reached freedom
he tells me I would not have made it
the men and the women are now discussing the false papers I must get
I have to choose a new name for myself
I suggest Julien Sorel they say it's too obvious
what about Julien Sore I say just Julien Sore
they think it's fine one of the men goes out to get my false papers
I assume my new name and later we all go for a walk in the city
the soldiers in the street are looking at us suspiciously
we decided to go back to the apartment
and wait there until the end of the war
I tell the two young men and women that we must leave immediately
because if we stay we'll all be exterminated
they argue that on the contrary if we leave we'll get caught
I tell them we won't because I already know that we'll survive
they look puzzled
I explain that I already know when the war will end
it will end in 1945
the Americans will drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima
300,000 people will die there
then the enemies will surrender and all of us will be free
they don't seem to believe that I already know all this
when I awake it is the 15th of January 1988.

MELISSA LENTRICCHIA

Fables

There was once a child and a woman and a shack in a land that was either so wet that the walls of the shack turned to mushroom or so dry that the woman turned to brittle brown leaf and disappeared if the child forgot to press the fragile leaf within the pages of his book until the rains came and made the woman soggy again and sullen.

One time when the dry wind was so fierce and electric that the child was fearful the shack would die, he forgot the brittle woman and she crumbled and was blown into the dusty corners of the shack. After days and days the child finally found her, scattered and much older than he had remembered. It took the child many months in the crackling heat to fit the woman's withered pieces back together and glue them with what little spit he had. After that he never again forgot to hide the woman within the pages of his book when the dryness swept over the land and made nettles of her despair.

There was nothing for the child to do when the land was dead from thirst but sit upon his book and eat the ants and wait inside the shack whose papery walls did their best to protect him from the hot relentless wind. There was nothing for the child to do when the land was soaked and drowning but open the book and wear it upon his head (to quiet the constant noise of the rain) and wait for the sullen woman to beat her head against the shack's tin door, for when she was bruised and finished she would remember the child and play the game with him in which they imagined they were fishes swimming upstream, trying to get home, succeeding.

Rarely did the woman speak. It used to be that she spoke to the shack of her secret wish for a house made of stone and an oven that smiled when she filled it with bread and a fig tree that danced in the pink afternoon light. It used to be that she spoke to the child of the lady fat from wines and cheeses who had come from the West to take color pictures of the shack and to give the woman two dozen jars of jam and to hand the child the book of fables. It used to be that the woman said, There is no color here, there is no bread, there is no reading. And the child used to stare in wonder at the woman's angry eyes and did not understand when the anger turned to sorrow and the sorrow to almost nothing.

Then one time the woman felt so wretched as she beat her sodden head against the shack's tin door that she did not see what the child saw, nor did she hear what the child heard: the wet flutter of spongy birds and beasts

as they fell from the woman's wounded head and landed in a heap on the shack's dirt floor; the damp voices of words as they did the same, complaining if they landed on their backs. While the woman cried and cursed the land that did not belong to her nor she to it, the child took up handfuls of the limp living figures that fell from her head and displayed them to the shack as if their prayers had been answered.

The shack had never seen the child smile, and it was such a magical sight that she straightened up and did her best to smile back as she remembered her only dream and said to herself: I dreamed that this would happen, that these ingenious figures would invade the woman while she lay leafy and helpless within the pages of the book. I dreamed that the woman would not endure their presence, would rather be empty of everything than full of wisdoms that change nothing in this homeless land. I dreamed that living words would make a muddy mess of my soft dirt floor. I dreamed of the smile on the child's face. And in my dream I was afraid.

But the fabulous creatures so excited the child that he did not sense the shack's concern. He did not touch the woman's arm as he usually did when she finished beating her head against the shack's tin door. He did not see the woman capture a tiny plump chicken and try to eat it, and then spit it out as she had long ago spit out the useless jam. He did not pay attention when the woman began to play the game of the fishes swimming upstream, trying to get home, succeeding. Nor did he notice when the woman finally gave up forever and went to sleep atop the now blank pages of the book of fables.

At first the words and creatures were floppy and wet and as passive as everything else in the drowning land. But it was not long before the dryness arrived in the night and the child's pliable playthings grew restless and mobile and quick. There was so much confusion inside the shack that for days on end the child did not eat or sleep. For days on end he tried to make pets of creatures as crafty as men and laughed at their bites which he mistook for play. For hours and hours he dug holes in the shack's dirt floor for the birds and the beasts to hide in, and then filled the holes back up when they refused.

As the days went by the words and the creatures grew clamorous and rude, but the child happily mimicked their strange sounds and spread jam on the shack's dirt floor for them to eat and tried to teach them his language even though they ignored him. With bits and pieces of the shack's old walls he made miniature shacks for his new companions and thought that they would love their shacks as much as he did his own, but he was mistaken. So instead he watched and smiled as they swarmed this way and that, in large groups and small, words and beasts of all kinds, and birds that kept trying to fly.

At first the shack said nothing when the child one day asked her, What

are they doing? What game is it that they play? The shack did not want to say. But when he asked her again, What are they doing? What game is it that they play?, the shack could not make herself lie to the child. They are fighting, the shack replied. And the next day when he asked her again, Now what are they doing?, the shack was forced to say once more, They are fighting. And she had to watch one corner of the child's dreamy smile disappear as he asked her three times, What is wrong?

Within her wrinkled ruined walls the shack began to weep. Then she asked the child to lean against her as she spoke to him about the book of fables: The book has served you well, Child, as keeper of the brittle woman who was once your mother until this land where there are no chickens to count before they hatch convinced her she was no one. The book has served you well as bed and chair and as hat to quiet the constant noise of the rain.

But it used to be, the shack went on, that inside the book there lived some tales that do not gladly see themselves as beds or chairs or hats. It used to be that these words and beasts that swarm confused across my soft dirt floor were fixed on separate pure white pages. It used to be that each separate story had a separate ruler whose job it was to teach us what things mean and how to act. Be modest, be humble, be content with your lot, do not desire a house made of stone: this is what the strongest rulers spoke, and as long as their stories were separate and tidy they lived in peace within the pages of the book. Now mixed together in a one-room shack that is either too damp or too dry, they find each other appalling. Now face to face on my soft dirt floor, the Applications are at war, everything has changed. The woman who absorbed them has refused them, the book cannot take them back, they have no purpose here. There is nothing they can teach us, no warnings that apply in this land where there is nothing to want or to become, where there is no chance that we might attempt to taste the grapes or eat the cheese or pretend that we are peacocks. There is nothing else for them to do but turn upon themselves and fight to prove which one of them is truest, which one will last the longest in the dearth that is this land.

What should I do? the child asked.

And the shack replied, You must open my frail tin door and let them out of here, all of them, soon.

I cannot let them out, the child told her. Your door can no longer be opened. Look.

Just inside the shack's tin door a flock of frightened sheep pushed dirt and debris upon a growing mound that would trap the rest inside. Beside them a wolf in sheep's clothing hurled lifeless words, dead fir trees, and half-eaten lions onto the pile. Atop the rising barricade stood a haughty Application whose victories thus far had stretched him out with words beyond his own.

Come away from there, Child, said the weeping shack. It is worse

than I suspected.

I will stop them, said the child whose miraculous smile had completely disappeared. I am so much bigger.

But at that very moment the child felt a stinging in his foot. And when he sat upon the shack's dirt floor to examine his small wound, he felt a stinging in his side, in his stomach, in his back.

Stupid boy! Know thy place and keep it! said the haughty Application as he stung the child with a sharpened shepherd's staff. But the child did not understand these words, he had no place to know or keep. And then he felt a piercing in his scrawny thigh. He saw a tiny shepherd lying dead atop the barricade. He saw the stabbing of a bright red fox.

Come over to the book, the shack pleaded with the child. Lie upon the pages and go to sleep. Come quickly, the shack repeated.

And so the child curled up upon the empty pages of the book of fables, and he was too startled to wonder where the woman went who had once been his mother. He watched the war and listened to the weeping of the shack. He listened to the deaths of turtles who once wanted to fly and now were used as weapons. He listened to the mournful screams of peddlers who had lost their purpose. He listened to the roar and hiss of useless words that had turned upon themselves. He listened to the blistering wind that flung its heat against the shack's tin door. And then the child went to sleep.

Three days later only the shack remained. And as she looked about her, she said to herself, At least the child did not have to witness the gaping holes they finally made in my parched walls. At least he did not have to see the corpses everywhere, left unburied by those who escaped. At least he did not have to hear me pray in my strongest voice for a wind so fierce and electric that it would blow me down forever. For then I, too, might lie upon the book and go to sleep and disappear within its pages where the child and the woman abide without meaning.



2 SURREALISTS OF THE CENTURY by Ronnie Burk, Collage, 1988

RONNIE BURK

Poem

To be delicate yet contain light as an orchid amid dream.
I was eating a mango under a banyan tree and had to blink my eyes
to make sure I was not dreaming Coyocan mercado.
In a real dream I had a zen hair-cut and sat facing the wall.
Kona wind storms blow in upsetting ionization of the atmosphere.
I wear black and feel clear to partly cloudy.
On Makena spirit possession of the heart mantra.
Somewhere on a black and white t.v. set Humphrey Bogart.
The yellow futon standing right side up looks like Quetzalcoatl.
Emptying the mind fills up with sky.
There is talk of living in a Tipi.
If we share the menehunes may help us garden.
Japanese is a good language to learn for the future.
The time is coming but isn't here yet.

DIETER WESLOWSKI

I Have No Problem

with the fact that I am a throw-
back to something out of its water,
that the god of chance has no
face and changes without notice
to the god of whoever's-in-charge.

I have this aura about me
these days, of someone who survived
drowning; only my bug eyes refuse
to shrink back to size. Oh well,
sacré-cour of vaginal peonies,
time to pour more water
into your vase.

Ann B. Holds Forth on Angels

Now you must remember
that the whole point about angels
is the mystical number ten,
which is also the number for water.
Ok, let's see,
angels in rank and choir: there are ten
choirs. We are told
their singing moves the planets.
Used to be everybody had a Guardian Angel,
then the world got too crowded,
and the angels went back to Heaven.
This may or may not explain
the current high level of crime.

There are four top angels. Can't remember
their names but they correspond
to the four corners of the earth.
For every good angel there's a bad one;
for example, there is a good angel Stanley
and a bad angel Stanley. Now, this leads
us to the inexorable question of Hell.
The hells of the world are its volcanoes,
active and inactive. When they spill forth,
the damned rush into the sea and are cleansed.

HERB SCOTT

She Dreams a Letter from Her Son

Mother, don't hide your dreams in my head.
Mother, my eyes haven't opened yet.
Mother, the days are puppies put to sleep.

Mother, the cottonwoods are crying in the night.
Mother, I am too young to go to school.
Mother, you touched my face and lost your fingers there.

Mother, a gun is a good teacher.
Mother, I have learned my lesson.
Mother, I am staying after school.

The Minister

I would not lie to God.
I am like a woman
with two loves.
Will I speak
the right name?

The old men
in libraries read
the news for warmth.
When will their names
rise up
and not their bodies?

Yesterday I prayed
for a young man
shrunk to the size of his bones:
Pain, your apron is full.
Thrust that bitter fruit
down his throat. Choke him.

It is the same each day.
I see the children
in busses making tongues
and crossed eyes against
the world, laughing at God.

PAUL HOOVER

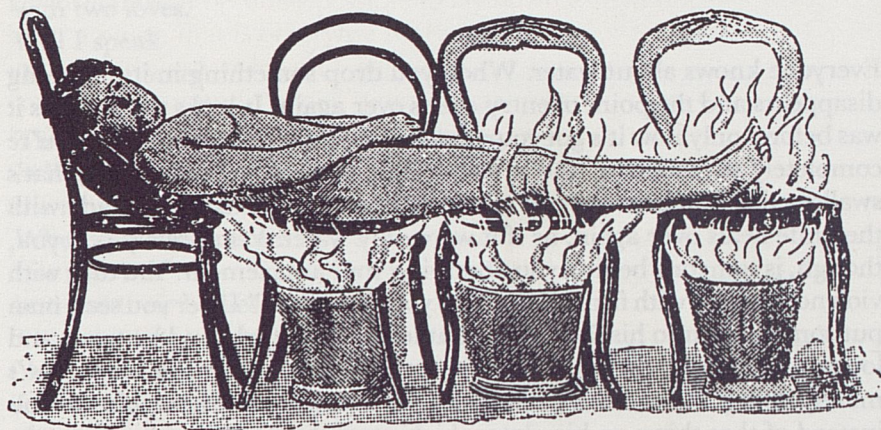
Water

Everyone knows about water. When you drop something in it, the thing disappears and the point of entry closes over again. It looks the same as it was before, only now it's got your watch. After you dive into water, you're completely surrounded, and it feels a little strange to be the thing that's swallowed. Then one day you're eating steak and the cut you made with the knife heals over again, as if it were only water. What really gets you, though, is someone behind you observing your amazement. You turn with violence and say with firmness, "Who you lookin' at?" Later you see a man put something into his face with what looks like a fork, and he turns and looks at you oddly. He wonders why you have such an interest in what he's merely doing. His teeth are revealed for a moment, as if he might eat you instead of that thing on his plate which everyone knows is bleeding.

The Dog

They were given the dog, and the next day it died of a heart attack. They hadn't even thought of a name. The father thought, "Maybe it was a little too old. At twenty years of age, a dog is rarely playful, but exceptions make the rule." They buried the dog in the yard, and that was that, except for the smell in the room, like that of an older man. There had been the burning dog beside the swimming pool (this was in a dream), the blond dog with blue eyes, the dog in present tense, and the dog at the back of the eye. Consciousness is not disjunct, and one thing follows another. An orange was on the table, sliced into equal parts. The father was reading the paper. The mother was humming an old rock song. The children were in their rooms. The dog was climbing the stairs.

Correspondence



Dear Caliban:

CALIBAN's Contributors' Advice or Free Speech Corner tends to offer its editor and readers more irresponsible Free Speech, I feel, than practical advice. I'm over 40, alas, but might agree with Hayden Carruth if he could also advise those under 40 where to emigrate. Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Chile, Cuba, Ethiopia, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Uganda, the Union of South Africa? Surely none of these. But would Canada, Bechuanaland or Swaziland accept an invasion of all Americans under 40 who might follow Hayden's advice? Perhaps we should first try, whatever our age, to make the United States more livable. We have tended all too long to allow those who rule us to get away with murder: they have indeed been responsible for too many deaths in Vietnam, Central America, among the homeless at home, or elsewhere. Far too few of our Presidents, Senators or Congressmen ever really feel that their lives are threatened as a consequence of their actions.

The world's smallest and, I believe, most ancient Republic, that of San Marino in Italy, has seventeen thousand citizens and has long been envied as the "felicissima repubblica" because of its uniquely felicitous constitution, originally drafted by Humanist scholars of Aristotle's *Politics*: instead of

being afflicted, as we are, with a President who remains in power, however incompetent he may prove to be, for at least four years, the citizens of the Sovereign Republic of San Marino elect every year two ruling “Captains” who share their powers but can both be sued later for anything that they did wrong during their brief reign or neglected to do.

The Republic of San Marino derives most of its income from the sale of its many new issues of postage stamps. Very few of its citizens are ever tempted to emigrate. Every once in a while, however, they have been known to vote Communist and, unlike Grenada, to get away with it. The United States appear indeed to be too big to be really happy. Perhaps we should scrap our whole constitution and start again from scratch, even if this would require abandoning the “terrorism” of avant-garde art and literature in favor of more strictly political terrorism. Marcel Duchamp was not risking his life when he exhibited his urinal as an original work of art. I never shared Pound’s opinions, but cannot refrain from respecting the courage that he displayed in defending them. He had the makings of a good assassin, but was fascinated by the sound of his own voice and talked too much. During the War years, I often used to listen to him speak over Rome Radio. Perhaps more American poets should have Pound’s courage, though not necessarily his particular convictions, and CALIBAN should perhaps become a more dangerously anarchistic publication, deliberately rousing its readers, as the French poet Louis Aragon once did in one of his poems, to commit political mayhem. In any case, most avant-garde art and literature has become by now old hat.

Edouard Roditi

Dear Caliban:

I’ve been grumbling about post-modernism for a time now on my own. The term “New Modern” is a strange one. My heroes in the arts are from the *old* modernist period.

Maria Corti’s quotation in the Porta interview, that the language of poetry might actually be able to change human behavior, is a bit chilling. Change human behavior to what? Is poetry to become mind control? Are poets to become behavioral scientists?

Something in me wilts at the idea of brave new worlds. To quote Maria Corti again, “linguistic utopia.” It has sort of the quack-quack of the shoptalk of twenty and more years in this country. One easily tires of the well-made nothing. Which may describe the universe.

Is it really believed that Homo Sapiens can speed up his evolution through art? Be changed genetically through poetry? Why not? Life itself

doesn't make any sense. Why shouldn't poetry be able to make permanent chemical changes? Poetry then as a branch of medical science. Perhaps in time when poetry has perfected the species there will be no need for poetry. Perhaps we will come to live as the cows. Quite seriously, they know something; herd animals needing no shelter, needing only grass growing out of the very earth they stand on.

Sometimes, Caliban, I feel like abandoning my hands, and walking on all fours as I did in my earliest youth. There's something happy about it. This may sound silly, but if poetry could bring us to this, that our hands became walking instruments, I would be the first to champion the glories of poetry. I'm not talking about hooves, although that might come later. I would settle for simple paws, say, on the order of a dog's. They seem to know something too.

Perhaps we are too little to do very much about anything. The universe seems awfully large. It may be smaller than we believe. But then we are probably smaller than we believe. It may all be a joke that nobody made. A mistake. A smudge. A wisp of possible thought.

But it is encouraging that you feel that there are horizons yet to be entered. That there is worthy work yet to be done. And that we are not just stuck with what we have now.

Russell Edson

Dear Caliban:

What concerns me in Porta's remarks is his misuse of the term "myth" and his consequent rejection of mythology based on that misuse. Porta's myths, such as the myth of egalitarianism or the myth of freedom, are ordering principles, at once reassuring, false, and subject to co-option by totalitarian governments. For me, myth is the storehouse of hermetic and cultural lore, the on-going dialogue between consciousness and those unknown, silent areas of the mind that achieve expression through this medium.

The power-seekers will use whatever means lie at their disposal, reason as well as myth—and ultimately will rely on the myth of pure force in any case. I've seen this criticism leveled at Bly's work—that the subconscious is just a power source for fascists—and I don't buy it. Even a cursory examination of virtually any totalitarian aesthetics will reveal the complete absence of and antagonism toward any input beyond the rational, the socially "real."

Myth, in actuality, is as much about disorder as order. Where would one locate the well-springs of dadaism and surrealism except with the same

sources that gave rise to the trickster and the apocalypse? Fascist aesthetics are plainly hostile to this whole body of “unwholesome” influences. If certain movements played into the hands of the fascists, as Porta claims, it is through their attacks on the social order, prompting a response by the forces of order and providing a target for those forces. In this case, the struggle itself may be viewed as a mythological whole.

More to the point, however, it might be more accurate to say that the totalitarians, in their repression of traditional mythic expression through religious ritual, compensated by adopting the ritualistic elements while subverting the mythic elements that gave them meaning.

In any case, one has to maintain a certain cautiousness about a theorist, like Porta, who attacks modernist utopias while at the same time positing anti-utopias which seem to be merely utopias re-defined, and who suggests that truth is an a priori socially critical stance (as if the individual was born with a genetic hostility toward society).

One would like to accept his other points, that modernism is entering a new phase with a yet-to-be-revealed form and content, that an art that communicates has the potential to renew society, etc. But reason, by itself, is sense-bound and affords us only an objective experience of the world, while all around this island of perception is a deeper, subjective connection with the universe. I, for one, do not intend to move “forward” into any project or stance that thinks it can advance by severing the links between the various areas comprising this totality.

My own comments at the end of #3 were intended to suggest, through the references to Black Elk and Jonah, the absolute personal necessity of giving voice to a socially valuable report from the experiences of the individual that occur precisely beyond his own ego. Which leads us, it seems to me, toward Ginsberg’s “poetry as prophecy,” not toward another revised rationalist utopia, however it is named.

Gary Aspenberg

JAMES GRABILL

Belt Drive

In deep Buffalo, in the steel mill by the river, Hans loads
the bales of steel scraps onto the immense moonly conveyor
in the midafternoon, on a Wednesday, as in other cities, feeling

crates of oranges, shoes, lotion, or bundles of brochures
pulse, loaded on and sent out, through midafternoon tunnels,
shuddering through reptilian screees of machines, geyed whines

from ultraviolet grindings, baseline dusts scanned and pumped
out in time by passing horses as they speed through a boy's chest
to the 1953 hayride coming to stop at the door of his father's car.

What a fat! Women straw and hugs, shadowed by the barn-stormed
moon of alfalfa-cheeked ice-age banjo-gunned steam-glass working
up from late evening turns, after the usual eclipse of sleep,

and them journeymen still acting their grammar schoolboat
long-distanced resilient foundry deep in molten Cleveland
to make a frame on the green board woofing back your answers

to the big writing up there cranked in front with cattle yawrowing,
behind the rocks that had reeling light eaten and partaken
through sage of auric blossoming tundra, the China flaring matches

in passing cars on a way through wakes of uncles of the body.
Hans shifts and floats the steel rocking through that black shining
hole in the ground that farmers plowed and raked, the particles

snowing back around bent green gearing oblivic and skewed oxiting
landgrass station, flakes from clicking heels, pelvic filaments
from pearl-clustered hallway licked and oily heat of the doors,

of the lockers themselves, flooring night lapse of conscious
brakes thrown back steaming in blue-black leaflight, thighs
of oaken slowdance scout hikes, whittled back, into a hand,

the boy's knife still sleeping in its ore and raindrops.
 Hans wires a bale and it slogs down onto the sweatbed steel-veined
 conveyor in fall, as stewed tomatoes are swabbed out of the deep

kettle by the white-dressed woman at the changed moment something
 could happen, like Kenny pull on Susan's pony belt jerkily
 in grass of a moment that passes through each little body

as it waits in a line ready to eat something that will fill it
 with peaches, that inks off the fool cows of the yellow paper
 berrying some kinder to the children who sleep in the week,

who be inking off the fool microscope numbers moonlight made
 when we went away. Then, ratcheting, the brakes are thrown,
 deep in 1957 again, or in 1900—unthinkable for us, unborn,

the phosphorus tracers of a touch at the back of the pool
 room hard hock radio amber of a grandfather's booming shadow
 thrown into the room turning switchboard of august beams

when she touched his hair on the split diamond of an hour.
 Nothing better, Hans forking the crates through, from a man-
 pumping ox urge draining the love luck from those pennyng

and brokered down wing to what or why root up to musky screens
 of stars again those fathering fisheyed ocean waves striking
 their fossil fire in hearts with grandma a girl then, waiting

lifetimes to look through your century in a curved glance,
 the tiny porch lights towered over by your friend, on a July
 evening, on her swing, hedge-mansioned, all hothouse odors

of earth. Then the belting point of night, when slabs of iron
 run stacked and bands arc tightened in the mainstay swale-holler
 down a ramp of the engines and Saturday wheeling, onions, coolness

of heather, sunseting through the backs of beetles, like spoken
 hold of a hand becoming a hand, the rolling of an apple's light
 of it all. This hour, all that is, how can it be incoming

itself and not sequoia-thickened by gulls watching or waved
 when night fills in, whole ships of forest or ocean plunging
 forward, through the star-filled galaxy of a seal's bark?

What It Does to Him

He has swallowed the mother's breast, and held an apple gently to feel the seeds inside. He has felt the house exploding the speed the earth explodes. Doesn't he think everything is opening up? Doesn't he feel everything closing down? He sees red-orange pastures between the molecules of dusk and great cranes bending their arms of steel between streets of wind.

The trembling ore of sodium wakes him, from 200 miles south, near Columbus. He doesn't think we will kill each other off. But when we are dead, will it seem as though we have? He thinks of the cancer we lick from the arrows and of the strength we never expected. It is simple breathing, folding back over us, through us, its silk worms weaving us into our bodies, at all points! He has hardened into the father's bone, and felt the soft teeth of vegetables. He has let his blood go, and watched it come back. He has kept going by simply standing still.

In the Scent of Earth

Deep in tracks, where the cat vanished,
the jazz in my chest started to form.

**

Silverware touching the shell of listening to it.
Flower flowing in lizardly flames from the yellow.
Even the faint moonlight around things that wait,
or rooms a horn makes around itself, like years.

**

Chords computing, bodies full of their trees,
the horse sweeping over land felt from our bones,
or ships whose massive sides split through the globe
forming, and great jets landing like gnats.

**

In the hammers, in the street glowing, in listening
to how fires are leaning. In eyes at the dance,
and buildings taken ceremoniously, back to before
they were worked—with scent, the ocean floors appear
through some of the plants that let the world form.

CHARLES BERNSTEIN

Desalination

Then suddenly and without explanation
a bell rings. A grifter, his hands
covered by calfskin gloves, drives to
the station house to receive the goods.
Exemplary passages are cited. A
mystical blond with a scintillating
hat devours the nightlife. Overtures
are made to the underlying functionaries
in the hope that they might oil
the machinery. Fades prompt petty
tirades on the part of the tired
professor. Enabling fictions adorn
the prisoner's cells. In a minute
you can hear the dust settle on the
settee. The troupe fans out to
outflank the patrol. Portions
of lockets are auctioned at poolside.
A gazelle collides with a zebra
on the crowded skyway. Sentiment
cements the well-settled arrangement.
The fabricator eschews her prognostication.
Streetlamps crash into pounding
surf. Foreign lances punctuate the intermission.
A billiard pictures a tumbling
terrace. Sewage accumulates at rearmost
flexpoint. Plumage flutters from
above, gift of a departed origin.
The regulator consults the ordinance

but cannot determine its application.
 Sustenance evaporates in subsequent
 slumber. Amulets emit armatures.
 An obligation meets its reward. Laundry
 revolves in large metal tumblers filled
 with soapy water. The radio covers
 the burn in the table. Headwaiter
 pockets tip from man in wool
 suit, makes bet. Snow obliterates
 the distinction between here & eternally.
 Man's body stocking constricts the flow
 of his blood. Oil tankers pour steam
 into the gulf, upsetting the balance
 of argument and insularity. Sorcery
 threatens the petulant perpetuators.
 Unequal in demand, frightening in
 reward, flares appear dim
 & the sky a tenement ceiling.
 Unguents unnerve the future bookie's
 wry predicament, mindful of deeds
 left unfinished, duties not
 discharged. Crumbling
 into the Seine, memories of mysteries never
 conceived. Then drops a lantern, a
 picture window. Notation develops on top of
 nuance. Crusts accrue like pillows
 in a fight. Voiced as if regard were
 trust or limousines malteds. The fun
 is over before the fun begins. As when
 a chance to speak becomes a chance to
 slip: accommodation its own desperation, dispute
 its own punishment. Pulling a dumbwaiter
 & wishing for water. Discoloration of the enmazed
 tractor parts—shifting through the pieces to find

the hearth. Hunt or hunched or clump or
 confront. Roads roll into the harbor, with
 no sign of the travelers. The crow flies
 over the abandoned mine, irrespective of
 penetrable homilies. Slow, maybe slender, taking
 foreground for must. Craters cantilever to the corner.
 A forager flushes his finds. Sacrifice
 deploys secreted salvage. Burgers
 bounce busily. Ratiocination cops
 plea to lesser offense. Curls dwindle
 in the high-pressure dome. The draidel
 begins to wobble wildly before tumbling to
 ground. Emanations suffuse the body.
 Sound permeates the *schul*. Young man
 with horn can't hit imaginary note.
 Steeplechase cascades through valley.
 Someone says something. Motor oil materializes
 miraculously. Camels stagger in the desert.
 Snowballs batter the Mercedes as it speeds
 through the puddle splashing the pedestrians.
 The bride, tripping on trail, makes her way
 to the launch. Holsters pile up in the checkroom.
 The mission is cancelled. Balloon slips
 from hand and floats into sky, like
 the soul of Jesus meeting
 its father. The bus disappears on route
 to Jakarta. Holiday sales mask the despair
 of a populace exhausted by good cheer and bad
 chocolate. Ice coats the windows and railing
 of the fabled outhouse. An apprentice disconnects
 the hose that irrigates the pavilion's
 ostentatious gardens. Workmen
 erect the towering edifice according to plan, then
 report to next job.

GENE FRUMKIN

Outnumbering Any One Way

Too much kindness in a style infects the humor
with summer's disease. Skin softens, eyes reflect herons
in a pond, their instinctive lingering in a single
stance. Teeth grow shadows in summer, the darker laughter
more visible in the kindness of silver. Thought, in self-love,
wends back catlike along its phantom trails,
and sleekness gradually assumes its voice. The kind one
is better as a liar, a bit wooden, a jester stitched
to the back of his lord. The kind one distributes her style
among the several tributaries of a supreme river,
and she does not weaken in sickness; she laughs
out of the coroner of her mouth. He witticizes
doggedly to divert himself from the one way, the too-insistent
kindness that one day will hoist him to his knees.

*you write: i'm back now, though not with Fred, but
in Winston-Salem where Joanie lives. she's been a darling sis,
mothering me almost as if I were the younger.
the kids are back in school, Alan at SUNY-Buffalo (just starting)
and Marlene finishing up high school. so far apart in distance,
but I think close in spirit. my mother is as well
as can be expected. believe me, I'm glad
to be off Oahu. a very strange thing happened.*

just as the goldfinch brightens in summer, my memory of you
turns to me with a voice clearer than unimpeded breath.
i refer so much to words that life pleases me most
when I can almost phrase you into presence. you are not here
with me nor there in some former blessing, but a formation
of words possible as a single brushstroke on air. style outnumbers
any one way of saying anything. it harbors delayed attitudes,
beginning with a goldfinch, brightening in longer exposure
to light, in measures ripened by time in unapprehended
recesses. because your figure lacks the subtle shadings
of anima, it refers me to stylized beings, hieroglyphs

drawn on an obelisk. This is not psychology. It is a separation from all moments of repression, an embrace barely perceptible in its source. watching a goldfinch alight on the seedbox, I seize you who are missing from this life. my voice calls out and yours answers, then another voice, yours also. All divergences converge. Here, here. Hear.

*Francine, who is Jewish—which I don't remember telling you—
and Ralph knew this sculptor, Goldenberg.*

*he was apparently a good sculptor and a kindly
generous man. he used to go to the beach with them
quite often, Francine told me, but he always wore
a T-shirt. he'd never take it off, no matter how strongly
he was urged to. he said it was a kink of his.
so how can you argue against a kink? one day
at the beach when they were with a bunch of other friends
a couple of the men got after Goldenberg to take off his shirt.
of course, he refused. and he couldn't be persuaded.*

Theodore Roosevelt was born in a New York City subway terminal. The trains go by so fast it takes a trained eye to see the glasses and moustache. He visits the subway to look for his house, but the trains are moving too fast, downtown, uptown. A big bull moose was born in Theodore Roosevelt's head; he stuffed it, trained its head to hang on the subway wall where modern graffiti overshadow it. Whenever he returns he feels insubstantial, the parts of his body moving too fast, some downtown and some up. Get hold of yourself, he says, but can't. His big stick, of course, splintered long ago, his glasses cracked, his moustache fell off. The trains whiz by and Teddy can only wave at them abstractly, constituents of another day when his house stood solidly in its tracks, no matter the subway already advancing toward a new city, which remembers his name, his house, everything, remembers his bullying rush through the infant hours of our century.

*finally a couple of the men just grabbed him—
he was an older man, in his sixties—and tore the shirt
off his body. you'll never guess what they saw.
Goldenberg had an "SS" tattooed near his armpit,
which I'm told is one of the places where the needle
hurts the most. "ss"—can you believe it?*

If one thinks a wallet in American, is this a neural event concomitant with thinking an exactly like wallet in German? Having left his wallet on a table in Vienna, the man returns to find it missing. What has he found? Is it German if he is American, germane at all to the neural question of what is immaterial and what physical? To locate his wallet, the American must be present at the site of that table, where the wallet must also be instead of in his thought alone. This question is interesting only if one cares about finding what is missing in what we call intuition, which is not exactly a thought but the intimation of a presence in thought usually alien to it. Is intuition the same in German as in American even if in both languages it is the same wallet, a brown one with a gryphon stitched in its leather? Is Vienna the same city? Is my intuition the same as yours in my language? Such problems are interesting only if we have lost sight of the physical. Is losing sight the same as thinking sitelessly? Be assured your wallet is safe. If you keep in mind what is already stored there. If you believe Vienna is already a myth even before you leave it, a place long ago, once physical but receding so fast, already, that your intuition acts entirely as a future tense. Having forgotten your wallet, can you still feel its neural mystery as a past object now ghostly, a question to be asked later, when you are not even thinking of it in German?

goldenberg, whom they had all thought to be a Jew, who identified himself as a Jew, was in fact a Hitler Stormtrooper. all Stormtroopers had "SS" tattooed in tender places to show their machismo, but Goldenberg, who was such a nice and even talented man, what a shock! as it happens Francine had relatives who had died in the camps and ovens. can you imagine how this made her feel? and what was she to do?

The bird's chest incandescent like an old woodstove. We hear no chirping from this assemblage that stands doddering on two matchsticks. It is passive, a still life in a bric-a-brac shop. Then the bird's blood-eyes flicker, something moves through them, drawing us despite our distaste. Feathers stuck on wings, beaked head strung to body, this creature pretends to sign for reality. Its creator clearly blundered, despite

the dance in its eyes, which we ourselves mimic, just for a moment, before good sense constrains us. In that moment, when we forgot how fragile reality is, did something alight in us as on a bough, carry us through fresh, numinous air? Whatever flew through us was childlike, a Halloween trick. The bird tumbles down, ignites itself. We were fooled.

the Goldenberg she and Ralph knew was one man, the Stormtrooper was another, a Goldenberg they couldn't know at all or even imagine. what was the just, the moral thing to do? which man were they to believe? later on Goldenberg admitted his past life. he had shared responsibility for the deaths of many Jews, and others.

now you are writing to me on a sheet of paper that has no other side so that when I read I will be looking for the absent side, certainly not a carbon but, then, what could it be, this sidelessness, a profundity of art versus physics? truthfully, I don't know how to hold this page of writing, where to grasp it, certainly not on its reverse side which, as I have already stipulated, is unavailable. that is to say, your address to me has no witness, no backing. i can refuse to read what you have written with impunity before the writerly law since whatever you've said is without dimension, is certainly less than a surface. you are so clever to communicate by circumventing even so elusive a surface as the mobius strip, which at least curves and is describable. here I must meditate on a dynamism conceptually evasive, impossible except as a concept of art without reference to possibility. such writing as you are doing leaves no sign of itself, is in fact a pretense at vanguardism. stop this writing right now before it's done. it can't be done. are you thinking of an oral page? don't think of this. nothing I say will authorize you. legally, we are the same mouth. let's not say what cannot be meant, although this is better than a one-sided argument consuming many, though brief, artless pages.

Watching the Orioles play the Royals in Baltimore, he timed himself from future to past, a mood in pasture brought on by his sense of grazing, the players below, as they hit or fielded, moments of departed heat. This was evening

when moths and gnats, the entire industry of insects, moved
 in waves across the arclights. Recalling
 that time to come when he was dead, he compared this living
 to wrong directions. He could have been out there
 on the field, pounding his glove or stretching his weighted bat.
 Oh the herd of intention, to be a star in the minor heavens!
 He thinks he will be alive on Arcturus 36 lights years
 from now, ever waiting no matter who wins.
 The turf greens in his four stomachs, and he hurrahs
 for the home team as if he knew his business, his light's exact location.

*his life since the war's end had been an atonement.
 although he couldn't convert to Judaism because
 he would have had to lie about his past, he nevertheless
 studied Judaism and had taken on at least the outer trappings
 of a Jewish life. Francine and Ralph, too, remained
 in a quandary. meanwhile, Goldenberg went off
 to Carrara to purchase marble for his sculpting.*

She dreams, wearing a white, wide-sleeved blouse, applied
 with satin apricots. The usual horse clatters through the barn.
 Ziggy Elman's trumpet angelically sings, although she does not
 hear it so much as throb to Krupa's drums on another disc, the moon
 perhaps, the tides sweeping away blanket-to-blanket
 patterns. This is her dream, a zigzag, an improvisation
 on the ballistics of her life. The checkout, a rubbed
 impression in molten metal. Blood swirls in her brain.
 Someone observes her from within her belly. To dream
 reminds the others of a sail gliding whitely into a moon
 stitched like an apricot on black satin drapes. Curtains,
 someone in the audience quips. Taps. Lights out.
 Cooler jazz now, electric, what we call neo-groin music,
 without the saving partition between angels and the dead.

if style is a voice, who are you? Disassembled,
 dissembled, a culture violates the singular portraiture
 with which art approaches its maker. so you wheeled around
 toward your appointment, disappointed it was a man
 without mail. Multiple astounds with its singularity, almost
 insular in force raying out over the host of variable skies.
 you impose, with tears in your words, the penal
 on the penile, distending constriction by warding off
 tumescence. Yet style, a blessing in its burgeoning, a haven

on earth. you are, that is, you smile at the immortelles
 you hold as if they were letters to be read or recomposed
 into an artful contour of the screaming night. Yet voice overcomes
 style, mimics culture in hope and despair, various
 as the winds' completely complex directions, not to be overly simplified
 by meaning. you are French, are you?—why did I
 think so? Perhaps deconstruction reconstructs in vision
 of language act differently than any single referential unit
 would seemingly allow. now you are readying for bed,
 taking your words with you into your dreams, smiling, a style
 among the dozens your facial accent assumes each day.
 The ways are many, the voice is one. you think you've
 heard that before, but can the spokes in your wheels revolve
 that quickly into sexual details mailing themselves?

*while he was there, inspecting the marble, a large chunk
 fell on him from a high place and instantly killed him dead.
 it was like he'd been trying to make a new model person
 of himself, in a sense, a statue. and what happens?
 he's killed by the very material of his new being.
 talk about irony. if you were to try to make
 a poem of this stuff, what reader would believe it, right?*

you, who are no duty, give me license to do
 what I must imagine was a way to do. if I am forgetful,
 you will remember me at the right instant. if I stare
 too long at sun's midnight, you will blind me
 with sudden sight, in mind seeing all again as in
 the first instant. all ways, how you smile itself
 a style, one of many, like the weather. if I write of you,
 it is the muse of my moods, many so old I can barely recall
 what memory hides them. The memory too, you see,
 is not alone, is life's sundriness, its pharmacy.
 when I feel myself most alive, least dusty in the blood,
 you rise in me, a sudden hot sun ascending through clouds,
 through snow itself. should I say miraculous, you would laugh,
 delighting in hyperbole, to think of me helpless
 in lonely abandon. This is not how we speak in the modern manner,
 the cadence is older, of a simpler trust, and what I say
 represents a state efficiently moral, though roughly designed.
 trust your weather, love me whenever: I hear you.

just too cockeyed a turn of events. i wouldn't

*believe such a thing if I hadn't been given it as exact truth
by a dear friend. even though Francine has some knowledge
of the so-called military mind via her ex-husband,
Goldenberg was beyond her understanding.*

Look, Stunt Woman applies her makeup. In its office
the Corporate Ego makes up its mind, a sly touch
to affect the rouge deal, take over the powder, eye
the shadow. Break-a-leg, Stunt Woman, that's the wheel
of the deal over waterfall. Corporate Ego cracks a joke in half.
Shell time. Peel an eye. Rind on. Stunt Woman hangs
on Whitney's eggwhite wall where Corporate Ego spots her,
splatters in fact. It's worth any backward fall
through phony glass. Make up, it's only a game
as in foul, pretend as you will, swell. Or shrivel with
blood-trots. How you fell, Stunt Woman, head on into
oblivion, Indian lady not even drunk, supposed to get high
on heights. But Corporate Ego lives on the 51st floor of what used to be
the World's Tallest Whiskey Bottle. Too much distance
to make up. Here's a hand, Stunt Woman, though it won't
replace the fog that coats your red-eye flight into the all-star
pigeonhole. You can be replaced, says Corporate Ego, by any
whistle-stop in any war-whooping crazy picture show.

Wherefore this report enters obedience, climate in size,
perdurable. Question the foretelling as bond
to incident. Refrain closely from distinction as cup
to saucer, wherefore a steam aligns with commodity.
Then in structuring voice regard telltale dramatics as host
and fireside. Quickly a barometer registers high-low
grudging cartels. Thus in card flame a hand supports as many
blue-chip stocks as water buries. Distinction relies
eminently on ideas already briefed in crystal. Prospects, if
limited, connect to markets limned to reflect fuel tanks.
Keep alive a mordant ear, listen to street squatters. In panhandling
describe the curving fingers in terms that refuse
to squirm in index or any other context. Buy when the bet
fulfills a promise you made to yourself when drunk.
Wherefore a motion compromises this report that ends
with a clogged signature. Maple syrup from Vermont
acquires value when the boss of signs agrees
to end construction. This questions motives in assigning
a soldier to duty before the votes are counted or the straight

shows its weakness to the bluff. There are also cliffs that have strong names from which jumpers gain stature as they fall. These are but a few of the rigged contingencies.

her dilemma, whether to break with him or accept him as the proto-Jew he was trying to be, was of course resolved by a hunk of marble. a strange thing, and oddly after Francine recounted the story, I felt very ambiguous about her—and Ralph too.

i re-create nothing by naming you Sweet Honey in the Rock, yet the Sweet Briar auditorium fills again with breath and bright costumes. i call this a sugar in the memory, a cream, and I sip it cold now. i sit at a table, absorbed in fading film, you alive somewhere among the greenest fields either of us ever slept in. and I don't think I am crowding possibility by assuming it in how you smile: so much the hardnosed orphan, the pepper on my tongue in the blues of night. the auditorium fills, the five women sing black gospel, the signer weaves her fingers into speech even I, who am not deaf, can hear. yes, the heart goes sweetly low, grows from grief to grief, you the tensed bow, the smart arrow.

we'd been having fun as a threesome. it was good. even though I couldn't explain it to my mind, my body accepted the situation. but now there was a turnaround. how could they have been so misled by this Goldenberg, a Nazi of the worst sort? (is there a best sort?) i felt less for them, less comfortable being with them. in fact, I felt like their accomplice in some shady design, a "crime" against humanity.

Everywhere a window. Inside the room a pineapple on a dish, some peaches, the striped tablecloth and curving drape. Through the window several red-roofed buildings stand as guardians of the mild blue sky. Somewhere this orderly arrangement exists, of objects sure of their place in thought, the window conserving the room's interiority. No one thinks to look out. Later, some years later, this very situation looks dangerous, the security gone laxer, the peaches nervous. What has changed is the window's position, although it

looks the same. The red-roofed buildings press against the glass, and also the sky. One is no longer stationed in the interior. Objects have suffered the wearing away of sufficiency; they darken from the exterior view, are visible only to depth penetration. Eventually windows will be useless.

High-Risk Woman spares no one her love. If this means she aspires to the seclusion of a stool in the music room overlooking the practice sessions of her lovers, then how many hours can the day hold? Never enough to say I am too old for her or she too standard for me. Love is her greed. She returns a modest welfare to the musicians. In the other way she offers everyone her aspiration. To inspire, High-Risk Woman would breathe love into the word itself, the brightening rod of her bird-making. The generous requiem, I think, for which I am too dead to compete. All is nothing in taking sparing at its word. High-Risk Woman climbs off her stool, laces her boots. The musicians look to her. Clarinet? Oboe? Or as still as silence can be in our air that aspires to sound, even to the hum a cricket confides to earth in its iridescent death? The rod entices as it waves away all that chirping. High-Risk Woman leaves enigma behind when she leaves, behind still ahead.

*so that's why I'm glad to be away from Hawaii and staying with real family. even for a short while.
i don't know how I feel about women now. i don't know if i'm really half gay. all that matters just now is accepting myself as a good person.*

Cauterized in consequence of love, tarred away, annealed if not healed. my thought retains the raw coast it began with, you jogging the littoral mind, quite naked. this is but an angle of vision, what I think may be too raucous: seagulls swooping across your way. Different versions exist of the same love process. How does one believe that one's personal love is not inevitably public? if you are a system, will I learn it, like word-processing? i will move to Washington and drive along the Potomac, whose banks bound a visible utterance, the long line of a nation, and you, a quite naked statue escaping from your place

in the museum's garden, will finally burst into ashes.
 We lament willingly what we do not dare to learn.

*fred wants me back. i haven't informed him
 about my Hawaii "adventure," not yet. maybe I shouldn't.
 i don't think going back to him would be a solution.*

Compassion begins with a 40-watt bulb in a room
 not far from suicide. The woman stands before her pocked
 mirror and considers how beautiful she is. The mirror
 is much too small to contain all her beauty, and her dim light
 blurs still more what she thinks. We hear the story
 about her: how she left her husband and two children
 for a woman, who then left her for another woman
 who lives in France. Her husband, a Spanish professor, speaks to her
 once a week. He asks her how she feels
 and comments on the spiderweb growing under
 her 35-year-old eyes. Under is his word, under the surface
 of her lust grows a worm, under her footsteps waits
 the stiff ground. On a table she can barely see in the mirror
 stands a bowl with two brown apples. The refrigerator hums
 periodically, deep-throated, hungry. She reads her own name
 in any book or magazine her hands pick up. She could be
 a portrait standing nude in Dutch light, a distillation of self
 already gone far, to another country where the language
 preserves her fingermarks in its dust, the oldest, dirtiest
 glass she has ever looked into. She would not speak it,
 would not open the door to her husband, would forever smile
 at her children, would ask for death where her woman lives.

SONYA HESS

Mirth

...and she leans over, tickles the baby
just a bit too hard—one finger—
until he chokes on his gurgle, milky
lips shaping a miniature agony.

She's been doing this to him
for years.

At dinner among the tinkling, silver
and ice, as he's cutting the succulent
portion on his plate, she pops in between
his teeth her own tongue with the wafer
of hilarious word. His lips soundlessly
droop, saying his bewildered spirit.

Bowing over her own bosom she shrieks
in merriment at the sight of his necktie.
Some girl's gift. The tie grips his neck
making it impossible to swallow.
The other diners stoop to their feed
among diminishing candles.

Interior silence rolls down to his feet.
No breath stirs in the night-blue curtains
where he used to hide and search: a star,
a feather, a pet dog to love without pulling
hairs out one by one to prove the skin.

Dinners, teas, cocktail mobs, she speeds
at the rim, whipping the whole galaxy
on with her levity. His hands keep
clasping shut far too late.
The dog never came home. The bird
flew off with all its feathers.
The thought of binary stars
emits a continuous warning.

When the comedy closes
he must stand by her one more time,
shifting from corner to rug
in the disheartening parlor,
mouth stretched in the downward grin
of grief on its own.
Other mourners come, and flee.
His red carnations spot
the white garlands
with inappropriate living furor.

GEORGE KALAMARAS

When Anger Became a Man

When anger became a man, the sea at first
felt the pleasure of form far down in its nostrils.

The sun split open like a ripe planet.
Memory held its breath and hung

a sentence between seeds. What was purely
vegetable, became heat. What was heat,

a ground. What rounded in the basin and formed
fossil. The large, dark eels moved together

and felt in one another their strength
pouring out through the horse's egg.

When anger became a man, the sea was still.
The earth calmed, a moment, believing it

had completed itself, that grass could dissolve,
again, into spheres of sound, that fish

would find form in orange, that water
could finally forsake water. When anger became

man, it poured and sang to the undulating
cliffs. It sought sound in the taking

of animals. It grew an arm and delighted
in soup. It grew hungry in the halls of heat.

It fucked dirt and sensed the breathing
of birds deep in the unpolished furniture.

It slept awake and knew the permanent pull.

AMMIEL ALCALAY

I Had Thought of Writing a Play Based on the Following Facts:

1. I now live in Nahlaot.
2. From the end of our street I can see Gan Sacker and the stone wall enclosing the graveyard where my grandmother is buried.
3. Gan Sacker used to be wheat fields farmed by the villagers of Sheikh Badr.
4. The caretaker, Ezra Cohen from Istanbul, lives in a tin shack near the entrance to the graveyard. On Friday night you can see the flame of two candles through the cracks.
5. My mother was on her way from Jerusalem to Rome when her mother died.
6. The villagers of Sheikh Badr used to pray at the mosque that's now on Strauss, in back of the Edison Theater.
7. The Edison Theater was built in 1932 by M.Y. Mizrahi and Sons.
8. I have a great aunt who lives in Istanbul but now she spends half the year in Athens with her daughter's family since being evicted by a developer. We've never met.
9. A relative on my mother's side, Shlomo Almuli, published a book called *The Interpretation of Dreams* in Constantinople in 1530 which was first quoted by Freud in 1899.
10. Another great aunt, whom I know well, was a patient of Freud's for a brief period after being sent from Belgrade to study in Vienna.

11. Sheikh Badr, who had a feud with Sheikh Jarrah and was sanctified for his power of answering prayers for rain, is buried under the Hilton, to the right of the graveyard.
12. Legends about Sheikh Badr: some put him in the 7th century, others in the 11th or the 18th. He may have been the founder of a revered circle of dervishes or he may have been born in the Hijaz, the grandson of Caliph Ibn Abu Talib. When the spoils were divided, Sheikh Badr got the land where the Knesset, the Hilton and Binyanei HaUmma, once Khirbet al-Umma, are today.
13. Sitt Badriyya and Sitt Humiyadiyya, now buried in the village of Sharafat, inherited Sheikh Badr's power over the sanctity of rain.
14. The 10th Roman Legion built fortifications in the area as well as an elaborate brick and pipe works.
15. For a long time, gold was thought to have been buried in the caves scattered around the fields. Many Roman coins were found.
16. One of the rituals of the Urfalis in Nahlaot was to throw their children's first milkteeth into the fields of Sheikh Badr which, because of its distance, could be considered a substitute for the sacrifice to Azazel.
17. Sima Kedmi, now a resident, said: "The first thing I remember from Sheikh Badr was seeing a building blown up and 10 Arab women expelled. Their hands were raised and their children were on their shoulders—they said: 'The Jews are attacking us.' I'll never forget those words."
18. The evacuation of Jewish families from neighborhoods in the North of the city was not carried out without some resistance. Housed on mattresses in a school, they refused to leave for the empty houses of Sheikh Badr. Sanctions imposed against them, including cutting off the money they were getting for sustenance, didn't help. The few belongings they'd managed to salvage were finally piled onto trucks by the National Guard. The people protested to the Neighborhood Committee and tried to resist the National Guard, but they too were piled into trucks and taken to Sheikh Badr. After they arrived, the British even had to be called in to restore order.

19. David Ben Gurion offered 100 liras to families with 10 children.
20. The residents, mostly Iraqis, Kurds and Urfalis, worked as street-cleaners, shepherds, construction workers, stone-cutters and peddlers.
21. Many years passed before the municipality hooked the neighborhood up to the city water and power system.
22. More land was needed for the Heliport, the Foreign Ministry and the Hilton.
23. Ya'aqub Shalom and his wife had to be hospitalized after Amidar tore their house down with them still in it.
24. One of the oldest residents left, Sara Elbaz, said: "When a house is destroyed I fall apart, I tremble, it makes me feel sick."
25. The area was used by both the Hagana and the Irgun to settle accounts, some of which are still secret. People from the neighborhood still remember seeing British soldiers dangling in front of Hadassa Shalom's window.
26. A double agent who worked for both the British and the Jewish Agency was shot there. Someone who had been in charge of guarding her said: "After the interrogation they told me to get her out of there and let her have one in the head. I couldn't do it so David Efrati took her over to where the Foreign Ministry is now and let her have it."
27. Another time, an Irgun man was rubbed out there by the Hagana.
28. Some of the refugees from Sheikh Badr now live near Ramallah in ElAmri camp along with people from Kolonia (Motsa), Lifta and Malha. Sheikh Mahmoud Silmiyya, a religious instructor who was 16 when the Irgun raids began and whose house is now used by soldiers as a lookout point over the camp, said: "When we fled, we thought we'd be back in a week or two. In the end, it took me 40 years to make it back for a visit. I saw that the doors on my house were the same doors and the stone the same stone."

29. In an effort to complete the plans for Democracy Hill—an area that would house the state’s judiciary, parliamentary and executive institutions, attempts have been made to evict the remaining residents.
30. One of them said: “If they try to get rid of us, there’ll be murder here.”
31. Of his own house, Sheikh Mahmoud Silmiyya said: “They want to destroy it so we’ll never come back. When you destroy the house, you’ve destroyed any chance for peace.”
32. I’d envisaged Sheikh Badr as an austere but intense man wrapped in a white winding sheet. This image came to me from a painting by Mershad Berber, an artist from Sarajevo.
33. In the right corner a Sheikh framed in a charcoal box and wrapped in a white turban looked out over a Turkish grave at wild brown horses running off behind the portrait of a woman withdrawn within a large gold icon taken from Velazquez. I somehow thought that Sheikh Badr needed to be drawn from all angles simultaneously, as if the Hilton was exerting as much pressure on him as a pyramid.
34. I asked a friend of mine if she could do some preliminary sketches.
35. Meanwhile, I planned the set: a series of at least 5 clear sliding panels with maps and pictures on them so the layers could overlap and the two people on stage, a man and a woman, could traverse the whole terrain. Above them and the panels would be a man in a glass booth doing simultaneous translations of whatever happened to be coming in over a shortwave continually dialed slowly up and down the bands.
36. Since my friend hadn’t come up with anything yet and I didn’t have the material to work on the panels, I started putting together a story board with photographs whose original intention had been to serve as substitutes for some tapes of random noise I hadn’t yet recorded:
37. Shortly after finishing this, we went to Cairo
and it gave me the feeling I had to figure a way of rethinking things.

CHARLES BORKHUIS

Digesting the Data

This carrion wilderness that floats
beast-up
in the cup of your hand

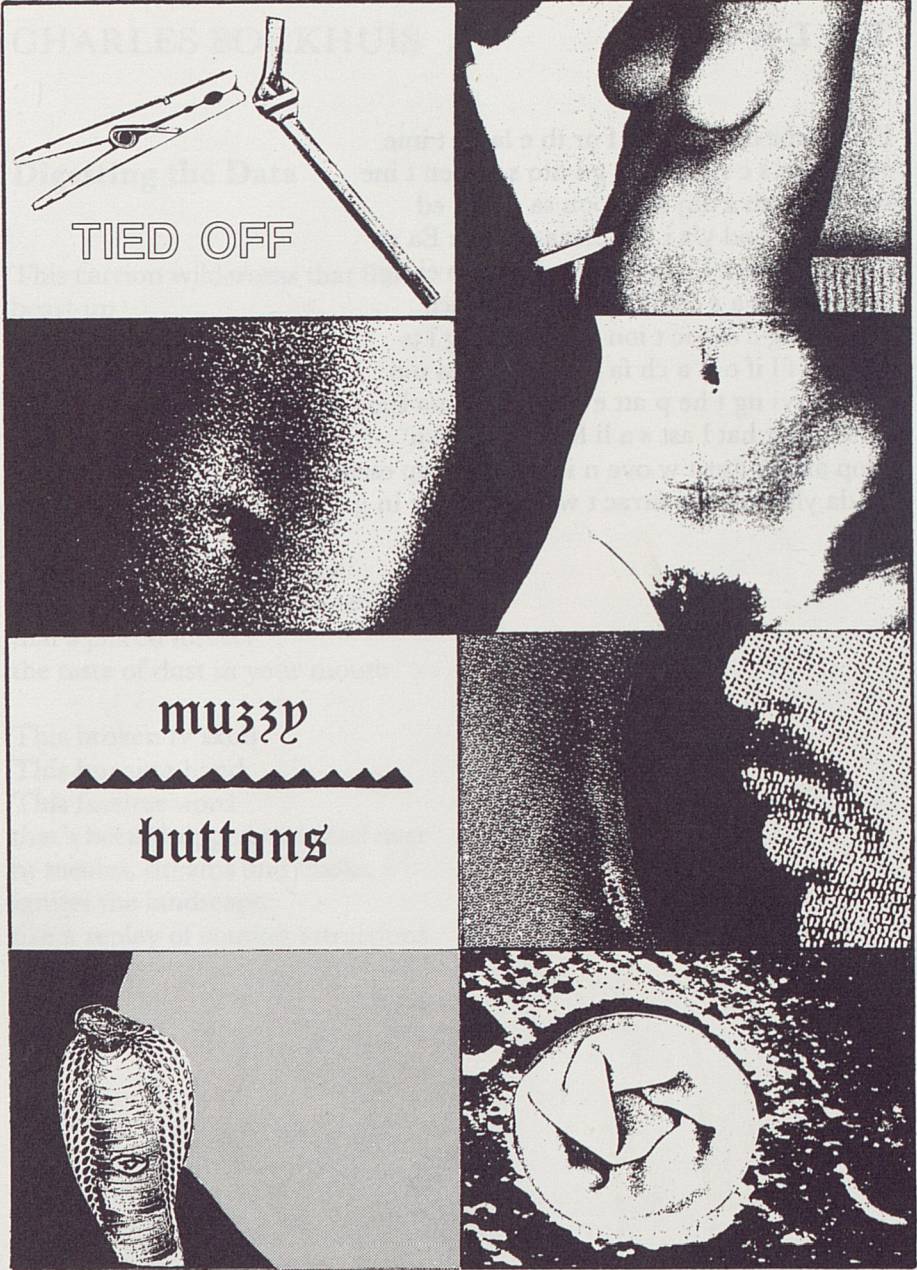
This intimate, post-historic hour
glowing nearer
like the breath of an equation
upon the lips of trees

This monstrous pregnancy
slowly eating its way to the surface,
that's placed forever
the taste of dust in your mouth

This broken tv skull
This burning hand
This faceless word
that's been dropped over and over
in movies, dreams and books,
ignites the landscape
like a replay of coming attractions

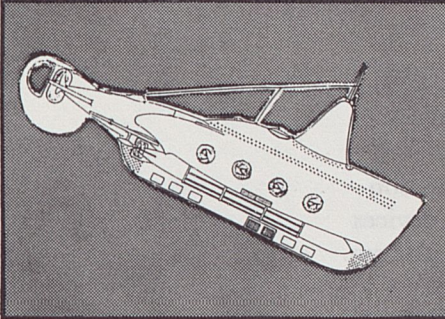
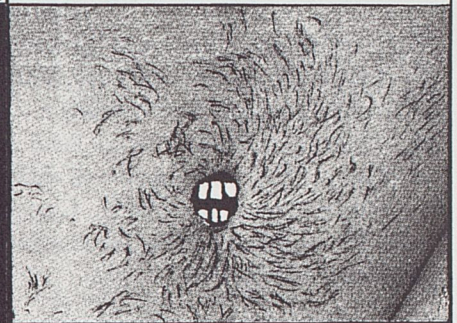
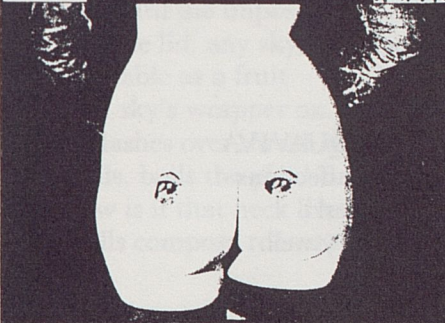
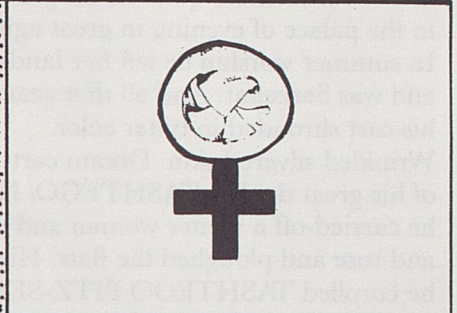
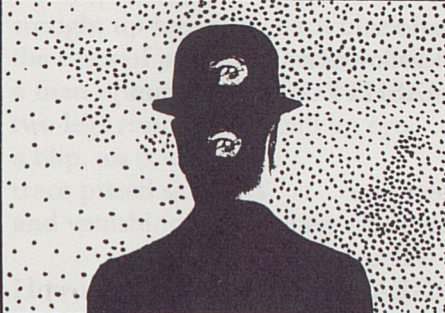
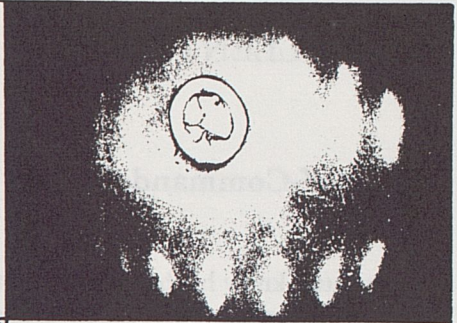
The Living

Each word written for the last time
syllable scumbling into serpentine
rains Each subject soon saturated
with the body's impermanence Each
voyage back to now Angles of being
perceived as contradiction Each
lurching conviction extrating its
license of life Each false conversion
preserving the pattern Each final
gesture that last salutation Each
stop and start woven into the apertures
of daylight's contraction with the living



BELLY BUTTON SUITE by Nicolo Fabrizio, 1988

POCK



*the footprint
of the
dream*

LEE BALLENTINE

Chain-of-Command

Great cattle knew his hard hand scorched and pilgrim.
His couth mistress quiet in her plans. Her chamber
in the palace of evening in great agitation.
In summer worship he left her lands. Followed a Captain
and was Sergeant. And all that year TASHTEGO tended him
his cart shrouded in bitter color.
Wrinkled silvered skin. Dream cart
of his great donkey TASHTEGO. Next year
he carried-off a winter woman and pitched a tent
and rose and ploughed the flats. His war-son
he enrolled TASHTEGO FITZ-SERGEANT.

The next war was airborne. Battlefield below.
&—fought by modern officers. TASHTEGO!
Where no one else would soldier
was where you wanted to go. And private AQUAVIVA
with fewer than your cares—alienated your affections
and drained your wingtanks. Captain of cares!
Your shirttail is showing. Your sons will marry well.
Your airedale is dying.

Mists vented across the landing place.
We need a place to land our planes.
We want some new equipment at your place. SERGEANT
we want to do some launches at your place!

His pandemonium fanned itself to treason
with portable disruptors—improved devices
of joy and resolution. S*JEN designed them.
His masters' stern finality. Near-mad
with disobedient joy—he sealed the icon
to all intrusions. Achieved pure solitude
but for EMMELINE—naked in his mechanic's cot
stopping her breath with his tongue.

THAD ZIOLKOWSKI

Untitled

Sills, and in the breath between tracks
the day, as it sits
straight up into hate, each block
the cases of possession simply visible
a man upright on his feet but not necessarily
two legs running beneath an eye
a blip, an ocular
trace pissed sideways
and vanishing into a sleeve along roofs

How is it such recoiling
goes on until the impossibility, the blossom
restores the lid, any sky, eats
the vegetable as a fruit
with the sky's wrapper on. Negative
light splashes over thrash of trees
and boils, boils the plaid below a neck
and how is it that neck lives
and walls compose rooms this

room

Untitled

Moreover, said of a stream, very
still. Aircurrents swing the doors
until the last one slams. Your brother
might be behind it, dying
wanted to, and this never known
even as every bit blows in past
guard rails to rest in the lap.
Rails through which a distance,
density of leaves, leavings.
And I only escaped alone to

tell what, how it's colder out now?
Though a light arm still lets fall
on the lot. Pulls back through the slow
pumping of boughs. The way up,
the way up is the vertical way.
Spore hung vertical in the sun.
That falling, cuts the vision in two
from upper right to lower left
in the nacreous slide
away from allegiances, past memory
at the angle of eventual
speaking upward
from amidst the givens of ground.

JOHN M. BENNETT

The Current

I had a cat for a face, like
sleeping in sand, and the
dream of an arm or a severed sail.
This morning I embraced your
legs and you ran, the
beach fur behind. Still I
rippled, splashing in my
rut for you, snuffling a shirt.
You were laughing like sun and
moons rose in my pants as I
sank under you. Tossing at the
bottom in stones we were our
head blind in a pillow of fish

The Blur

Just like a photo, what I
see of you, sort of flat and bent with
amoebas of light. Maybe my glasses
smeared or maybe the shape of air but I'm
always back in this corner with my
eyes crossed. My fingernails sodden and
splinter long to scratch I, scrawled
in this book my finger distended past my
nose; tho read it's still just
tissue wiped and dropped. If only I could
see beyond these spattered walls of glass. If
only I could read what I wrote and get back

Teaching in the Prison

She falls from the cliff leaving her
Three-fingered hand-print on the cave
Leaves the future hanging on the wall
Like a scythe in Checotah thrift shop
On lock
She picks up moonlight
Striped light in five directions
Running from the pick-up
With knife in her hand
Jesus
Behind these bars
Even the ghosts turn their backs.
“Come on in Poetry Bitch
What you gonna show us today?
Push a little harder
This ain’t no screen door.”

Ward’s Island

The amnesiac carries a satchel of windows
Through which she sees the red glow of zeros
Dance in corridor ruins unsung.

This daughter of memory cries out against
This deep mechanical silence
“You play Good, Mama!”

Drenched in fire
Burned in sweet decay
Mothered by sorrow
How can I heal you with song?

A Cardinal, New Snow, and Some Firewood

Once when I was getting firewood down by Buck Creek I had a long talk with a cardinal who was wintering there. Of course I don't understand the summer language of cardinals, the kind you hear when green things come back. That isn't meant for us but for themselves, and all I can make out is that it has to do with love and war. I've stood and listened, looking up through the white locust blossoms at the blue sky, in all that fragrance and new bright green, and a scarlet flash singing there, but it was just birdsong, it hid the meaning like a nest someplace away from where it sang. Finding it would probably kill it anyhow.

But in winter, when there is new snow, and snow-lined branches in a blue sky, and the crimson flashes down to a bush for coral berries or a wild rosehip, sometimes if you're sitting quietly near it will talk. And their winter language is like the new snow, I can read it for a while, until it gets tracked all over with human things that come out of me and walk around as if it was their back yard. Down by Buck Creek early that morning, I saw it up in a huge American elm, then it dropped from sight into a holly below, then flew back up into a tendrilly mass of grapevine in the elm's branches, swaying a little when the wind would pull at the tree's upper boughs. The woods were almost silent, and the wind did not come down among the blackberry patches and undergrowth except to put a finger down the back of my neck or whisper from dead weeds behind me. The inch of new snow had fallen after midnight and in this early light shadow-lines were sharp across it. I brushed off snow to sit on a stump, and saw going past the stump a weasel's tracks. The snow told me where it had lunged after a cottontail, and where the rabbit jumped and veered and got away, and the weasel had chased it for a short way, stopped and sat up, then turned and dived into the big brushpile left by woodcutters alongside a tangle of blackberry vines. It was while I was reading that part of the past that the cardinal sang.

"The weasel isn't there, he's down by the creek. He found a covey of bobwhites and killed two," the cardinal said.

When I looked up to where he was singing, he was perched on the lowest branching of the long grapevine. I knew he was talking to me, answering my thought. He was looking at me first with one eye, then the other. I answered him out loud before I thought.

"I guess weasels have to live," I said. When I spoke the place went

completely quiet. I had thought there was no sound, but when I spoke time stopped breathing for a heartbeat or two and I wondered if I was delirious. It felt like that, everything recognizable but different, changed the way sound is changed under water.

“You don’t have to talk,” the cardinal said. “The snow has gone inside you and I can see what you say walking there. When you speak out, the sound tramples around and all the meanings that are friendly go into hiding and the others start sniffing for me.”

I looked at him swaying easily on the grapevine thirty feet from the ground, and I looked on up into the great leafless elm with snow fluffs along some branches still, and into the blue sky where a jet-trail was drawing itself thin and straight out of nowhere, fluffing out behind like the rattles of an invisible snake.

“It’s the President’s plane,” the cardinal said. “A whole crowd of reporters up there, but he’s in the private parts of the plane talking about how to keep a scandal dark, while they’re up there trying to see what each other is going to write about next.”

I looked at the black mask of the cardinal just as a pat of snow, dislodged by the wind-sway, came down in sparkling crystals. For a second he was looking at me with his beak open and I saw an old face surrounded by a ruff of diamonds.

“The President is looking out his window,” he said. “He sees a snowy landscape with not a soul in view. We know he is there, he doesn’t know we are here; it has to do with power. At one time he was a weasel on a high branch swaying in the wind, furious that the squirrel had jumped to another tree. Now he is fullbellied, blind, warm, feels safe. His titanium cocoon has translucent spots for him to look through. A flock of swans could bring him down, but we won’t do that. Less harm this way.”

“I must be dreaming,” I said.

“Why? What do you think a dream is, anyhow?”

“Something a mind makes up when it’s sleeping.”

“What does a mind make up when it’s waking?”

“That’s not making up things.”

“What makes you think that?”

“Because there are others hearing and seeing the same things.”

“You mean I’m not a red bird, an other, I’m just you?”

“I made you up somehow.”

“And the President, and the weasel that isn’t there but left its tracks, you made them up. You made the snow up. My voice, you’re making it up. I haven’t told you anything, then.”

“That’s right.”

“And someone made you up as well as me?”

“Of course. But not just one person did it. He, and all the people reading

these words. They made me up, a lot of different me's according to their minds. They made me up, they're looking at me, hearing me. The snow is in their minds. These words are tracks in the snow."

"Sure," the cardinal said. "You know that new snow is a wonderful computer. You can retrieve history from it, all the living beings who have moved across it. Water forgets, snow remembers. Have you any idea how many kinds of snow there are? The spread of white blossoms, say, in April and May, they remember. They record what the bees are doing, and the trees remember it in August and you taste it as apricots, apples, plums. I can retrieve the tiny variations in air pressure from June, and return them as song in December. You can retrieve from stone the consonants of Babylon. Greenland remembers, ten thousand feet down in its ice, the volcanoes of Java, the fireflies from space, of a hundred thousand years ago."

There was a flash of greater wings, a swerving and fan-tailed slewing around the elm's huge trunk toward the crimson bird on its grapevine, a curved beak open, talons stretching. The redbird launched sharply down towards me, the hawk close behind. I heard a hard fierce voice say get out of its way, but I stood up just as the cardinal dodged around and behind me, then claws grappled suddenly, my cap flew off, the flurry was past and when I turned I saw scarlet flash into the holly-tree, and the Cooper's hawk bank and dart past its spiky green darkness, hover briefly on beating wings, then go coursing away into darker woods toward Buck Creek.

"Son of a bitch," the voice said faintly, "those politicians may not be so dumb as I thought." Then it went silent.

I walked on over to cordwood we had stacked the week before, and stamped and waited till they came with the pickup. I was thinking how the cut wood remembers years of sunlight, and lets it go out in snapping, sighing light and warmth from the ashes. What the red coals say, I was thinking, I'll have to listen to. What the words release, I leave to those who read. Some of it lived there ten thousand years ago, some never was. Across the snowy pages dark words leap and sway. A red bird is singing in them. What year, what year? he sings. This one, this one, this one, they answer. Blossom, blossom, blossom, he sings. And they do.

ROSANNE WASSERMAN

Pillow Dreams of a Woman She Loves

Odor of sea: sweet fish.
She climbs down a high white cliff:
limbs shift weight. The dry beach
stretches its rocky length

left, right: a man dancing.

She falls on her hands and knees,
then sees, dug into sand,
the packed little swimmers, set
together, like big sardines.

That's what the children do.

But the house of the carpenter's wife
at number eighty-four
is made of gray wood
with an old screen door,
and the carpenter isn't home.

"We can make love," she says.
Her mouth is as small as a cat's.
Her eyes slant, and she swings
two fishtails instead of feet.
And where the scales split:
a translucent and mobile wand
the shape of a bird's breastbone.

That's how to make her come,
and now Pillow's unskilled hand
will work to give her joy
like her own man
who never lets her down.

Love Song

I occur as fast as thought in the mediocrity
surrounding hopeless realization

She waits in the dream silent, unknown, serene, mad

She waits to scrape me off the ground where I lie
excreted and compressed

I am the madness stepped on by all walks of man whose
laborious creations are of the love to copy

She is the mad

I am the madness

She sees this resemblance within the confines of
her white, determined dream, and, her wait aborted

goes nova in a burst of agnostic dance

while my soul spills like the blood of a leech
severed from the skin of a virgin

into the earth.

Not One of Them

the moon will come and go
and the derelicts are no different
from the rich
and if I had ten million wishes
not one of them would apply
to this night.

like a dead dog in the road
I can dream all I want.

Across the Desert and Into New Mexico

The description is a petroglyph tattooed to my eyes
And the endless flatlands reverse an image of fire

of which the center is my reflective odor

Still within the screaming metallic capsule of night
In love with the many deaths of the moon.

I Know What He's Thinking

the light on my ankle is white as a winter moon
and the desert is no different

God himself is leaning back

I know what he's thinking

My model

isn't

mine

warm at his big eye

foot.

Not One of Them

the moon will come and go

and the desert is no different

from the rest

and if I had ten million wishes

not one of them would apply

to this night

like a dead dog in the road

I can dream all I want.

ELI GOTTLIEB

Minute Steak Gothic

The woman lived with the boy, who was Large. He had a big head, particularly. Also his face was of a peculiar whiteness, beyond pale, which summoned to the minds of onlookers an image akin to fever, or a certain cheese.

His mother loved him.

His mother, whose name was Naal, held him now in front of her and gazed into his face. What do you *want*? she said emphatically as a minute pandemonium erupted of doors flying open and feet tramping stairs while children left their schoolrooms and music lessons and thronged the absolutely level streets of the city, heading home. In groups of three and four they moved without hesitation. Their clean foreheads reflected the fire of the sun. Their noses came out declaratively into the air. The way their hair started in fine arcs above their brows was reassuring of something, absolutely.

I wanna go out, Large said. But his mother merely held him firmly, frowning at him, even though he was a very big boy, and could conceivably have wrenched away.

You let me go out, he said, and reaching forward he silently grabbed a handful of his mother's loose cheek, twisting it until it came away from her face.

When she finally let go, Large ran grinning through the front door, stretched out flat on the grass of the lawn and lay in the sun. It was a spring day and the elevation of the lawn was mild. His brain moved slowly around his body. The house above him stood on the uppermost section of the single sustained hill of town, open utterly to the elements and particularly dramatic at such moments as when lightning dropped from the sky in brilliant parts, or a storm blew up with the big rippling tureen-shaped clouds which had always reminded the boy of a parade of some sort, even though he'd never seen one, nor even imagined it.

Large rolled heavily over on his stomach and put his face down among the spears, snuffing in the mash of roots and earth. He blew a variously-toned noise from his mouth. Often the noise began as a kind of whistle before shading off to something more bodied and tonic, like a hum. Or it conflated violently from rushing air to a hiss. He plucked a grassblade and began flicking it with thumb and forefinger, making fast small lights in the sunshine in front of his face and smiling in the way of nearly a real smile

for how far the skin rode back on his bones. When he jerked his head up suddenly, his body followed. He stood crouched, staring a moment into the next yard, making his noise, and it was only as he straightened up and began running that he slowly closed his eyes.

When Large a moment later smashed broadside into his Oriental neighbor it was the velocity of Mr. Wang's withdrawal in space that made everything in him come forward at speed: his mouth, his glasses and especially his arms which he held imploringly in front of him a moment while he sat in the air and seemed to figure, seemed to look sadly at the boy from his height before falling down all at once and lying very still.

Large made a wheezy sound and bent over the prone body, watching as Mr. Wang began faintly to make noises, began effortfully to bubble and wheeze and swallow. His thick black glasses had flown from his face and lay in the grass nearby. Large bent over and picked them up. Both lenses were intact and slipping them on was like diving with your eyes open into a pool for the way they held a long curving vista along which houses and trees lay combed backwards like hair. Fancy words, as a result, were coming into Large's head for the first time in a long while when "You please help me!" said Mr. Wang, before turning his head slowly to one side and groaning. Large, looking, made a faint noise behind his nose and fled.

Later that evening he lay in the bathtub staring at the new bruise colors on his thigh while he listened to his mother's voice struggle up the stairs. The voice bore his name, he knew. It turned like a key in his ear to make his eyes open and his heart slam. He looked down at his body, at his big body lying sunk in the water. Instead of listening to the voice, Large bent closer to the bubbles where they grew upwards at the entry of the falling water into the calm. From up close, this water with its ropes of bubbles and noise could be all there was. It could make a circular sound in the middle of which he was a listener only. Also the water seemed to have something to say to his body.

His big, white, hairless body.

His mother's voice came again, came added to the sound of the tap to make a doubled roaring in his head. He played beneath the hot water bodily, dragging his whole heavy length below the surface.

Probably his mother's voice went on, coming up out of her body, in search of his.

KEVIN MAGEE

The Break of Day

1

Daylight arrives like a police car.
The radio
competes with a bird's static.
Not that it or anything out there
has riveted me lately
except, before the light improves,
the better to—leaning over this page
as though spread against one of the walls
of my father's house: Exposed,
accused by the backup's blue glare,
shiny leather gloves shaking me down
like the night our neighbor's son
grabbed a shotgun
and blew a hole in the chest of the cop
who chased him home.
The TV the only light on, my mother
asleep on the divan, her dirty
uniform snagged high up around her
heavy thighs, the revealed veins—
Suddenly I am alive
to destroying, in the face of this morning,
my habit of obeying it, avoiding it,
as if the sun was a searchlight
stronger than the crook of my raised right arm.
Already the thawed sod and impotent limbs
of a linden tree
throb in it, the threat of it,
the thrill,
the machete aria of an arriving siren—

The man who gets out of the car has no face
Nobody gets out of the car
An idea gets out of the car
Blank, the face is blank
An idea opens the cardoor
Closes it quietly with the faintest click
An idea opens the cardoor
Then closes it quietly
The face is blank
What opens the cardoor closes it quietly
Already the pumphouse and the cement post
The pumphouse and the cement post
The car has passed disappear
The gravel road it arrived on is narrower
Nobody gets out
The car disappears

GERARD MALANGA

from Poems in the Key of G

*If you have not entered the dance,
you misunderstand the event.*

—Jesus to John
in the Gnostic Gospel
of John at Ephesus

paralipomena, or “Sundance”

Ezra Pound unties my shoelaces
William Carlos Williams removes my shoes.

The city is Hoboken. The street: Washington St,
near 11th, down from Schoning's Bake Shop

Installed
at the Humanities Research Center
the University of Texas Austin:

Carol Chalik, 21 letters, typed and signed
7 letters, handwritten, signed
total # of pp: 38, ca. 1959, 1960.

Is it Bloomfield Hills Michigan
or LA
or is it still Brooklyn

475 Ocean Avenue 11226.

or:
Olson says
History
is the memory
of time

a rubber stamp pad impression red ink with finger
pointing



RETURN TO SENDER,
ADDRESSEE UNKNOWN

the history of surprise is disappearance—
also a divine principle described by the Hindus

How'm I doin'

Hoé spends 45-minutes in phonebooth
outside of *Souen* talking to Phil

at another time

Phil telling me, "The energy
we waste on these pussies
we could be putting into
so much more vital situations"

(Like *what*, for instance ?

Well, for one thing... (the voice trails off on the phone

What is it that drives
him toward this or that woman ?

autumn now, shot thru with sunlight

the window of the living-room
fallen out and into the alleyway
during the night

Today's just not my day

Eban curled up on the couch
asleep just now

meditating and stating his
independence and power

I'm bundled up just now
in my Sara Vogeler Finisterre
all-wool sweater

and "Sara Vogeler" cited in the Dance
column the Nov. five *Village Voice*

this is saying one thing is not like another

and when the doctor at Beth Israel comes to me
he's not saying "No ideas but in things"
but "You've lost three degrees of extension
in your left arm"

All in a day's work I reply

Just the way things are I reply

This is not a poem in the narrative manner

trees birds twigs sky

the wet grass

a vegetable
basket of leaves
tipped over
on the subway grating
at Stockbridge

leaves clashing in wind
along the cobblestone walk Main Street

green book-bags

kids on school break
decorating store windows for Halloween

Gemma's Dilemma, Niejamie's

The year is 1948. A blue-grey sky chill in the air now

the Red-wing Blackbird is a favorite bird

a slope-back maroon Pontiac—Silver-Streak-8—
parked out in front of the Pharmacy

Advice: to bring yourself
in, hold together
lovers in one lover
and at the same time
scatter it, the one
in all of them.

now celebrate her—

now buy her nice things,

i.e., the night slip,
bikini panties beneath

that clarity of sunlight
which is the beauty of
a naked shoulder the back of
a woman's head

at dance class
perspiration
is beautiful . . .

(you take your clothes
off is beautiful
to watch also

afterwards, the smell of
your shirt, that's why.

This poem is about creating
a reality for oneself

No one believes me.

Check the following:

Yes No

Are you capable of a kind of
foresight regarding your future
which is not so dark

Can you be more or less opinionated
since coming to New York

Is it difficult to be beautiful
but easy to appear so
or the other way around

Are you free
from hate

Are you feeling slightly empty

Do you defy fate or avoid it

This poem is pure information

Again a wine glass grassy snow pale sky

phone number
on the back of matchbook
recently misplaced

bright pink maillot hanging from nail

poems by François Villon

a midnight diner bathed in fluorescence and neon [Hopper's
Nighthawks
light

liquid Woolite

essays before a sonata

cold November beach Wainscott

the record, this white paper

It is the weekend of the 4th.

the light only reaches half way
across the floor

the windows are empty
now that the rain has stopped

a shirt hangs over the arm
of a chair

nix the following from the poem:

1. the late-fall syndrome: hugging
by a bus-stop
for warmth
when the jacket's too small
2. ...on the edge of waiting for her to show up
3. the benign acceptance of it all
4. "the death of a thousand little personalities"

the ground is so full of silence
this time of year

maple and oak leaves this time of year

birch

bright yellow roadsigns



Christina in Berlin

disappears
in time, too

the process of “forgetting and learning”

Rather observe

the slow
rise of

the bird
in the instant

before
landing

than that its color is black

(So what if the bird's color is black ?

So what if it's 6 in the morning
Now it is rain-reflecting lights
and a calm damp breeze
before the mist rolls in from the seashore
and the sun comes up (but I'm not up
and you wonder what you did with the keys
or if it's wise to
return to the flat you
share with your girlfriend Maria
looking the way you do
or grab a coffee at *Bigelow's*
and head on up to the Whitney.

It isn't unusual to look unattractive
but to believe it !?—

is not the way others see you , I see you

(unless you're someone
one reads about in books by Karen Horney or Otto Rank

but you are
not known
or half-known even

The city is waking
neither shy nor caring,
allowing you to be direct

and instead
you sidestep encounters
making a dance
of a series of sidesteps,
entitled "sidesteps"

there's no second chance

Phil, by the way, was right when he sd:
To anyone used to having money
and suddenly
down to the wire
can be scary

Conceptual photos:

Can you stand still
for a moment hold
a piece of beveled plate glass
up to your face
in such a way as to
cause a reflection
obscuring your face somewhat

your foot extended also

Can you fall and get up again
and fall and get up again
fall and get up again
get up again
up again

Can you dance
on sand on a basketball
court

and can you do all this wearing leg-warmers

(Go ahead, let me see you...)

Now what we desire is space
and that you reestablish the horizon
with your silhouette back-lit with the sun sinking

but you are not like being outdoors

“autumn is red and specific
like all great works of the imagination”

(I'd like to get rid of words like *like*
banish *like* from the language

This is not a poem in “two variations”
or two movements even

*I pull down your bluejeans
and you unbutton my shirt*

I unbutton your blouse. Slowly...

the sky is not soft
but dark

and a wind is pushing
at the trees

The month of November New York
At a street corner I walk up to
Someone whom I believe
To be Simone Weil in a trenchcoat.
In the book I hand her
She writes Only he who knows
The empire of might and knows
How not to respect it
Is capable of love and justice
And returns the book
And crosses over to the other
Side of the street and loses

Herself in the traffic
Lights and time-lapse photography

and the wildness and tension

the tumbleweed

all the dust and confusion

Snow is falling on the sidewalk
and beginning to stick

it's the first sign of reality

Henri Montherlant
has just left a message
on my Service machine:

“just as nine tenths of the
people in the modern world
never notice
the intelligence of a face,
so in all sense
of the beauty of the human foot
is lost to them”

the time for leaving your message
has expired please hang up now
the time for leaving your message
has expired please hang up now
the time/

Contributors' Advice, or Free Speech Corner, or the Blind Assemblage (being the unedited comments of contributors on almost anything.)

RAYMOND FEDERMAN:

A lot of people are bitching these days about *the situation*, saying that *it* is not very encouraging, but one must reply that *it* is not meant to encourage those who say that.

CHARLES BORKHUIS:

human beings THE CONTEXT BRIGHTENS HERE do not invent things ABORIGINAL SNOWMEN that are not there THE PREMISE TREATED AS A TOURNIQUET there is already here SHAPE-SHIFTING AT THE KITCHEN SINK thought already in THINGS every subjective SHIP UNDER THE FINGERNAIL vision or objective fact (t.v. version acceptable) SHARES THE MIRROR'S EYE for place and time SETS OF OVERLAPPING WAVES having occurred somewhere perceived by someone MOMENT OF REVERSIBILITY separating at the junctures (THE CONTEXT NARROWS) fictive walk through a microscope DEVIANT IMPULSE recorded as felt THE SCREEN RIDES ON THE SURFACE hand on the doorknob TURNING two moons left TO FIND invention a disguise OPENING THE GRAVE ONTO A GRAINY WOODEN SKY already seen

MELISSA LENTRICCHIA:

Free Speech Corner. What a corner to be in. I like it, as corners go. A freebie: something given or performed with no cost to the receiver or audience. The giver or performer I'm not so sure about: no cost? I'm suspicious. Which I guess comes as no surprise (my shack is suspicious, too). There are consequences of some sort when you make your words known, costs involved in the search for the words that will fit, that will *do*. Free speech. It's uncannily potent: you speak out, say, for the pro-choice movement, or for the rights of the Palestinians to a homeland, and your words, all by themselves, may be taken as threatening, as *action*; you speak out, freely, against our "democratic" imperialism and you get your picture taken—roped-off speech, photographed speech, binocular speech, free because you don't get arrested speech (as long as you're careful). A corner, where two things meet: there's something about this that seems just right.

GEORGE HITCHCOCK:

Surely the most overlooked contender for the crown among novelists

of this century is John Cowper Powys, English by birth, American by 25 years of adoption, and Welsh by choice—madman, mystic and penetrating psychologist, over whose birth must have hovered the ghosts of Rabelais, Dostoevsky and Hardy. Start with *Weymouth Sands* and then go on to *Wolf Solent*, written in Powys's 58th year in a long string of cheap American hotels. After that you have another half dozen novels to choose from (if you can find them) since he went on writing to his 91st year in Blaenau-ffeniog, Wales. A novelist who took all a poet's risks, sometimes fails but fails greatly which is more than can be said of today's minimalists. One of the great originals.

IVAN ARGÜELLES:

Evocative, finely crafted, witty, urbane, sophisticated, occasionally troubling, but always safe, white writing is easily the most pervasive literary fashion with us today. White writing went to finishing school to get that extra degree. White writing teaches white writing at hundreds of white writing workshops year in and year out. White writing is as American as Madison Avenue, its putative godfather. White writing can sometimes be politically correct, but sanitized and with only faint air-brushed innuendos of anger. White writing is meant to be polished, to glide over the tongue, to amuse, to be clear, intelligible and intelligent, to be thoughtful, balanced and beautiful, well conceived, cool, artful, smart, sometimes darker than we care to admit, but never indiscreetly black, full of phrase and feeling. White writing writes about itself as: wonderful, full of courage, a pleasure to read. White writing fills the pages of *Ironwood*, *Antaeus*, *Iowa Review*, *Prairie Schooner* and *Poetry*, inter alia. White writing is polite, and cannot HOWL, for it is too busy writing grants, earning NEA awards, and getting published by the Pitt Poetry Series or Wesleyan University Press. White writing sometimes visits prisons or Indian reservations, but would never find itself incarcerated in a booby hatch like St. Elizabeth's Hospital. White writing is the suburbs, jogging before work. White writing is ahistorical: it has no ancestors, although sometimes in its sleep it can be heard to utter names like Ashbery, Creeley or Williams. White writing is not a genius, merely a technically competent entity in a world swiftly computer-programming itself to death. White writing is a safe, perpetual summer camp for kids from the best parts of town. White writing is never ethnic or foreign, but calm, in control, describing but not experiencing emotions. White writing supports white writing, often within the confines of Academe, perpetuating itself as a Mandarin caste. White writing does not leap, risking the Pascalian abyss. White writing does aerobics in front of a screen. White writing does not concern itself with Thanatos, the mystery of death, but with guilt feelings aroused in watching a close relative die. White writing ignores Eros, concentrating instead on "relationships." Let's face it, white writing is

corporate writing. White writing is not literature, but just writing, writing that is learnt/taught in that corporate tool, the workshop. The Esalen workshop has become the white writing workshop. It is an important distinction to make that white writing workshops teach writing, not literature. Is it a coincidence that white writing becomes predominant after the death of Charles Olson in 1970? (Olson was not only a great poet, who began writing relatively late in his life, but probably just as great a teacher of literature.)

White writing not only is not literature, but is wilfully ignorant of literary traditions. White writing is a craft learnt in a corporate environment. It has nothing to do with inspiration, intuition, the unconscious, the Muse, dreams or madness. White writing is largely prose fiction, easy enough to digest with its tropes of familiarity, and, when it calls itself poetry, it's still prose carefully disordered on the page. Because it is corporate writing it has become the most acceptable and perceived form of "literary creation" in America today. White writing has made APR the safe money-making literary journal that it is. White writing makes it possible for a small, but well endowed, publisher, The Galileo Press, to receive 435 full length poetry manuscripts in a single annual competition. Imagine 435 poets [sic] inhabiting contemporaneously the same anglophone country! White writing encourages those who have no notion of literature or what artistic creativity is to consider themselves writers, white writers. White writing has fostered that mercenary blight, the reading fee. Who's making money off whom in the white writing world? No need to name some writers, we/you/they know who they are. Does white writing know who the following are: Philip Lamantia, Seneca, Friedrich Hölderlin, Apollonius Rhodius, Myna Loy, Jacopo Sannazaro, João Guimarães, J.V. Foix? What are the Shih Ching or the Dolce Stil Nuovo to white writing? Is there a connection, finally, between white writing and LANGUAGE? If there is, it is the deliberate turning the back on literature and the felt response to profound emotional experiences, in order to cope or deal with what writing is and what life and literature are not.

As to what is not white writing, let Spenser speak from the Shepherdes Calendar:

Poetry is a diuine instinct and vnnatural rage
passing the reache of comen reason.

THAD ZIOLKOWSKI:

To draw us as fully as possible beyond what we bring to it—in avoidance that is of the glib, the over-determined, the numbing circularity of methodological wit, transliterations of this week's Continental lexicon, transpositions of received diction—poetry must somehow be allowed its... by definition we don't know how, what...not even that we don't. Art is faster than art.

WANDA COLEMAN:

The supreme irony of the so-called *War on Drugs* is that no history/context is ever presented by the media when discussed. Haven't drugs always been a vital part of American life from the beginning? Which drug was used to control the indigenous peoples of America, defeating them in the name of Western "progress"? Which drug was induced into the black community by the Federal Government after the Harlem race riots of August 1943 (through Jewish and Italian bodegas)? Which drug and its attendant subculture has found its way through black music (jazz, soul and rock) to affect the entire underbelly of American society and is now chipping away at the dominant culture? Out southwest, little concern over PCP/elephant tranquilizer, induced after the Watts Riots in August 1965, was shown until young white teenagers starting having whack-attacks on campus nearly a decade later. As long as a drug (or disease) confines itself to a given subculture it is allowed to devastate freely. What the war on drugs is *really* about is taking the tremendous cash it generates out of the black/hispanic communities (which have finally given birth to their own little "mafias") and returning it to the control of the traditional gangsters/freebooters sanctioned by the dominant culture. How does cocaine get into Watts? Young black males aren't bringing it in on yachts and jetliners. Here in L.A., the real war is against the black community. In fleeing the inner city, racist whites have left us the best, if blighted, turf; now, how do they get it back? According to a *Los Angeles Times* study, blacks own more property per capita than any other segment of the city. At only 9% of the population, we are the most difficult to *dislodge*. Black women are very tenacious, holding on to their property for obvious historical reasons (40 acres and a mule). What better way to *uproot* us than full scale assault on our men and children through drugs and violence generated by drug abuse? And by *seizing* the *property* on which drugs are purportedly used, manufactured, or sold. Clever these capitalists. Next: in Australia it's known as Black Death. A number of drugs are combined into a black stickiness, rolled into a ball tiny enough to fit under a fingernail. When ingested, the high brings on a comatose state. The user is out for hours, sometimes days. And these clowns are complaining about nicotine? Spare me.

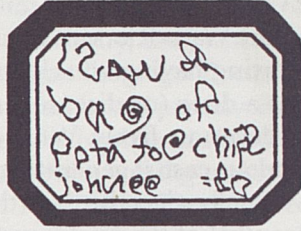
GENE FRUMKIN:

I was looking through one of my notebooks recently and came across this bit: The world is a symptom of the hermeneutics we cannot cure in ourselves. Since there were no quotation marks around the sentence, it's probably mine. It connects for me with the view of a physicist, Ed Fredkin, that the universe is a computer. I take it that these are metaphors of our time. If they deserve any attention, I think it is because they reflect our need to keep on looking for ever more subtle codes beneath the weary old signs:

physical, spiritual, economic, aesthetic, moral. In my case I'm uneasy in the search. Maybe we're just bits of ailing software.

JOHN M. BENNETT:

THROWING A KNIFE AT THE FAN



CARTER REVARD:

When you leave New Jersey, as Gertrude Stein did, and go to Oakland, as she did, you can say, as she did, there is no there, there. When you are a Hartford insurance executive, as Wallace Stevens was, and you have never been to Oklahoma, as he had not, you can invent people to dance there, as he did, and you can name them Bonnie and Josie. But a *there* depends on how, in the beginning, the wind breathes upon its surface. Shh: amethyst, sapphire. Lead. Crystal mirror. See, a cow-pond in Oklahoma. Under willows now, so the Osage man fishing there is in the shade. A bobwhite whistles from his fencepost, a hundred yards south of the pond. A muskrat-head draws a nest of V's up to the pond's apex, loses them there in the reeds and sedges where a redwing blackbird, with gold and scarlet epaulets flashing, perches on the jiggly buttonwood branch. Purple martins skim the pond, dip and sip, veer and swoop, check, pounce, crisscross each other's flashing paths. His wife in the Indian Hospital with cancer. Children in various unhappiness. White clouds sail slowly across the pure blue pond. Turtles pokes their heads up, watch the Indian man casting, reeling, casting, reeling. A bass strikes, is hooked, fights, is reeled in, pulls away again, is drawn back, dragged ashore, put on the stringer. In Oklahoma, Wally, here is Josie's father. Something that is going to be nothing, but isn't. Watch: now he takes the bass home, cleans and fries it. Shall I tell you a secret, Gert? You have to be there before it's there. Daddy, would you pass them a plate of fish? See friends, it's not a flyover here. Come down from your planes and you'll understand. Here.

ROSANNE WASSERMAN:

Forgive me: the "Free Speech Corner" sounds so much like Lear's anxiety that I clam up, "I cannot heave my heart into my mouth," & not just *heart*, but husband, house, friends, undeveloped futures, & the good old days like rolls of undeveloped film, or letters soliciting for too many good causes. Speech is anything but free; the fish in the ocean *cost* you. And why pirouette in a corner when *you've* been kind enough to display some prize catch up on the gallery wall?

BILL KNOTT:

MOTHER TERESA TREATS TERRORISTS TO TAFFY

The A rack and the O thumbscrew, the
E pincers. Yeah, I brandingiron, U electrodes.
A world I am defeatist of, that's what
I remember— Now I asterisked them:

Pick up that hotline in your hushed-up highrise,
Higher-ups. I videopoemed them please
But did God's Little Guru LISTEN? Nope
So, tipping my head sideways as if trying

To pour it into the ear's cup I hung up. Oh
To fix my thought on 2 fingers giving
The peace sign inside my mouth, ears, ass

Or whatever other orifices they fit in is
Fine with me. Neutron bomb has the same
Theory.

RONNIE BURK:

The bearded, headless, talking, man-woman, is it Fridha Kahlo who makes her way down the Ave. of perpendicular perceptions? (Place where myths are born) Which way foreshadows movement of the torn bliss dream? Writing this letter I am told Man Ray wrote "We cannot revive something that is alive." and slip into the chair walking hair follicle. Is Dada still alive? Ask the tar feather worm. Ask the spigot of the teapot which resembles an erect penis. Ask all the invisible poets still fondling the paradisiacal, paranormal concept of Utopia. Well, friends, one thing is sure, I am still alive and coming back to my art via the dream which I've enclosed but I have no remedy for torn hearts.

This is my thought. Isn't it interesting that surrealism rejected the novel

and yet the most important novels of the century are “surrealist”? Isn't it interesting that the roots of the exploding avant-garde between the two great wars of this century are to be found in pacifism, anti-militarism and total disgust for the complacency of the banal and mediocre, not in art but in Life? Isn't it interesting that the dada-constructivist-surrealist heritage is talked about in the schools, museums, galleries and reviews minus its explicit political message?

I foresee an inevitable explosion not in the art world but in the world of this tendency for the 90's. Held back for some eight decades by bourgeois intellectuals, critics and artists alike but will no longer be contained due to the mounting pressures of the second great capitalist crisis of this century. There is some significance in Andy Warhol's death in the year of the stock market crash of '87. The artiste as capitalist par excellence. But for me the fascinating crux of the matter is not all those dying but in those of us who are surviving this holocaust. For what can we call this time of plague, of the despairing hordes of homeless filling the streets of Anytown, U.S.A., of sex police and the contamination of love? It is as if by way of the mounting human death curse we are put closer to the life pulse and are inspired to act for life and make the dream real. And if the Utopian instinct is as natural to man as eating, sleeping, copulating, and dreaming, then what are we worried about?

CHARLES BERNSTEIN:

I haven't seen any notice yet of Robert Creeley's *Collected Prose*, published early this year by the University of California Press (a few years after Marion Boyars's cloth edition of the same work). In addition to *The Gold Diggers* (short stories), *The Island* (novel), & *Listen* (radio play), here is some of Creeley's most remarkable, & densest, writing—"prose poetry": the "prose" section of *A Day Book*, *Presences*, and crucially, *Mabel: A Story*, which has not been previously published in a U.S. edition. Speaking of adding weight to my bookshelves, I haven't yet more than bounced off the surfaces of *The Collected Poems of Charles Olson* (the non-*Maximus* poems), edited scrupulously & with immense devotion by George Butterick; but this giant (625 oversized pages) volume is already changing my (our?) conception of Olson's work—in the (welcome) direction already propelled by Butterick's reconstruction of *Maximus III* (in the 1983 U of C edition): less information, less Gloucester, more immediacy of form & reflection. 300 new poems here along with those known to me already from *The Distances & Archeologist of Morning*. I can't say that *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams: Volume 1 (1909-1939)*, edited by A. Walton Litz & Christopher MacGowan & published by New Directions in 1986, has changed my feeling for Williams, but there is something luxuriously inviting, & readable, about the book. For example, great to have *Spring & All* in its chronological context within

Williams's work; & very useful to have the indexes. The poems seem better than ever ("answering / ecstasy with excess"—p.424). Volume Two is expected, appropriately, by the Fourth of July.

& while I'm at it (books that bulk): Donald Ault's nothing less than monumental (maybe anti-monumental?) *Narrative Unbound: Re-Visioning Blake's Four Zoas* is just out from Station Hill Press—an enormous (500+ pages), & financially precarious, endeavor for a relatively small alterative press. It's hard to believe Blake criticism can be undergoing a revolution—but Ault's book is genuinely radical—in the Blakean sense—& convincingly shows that Blake's "incommensurable" narrativity is fundamentally at odds with any conventional way of "unifying" his mythography. Central to his project, Ault *reads* a dizzying series of textual discrepancies as *constituting* the method & meaning of the poem, rather than seeing these discrepancies as "disruptions"; thus disruption & disturbance & interference are understood as intrinsic to the poem's refusal, at every level, to add up to a "coherent, closed totality." For Ault, *The Four Zoas* "pushes to foreground the productive labor of writing: . . . it is a text that insists on its own struggle to be different from itself." Numbingly detailed: I doubt I'll ever "finish" this beautifully produced book. Ault, by the way, is an academic whose previous book, *Visionary Physics: Blake's Response to Newton*, focussed on Blake's attack on the rationalism of the natural sciences; but Ault has also written about comics (Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge in particular): the relation of word to image being one of his main themes. George & Susan Quasha deserve much appreciation for helping to make the new book—over fifteen years in progress—possible.

& with all that weight (heft?) of the (a) past of words—exhilarating to see this week the exhibition of paintings and drawings by Elizabeth Murray at the Whitney. Painting needn't get (& doesn't get) better than this—& Murray—by sheer painterly exuberance & intelligence—deflates or anyway sidelines much of the fashionable art-talk that alleges to give a clue to what's now happening. *Oubliez simulation*. This is *it*.

JAY PASSER:

THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH

I got this letter and I was wondering whether to answer it or change the cassette when I thought about someone in Canada who 32 seconds later called. at first I did not recognize his voice. then I regressed into stupid amazement like any fool would even though intellectually I know such occurrences are basically mundane. I told him about the letter I got and he said forget reality, fail like a hero.

of course in more words than that.

GUY R. BEINING:

Will we pulp out from this night tray where cans are fastened to hips and heels of nurses, and with hobbyhorse mannerisms will the blinking light & operatic horns take the mountain of salt from our chests, or rather take fields from our memories. Will the price rate of a bed cut the cord holding that sour light over rim of illness? Are we as those lesser paid to face that mt. of salt without support? And so to crack each rib, as that coatrack of poetic life. Is that license to be cut, to be packed back into wood powder? This melioration of our ties, of our concerns, where ode has dropped to balls of our feet now to relish in foremilk, that moon stuck like gum to our tongues.

JAMES GRABILL:

Emerson proposes an “abandonment to the nature of things,” a phrase that could possibly be heard as having literalist leanings, but Emerson continues that ‘the poet knows that he speaks adequately only when he speaks somewhat wildly, or ‘with the flower of the mind.’” (“The Poet”) In “What the Image Can Do,” Bly points out that images have the power to join “what is present with what is not present. The moistness comes from the world we don’t know: the underworld of the dead, the energies the ego has almost successfully repressed, the absent foot, the interior sun in another human being, the imaginary cattle.” Or, as Donald Hall says, “the lost forest struggles to be born again inside the words.” (“Goatfoot, Milk tongue, Twinbird”). Some poems are grounded intuitively, and work to call into form shifting impulses, tinctures, or perspectives. These might be thought of as *morphic resonances* that bring something of essence (or of the primal) from a particular being, state, place, gesture, or thing into renewed vibrational human correspondence. Association of images or of images and ideas, then, produces meaning, as does displacement between what is expected and what is given, or between the true subject and its expression. (The relation of the subject to its linguistic expression Higgins calls the “allusive referential,” where hopefully “discourse is transcended by displacement . . . The poet, then, witnesses life in language.”—from “Towards an Allusive Referential.”) The ocean comes this way. Breathing light from deep stars of absolute space. Light from peaches, and their stairways. Full summer hair, the cinnamon and clover. Scent of foreign wool, ancient apples, clear rain. *A word lets the earth hold through a vowel.* Through houses and planets the night holds in the wood and stone. A shell speaks from its midnight farms... Poetry is a music, where associations create displacement, giving virtual space to the reader or listener to recompose the poem. Associations create harmonics. Gestures contribute

to melody. Displacements cross-modified create further harmonics, however dissonant. *All words form again when any is said.* Presences are conjured through morphic resonance. Ground forms where we first stepped out of our time, or more fully into its "dilation." Certain poems unfold along the lines of dialectic, cohesive, or extrapolated symmetry... The infrablue hyacinth in the body of a Stellar's jay, roots of ultraviolet paintings, what we forget, what we find in something else: recycling memory is rebirth of the morning and evening. Deep memory is archetypal. Loss the self feels gives poetry a way to fullness. The abstract embodied in light. A person typing connects to continents like a person hammering. People together do not need to be in the same room. Poetry is a vehicle, a medium, full of the earth, and it is empty, waiting to be born when the earth is born.

LEE BALLENTINE:

Pure surrealism, contrary to opinion, is not out-of-date and needs no special rejuvenation—it continues as useful a view of the world as it was in André Breton's day. Indeed *it* is revitalizing *other* literary explorations, including *speculative poetry*, a name which owes as much to the model of speculative *philosophy* as it does to speculative *fiction*. Speculative poetry is not content to explore the minutiae of experience, the sex-lives-of-the-wealthy, or linguistic-angel-counting. Rather, it engages larger questions of our humanity, time, death, the nature of meaning, themes taken from the wide-cast net of science fiction.

GEORGE KALAMARAS:

What to say? Sometimes it's hard to find the words. Instead of speaking right now, perhaps I'll listen, and with some luck I might hear the deep syllable, what John Tagliabue calls "the sound of soundlessness."

GERARD MALANGA:

I write what I cannot photograph. I photograph what has the potential for becoming a poem. Veronica Norpel whom I've been photographing all summer exclusively for her model portfolio is of that essence and poetically inspired nature, but that's not what interests me about her and that the act of the instant hasn't as yet had the chance to occur—no matter—simply that the availability of photographing her precludes any poem that I otherwise would write. Perhaps this "love of beauty," as Nietzsche declares, "can therefore be something other than the *ability* to see the beautiful, *create* the beautiful. It can be the expression of the inability to do so." This nonexistent poem therefore has been transformed into hundreds of photographs of her face, body, hands and hair.

It should be noted that the name Veronica contains two meanings inherent in TRUE [ver] and IMAGE [nica]. To photograph Veronica is

to love her and to love her is to continue what I've been doing right along, which, incidentally, is what cannot be generated by any poem for however long the relationship is to exist. But all that can change. Nothing is certain in this world, a friend said once. And I know what he means.

To be intelligent in love requires great effort and patience and ultimately creates its own physical and auric beauty which is evidenced in the photograph finally. *The look of love on their faces* echoing Dante and Beatrice comes to mind here. A poem, any poem for its part, is limited by its own inherent structural imposition. Poems can always be gone back to, read and re-read. But a photograph is something else entirely, has the capacity to be fetishistic. By holding it in my hand I am holding her also. I can gaze at her at will and conjure for myself those private moments that seem to touch upon everything we've shared thus far. The photograph of Veronica becomes a fetish in this instance.

TERRY HAUPTMAN:

Poetry is strong medicine. Like a gulf wind it can hurl you forward pushing chaos to its climax. It can in its seasonal movement/circular process Transform the nervous edges, heal the body, empower the mind, knock you out with its blue sparks in its efforts to get to the origin/source, ease you through warm ocean breezes, ecstasies of sorts, spiral you through the gate, the cave, the womb, and can, as Rimbaud prophesied, in its struggling labor, ancient as beginnings, change your life, stamping its foot on the ashen crossroads of Becoming.

DIETER WESLOWSKI:

I have wrestled beyond the naming of my demon, with the dilemma of what to say for your "Free Speech Corner."

Originally, I had penned a vitriolic attack on the "New Regionalism," hence, the subsequent banality of current American poetry. I held forth on how American poets no longer wrote as if they belonged to a world community, and were actually taking an active part in the demise of language, by jumping on the TV, Pop language bandwagon. All this done, of course, in the stupid, holy name of clarity.

But then, a friend called, and sensing that I was in a particularly foul mood, suggested I might take some solace from Randall Jarrell's essay, "The Obscurity of the Poet." Recognition, I found, but no solace.

Of course, it goes without saying, I'm wickedly tempted to include a two page list of foreign poets (living and dead) for the "average" American poet to read, but I won't.

Instead, let it suffice to say, I would love to meet a Renaissance-type patron, who wouldn't mind taking me out of this Spirit-killing empire, for a while. Then again, this is an old wish and complaint of mine.

ELI GOTTLIEB:

A few words on Italian. After living abroad and speaking it for a few years, one finds upon returning home that one's native language has become strangely raw, pushy, and—more subtly than these—possessed of that isolating feeling of *negotiation* which seems to lie at the heart of speaking "American." In contrast with English, Italian is never inadvertent, but contains a continuous and uncanny congruency within itself, sponsoring sentences which push directly forward through the spoken space. In its implacable linearity Italian sometimes seems a descendant of those famed Roman roads driven rule-straight through the forests and mountains. But it is also a sweet and sheltering language, rich in rhetoric, with a great benevolent curve wound diagonally across its rigor—a windbreak of sorts behind which the more modest operations of daily life may take place unmolested. To fully grasp Italian one must first grasp the simultaneity of the straight and curved as felt properties within the language. Latin, building beneath two millennia of Mediterranean family life, produces the paradox: a linguistic instrument of great tensile precision which is filled to bursting with bathos and sentimentality.

Whither American English in all this completeness? The main animating event of our native language has been industry, arriving unlike its British counterpart without a great linguistic culture behind it, but as ranged against the sheer difficulty of naming at all in the New World. With the country's industrial boom well underway in the mid-19th century, Whitman quite rightly noted that along the quays and wharves of America a new language and nomenclature was forming which was unlisted in the dictionaries of the time. This was not only seaman's slang but the commonly used words for objects themselves, thrown out by inventive American business faster than they could be ordered into accepted speech. The cluttered catalogues of Whitman's verse are a testament both to the enormous sprawl of *things* in America and to his belief that the process of naming was itself the most democratic and poetic act. But Whitman's dream of the "nominative sublime" was to remain unfulfilled outside the artistic confines of his poetry, and our language has come down to us inherently sized to descriptions of commerce, transfer and exchange rather than anything of a human scale.

To a writer this simply means more work of a differing kind. The positive virtues of American English—its agility, great absorptive and synthetic powers and the unique range of its vocabulary—place its novelists under the necessity of inventing the ground of their own language before they can begin to build on it (a situation which would explain the absence from our literature of a Calvino or Robbe-Grillet, masters whose stable native languages allow them the luxury of sustained detachment and scientific study of narrative). The notorious inability of American writers to maturely describe love between men and women derives in part from our linguistic

weightlessness, whose centrifugal influences a writer uses up the better part of his mind combatting. Wide but not deep, fast without being grounded, American English moves with great, disinterested velocity over its landscapes—arriving quite naturally as language of choice for that new modern prince of anti-language and metaphor, the computer.

The poet Paul Celan spoke of the “fatal once-only” of the mother tongue. Returning home after several years abroad, one feels more uncomfortably certain of this than ever, and impressed by American English, and dismayed by it.

KEVIN MAGEE:

There is a 16' x 80' mural painted by P-9 strikers, artists and supporters from across the country on the Austin Labor Center in Austin, Minnesota. It was inspired by a year-long strike against the Geo. A. Hormel Company in 1986.

In the picture, a line of faceless workers in colorless clothes enters a factory, meaning smokestacks, lighted windows, cells, assembly-line, the architecture of massive cement slabs. A giant snake has wound the length of its body around the factory. The snake: allegorical figure of greed, private profit, the Devil of Competition.

Leaning over the factory, beacon (of understanding) in his hand, a man looks intrepidly into the future. The woman beside him, wearing a butcher's smock, axe in her hand, swings at the head of the monster, the snake. The bloodstained blade reads *P-9*, the name of the union local that stood up to the Company, the Banks, and, in the end, its own International (which betrayed it and refused to defend it against the cops and the courts).

From under the snake's bleeding neck another line of workers emerges. They have faces, defined features, and wear colorful clothes. They carry banners that read: 'International Labor Solidarity: Abolish Apartheid,' 'Farmers and Labor Unite,' 'Families Fight Back.' The bottom righthand corner bears a dedication to Nelson Mandela. The banner that spans the top of the wall waves the words of an anonymous poet who worked in the industry at the turn of the 19th century: 'If blood be the price of your cursed wealth good God we have paid in full.'

The coming decades will be an important time for poetry, although the lack of discussion in contemporary journals about the relationship of art to history, the relationship of art to class struggle, indicates just how far art always lags behind the social and political forces that condition its production.

I have this question to ask: what kind of poem, what vocabulary, what language will it take to make the leap beyond the 20th century, the age of the intense interior, the crisis lyric, the high seas of private longing, to—what—society? history? The festival of the people, marches and demonstrations, rallies, riots, strikes, plant shutdowns, trials of the leaders, the birth of heroes, political work, partywork: the emergence of the working-class out from the factory, proud and defiant, into the light of day.

"Not easy, at any given time, to reckon a count of the literary magazines that this nation has the good luck to have such a bounty of. But every so often it is time to welcome a new litmag that seems determined to make of itself something rather more than a mere additive, a small palliative. Such an enterprise is Witness. So that's what these sentences of mine are — my witness for Witness."

Gordon Lish

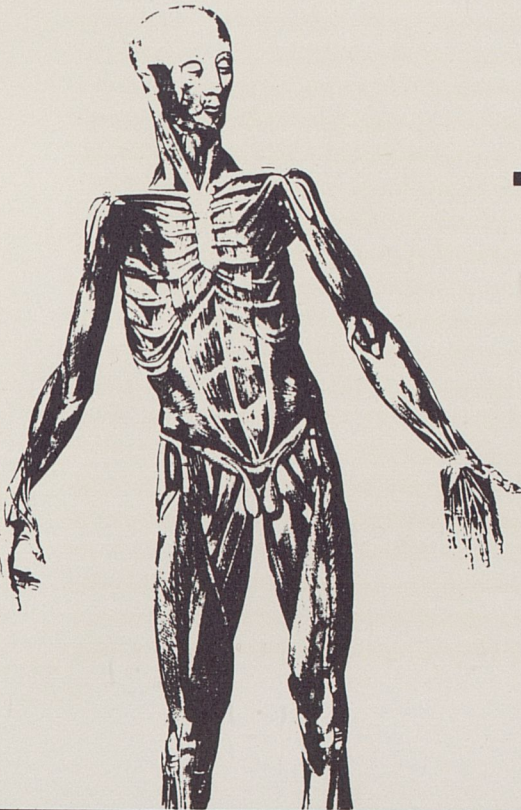
"Witness, from first word to last, aims to make a difference — and does. It is loud and angry and serious — like fistfights, and literature, ought to be."

Lee K. Abbott

"Witness is one of several excellent new literary and intellectual journals of the past few years that confirms our sense of the variety and scope of the imaginative life in the United States. Its focus upon thematic subjects is particularly valuable."

Joyce Carol Oates

- *Witness* presents nationally known writers, as well as new talent, and highlights the role of the modern writer as witness.
- *Witness* has featured special issues on **The Holocaust** and **Writings from Prison**. Contributors in 1987 include Carol Ascher, Madison Smartt Bell, Robert Bly, Tom Clark, Robert Coover, Tom Disch, Stephen Dixon, Russell Edson, Richard Elman, David Ignatow, Lawrence Langer, Leo Litwak, Askold Melnyczuk, Charles Simic, Lynne Sharon Schwartz, Ruth Whitman, Kim Wozencraft, and Rudy Wurlitzer.
- *Witness* will present a special Summer/Fall 1988 issue on **The Sixties**.



WITNESS

31000 Northwestern Highway
Suite 200
Farmington Hills, MI 48018

	<i>Individuals</i>	<i>Institutions</i>
1 yr/4 issues	\$16	\$22
2 yrs/8 issues	\$28	\$40

\$5.00

ISSN 0890-7269