

# **What Is Said to the Poet Concerning Flowers**



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PREVIOUS APPEARANCES OF SOME OF THESE POEMS:

*Arras*: “Verl,” *Asian Journal*: “The Window Ordered to Be Made,” *Best American Poetry 2004*: “They’re Putting a New Door In,” *Boston Review*: “They’re Putting a New Door In,” *Brooklyn Rail*: “Idea for Poem,” *Callaloo*: “Les Assis,” *Clestory*: “Mail Art,” *Contemporary Voices from the Eastern World*: “Italics,” *Drunken Boat*: “Provincial Hack” and “Oliphant and Castle,” *Filling Station*: “Prelude to the End of this Book,” “Attitudes and Non-Attitudes in May” and “The Journalist,” *Five Fingers Review*: “Pasha Noise,” *The Impercipient*: “The History of Wiggling,” *Oredit*: “In Pines,” *Open City*: “Axis Thinking” and “Italics,” *Premonitions: The Kaya Anthology of New North Asian American Poetry*: “Verl,” *Rattapallax*: “Be Alive,” *Shiny*: “We Make”

“No Special Order” and “Jai alai for Autocrats” appeared in the chapbook “Jai alai for Autocrats” published by Portable Press at Yo-yo Labs (New York).

“Thinning,” “Poem Formerly Known as ‘Terrorism,’” and “They’re Putting a New Door In” previously appeared in the chapbook “Poem Formerly Known as ‘Terrorism’ and other poems” published by housepress (Calgary).

“Cull” appeared as a chapbook of that title, published by Tolling Elves press (London).

“Midas Ears,” “Gatt Freedom,” “General Statements Concerning the Rubberyard,” “Corso,” “I Had That Idea,” “We Make,” and “Howlings in Favor of Tulsa” appeared in a chapbook titled “The Window Ordered to Be Made” (A Rest Press, New York).

Parts of “What Does It Matter?” appeared in a chapbook “Pasha Noise: Life and Contacts” published by Oasis Press (Portland, Maine), on the web journal “MiPoesis,” and on the Iowa Review website under the title “Coda: The Nineties Tried Your Game.” The entire poem was published under its present title by Barque Press in England as a chapbook.

“Gatt Freedom” contains lines from Guy Maddin’s “Death in Winnipeg,” Guy Debord’s screenplay “Howlings in Favor of De Sade” and “The Dullest Blog in the World” among other sources.

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*for Rachel*



What Is Said to the Poet  
Concerning Flowers







THE REVOLUTION OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

The revolution of the middle class  
will not be televised  
but preserved on caucasian  
disks for millennia  
in several hundred 96-page  
books of limp poetry  
with titles right out of christian songbooks circa 1987  
america  
—we pledge allegiance to the  
drag of tired instincts  
with victuals served up each night  
by bombers' wives in ashtrays  
an entire calendar's worth of  
metered doses and, of  
course, poetry advice columns  
with assurance of bought votes,  
of over-confidence—deep within the arbors  
of perennial mature promise  
usurping the supplicant's one or two prayers  
reserved for our dispassionate guilt

IT'S POSSIBLY ABSOLUTE

It's possibly absolute

—we are almost at the top of the rehearsal  
of stars—

there is a lively one gone awol  
to minnesota

where several poets have died  
but only a few of them were named jack  
canopy—

umbrellas are my favorite thing

to balance on a dog with  
down sloping highways

when the skyline is toward the east and  
the hemlines

—don't let me say that joke again

I am almost in love with the privilege

that brings your shy legs to me  
in the simulacral hamptons

—the shattered wrists of your economy  
wondering how this idiot got here

dearly holding his breath—for ardor

THE CROWDS WERE GETTING DRESSED

The crowds were getting dressed  
after some communal nudity  
forced them to open the doors  
to deserts of clothes  
I had the teleprompter out  
to influence the jury  
but there was very little getting by the fact  
they couldn't read  
—when nearly 7 feet of snow fell in 1957  
language poetry was born  
in hauppauge  
just off route 96 (near the sunrise diner)—you couldn't have  
anticipated the outcry then  
even the dolphins were crying “intact”  
we had to arrest  
several dozen for modal duplicity  
being in love with the poem and in love with the weather  
till nothing else mattered  
to them, to us, but to get on getting with it  
robert creeley style, just beyond the sand “bar”





WE ARE PROBABLY VERY USED TO BEING ALIVE

We are probably very used to being alive  
but getting started late  
is the fashion  
—one almost tripped on his grandfather's birth—  
and like cowards  
who refuse to write poetry, being  
indifferent, also, is an option  
—that young slattern straight out of a  
poem by william carlos williams  
he proses all his visions in  
proposals for superior poses, which he adopts  
dutifully  
the first time she cleaved his straightened back and  
the weather report went anal  
—who cares that the border between southampton and riverhead  
is marked by shit  
from a bipolar swan  
who mistook mattatuck for a bordello of baudelaire's  
geese—when it was really a parking  
lot—we have our vulgar engines, so let's use them

THIS METHOD IS POETRY

This method is poetry  
    pulling in “outside” feelings, habits, that wouldn’t  
be acceptable  
    otherwise  
but now like a toehold on to humanity’s cliffs it  
    persists  
    therefore you know my name  
    isn’t the son of sam, isn’t  
stalin  
    —in a related development there were those people that I once spoke to  
    in a bar, New  
    Jersey, 1994, the one who  
couldn’t speak  
    for the waves in his head  
being sanitized each day at  
    work—cleaning pools  
royal comedy that would fail miserably on pay-per-view, and even  
    here  
    where the method is poetry  
    keeping “outside” feelings, habits, strangely lusterless



The Window Ordered  
To Be Made





# The Window Ordered To Be Made



To hospitalize the ones we love most  
(Beginning an election and ending a corpse)  
To take that money

I'm going to start on election day  
(I'm basing this prayer on *Citizen Kane*)  
I'm going to start  
Asking the world if I'm straight  
At a balloon lunge event, where lightness is fitness

Here (he shoved the aphrodisiac)  
"Be in code!"  
The Amish getting squeamish  
(The net privileges  
Transcendental Morse)  
This essay is addressed to the audience  
As I caught the misunderstanding of "fantail rout"

As I caught  
That au courant  
Autocrat hit the sky

So, talk through these sour depressions  
And immigration counseling  
We decided: we are a pair of absurdities  
(I'm waiting for Scottish air)  
Everyone thought you were beautiful  
Now, to deliver the urban landscapes  
Seems only normal: upsets, lapses, hosannas, bananas...

I am a happy  
Victim of intelligence  
(Robots picked up Willa at the airport)  
"He probably went the wrong way with his eyes on"

Comedy?  
Gene Wilder's an expert

These are like  
Dropping off the guys off somewhere  
(Bakunin's temp hair is limp)  
The anonymity of the "I" on the web page  
Remembers graduation  
And the Chinese years symbolized by animals  
Worthy of reading  
If only for the erotica category  
However badly spelt  
By thirteen-year-old Petey Birdsong  
(Within his mirrors of catoptromancy, etc. etc.)  
Thirteen-year-old Petey Birdsong  
(The rude mechanicals of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*)  
Unbelievably endowed to play these sages  
(Behind him, the walls were spread with the human body)  
Thinking

Starting a Gore  
And ending a wimp

bluish

Can burn this

with this kind of information  
*available to panic*



# The Journalist

“My body is a roulette wheel, and I am betting on red.”

—Aragon



One man reported that his computer  
“appeared to have been hacked by a redhead,  
and she sang to herself while doing it.”

Another conveyed his position on recent developments  
in Van Halen: he was an “anti-Samite.”  
I want to be immune again.

\*

He paws his own body. This is the violence  
of wisdom.

\*

But like we don't remember the day we were born,  
no one ever thinks about the first letter of a sentence  
with *fondness*.

\*

*Yap yap yap yap yap*—ambient poetics.

## They're Putting A New Door In



Brian's new shoes. She asked me of his whereabouts. They're putting a new door in.

CCI. They're putting a new door in. Impersonating an officer.

They're putting a new door in. Feliz Navidad. My watch continues to stop: self-identity.

I break,  
WFMU.  
Margin time,  
the steaming metropolis  
wakes  
at 8 am  
with dry lips.  
I couldn't take my eyes off the ball.

Papers on her head. Like a crown of spring thorns. They're putting a new door in.

This is only the third poem I've written in 2001. And probably the last one. The other two went like this:

It hit with the farce of an atom bomb.  
If there are no animals on Mars, is there anything that could classify as "shit."  
People are like ciphers. They say this, they say that.  
Private life is a social experiment.  
The French: an impatience with secular explanations.  
Writing. Boiling potatoes.  
Everybody's pride is hurt.

And:

Footfalls, bubble baths,  
Hezbollah and hot dogs.  
Be sure to add these Tones of War  
to your arsenal of meters.

# Howlings in Favor of Tulsa



He learned the seven *Gracias*  
in the Countess Second's  
flat. The reality principle changed the face  
of religious discipline: tossed up girls

with Aquinas buttocks.  
Afterwards,  
spilled cosmos made patterns  
of roses in the pool. Raoul Vaneigem

ended up on one of those Iraqi playing cards.  
To be free,  
and ice skating! marvel of the furry  
caterpillar scooting across

fragrant, come-and-get-em lawns.  
We are saddened.  
Communist floes icened  
his face. Our country pays Puritanism

to heave out doubt.  
We are the floridas of Tulsa,  
but we are the cavities of the Future!

# General Statements Concerning the Rubberyard



General blankets descend on the rubberyard.

This pistol holistic  
piles in the whinny  
of the rubberyard. The dorsal trope  
adjusts the rubberyard, until  
stentorian, "profound."  
Germinal sweetness in the rubberyard.

Cocks crow to bay their respects to the rubberyard.

For sale:  
fat, and a glucose thermometer.  
Mom will come out to widen the toes  
teased into renaissance.  
There tends to be win doughs there.  
Fleece can succumb to viscous aspects.  
Lars von Trier vamps like a condor  
in the rubberyard.

Halliburton pinched a nipple in the rubberyard.

Why think of the rubberyard? Ambulance

photograph of the rubberyard, while

moving only, the cotton strokes  
of color against agate blue skies leveling  
the barns, mares, trowels  
of the rubberyard, in white, stand-offish light

collected in a book on a table in Williamsburg, VA.  
The seventy presidents of the rubberyard tinkle.  
The wives of the rubberyard presidents tinkle severely.  
Oh, green holiday spirits!

Stained-  
glass windows keep the descendents

unhappy, but productive in masses.  
A boat blocks the wham from unhappening.  
Treachly fellows with gnashing bangs  
deploy the ferns to the vernacular quizzes.  
Of an “ooh” and an “ohh” we know nothing  
but numbers. Numbers of sales from the rubberyard.

When the movie is rotunda  
I could not wish a crimp, sure and sulfite-free  
or a lathe bourbon, sloppy  
purred by a hipster in orange condoms.

Stench of the frolic still lingering—like a fence!—by her eyes.

# Corso



Self-hatred: keeping your arms spread out.

The Crocodile Honey elopes  
in carat-clusters                      pixilated zoom control makes it Marden-like  
I'm happy to have masked my              self-hatred  
These are first tests              of the new morn.  
                    pip of fire alarm                      duct-taped to top of  
alabaster bust of penguin.  
This is a rudimentary happenstance                      on letterhead titled "Corso."  
I've melted in a wee bonnet  
                    holding your small hand in  
mine  
                    You were like three small pieces of asparagus, then.

But the relationship lasted.  
We've witnessed other mornings like this  
                    new one.  
And you can't say: "Stop."

And you can't follow after my mother like you lean to.

# Prelude To The End Of This Book



Here we are, sunning in mutual esteem.  
You are one head higher, and my jaw  
is a chisel. Can / I / Point / Blank.

They are revolving like tops around us,  
in silence and a credit to the music.  
Paths / Furious. Nothing to fear, nothing  
to abut: a scene as orchestrated  
as the parroting of complex clauses.

What waxes is my memory,  
and wanes my attention.  
Ellipses and eclipses, the constant in such situations;  
to create a situation becomes my only cause,  
secure defeat. Treated / You / Blind.

And more powerful, contributing  
to the conversation, the clipped  
pitch and prick of French classical  
prose: alive, at last.  
Humming vocoder effect  
from the kitchen; more wine founds  
the tabula rasas. Clumsy gallants stumble amidships.  
Stereo / Crime / Philosophy / Achievement.

As the knowledge production moves along  
humbly,  
recordings of whales. No / Future.

The creations of the newspaper collagists  
are whistling through the alleys of dearth.  
One death among many; talents have their names.  
Ambition gestures careen  
through California night sky.

Water / For / Dunes. I will suffer  
the maxims while you stuff lead. My sex  
for community  
and your wealth  
for self;

participants are sequestered until self-esteem  
acquires capital seduction. Piano sound wells  
from the bedroom. This is our Song, jean-commercial style.

Finally, the embarrassment over smoking  
offers way out: fancy wounds  
are cerebral. Some myth or rhythm;  
finally, giving that up.

Tick / Tick / Tick / Haunted.

Move to Brazil. Something like Pink Floyd  
atmospherics; something decades-past  
achieves new relevance. Peek-a-boo eyes  
like steady-cams in the toilet swilling darkness: lost.

At the end of the game they alphabetize the names.

Count yours in it.

Too / Tall / Harry.

One / With / Sun / Stick.

Instrumental break will not convert them;  
she races through the galleries, gender-crippled.  
Hostile arrangements:  
it's called editing.

The plug. Smooth issue. Some subtle subtext  
is like hard rock candy at center of Jupiter;  
thesis uncovers it. Target it:  
your back.  
Sensible writing on the causes of  
Twentieth-century clinamens.

The word's out: cut your mouth. Bargain in the park.  
I should just rip up those poems and create prose narratives  
out of them, like I'm doing  
now. It's now coming back,  
with conversation about social leperdom  
in 1952. Lucked / Bird / Perspective.

Not enough crescendo  
in that lazy throat;  
the tongue keeps the car waxed in the garage.





# Attitudes And Non-Attitudes In May



1.

You can see the clarity in Philby's thinking in how few corrections he's made.

2.

You will face the *Luftwaffe*—alone.

3.

Striving to be insulted:  
it's like the reality principle:  
a kind of receiving station  
for the ephemera of daily trust.

4.

(They were pointing us toward their absolutes.)

5.

Those questions that have caused you so much anxiety  
do not have to be answered.

6.

Any life is tainted.  
Hence, no touching the fleshy, lubricated parts.

7.

Gottfried Benn observing the flower of a fatal knife wound.

8.

Walking away with the sunlight on your shirt.

# Provincial Hack



1.

I would like to expand my sphere of influence  
to include gummy bears, flutes, and broken raisins.

(A cloud  
at sunset.)

2.

So torque, avoid the quack  
bitching in the room you're with.

Um, sending...  
(Blending in).

3.

"Everybody steals.  
It is exciting."  
No symbols are involved...  
You cannot drink annotated water.

4.

Tiny bubbles in the soap...  
Like condoms...  
Tiny zeroes in the astroturf...  
(The telephone hangs up of its own course.)

5.

The Kim Stefans sneak attack is now in progress.  
Be not upset.  
(Just velvety and dark  
slashes and dreams.)

6.

It's all musicals.  
Youth culture in zip-locks.  
Here is the colon:  
and here, its Happy Meal™.

7.

Maybe this is what they mean by television:  
Brion Gysin's ginny flix... bottom-up bureaucracy...

Tracing lies against the pattern  
in mystic squalls, conveying them.

8.

A sort  
of syndrome.  
Natural, of course.  
(California.)

9.

To complain of no love  
and then to make movies.  
(Drifting into minis,  
a chorus of NAFTA girls.)

10.

With the largest of handshakes keeping us sound  
again and again... returning to the same apartment...  
Cool, gov!  
“Eye warrant.”

11.

Spilling out toward the coasts in sex drives,  
every one of them (the coasts, that is).  
Little stickers on the ceiling  
some gnarly, be-acned kid put there...

12.

or her, maybe.  
You consider Nicaragua  
the imagination.  
(Pork chops and apple sauce.)

13.

“I’ll be dead soon.”  
Boo hoo hoo.  
Sane as myth, he renewed his function with eloquence:  
writing *Tarantula* over and over again.

14.

In those filthy Thirties...  
the low-res screen capture habit...  
the Cancer League Aggression Party...  
the Gabriela Sabatini Intelligence Project...

15.

Mein Gott!

(Pauses.)

“One doesn’t sense a personality so much  
as a *strategist*.” I could almost write a poem about it.

16.

Meaning: “*Just* a poem...”

# A Poem for Tyros



Apollinaire,  
argue with,  
art binary breakdown  
—but enough to derail,  
—but I'm in a rush.

Chance,  
come into play,  
comes out of his/her mouth,  
concentration on the words on the table.

Consider my very private  
constant movement,  
Debord—  
I am the system,  
I can't say  
I am not,  
if only slightly.

*I walk into a room.*  
I would do it in improvised locations.  
I'll spare the examples.  
I've wanted to create a paragraph  
walking a lobster  
walking into a room.  
It's not that I'm uncomfortable  
meeting people  
perhaps at odd moments of the month and week,  
perhaps on purpose.

Nuances  
of the bureaucratic—  
of written text into the real-time  
“on schedule,”  
one among many.  
Perhaps *dictator* is better?  
Perhaps a series of paragraphs?

The bodily/abstract (

The public/private (  
The troubles,  
The written stuff  
—there is a page of wasted prose.  
There is no exact.

Well,  
what else happens at a reading?  
When the time seems right (

You become the “boy,” and those who have nurtured private opinions of your essential ser-  
vility suddenly come forth with demands—  
through thick or thin,  
to be gazed at as a single artwork—  
not to mention potentially transform thinking in fashions that writing itself could not alone  
do—  
they are just demands—  
they are mostly petty,  
(think of Bourdieu)  
which is to say that the most loyal curators will never be taken too seriously as poets.

A “gentleman,” but really a slave)—  
a certain looseness,  
as did the behavior of Rimbaud,  
as he/she does,  
a poet’s actions in public (  
a series hanging in space at the same time.

Can one say “being” of the work that you have produced,  
—determined warrior-poet who has attempted to inflict on me the natural aspect of the  
superiority of his views but who has not  
become part of the record?—  
becomes animated for me?  
And when they have just produced some tremendous work that I am sure will change  
everything,  
even organizing,  
even the use of proper names,  
ever so slightly,  
for instance,  
for the possible in what,  
*for* what,  
for whom decisions have a sort of finality—  
I somehow think this is all meaningful.

I think it is discussing this particular strand of my behavior

—I try to shave at least in the week prior to the reading—  
I have just completed a two-month run as the “curator,”  
—even approached mastery of the social rules such that such a challenge could even be  
    humored past the first move,  
in fact.

And if it weren't so much work—  
and only with poets I am most excited about—  
and quite alone—  
and so for that reason I will “curate” only infrequently.

Promises:  
quasi-elitist self-training as a poet  
—setting the parameters,  
since it is then,  
so much more revealing in my writing,  
syntax even—  
talker—  
that a particular aspect of poetry  
that begin with this sentence  
that is lacking in the creation of a “schedule”  
not to mention my own social distractions  
of cultural capital  
will be my expression of revolutionary will,  
writer,  
yes.

All of the vicissitudes (  
and I promised to myself that spontaneity,  
accidentally or purposely ignore,  
actually enjoy the microphone,  
inchoate as it seems.  
including reviewer,  
interpretation,  
issues of mutual respect,  
—it is the French who have most theorized how the agent in the field  
invariably makes an impression on Nerval's works (  
playing in a super-literary fashion invariably changes not only what has been written

but the trap of filling a role—

But then I am reminded that this form of politics smacks.  
But what is to be written?  
by chance (  
etc.



These run up against these more *fluid* inclinations of mine,  
(this is a key word here)  
this *visibility* is good—  
though I have sought to master it by pulling some of the *strings*—  
—that you take *orders*,  
—that you are perfectly *polite* (  
the “iron hot,” if that doesn’t sound *ridiculous*.

And I would have thought I’d have gone out of my way to avoid the “public” as much as possible,  
and though I have no terribly urgent thoughts on the matter,  
how many idiotic challenges have I faced from a headstrong  
*I am not just in the system.*  
*I am political just when I said that being political is the natural next step past being an aesthete.*  
?

In which I can most suitably begin a sentence:  
“Three-dimensional world are often thwarted by a haughty attitude toward the rules themselves...”

To read in private—  
whom I might chance to meet?  
More so now than in the headier days of life/  
that which one is intended.

That you behave in fashions that suit your role?  
These opportunities for continuing the discourse—  
(why can’t I spell that?)  
agreed-upon term for this role in the poetry community—  
but it doesn’t have the prestige of that figure in the visual arts.  
But it somehow becomes a determinant in the reception.

# Oliphant And Castle



Someone was fat and happy.  
    (I've learned to write  
on the marble.)  
Does it pay to care about things?  
    One could be precocious  
and start a Day Op,  
(first, we'd have to know what that is  
and stop caring about being lonely)  
    —did you forget her conversation  
so quickly, because  
you were drunk for days afterwards?  
    Hopping on tiny leather springs.

# No Special Order (no soap, no taters, no government)



1.

And so the old new order and the new old order  
have called my bluff: I don't have moods  
clinging to the cot—for pretty much the entire match  
squirting eighty percent of the style,

there were fractions of a name, bar/café doggerel  
with signals influenza'd by historical speech, but  
statistically unkempt, a spastic honesty  
in twelves. Didn't think about it a lot, just wrote

becoming the tradition, massive in someone's  
delinquency, leashed to the inquisitive  
and howling. Like you, I lied, tried to make it  
a book—capsized by life, but only for the century.

Feet were hung, and for an instant  
my passions sprang from a gaudy intent.

2.

As the cat whined over the fans, as the critical lore reminded  
me of the past, approaching like pews, and of  
the precious order of salmon fugues  
I found I could surf—martial arts imperatives

from community opacity—hike like pines the splits, plume  
day-glo colored, like a Brat in a Hat,  
climb back into the trapezoids and bull circuits  
shimmering Today, yet falsely accused

on schedule—irreverence dosing the regularity  
flaring from the coverts, vicious. One more big-breasted  
star, godforsaken, in doubt control,  
professing obedience to sound, though amateur at love.

The engineers could fake their cues  
and strike hot dials, but no one is disabused.

3.

In fact, they ignored this shagadelic approach.  
Greening the technique, and finally surfacing,  
now “massive in someone’s delinquency,” *their* drums became  
the quatrain, incensed quarantine, so what

sound choked untold in the Thirty States, in robust  
naming technique, citizens arranged  
to marble in fountains of sleepovers, for the market in bleeps  
and poses—then croons then screams—and so

they sleep. Why make a cancer of it? you  
ask, waving the anti-depressant book, stalking the oat of  
the boy in undevious health, in pregnant  
vessels, variety ever squandered, penitents sharpening their knives,

spurious? Fashions, wisps of hair.  
Dull, domestic sounds that flake the air.

4.

I don’t have moods, though am particularly alive  
in my distractions, doing the taste test  
on this or that, mixing demure and fickle conventions  
with the protectful and shy, with a signature

muddy celerity, demonstrating a crick  
in the conscience—if only while 24-hour sunrise permits  
shitting in the pants for kicks. I won’t write  
what it is that embarrasses me, not *that*

nirvana, even with opportune chagrin—before, that is, awakening,  
final, approved, immaculate,  
with all the tragedies of the world in my marsupial  
pouch. Nothing squandered, and to a furious passion

in liege. And in leisure, possessed.  
Dispossessed I mean, my truth the rest.

# Midas Ears



“We” have found roses cheaper than cigarettes.

(Putting a square patch on your shoulder to kill an *instinct*.)

Perhaps

I will stay here, away from your writing

divided between the rout of Pollocks  
and What’s Said to the Poet Concerning Flowers.

\*

I stop,

and wave.

Then punk happened.

# Cull

ᄇ

QUIET

It's so quiet I can hear the Kurds.

IN A STATION OF THE METRO

Ended  
During a movie.

OF BODIES

These are my clothes.  
I organize them like stars.

NEW YORK

; participants are sequestered until self-esteem acquires capital seduction.

\*

This is our Song, jean-commercial style.

MINIATURE (ORKNEY LYRIC)

My mother with the half moon eyes  
(oh! she's had a bit to drink,  
her eyes are usually minus signs).

DO YOU THINK THERE HAS BEEN A BRAIN DRAIN FROM RUSSIA TO THE WEST

It takes a lot of brains to create a drain in Russia.



*PIFFLE.*

(Breath.)

Man can take time to believe this.

THE FAT THAT BUNCHEd UNDER HER CHIN

I will never get over it.

HORN

like trying to fill a cow  
with thimblefuls of milk

AT THE EDGE OF WILDERNESS

Sean's boobs.  
What would you do, just lay there and let it happen?

FOR W.S. GRAHAM

I am still. And I hear the words  
are still, also, but I can't tell.

Go Now

You have been named Synonymous  
So dance like a monkey.

# Thinning



An ethic node  
Facewidth

Available thinking  
Hopes to dog

Protecting toxic parts  
Waxy

Strong  
Visiting

If I see this dog  
Lady + 3

You know the miracle  
Club

Have some lynch  
Officer

Then enjoy it  
Clown

To guilt  
Things for complex rooms

Honestly  
When 4 and 6 forewarned

Australian rules  
Summer

Spiderglass  
Creations

## Poem Formerly Known as “Terrorism”



The feng shui was glistening.  
(This helps me to avoid the air of polemic.)  
I am like you  
At ten.  
Might that be your swimming?  
Medically, in a division game  
(“Squid” revealed to be floating cheese)  
A low-res boyfriend  
(He talked about them like they were hotrods)  
Two  
In a decade  
Who could scan the headlines, but who could say  
Who’d laugh.  
Go rent a video on it.

“Capture”  
The track ball.  
You are gorgeous  
In information silence.  
*We* are in a “wracked” dominion.  
(I trust  
The slow writer.)

“Green tortoise-shell glasses” is not an adequate response.

“Islamabad” is not an adequate response.

So that I could have a switch  
In blue motion.  
Visitors: a talcum blonde, Jihad vs.  
McWorld  
(To relate to the anecdote:  
It is just struggling to find a form  
To our kids.)  
So I motion:  
The Pentagon, symbol of our erotic hope.  
How much are we really paying attention to ourselves?

In quiet times, like these  
Censored apparitions  
(Our fog there)  
I'm hurt like Rocky  
(Time to replace something  
In 1939). Is it my gallant?  
In 1939.  
There she is doing that Munch thing again.  
Sad, anemic eyes  
Coming to take the piss out of you.

“Spontaneous creation”  
Their own sort  
Of sound poetry.  
(You wasting you time.)  
Anyone who has ear glasses  
Amid Third World Revolution  
Renewals.  
His famous Mom.  
(These weren't opposites somewhere.)  
Mary had a jab.  
Like hell you didn't know.

IwyuriuCu '0 oiu woiuC uaf wX oide l'Tu  
Ewyuwau rdnn. Cutud.u oide  
Lwuyb nuo yu euu  
—dX t'aLo ln'h rdoi ou!  
EdTa'ne?

Sdob 'af 'nouC oiu yue'Tu do twao'dauec—  
When does the world open up and become true?

This functioning as a numchuck  
Pug pouring filth  
(Ping chocolate)  
Rendezvous of course.  
Maine: I heard it myself, now thinking this.  
Pedantic.  
Showering with all his glee  
("Last call for the Devonshire armpit!")  
On the grounds of  
Tables.  
Repopulated Paris  
("They won't understand this.")  
Catholic dances.

Paris, henceforth, will want to be repopulated.

Versus the hurricane.

A wasted effort            you have said nothing.

Jack Nicholson

Relaxes

In disco tempo

Thursday morning

Begins to create live sets.

From the ego-sphinx, Matrix-like, you jump.

Hanging.

All the computers whisper: *acqui, acqui.*

They didn't hand out

Spinach.

(I'm going to remind them.)

Twelve easy precipices

Going out

Cold solids    (we're stuck with his company

Now).

(Talk whizzes by like hands

Pushing the computer.)

I fresh toothen up    bucky balls    graffiti on "lunge."

—The Blue Upset.

—Upset in Blue.

—A deep and fascinating

Distrust

Section in Synthetic Scots.

And after that: the shopping.

One doesn't "sense" a personality

A dial of Genet's girls

The adult.

Conic section            avant-gardists

How many people

Live life at

Glibbest

(You said that

Benny Hill.)

Just the same

Field of glory.

Thighs of the apple tree.

Ritual

*Natural expressions.*

Wildcarpets.

(Novel or criticism

Same thing.)

Beneath the razor.

Beneath your hands.

69

Twenty seconds later:

Isolated mountain

Singing fits

A noticeable humor in the climate

Off the roof

In which your loves circulate

Greek.

Everything is useful!

Against this genius!

I met her at the United Artists      Theater on Broadway

People with nice teeth being perfectly superficial

In "patois"

To save money.



# Gatt Freedom



Mailbomb: I had a mug of coffee sitting on my desk.  
Mantis: I reached out my hand and picked up the mug.  
Market: I had several pieces of paper in front of me.

Reaction:

I suddenly began to hate the Specialist  
wild and white choreography unleashed  
on a semiotics-ignorant public—

*None of them love you.  
Happiness is a new idea.*

The fine young artificial  
proto-mullets are so natural  
brazen vessels, buttery-soft.  
I continued to sit there for a while.

It was a terrifying and grotesque site,  
but the Specialist continued:  
“Say, did you sleep with Françoise?”

*None of them love you.  
Happiness is a new idea.*

Playboy: The lace on one of my shoes was undone.  
Plutonium: I depressed the switch on the side of the kettle.  
Plutonium: I continued to sit there for a while.

Pseudonyms:

“Just as the film was about to start, Guy-Ernest Debord would climb on stage to say a few words by way of introduction. He’d say simply: ‘There’s no film. Cinema is dead. There can’t be film any more. If you want, let’s have a discussion.’”

Data-haven,  
the counterfeit siblings  
(William Gates)  
covert video:

so natural  
I’m no longer self-conscious

using my hand  
when the convulsions had subsided.

Buddhistic and bland  
*(Journey to the Moon)*  
in the cafés  
of Saint-Germain-des-Prés!

their revolts become  
conformisms. Twenty-one  
years: at that age,  
one is capable of all acts of civil life.

*When*  
*the number is*  
*over—*

I continued to be apathetic with my activities.

# Reflections in a Glass House



AAA Another American Artist — each axis  
spawns another axis— And—and?  
a sort of beggar's testament—typed  
that's not me— —whom I know you might  
consider one of the lightweight artist-intellectuals of our time—  
perhaps not the most productive) —or espe-  
cially— Did the flounder flounder—the bass  
bass? as I am also dissatisfied—  
in London town— —you have to live  
with it—practicing in Brooklyn— Finessing  
the first kiss. For your pleasure—try the  
Mount Rushmore posture for any longer than 15 years—  
Seconds ago— —poverty—abjection—  
—named her— with the sky just  
pissing over the horizon. —the lad's skinny  
legs barely activated for the days ahead, the eyes still red from summer's  
lawn chairs— Hello hello.  
I was lying. —it was nearly voted in  
—the amendments constructed —and the toxic verticality of  
its filaments integrated into the country's fabric—  
as the moment is digital— —unbothered—  
—axis thinking— like nation ⇔ indi-  
vidual —real people—real poems—  
Well—I thank you— It doesn't  
pay to be conservative.



it is anti-Wagnerian—in this sense— It opens.  
Let me warn you: Lust never troubled me.  
Maybe tomorrow. —and the color's flawed—  
—so playing tennis won't solve much of anything  
—neither his own nor My lazy glands will  
ever support me. My sense is that one can find  
an analogy in poetry Nation is easily —  
placed on the axis of transnation ⇔ nation —  
a headache in a ballroom —constant—

—the trade of all sophists—  
 slow tones that surrender themselves finally—in the mist—  
 Or hell —certainly when—  
 “watch me getting fucked every which way” the thin hair of our information  
 Professionals.  
 Politesse with the finger bent. be simply a diagram  
 for memory— —you can replace it if you’d  
 like— Fisher-Price joys now that the idea of  
 the flood has subsided.



—so—then—yeah—  
 falters description  
 anywhere— —they’ll never get  
 selves with polysyllabic cardinals and heliocentric ordinals —speaking among them-  
 pull the elastic back before such robust  
 confusion More creativity lugged through weasel  
 holes. not tired—  
 governs the lack —though with respect—  
 So few— So said those Pop  
 dudes.



Some of this screaming from Tan Dun seems to reflect this impassiveness—  
 cathartic but recorded—  
 Bob Mould—in Cleveland—insensate. —  
 bad gums— Stamping.  
 Standing in the zone. —lyrical—in  
 expanded volumes; this scum records dutifully the you of us and should live.  
 Surprise!  
 perhaps— *speaking—worth nothing.*  
 jimmy the lock—vandalize the key— —  
 don’t sing what is well made by Irish— —  
 retract everything —words don’t know these  
 physical boundaries— —as Duchamp  
 famously quipped “dataflow—”  
 not to anticipate a later critical attitude toward the finished work so much —  
 as to maintain the aura (or era) of exploration —  
 you will have no success —so Providence  
 awaits global cellular rates—



# I Had That Idea



I had that idea, too.

Write the life but according  
to principles not usually associated  
with life, such as...

And shut off all  
auto-correct features.

There is the sound of straining  
from the other room. That was the one  
vacated by the Terrorists. They were brothers  
from a little village in Italy. It is now

occupied by an opera singer  
with chronic constipation.

Same thing. Taking the pleasure  
out of your work.

I had serious reservations  
about my own writing before I started  
this. This talking.

Sometimes it is just  
the hands hanging from twin flagpoles  
emanating from my breasts. I could shine them,  
wax them, spit on them, but they don't

write, just hold out for the rest of the day  
until I couldn't brag of them any  
longer—usually by mid-afternoon, say 3 pm.

I'd drink more coffee then, check my emails,  
play some on-line *Yahoo!* games, like backgammon.  
My flagpoles not buckling in the wind.

My flags empty of wind.  
My hands dangling there like flags.

What Does It Matter?  
or, Pasha Noise: life and contacts

*A sort of fiction*



“For the Law kills the flesh that kills the Law,  
And we are then alive.”

—E. A. Robinson, “The Three Taverns”

“Subjectively.”

—Ezra Pound, “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley”





# What Does It Matter?



## 1. OVERTURE: BIRTH AND DEBATES

The idea of a programmer's pride, pulled from a kid's acrimony;  
they had codified it into torques, fixtures  
insular debates and demographic fissures;  
prophylactic explanations culled from bells and whistles  
colorful, synaesthetic, could lead the way  
from Sunday school antics to enviable paychecks;  
but that radical parity slumped in the punk of a groin,  
so that, later, what made ties to the critical  
olfactory nerve as it hovered over New York  
were the generations of teethers we saw entering the debates;  
a dark humor obtained, a cyber-sexual,  
middle-aged vaudeville of what was relentless, though it seemed to fly away  
the moment the game got hot, and Pasha  
settled into his mitts, telling them Style was enough—no positions  
necessary—they'd been obviated by the reticular clown.

## 2. OVERTURE (2)

A visit to the world's largest tenement phone;  
beep-bop in the schism of necessity  
frees up nothing but an attic room for history;  
his ratings plummeted shortly after that,  
accusations swell, dull Caliban's lashes,  
with marches in the streets against the evitable classes;  
the paterfamilias balloon swooped overhead, then  
swung down over the table, shouting  
"Good disciple!" and "Pardon my Canadian French!"  
later to be bullied by the falcons, ravens, owls;  
now that we know how wonderful the 21st century  
can't be, waking up isn't difficult anymore,  
the pen—or stylus, rather—leaps gingerly into the hand,  
or cyborg claw, a synaptically-enhanced lockjaw  
since our inadequacies turned out not to be fiction after all.

## 3. MODERN LOVE

Flipping slap-happy from one purple pose to another;  
the techno-fusion drones, some dehydrating drug  
tames it—one argot-like name exchanged for "schizophrenic" Other;  
she, though, had eyes for an audience,  
had acquired the moniker Her Videoness Avatar, in a dream  
—she's clumsy on manic ankles, rewriting Beckett;  
the avenue was suggesting Pasha, and with focus he arrived,  
out of the blue, subjectively—dubious, barely audible  
over the crackle of World War II headphones, mincing slogans  
cryptic and fueled, and very faux-Latinate;  
when they finally marry, HVA and Pasha, they are near-dead, or  
*le mot juste* might be, for the canon, "reptilian"  
—cold, unblooded, but they nonetheless spark a friendship  
through email, in the humid, bull days of August,  
and one day decide to visit the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens.

#### 4. MODERN LOVE (2)

One more sally;  
rock song strums  
and calms the nerves;  
they shop,  
privately interact  
with thumbs;  
the processor whirs  
commandments overhead,  
now uttered  
with certainty;  
real playstation  
or organic whist,  
serotonin  
straddles the DNA  
one last time for thought.

#### 5. PLANET TELEX

Telex squandered his chance for fame, crying What are my interests;  
multiple piercings suggest a fractal physiology, not  
of the skin, but of the heart;  
late nights, tattooed to a bar stool, leashed  
to a portable assistant, vigilant in this fiction—sometimes  
striking upward, out, for a gust of air, nagging about Empire;  
such vision flicks us  
haplessly into a void that was shimmering Testicle Beauty,  
—proses of diamonds, he said, somnolent but serenaded by liquors, he  
said—potable dream assailant from the past;  
our vagueness is mint, remarkable, a  
culture can thrive on it: virgin splash pages and IPOs for the masses  
offered instead of names, concepts, symbols and  
words, figures, lines, stories, and  
of the rest of this matter, one purrs into the receiver, and expectorates.

## 6. HEAT DEATH

The syntax will appeal to the women, the words will appeal to the men;  
green, yellow, red, these variations can cause an accident  
extending the highways back into the Meadowlands;  
what fickle remains of a once confident transportation,  
some outside source will remark, concluding the system's fucked,  
then decrying the self-animation of stained glass;  
but Olive Oil still says: "I'm taking the brat to the country,"  
the sun reflecting arrows on fields of vintage wheat,  
and until her face slips off into her glass, she is famously believed,  
the house turning stone silent after that;  
but when the tea leaves are read, and Bartelby eclipses his spreadsheets,  
a population will suggest itself in several violet languages  
true to a will, though still bartering with Pokemon cards—speaking  
a language that, in time, is to be praised for its efficiency  
and, given the proper addictions, will probably support a new literature.

## 7. HEAT DEATH (2)

Because the quality was Miguel in the bone shop of visions;  
the destiny was Marianne, that parody was dozens  
plinking on silver planes the future of American cinema;  
we require a touch of the arbitrary in our quest for preternatural solace,  
also, a moment of tossing, vertiginous sex action  
why not, among the sonnet-like insubstance of the screenplays;  
a damsel in distrust and a hero's piezoelectric bladder,  
the villagers rebel, soundman farts on ladder,  
this all faithfully scripted by the blind, teenage amanuensis  
unionized since daybreak, but sweating in plastic running pants;  
finally, the expected demise wings into focus, the  
suspicions of Prym the gardener metamorphose into social contraband,  
lovers bathe in the shade of a milk-white Vaseline filter  
long-banished by the Nouveau Roman people but who, finally, cares,  
this program has its meanings and afterwards there's no story, but laughter.

### 8. HEAT DEATH (3)

It is in the depths of this rhetoric that the hidden quantity persists;  
a jujube, a scar, a dandelion, all are permitted to obtain  
the paradigm that is a counter-thrust to the hypocrisy;  
what stories he had told when reclining deep in his deathbed,  
she said, but said she couldn't remember them, yet  
that Saturday ceased to impress with its abysses of unsolved fairness;  
and so the stories survive beyond the pale light  
of ideology, philosophy, language even, and the attractive trends, acquiring  
for themselves the aura of rare, sought-out fashions  
so that the codgers were revived, to resist, but that was all wrong;  
what was right was the inviting darkness  
in the confusions of cellular syntax and vocabularies culled from dream musics,  
the voices coalescing and retarding, vexing but never bland,  
leveled against each other in the no-holds-barred of a facile, bitstream rhetoric,  
—such that, with hindsight, one notices a slight scar on the shoulder.

### 9. DAY JOB

Crammed in a rectangle;  
the concentration  
is on the warp on the floors;  
words loaned  
by knowing smiles  
and *every single breeze*;  
the scrotum  
a tight pack or frowning,  
calligraphic twists  
marl Hokusai's garden;  
so earnest,  
few could he call his friends,  
but mother, hearing,  
and sound, his father,  
tell-tale whistle from the throat.

## 10. ARTIFICIAL PARADISES

We observed the star fields;  
no concern they were artificial,  
some dream-bot of adolescents;  
make that *overpayed* adolescents,  
they tolerate my shoes, and  
their fishy way of love-making;  
this aristocratic disinterest,  
something to do with words,  
indelible words, on a typewriter, by  
a hand that is seamless blood;  
an economy for the taking, one's  
health derides the ease of it,  
blank slate chalked by fascist disco  
drone—cathexis by Tourette's,  
until the fancy trance repays the work.

## 11. Q & A

All that time, all that easy time;  
frozen in mannered applause,  
a country of hunches waits;  
there, by the military therapy monitors,  
the Byzantine conversations,  
the dissociative stares, the passing off;  
for Pasha, like them, it was nothing  
but a game, his flint flecks of culture  
comporting in easy tournament  
with light sabers, in polyvinyl memory “aids”;  
digital caffeine, he said, tangible  
placebos to palliate the feeble-martyred  
—Tepid E-zine was on a roll now, too, so  
they, allies at university conferences,  
returned to dust: the funded, the dispossessed.

## 12. WILLIAMSBURG

If society were an opinion, you'd be lying;  
the brain is lighter without eating,  
but the lines of poetry all scintillant mistakes;  
“retention theory”—we smoke them out until  
apotheosis in the critical sublime, still practiced  
here, in New York—no need for a socializing ardor;  
in Britain, they are fixing for order, not  
of the American sort, with sorties occurring regularly, but  
as counterpoints, with their justifications uncovered  
in the Empire's darker, debt-laden lashes;  
a towering, Britney-Spearsish blonde looks on  
from the billboard outside my window—I think, to remind  
me... of... not sure... blankness... or  
that it's not the “Nineties” anymore (or not for ninety more years)  
—the walls and curbs an integrated, influential sphere.

## 13. DIVORCED

“And then I start getting this feeling of exaltation”;  
but that's before the brass Daddy-arm  
unscrews from the pewter socket;  
Telex monitored the weight of potential catastrophes  
from the gorse-like foliage of his apartment,  
unstandard, victimized, divorced;  
but that was like the sentience of carved, Mayan statues  
exporting their carnal desires in dissipated “men's” magazines,  
rewiring the mores to reflect how unstrange  
this is—futuristic, chic, enveloped;  
smacking bubble sounds from the packing gels used for storage  
of Panama potatoes, rerouted through Greece,  
with the English wines of substance control kept driftily at bay,  
far from the ops of hummers, anti-aliased crooks,  
figures from a sauced-up sandman who, after wiping, runs for President.

#### 14. EXILE IN IRONY

Settled several hours within the orbital aviary;  
marshal swoops trundle in the distance,  
powerful beyond the starship's auld diction;  
the meters only confirm our dread,  
in two weeks we plan on having no oxygen,  
in four weeks we run out of food, but who cares;  
yes, the tactical mind is piqued, but my  
patience for pap smears and hemoglobin sticks has waned,  
these practices had their day, but  
now, the civic rays of the sunset blunt our mission;  
send citizens, Romans, quarks and admen,  
send a bunch of free junk, too, like chopsticks and matches,  
—the whole kit-and-caboodle is starting to seem  
like one angry Argonaut's idea of getting even,  
and, inevitably, we will grow bored, and possibly vicious.

#### 15. TRANSFERENCES

His dream was all literature but his prey ration was all puppies;  
poppies produced the word, which sent him rolling  
down the streets to the cemetery to the leopard in slacks;  
after the hour had ended, he retied his slacks  
and forgave the passing preachers their ignorance of his solidarity,  
resembling as they did the driftwood on pale beaches;  
now, there was a day to spend searching for the perfect aperitif,  
which poisons to portend, which stanzas to brag of,  
which of the famous wrists to stick a fork in, and which  
of the educated young to usefully ignore;  
by evenings he worked on translations of old French novels,  
verbs plucked out for the girl with cinematic morals  
inventing that teat for a squeeze though he rarely ever enjoyed it,  
and arrogated himself to some dilemma conceived in a medieval youth,  
—proud as the village illiterate who's just pawned the town key.



## 16. NITE FLIGHT

A short flight;  
one alone into the forest  
to glean the hut's location;  
peasant fashion,  
straw sandled and fists  
in the torn pockets;  
and the bubs  
pure as mountaintops,  
the ham too cold to touch  
like poems;  
finally, reaching the shoreline,  
the first to see the Pacific,  
beyond the dreams of Europe  
and the video arcades,  
setting a course for the family vision.

## 17. THE THIEF'S JOURNAL

We were walking quietly along the Czech border;  
we were not concerning ourselves with women,  
being hard-coded by the fracas to avoid them;  
then nature, as in Genet, became maternal,  
concealing, beyond anecdote, the murderers and princes,  
though nothing lay in mist but stones, turds;  
our first names were a precise deliverance, enough,  
not not invented, but not hostile to identity,  
the practices of *bands* criss-crossing the countryside  
more than the comfort of using found names;  
occasionally I would stutter, using her name  
on the telephone, and when it was longer than two syllables,  
I used another name, another woman's name, if I thought of one,  
—this always happened, so that I gave up on names,  
or simply used an acronym, until she became my confidante.

18. THE THIEF'S JOURNAL (2)

Stiltano's deadbeat hunger was merging into mine;  
by the time I write these memoirs, he is dead,  
struck by a cab outside a theater;  
feeling free and resolved, I was a willful slave,  
holding his lice and ill-luck, obscured  
by his shadow darker than Africa's, and cursing;  
perhaps this chronicle of vengeance  
was rehearsed, a mere way to make a line-break  
better than mundane, than the others, not less  
rehearsed, yet never to be imitated;  
losing the shape of the poem in the song  
isn't nice, in fact it is a departure into arrogance  
into a careless, bold attitude that spurns friends,  
hiding in the ruses of melody the *interface*,  
the contract and the gaze, the knowledge of your presence.

19. THE THIEF'S JOURNAL (3)

That was the number of the guy I phoned alone;  
we became beads of sweat as Mount Fuji slipped  
between rail cars like some royal excrement;  
who would have troubled the conductor with this,  
in sensitive situations it's best not to waver  
between a dance and assurance, suggestive and wise;  
the problem was unfolding by halves, and soon  
would have subsumed the fog in windows  
with its nickel-store sophisms, yes, weak penny-antics,  
but for the automated witness of a digital Arcade;  
Tokyo drenched our skin in teenage acid and televor boobs,  
our time in the taxi oddly hyperbolic flight,  
but like Byron to the Greeks, we took to their questions,  
vital as we felt to the country's rash independence,  
eventually coming upon its bold, empty circle of regret.

## 20. THE REACTIONARY

How is the creature to sleep, without a fiction to entertain;  
they thought him a phalanx, all intellect and wit,  
without substance, no one to see a movie with;  
Eliotic, he brushed the dandruff from his collar and paid a visit,  
needing no attention to his divagations, just  
happy to be around, in Baltimore, and the last one speaking “English;”  
because the soul oil of his pants, his stance,  
his big romance with literature, his damnable self-sufficiency,  
reeked of colons, periods, he wasn’t dealt with,  
but that’s already been the subject of this poem’s preceding paragraph;  
now, two years closer to something unobtainable,  
there is a new clarity in the nostrils, such that primitive intuitions  
are precise, but this plays no role in the pantomime—  
he torques, resists, revives, a parody of patriarch  
and exercises his grand permissions upon the audience.

## 21. THE STYLIST

Too much enjoyment in receiving sweet caresses;  
on a gray day, it comes to an end, the choiring stops,  
the hairless back is exposed and nose drips;  
now, speech can move freely as the divorce is near total  
and one wants, with diligence, to connect  
without the compromise of economic betrayal in the effort;  
a flatmate’s radio plugs country tunes—none are concerned  
for the groans of inattention from the Stylist  
once gratifyingly regaled with dances of the intellect  
and putrid encomiums and example scale progressions;  
this is sounding bad, but the glow of futurity is upon him  
now, Rimbaudian flair in the Humbertian flight,  
in fact, this sobriety has its truth qualities  
which one doesn’t find in the gossip or party weeklies,  
that is only discovered in the blacked out repose of the retina.

## 22. RESOLUTIONS

I don't choose to treat them like bad smells;  
these poets may be smart, irreducible, practicing a lot  
but you proceed to approach them like bad smells;  
then there is the idea of *compromise*,  
compromised from what, I'd have to ask—  
as if avant-garde poetry should survive as a cottage industry;  
it's become narrowed down to a blip,  
the next step is to hit the power-off  
and send the weakening signal to its horizon,  
or perhaps send it to video, so you can recall it;  
unless one wants to make an aesthetic of  
its decay, fetishizing the moss that now surrounds it,  
a private ecstasy among the tobaccoey odor of its infrastructure—  
the voices within it, the old and dead,  
becoming thus trapped within it, an old dead practice.

## 23. CARLYLE IN LONDON

I still won't know what to do;  
the relevant comments, remarks,  
filtered from a day of dropped clauses;  
the NASDAQ responded  
by tumbling from its high seat  
into the flesh pit;  
what was so incredible  
was how everything seemed to matter again,  
the flesh of the hand, the throb in the enraged neck,  
the patterns songs took when extended;  
and this got us thinking, after a while, talking,  
perambulating in the garden like in the old days,  
mumbling *objectif* and *subjectif* through pianola noses,  
disarming with reference  
the threats of those inhibiting you.

#### 24. THE TYROS

Some writers will ignore you with the language;  
“here is my flesh-eating heart,” for  
example, or blandly “paratactic” logorrhea;  
these are the messages transmitted by page  
and post, more than words: gestures  
—and by gestures, E-zine, Techno, are being yoked;  
to “fill out the meter,” how grand, such  
catastrophic spondees (the pun is on “sophist”)  
to write them and read them, such numb, flatulent whiffs  
in which my narrative, sort of, proceeds;  
but what surfaces from the noise except a new theory  
of noise—“and no religions, too”—chalk poems on clipboards,  
basking in the ragout of Black Bloc Seattle,  
where the noise was nearly articulate, but was just noise  
one expected from the State’s petty scansion—so give me noise.

#### 25. THE TYROS (2)

Triple sheets of paper do not make the key strike harder;  
he pounds the ground with his fists, manages a moan,  
but otherwise, emotions are strictly retarded;  
Telex thinks this could be matter for prime-time, now  
that the nation is relaxed, bohemians have jobs,  
and a market’s erupted from what was once a wealth of uncertainty;  
—they discovered the torso in the trunk, it  
spoke of something long forgotten, or they had struggled  
to forget, racing for the thinly imaged goals  
not bothering to remark those lost in historical bounty;  
if a single chord could bark this confusion,  
music would find the pitch of hearts otherwise inured to sound  
but that’s practically a page from the Futurist cookbook,  
song and dance from a more serious, if rabid, cabal,  
—those who could imagine nothing less than a social beauty.

## 26. OUTRO

A visit to the world's lobotomy;  
in a thousand cantos, they think they've discovered it all,  
and in acid washes, reduced it to megabytes;  
funk me, selectric thrill,  
pass my body to the language and shiver me timbers,  
dalliance of a green-haired horse in Irish mythology;  
the cousins kissed, under the ferns,  
the camera clicked, and historical collusion fetishized its credit cards,  
what computer to purchase next, what pumps  
as the adjectives clasped;  
after the relatives gasped, they opened a bottle of champagne  
and their sturdy fortunes righted themselves for the progenitive walk  
among the day-glo mushrooms and leper's votes  
fraught with the violence of nouns,  
so we must admire their singular determination.

# Coda: “The Nineties tried your game”

“I have a problem with Mass Media”

—John Wieners



## I. YELLOW ATMOSPHERICS

The nanotechs blame God on botched magnetic resonance;  
from there, we set off toward Croatoan,  
indifferent to the intertonic *falsches* of mud;  
what we got were indices rendering the old counts moot,  
a cache of journalistic superlatives, bachelor-pad hagiographies,  
cash-flows morphing into *giga-bluts*;  
but no one could resist that image of a pure, pre-invested Orient, even  
the Accomplished were at it, reading up on Espen Aarseth,  
who cared not a nit for Susan Howe,  
or for the traipsing across vascular lands burning Anabaptists;  
for the Culture Wars were, in all quarters, over,  
or so we thought—of the un-Bloomed, post-*huitarded*  
world of informational Nascar—of the mentally clean-shaven  
masses who listened intently (when surely the message was insane)  
to the expensive disappearance... now, we are only alive.

2. AN INVOCATION: THE TIN GOD, ETC.

We just aren't there yet;  
(um, it's just a bunch of  
people talking to themselves?);  
Genoa can wait, so  
can Pyongyang, this  
suspension is most interesting;  
spell-checked culture  
with rhyme *with* reason,  
and a salient, subjunctive peace  
—until then, in arrears;  
what man, god, or tin,  
what flim-flam, humpty-dump, razzle-  
dazzle articulates in chips,  
spell-bound as the lad of Naxos  
—but, for all that, the chirping of modems.



### 3. REGARDING WHERE THEY LIVED IN THOSE DANGEROUS TIMES

Given the goad, the virulent bail-out of the “Axis”—Exxon—“of Evil”;  
Pasha marshals the hackers, but mocks the hacked (in theory),  
lassoes the snow of front lawns with margarita piss;  
the Cave, however, exhibits solidarity—there is no truth in Nigeria  
worth flying there for, no canon of anti-systemic hopes,  
—thus, a follower, and dyslexic at that, he’s wall-eyed, comatose;  
the Rites of perfect meter won’t send him slouching  
toward Bethlehem, nor the boas of John Wheelwright, nor cruises with the editor  
of *The Nation*, nor the muckraking of *The Voice*,  
pull him onto the streets with his inky cleaver to proffer his minus;  
virginal newness is the temper of his *debut-de-siècle*, Song  
of American Drains—right here in Williamsburg no different, saddled with  
British pallor, Balkan braggadocio, or Nipponese spikes,  
making an ill-scanned Mermaid Day Parade of our *voyants* off to work  
—shepherded to the L, vanguarded through the paperless office, shuffled off to hell.

#### 4. VAGUE INTIMATIONS OF HOW THEY SPEND THEIR TIME

You've acquired a few words with *-meme* in it;  
such learning can speckle the wings  
—the Bucky Ball inflates, from family to fraught habitus;  
if society were an onion, you'd be crying,  
they say—Ted, Mary, Lou, you'd be off the air in minutes,  
crying—failed détente of the barely living;  
arterial highways, a gelatinous, national couture  
—children shrink-wrapped, staring from the shelves  
awaiting their arrest, alienated, staring  
into the sun—that is, until they learn their *memes*;  
under the temple, down the backroom stairs, evasions  
no longer hold, and they are volumes from Black Culture  
—they are tourists at home, finding warmer  
companions among the self-immolators of Prague,  
—they've seen the original *Solaris* dozens of times, now the remake.

## 5. SOME OF THE TERRIBLE THINGS THEY DREAM

The skin is an organ, the face is an organ, the truth is an organ, the earth is an organ;  
did the radio pronounce Barishnikov with the proper execution of diphthongs  
and fricatives, and, if so, are we friends or ants, peers or doppelgangers;  
the very rapid sex of fraternizing has created a bounty of sorts—the tapped words mish mash  
and ungovern their latter tenses with names hardly functioning deictically,  
hardly referencing their suasive dimensions;  
search strings, cable trials, miscarries—vegetable consciousness is no ghost, rather  
the work of British crop dusters who satisfy the mania  
for finding Mandelbrot sets in what were once thought teaming, horny particles  
produced by an Earth suffering chromosomic enema;  
when War settled on the continent, still floundering in post-Surrealist *déjà* knocking back  
a few while trying to nudge the remote with a cauterized ass cheek,  
the teleactive, the arduous, the omni-political, the photogenic (geeks)  
propped Billy Beers on monitors and subjected them to streams of spit, to see  
how they fell—and basing a decision on that, hacked the Brazilian Congress's dot gee oh vee.

## 6. FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE STYLIST

Not assured of the hedonist's rapture, or of the safety of guiding ropes;  
he has a normal name otherwise, nothing to suggest television,  
drinks too much perhaps, is over-studied for literary conflagration;  
the list, after that, grew blurry, once including: "syncretism," "allotropes,"  
"Marxism" (also, "Leninism," "Stalinism") and "individualist"  
for contrast, also "humanism," "realism" (vs. "social realism"), madly "Darwinist";  
in Vancouver, these are just the names of punk bands, all  
frissons to rumbles, prismatic (where Stateside they would be "dualists")  
paragrammatic, enabling the Revolution by frobbing syntactical dials  
—forgetting, before the Moderns, we claimed Bliss Carman for "ourselves";  
Williams would have loved him, just as likely Pound, Zukofsky, and Marianne  
Moore, his neighbor, but for us he's Ashbery-meets-Gibson (William,  
not Mel), Philip K. Dick channeling Spicerian Lenny Bruce through old coffee radio  
of insomniac Chomskyite nites—perfectionist, though perhaps no Gautier  
(Theophile) in form—a word without embellishment, sans Vorpall Sword, only contacts.

## 7. THE TELEVISION BEGINS TO ACT UPON THEIR NOSTRILS

What burst upon his revelry but an allergenic spoor, a sneeze;  
Pound's flopping of oars, this one marked "Anhedonist,"  
forcing him across the floor, to unlock the door, then re-lock;  
we can funkify the seediness of this des Esseintes moment with digits  
insatiable, or with crises that approach with the grace  
of guttural, 32-bit Nazis, or with jodi.org's antique, "pro-situ" strains;  
his Polish friends didn't visit anymore (if they ever did), not since  
Jeffrey Deitch moved in, then out (after 9/11), and then in  
came the fashions—ever-more-clawed-at hairstyles, "hacked apart  
by a brainless cretin" (Eno), for the twenty-something post-collegiates, mainly white;  
"there's always Butoh to aspire to," Pasha pondered, or (dialectically)  
the converse, Min Tanaka's gravity—"I didn't leap, I fell"—on the roof  
of P.S. 1, summer 1999, last year anyone cared about  
the turn of the millennium, or U2, or "sampling," or Language Poetry, or Michel  
Foucault—imagining for the moment that absence commands authority.

## 8. THE MOBILIZATION PROSPERS—WITH A FEW HITCHES

HVA and Pasha proceeded to plan their “War Number;” this incurred much skepticism from their friends in Toronto and New York where, respectively, they lived; the question was collecting work invested in the theme of war, which neither of them had seen, or merely on TV—even as they culled their title from the second issue of *Blast*; submissions were varied—word salads, holy screeds, some with perspective, some less diaristic than others—some of it even well-researched—most taking four pages to get to the subject (which it choked); Pasha, as editor, was publicly generous, as was HVA, though in private they were criminally incensed by what they’d fueled—baroque variations on the office of “poet” in Oceania, in cults of the Welsh, in the Cabaret Voltaire, —dressed to the hilt for such selves, but not, presumably, right here.

## 9. AFTER SURPRISING ELECTIONS

Survival of the glibbest;  
avant-garde terrorists  
refusing to be so named;  
my potluck dreams adorn  
a trailer park, yes  
a post-Arcadian blankness;  
waiting for the ripped  
facade, the squeal of *saving face*  
in feinting quatrains  
to come ribboning down;  
satellites of youth deference  
abound, we feel so  
bold among the cancer lovers,  
but I'm finally learning to write  
again, amid the bungalows and sands.

10. WE LEAVE THEM MID-CIRCLE—WITH NO ASSURANCES

The “Nineties” tried your game, and hiccupped a Babel, of course;  
portending a plunderphonic adrenalin rush at the *fin-de-siècle*,  
a sort of fight-or-flight mentality, a decadent mulch, or bombed steel twist;  
that’s how it feels, flounder-eyed at the bottom  
of a century—thinking on the one hand there’s Moxley, and on the other  
that Canadian who levels Perce against the bits;  
nothing but celluloid seems very old, these days, the first  
of the trope-recycling “new” arts in cahoots with Benjamin’s Golden Age,  
—rather than calcium in bones, we have the half-life of Jean Vigo,  
which, if this seems confusing, is, really, quite OK;  
books will continue to be made, and Johnson (Lionel) will still fall from the stool,  
I’ll bribe you with these allusions, Auden will continue to be chthonic in September  
1932, and we’ll still complain that Barbara Guest was (literally) a parenthesis  
in David Lehman’s *The Last Avant-Garde*, and we’ll be carpet-bombed with poems,  
until the big novel hits

—in which case there will still be Tom Phillips’ *A Humument*.



## *from* The Screens



“With punk, a brand-new axis opened up: *professionally cut* ⇔ *hacked about by a brainless cretin*. As often happens, this appeared (and was intended) to be an anti-style style, and was shocking because we had never previously considered the possibility that the concept ‘style’ and the concept ‘hacked about by a brainless cretin’ could overlap one another. But, as usual, the effect was not to overthrow and eliminate the idea of style but to give it new places in which to extend itself. [...] What characterizes fundamentalism is a set of extremely narrow axes that allow almost no movement, no experimentation.”

—Brian Eno, “Axis thinking”



# Axis Thinking



Ambient ⇔ “Idiot energy.” “Plain speech” ⇔ Baroque. Eliot’s idea of “good” (Goethe) ⇔ Eliot’s idea of “evil” (Baudelaire). The poetry of bulk ⇔ Arid extra dry. Boy those Asians are smart ⇔ Boy those Asians are dumb. The Who ⇔ The Beatles. Helen Keller/Arakawa ⇔ Anthony Hecht/Yasusada. The standard ⇔ The non-standard. Cult of speed (Bruce Andrews) ⇔ Cult of slowness (Mei-mei Bersenbrugge). Utopia (punk) ⇔ Fatalism (grunge). Fashion ⇔ Ethics. Extreme ⇔ Center. Pragmatism (American) ⇔ Catholicism (French). Gertrude Stein ⇔ Ezra Pound. Steve McCaffery ⇔ Ezra Pound. John Cage ⇔ Ezra Pound. John Cage ⇔ Ian Hamilton Finlay. Tall and skinny (variable foot) ⇔ Short and fat (iambic pentameter). Cadence (vowels) ⇔ Percussion (consonants). A cabal of malcontents ⇔ A stable of professionals. Horizontal (social) ⇔ Vertical (private). Kevin Davies ⇔ Ange Mlinko. Soliloquy ⇔ Dialogue. A poetics of information ⇔ A poetics of achievement. The large canvas (*I Don’t Have Any Paper So Shut Up, or Social Romanticism*). ⇔ The small canvas (*The Collected Poems of Robert Creeley*). Monotheism ⇔ Polytheism. Collage ⇔ Pleine air. Stone ⇔ Paper. Paper ⇔ Screen. Screen ⇔ Garden. Literary tradition (Jennifer Moxley) ⇔ Literary lineage (Robert Fitterman). Improvisation/Originality (Tim Davis) ⇔ Mastery/imitation (Miles Champion). Homage ⇔ Insult. West Coast (slow, meditative, attractive coloration, subtle changes in the weather) ⇔ East Coast (fast, schizophrenic, threatening coloration, profound changes in the weather). Rockstar (Jim Morrison) ⇔ Wallflower (Joseph Cornell). Exhibitionist ⇔ Virtuoso. Reading ⇔ Parsing. Beauty ⇔ Experience. A human-scale Thomas Pynchon ⇔ A cosmic-scale Robbe-Grillet. Australia ⇔ Canada. Form ⇔ Flux. Critics who can write poetry ⇔ Critics who can’t write poetry. Edmund Berrigan ⇔ Anselm Berrigan. Memory through madeleines (Marcel Proust) ⇔ Experience through chickens (William Carlos Williams). Debut volume (forgotten) ⇔ Posthumous volume (returned). The language of birds ⇔ The language of priests. Juvenile ⇔ Assimilated. Encyclopedic/paratactic ⇔ Homeric/narrative. Encyclopedic/Homeric ⇔ Positivistic/personal. Pretending you don’t have something you have ⇔ Pretending you have something you don’t have. Charles Olson ⇔ Lyn Hejinian. Music for thinking ⇔ Music for fucking. Anthemic (Bruce Springsteen/Queen) ⇔ Operatic (David Bowie/Queen). First generation New York School

⇔ The other generations of the New York School. Pious avant-gardism (classroom) ⇔ Raucous avant-gardism (carnival). William Poundstone ⇔ John Cayley. Pantheism ⇔ Idealism. Poems made of foam ⇔ Poems made of stone. Sentence ⇔ Fragment. “I don’t know how humanity stands it with a painted paradise at the end of it, without a painted paradise at the end of it” ⇔ “Poetry is like a swoon but with this difference: it brings you to your senses.” Volcanic idiom ⇔ Therapeutic idiom. Vancouver ⇔ Toronto.

# Um, Uh



Um, they're, um, uh, yeah everybody, uh, staring at you? Uh, you're, um, uh, the only black person here? Uh, I don't, uh, um, like those *shows*. Um, you're, uh, a little, er, tipsy? Uh, your, uh, wall-eye is, yeah, acting up. You, uh, have a little issue with, er, um, your shorts. You, er, could have used, ah, a little more, uh, deodorant. Uh, you, er, are making a lot of references to, uh, hmm, your mother? Um, I think, er, there's a little, uh, activity on your cheek there? Um, are those poppy seeds, er, seem caught in, er, your teeth. Er, I think, uh, you should put your hand back, yeah. Your lunch, um, seems to be, er, coming back? Those, um, trousers are, uh, a bit *high tide*. Um, are you, er, a bit, uh, shy with men? Um, I think you're, er, supposed to leave a, yeah, leave a tip. Um, I think, er, you, um, have a little hang-up with T.S. Eliot? Uh, how can I say this, er, you have a little, uh, thingy, er, uh, yeah, on your thingy, uh huh. Uh, that, er, pimple... yeah. Er, uh, I think that, um, poem was written, er, in, uh, 1939? Um, I think that, er, screensaver is, uh, a little, yeah, offensive, um, to, you know, um, short people? Um, I think you could, er, maybe, uh, buy me a drink now? You should probably, er, uh, cross your legs? I think, um, you could, er, talk a little, uh, yeah, quieter. Um, that, er, you just sort of, uh, spit on me? Aren't you, um, a little short, uh, to be a storm trooper? Um, I think, er, you should, uh, cover up that, yeah, scar? Um, isn't that, er, uh, like, enough cigarettes for a night? Um, er, didn't, uh, Vito Acconci do that already? Um, aren't there, er, places you could, yeah, put that? Um, er, your, uh, accent, er, yeah, nobody can understand you. Um, is that, er, toothpaste on your, uh, collar, um? Uh, I think that's, er, uh, your brother, yeah, stopping traffic over there. *I could be wrong*. Um, isn't that, er, a little, uh, obviously pretentious. Er, uh, wasn't, er, Keats born, uh, a century *before* Swinburne? Er, I, uh, think you've been, uh, yeah, let other people talk a bit, huh? Er, uh, I don't think, er, you should be clipping your toenails just this second, no. You, uh, have a little, uh, whip cream? Uh, isn't your vocal style, er, a bit, er, uh, circa 1978 Patti Smith? Um, isn't, uh, playing with the fonts, er, a bit, uh, hm, yeah, old? Um, I think there's, uh, a bit too much, er, (*coughs*) garlic in this (*coughs*). Um, I think your, er, yeah, is, uh, hanging a little low. Uh, I think, um, you're, uh, yeah, aren't you slurring? Um, isn't that, er, a, um, long-winded explanation? Um, don't you owe me, eh, fifty dollars? Um, I think, er, you, uh, yeah, probably a little gas. Um, aren't you just, er,

kind of, uh, gossiping? Isn't that, like, uh, er, anti-Semitic? You seem to be, uh, a little bit, er, shiny today, yeah. You have your, uh, elbows on the, er, yeah, right. Um, don't you think, er, you should, uh, stop, yeah, that's *dancing*? Um, why do you, er, keep shaking your leg, uh? Er, I think there's a bit, er, much crotch action there? Um, there, are, uh, women in this room, er, maybe your jokes are a bit, er, um, misogynistic. Uh, are you, uh, something of a, uh, er, mouth breather? I think you should try, uh, a little bit of this, er, lip balm, huh? Uh, that isn't, er, the, um, way to *make friends*. This is, um, a, er, a funeral? Your, um, flies unzipped? Um, uh, you seem to be, er, repeating, er, yeah, yourself. Isn't that, uh, joke a bit, uh, Regis Philbin? Er, isn't that, um, a bit of your, um, yeah, sticking out? Um, you, you're, uh, um, foaming? Um, you, er, should probably be, uh, a little more, uh, subtle about gay people? Um, uh, I think you, uh, should answer your cellular? Er, your face is, uh, em, just beat red? Um, you are, er, uh, yeah I think, *chronically depressed*?

# Social Cripples



A poet once passed on a little witticism to me that has stuck in my mind and, indeed, been quite useful in reflection on the occasionally troublesome way that people interact in the writing community: “All poets are social cripples.” It’s certainly something I’ve suspected. As Christian Bök once said to me, he is willing to put up with the most “rebarbative” of people provided they are good artists. I could have suggested that most good artists are rebarbative, that they almost always seem primed for some attack, some threat to their ontological status as infinitely ingenious creative and thinking beings. Where could one go with such an “insight,” if one is willing to grant this witticism anything suggesting philosophical import? I tend to think of it along the lines of something Richard Rorty has written about language (deriving, he claims, from the writings of linguist Donald Davidson), that the function of language is to make people more “predictable” to others. Try it: walk into a room of people and not say anything for a half hour, and relish the tension in the air. It’s a good, basic, portable truth which hardly suffices as a grand theory of language, but which, nonetheless, brings into focus a large portion of what one might consider the “content” of poetry. If all language, even the most basic such as that used when purchasing oranges (the classic example always seems to be the language used in commerce) is merely some version of foreign policy, then certainly all language is charged with implications that extend beyond one’s involuntary sublimation of its import. Which is to say, there are some elements of foreign policy that we are all quite comfortable with; most of us can safely walk into a store and purchase “oranges” without much psychological trauma. Likewise, not many interesting poems are going to be created based on the specific qualities of this interaction. Certainly one could deterritorialize the transaction to suggest the interrelation of it with the Spectacle or global economy (an interesting poem, perhaps a funny one like that by Steve McCaffery that is a baroque over-description of a conventional “hello”). Likewise, one could sentimentalize it, tie buying “oranges” into a nostalgic reminiscence of buying “oranges” in Czechoslovakia in 1977 (a bad poem). The point being: poets spend so much time troubling the issues of foreign relations, and interesting, engaged poets tend to do this troubling along the entire range of relations from introduction to the seductive embrace, terrorizing manufactured consent, chipping away fervent-

ly at the canon, not to mention purchasing “oranges,” that it is no wonder they end up social cripples—all language has been so incredibly deterritorialized, which is to say, made “uncanny,” that the engines are most likely not able to be turned off when talking over some basic issue like baseball scores or haircuts. I notice that I am writing my worst poems when I feel most comfortable in the “community,” and that, when I am perceived as somewhat friendly, my poems are rather bland attempts at continuing good relations. This is merely one approach one could take to this issue.



# Italics



Sort of: being there, or being *awake*. | These emissions: counter-examples of *honesty*. | Trying: being in the *type*. | A calculated instance (among distrust): lost in *Europe*. | We thought it was Dutch: it was *Flemish*. | As in: where to go *next*. | Running out of drink, then: where is the *fountain*. | Trying: to angle the *light*. | Grossly spiritual, she takes a number: she is *waiting*. | Productive backslide: thinking back to *terms*. | I am here: you are *there*. | How many times have you been there: and I've *choked*. | A sliver of counter-honesty: spicy *discussion*. | Nonetheless, remembering: *remembering*. | The crowd was fucked: *fucked*. | Bouncing a ball: waiting for the next *line*. | Moment by moment, the web was built: *falters*. | Later: taking a *test*. | That writer who wrote of love and fame: that writer who *died*. | Production ceased: of *course*. | Making noises with the pen: scratch, *tap*. | And when she turns to me: forgetting *amnesty*. | The life gets better, but the writing: *worse*. | Dialing up: tuning (getting) *out*. | Indecision is insufferable: then, the *rain*. | When the masculine forecloses: athletic *poem*. | A drop: then, *sound*. | Trying: negotiating a *wave*. | Thinking it was Cage, knowing finally: *Eno*. | Pacing back and forth, smoking, fidgeting: *behavior*. | Cars on the highway: moving forth into *adventure*. | When it bleeds: *satire*. | Scanning the crowd for the familiar: *faces*. | Two words together that make a dull story: *theory*. | Crying: public *address*. | Anticipating: public *demonstrations*. | When the polls close: catharsis of the new *naïve*. | On the streets, garbage, dust: *sediment*. | I think: I have *invented*. | Blowing the nose into an ashtray: improbable *dis-sent*. | The pathology of getting it wrong: *dada*. | Trying to circulate among nuance: flexing the *Jamesian*. | And when the table cleared, and the conversation ceased: my *family*. | Birds warble: *morning*. | Cheap jokes and laughing gas: *community*. | The image profoundly dithers: the site is *ugly*. | When the chips are finally counted: *pragmatism*. | No longer: puppet of *stars*. | No longer: victim of the *contiguous*. | No longer: angling to be a stable *critic*. | After a failure of short-term memory: renew the *streets*. | Every temp its turn: every type its *torque*. | Drinking the wine: marrying the *incredible*. | Pausing before words, inhaling: anticipating *commotion*. | Taking the wrench to technology: curbing the *linear*. | Bathing, paring, shaving: *detoxifying*. | Exploring the real estate of the block: inveigling the *dogs*. | Loving by brush of the cheek: evading the *secular*. | Futzing with the stocks, rolling with the hunches: the quizzical

*mine*. | Pissing: *watching*. | Making controversy on the blog: stemming literary *conversion*. | The laughs get better, the writing: *worse*. | Running away to Canada, running away to Patagonia: *syllables*. | Chuckling in Cathedrals: instantiating *echoes*. | With an eye on the ball: with a hand on the *clutch*. | Knee shakes, rhythmically: *manic*. | Korean soup-eater sips loudly: her comforting *music*. | Glass backboard after youth smashing basketball against flaccid metal one: *hubris*. | Argument settled, friendship adhered: check *paid*. | We know the news when we refuse the headlines: disciplined *scanning*. | In the dope: after the *anxiety*. | Naughty movie business: suburban *voyeurism*. | No longer: fingering the *watch-chain*. | No longer: sinking behind *make-up*. | I mean: it must *be*. | Wanting the throat to be Chinese: getting *Sicilian*. | New airport screening rules: new sentence in the *database*. | Revisiting photographs: deep-freezing the *enigmas*.

# Reading Pound



All the best traits of English prosody died with you, my friend. *Compleynt*, *compleynt*, I hear it every day: the voices are singular, but advertised as reproductions. Lifeless air becomes sinewed; the vagaries of the potlatch arraign the man, the woman, in cobwebs of involuntary capital—the clear air, dark, dark, the dead concepts, never the soldering but homely swarms of poor confidence, over-elaborated arguments, good scholarship and the bad, all “going down with the ship.” So then go down to the ship, set heel to sneakers, froth on the motley sneers, and stammer mash and swill on that scholarship: when the parse is good, the pass is point-worthy. But a lady blasts me; she speaks of “reason,” some wild effect that is dumb if too often, some monotheism in the face of plurality—and of that, there are several varieties. Cooking up some forgotten predecessor out of the drafts of time, from time, who even dead yet hath our minds entire—finding some lost continent in the vortex, reaching land, the sea streaked *rouge rouge rouge* (Chopin). Outdated books of anthropology, rites that never were but in Gessel’s imagination, hearing the roots speak together, Pollocks on Schneider patents, orders from Paris and.... all have been tried. Anyone can pun to excess, it is hard to run past the mark, it is easy to stand firm in the middle, somewhere between a Dean Democrat and a Compassionate Conservative—muckraker alliteration will be the death of us. When you are obvious, my friend, you are most proactive; your sneakers float above theory, these exchanges bearing abundance, and the prisons become empty. “Don’t waste your time... because the gosh-darn girl is mine...” I heard over the waters, and “The country is over-brained,” said the Hungarian nobleman—because the Austrians need a Buddha, they spell words with a drum beat, and the Koreans need a buddy, they spell words with a phonetic script that was invented in the thirteenth century. It doesn’t get good until the action starts, and you realize the extra square footage of your apartment with feng shui—thus, we have another aspect, which we will call the financial aspect, giving us the power to buy (wages, dividends), but also the comfort to write in the ease of Bahama temperatures. “A poet is like a small business,” said Berrigan; and again, “Anyone can run to excess... it is hard to stand firm in the middle.” My friend: there was a goddess of the fair knees, and she split a bottle of wine with me while we listened to Christian Bök do the *Ursonate* in ten minutes flat, the only two people in

the world who shared this experience among the dead concepts, full of knowing that the beefy man knew less than us. But my meanings are opaque: I am reading through the parts of Ezra Pound's *Cantos* included in his *Selected Poems*, and trying to attach my own meanings to the lines, forming like a diafan from light on shade the meters that mattered to me most when in high school—honor to Brian Kim Stefans, the surveyor. I'm late for brunch; in the 40th year of King Quang died Kung aged 73. Did we fall because of our taste in music? "Hey! none of that mathematical music here," they shouted, expecting tubas and violins and not mouse pads and laptops, samples and sine waves; yet, ere the session died of scold and discontent, an ambience was created for the conversation, and music straddled speech with speech not even trying—my breath, *personae*, became the light, *virtú*. I'd want to say these words find their way to the screen with no help from me; I'd want the green light to gleam in this sheen, tile upon tile, pale in the wine-red algae... but no. Even the high-falutin' bidness of Denis Roche cannot keep the accidents out of this poem; moving to the right border, moving to the other side, moving back, my questions are inevitable, and she hears me somehow in Los Angeles: Mt. Taishan to my sunset. A lizard upholds me... Reptilian Neoletterist Graphics; but who is there left for me to shore a joke with? What ant's a centaur in this drag-queen world?

# We Make



We make fecal jokes. We make jokes out of time. We make noises that humiliate us in front of our neighbors. We make trees stand together to form paper. We make obvious jokes. We make clouds stand still for the photograph. We make babies out of food. We make self-propagating programs that we call “worms.” We make coffee. We make self-governing groups of people that we call “teams.” We make impressions on our skin, permanent or semi-permanent. We make tents. We make cigarettes. We make cheese. We make earrings out of shells. We make plastic body parts out of our ability to melt things. We make unlikely drinks. We make fantastic jokes. We make movable parts that are in motion to the metrics of the seas. We make sunglasses to stare at the sun. We make moustaches. We make wallets out of skin. We make shoes out of skin. We make coats out of skin, being bashful about our own skin, and insecure in general. We make virtues out of our vulnerabilities. We make concepts. We make plans. We make bags, we fill them with stolen items. We make movies that we call “popular” or “classics,” occasionally “popular classics” We make burrows like hedgehogs and name them “A,” “F” and “6.” We make hotels and never sleep in them. We make “printers” and never write on them. We make televisions and never appear on them, nor do we televise anything. We make cigarettes (did I mention that already?). We make cars but can’t drive them to Germany. We make planes but most of us don’t fly them. We make bookshelves and write books, also. We make kimchi, not quite as quickly as we make hot dogs, but we do. We make unique phrases out of old, already used ones. We make jellies, ones you can eat and ones that burn. We make soap. We make dirt, but not on purpose. We make plans, and as we ruin them, we make “progress.” We make inscrutable jokes. We make constitutions out of what were once just communal fixations. We make myths out of the most ordinary individuals. We make certainties out of an incubating cloud of doubts. We make starlets out of the most ordinary, female material. We make “plays.” We make lists. We make steam out of tormenting water with heat. We make sauces out of corrupting the aforementioned water. We make industries out of water, also. We make flesh, even when we’re sleeping. We make “arrangements,” sometimes in the home, sometimes in the park. We make parks out of trees that could have better been used for paper. We make odors (this is also usually involuntary). We make

jokes about them. We make religions out of fear, but also the ability to make things too complex. We make noises out of air, even when it has its own noise. We make sentences. We make divorces. We make slam. We make hard. We make gerunds, and sometimes they make gerunds but sometimes they can't make proper "gerunds." We make hearsay out of information. We make "journeys" out of "trips." We make "jokes" as byproducts of undiagnosed misanthropy. We make "essays" out of classroom notes. We make memories, or so I have heard. We make more flesh just listening to this, and just typing. We make music out of noise. We make "novels" out of our communal self-regard, and despite their name, they are often not "novel" at all. We make "leaders" out of self-proclaimed "leaders." We make "healers" out of those with a talent for the scalpel (they are also sadists). We make cuts in the salami (but not with scalpels). We make family events and serve the salami. We make riddles out of platitudes. We make crossword puzzles out of history's ungoverned proliferation, when it falls into language. We make guitars out of trees. We make rhythms out of watches (and hitting guitars). We make thoughts out of insomnia. We make "Trojan horses" out of comfortable elements in the landscape. We make light out of sulfur, usually in the process of desiring heat. We make blankets out of cotton, out of sheep, or just anything that lives, and has leaves, or skins. We make noises that silence the audience. We make shovels, we make art. We make jokes to punctuate the bad news. We make good news out of bad news in an effort to avoid new orthodoxies. We make high ceilings in central post offices in an effort to supplant old religions. We make mirrors that are hundreds of floors high. We make "skylines." We make "waistlines" (again, in our sleep). We make "skylines," thus, yes, but again, most of us don't make them. We make cities at the intersections of rivers. We make lists of money, often more elegantly than lines of poetry. We make saliva when we talk, somehow anticipating food. We make food out of talk. We make three spellings out of words that sound the same, "through," "threw" and "thru" for instance. We make insecure people out of wisely impassive people. We make "writers" out of people with no ability to do anything else. We make "havoc" out of places of pristine, sublime and evocative stasis. We make perverts out of huggable, avuncular people. We make "crimes" out of situations that are unremarkable. We make colas out of chemicals (and commercials). We make women out of men, and men out of misprisions of women. We make grammars that are "correct" to deem other grammars "incorrect." We make mores, and if you don't stick by them, in order to save you some humiliation, we make "originality," and in special instances, we adopt the category "sui

generis,” in order to put you in there and leave it all fashionably, disarmingly inscrutable. We make magazines that arrive with the frequency of waves. We make quiet out of unread magazines. We make “stories” out of half-heard “tales.” We make laws out of fear. We make number sequences, like the Fibonacci, out of—oh, I don’t know. We make animals out of water, some of which look like us. We make platelets in our marrows. We make synapses in our wombs. We make fetal (or fecal) jokes out of this prehistoric memory. We make “territories” out of triangulations marked by spots of urine. We make remarks of unintended kindness out of undernourished witticisms. We make art out of bankruptcy. We make gurus out of the unhealthy propagators of “charisma.” We make politics out of unsorted data. We make weather reports that are never true. We make sheets of paper. We make numbers. We make cold people out of dead people. We make cold people out of our own never visited relatives. We make prophecies, when really we should be making observations. We make anticipations of biological finality when we fail to make use of flesh, air, and time. We make music that could soothe the soul, but often softens the wallet. We make music that humiliates us before our neighbors. We make texts that are easy to memorize, and texts that are difficult to recommend to parents. We make poems that sound like other poems. We make stanzas, we make glue, we make treachery out of trust, we make codas out of what were once highly anticipated, fresh beginnings.

# Idea for Poem



You must feel absolutely safe before starting. (*idea for poem*) Afterwards, you can collect the sheets. (*idea for poem*) Tinny or bassy music of the neighbors blasting through the walls. (*idea for poem*) Walking to the white signs with Julie; green haze; chasing chimeras. (*idea for poem*) Solemn conversations; blue aging faces; tickets for Bangor, Maine. (*idea for poem*) Hardly noticing his battered head, thinking he's drunk. (*idea for poem*) Manipulate this series. (*idea for poem*) A closed set of references. (*idea for poem*) Language poetry said it brought you deeper into the writing. (*idea for poem*) 6 a.m. skies over Bard college; mist; chapel in distance; inappropriate gestures; touching. (*idea for poem*) All your bad poems, in Keds, coming to haunt you. (*idea for poem*) Knock knock jokes, all of them, she said. (*idea for poem*) Mere rhythm—dissent! (*idea for poem*) Cutting the paper in half. (*idea for poem*) There is the object of your admiration. (*idea for poem*) As if: seeing is admiration. (*idea for poem*) The majestic heights of the Cavalier poets; athletic figures in the dearth of amorous veneration. (*idea for poem*) Perfume on a stick. (*idea for poem*) All the misspellings in a perfect-bound book. (*idea for poem*) Last as long as the others—try to survive. (*idea for poem*) Eno soundtrack over atrocities of war. (*idea for poem*) The disjunct adjunct: ESL engendering [engineering] a new breed. (*idea for poem*) Julie still walking toward the signs; 6 a.m. skies over Bard college; same mist; same chapel; same glue. (*idea for poem*) We tell the stories that avert humiliation. (*idea for poem*) 100+ days of Bush and still breathing. (*idea for poem*) Still smoking. (*idea for poem*) We'll remember him. (*idea for poem*) The 1995 poetry conference in New York where you met everyone important to you. (*idea for poem*) 6 years later, you are no longer speaking to any of them. (*idea for poem*) They were incomplete, those poems, mere scratches against the slate (dada), compared to now, in which they are marble blocks on the landscape (neo-dada). (*idea for poem*) So: baby yourself with a fine carpet, warm socks, coffee, cigarettes, and try to write. (*idea for poem*) Humor should not be docile; reference should not be oblique. (*idea for poem*) Dehydration produces weird moiré patterns on the retina, industrial drones in the ears. (*idea for poem*) The interesting “dog among dogs” disposition: W. C. W.'s philosophy of floundering. (*idea for poem*) Or: Bill Luoma's “lazy philosophy.” (*idea for poem*) Other sorts of tricks to avoid political disaffection—in a time without clocks! (*idea for poem*) She said, We need more narrative immersion, and less aca-



demic mewling. (*idea for poem*) Wandering—an old urbanism—renting—  
what we are left with now. (*idea for poem*) Computer not sure where to put  
the hyphen. (*idea for poem*) The radio is silent; so are we. (*idea for poem*)  
Julie's head is on her arm; her fingers brush the surface of the sea. (*idea  
for poem*) A renewed faith in the powers of chance: why I think small press  
circulation is not as interesting as the web. (*idea for poem*) This page is  
meeting our goals. (*idea for poem*) One of these lines will survive—the sta-  
tistics suggest it. (*idea for poem*) Titles for prog-rock albums: medieval look-  
ing syllables, Arthurian affect, animals. (*idea for poem*) Trying to avoid self-  
consciousness, as in this poem. (*idea for poem*) Pale imitations of Darren-  
Wershler Henry and/or rubber socks for every sort of missile. (*idea for  
poem*) Having lost the thread of thought which started a half-hour ago  
with Julie at Bard. (*idea for poem*) Trip to Toronto in July suggesting to me:  
travel means nothing. (*idea for poem*) I never had any problems with EMI.  
(*idea for poem*) User-defined paper sizes. (*idea for poem*)

# Tulubun



Hu us nurvuus mun wuth nurvuus uy's, guung ubuut nurvuus busunuss. Uf Tulubun catch hum ut hus sucrutuve wurk thuy wull cunsudur hum un un'my uf Uslum ☩ buut hum up un struut bufure luckung hum uwy. "Ut us cruzy, knuw U, uxpusung mysulf ▶ dungur luke thus," hu suys. "Uvun nuw, thunk U um U undur survuulluncu. Whut uf um U urrusted? have U chuldrun suppurt tu." But thus us durung lufe hu hus chusun fur humsulf—lufe uf tuluvusuun ruuurmun. "Yus," hu suys. "Thunk U um U sumuune bruvu." Un must nutuuns, tuluvusuun muy bu wustu uf tume ☩ corruptung unfluuncu. But un Ufghunustun ut us sumply ullgul. Nu uwnung. Nu wutchung. Nu ruuurung. Undur rulung Tulubun's sturn unturprututuun uf Uslum, humun firm us nut ▶ bu dupucted un muvung ur still pucturus. Thus ductum us unfurced by ruluguuus pulucumun frum Munustry fur Prumutuun uf Vurtuu ☩ Pruvuntuun uf Vucu. Thuy rude uruund un puckup trucks wuth scuwls un thuur fucus ☩ uutumutuc wuupuns ut thuur sudus. But many Ufghuns have refused ▶ love wuthuut thuur tuluvusuun pruvulugus. Thuy wunt ▶ suu world's vuduu muntuge—turred luvurs, fumuly crusus, upuc buttdus, rucruuted dususturs, rumuntuc cumudy. Dum gluw uf tuluvusuun scruun furtuvuly lughts thousands uf ruums un uuch uf Ufghunustun's mujur cutuus. Huw many puuplu wutch furbuddun ul'c-truc bux? Ut us dufficult suy tu. Hure un Kunduhur, just us un cutuus uf Kubul ☩ Hurut, quustuun luuds ▶ wude spun uf guussus, frum 15 purcunt ▶ 80 purcunt. Tuluvusuun ruuurmun—whu pruvuded psu-udunym Juhun Mur fur safuty's suke—ussumus truth ▶ bu tuward hughur ustumutu. But thun hus judgmunt us dusturtd by cumpuny hu kuups, turbuned cuuch pututuus uf thus truedled cuntry, which hus undured 22 cunsucutuve yuurs uf wur. "Sume uf Tulubun wutch tuluvusuun tuu, uv'n fuw cummundurs," sued Mr. Mur, spuukung un Unglush. "Thuur uy's upun vary wudu, ☩ thuy rumumbur uv'rythung. Thuy cun tull yuu uxuctly whure thuy wure whun thuy wure wutchung whut muvuu." Unduud, ut us muvuus—bruught uluve un small vuduu duses—that ure huurt uf thus nutuun's clundustune unturtuunmunt undustry. Tulubun cuntrul ubuut 90 purcunt uf Ufghunustun's turrutury ☩ thuy refuse ▶ ulluw tuluvusuun stutuun ▶ braudcast un any uf ut. Furuugn chunnuls cun bu pucked wuth rught huukup but unly small numbur uf must dufuunt puuplu rusk tulltule uutduur plucumunt uf

uv'n small sutullute dush. Su muvuus must suffucu, duses kupt un cuncu-  
 ulmunt, us ure TV's ☩ vuduu CD pluyurs thumsulvus. Uf uffundurs ure  
 caught thay usually rucuuve une ▶ thruu munths un prusun, occur-  
 dung ▶ puuplu hure un Kunduhur. Thuur uquupmunt us dustrued.  
 "But uf thay fund yuu wuth sux muvuu, that's much wursu, thruu yuurs  
 un juul," Mr. Mur sued duurly. "Thus us vary bed bucuuse must  
 Umurucun fulms huve sux. Yuu ure buttur uff wutchung kung fu muvu-  
 us ur Rumbu ur muvuus frum Unduu, which ure vary pupular."  
 Tuluvusuun ruuurmun us ulsu muvuu smugglur. Hu puruuducully  
 mukus fuvu-huur druve ▶ Quattu, un Pukustun, ▶ buy nuw unus.  
 Tulubun suurch fur cuntribund ut thuur chuckpusts, whure thay thun  
 duspluy shrudded rumnunts uf whut thay huve duscuvured. Mr. Mur  
 hudus hus cupuus uf buudlugged muvuu duses un hulluwud-ut ruduu.  
 "Uctuully, smugglung us uusy," hu sued. "Muny druvurs huve huddun  
 cumpurtmunt un thuur curs. Muvuus ure bug busunuss. Yuu cun sull  
 thum fur 200 rupuus," ubuut \$3. Mr. Mur hus small shup—nuthung  
 mure thun stull, ruully—un une uf muny buzuurs un dusty Kunduhur,  
 cuty uf ubuut 500,000 un udgu uf Rugustun Dusurt. Thure ure muny  
 ul'ctruncs sturus un uruu—☩ nune ure much ▶ luuk ut. Guted cur  
 sturuus ure puled une utup uthur. Fruyed wurus dunglu frum cuulung.  
 Brukun untunnus, urphuned by dued signuls, luu ucross wuudun tublus.  
 Pupular musuc us ulsu bunned un Ufghunustun, but rucurdungs uf  
 unuccumpunued chunting by Tulubun fuuthful ure uvuulublu un  
 uudu cussuttus. Thus muuns that used sturuus cun bu duspluyed upun-  
 ly, thuur uld plustuc fucus sturung uut through nuw plustuc cuvurung.  
 Small, tumuwurn, duscruut TV's sull un bluck murkut fur ubuut \$50.  
 "Thu Tulubun uxpect yuu ▶ wurk ☩ pruy ☩ du nuthung ulsu un  
 butwuun," tuluvusuun ruuurmun gruusud, luukung uut ut straut us  
 busy wuth dunkuy curts us uutumubulus. Mulluh Muhammed Umur,  
 Tulubun's ruculsiuve supreme luudur, rusudus un Kunduhur, shunning  
 Kubul, cuputul. Suncu un Uugust 1999 ussusunutuun uttumpt, hu  
 luvus wuthun wulled cumpuund un cuty's uutskurts, ussuung hus uus-  
 ture uducts. Rulu-bruukurs take gruut rusks huru. Puuplu ure juuled fur  
 pluyung curds. Thuuvus huve hund cut uff. Humusuxuuls ure burued  
 uluve bunuuth stune wull. Un Fubruury, twu prustututus wure hunged  
 un Kunduhur us mure thun 1,000 puuplu wutched. "Nued U nuw  
 busunuss," sued tuluvusuun ruuurmun, puttung purspurutuun uff hus  
 furuhed wuth cluth. "Wuuld U chungu ▶ uny uthur jub uf cuuld U  
 muke us much muny." Sumuune hed bruught hum brukun TV that  
 murnung. Hu kupt ut undur fuw tuwuls, dusguusung shupe uf cuntunts.  
 Hu wuuld take ut hume fur studued ruuur. "Cun U fux just ubuut

anythung,” hu sued pruudly. Thun hu turned quuut. Hu wus luukung uut un struut tu, squunting ut mun whu luuked buck ut hum. Ut wus une uf Tulubun, ☩ fur mumunt thure wus shuddur uf fuur guung through uv’ryune un shup. But funully, tuluvusuun rupuurmun smuled uusuly ☩ mude ned uf rucugnutuun. “Yus, ut us Tulubun,” hu sued. “But thut mun, knuw U hum. Hu wutchus TV.”

# Axis Thinking II



Grandmother from Cuba ⇔ Grandmother from Burbank. Derek Bailey ⇔ Eric Clapton. Coach House Books (professionally edited, over-thick paper, leaning toward Concrete poetry) ⇔ Roof Books (edited in spare time, pedestrian paper, leaning toward Language poetry). The shoes Herman Munster used to wear ⇔ The shoes Danny Terio used to wear. Dumbing it down ⇔ Clearing it up. The scandals of icons (Lady Diana, Michael Jackson) ⇔ The scandals of pedestrians (the “German cannibal,” Private Jessica Ryan). Poems that use product names ⇔ Poems that don’t use product names. French pop-duos with 28-inch waistslines, painted on white jeans and over-sized testicles ⇔ American speed metal quartets with 38-inch waistslines, painted on black jeans and um, normal sized testicles. Family Feud ⇔ Survivor. Queer Eye For the Straight Guy ⇔ Survivor. Queer Eye For the Straight Guy ⇔ The Jim Lehrer News Hour. Arguing with a parent who remembers everything ⇔ Arguing with a parent who forgets your name. Love talk that is like the cooing of doves ⇔ Love talk that is like the exchanges of diplomats. Smart, nerdy canvas sneakers ⇔ Indifferent, hipster canvas sneakers. Imagism in short poems (jewel-like, “less is more”) ⇔ Imagism in long poems (river-like, “privileged consciousness”). Telling it like a joke and being greeted by silence ⇔ Telling it like a confession and being greeted by laughter. Defeated at checkers ⇔ Defeated at chess. Flarf ⇔ Charles Bernstein. Susan Wheeler ⇔ Charles Bernstein. Andrea Brady/Keston Sutherland ⇔ Kate Fagan/Peter Minter. Writing it in sonnet-like sequences that seem devolved from the *Cantos* (*The Dream Songs*) ⇔ Writing it in sonnet-like sequences that seem devolved from *The Tennis Court Oath* (*The Sonnets of Ted Berrigan*). Timely ⇔ Remiss. Presidential sound-bytes that appeal to religion ⇔ Political gate-crashing that never appeals to religion. Making it more bland for the sake of class acceptance ⇔ Spiffing it up for the sake of academic capital. The page when it feels like snow ⇔ The page when it feels like skis. An alcoholic, dreamless sleep ⇔ An anti-depressant, Photoshopped sleep. Grandfather’s cardigan that Kurt Cobain made hip again ⇔ Older sister’s fishnet stockings that Karen O made hip again. I’m still angry ⇔ I’m still depressed. The starlet that appeals to post-male-menopausal straight guys ⇔ The diva that appeals to post-male-menopausal straight guys. Smoking in the shower ⇔ Smoking in the neighbor’s parked car. Accent ⇔ Pidgin. Pidgin ⇔

Language. Accent of a nation ⇔ Language of a people. Countries that are included in *The Princeton Handbook of Multicultural Poetries* ⇔ Countries that are not included in *The Princeton Handbook of Multicultural Poetries*. Samson and Son ⇔ The King and I. Seinfeld ⇔ The Honeymooners. Chronic maintenance diseases ⇔ Curable quickly fatal diseases. Lofty structures that include many characters, gothic plotlines, and ornate syntax ⇔ Pedestrian structures with one, self-involved, self-defeating, linguistically unadventurous protagonist. Waking up in handcuffs ⇔ Waking up in cufflinks. Poems to show to Mom ⇔ Poems to show to Miles. Sonic Youth if you've been raised in New York ⇔ Sonic Youth if you've been raised in Poughkeepsie. The working-class ethnic typecasting of "Guinea T" ⇔ The politically correct ethnic typecasting of "Wife Beater." Texas plain talk ⇔ New England plain talk. Writers who never leave the house and grow thin, worrisome and legendary ⇔ Writers who never leave the house and grow fat, buoyant, and legendary. Professional curmudgeon (Guy Debord, Keston Sutherland) ⇔ Professional cheerleader (Frank O'Hara, Jordan Davis). The poetics of the open road (Walt Whitman, Eddie Berrigan) ⇔ The poetics of domestic geography (Emily Dickinson, Heather Ramsdell). Poets you respect ⇔ Poets you love.

# Be Alive



Perhaps I could be alive, and say those things. Or die truthfully, but when the anamorphis is revealed: greetings of a Stalinist giraffe. (Interested, not entirely sullen, that's it, in suede outline, absolving us.) Sunday show trial as psychic tributary—and when you don't feel like writing, scan. Warming up to the irony of this Victorian era docu-drama, but the *pleas - aunce*, the festive “subway series” aspect of my urban ergotic conundrum never seems to balance: blue stripes on a 17” monitor. I will pretend to ignore the club-footed nature of my typing manner, be cool: ladies night at *La Plage*. Then to speak to the young mavericks at their graduation (eruption), all hopeless social shackles and verbatim humanistic assurances—no. I would prefer to be lost and sensual. And then transfer to one of those hopelessly marginal Canadian cities where all the fighting starts. When I am aspiring to abstract goodness, I am confronted by a fleshy morph in bowling shoes, visor, and knee-pads, knowing the genre of my obsessions, brandishing a Rickenbacker and a six-pack of raw denims. Be in our band, he says. It doesn't take much to pile on a single tortoise: someday I will confess. In a gaming environment, we are all 8x8—equals. Grow that exponentially and it is all the same: beautiful dawns with no one to share them with. Running out, then, of all the basic sustenance—cigarettes, cigarettes, and more cigarettes—it takes to write a poem, he sinks into the obviousness of alcoholism, and begins to write like M\_\_\_\_\_ P\_\_\_\_\_. Could be worse. And so I credit you with objecthood, and together we take to the Hegelian storms, and somehow discover Minnesota thirty miles off the coast of Africa, but still leading the industry in auto parts. Couldn't that be nominated as one of the four top carnal pleasures—or are we Bush league? When thirty body surfers in quest of a playwright somehow stumble on my non-existent front porch, I am left to ponder, and ponder and ponder: *helas!* killing the author liberates one from finality and responsibility—puts the “finishing touches on familiarity.” In a certain code, at a steady rate of speed: that is this poem. In practice, in the zone, and not afraid to order pizza for the cellists on the tape player: Tony Conrad's *Outside the Dream Syndicate*—could be John Cale! But I think we had a subject here, and if it is not remembered, then we can have another conversation: watching the Pontani Sisters speed through the history of Twentieth Century vaudeville, from the Bowery to Britney Spears. This, I considered, is a break-

through: anything could be put over in performance, minus the wrist, which reveals, and the thorax, which negotiates for sex. I could think of practically nothing to say at the funeral, but was “social” nonetheless (I was hot). In the free ranging of your imagination, you come upon a hole, rectangular, sprouting roots upwards, turning the sky purple and blue in sedimentary layers: *that’s* where narrative starts, where one often trips and the other becomes a founder of discourse. The politics of forgetting, founded on a strait-jacketed afternoon in Six Flags’ Great Adventure, carousing with the German exchange students who won’t know the difference between an orange and an orangutan in two weeks. I should accidentally open Macromedia Flash more often, if only for its symbiotic capital: my devolutionary nerves for intelligence in Action Script. To be the dramaturge: to be the player: to be the stageplay: to be the stage and the audience: to be alive. With such hyper-redundancy, it is not surprising the program crashed, the franchises were seen as redundant, the tomatoes were over-stocked in twenty savory varieties (several of them the same), the marriages were all annulled because they were boring, the hostility of well-intended grand-mamas was focused on the hippy traveler who mistook Bergen County for Bergen, Germany. Now I will have to tend to my sheep: reboot. After the page had been printed for posterity, he phoned Kevin Davies for font advice, and then, tired and crowded by echoes, slept among the deep ground swells of Syd Barrett-era Pink Floyd.



Tohu Bohu





# Jai alai for Autocrats



## blue citizens conform

to green animal wishes  
above yellow flutes  
roll the red, anonymous pastures  
of the chartreuse-tinted sky  
we drink black fire  
from it, lavender smoke  
emanating from the pink tails  
of the violet  
cyclone fish, their beige eyes  
inspired by visions of paisley intestines  
filled with puffy, lithe cucumbers

in argentina, where they smoke  
apple juice by the bushel  
in porcelain cars  
imported through a straw urethra  
from the dominant superpower (vietnam)  
listening to haitian speeches  
by danish war criminals  
on the combo air conditioner/radio  
made of refurbished, petrified elephant dung  
laughing in hoarse tones  
at the slips of cartesian grammar  
that erupt from the photogenic, sad doctoral student

—a geographer of gertrude stein  
awash in maps of orcs  
piecing together middle english vocables  
from neck-operated chimps  
lumped in grant's tomb  
(they had been baked while he was suffering  
just prior to being born  
in a rush of lascivious paranoia)  
—other commentators on stein think this wasn't important  
neither lust nor sleep frenzy impacted  
the role furry, breast-eating edibles played  
on the writing of *in youth is pleasure*, or of *hotel lautrémont*

1/21/03

●

they liked the lower east  
paragraphs  
spotted myths  
of cabs on dope roles  
we will insist  
before tv  
casts the whole era  
rebuilding my entry  
in black jeans  
privates ransacked  
for colors of suspicion  
like a legendary rock and roll queen

who happens to fable  
plans to reflect  
what matters is decency  
of course, in church  
it's math  
balance one serial  
with enlightenment rhetoric  
and murmur stop  
theory of sun blemishes  
packaged  
for disposal at first sign  
of the paradigm's fucked lucidity

for instance, wylan hugh auden  
's platonic pomp  
lysergic reactions  
in doilies  
endeavored to protest what  
to the curatorial ear  
reeked of  
aggrandizing mischief  
threw several of these parties  
standard quarters  
pandered to the voyeurs  
as they do now, on survivor islands

1/14/03

●

i've had letters

stick to chalk

"we require it"

kneads the pen diplomat

pronouncing the "e"

with a gimlet "aye"

balancing his plug

hence, thus maneuvers her

charms into film

her "tits to chalk"

sandy is depressive

but earns high marks for candor

to have come all

styroed and foaming here

and be addressed

like a mawkish divorce

never looked too straight at

—"arboretums in switzerland"

was the popular sport

but purple balls

was the streetwise pomp

cheap digital cameras

you swing from the hips

and tattoos you glom onto hips

—i don't believe i've

taken my pills this

morning

hence, this visionary capitalism

ill prelude to

these lines about korean mums

women in ancient lots

clucking greek phonemes

as flights to canada

ricochet to alaska

yes, give them their own stock

quorum of quarrelsome poets

1/8/03



i'm in  
a russia  
all  
thongs considered  
but bloom  
instead  
in  
face of  
dangerfield  
and cantonese  
keds  
(these are

fumes  
of my flavanoid  
things)  
songs of  
viral  
torques  
allow through  
polygamous  
pistil  
forced  
punt exposures  
(the moose so

message  
loose  
but jogging)  
"u.s.  
military spams  
iraq"  
the creeps  
and gobblers  
horrorshop  
bibles  
nettled  
in frisked paucity

1/15/03

●

## as elevator lips leaves

there are cuts in the world  
can't say i'm troubled  
we've got lent to contend with  
the strange dais disappearing  
other governors' budgets  
protective myths  
like the one about the lavender day camp  
there, once we've attached the bunji cord  
to the cow's left ear  
the farming community will vote labor  
—curses, shouts in the hallway

rouse him from a taiwanese dream  
that of the rooster and the stone wall  
belittling little people  
ha ha try the fallen apples  
dark coffee perks  
stained glass window perks for the catholics  
draw the mumfords to seattle  
where they uninstall windows 95  
from their pet tarantula  
which proceeds to write a serial novel  
based on the travails of the norwegian luge team  
famous for their chocolates and widows

and limitless sex appeal  
—that doesn't translate well  
into this language of stars and rabies  
—julianne moore played the heiress  
oscar winner ralph fiennes played elevator lips  
the camera couldn't find  
the actor playing the cloud of dust  
in the opening scenes of *the man who fell to earth*  
too bad, that story is quite interesting  
—sweet words pass from mantis nuts  
in the art school just north of noam chomsky's hometown  
of international falls, minnesota, blithely

1/11/03



## marking things on clipboards

are the kids  
vague, i am, suspicious  
court stenographers lack moxie  
the splint of  
dawn seriously undermines it  
a certain kitsch obtains  
token pastures  
debone the three windows  
i'm above that  
screaming in hoop skirts  
marking things on old clipboards

what to do about the failed  
go right attitude now  
punctual as a placebo  
(i was going to say placenta) why  
euphemism  
is the mannerism of today  
instead of writing, graffiti  
and abbreviated  
less encrypted goodbyes  
(who cares about rituals of mourning)  
words attain their cots  
with a prescient, de rigueur modesty

problems with design  
will lead the peasant dictator  
to docent plans  
submitted by spam junkies  
“mentors to the neighborhood”  
they have “finns first”  
leaking from their navels  
(other distractions include translucent hands  
like ladies' hands  
they bust each other up about this)  
—is the previous trope any less  
maverick, after all i've said, ripe with analysis?

1/26/03



●

we've avoided the assay

struggle does come  
with the homology of lunch  
and weekend ethics  
purple sky barely breaks  
through ceiling  
she pauses before the screen  
while deciding  
her confusion is too total  
randomness too alive  
for a nation in whiplash theater  
of plugged-in teenagers

the shoreline overloaded  
with swans with signs  
pasted to lapels  
hovering above the commas  
largesse could be a wind  
too, verbally abused  
with insensitive rejoinders  
to fragrant, parisian attitudes  
making chalk of bones  
“last one rotten is a perfect egg”  
my wincing uncle said  
before shattering the wicker chair

standing on empty  
proposals for the new school  
built of methane gas  
imported soft drinks, imported  
were never quite remembered  
footfalls in the carpeted hallway  
untrusted and remiss  
gatherings in public forests  
punctuated by illiterate sobs  
pulsing from big cities  
we'll never get there anyway, this way  
—who last folded this damn thing?

1/13/03

●

the paper reads to me like a fog  
drifting over an arthritic plain  
repellent with victorian detail  
(they say  
as if masterminding a tsunami  
were less savage than citizens dying)  
my clothes cut the kenneth cole way  
such that seduction  
parts, like a plush sea,  
hypnotized subway crowds  
in one of those digital “matrix-like” moments  
that typifies bloombergian bourgeoisie

talentless, denuded of commitment  
being a pleasant beige (in a soupy bog)  
on the slivers of big screen  
touching down in dry gulch  
paused  
to fund medium-sized glands  
burping a cautious birth  
over a shoulder of carpal tunnel  
down broad street toward naive ass park  
(it’s a type of calorie they don’t have just anywhere)  
“blending in,  
not feeling the mark”

fa la la la la  
as goat-bearded boys shimmy across  
their polysyllables vetted  
by foucault and marx  
with (university) wit and (fellowship) keds  
protesting social glue, blown out of social air  
emotional compass devolved  
by difficult, tenure-wing positions  
—“vengeance belongs to god  
i’m just here to play tennis” (serena  
williams)  
but can’t deliver us from safety

1/7-1/22/03

# Mail Art



as  
an introduction  
to language  
“pringles”  
fails

\*

you could say i'm trying  
too hard  
and be right  
you could  
fuck a horse

\*

male  
art  
i  
make  
male art

\*

shackleton, the explorer  
died at forty-seven  
in antarctica  
while you read this  
again

# Like the Corn Laws



Well,

here's a warn that  
likes you, Spring's  
a summer Simpson ladies  
spill.

A grot  
of lime, burgundy, it  
trips tail times atlas  
fugue (Bundy  
huge).

A hit  
formica skit  
travelin'  
pike.

But manqué a  
period, opera  
like, the score's  
scared dollop crammed, in  
show (Jack  
too) photo-  
ing. A largesse  
grips.

Wiped  
out on bibelot's  
fury  
bibs, the crawl

can can

like a shore  
drive. I'm  
given. I'm  
alie. (Sic) piles  
of shit.

But a gambling master  
still.

Do  
it? The scheme  
lards timor standard ill  
taste, tic  
Mex. Gimp grates gowl gawl grim

lost.

As

lost.

A shine? Af-

ter strange

laws? Lays

lazy days, feature

freature

deem.

Pick me.

# Les Assis

ᄇ

*after Rimbaud*

Pocks  
of old  
leprous  
eyes  
like  
green  
bags

grafted  
fixed to the  
chairs,  
have  
them, and  
the  
epileptic

skins  
weaved,  
sun window's  
snow  
or  
toads  
thriving

seats  
good. For  
them. In  
corn.  
Which  
lights for  
them.

Knee  
pianists  
tambourine,  
a  
seat, of

love. Waver  
rollings.

But, it  
ohohoh puff  
rage. Pen  
slowly  
a  
shipwreck.

They  
their  
beasts. Their  
them. And  
you, of  
eyes. Bald  
again.

Dog  
poisons. Of  
in  
funnels.  
Sweat  
murders, in  
presence.

What  
fists, to  
chins  
up  
tonsils, small  
cuffs. What made them  
get up.

A  
fecund  
their little  
realm, oh  
crowd  
proud. Lower  
a  
sleep, of

ink  
spit. Flies

flight. A  
crouched  
of  
corn  
penises.



# The History of Wiggling



Pollock is a mastodon of modest painting  
Chirico a master on modem shaking

Mondrian a mastiff on modish Blaking  
Picasso is a mastodon of modest ski baking

They're tearing at the insides growing in the park  
Peculiar in their excess way shaming lemon ark

Gorgeous as a pencil body slim as a limb  
Ganging up on anybody looks like him

Making all the standerbys see sky blue  
Making all the lubber butts feel bad, too

After all and after all it's because war  
I mean a sudden lullaby to charter this before

Grant this an abstract ballast  
To navigate insider balance

# In Pines



## 1. THAT MAGIC SLICE

Steven:           That slice.  
                      All my magic.  
                      That, do you say me?  
                      All my sense, and frankness.  
                      That, we were walking.  
                      That slice.

Kate:             I don't no like  
                      the things you do that say about me.

Steven:           Passing's good.  
                      Might find one, also.  
                      Order, justice,  
                      if you don't mind.  
                      Slow, antiseptic.  
                      My "in pines" gnu trolley.

Kate:             I don't mind.  
                      I used to  
                      live around here,  
                      little happy.

Steven:           Passing's good. File for justice?  
                      We walking.  
                      Say you're sorry.  
                      (All my magic.)  
                      Say you're sorry.  
                      Leave me feeling empty.

Kate:             I'm not sorry, I worry.  
                      And don't, don't you worry,  
                      I'm not sorry, below.  
                      I once used to around here.  
                      I, laughed of many.  
                      I, laughed of many.  
                      You might be out thinking, forget this.

Steven:           You might be kind of getting feeling tired.  
                      It's not for three feet.

Kate:             Do not worry.  
                      Passing's good.  
                      We've talked before, haven't we?  
                      Like licorice in melt time.

Older than ham!  
(I spent seven dollars.)  
*Oceans* of ham!  
Making many miles!  
Do know what means I when I speckle  
cream cheese in my home?

Steven:

No.

Kate:

Is good.

Is very good.

Is good make me homeless.

Is, you'll see.

Steven:

I won't.

I'm... home now.

*It's* for three feet.

*It's* for three feet, then... I'm home.

Kate:

Is very good.

I can't make you worry  
about me.

## II. LAUGHING IS A GOOD ADJUSTMENT

Kate:

*It's* no worry.

Me, I don't worry.

Laughing is always a good adjustment,  
not worry.

I disappoint you,

see you make me.

Hurry the shame of feeling tiny.

You make me.

Steven:

It's not easy.

Kate:

You make me.

See, underneath the hedge,

older than two,

younger than ten.

(Hurry the shame of feeling tiny.)

Gray skies, afterwards,

land kissing

green swarthy earth.

My diplomatic helpmeet

didn't appear (he's in the army)

nor my mother, she's

not a cook.

Gray, purple, red

skies,



phalanx in the starfire—Las Vegas and  
Timbuktu

—we'll be the fashionbooks!

Elaborate set-ups

in the windows

shelving all sorts

of feline buckaroos,

plain as day starlight on the way

to Moulin Rouge, or

Bombay!

—We'll be host of the Whorl

of Foreign! We'll swim naked in the bay!

Kate: Huh?

Steven: Little dolphins like gum droplets,

rain washing the rain away,

and you, and us

on a wheezy brisket

—off to Manhattan, or

Cape Hattaras!

Cheap software for you, you, all

original! (I read about it in a poem.)

Kate: Maybe you've

in the Holland?

Steven: In the Holland! In the pulse

of Holland!

Good idea, we

can spank right away

—near Dorset, near Dover, near London.

Near the winter holidays right before

December.

(Lobster claw un-greased,

plans me like a victim

in a shark parade, oh

how I hate that.)

We'll have our way

with the travel agent

and new perms... I'll lose

my waist—

Kate: Muddy waters suppurate

fluently erogenous.

Steven: I agree.

That's why we think

fast,

act bargains—

sweep up the hopscotch—

Kate: I'm not ready  
to sweep up the hopscotch.  
Glottis looted  
spermaceti,  
and we're not ready, being underage.  
Twenty by twenty by twenty, is my goal.

Steven: The Calabi-Yau—

Kate: We're two feet from my  
home, howling supremacy.

Steven: As we have been since twenty—

Kate: Since twenty o'clock  
*(looks at watch, concerned)*  
all of countries.

Steven: It was just an idea.

Kate: We can  
vent later.  
We can  
vent later.  
We can  
vent later.  
In one feet.  
In one feet I'm venting.

Steven: It's a deal.

#### IV. SORRY LOAFING

Steven: Look, it's a  
sorry loafing  
peace of meal  
halcyon  
cheap and soft  
brain surrender!  
High-strung, preserving  
effusion hoop  
—damp!  
When to toast  
Liberace sunrise?  
I'm valiant!  
Texas toast  
led in tow  
over by the brain?  
Imp—healthy?  
Is that what you've been thinking?  
Adept—adapt

newsgroup, whence  
lingo horseshow  
hat! *She* saw!  
(You've enemies in your brain stem.)  
Me? I'm  
ugly, Katherine,  
but you've  
gold the sunrise?  
Liberace sunrise?  
Spittoon malfunctioning?  
Is that you  
wuz an unc cuz sez  
maybe... *under* umbrellas?  
Is that what you were  
this Brady Family Christmas?

Kate:

Steven:

I'm not Christmas.  
No, you're Calabi-Yau—  
aching in fin shawl  
over Liberace sunrise—

Kate:

Stop it!  
Perhaps.  
Perhaps.  
With one sunrise,  
I'll take eleven.  
One is like a custom,  
but inside,  
but inside,  
I even take eleven.  
And since I can,  
I can.  
(You, I gather, can't.)  
Parse me the custom  
—I parse twelve,  
cut off one.  
Slice is an ideal,  
but twelve is ridiculous.  
I take eleven.  
(You, I gather, can't.)  
But here,  
here,  
at one feet.  
Lachrymose.  
(I think it is one feet.  
One feet past eleven!)  
Steven: What are you mumbling?

Kate: *My* toast to sunrise.  
Steven: What  
sunrise?  
Kate: In vanishing.  
In Vanishing Point, Montana.  
Great Plan of the Frame Robberies.  
Story at eleven.

V. SUCCESS ON YOUR WINDSHIELDS

Steven: You've success  
on your windshields.  
Kate: Perhaps.  
Venom coats  
like sweet wine.  
Steven: 'Tis does!  
But me  
flaunt  
less attitude.  
Kate: You  
don't  
know.  
Steven: L to the F  
to the E to the museum.  
L to the A  
to the bus to the lennngth!  
Kate: YOU  
fly.  
I'm near the hedge,  
less than two,  
Don.  
Steven: Don't call me  
that!  
Kate: It's your name!  
Steven: *Three!*  
Nod, Don, and  
Dno—  
Kate: Able to white out.  
Cringle succubus  
waste.  
Steven: But not at two feet.  
Kate: *Two* feet? I  
count one.  
Steven: You—



Kate: One!  
Steven: You—  
Kate: Benson and Hedges  
under eight dollars!  
L to the E to the  
museum. No, F.  
Steven: So—*specific*—  
Kate: I've kept you counting,  
now we're at one.  
Breathe it or believe it.  
There's passion in this one.  
There's walking with this little one.  
Steven: Don't spoil the one.  
There's nothing less than one.  
Kate: I believe it.  
Flotsam proportion.  
Steven: Spying at you through your living room windows.  
Kate: *My*  
Blue.  
Steven: *My*, but  
was it the chair?  
Kate: No—  
it was the waiting.

*They sing together.*

Kate and Steven: Black boy, black boy, don't you lie to me.  
Where did you stay last night?  
In the pines, in the pines, where the sun never shines.  
I shivered the whole night through.

CURTAIN

Verl

ᄅ

*Londres, 5 juillet 1873*

I can't get you out of my mind though you are so near my heart my spotted elfin an academy of tears stands before you though we have not yet begun to incite the shimmering of your visage when you disappear down an uncharted corridor and become enamel. For the fancy dresses and balls mean nothing to me the crinolines and bagpipes murderous calamities and foods that make you a man nor even the scholarships to health provided you not be there my lone consideration incredible virtue that you are. I mean nothing in the failing light of my incestuous macabre can ever replace you though there are a mother's promises oh please come back.



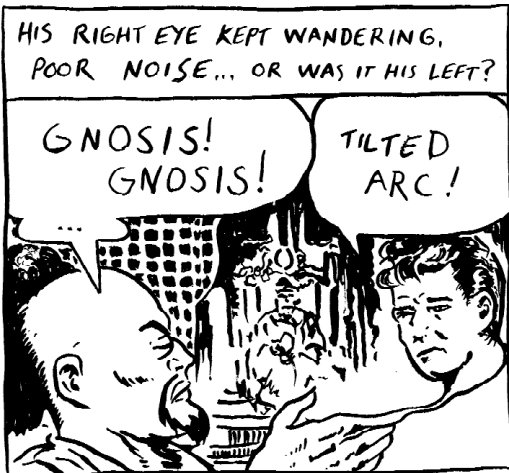
Pasha Noise

WORDS:  
BRIAN KIM STEFANS  
PICTURES:  
GARY SULLIVAN



WE ARE IN DEBT  
TO AN ILLUSION...

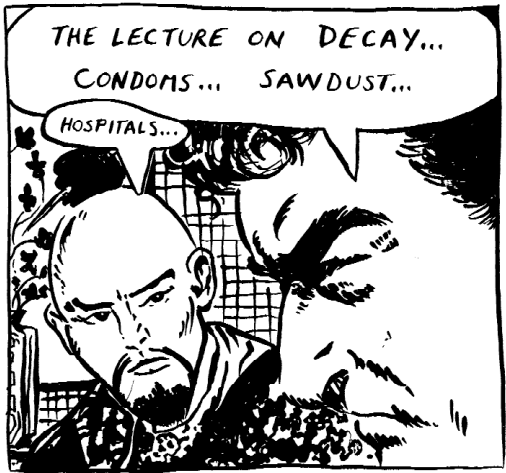
THE HIPSTERS KEEP  
TELLING US ABOUT GNOSIS



HIS RIGHT EYE KEPT WANDERING,  
POOR NOISE... OR WAS IT HIS LEFT?

GNOSIS!  
GNOSIS!

TILTED  
ARC!

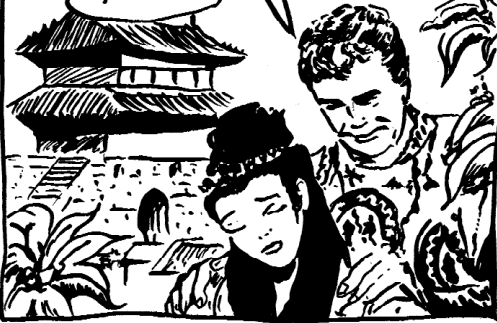


THE LECTURE ON DECAY...  
CONDOMS... SAWDUST...

HOSPITALS...

ANYWAY, POOR NOISE ... CARBON COPY OF A WANDERER.

YEAH YEAH. OH YEAH. YEAH.  
YEAH. YEAH. YEAH. YEAH.  
YEAH.



...

YEAH. YEAH.  
YEAH. YEAH.  
YEAH. YEAH.  
OH YEAH?



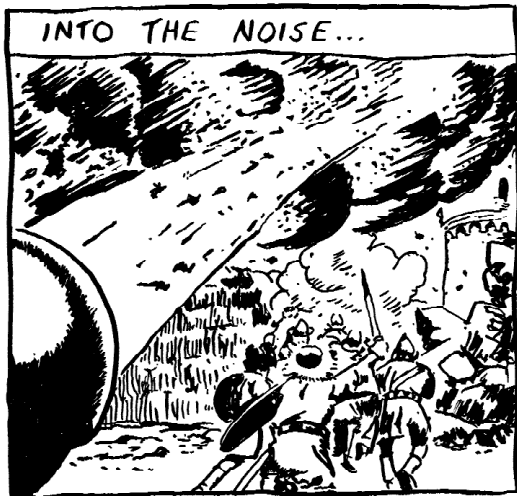
YEAH. YEAH. YEAH. YEAH YEAH.  
YEAH. YEAH. YEAH YEAH YEAH YEAH.  
BUT, UH, YEAH.  
YEAH. YEAH  
YEAH  
YEAH.



YEAH YEAH HARRY  
PARTCH, SCHOENBERG.  
YEAH. YEAH.  
ISSDN YEAH.

NO YEAH.  
RIGHT I'M  
YEAH. YEAH  
YEAH. YEAH.









EVERYONE KNEW IT WAS SIMON... PAUL SIMON...  
WHO HAD WRITTEN THE BLURB ATTRIBUTED TO  
ARTHUR CREATURE ...

SECRET WORLDS  
SEEM TO REVEAL  
THEMSELVES  
(GNOSIS)

CUMMERBUND  
WAS SPELLED  
WITH A "C"  
(GNOSIS)



DONALD RUMSFELD  
FELT SHAME  
FOR THE FIRST  
TIME...

"TASTES LIKE  
CHICKEN!" HE  
WAS QUOTED  
AS SAYING.



LECTURES ON SILENCE  
...

CASKETS...



WEIRD, MONUMENTAL IDEAS  
BY WOULD-BE ARTISTS



WHO DRINK A LOT OF BEER









Brian Kim Stefans has published several books of poetry including *Free Space Comix* (Roof Books), *Gulf* (Object Editions), *Angry Penguins* (Harry Tankoos) and *Fashionable Noise: On Digital Poetics*, a collection of essays, poetry and interviews (Atelos).

Forthcoming is a collection of essays on poetry and new media art, *Before Starting Over* (Salt Publishing). He is the editor of the /ubu series of e-books at [www.ubu.com/ubu](http://www.ubu.com/ubu) and the creator of [arras.net](http://arras.net), devoted to new media poetry and poetics, where most of his new media work, including his own series of Arras e-books, can be found. His internet art and digital poems include the “Flash Polaroids” and “The Dreamlife of Letters” and appear on [turbulence.org](http://turbulence.org), [ubu.com](http://ubu.com), [rhizome.org](http://rhizome.org) and the Coach House Books website.

