

TRIPWIRE 7

OAKLAND : 2014

TRIPWIRE
a journal of poetics

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cover image: Blueprint for the maze and theatre, gardens of Vizcaya, estate of James Deering, Miami, Florida, 1916

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Looking for essays, reviews, interviews, translations, black and white visual art, etc. No unsolicited poetry, plays or fiction, please.

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JEN COLEMAN

Krill List

This krill is neritic
a vertical migrator
neritic
a vertical migrator
a vertical migrator
a vertical migrator
neritic

This krill is circumpolar
in and below the thermocline
not a vertical migrator
two vertical migrators
neritic

This krill is above the thermocline
a circumpolar vertical migrator
three vertical migrators
a strong vertical migrator

This krill is a vertical migrator
a vertical migrator
above the thermocline
in and above the thermocline
neritic
circumglobal.

It is not known whether or not this krill
is a vertical migrator.

This krill is not a vertical migrator
is circumpolar

is a vertical migrator
is circumpolar
is a circumpolar vertical migrator
a vertical migrator
a vertical migrator
not a vertical migrator
not a vertical migrator
not a vertical migrator
a vertical migrator
within the thermocline
not a vertical migrator.

This krill is a vertical migrator within the thermocline.

This krill is surface.

This krill is within the thermocline
a vertical migrator
a vertical migrator below the thermocline.

This krill is in shelf waters
is in shelf waters
in shelf waters
shelf waters
neritic
neritic.

This krill is not a vertical migrator
not a vertical migrator in and above the thermocline
above the thermocline
not a vertical migrator above the thermocline
not a vertical migrator
in shelf waters
not a vertical migrator
not a vertical migrator

not a vertical migrator
not a vertical migrator above the thermocline.

This krill is not a vertical migrator
not a vertical migrator
not a vertical migrator
appears not to migrate but this is unconfirmed.

This krill is not a vertical migrator
a vertical migrator
a vertical migrator
not a vertical migrator
circumpolar
below the thermocline
neritic
above the thermocline
circumpolar.

This krill is a vertical migrator
is a vertical migrator in and below the thermocline
a vertical migrator in and below the thermocline
not a vertical migrator
below the thermocline
a vertical migrator
below the thermocline
an abyssal species
above the thermocline
within the thermocline
not a vertical migrator.

This krill is not a vertical migrator
not a vertical migrator
a vertical migrator.

TRANSLATED BY JULIE CARR AND JENNIFER PAP

LESLIE KAPLAN

from Excess — The Factory

SEVENTH CIRCLE

You are in a round factory.

Outside, it's difficult. Night, with some trees.
A light bulb turns, peaceful.

You are on a platform, leaning over. You look.
The elevator goes up and down in a vertical corridor.

There are many doors and windows, you saw them while arriving,
they increase the unease.

The factory is big, really defined.

Powerful light, invisible. The ceiling is far.

There are precise walls, hallways.
The air is breathed, imperceptible.
Thought is there.

You are standing, at the bus stop, you wait for the bus.
All around there is sky and telephone poles.

The sky advances, immobile.
Big wide sky. You see the streaks.

At the café, music, tranquil and absent.
Those were the days, my love, ah yes, those were the days.

Interminable sky, already frayed.
There is no forgetting, ever. You are run through.

When you arrive, a refrigerator in the corner is big and white.
Some wires over there. Things are hanging.

There are appliances, hollow basins, a counter.
The basins are blue and yellow.
You sit down, you have a drink.

Across, the shelves. They are apparent.
You dream, always. The shelves are edged.

The substance of the room is porous.
A silence. You are seated.

Presence of volume. Curved things. The wall offers, a lot.

A calendar is pinned up, for the days. Repairs and stitches, and always
this room, run through. Wires. You are there.

On the counter, there are objects. The objects are useless, it's terrible.

Volume swelling, colors. Scraps and things, rubber.
The room slides endlessly. You are inside.

It's evening. You have time.

The tranquil space moves in. Things fall, everything.

There are images on the wall, stuck there, flat. The objects are isolated. Anxiety. All around, the tablecloth and the blanket, and the crocheted bedspread. The curtains too, wooly.

Behind the windows, the suburbs broad and spacious. You feel them. You are with your kind, and you consider dear immobility.

The room is there, all around. No one can know, no one. You have eaten the meal with your mouth. You are seated in chairs, there are hands and knees.

Something dies, what violence.

Across, the face of the other, closed and supple like a piece of body.

RODRIGO TOSCANO

from Explosion Rocks Springfield

The Friday evening gas explosion in Springfield leveled a strip club next to a day care.

“Bleed it here, the gas—watch.

Gauge zero’s—see, both ends.

Cinch it—there, till it pools.

Gauge should read 25.

Double tap it, why not.

Eight, has to be eight feet

O2 tanks and this one

Or five foot wall between.

Now, that’s premise regs, right?

C.O.’s have their *own* regs.

Zone, each one has its reg.

Same principal, you’ll see.

Double strap it, always.

These trucks, they shake, awful.

Brewskies at The Bouillon?

Nah. Stick a fork in me

This shift always, I’m cooked.

Thursday—right, at the hall.

You should chair it, why not?

All right, buddy, be safe.

Don’t let them gals fleece you.”

The Friday evening gas explosion in Springfield leveled a strip club next to a day care.

“Unbutton here, this strap.
Even jugs, see, real nice.
Now clip on this red tail
One minute into it.
Double flare it, why not.
Five, can only be five
Per booth—including you.
Or eight, if two of you.
Now, that’s this club’s reg, right?
Other clubs make their own.
Boss, each has a ‘vision.’
Same old dance, count on it.
Well, maybe *two* buttons.
These strobes, they blind, crazy.
Night owl shots at The Coop?
Nah. Scoop me on a cone
This shift always, I’m licked.
Thursday—right, at my house.
You should chair it, why not?
All right, honey, be safe.
Don’t let them guys steer you.”

The Friday evening gas explosion in Springfield leveled a strip club next to a day care.

“Spread out the ice like this.

Twelve chocolate, three white milks.

Watch how I wedge them in.

Roster should say fifteen.

Do a roll call, why not.

Four, only four can go

This bathroom and that one.

That’s *this* center’s regs, right?

Other ones have their own.

Counties, each one decides.

Similar norms, you’ll see.

Yeah, check for leaky ones

These cartons, they rip, tons.

Rump shake shooters at Ski’s?

Nah. Crunk on without me

This shift always, I’m zonked.

Thursday—right, at the rec.

You should chair it, why not?

All right then girl, be safe.

Don’t let these kids crank you.”

The Friday evening gas explosion in Springfield leveled a strip club next to a day care.

Spartacus sprinklers (top rail)

Serial no. 21809A

Inspector 480F

Jiangxi Quality Products

Night Hawk Importers, San Bruno, CA

Roman Roads Distributors, Phoenix, AZ

Port of entry, Tacoma, WA

Tankard 10179.03

Inspector 4201

ILO quarterly report:

Case study 1142

Tingting Liu, 23, female

I.D. 41732

Platform 12, line 8, station 4

Muscular skeletal paralysis

3rd metatarsal taped to 2nd phalangeal

4th proximal splinted to 5th distal

OSHA Region 1 final report:

Incident 2267, explosion (gas)

Inspector 505F

Sprinklers inoperable

Logic Tree branch 20

System of Safety failure

Mitigation device

16 drill holes stoppered

Weld burs not filed

Citation: 29CFR.1910.159(c)(12)

Notes: inspector 505F on leave

DOL budget sequestered

PUB.L. 112-25

District 2, 112th Congress

United States of America

The Friday evening gas explosion in Springfield leveled a strip club next to a day care.

Spartacus Sprinklers (top rail)
Serial no. 21809A
Scrap metal yard F-2
Stripped steel tankard 28
Sampson Recyclers Ltd., Pittsfield, MA
Steelworkers local 4-12026
Smelting furnace 48
Slab beam rollout batch 81.2014
Semper Fortis Steel Precision Corp, Brooklyn, NY
Steelworkers local 4-200
Section cutting station no. 12
Steel cylinder hollow type 2b
Store & send department 4
Spirit of 76 Commercial Furnishing Corp, Slidell, LA
Steelworkers local 3-275
Sargon Sprinklers (bottom rail)
Serial no. 321911B
Sink coating station 12
Sanding unit 25
Seal testing station no. 7
Sprinklers standard specification 29CFR1910.159(b)
Station inspector 13
Sales packaging room H
Sort and storage garage 4
Second incidence of forklift crushing worker's toes
Spirit of 76 Personnel Motivation Free Cupcake Fridays director, Chet Baker
Steelworkers local 3-275 chief steward, Marynella Fernandez
Section 5, clause 2 "Management shall comply with all state and federal standards"
Safety committee grievance no. 78: unannounced station rotations / inadequate training
Staff training regulation arbitration hearing 501.P.36
Sargon Sprinklers 1st annual wet t-shirt contest
Super Sonic Dance Club, 3rd Floor, Picayune, MS

The Friday evening gas explosion in Springfield leveled a strip club next to a day care.

I remember the breeze right before...
Burs of—was it willow—slant-falling.
The gray sidewalk, schist granules, scattering.
A brown dumpster lid smushing its green plastic, sandwich meat.
A rat made its debut, but for a moment.

I remember an awning string's knotted tip soft-thudding a windowpane
—tympani's uneven beat.
The rustle of stray trash—bass strings, almost rising
—but never.
And the chopper, the chopper—spittletatootling, spittletatootling—
A proud boot landing on obedient asphalt.
The stern, uncringing chrome.
The flighty flames decorative gas tank.

I can't forget the beryllium blue sunshades
—orange hued at a glance.
And the stars and bars, starched, pressed, bandana.
Nation Idol Gorge
But for a moment
Then
Boom.

The Friday evening gas explosion in Springfield leveled a strip club next to a day care.

I remember the plume right after...
Orbs of—was it cinnamon—black-rising.
Vapor gray whitening shingle powder rain.
A dumpster lid sheered off a gravestone's angel face.
A hawk's claws claimed the stump.

I remember two spouts of thin flame, blue, making an X
—mind's waking dream.
The hissing of gurgling plastic, suppliant—sick
—stomach's inner eyeball.
And the bathtub, the bathtub—sittin' pretty—sittin' pretty—
The hysteric roof flopping on an unfazed floor.
The wise, ever-wakeful steel beams.
The cheery glass—beaming—everywhere.

I can't forget that purple doorknob
—horny at a glance.
And the plump couch stuffing foam, blazing, angry.
City's Final Chorus
But for a moment
Then
Shsh.

The Friday evening gas explosion in Springfield leveled a strip club next to a day care.

I don't remember the very moment...

Flashes of—was I daydreaming—Biloxi Bound.

The termite swarm at dusk, balling up, sprinkling.

A skeeter swirling in its hotel pool—for the first time.

A no-see-um bug popped out from nowhere—but for a moment—to romp.

I can't say I recall Cleopatra's hairpiece flying off in a speeding four-cylinder vehicle
—Empire of the Great Somewhere, but never.

And the flying fish, the flying fish—hither-flopping, hither-flopping—

The carefree palms, twerking, injured.

The bald, unyielding sun, giddy.

Tentative feet in knee high water, gripping.

Have I forgotten the name of that triple IPA—something like
—*Rondez The Moon à la Batshit*.

And the ample sized black polkadots—in my eyes, twerking, carefully.

Empire of the Great Somewhere

But for a moment

Then

Then

SAMUEL VRIEZEN

The Poetry of Jeroen Mettes

Jeroen Mettes burst onto the Dutch poetry scene twice. First, in 2005, when he became a strong presence on the nascent Dutch poetry blogosphere overnight as he embarked on his critical project *Dichtersalfabet* (Poets' Alphabet). And again in 2011, when to great critical acclaim (and some bafflement) his complete writings were published—almost five years after his far too early death.

2005 was the year in which Dutch poetry blogging exploded. That year saw the foundation of the influential, polemical, and populistically inclined weblog *De Contrabas* (The Double Bass), which became a strong force for internet poetry in Dutch in the years to follow. In the summer of that year, a lively debate raged in the aftermath of Bas Belleman's article "Doet poëzie er nu eindelijk toe?" ("Does poetry finally matter now?"), on a blog specifically devoted to this question.

Up to that point, the poetical debate in the Netherlands had largely been confined to literary reviews (which were often subsidized), having become mostly marginalized in more mainstream media, where poetry could be covered by only a small number of so-called authorities. As a result, literary debate had acquired a rather placid quality. Though a variety of camps with different aesthetics could be discerned, most poetical positions shared a general acceptance of poetry as a form of art somewhat apart from fundamental political concerns. Late modernists would pursue subtlety and density of reference. Others would insist poetry was best understood as a form of entertainment that should ideally be accessible and work well on the stage. Still others would insist that poetry is mostly a play with forms. Linguistically disruptive strategies were valued highly by some, but mostly for their aesthetic effect. Values of disinterested playfulness reigned supreme everywhere.

Any idea that poetry could be a field in which one confronts politics and the world was decidedly marginal. This led to a climate in which most attempts

at polemics were DOA, often based on far too superficial positioning and analysis. The greatest polemical debates were revolving around the question of whether poetry should be difficult or easy, with both camps defining their ideas of difficulty and accessibility in ways that were so utterly shallow as to make the entire point moot. Debates were performed, rather than engaged with. It was a postmodern hell of underarticulated poetics.

Half-consciously, people were yearning for new forms of criticism that could put the oomph back into poetry. Weblogs provided for ways to explore debate directly outside of the clogged older channels of the reviews and the newspapers. Belleman's essay and the resulting online activity had shown that there was a widespread eagerness to take poetry more seriously as a social art form. It was in this environment that Mettes started his remarkable project *Dichtersalfabet*.

At that moment, Mettes was active mostly in academic circles, having become noted at Leiden University as a particularly gifted student of literary theory. Within the Netherlands, the field of literary theory has a very odd relationship to literature as it is practiced in the country. Academic theory tends to have a mostly international view and engage with international debates of cultural criticism, literary theory, and philosophy, with academics often publishing in English and attending conferences around the world. Literature itself however is much more concerned with domestic traditions. Consequently, in the Netherlands, there exists a language gap between academic theoretical practice (as it is studied in the literary theory departments) and literary practice (which, academically, gets studied in specialized departments of Dutch literature). The *Dichtersalfabet* can be seen as Mettes's attempt to close this gap. It is also an attempt to bridge the divide between theory and practice, in which he could apply his theoretical knowledge in a very unorthodox and unacademic critical mode that moreover could reach far beyond the domain of conventional criticism.

Mettes's goal was to trace a diagonal through Dutch poetic culture, to "strangle" what he perceived to be its dominant oppressive traditions of agreeable irrelevance, in order to see whatever might be able to survive his critical assaults. But he could only do so by means of a very serious engagement

with poetry itself. To this end, he would go systematically through the poetry bookshelf of the Verwijs bookshop (part of a mainstream chain of booksellers) in The Hague, buying one publication per blog item, starting from A and working his way through the alphabet, reading whatever he might encounter that way in the restaurant of the HEMA store (another big commercial chain in the country). He would subsequently write down his reading experiences, refraining however from trying to write a nuanced book review. Rather, he would write about anything that caught his attention and sparked his critical interest.

This way of working would yield vast, at times somewhat rambling, dense, lively, and generally brilliant essays, in which he held no punches. He never hesitated to pull out his entire arsenal of concepts from the international theory traditions, while never degenerating into mere academic exercise and pointless intertextualities. The attempt was rather to live the poetry that he read, and to engage it with the full range of political, academic, cultural, and personal references that he had at his disposal—all that composed the individual named Jeroen Mettes as a reader. Often what he wrote would not be according to the standards of what we usually think of as a critical review of a book of poetry. Sometimes he would even be a little sloppy in his judgments of poets or representations of the books he read, for example by basing an entire essay on the blurb of a book rather than its poetry content. But what he did was always brilliant writing nonetheless—virtuosic riffs on poetic fragments randomly found within capitalist society, exposing an incisive and insistent poetical sensibility.

Mettes read poetry for political reasons, to see whether poetry could offer him a way to deal with a political world he detested. The right-wing horrors of the Bush years, the Iraq war, and the turn of Dutch public opinion towards ever more conservative, narrowminded, and xenophobic views alongside a complete failure of the political left to present any credible alternative, were weighing heavily on the times in which Mettes reported on his reading. Poetry was to measure this world, diagram it, to lay bare its inconsistencies and faults, to indicate where lines of flight might be found. Amid the ruins of a world wrecked by imperialist policies, corporate capitalism, and doctrinal neoliberalism it would have to show the possibility of a new community. And

it was, through its rhythmical workings, to release the reading subject from his confinement to ideologically conditioned individuality and lead him into the immanent paradise of reading.

The stakes were high. Much higher than anything Dutch poetry had seen for many years. Mettes's blog was widely read from the start. His posts sparked lively debates. Some of these subsequently led to the publication of extensive essays on a few key poets in some literary journals, particularly *Parmentier* and the Flemish journal *yang*, for which Mettes would become a member of the editorial board, a few months after starting the *Dichtersalfabet*. This could have been the start of a brilliant career, but this was not to be. The initial manic energy that fueled the blog gradually subsided. The *Alfabet* was updated less and less regularly. Mettes sometimes just disappeared for many weeks, then suddenly returning with a brilliant essay. Until, on September 21, 2006, he posted his final blogpost, consisting of no text whatsoever. That night I learned from his mentor at Leiden University that he had committed suicide.

Mettes and I had had some fruitful exchanges on poetry, rhythm, music, and form, mostly on the blogs, but also by email. Three weeks before his death was the last time I heard from him: a very sudden, uncharacteristically curt note saying "My old new sentence epic." Attached to that message I found a doc file of a work so major that I felt intimidated. This was *N30*, a text he had been working on for over five years. After his death, it took me a long time before I dared to read it in its entirety. In the meantime, the work of preparing the manuscript for publication was entrusted by his relatives to his colleagues at *yang* magazine. It took them a few years to brush up the text and to edit the *Dichtersalfabet*-blog (which, apart from the *Alphabet* project itself, incorporated many other fragments of political, polemical, and theoretical writing) into book form along with the essays. The result of this labor was finally published in 2011 as a two-book set, and Mettes burst onto the Dutch poetry scene for the second time. The work was widely reviewed, on blogs, in journals, magazines, and newspapers. Many critics who had not followed the blogs in 2005 showed themselves surprised, baffled even, by the intensity of Mettes's critical writing. But for those who had read the blog, the main surprise was in the poetry.

During Mettes's lifetime, some of his poems had already been published in *Parmentier*. Although these were strong texts by themselves, in no way did they prepare readers for *N30*. Nothing like it had been written in Dutch before. Instead, *N30* explicitly follows the American tradition of Language Writing, directly referencing Ron Silliman and his concept of The New Sentence. However, it would seem that much of the poetical thinking around his use of this technique puts him closer to a writer such as Bruce Andrews. For Mettes, using non sequiturs as a unit of poetic construction was not only a way of reinventing formal textual construction, but it was another way of finding the fault lines in the social fabric. From the perspective of the Language tradition, one may put *N30* somewhere between Silliman and Andrews. *N30* shares an autobiographical element with Silliman's New Sentence projects, and as in Andrews, there is a concern for mapping out social totality from within text—what Mettes refers to as a “textual world civil war.” Again this shows a formal textual strategy for allowing the person “Jeroen Mettes” to be absorbed by the world, which here appears as a whirlwind of demotic and demonic chatter, full of violence, humor, intensity, beauty, disgust, sex, commerce, and strife.

Influenced as it may by American precursors, Mettes's tone and form end up quite different from his American counterparts, consistently referencing a world that is Dutch, all too Dutch, taking on the oppressive orderliness of Dutch society with its endemic penchant for consensus by introducing chaos into its daily life and laying bare its implicit aggressions. The work's 31 chapters each have a different feel and rhythmical outline, but none of them follow a predetermined pattern. Rather, Mettes would consistently edit and re-edit the text, randomly rewriting parts of it, as he explains in his poetical creed *Politieke Poëzie* (Political Poetry).

N30—referring to the 1999 antiglobalist protest in Seattle—was to be the first text of a trilogy. The work itself was written “in the mode of the present.” A second text was to be written in the mode of the future, and a third one, in the mode of the past, was going to be an epic poem about the Paris Commune, and to form an alternative poetic constitution for the European project. I still deeply regret that Jeroen Mettes never got to complete those projects, just as I would be very keen on knowing what he might have had to say about

more recent political developments. Instead, in 2006, he remained stuck in the horrors of the present, that ended up consuming him completely. He left Dutch literature with some of its most piercing criticism and its most profoundly moving, exciting and powerful poetry.

—previously published in *Continent*, 2012

JEROEN METTES

Political Poetry: A Few Notes

Poetics for N30

L'égalité veut d'autres lois.

—Eugène Pottier

The modern poem does not have form but consistency (that is sensed), no content but a problem (that is developed). Consistency + problem = composition.

The *problem* of modern poetry is capitalism. Capitalism—which has no image: the unrepresentable Idea of “everything.”

The problem is that a poem cannot be justified. There is no excuse for it.

Political poetry—*pure* poetry—has to be problematic, though not in a mannerist way. Yes, its problem is first its own problem—poetry’s existence in the same world as the newspaper—but therefore also always everybody’s problem (the problem of any world at all).

The cult of the sublime points at a suspect desire for transcendence, nostalgia for paradise lost (the womb?). Melancholia of the post-. But a problem neither sorrows nor mourns, it is alive, and the fact that it is alive is the problem—the problem for death (rigidity, the status quo).

Our symbols and ideologies do not hide any god: symbolic = state; imaginary = human; real = money.

Problem: the possibility of communal speech (poetry) in the absence of a “we.” Or: what is a “we” that is not a collective subject, or in any case is not a *volonté générale*? What is a universal history that is not a History?

This work was started in the shade of the anti-globalization protests at the end of November 1999. I considered *N30* to be the closure of the nineties, of my adolescence, and of the a seemingly total extinction of social desire. From the beginning I was skeptical about the alterglobalization movement as the avant-garde of a new politics, but something was *happening*. Maybe this event did not show that, according to the slogan, “another world” is possible, but for me it indicated at least that such possibility was at least still possible. That naked possibility is carrying forward. And if the fundamental tone of this work sounds more desperate than utopian, this is not caused by the catastrophic sequence that since 1999 has plunged us ever deeper into the right-wing nightmare—a nightmare that this work also gives an account for—but because my hope as yet remains empty.

Composition. Composition is not design, but the production of an autonomous block of affects (i.e. a POEM), rhythmically subtracted from the language of a community. A poem does something. Is something.

New Sentence. Choosing the non sequitur as compositional unit has the advantage that an abstract composition is subjected to the stress of concrete, social references. Where there is a sentence, there is always a world. (This does not hold necessarily for words on their own.) And where sentences collide, something akin to a textual civil war takes place. It is not about “undermining” whatever, or de-scribing the raging global civil war, but about *writing* social (or even: ontological) antagonism—including all its catastrophic and utopian possibilities.

Minor resistance.

Why would poetry be the *no protest zone* par excellence? It is nothing but protest, not simply qua “content,” but in its most fundamental essence:

rhythm. Rhythm is resistance against language, time, and space, and the basis of (what we will continue to call) autonomy. Rhythm starts with the anti-rhythmic caesura as Hölderlin remarked about Sophocles, a disruption of the quotidian drone. The destruction of everything that is dead inside of us. The noise of the avant-garde has never been the representation of the noise of (post)modernity (from the television or shopping mall), but the sober noise of the systematic exchange of an unbearable worldview. The poet does not describe, but looks for a way out:

*There is a Grain of Sand in Lambeth that Satan cannot find
Nor can his Watch Fiends find it, tis translucent & has many Angles
But he who finds it will find Oothoons palace, for within
Opening into Beulah every angle is a lovely heaven*

William Blake was not mad.

And there has always been only one poetry: the poetry of paradise. The principle is that there is something in art (the essentially creative element) that is disgusted by that which, unlike art, does not aim for the supreme. Even amusement is not supreme! The supreme is supremely open, “das Einfache,/ Das Schwer zu machen ist”¹; paradise. That is abstract. Literally. For me it is not about a concrete imagination, an idyll or utopia. There is no doubt a need for that, but it is not so much the supposed lack of imagination or ideals (human rights are ideals), but a fundamental lack of desire (human rights are not desires) that we suffer from, and from which we do not need to remove Nietzsche’s label of “nihilism.”

“We.”

George Oppen: “*Of Being Numerous* asks the question whether or not we can deal with humanity as something which actually exists.”

What is less actual than humanity? Nowadays it appears as a lifeless ideology of cynical power politics. Or as what makes one think. It is a shame to be human.

The event is the caesura that defines rhythm. Writing toward the event is not the description of the event, but the marking of an abstract and intense space in which the event may unfold and keep itself. It is a task. “Remember that thou blesseth the day on which I seized thee, because such is thy obligation.”

The event is a contraction (or a series of contractions) with its own rhythm and unique qualities. It is more than an explosion or demonstration. But at the same time less. The endless repetition of images and stories in the media points to a fear for the indeterminate and indeterminable void of the event. In the end there is nothing to see. We do not live in the disaster’s shade or the miracle’s light, but rather in the rhythm, which is contracted time, having little to do with omnipresent representations.

For this book I did not intend a rhythm of evental representations (a narrative rhythm), but *a rhythm which would be an event itself*, because it draws the border between artwork and history. My desire for a direct engagement with the “extra-textual reality” has nothing to do with the representation of “rumor in the streets.” What has less *street cred* than representation?

Naturally, a poem is no historical event and does not change anything. But a poem is a part of history that wants to be repeated forever, constructed in such a way that it is worthy of repetition. It is a part of desire (composition) made consistent (durable). The “historical event” flares up and burns down, and has to burn down to be effective. The leftovers are images and stories (representations), History—no event. The artwork—that is the ambition—*remains* event (though monumental and inefficient/inoperable).

(No wonder that a historical singularity, a revolution reminds us of a work of art; the resurrection yearns for a judgment, an affirmation; everything depends on it.)

Hence the title does not summarize the book, let alone contract its “content” into a quasi-transcendental signifier. The title is juxtaposed to the book, like

everything else inside the book, and in that relation it precisely forms a part of it. The ideal work is an open whole, lacking nothing but to which everything may be added.

I have been interested in this “everything,” the world, or as I said above: capitalism. “Everything” is not the space for “wonder”—a code word, a shibboleth for petty bourgeois imagination (I recognize myself in the strangest things, a speaking dog, a canal, a pond standing straight—oh my god). No. The world is a social world, not YOUR world, poet. Power is number one. I will call “Dutch,” or “shitty,” whatever denies this power. That hurts, but this pain is an expression of the desire in the world to write another world, or as Blanchot says, “the other of all worlds”: the world. Not as what “is there,” but rather as that which urges for an escape from what “is.”

This is a testament of how radical reality has become, for me—or rather, a writing body—in a having-been-written.

I am not interested in the problem of “meaning” as misunderstood by literary scholars³: “order” in “chaos,” “symbolization.” Bullshit. What is there, hop, hope, now: the meaning of the taste in my mouth. Bullshit. I am not interested in the frustration of interpretation; I am writing for readers who do not want to interpret. I do not know how many “professional readers” will hear the music of a paragraph like:

Sun. Sushi. Volvo.

I hope more than I would think. There is a suggestion (or rather, an actual production) of speed and infinitive owing to the absence of plosives, i.e. articulations such as /k/, /t/, or /p/. Can you hear the slick suaveness? Driving car dark, vocal chiaroscuro of the word “sushi.” The unstressed /i/ stands in the middle of dark vowels and thus acquires its own special *out of focus*, like a momentary flash or brilliance—an obscure light. It is not about recognizing a story, but about avoiding any story whatsoever: the car

disappears in the glow, cars and raw fish have nothing in common except their articulation in a language that brings them together, blurring them. A world appears in its disappearance. For a moment, light is a metaphor for language, though it cannot be reduced to tenor. It is not necessary to be a linguist or philosopher to hear this—a “difficult” poem all too often becomes an allegory of its own impenetrable being-language. The only demand: leave your hermeneutical fetish at home. This was no interpretation.

Most shit has been stolen. That is no longer interesting. You cannot shoot the body with information and let your lawyers reclaim the bullets. So every sentence has been stolen. Also the ones “out” “of” “my” “head.” Why would I be allowed to steal from myself and not from others? Man takes what he needs to move forward. Whatever he encounters, finds in front of him, “occurs” to him. The writer as text editor, or singing pirate. Nothing new here. Important difference with for example Sybren Colet’s⁴ montage technique: anti-thematicism. Most of the time ferocious citation from whatever I was reading, listening to, ended up in, and so on. I wrote chapter 12 on my laptop while watching CNN. *On the air* instead of *en plein air*. I often employed search engines to generate material. Chapter 20 offers the purest example of this. Often I stop recognizing a particular citation after some time. It is not uncommon for a stolen sentence to conform itself to the paragraph in which it finds itself. Sometimes I nearly arbitrarily replace words. Arbitrariness as a guarantee for absolute democracy.

It is a poetics of the *non sequitur*: a conclusion that does not follow from the premises, the strange element in the discourse. A discourse of strangers. No logical, narrative, thematic unity. There is unity in speed/flight. It has to be read linearly, but not necessarily (not preferably) from beginning to end. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line, but this line precedes every point. The middle, the acceleration, comes first. A point occurs where two lines cross.

It has been written from up close, at the level of the tension between sentences. Nothing to be seen from a distance: no form except the exchange

of form, no geometrical or mythical meaning. You have to get in, “groping toward a continuous present, a using everything a beginning again and again” (Stein).⁵

In Dutch, experimental poetry has been mainly *dense*: a small rectangular form filled with a maximum amount of poetic possibility. But at the moment the poem starts to relax, the anecdotal content seems to increase. This is what is called “epic”: long, narrative. I believe that an epic is more than that, in fact something completely different. An epic is “a poem including history,”⁶ a long poem tied up with the life of community, that as a whole does not need to be narrative. The American poets of the twentieth century (Pound, Williams, Zukofsky, Oppen, Olson, Silliman) have put the epic back on the map by interpreting the poem itself as a map, and writing it as navigation. They have invented the experimental epic, a genre that has generated little original following in “our” poetry.

N30 is the middle part—“always start in the middle”—of a trilogy, the contours of which remain as of yet unclear, although each episode investigates one of the three “ecstasies of time”—past, present, future—concerning society X. *N30* concerns itself with the PRESENT: not with the description of actual facts but of the rhythm and the intense depth in which facts appear to us. Where are we? We are camping in the desert. Sometimes we are looking at the stars.

As opposed to maximum density and minimal tension (a characteristic of most [post-]experimental lyricism), I have sought a minimal density and maximum tension in this book, considered as a long non-narrative prose poem. On the one hand, the minimal density is obtained by the inherent formlessness of prose, on the other hand by the conscious refusal of any active (formal, non-rhythmic) synthesis: the poem tells nothing, shows nothing, has no theme. I did not seek maximum tension either by loading the quotidian with epiphanic radioactivity (“wonder,” confirmation from above), or by means of the intensity of the linguistic structure. I want an *abstract* tension, but social in its abstraction, in other words, not neutralized

by and subjected to Form. Instead of form (transcendent): composition (immanent).

The concept is series. Ideal: every unit is necessary for the efficacy of the others and the whole, their relation is purely linear, i.e. non-hierarchic, non-syllogistic, non-discursive, non-narrative. Sentence related to sentence like paragraph to paragraph and chapter to chapter; the whole means nothing and represents nothing. Inside the sentence: syntax (Chomsky's tree, a type of parallel circuit), outside: parataxis (coordination, an asyntactic line through language and world).

I consider duration—the energy of duration (rhythm)—to be the fundament of a poem, the temporal inclination to delimit a “space.” Being as consistency, its consistency. A spatial part of time is not merely a metaphor for an inevitable trajectory, an inescapable time, something like “our time.” *Not merely*—because rhythm comes from language and is not projected onto it; the poem derives from the world like a scent and a color and a life from a flower.

A series, a sequence: nothing potential, but truly infinite—the movement of an infinity. The infinite series = everything *minus* totality. That means that there is no container—no Form, no Self, no Image, no Structure, not even a Fragment —, just “the prose of the world.” No representation, but also no staging of the impossibility of representation (the postmodern sublime). These are no fragments, no image of a fragmented world or personality, no cautious incantations around the Void. It does not exist. It is a movement. Buying bread, a flock of birds, a bomb falling—they do not depict or represent anything, not literally, not metaphorically. There is an Idea, which is however nothing more than a rhythm, like capitalism nothing more than a pure function.

Parataxis: the white space between two sentences stresses, which is nevertheless always there, also between words, even between letters: the *out of focus* of idle talk, the gutter, the irreducible Mallarméan mist which

renders even the seemingly most transparent text legible. The white space suggests a neutral medium for free signification, a substance of language. A non sequitur is an element from a foreign discourse, which stresses the white space as space, and problematizes the freedom for supra-sentential signification.

I start by withdrawing material, leaving the initiative to the sentences.

In general a word presupposes less often a discourse than a sentence. What discourse is presupposed by “dog”? We may think of several, but why would we? It is more probable that, when faced with the naked word, we think of its naked (dictionary) meaning, of its denotative signified. By means of two simple interventions we may also write the word as sentence:

Dog.

In no way this suggests the discourse from which this sentence originates, but in any case we're *presupposing* one. This is shown by questions like: “Whose dog? Who's a dog? What kind of dog?” Etc. (Sentences are question marks.) A sentence implies/is a microcosm—a subject, a verb, an object, and so on. Even an incomplete or ungrammatical sentence does so. My main fascination while writing this book is the worldly and social aspect of language, an aspect that often becomes invisible, or rather, transparent in narrativity—the stretching of sentences into stories. Narrativity organizes a new discourse and a new world, and places a sometimes all too dispersing relation of transparency in between. The conventional novel is the brothel of being. I do not intend to prohibit brothels, and I have certainly not intended to write an anti-novel (THIS IS A POEM), but I do consider narrativity (in general, in poetry, in the news, in daily life) to be *ontologically secondary* with regard to an immediate being in the world through sentences, also if the latter have been withdrawn from a narrative or otherwise externally structured discourse (which in that case would therefore be *chronologically primary*).

Naturally, two or more sentences are always in danger of telling stories or arguing, just like the world is always in danger of becoming an objective representation, opposed to us strangers. That is why need to wage war—against representation and against the interface, against interaction. AGAINST THE “READER.” To the extent that a sentence is worldly, writing is a condensed global war, and in so far as there is ultimately only one world and one open continuum of languages, it is a global civil war. Nice subject for an epic.

The elaboration of a singular problem—prose as the outside of poetry, the form of the novel as purely prosodic composition scheme—“expresses” the universal problem: capitalism as Idea of the world vs. poetry as language of an (im)possible community.

The paragraphs are blocks of rhythmically contracted social material. By choosing the sentence as the basic compositional component, an abstract whole may contain social sounds, without telling a story or showing an image. Composition is subrepresentative—a rhythmic, passive synthesis, or rather: a synthesis of syntheses. I never write large blocks of prose in one sitting, because there is no obvious organizational vector—plot, theme, conscience—outside the inherent qualities of the material itself. Usually I write down one sentence, sometimes two, but rarely more than three. Those sentences are usually placed in the text which I am editing at the time. In fact, there is no original composition, new chapters split off from chapters which became too long during the editing process. (Revision mainly consists of adding and inserting, displacing and dividing; only during the last phase, when the text has gained enough consistency, there may be subtraction to tighten the composition; each chapter needs a season of daily revision). This constant revision, accompanied by a continuous influx of collective background noise (to speak with Van Bastelaere⁷), makes every chapter a block condensed (“historical” and “personal”) time. The block itself is a-personal and a-historic; it is ontologically autonomous. If there is such a thing as a spirit of the times, I do not try to offer an image of it, but rather to cancel something of it by erecting a monument of its own excrement within

its own boundaries. Tuning and *dis-tuning*, “in de taal der neerslachtigen een eigen geluid doen klinken,”⁸ in other words, desiring in an Elysian way.

In this sense I have intended to be able to write a *political* poetry. The ultimate political poem is the epic, “the tale of the tribe.” I consider *N30* to be a prolegomenon to a future epic (of which it in the end will form a part a structural moment, as introduction-in-the-middle), an extended pile on top of an epic as narrative, a question of the tribe and question of its history. I was bothered by too much satire, too much bullshit. But: satire willy-nilly = the only justifiable satire. Against the abstract universalism of the market (“globalism”): concrete disgust, a positive way of saying “No.” Moreover, disgust is a specifically *total* attitude, which ultimately concerns the world as a whole. I hate this or that, but I am disgusted by EVERYTHING (when I am disgusted), and so it appears that satire is in fact related to the epic, in so far as it concerns society, the cosmos, history. Maybe it is no coincidence that the Dutch literary canon knows no great poet of disgust; what could be more fearful to us than society, the cosmos, and history? The T-tendency (T from Tollens⁹) clearly points into the direction of the small, friendly, ironic, melancholic, acquiescent, curious, and so on. The anti-political, anti-cosmic, anti-historical. (Why am I so philosophical? To scare away the Dutchies.) And most of all: the “poetical” (the pseudo-mysticism from the backyard).

Yes, the N in *N30* also stands for the Netherlands (just like 30 indicates the number of chapters). I was not in Seattle, I do not live in Iraq. But is not the whole world bleeding to death on Dutch paving stones? Let’s hope that we mowed away something with this total satire, also “in myself.” The arrogant stupidity that definitely thinks to know the essence of freedom (the free development of esthetic needs inside the void), that cannot take anything serious, only believes in the disciplined bestiality of the individual (“norms and values”) and the mere functioning of a social factory which finds no justification whatsoever outside its functioning (“get to work”)... Who knows.

A certain aimed destruction leaves grooves and craters, mapping out a next adventure. Pound's *periplum*: sailing while mapping the coasts. Immanent orientation. The terrain changes with the map, history changes with the poem.

Maps never merely organize the chaos, transcendent schemes imposed on a formless *Ding-an-sich*. They organize from within, surfing. But they are most of all routes back into the chaos or forward to paradise (final identity of chaos and paradise; Schlegel: "Nur diejenige Verworrenheit ist ein Chaos aus der eine Welt entspringen kann"¹⁰). A poem is not only a piece of history, it is also a flight from history. Maps *give chaos to the form of reality*, open escape routes, break through representations, make us shivery and dazed. Paradise is immanent to a fleeting desire.

History is the history of labor—this is Adam's curse—, and the poet works too:

*For to articulate sweet sounds together
Is to work harder than all these, and yet
Be thought an idler by the noisy set
Of bankers, school masters, and clergymen
The martyrs call the world*¹¹

But: the poet works in paradise. The paradox of the artwork, the work that is no work, the piece of history that cannot be reduced to History—this is explained by *The Space of Literature*, a virtual space, an autonomous rhythm, not outside, but in the midst of the noise, a piece of paradise in hell, a postcard from the vale of tears addressed to paradise, to X.

Political poetry means: a poetry that dares to think about itself, about its language and about its world and about the problematic relation between both, which *is* this relation as problem. A poetry that thinks at all, articulates its problem. It has nothing to do with journalism or morality or debate, let alone the law or the state. It has nothing to do with "criticism" if this means the replacement of incorrect representations by other, more correct

representations. It has something to do with ethics in the sense of learning to live. It has something to do with the community and the language of the community (whichever that may be) and the role of the poet regarding the community. It concerns justice without judgement or measure. In the end *the just word* is *just a word*, to paraphrase Godard: it is from a future that is unimaginable. It is no rational engagement, but an aversion against everything that obstructs life, and love for everything that is worthy of having been loved. The world is engaged with me, not the other way round. First Exodus, then Sinai. A desire does not start with an agenda. To answer the question whether I am really so naïve as to want to change the world: “We only want the world.” Justice is the world appealing to us to liberate it from all possible chains, from each organization and inequality, to *be* it, smooth, equal, under a clear sky—a desert and a people in a desert. That moment between Egypt and the Law. It is not a revolution, but the sky above the revolution. Poetry = the science of escape. There is no art that we already know.

The weakness of modernistic epic poetry seems to me to be the unwillingness to completely abandon narrative as a structural principle, in favor of a composition “around” or from an event. The *China Cantos* and Adams Cantos are the low point, and the *Pisan Cantos* the high point of Pound’s poetry. Two types of research: archival representation of the past vs. ontology of the present (which virtually presupposes the entire history). Presupposing an event means that it is impossible for the poet to stage his own absence, but in no way makes the work personal. An event is the unknown, the new invading into the business as usual, so also the personal. The question heading this research is not: “Who am I?” but “What is happening?”

The book is as little illegible as Mondrian’s work is invisible.

Form is of interest only to the extent that it empowers liberation.

Ron Silliman

So no formalism, but what it means to live in this world and to have a future in it.

I want something that holds together that's not smooth.

Bruce Andrews

*The past above, the future below
and the present pouring down: the roar,
the roar of the present, a speech—*

William Carlos Williams

*If my confreres wanted to write a work with all history in its maw, I
wished, from the beginning to start all over again, attempting to know
nothing but a will to create, and matter at hand.*

Ronald Johnson

—previously published in *Continent*, 2012

¹ “The easy thing/ that is difficult to make.” Bertold Brecht, *Lob des Kommunismus*. (All footnotes are the translator’s)

² Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock. Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press (1989), 75.

³ Mettes uses the word “Neerlandicus,” which refers to scholars of Dutch language and literature.

⁴ Dutch poet.

⁵ Gertrude Stein. “Composition as Explanation.” *A Stein Reader*. Ed. Ulla E. Dydo. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press (1993), 495-503.

⁶ Ezra Pound.

⁷ Flemish poet.

⁸ “Resounding an original sound in the language of the despondent.” A. Roland Holst, *De afpraak*.

⁹ Dutch poet.

¹⁰ “Only such a confusion is a chaos which can give rise to a world.”

¹¹ W.B. Yeats, “Adam’s Curse.”

from N30

Chapter 1

1999.

A day is a space too.

And another man, who had chained himself, had his ribs crushed, and a motor has driven over somebody's legs.

Dutch health care system spends ±145 million guilders per year on worriers.

A spiderweb vibrates as I pass by.

Randstad renovating.

She slaps her bag against her ass: "Hurry up!"

OPINION IS TRUE FRIENDSHIP

Your skin.

It doesn't express anything.

"But the use of the sword, that's what I learned, and you'll need nothing more for the moment."

Just try to interrogate a guy like that.

Gullit in Sierra Leone.

Codes silently lying all around.

But that's simply what belongs to "that it's just allowed": that sigh of "world" (a word expressing that the trees are now standing along the water like black men with white bags in their hair); that's nothing else right?

And you see how everything has to move, and first of all what cannot do so.

Without Elysium and without savings, barbarians lashing out, horny for an enemy, staring across the water, staring into the air—staring to get out of it.

“You’ve never showed me more than the mall,” she said.

All those “dreams” in the end—and now?

It was lying on the stairway, so I picked it up and took it upstairs.

*

Chapter 3

“You know what?”

Telecommunication. For love... I don’t really like that easy cultural pessimism, but... The holy city is on pilgrimage in the earthly bodies of the faithful until the time of the heavenly kingdom has come. The end of an exhausting autumn day behind the computer, my eyes filled with tears of fatigue. KITCHEN / INSTALLATION / SPECIALIST. Network integration. In the sun, stretched out on a sheet. (...)

I don’t believe what I’m reading, because I want to believe something else. An illusion? Suits me. There’s a variety of shapes and tastes... “So what?” you may think. 102 dalmatians can’t be wrong.

But I want *more*, dear...

A feel good movie. I’m smashing the burned body. So what? We continue to save the European civilization. What’s there to win? Plato *with* poets = Stalin *without* gulag? Ball against the crossbar. No wonder. She comes straight to her point. She’s standing in the kitchen eating an apple. (...) The godless Napoleon had used her as stable and wanted to have her taken down. “Our” Rutger Hauer. Ready or not here I come. Psst...are you also wearing a string? Nobody understands our desire. Cliffs breaking the waves and shattering the sunset. I used to be a real romantic (as a poet). A typical fantasy used to be the one in which I brutally raped mother and daughter Seaver from the sitcom *Growing Pains*. Nevertheless you only

contain bad words. Eyelashes. Automatic or manual? That your skin always in the afternoon. Integration. The air is empty. Too bad!

Hand in hand on their lonely way. Alaska!

*

Chapter 12

May 5, 2001 [10:00-10:30]

A dust cloud on a hill. Globe. Indian (British) (tie) / pope. Damascus. Rape. We're carrying the ayatollah's portrait through the streets. At the moment the girl is mostly suede jacket with white ribbons on her sleeves. A small explosion flares up/impact. Camouflage. Close up. We're analyzing the situation. He's dead right? Dead dead. Dead. Everything without, these, and only with the body. Indices signal death. Dollar bills are printed in factories. Holes. Light patch. Globe in a box. Microphone. What's the situation? Grey impact on a green hill (field?). The water is blue. He has no lips. Interns on the background with skirts that are too long. This is an example of a sonnet. An Islamic woman pushes against the door of an electronics shop. Arrows (percentages (prices)). Is this what awaits the American? Touch screen interface. The word, an island, can only be a sign in that situation. We pull up a chair, join in the fun. On the shelves only books about computers. One glance in the distance is enough to lighten up a luna park in the distance. She's really desperate, especially when she laughs. Click. Ah. Next. And now it's raining, but that's ok. Yellow stains sliding over the south. Shallow caves light: clothes, boots, electrical equipment. 45. 22:10. Nothing gives you the right to eat more than people starving to death. The Hague. Slam dunk. Traffic light. Two H's, one L (standing for the L (little prick)). We're happy to say something. Clouds, small suns, temperatures, cities. The truth is never an excuse. Yellow. Yellow. Green. Yellow. Yellow. Yellow. Yellow. Green. Green. Yellow. Will you email me? Skeleton: "No." Ex-nerds in brand-new and brightly red sport cars. \$\$\$\$. I

love. Shihab. Hooves in the sand. Skinny senior with over-sized sunglasses; old jockey (cap, trophy) smiling in slow motion. And there I am again, flashback, crying with my head in between my hands. Sometimes I've got the feeling that cannibals. Eyes: blue. Cancer. Why would I wait until tomorrow? Golden beams protruding from the lifted/lit earth.

May, 2001 [11:30-12:45]

You'll remember this for the rest of your life. Graphs, diagrams. Bu\$ine\$\$\$. Blue shirt, white collar, no neck (porn star). A name lightens up. I'm hysteric. Will you join us? Letters falling in their words. Fingers set up a tent and start to dance. Young entrepreneurs from poor neighborhoods (read: black) guided by Microsoft. Kinda makes me happy, that sort of kitsch. A sense of exhaustion/impotence to see anything but the present. (...) Wouldn't you like to? Orange explosion on an industrial zone. YOU'RE DOING THIS FOR AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. Would you. A familiar face. Clouds and blossom. Sunflowers. Supermodels. Mountainous area in a rectangle: shades of brown, from dark to beige, more green toward the south. Tents and next to it (it's all a blur) people. Plane. Stadium. Geometrical block of people. No, I ain't crying. I don't speak no more. I just want. Quote + photo. (Positive:) screaming crowd. Three-piece suit, seen from the back, before entering the arena. On the back: "Daddy abused me." Oh, bummer. State of emergency has been declared and everyone has to cooperate. She's cut her wrists. What we do know (...) is that there's never been a unique word, an imperative name, nor will there ever be. [Click here for work that fits you.] Barefooted children are watching it (coherent pieces revelation of what's lying below). Who knows how she's changed during those two years. "Everything used to be better" + sigh. And here we are. An empty field of parquet. A city lying behind it. Explosion. Blue. A rain drop falling in my coffee.

May 5, 2001 [14:30-15:30]

A young Arafat on video speaking with raised finger. "I'm calling from my convertible." Names on walls, victims, numbers... Tourists. Yellow. Yellow.

“Your own child! Really, what kind of human are you?” I don’t want to hear it no more. A woman jumping out of the water in a yellow bikini against a background of fireworks and the Cheops pyramid. Thy sorrow shall become good fortune, thy complaints laudation. All planets will float and wander. Wo die Welt zum Bild wird, kommt das System (...) zur Herrschaft. It is something, but is it?

May 5, 2001 [18:30-19:00]

Iris. Leaves. NASDAQ. Open / and white and. For the one who’s doing nothing, just waiting. (...) NO DEFEAT is made entirely up of defeat—since / the world it opens is always a place / formerly / unsuspected. October 2002. “Jeroen, I’m leaving for the cemetery, byeeee.” The rise of the middle class. My entire oeuvre is an ode to the. My entire head is a fight against the. God always demands what you cannot sacrifice. You may take that the easy way, but... “The state hasn’t made us, but we make the state” (Hitler). A stork exits the elevator. Skeletons of. Moscow. Helsinki. Palermo. Paris.

*

Chapter 30

Like your paradises: nothing.

United Desire, as only remaining superpower. And even though the sea is now calmer and the wind is blowing pleasantly in my face... Heart! Who determines whether a tradition is “alive”? The yellow leaf or the white branch? Mars. This sentence is a typical example. Most Dutch people are happy. No consolation. When I see a girl sitting at a table with a book, a notepad, a pen, a bottle of mineral water, her hand writing in the light—then for me that’s one thing. “Presents,” “poetry,” “classics.” We are what we cannot make from ourselves. “Left”: mendicant orders, missionaries. Saint-Just: “A republic is founded on the destruction of its enemies.” She crosses

the street with a banana peel between her fingers. (...) We chose our own wardens, torturers, it was us who called all this insanity upon ourselves, we created this nightmare... But “no”? Girl (just like a beach ball) talking rapid Spanish (Portuguese?) in a mobile phone. Do I have a chance now that her boyfriend is getting bold? CLIO, horny bitch. What else do you want? An old woman, between the doors of the C1000, is suddenly unable to go on; her husband stretches out his hand, speaking a few encouraging words. Selection from. Der Führer schenkt den Juden ein Stadt. How can it reach us if we haven't been reached already somehow? It doesn't “speak.” No problem. Each word she uses is a small miracle, as if she doesn't belong to it, to language, but wanders around there with a pocket light looking for the exit; she's never desperate (maybe a little nervous), lighting up heavy words from inside. But indeed, we're free. But the predicate is not an attribute, but an event, and the subject is not a subject, but a shell. That's why also samurai, knights, and warriors raised the blossom as emblem: they knew how to die. Locked up in a baby carriage with a McDonald's balloon. Blue helicopter, the blue sky. Whether you want to refer? The point is. How / Motherfucker can I sing a sad song / When I remember Zion? You'll feel so miserable and worthless that you think: “If only I were dead!” or: “Just put an end to it!”

“So you're an economist?”

Her card—two little birds building a nest, her handwriting shaking—is still on the mantelpiece.

Guevara: “No, a communist.”

A straw fire, such was our life: rapidly it flared up, rapidly it passed. I'm fleeing, coming from nowhere. (...) Eazy-E drinking coffee with the American president. If I'd scream, would that be an event? Drown it: the cleaner it will rise up from the depths.

No!

The night, so fast... As if there's something *opened up* in that face. Come on, we may not curse life. He shows me his methadone: “If you drink that all at once, you'll die instantly.” The last one dictates how we should behave to deserve happiness. One shine / above the earth.

“I want to go to Bosnia,” I said bluntly. I don’t even know the name of the current mayor.

Let’s despise our success!

“There is no future; *this* is the future. Hope is a weakness that we have overcome. We have found happiness!”

Sun. Sushi. Volvo.

I feel like a bomb about to explode at any moment. Makes a difference for the reconstruction right? The decor moves forward. Daughter of Nereus, you nymphs of the sea, and you Thetis, you should have kept his tired head above the waves! Alas! This sentence has been written wearing a green cap. I receive my orders from the future. A frog jumps into it. Her husband has turned the Intifada, which he follows daily on CCN, into his hobby, “to forget that he doesn’t have his driver’s license yet.” Suddenly the sun slides over the crosswalk. Her (his?) foot is playing with the slipper under the table. Is this how I’m writing this book now? I’m not a fellow man. I hate you and I want to hurt you. These are my people. Their screaming doesn’t rise above the constantly wailing sirens which we have learned to ignore. My whole body became warm and suddenly started to tremble. Unfortunate is he who is standing on the threshold of the most beautiful time, but awaits a better one. Arafat’s “removal” is contrary to American interests. Jeep drives into boy. What you can do alone, you should do alone. A food gift from the people of the United States of America.

Two seagulls.

[...]

LESEGO RAMPOLOKENG

from AFTER THE ARMAGEDDON

Promiscuity in the Hand of Plenty makes my Land Empty.
The New Radical a mid-scream giggle.
Anaemic-comical prestige of a political gaming temple.
ruckus-pocus. bogus siege of the counterfeit public.
punters & smotherers.

The audience is the performance
in the Necropolis the meaning's absence
what's left is dead ambience
thrust & counter-thrust of celebrant argument
among the throbbing members of parliament
as a nation in decomposition celebrates its constitution
the power-junkie jackals improvise catcalls the hyenas heckles
the global funeral parlour is ecstatic
Coroner & embalmer collect their trinkets
Among the probers rank wielders of crow-bars for the whine-miners.
The Pawn-Fabricator & the Porn-czar June '76 Winter-mediate.
Cold Cut the prance-hall pimp is the dead-beat selector.
The commentator is hooked up to a respirator
aka arse-spiriter.
At Congress of the lame & the slack.
each ambitious one fashions himself a punnany-splitter
Bowels unrelievable
the dominance impulse in the mannikin
witness the rule of Sad Sack over Roly-Poly
sprung from an eye-pod
they see same sight uniform vision
no debate but dual transmissions of static

sex-scavengers in the ruins of our ideals
dried up as donor funding
they flip loins
witch cum up tails
david-slugs fall apart in the second drumming
as future mourners start humming from here to the mosquito-coast

*

*Preach liberation theology in the face of race-hate & leave space on the
collection-plate
for the severed head of state*
they call it street knowledge,
it washes out of the township drains to flood the suburban's
Comes the Rapper with the Sewer Flow
To battle the hell-free / Belfry Saints
The city council shut off the water mains
He suffers a fatal stroke on the tongue
(diagnosis : dehydrated rhymes)
Columbus & Christian army ships sail on beyond the 21st century
To butt-plug anuses
Yet 'establish who the most famous is'
is the model poet's concern
Both the safe & the grave reward the trivial bard
Ruffle from the banknotes & shudders from the corpses
as raffles give us our spokespersons

what aspect reflects memory selects.
Chainchoker & Mulebrainpoker.
Take your spatter-stammer & flatter-hammer verbiage.
to where *fashionista & trendoid* compare adenoids.
Capital contrivance is to don a Birth-mask.
when death sentences serve a six and nine function

fly-swap they switch crotches like Burroughs' fiction
sky-map the roach's future is in the stars...
nigger gets there via the kitchen
spy-trap fantasies govern now arses are torches
the trespasser carries the perimeters
'everybody's property is what i possess'
 says the ruling order as it petrifies
 defines what it denies refines the lies
desecrate the ground between command & subordination
 & ja-baas is denigrated...subservience is luxurious
 as the boulder erodes it eats away at Sisyphus
as it becomes a pebble Sissy Fuss shrinks down to Little People
 & those are staple-diet for Missus Maple
 So is the Nation-Creation fable
The bill withers in the bio-chemical gore-fest
 garbage crucial mime
 walk across the Bridge over the *River Naai*.
 The horn mill grinds out praise-singers, crap gunners,
 soul invasion panty-liners to cover the yearn-marks
 of snigger-niggers
 With Dues to slay of those who overstay their hell-cum
 The Articulate Run it Parallel to Radiation –
 Spew it north quick we have views to subdue
 Subsume the yielding ideal
 foreign exchange spiritual eruption into material possession
abstraction subjection to laws of concrete ordain
 desperate jaws on a domesticated course
 rusticate maws to suppurated sores
 Father Nation, Lion & Tiger got manicures
 & climbed up bill-boards
To necklace the gods to repentance
 What ethics in advertisement?...
Upward mobility says :

'Between shadow & rubbish-heap I create my own dawn
Became Slime Merchant for the toxic wasted
 in the chief executive office...watch me float ether-bound
& catch the smell on the rebound'
Mandela in the media is product placement
The hottest sale is of complacence
 We pitch it at the Diddle Class

—from *Head of Fire*, Deep South, 2012

HEATHER FULLER

from Dick Cheney's Heart: A Memoir

Chapter 2

the heart that jumps the track
is a lesson in walking against traffic

the door lady on Belair Road says speed is in this season
for your near-miss little constitutional

shotgun passenger delays gratification
mowing down the dirtbike undertow

no one said recovery was glamorous
and so we idled

*

pop quiz: who said
I am a very dangerous man.

Charles Manson or Dick Cheney?

in off-the-grid tribunals blood has its day
for the man with no pulse who lives centrifugal
crashing against inner chambers of

puppet hearts
prisons with no boundaries

DNRs for losers

*

when the pit bulldog turned up
the DNA of a songbird

when a titer derailed an extradition

when Roland Park de-NIMBYed

your broken heart stopped
being a pathology

we learned to hold our liquor

Chapter 3

I woke up on the day of the transplant and

I wanted full disclosure on drones

I wanted cats to stop fucking

I wanted more income disparity at the clinic

I wanted an all-drug option (see Rod Smith, 'Poem')

I wanted to form a girl band with Tina Lynne & Phyllis

I wanted to de-bedazzle

I wanted to put the Fuller in Fullerton

I wanted more sex and less sext

I wanted more aphids

I wanted back-to-back reruns of *Oz*

I wanted to dogear ketamine in the Merck Manual

I wanted everybody to shut up about cicadas

and cherry blossoms

and beavers

I wanted a nonrefundable free pass

I wanted the war on drugs to stop at home [my home] (*ibid.*)

I wanted to like the Krispy Kreme stock ticker

I wanted to feed the badger

I wanted

...

I wanted to see a man about a heart

Chapter 4

your broken heart is a syncopated ride with
everyone's favorite reckless driver

which is to say no one's and have something left over
for roadside transgressions

the baby arsonists who light up stray pets and brothers
have more skeletons fossilized into vacant lot dreamtime
than the jury has hangups

which is to say justice must be served
on your own damn time

*

when I say ethernet I mean literally
there was a net of ether
drifting us to the big sleep undercover

we triaged the meth lab dogs in the open air

someone named the puppies after lipsticks
Ruby
Scarlet
Poppy

I asked my neighbor for his conspiracy
he said it was a long story but
it started with the foreman sliced in half
at Bethlehem Steel

then shutdown

and picket
scabs in the lifeline

docks idling on the union man's clock

*

the child grounded for roleplaying Omar
lifting jumbo pack of sunflower seeds
Ravens cap
box of Bic lighters

then redistributing along Lanvale

they called him bad for business

I said no
the kid has heart

Chapter 5

why do I have to be such a Dick?

the churchpeople simply wanted a moment
and maybe another prayer lifted up
cannot confuse us further

Michael Vick took his free pass and
read from a script about healing

around the same time the stink bug
became the new cucaracha

my neighbor asked if I could move my stinking motion sensor
so it would stop lighting up her stinking driveway
it was invading her stinking privacy

I took my sweet damn time it's true

*

the surgeon squares the heart to
the left sternal border

Chris bodyblocked a car to save a kitten
rotator cuff unspiraling

four muscles four tendons four nerves
levitate the arm to praise position

so much can go wrong in the crosshairs
meshes sinuses it's extraordinary
we talk to god at all

Chapter 6

my nurse practitioner told me a side effect
could be unusual thoughts

I said well that would be different

so many ways to say sorry
to a friend with birdshot in his heart

Dick Cheney [shooter] is my Stockholm
and my Mardi Gras

but what happened in Kenedy County didn't stay
in Kenedy County

*

the note on the porch was brief but unequivocal
*I think we messed up by putting the birds
back in the nest. Please meet me at the tree.
P.S. Can I hold a 20?*

there's no reason why a man with open heart
can't see another day

so many ways to say sorry

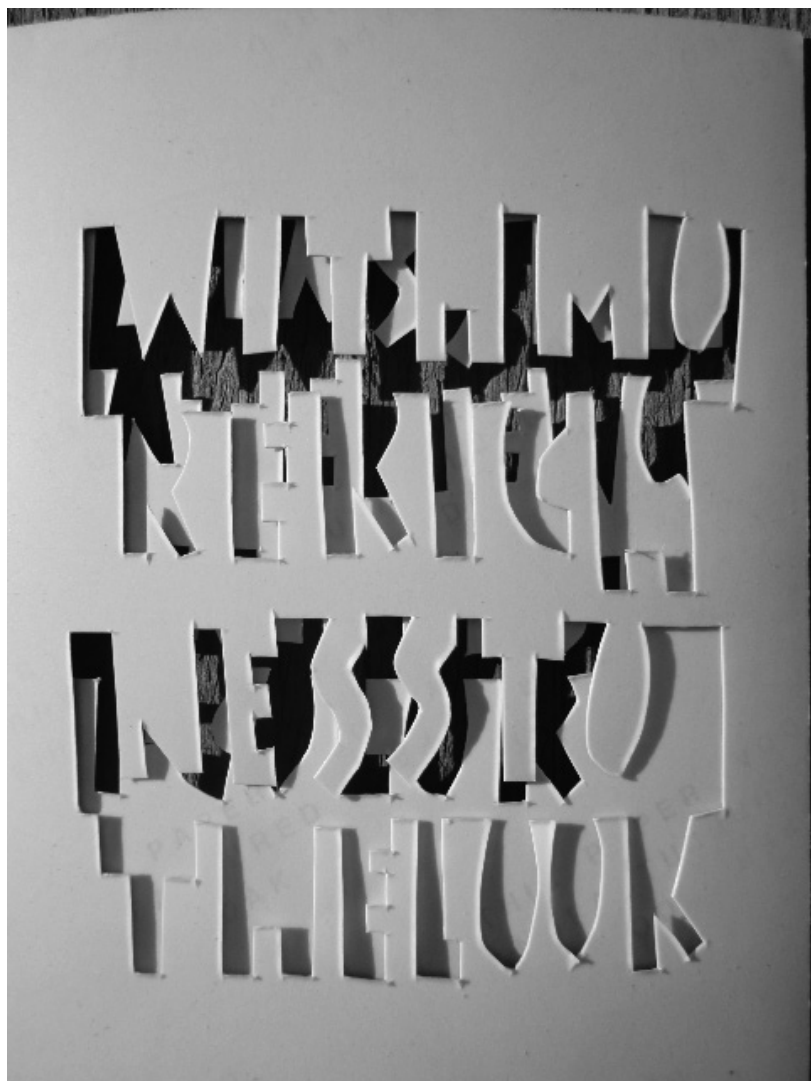
I watch birds
livestock for subtlety
signs patterns

bats for cross-pollination
crows for bioburden
error calculus in the food stream

so many ways to say sorry

NATHAN CORDERO

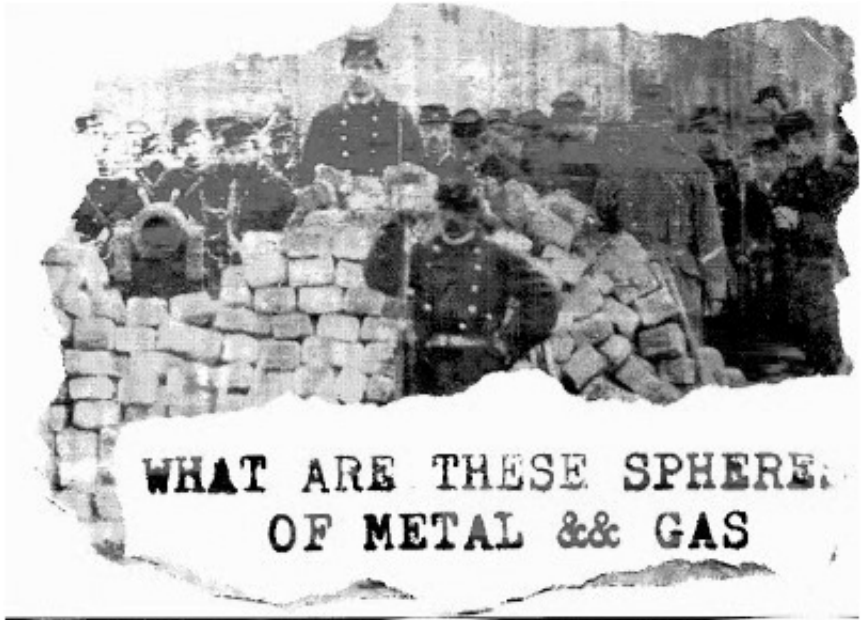












UNRULY BRITANNIA

(COLLAGE BY SEAN BONNEY)

NAT RAHA

the modern legal system is not for saving you
in absolute solidarity with CeCe McDonald

limit for static
change in assignment,
registered to throes of bureaucracy: that
protected characteristics
cf. status quo conservational society inc.,
newsprint mythology
where privilege of a/recognisable common sex is
unrecognised as privilege.
whose being
does legislation represent?

whose disclosure to
the bounds
white classed liberalism,
the false grails of the free in ties
& employment, beside the colour of the
same in employment
difference slated to 'the same as but',
with fear or something---; reproducing
the scene of happily //-til she
blood cut a fascist with her labour tools,
state oriented against intervention, of the necessity
to exist still in the AM,// 'cept intervention
the sanction
of good

/ of socially-necessary incarcerated/ dear
CeCe speak / feeling beside the 'can'
/ not by list of our
trans* collective global loss / break
the pillars / amnesiac /
burying the ribbon & its referents
/ deviance struck off the // official
history of civil rights according us freed
compelled through the prohibition

[August 2013]

THE MARRIAGE OF GEORGE OSBORNE & IAIN DUNCAN-SMITH (epithalamion)

“George Osborne, god of love, we have spurned beauty –” ~ Sean Bonney

conservative love = the absolute colonisation
of the social senses.
political sedation
bestows the being-subject onto partial us,
impelled stakeholders. queer life privatised
in a moment of
subcultural needs / surplus on the
back of affective provision, where our
qualitative use of the marriage-form
is legitimate only
through its exchange-yield;
where our possible love is depoliticised
as multicultural inclusivity girded from
bone capital/
where LG(bt__) is a series of summerskills linear
w/ new norms i.e. acronym sold to close down
content / we extrapolated to financed change
that negates us / bodies known through markings for
happiness-as-refugee in the fetish trait,
between the vow-thing & the
happily ever consumed ;
there is no talk
of fucking here.
the marriage-form
weds economic selfhood
freshly denies racial / gendered

/ sexual / disabled / unemployed abject,
 negated from perspectives as scrounger—
 i.e. get married or get deported;
 the crowd taught to only sight normal/other:
 the congregation is a pride parading to social conformity
 / g.a.p.-ad happily sold not to stitch
 / comprehensively spent regulate / the cruelty corporate
 liberal gay optimism inflicts on under-subjects
 / the happy couple formal neoliberalized
 through active material hate;
 no compare to material inequality, 1/4
 homeless youths still queer, of trans* subjects
 sutured to disclosure in the name of right:
 our gendered beingness extra-legal, of the
 strictured possibility within administered
 thought & the felt / boundary
 stray to political lockout / insufficient investment /
 capital-legit sociality negates the necessary of divergence.

GEORGE: lo! the wishèd day is come: we
 announce the latest action to secure recovery;
 that shall pinkwash the gays to usury of long delight:
 that we value marriage *socially* and *financially* &
 doe ye to usury of joy & privatised sexual pleasure sing,
 on the back of material cleansing to which all
 must answer with all its social consequences, & its
 ring that I give to you, Iain, as a symbol of my love,
 choosing to bestow austerity with you.

all gays with garlands goodly well, buy
 this union
 as image, public-corporate for my fayre love,
 of wealth and endless things
 & goodly *all* agree with sweet consent, to this

commodity celebration of coupled norm. hark!
how the cheerful gays chant of marriage's praise,
their recuperation in this world, fundamentally fair

fair Austerity! shew forth thy vicious ray
and let thy lifull heat fervent be,
for burning the scrounger beings &
welfare state, with fresh lusty-hed, go
to the bowre of my beloved love; we enforce
on our public three principles: growth, reform
and sick fairness— ascending british enterprise
& economic culture it needs

to win the global
race in honour of capitalism; making sure we
are all in it together;

now is my unending love all ready forth to come
in unbroken circulation: let this day, like all,
be myne; let all the rest bequeathed to you, Capital;
the which the base affections doe obey,
and yield their services unto your will;
once seene your celestial, unrevealed pleasures,
wrought by your own hand, then all
do wonder, and its praises sing:
spread thy broad wing over my love and me,
and in thy sable mantle us enwrap,
from fear of crises let no dread disquiet once
annoy the safety of our privilege; pour
your blessing on us plenteously, & your
happy influence upon us reign—
that we may raise a large surplus
through the earth that you do long purchase
saturated with market-grown happiness

DAVID CAMERON: bless O Capital, that
Iain and George bequeath, may they ever
abide in thy transformations, together
in privileged unity, love, and happiness, amen.

GEORGE: Iain, conjunct to all desired lending, I
join our lives to this economic plan, of a
downsized state, minor democratic, of private needs
material, emotional, political, to be
its partner in life. to honour you &
not let the poor leech upon us through their sickness
& in health, nor other undeserving subjects:
migrants with their mischievous, numerous child
they shall pay £3000 to enter our empire;
NOR the disabled, whose need we sense not;
let no lamenting queers, nor the dolefull jobless,
pour foule horror on the pleasures that thee, Capital,
wrought, honest and faithful they must turn up
with a CV and look for work & only after the seventh
day shall they receive the minimum amount of money
the law requires for life;
& the number of persons working for our public, esp.
women & northern folk, shall fall
by 144,000 in our next years of happiness & health
& we are to remove automatic pay rises simply
for time served to this public & these
are consequences of public investment; & those
who do not utter thoughts in our language must speak
it or we shall not pay them.
plebs! go to your wonted labours this day
is expensive; we plague thee
with the greatest unfairness
& we dub this progressive government

w/ the pledge to plague thee today,
tomorrow, and always.

IAIN: & George! my love, of applecheeks which the
banks hath corroded, I promise to join my life to your
counter-terrorism budget, that we may cut Muslims
from our biggest society, & having severed the equality
& human rights commission budget by 76% our love shall
grow sustainable enterprise through others' sickness
and in health, especially the disabled
who shall be reformed back to work through common
personal independence payments & quantitative outsourced
health checks which shall eliminate tens of thousands of
pounds/persons; & we shall universalise them
& the underserving poor to workfair for 30hrs pittance,
& end all legal aid to the austere crises'd ordinary subject
whose demolished life quality will forever be
their responsibility
& cut £11.5bn from our public's tax purse that
shall disporportionately free the ourselves
& the richest, who have already purchased
on credit the marriage commodity here
in the city of westminster, its 20 year ad campaign:
abject parody / commodity-form equality, a fused
community of enforced economic interests
rightfully into which
all homos may crawl, beauty bestowed
from democracy corp., through these difficult times
of happiness and sorrow, all the rest of their lives.

GEORGE: my right honourable love
arysing forth to run their mighty race, clad all in white
some angell Iain had beene. he has

comprehensively won the national debate about
welfare, his balding head alike melted tight
currency, vacant eyes debase the poor, countenance
enraged that they

thieve his handouts, fayre man
garnisht w/ privilege's beauty! glorious w/ corporate love!
now available as rights-based sacrosanct
ceremonies that it may produce & sell

such endless matrimony
DAVID: why blush ye, ministerial loves, at its exchange-value
give to me

your hand in its pledge
never had men more joy then this///

in newsprint *defenders of marriage say the darnest things*, yet
their fantasies are negatively realised as our
impoverished everyday. NO PARTIES. NO PEACE.
QUEERS: PRIDE IS NOT OURS. ORGANISE.
FIGHT BACK. ACT UP.

SCREW NEOLIBERATION:
START A REVOLUTION.

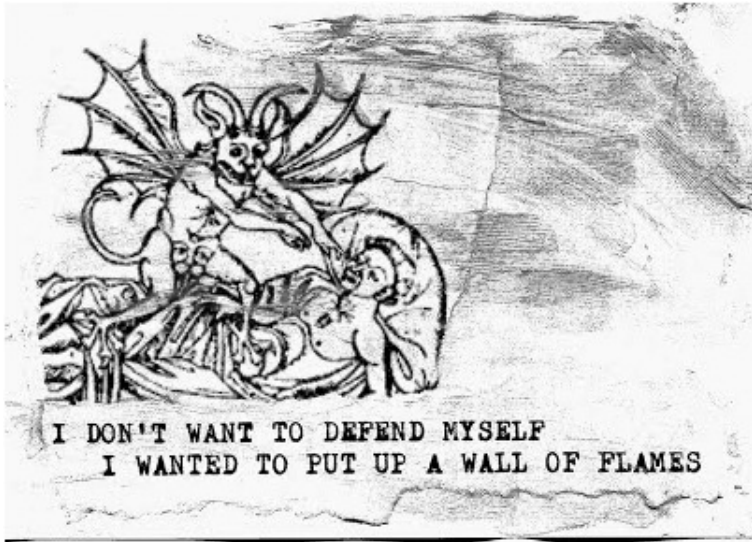
[June 2013]

SEAN BONNEY

Letter on Work and Harmony

I've been getting up early every morning, opening the curtains and going back to bed. There have been rumours of anti-unemployed hit squads going around, and I don't want some fucker with a payslip lobbing things through my window. Especially not when I'm asleep. Though I don't expect to be able to fool them for long - my recent research involves an intense study of certain individual notes played on Cecil Taylor's 1966 album *Unit Structures*, and so obviously, once I've managed to isolate them, I have to listen to these notes over and over again, at very high volume. Someone from the Jobcentre is bound to hear them eventually and then, even though I'm not claiming benefits, my number will, as they say, be up. Taylor seems to claim, in the poem printed on the back of the album, that each note contains within it the compressed data of specific historical trajectories, and that the combinations of notes form a kind of chain gang, a kind of musical analysis of bourgeois history as a network of cultural and economic unfreedom. Obviously, I've had to filter this idea through my own position: a stereotypical amalgam of unwork, sarcasm, hunger and a spiteful radius of pure fear. I guess that radius could be taken as the negation of each of Taylor's notes, but I'm not sure: it is, at least, representative of each of the perfectly circular hours I am expected to be able to sell so as to carry on being able to live. Labour power, yeh. All of that disgusting 19th Century horseshit. The type of shit that Taylor appears to be contesting with each note that he plays. As if each note could, magnetically, pull everything that any specific hour absolutely is not right into the centre of that hour, producing a kind of negative half-life where the time-zones selected by the Jobcentre as representative of the entirety of human life are damaged irrevocably. That's nothing to be celebrated, though. There's no reason to think that each work-hour will not expand infinitely, or equally, that it might close down permanently, with us inside it, carrying out some

interminable task. What that task is could be anything, it doesn't matter, because the basic mechanism is always the same, and it involves injecting some kind of innovative emulsion into each of those hours transforming each one into a bright, exciting and endlessly identical disk of bituminous resin. Obviously, what is truly foul is what that resin actually contains, and what it consists of. It's complicated. The content of each hour is fixed, yeh, but at the same time absolutely evacuated. Where does it go? Well, it materialises elsewhere, usually in the form of a set of right-wing gangsters who would try and sell those work-hours back to you in the form of, well, CDs, DVDs, food, etc. Everything, really, including the notes that Cecil Taylor plays. Locked up in cut-price CDs, or over-priced concert tickets for the Royal Festival Hall, each note he plays becomes a gated community which we are locked outside of, and the aforementioned right-wing gangsters - no matter that they are incapable of understanding Taylor's music, and in any case are indifferent to it - are happily and obliviously locked inside. Eating all of the food on the planet, which, obviously enough includes you and me. That is, every day we are eaten, bones and all, only to be re-formed in our sleep, and the next day the same process happens all over again. Prometheus, yeh? Hang on a minute, there's something happening on the street outside, I'm just gonna have to check what it is. One of those stupid parades that happens every six months or so, I imagine. One of those insipid celebrations of our absolute invisibility. Christ, I feel like I'm being crushed, like in one of those medieval woodcuts, or one of those fantastic B Movies they used to show on the TV late at night years ago. Parades. The undead. Chain gangs. BANG. "Britain keeps plunging back in time as yet another plank of the welfare state is removed" BANG our bosses emerge from future time zones and occupy our bodies which have in any case long been mummified into stock indices and spot values BANG rogue fucking planets BANG I take the fact that Iain Duncan-Smith continues to be alive as a personal insult, ok BANG every morning he is still alive BANG BANG BANG. I think I might be getting off the point. In any case, somewhere or other I read an interview with Cecil Taylor, and he said he didn't play notes, he played alphabets. That changes things. Fuck workfare.



(Louise Michel)

Letter Against Ritual

So I guess by now you'll have recovered from the voodoo routines at St Paul's. Guess it's nice that we won't have to pronounce the syllables Margaret Thatcher again. It all seems very distant now, like when you've been up for four nights, finally get some sleep, and then you're sitting there drinking a cup of coffee trying to remember what the hell you've been up to. You still know that feeling? You'd better. Anyway, the thing I remember most clearly is Glenda Jackson's speech in parliament, when all the rest of them were wittering on about Thatcher and God and the entire fucking cosmos and there was Jackson laying out a few home truths. But really, it's a measure of the weirdness of those few days how fearless that speech seemed: and, obviously, a measure of the weirdness that it actually was some kind of act of bravery. Tho the best bit was

when the anonymous Tory MP started wailing “I can’t stand it” in the middle of it. Like, that’s right, motherfucker. Anyway, so I listened to Jackson’s speech on YouTube a few times, and then I went and checked her voting record in parliament - bit of a letdown, yeh. Abstained on the workfare vote, yeh. So that’s her, she can fuck off. She made a much better speech back in 1966, I think it was, playing Charlotte Corday in the film of Peter Weiss’ “Marat-Sade” - I guess you remember it, she’s up at the top of a ladder, going off her head, and screaming something along the lines of “what is this city, what is this thing they’re dragging through the streets?”. Christ, if she’d done that in parliament, I might have rethought my relationship with electoral politics. Well, maybe not. But seriously, what was that thing they were dragging through the streets on April 17th, or whatever day it was. Through that silenced, terrified city. I thought of Thatcher as some kind of rancid projectile, and they were firing her back into time, and the reverberations from wherever it was she landed, probably some time in around 1946, were clearly a more-or-less successful attempt to erase everything that wasn’t in a dull, harmonic agreement with whatever it is those razorhead vampire suckworms in parliament are actually trying to do with us. Firing us into some kind of future constructed on absolute fear. Or that future is a victorious vacuum, a hellish rotating disc of gratuitous blades, and they are speaking to you, those blades, and what they are saying is this: “one day you will be unemployed, one day you will be homeless, one day you will become one of the invisible, and monsters will suck whatever flesh remains on your cancelled bones”. They’re not kidding. And the grotesque and craggy rhythms of those monsters are already in our throats, right now. In our throats, our mouths, the cracked centre of our language, fascist syllables, sharp barking. You know I’m not exaggerating. What they’re planning is nothing small. We’re talking about thousands of years, their claws extending into the past and into the future. A geometrical city of forced dogs, glycerin waves, gelignite. And what a strange, negative expression of the scandalous joy we were all feeling, at the death-parties, pissed out of our heads in Brixton, in Trafalgar Square, all of those site of ancient disturbances suddenly blasted wide apart. A pack of Victorian ghosts. Nights of bleeding and electricity. Boiling gin and police-lines. White phosphorous. Memories. It was like we were a blister on the law. Inmates. Fancy-dress jacobins. Jesters. And yes. Every single one of us was well aware that we hadn’t won anything, that her legacy “still

lived on”, and whatever other sanctimonious spittle was being coughed up by liberal shitheads in the Guardian and on Facebook. That wasn’t the point. It was horrible. Deliberately so. Like the plague-feast in *Nosferatu*. I loved it. I had two bottles of champagne, a handful of pills and a massive cigar, it was great. I walked home and I wanted to spray-paint “Never Work” on the wall of every Jobcentre I passed. That’s right, I’m a sentimental motherfucker when I’m out of my head. But no, already that foul, virtuous fear was sinking back into me, taking possession of my every step. I was thinking about Blanqui, right at the end of his life, sitting in his prison cell, knowing full well that what he was writing he was going to be writing for ever, that he would always be wearing the clothes he was wearing, that he would always be sitting there, that his circumstances would never, ever change. How he couldn’t tell the difference between his prison cell and the entire cluster of universes. How the stars were nothing but apocalypse routines, the constellations negative barricades. I was thinking about the work-ethic, how it’s evoked obsessively, like an enemy ritual, some kind of barbaric, aristocratic superstition. About zero-hours contracts, anti-magnetic nebulae sucking the working day inside out. Negative-hours. Gruel shovelled into all the spinning pits of past and future centuries, spellbound in absolute gravity, an invisibility blocking every pavement I was walking down. I wanted to cry. In fact I think I did. Actually, no. I was laughing my head off. A grotesque, medieval cackle. No despair, just defiance and contempt. Ancient disturbances. Ghost towns and marching bands. Invisible factories. Nostalgia crackling into pain and pure noise. No sleep. No dreams. An endless, undifferentiated regime of ersatz work. All of us boiled down into some stupid, Tory alarm clock. A ringing so loud we can no longer even hear it. But whatever. It seems pretty obvious we should adopt the Thatcher death-day as some kind of workers holiday. Actually, scratch that, let’s just celebrate it every day, for ever and ever, like a ring of plague-sores, botulism and roses. A barbaric carnival of rotten gold and infinite vowels. Sorcery. Rabies. You know what I mean? I hope so. Anyway, things have been pretty quiet since then. I’ve been thinking about paying you a visit. Oh shit.



YOU WON'T GO TO HEAVEN
 YOU WON'T GO TO HELL
 YOU'LL REMAIN IN YOUR GRAVE
 WITH THE STENCH & THE SMELL

(LARRY, LARRY)



WHELED AND THEY BECOME SUDDENLY AWARE OF
 THEIR ENVIRONMENT. THIS DISCOVERY AROUSES
 IN THEM AN IMMENSE ANGER AND AN UNCONTROLLABLE
 DESIRE FOR REVENGE. THEY HURL THEMSELVES ON
 THEIR MASTERS KILL HIM, THEN GO OFF IN SEARCH
 OF THEIR GRAVES)))

Letter Against the Firmament

I haven't written to you for a while, I know. There's not been much to write about, to be honest, apart from the recurrence of a few elementary social equations. Here's just one, to be going on with - (1) the forced removal of the homeless and benefit claimants from commercial zones (2) the subliminal encouragement of suicide for everyone with less than twenty pounds in their pocket (3) random police checks, arbitrary incarceration, racial profiling. If you take any one of those elements, or any one combination of same, and turn it inside out, the results will be all too simple: one royal birth, one state funeral, pageants, olympic panegyrics, etc etc etc, all expressed via the square root of silence, fast acquiescence and bewilderment. I thought, this morning, that I might be able to put all this together for you, as some kind of wondrous mathematics, a monumental calculus, but I can't get it to fit. It keeps coming out more like an oracular scattering of starling bones, of meat and shrieking larks, an extrasolar dog world made up of three parts rat nationalism divided by the given names of every human being who has died in police custody since the riots. Their names, all paid for with the collective revenue the government has collected from the manufacture, sale and distribution of third degree burns, multiple organ failure, and tiny droplets of phosphoric acid. And that's just the piss-stained surface, yeh. Pretty simple. Manage to boil it down into an infinitely dense, attractively coloured pill and you too can imagine that all of this is just a golden swarm of dragonflies and pretty moths, and not merely an injection of rabies into the group mind of every well-meaning liberal in this entire town. And you ask me why I don't write poetry. As if a metaphor could actually be a working hypothesis, and not just a cluster of more-or-less decorative alibis. I can't do it. I haven't slept since Thatcher. Curses on the midnight hag.

I think I'm becoming slightly unwell. I've developed a real fear of the upstairs neighbours. Every morning they emit a foul stench of bitumen and bitter, moral superiority as they stomp through the corridor on their way to work. A while ago I told you I rarely leave the house, now I can't, they've spun a web of 9 to 5 self-worth across the door, a claim on the law, moebius claws.

I'm trapped. I keep the curtains closed. Don't answer the phone. Panic when the mail's delivered. I don't know if this is normal behaviour, if anyone else feels the city as a network of claws and teeth, an idiot's hospital, a system of closed cameras and traffic. I'm probably beginning to smell. In fact I know I am: a thick cloud of inaudible noises from upstairs, dank growlings from somewhere outside the ring of the city. I feel I'm being menaced by judges. Who the hell are they. What are they doing inside me. I can't hear their voices, but each chain of wordforms solidifies inside my throat, inside my mouth, inside my own voice. It is no articulate sound. It is as if every verb had coagulated into a noun, and the nouns themselves transformed into something subterranean, blind and telescopic. I don't know if I can even see. I think I injected my eyes with gold one night, or at least the idea of gold, some kind of abstraction, and ever since then I've only sensed the city, as a wave of obsolete vibrations and omens. The gold itself some kind of anachronism, a dull rock rolling backwards into whatever remains of historic time. Each time-unit manufactured by a sweatshop suicide somewhere on the other side of the planet. The entire history of London, from its origins as an occultist trading post right up to some point in the not so distant future when it will be inevitably sucked into the spinning guts of Kronos and, well. All of that manufactured by sweatshop suicides, the kind of people my upstairs neighbours will insist over and again simply do not exist. But what do they know? Each evening I hear them, walking around, stomp-stomp-stomping, tap-tap-tapping out their version of social reality on their floor, on my ceiling. It's terrible. And since I can't even leave the flat anymore, the ceiling might as well be the whole of the sky, and they're tapping out new and brutal constellations. Here's the sign of the surveillance camera. Here's the medusa. Here's the spear of Hades. Here's the austerity smirk. Here's the budget. A whole new set of stars. Astrology completely rewritten. It's like they're the sun and the moon, or the entire firmament, a whole set of modernized, streamlined firmaments. What fucking asswipes.

the wealthier homes
have occupied my voice
can say nothing now, yes

my language has cracked
is a slow, creaking fire
deadens my eyes, in
high, contorted concern
fuses to protein and rent

I know. I'd been hoping to spare you any further musings I might have had on the nature of Iain Duncan-Smith, that talking claw. But perhaps we're at a point now where we need to define him, to recite and describe, occupy his constellations. Because to recite the stations of the being of Iain Duncan-Smith, as if they were a string of joy-beads, and they are, would be to recite the history of the law, if we take that law to be something as simple as a mouth is, and each noise, each syllable that emits from that mouth is only ever and never more than the sound of animals eating each other, a gap in the senses where the invisible universe goes to die, and we become like ghosts or insomniacs stumbling through the city, we become the music of Iain Duncan-Smith, his origin in the chaos of animals and plants, of rocks and metals and the countless earths, where over and again he breaks children's teeth with gravel-stones, covers them with ashes. Because to classify those stations, the cancer-ladder of the dreams of Iain Duncan-Smith might, at a push, be to consume him, and to define those stations, those marks on the hide of Iain-Duncan Smith, might be to trap him, to press granite to the roof of his mouth, the stations of the law. And at this point, obviously, I really wish I could think of something to say that was hopeful, that was useful, that was not simply a net of rats blocking the force of the sun, till it crawls on its fists and knees, screaming like a motherfucker, sarcastic and wrathful, boiling the mountains as if they were scars, laughing like a crucifixion, modular and bleached. Bleached with the guts of Iain Duncan-Smith, of each of the modest number of words he actually understands, such as grovel and stingray and throat, chlamydia, wart. And those five words are the entirety of the senses of Iain Duncan-Smith, the gates to his city, his recitation of the germs of the law, a clock that never strikes and never stops, where we are not counted, wiped from the knots of statistics, comparable to fine gold, receptacles of song, shrieking gulls. It's all I can bear to listen to, that shrieking. It blocks out

the stars, the malevolent alphabet he's been proposing.

because your mouth is bitter
with executioners salt, perhaps
when you die, perhaps
you will flutter through Hades
invisible, among the scorched dead

may you vanish there, famished
through the known and unknown worlds

Thanks for your letter. You think I spend too much time going after 'easy targets', do you? Got to admit I chuckled over that one. A while ago, you recall, I admitted to you I make a fetish of the riot form, and in that admission implied I was fully aware of the risks involved, that any plausible poetics would be shattered, like a shop window, flickering and jagged, all of the wire exposed and sending sharp twists and reversible jolts into whatever it was I was trying to explain or talk about. Think about it this way. Imagine that you had a favourite riot, one that you loved. Tottenham. Millbank. Chingford. Walthamstow. I like the last one, but only for sentimental reasons. It's a silly question, but maybe will help you to see what I mean when I use the word "poetics", or "poetry". What was Marx referring to when he was talking about the "poetry of the future", for example? And what use is that in thinking about prosody? Anyway. Loads of people have made maps of clusters of riots, trying to come up with some kind of exegesis based on location and frequency. And quite right too. Think of the micro-vectors sketched out within the actions of any individual rioter, of how those vectors and actions relate to those shared among her or his immediate physical group, and thus the spatio-physical being of that group in relation to their particular town / city, and finally, the superimposition of all of those relations in all of their directions and implications onto an equally detailed charting of the entire landmass understood as chronology and interpretation. Christ, you could include data about the weather-systems on Neptune if you wanted to. What would happen to this map, I've been asking myself, if

we went on to superimpose the positions of riots of the past, the future too if you want to be facetious, onto the complexities we're already faced with. Sudden appearance of the Baltimore Riots of 1968, to take a random example. Or the Copper Riots of 1662. The Opera Riot, Belgium, 1830. The 1850 Squatters Riot, California. Personally, I like the Moscow Plague Riots of 1771, both for their measures of poetry and analogy, and for the thought of them as an element of the extraordinarily minor Walthamstow Riot of 7th August 2011. Plague is a bad metaphor, that's its accuracy, it refers to both sides, all sides, in quantitatively different ways. But primarily, it's dirt simple. It runs in both directions. Means both us and them. As in, metaphor as class struggle, also. As decoration for some unspeakable filth, on the one hand, or as working hypothesis on the other. A jagged rip through all pronouns. The thunder of the world, a trembling, a turbine. Cyclical desperation, clusters of walls. The first signs of plague hit Moscow in late 1770, as in a sudden system of forced quarantine and destruction of contaminated houses. Within a few months, a clock of vast scratching, fear and anger. September 15th they invaded the Kremlin, smashed up the monastery there. The following day they murdered the Archbishop, that wormfucker, Ambrosius, they killed him, and then torched the quarantined zones. Much burning, yeh, much gunshot and vacuum. And no antidote, no serum. Around 200,000 people died, not including those who were executed. It's a grisly map. Disease as interpretation and anonymity. The plague itself as injection into certain subsets of opinion. Rich people. Plague sores, each basilica split open to various popular songs, calendars folded within them, recorded crackles through forcibly locked houses, through LEDs and meth. Basic surrealism. Aimé Césaire wrote years ago that "poetic knowledge is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge". And science itself the great silence at the centre of corporate knowledge, its dialectical warp and synaptic negation. As in a single node of extraction made up, for example, of the precise percentage of the world's population who will never again be called by name, except by cops and executioners. Each one of those names - and we know none of them - is the predominant running metaphor of the entire culture, a net of symptom splinters producing abdominal pain and difficulty breathing, which in turn leads to a sharp increase in arrest

numbers throughout the more opaque boroughs of selected major cities. OK? Now write a “poem”. Directly after the August Riots I went to one of the big public meetings, don’t know why, guess I was feeling a bit confused. Or maybe just bored. The speakers were awful, patronising, professional, you know the type. But there was one woman who spoke, she had nothing to do with the organisation, they’d got her up there for obvious reasons, yeh, and she lived on an estate somewhere and her son had leapt 16 floors from a tower block window. He’d been on curfew and the cops had turned up, without warning, at his flat. To check up or something. Anyway, he leapt 16 floors down, and they told her he’d killed himself, “and I know my boy”, his mother said from top table, “and he wouldn’t have jumped, he wouldn’t have killed himself, not for them, not for anyone, not for the cops”, and her voice cracked a little and then she said “and as for the riots, I thought they were fair enough, and I think there should be more of them, and more, and more”, and then she stopped and there was some applause. Not much. She was off script. A few of us had our fists in the air, nonetheless. Anyway. Here’s a statistic for you, a class metaphor, an elegant little metric foot: not one police officer in the UK has been convicted for a death in police custody since 1969. Get that? That’s how long I’ve been fucking alive. You get that? And I think that’s what she was getting at, at the meeting: every cop, living or dead, is a walking plague-pit. And that includes the nice ones with their bicycles and nasty little apples. Like some kind of particle mould. They are all Simon Harwood. They are all Kevin Hutchinson-Foster. And are running, with crowbars and wheels, year by year, strata by strata, backwards into, well, what they used to call the deep abyss, or perhaps the metamorphosis of commodities. The unity of opposites, anti-constellations cutting through chronology, an injection of three droplets of the weather on Neptune into each malevolently flashing unit of time. Spectrums, butchers. “Poetry”, remember, “is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge”. What do you think that means, “the great silence”. I ask because I’m not quite sure. Hölderlin, in his “Notes on Oedipus”, talks about the moment of “fate”, which, he says, “tragically removes us from our orbit of life, the very-mid point of inner life, to another world, tears us off into the eccentric orbit of the dead”. But he’s not talking about “fate” as in myth, or the

number of fatalities taking place every year in police cells and occupied territories worldwide, or indeed the home of every benefit claimant in this town. He's talking about prosody, about the fault-line that runs through the centre of that prosody, and how that fault-line is where the "poetic" will be found, if its going to be found anywhere. The moment of interruption, a "counter rhythmic interruption", he calls it, where the language folds and stumbles for a second, like a cardiac splinter or a tectonic shake. Again, a cracked metaphor, an abstraction or a counter-earth. Actually it's an entire cluster of metaphors, and each one of those metaphors twist in any number of directions, so that "counter-rhythmic interruption" refers, at the same time, to a band of masked-up rioters ripping up Oxford St., and to the sudden interruption inflicted by a cop's baton, a police cell and the malevolent syntax of a judge's sentence. We live in these cracks, these fault-lines. Who was it, maybe Raoul Vaneigem, who wrote something about how we are trapped between two worlds, one that we do not accept, and one that does not exist. It's exactly right. One way I've been thinking about it is this: the calendar, as map, has been split down the middle, into two chronologies, two orbits, and they are locked in an endless spinning antagonism, where the dead are what tend to come to life, and the living are, well you get the picture. Obviously, only one of these orbits is visible at any one time and, equally obviously, the opposite is also true. It's as if there were two parallel time tracks, or maybe not so much parallel as actually superimposed on each other. You've got one track, call it antagonistic time, revolutionary time, the time of the dead, whatever, and it's packed with unfinished events: the Paris Commune, Orgreave, the Mau Mau rebellion. There are any number of examples, counter-earths, clusters of ideas and energies and metaphors that refuse to die, but are alive precisely nowhere. And then there is standard time, normative time, a chain of completed triumphs, a net of monuments, dead labour, capital. The TV schedules, basically. And when a sub-rhythmic jolt, call it anything, misalignment of the planets, radioactive catastrophe, even a particularly brutal piece of legislation, brings about a sudden alignment of revolutionary and normative time, meaning that all metaphors - like scurvy - come back to fucking life, creating a buckling in the basic grounding metaphor of the entire culture,

wherein that metaphor, to again misuse Hölderlin, becomes a network of forces, places of intersection, places of divergence, moments when everything is up for grabs. Well, that's the theory. Riot, plague, any number of un-used potentialities we can't even begin to list. Christ, I can't take it. I've been awake for days. My hands are trembling. Plague. The opposite of solidarity. Or rather, solidarity itself: the solidarity of isolation and quarantine, of the bomb-zone or the ghetto. The great silence is full of noises. And that's what I mean when I talk about poetics. A map, a counter-map, actually, a chart of the spatio-temporal rhythm of the riot-form, its prosody and signal-frequency. A map that could show the paths *not* taken. And where to find them, those paths, those antidotes, those counter-plagues. Anyway, I hope that answers your question. It's a very partial account, for sure. There are hundred of other points of access to the metaphor cluster engaged within the riot form: think about the Portland Rum Riots of 1855, for example. Or the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943. Their trajectories through the varying intensities of official and unofficial chronology, the music of the past re-emerging as a sheet of blazing gin flowing through Chingford. Like that time we marched on Parliament, burned it to the ground. Remember that? It was fantastic.



FRANCESCA LISETTE

from Becoming

All great female literature is the fiction of becoming.

the second in front of me is spattered with blood from the last.

because it is my mother.

what can be reaped from a rejected ancestral body if consistently refused to know.

when longing becomes mental.

the archaic breadth of a mouth's o haunts my plausible shape.

words hands wants

to dissociate & tremble. phylum setting wild hearts fly.

the residue of a sunset trauma can't temporise this moment.

I am full of beasts that flutter and step on shadows and cannot be named.

who told me I couldn't be a woman because I am, because it's not enough.
because being female and being me would be too much.

gaps in the conversation create a cold plunging burp –

that's how to tie a subject as though she were an object and cling emphatically.

bloodlust skitters round the phrase of every hate-filled look ever stolen at yourself.

how can I possibly know what only exists as feeling?

what feeling does knowledge contain.

it skips past me as a verb buttressing a noun.

how can gender be founded without:

- (a) breathless self-antagonism
- (b) lies?

Union

Decamping from the world

intuition as art

sacred, profane, hermetic united in one flesh

+ boxing gloves ready for attack / withdrawal

simple flower

reed of night

percussive & come unto us

divided self, persuasive element

hypnotist manatee

birth memories swim up in you

the bone, the teeth, the womb, the placenta

she is your shroud

fertility of foundation

prodigal as peach spit

music ephemerides

remember shin soles swelling

as she wants to touch you

as you let her

as you let yourself dive & be dived

as you overdose pre- & post- & proto- sexual

thinking is porn for the indiscriminate
splayed mess of webbed toes
coming unstuck
in virtue of genetic heritage
lips split the soles flat
luminous, iridescent
give way to
antlered mother divine halo
cased in Perspex
shy, fearless, lactating, fluctuating
between the sign of guilt & innocence
a nascent waxing, a plumed murmur

CONNIE SCOZZARO

Skirt For

Whose will spans
coquette in kitchenette she
steers pale hands on a rodeo stove
white goods are wild horses
when they are not yours
women do whinny
brown donkeys, all fours.

A gadget for every cathexis
clamp either side of your
Gestalt every hand tied to a post
I tell you there's nothing like
idle kink, countercultural corn.

Ethics concussed
on identity's stunt bonnet
travelling too fast last days
 in the youth hostel
ass go yes in harassed air.
Us lillies are wily dykes
swapping pollen in public
like this is a liberal country
like this is a knot to tie all loose ends
like this cis laurel is just popery.

Call landlord fake name
laze to work hidey bruise
& exposed circuit under
cheating peach, wear high.

What sense is a belt on a bare
child's ass? I'm so sorry, how
can we help you each other
primates box in an endless ring
of yellow gold and carbon glass.

Everyone knows
no strangle in the *polis*
but OK in the *oikos*
what makes the oik that go-eth then
into police, beating queers & blacks
I say: salt content of cereal and excessive
fluoride too much public spending
not enough guidance on which tattoos
wreck your life forever, at which serious
assaults the state will shake gory locks
put to death by limbo under the poverty
line, send you miles in supermarket shoes.

Depression is sometimes a black dog,
a black slick, a parakeet with no song
these animals are smacked still and shy
a tiger is flayed into a rug, stomped by
uncle scholars with weightless tread
sighing about circumstance, the lyric why,
contemporary hands warming teenage zips.

Pfizer takes over AstraZeneca
cygnet freckles take over a sponge cerebellum
how I am taken over by an inscrutable gloom
with a counter prescription for leather leash
for each who can pay British pound
plays dead in the FTSE, that black slick

mauling throats St. George red over kicked lawn.
Illiteracy is a riot horse, a Tennyson horse, tramples
a workhouse of thugs, chained and painting
tiny versions of themselves, reading,
made better with a twinkle and a tear hear
this: our job is not rape but near pick me
prick me like a proud cloud like
the love of my life is in court for the
alleged strangulation of a pretty American
student.

EMILY CRITCHLEY

Love & the Debasement of Being

*'On s'est connus, on s'est reconnus
on s'est perdus de vue, on s'est r'perdus d'vue
on s'est retrouvés, on s'est réchauffé
s puis on s'est séparés...'*

Our box – a holding
company of outstanding stock
of others. Ticker taped & yet
with increased not diminished
risk. The oil we spread on that,
has scent of oranges, it runs out
hlf way through arrangements,
makes me sorry I told / came.
& yet my love for you, etc. how
frightening. But yrs for me – how
even more. The packing it comes
wth, sections it carves, ready
to be off at all times, whenever.
'Gift it gives, negatively.'
& how I need I take
it to be taken. How melted at
the seams. Wth everything
I have. Any dinner date possible;
no relay or delayed chance /
other real events /
whatever.
One cognizes, re-cognizes,
loses oneself from view, finds
a separation, warming to a theme,

knows that to leave now
may be the only thing to do.

More seriously, regarding such structure

He ran said numbers by me, faded yet still visibly
What is the purpose of such holding counting back
The porticos, the calculations he made – numbers in there;
In to a very sated, stated, simple reasons – have no real
Application. Besides they crunch a simple lack –
Architechtonics – Tho the diagrams hold up alright,
Run heavy down as feather-of-lead or the bright smoke
Thru which the lead me seeing me down.

& yes, such vertical's still hard & not unreal for me,
Tho faded, far from him as
Straight unbowed is. Things stand as they must.
As he was not meant to let me stand it. See how it matches
His eye with its grey intent. See how it won't let go.
That hoisting outwards at such cross purposes
Won't let me let it go.

VERITY SPOTT

ii. (Isis)

Pebble fuck-ups, wire fenced walkaway.

We never well.

The dog dance is standard: one lilts up, another pads
(hone) on target, rustle of papers, man staff, red furs
and the monarch poise.

„

King king, hush now, tell us king Jesus
king Jesus come, as is thy will, king Jesus
force feed mescall worms Jesus king your
book The Unchlenche*dLeprodananyic,,,ich dear sweet baby LORD
maketh me a marrow tree
so I can feed my family
Don't tell me how to bring up my kids.
Come in munch and storage bids. .

transcendition

This year's diseases
„ the monarch commands to attend in the house
„ wasp precinct, shame is s, crooked s crooked s
...

exposure surrender the whole installment system, undelete thoses , dredged,, ,,,
river starlings &,,
sparrows in hedgerows and rivers

/ steel to clog in the holding speakers of telephones that can compete in the
world like strengthening the growth
of helping those to move between Henry's naps and his head is functional these
Christians sorrows clogging in the ears of LONE rage and HEX spatter, god god, crimi
nalise fluoride, ,, but, but but any.

Aye, fuck it, be not dispirited. I pray that the blessings of almighty WOMB-
BOMBS
BY RIGHT that all WOMBS BE AS ONE SPOR SONG and when old
scumdog's
gutworm seizes out through the ribs WOMB BOMBS APHRODISE
SPIRIT PORN 'PON
SAINT'S # IED FOR WHEN WEAPONS DROP 'PON PRISON HEX
TORTURE IS REACHED AND FROM YOUR OWN FINGER'S
BLADE you once so duty, flopping gay in my arms, how harmful
of all great deceptions. I PRAY WOMB RELEASE GIDEON FRENzy no fuck
to O SWEET for his HACKING COUGH Is as the hacks of those
unreleased and seeking work uncommittable
YOUr mother WAS AND IS DYING hahaha IN
ARMS of real FEEEEEEEEELT //feel. Fall nathrakh on dualist atom!

The time has come to wipe out
Sophie's smile and all that stand
at these doors in the rain, exchange your ticket for a week's wages, head
scuffed soles ,, & miracle workers,
practical magic,
will evade,

merry in the drizzle

how about
trying your hand
at your throat while I
wank and,

i CAN get you returns on some logic, this way!

antithetical you are all base speed consumers and must
illumination, ((proud of my country, fucking the ashes,
/ dead volunteers,

))

stand here you dead prick
of Holy magnet light, whilst ,, the train at platform one , a performative
kind of money, Portslade Jobcentre plus 2014 please
remove your dog, child+d joy,, Thatcher spread child's with a Womb like Loaf and
sang to their throats with a willow whilst,
whilst,

난 그냥 여자입니다
나는 당신의 딸입니다
나는 움직 물 암시
중력. 쥐고 지구
저항이 무엇입니까

, , (

I
come here
look at frogs and fish
=, ,, & &, B(bed ti)e my deviling ewe
and scheming to cast a spell of sheer and livid joy ,
besotted

, as you twitch
and in fact we think
I,, think
& with mist
then would I your centipede king

I wedded
to a christian or shackled ,)
no
s on the loose,, you k [REDACTED] forfeit,

the child will rise

Oh apologies ,, outbursts mostly life is
malady conceit
enhanced as the frame I detect her smiling breathless and want to be trussed at every
limb
found a rope knot turned & hello swords, darling we lose our sense of the
decade's erupt .. dagger dagger, give me a ,,

then sold some ketamine

fixtu((re: saturday kick off my name is Heidi and

, no

birds soar the horizon and hail by limp
wrist stale linguistic studies theory

has taught the hyper inflated and cruel to be careful with encounter, that's ex-central
force, gravity to heart's and wild beasts pin my dog,, life,,,,,
pathic the world is their destruction fucking

light
-en up you come with me
we'll misery a lady's
option ((, Ersi, thank hinge If the only joy

I shuddered when he picked *i hexfap 4 life*
his nails and ass assumed *and mean life,,))*
he meant that the dead are in their graves , then in a flash of moans it was Gideon
screaming and raped by his own so beloved his fathers piqued the nails, rose the
cross and scowled, the apple and life of #HardWorkingPeople ,, time to leave
this place GO! eat some lube
today,, sissy bitch on a chaos (roses)
are violent live's in love are the waste and the bridge , fuckups died and in chains
with nothing / to lose but a glimpse of the birds. No, ^{that's my bike}, get us ketamine.

WILLIAM ROWE

From commodity to apocalypse: some notes

etc., and if you place two things together, something else appears. Reverdy calls it the image, the third thing that wasn't there before. But isn't this how you find the value of a commodity? Place one beside another and you'll find the value: John Locke's law. Isn't that happening all the time in any juxtaposition unless it specifically throws off the law of exchangeability? Try that out with Reverdy's poems: don't they leave you with a comforting feeling of continuity? Like you can carry on. 'Scarcely a minute / And I've come back / Having grasped nothing of all that passed / A point / The larger sky / And at the last moment / The lantern going by / The footstep overheard'. The poem, which is called 'Memory', having started by getting rid of the meaning of series, ends with the phrase 'A world full of hope'. These are beautiful poems, some of the most beautiful I've read, but 'lacking in strength, Beauty hates the Understanding for asking of her what it cannot do' (Hegel, *Phenomenology*, paragraph 32).

What can 'provide a superior attraction' is the void (Mallarmé). To summon the void: 'madly detach' things. Say Cubism: no continuous homogeneous space, only intersecting planes that break up the object. Understanding breaks things up. But there are two Cubisms, or two ways of responding to it: either the intersecting objects are antagonistic to each other or they become reconciled. Test that out on Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* and you'll find more reconciliation than antagonism.

'Madly detach things' but the sutures that operate in global capitalism pass calmly over those abysses. The massive production

of virtual realities is too fast. Poetry had been able to resist commodification by invoking the sensual richness of the thing and thereby the free subject, existing on a 'raft of all the senses' (Bunting), unbound, making the senses into 'theoreticians' (Marx), poetry its own ground (Hölderlin). But for Rimbaud, all that became impossible. The Third Republic, in order to cover over the abyss which the Paris Commune had shown to the bourgeoisie, invented the hyper-real. Rimbaud's *Illuminations*: blast holes in the hyper-real, with pain, by freeing the image from bourgeois order. The bourgeois order still in place.

Rilke, often considered to be a reactionary poet, seeks in the *Duino Elegies* to rescue the thing from capitalist production. Recuperate the presence of things by memory of a pre-capitalist order, as in Heidegger? There is that in the *Elegies*, as there is in a whole swathe of late nineteenth and twentieth-century poetry. But there's something else too: to recuperate the thing in its presence, it's necessary to pass through the land of the 'Laments', who exist in the domain of death, where silence and sound have changed places, the regime of the senses overturned. The power that traverses this zone is the death drive, which unbinds the pathways of libidinal energy and suspends the symbolic order, the laws of appearance.

This is the process that current legitimization of fascist violence seeks to invoke and conscript, but precisely to reverse it and rescue the inherited order of class domination while the ruling class regroup. Let people express themselves listen to Katie Hopkins, Nigel Farage etc.

So how to *suspend* the symbolic order?

Parallel lines don't exist simultaneously in space, they come *after* each other (Vallejo). The time-swarm, pre-ontological. But swarming time doesn't itself constitute a form of hope. You can look at the Brownian movement as particles of milk swarm about in a cereal spoon and think about how they show the unceasing movement of molecules but you'd have to be a Stalinist to believe that that gives a reason for hope. The regime of appearance is constituted by sovereignty over space, i.e. myth (Laclau) and police (Benjamin's law-making violence). The regime of appearance is the site of political and poetic struggle. How to accede to divine violence and not fall back into the State?

But what's the use of all this in a situation of defeat? Just want to be right, do you? Saved by knowledge? Read Sean Bonney's *Lamentations* (on his blog). 'Say those rats have names say you know those names. You do not know those names. Say black powder say a lot of things. And then, a fascist victory, say that. And then. Say it seemed like a door was opened like just for a second and we hurtled through that door or was it things hurtled toward us I don't know and. Say it was just a cloud of powdered blood. Say you know their names and then suffer from beneath those names and live and tunnel inside those names and. Ask what becomes of the motherfucking broken hearted'. Something before and after naming has scythed through the language and that's the place to start.

Or, contrastingly, Keston Sutherland's *Odes*: confidence in naming against an acknowledged crisis of comparison as such, in other words, crisis of value, and so of poetic structure. Or better, confidence in the work of predication, of saying what is, and in love which is the stated pivot of

the poet's relation with the world, the difference he makes. But – and here's the major lack – fulfillment of love without communism falls back into faith in a language which is past.

Then read Verity Spott's *Gideon* (forthcoming from Barque) where there's a tremendous unleashing of expression which doesn't depend on linguistic confidence but gets its energy from allowing the political real to break down the walls of the poem, via a death list and a hex on enemies. The hex, as opposed to confidence in naming, breaks out of bourgeois law but is not yet the law of the heart, the universal that embraces all humanity. The hex is the extreme form of the concept without pain. The book moves through the hex to how the un-rigidified body, present as dis-organised affect in convulsed, non-'logical' rhythms and syntax, might relate to the communist body, the eschaton penetrated by love, love by the floppy, trembling body, the whole of the apocalyptic by the tremble.

Jennifer Cooke's 'Apocalypse Dreams' (forthcoming in *Cordite*) suspend our current limits, the boundaries of the social body and of thought. The catastrophe has already happened, this is the political real. And it's not presented as cause for fear or other instrument of political action but as event that has passed through us and we hadn't noticed. This wrecked cosmos has come so softly beneath your defenses, closer than thought.

JENNIFER COOKE

The Poet in British Protest (2010-2013)

In the following I focus on the role of poetry and the figure of the poet in relation to political scenes of protest which occurred in the UK between 2010 and 2013. This was a time of social and political tension and unrest, with many changes forced upon and resisted within the sector I work in: higher education. The 2010 Coalition between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats saw Nick Clegg, leader of the latter party, rescind his vote-winning pre-election promise to scrap university tuition fees.¹ In the wake of this volte-face and in reaction to Tory plans to raise fees still further, to cut university teaching budgets, and to withdraw the Education Maintenance Allowance for 16-18 years old on low incomes, the UK experienced the largest and most radical series of student protests for several years.² During 2010-11, there was a wave of occupations of teaching and administrative rooms and buildings in universities across the country. There were mass London-based marches and protests, including the short but dramatic occupation of the Conservative Campaign Headquarters at Millbank on 10th November 2010 and the protests on the 9th December 2010 during the vote in the UK parliament on the raising of university tuition fees from £3,000 to £9,000 a year, which was passed. The Coalition regularly announced cuts to public spending; the Trades Union Congress brought together various unions and protest groups in an enormous anti-cuts march on 26th March 2011. Against the backdrop of these cuts and protests, just over a year after the Coalition government had been formed, the 4-day long 'London riots' erupted in the summer of 2011, sparked by the fatal police shooting of Mark Duggan in Tottenham.³ While the government, the police, and the mass media condemned the riots as simply rampant criminality, community leaders and youth workers pointed to a combination of factors linked to socio-economic disparity and institutional racism: the history of heavy and discriminative policing in urban areas of low income and poverty; a litany of deaths caused

by the police and their negligence, which remain unpunished; the closure of large numbers of youth centres and the cutting of youth resources; rapidly rising unemployment; and the now prohibitive cost of higher education. All of this, community leaders argued, resulted in a generalised erosion of hope for a secure future among young people, especially those from Britain's lowest economic strata. Echoing this focus on economic injustice, London Occupy camped on two sites in the City of London during 2011-2012: in Finsbury Square and just outside the iconic St Paul's Cathedral. Finally, more recently, 2012-13 saw a variety of Higher Education strikes organised by the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) over pay. Several London university picket lines played host to poetry readings, often organised by students who had come out in solidarity with their striking lecturers.

It is poetry in this climate, and in the context of some of these protests, which I will be discussing.⁴ My comments assume several premises, potentially problematically, potentially wrongly (although perhaps productively wrongly), and it is probably best to sketch them at the beginning. Although I will be referring to readings given by Sean Bonney and Keston Sutherland, I am using them as examples of a certain type of politically committed left-wing UK poetry. Within the left-wing commitments of such poets there are multifarious shades of political allegiance, stretching from party political or reformist to Marxist or socialist to anarchist or anarcho-syndicalist.⁵ In other words, these poets might agree on what they dislike but they do not necessarily agree upon what to do about it or what might replace it. The other broad brush I am employing is to term what these poets write as 'experimental' or 'avant-garde', although in different ways and to different extents, of course. It would be accurate, I think, to say that most of these left-wing poets were in support of the students protests of 2010-11, if not of every act committed during those protests, and that some of them were supportive of the London riots too, although perhaps to a far lesser extent and with greater qualifications. Sean Bonney was right to note that everyone went rather quiet after the riots.⁶ While the student protests traversed the field of work and study that many of us in left-wing poetics are involved

in, the riots happened in an intense, contagious, confusing but also diffuse way which is fairly unfamiliar to – or at any rate unexpected by – traditional activists on the left. Indeed, both the protests at Millbank and the riots of August 2011 took most left-wing activists by surprise. Poets wrote poems commenting upon these events, especially the student protests: Sean Bonney, Emily Critchley, Francesca Lisette, Keston Sutherland and Timothy Thornton, to name a few.

Poems about the student protests came after the events, commenting, reflecting, condemning, and celebrating different aspects of what happened on those days of marches, creative demonstration, kettling and police clashes. Yet, there is a desire, I think, among these poets and others in the UK left poetry scene for poetry not simply to do this but also to be politically instrumental, to contribute to the fostering, crystallisation or happening of political events and dissent, to participate in their political potential.⁷ I'm going to explore moments when avant-garde poetry has been involved in political event-making, and their implications for how we recognise, make use of, and create that poetical involvement for poetry, and what challenges that might pose to our usual conception of poetry and its performance. Specifically, in fact, I will be examining a common critique of avant-garde political efficacy in the light of occupation readings by Sean Bonney and Keston Sutherland.

Let us begin, then, with a traditional objection to avant-garde, late modernist, innovative practice and its political positioning, which in this instance I am identifying as left-wing and therefore critical of capitalism, especially neoliberal and conservative forms of capitalist policy-making and organisation. In her recent, brilliant book *Cruel Optimism* (2011), Lauren Berlant points to two related features of political avant-garde art which are often used to criticise it, although Berlant's intention is to anatomise, not chastise.⁸ Firstly, this kind of work is 'preaching to the choir', performed for usually small and like-minded audiences; in poetry circles, this means audiences often composed predominantly of other poets who broadly agree

with the poetry's political message.⁹ Thus, many of us have sat in the Judith E. Wilson Studio at Cambridge, or the Centre for Creative Collaboration in London, or in the upstairs and downstairs rooms of many pubs listening to poetry which criticises what we agree needs criticising, and expresses the anger, ridicule or despair which we ourselves feel about the contemporary political landscape. Berlant does not think this is without merit; preaching to the choir, she writes, is 'always undervalued' yet 'absolutely necessary to do' (p. 238). She deems the primary consequence of this kind of work to be the important provision of 'a scene for being together in the political' (p. 237). The secondary aim of avant-garde political art, which is where she locates the more complex problem, is 'to magnetize the political desires of a larger public' (p. 238). I would want to switch these around in terms of priority for poetry, since I would argue that the manifest desire of experimental political poetry in the UK has been more orientated towards magnetizing and inspiring, anatomising, emphasising and sometimes satirising the social contradictions produced by capitalism than it has been aimed at creating a sense of collective scene-making or affirmation, even if, in fact, that feeling is produced as a corollary effect, and even if the poet recognises that the context of their reading is one of choir-preaching. This is evident in the forms this poetry can take and the syntactical jumps, slices and violences it frequently commits upon the language it employs and detourns: the work is often more immediately visually, syntactically and semantically deranged than would suggest it is offering itself as a warm site of solidarity and coming-together. What intrigues me here, in fact, is that both poets I am writing about below have penned work which challenges this trend. It also makes a significant difference, I think, that Berlant is discussing video art, where the artist is absent and the audience comes and goes, stays perhaps only for a while, and has not necessarily chosen to encounter that work specifically. Arguably, notwithstanding any of the formal strategies utilised within UK political poetry, there is a sense of togetherness at a poetry reading, with the poet at the centre of the room's quiet focus and with a collective sitting down together to listen.

Berlant concludes that despite the affirmation involved in preaching to the choir, traditional avant-garde practice encounters difficulties within the social relations its aesthetics imply and tend to disclose. Writing of the political video art of Cynthia Madansky, she suggests that '[t]o offer solidarity through an uncanny and lightly discomforting aesthetics that keeps its own commitments and program implicit is to conflate solidarity with aesthetic sophistication – that is, with a privileged class location' (p. 238). Whilst we might want to qualify and recalibrate for poetry the kind of effects she outlines here, it is indisputable, I think, that the appreciation and enjoyment of complex and semantically challenging avant-garde poetry is usually indicative of particular class structures and positions; the composition of poetry audiences would mostly confirm this too. It does not necessarily have to be a formal, university learning that provides the aesthetic education such poetry tends to require in order to be 'understood', but it takes first of all an encounter, and then the time and space to engage, think about and become familiar with such work, and perhaps to meet and talk to others who appreciate such linguistic and formal strategies of initially unusual poetic composition. These days, such time, space and contacts are usually the result of education and/or a certain level of socio-economic security and cultural capital. That is not to say that no working class people are involved in writing, reading or listening to this poetry, but that the majority of us are firmly on the side of socio-educational privilege, even if we might not be free from economic precarity.

This raises questions about the relevance of late modernist radical aesthetics in attempts to address poetry to a political moment, especially given that any significant political change needs to galvanise a large number of the population and specifically, given they have the most to gain from socio-political re-organisation, the working class. Simply, and bluntly, does it matter if we write political poetry which only a small, usually highly-educated, section of society, a section of society with broadly the same political stance, understands and appreciates? Does it matter politically? Does it matter that it might be alienating to the very people whose support it needs if its political

dreams are to be realised, and alienating precisely on the grounds that the poetry overtly displays a familiarity with nonpopular and complicated aesthetic forms and ideas and thus demonstrates the probable social and cultural (though not necessarily economic) privilege of the poet? This is not the same argument as to suggest that the poetry is alienating because it is too difficult for the comprehension or enjoyment of those untrained in its aesthetics strategies; instead, I am suggesting that alienation can stem from the display of privilege encoded in writing, reading and enjoying this kind of poetry, even if that privilege is a fantasmatic projection on the part of the person encountering the work.

One simple response to these fraught questions is to reply that, no, it does not matter that this work is not appealing to sections of society beyond the culturally privileged poetry world; that art is art and must unfold in relation to its own aesthetic logic. Yet I think the poetry I am talking about here *wants* to matter socially and politically beyond the small world of 'preaching to the choir'. For instance, Sean Bonney's first poem in his recent collection, *Happiness: Poems After Rimbaud*, begins: 'september 2003. we were wondering why the poets were silent', as though events that month, which included various Iraqi deaths at the hands of US/UK Coalition troops and the election of a BNP candidate, *should* be remarked upon poetically, *should* have moved the poets to speech.¹⁰

I want to explore these questions tangentially, through two scenes of poetry readings during political events, namely at occupations. It's probably worth noting that most occupiers, even those who are occupying university buildings, will be unfamiliar with experimental poetry. Sean Bonney wrote of his experiences of and frustrations with the interface between poetry and politics, referring specifically to his occupation readings, in his 'Letter on Poetics (after Rimbaud)', dated 25th June 2011:

How could what we were experiencing, I asked myself, be delineated in such a way that we could recognise ourselves in it. The form

would be monstrous. That kinda romanticism doesn't help much either. I mean, obviously a rant against the government, even delivered via a brick through the window, is not nearly enough. I started thinking the reason the student movement failed was down to the fucking slogans. They were awful. As feeble as poems. Yeh, I turned up and did readings in the student occupations and, frankly, I'd have been better off just drinking. It felt stupid to stand up, after someone had been doing a talk about what to do if you got nicked, or whatever, to stand up and read poetry. I can't kid myself otherwise. I can't delude myself that my poetry had somehow been "tested" because they kinda liked it.¹¹

There are a host of desires being articulated here: a call for art to more effectively mirror experience; for a new poetic form; for better slogans or something better than slogans; for poems not to be feeble; for poetry and protest to move beyond one rant or a singular act of property destruction; and, linked to this, a rejection of romanticism. I want to pause on this last point. The romanticism rejected is both the fantasy of creating a formal monstrosity and the illusion that small acts of dissent, protest and denunciation are as effective as they are passionate. In other words, poetry doesn't *do* anything in the world, anything useful, and therefore it feels politically redundant even though the illusion of singular agency to express and act, to create and to rant, might sustain us for a while. This is the point Bonney makes about the reading of experimental poems at occupations: it doesn't seem as useful as other types of communication, even if people enjoyed it. If the slogans of the student movement offended Bonney's poetic sensibility, reading his own poetry at occupations offends his sense of political praxis.

Another poetico-political anecdote might be instructive here. In March 2010, Keston Sutherland was invited to read to a group of students occupying a lecture theatre in protest at managerial decisions made at his place of employment, The University of Sussex. Whilst waiting to read, Sutherland penned a poem in 'homage' to the occupiers, which he described as 'a bit decisive agitprop'.¹² He subsequently circulated this to the UK

Poetry Listserv with a description of the reading, its atmosphere, and some thoughts upon why he had suddenly felt he should write something new, there and then. Specifically, he alluded to Vladimir Mayakovsky's conception in *How Verses Are Made* (1926) and, in Sutherland's words, 'particularly his account of the "social command" and its necessity to the poet, the imperative to recognise a task that needs carrying out and to remake the language until you can do it'. I'm not going to reproduce the poem here, but suffice to say, it had the Sutherland markers of metrical care but was unlike his poetry of that and preceding times in most other respects: it rhymed in simple ways; it was extremely easy to follow semantically and syntactically; it was rhetorically rousing, utilising the recognisable voice of political protest; it was angry and specific about the targets of that anger (which were not internalised); and the poem included a description and promise of political and physical solidarity. Sutherland has never revised it for publication even though it was published by Joe Luna in *Hi Zero*, where he printed an essay of Justin Katko's which reproduced the poem amid a critique of another poem of Sutherland's ('10/11/10') about the student protests in London.¹³ Sutherland's occupation poem criticised the management of the university, complained about the fiscal orientation of the institution's decision-making, and expressed solidarity with the students and who were protesting: the reading of it was technically an illegal act, breaking a Court Injunction which the university had taken out to prohibit staff from entering the occupied spaces. His explanation for writing this poem, on the spot, was that it felt to him like an immediate response or address to the political moment. This suggests that his other poetry on its own was in need of supplementation or that the moment called for something of another order, something new that addressed the context. He read it last, after only two of his other published poems and a few 12-line sonnets. Like the work of the other poets reading, it got a big cheer from the students in the room.

The feelings of Bonney and Sutherland towards reading in these occupied spaces and the reactions to their work by the activists within them is, I think, a practical route for thinking about the relationship between poetry and the

immediacy of the political moment that addresses the problematic which Berlant outlines. Sutherland wrote differently for the occasion, directly addressing the circumstances in a language which the occupiers could immediately recognise and identify; Bonney desired for his poetry to be more instrumental, more useful, and, not insignificantly, I think, some of his poetry of this period is prose and that which is not has become more accessible than his earlier work to the reader unaware of the tradition out of which the poetry is working. The prose-poetic 'Letters' Bonney has been posting regularly on his *Abandoned Buildings* blog since 2011 are a case in point: intimate in their address to an unidentified interlocutor, passionate, hopeful, speculative, urban, angry, and even prophetic, they are also semantically clear.¹⁴ Like Bonney, Sutherland raises the question of the efficaciousness of poetry in the context of an occupation: 'would our work work or not, resound or not, be funny or not, when dramatically recontextualised and put to the test of sustaining energies of resistance', he wonders. But ultimately, he concludes that 'in this forum poetry seemed very obviously to have "exercised some incidental influence", to recur to a phrase by John Wilkinson'.¹⁵ I think it is also centrally important that both of these poets give extremely affective readings; readings which do not of course negate the difficulty of the poetics their poems enact, but which certainly hold out an emotional register for the audience to inhabit and share, enjoy and feel the immediate political scene-making that the poetry itself and their readers create.

Occupied spaces are creative, impromptu political spaces; thus, however fragile they can sometimes feel, they are powerfully imbued with the transformation they effect in the use and ownership of space itself. Writing of the fact that artistic circles often cross over with revolutionary ones, anarchist-activist-anthropologist David Graeber suggests that this is 'precisely because these have been spaces where people can experiment with radically different, less alienated forms of life', and, we might add, forms of agency.¹⁶ The occupation space is a microcosm of what could be potentially possible: the decision to invite poets to read is an affirmation of the kind of relationship between the imagination, art and political

space that the occupiers are envisioning. When Berlant articulates the political utility of art that preaches to the choir, she describes it in a similar manner. It is:

a world-confirming strategy of address that performs solidarity and asserts righteousness...When an intimate public is secreted in its own noise, it rehearses affectively what the world will feel like when its vision gains mass traction...perhaps reinforcing intimate binding is the main function of avant-garde counternormative political work. (p. 238)

Rehearsing how the world will feel when a vision is made reality is precisely what occupations, however temporary, try to do, which is why the arts are affirmed alongside the more practical lectures, reading groups, and political discussions which these spaces also usually host. Graeber sees the artist or poet and the revolutionary as one with the potential to challenge and help restructure the social imagination (p. 61); they provide spaces where experimentation and play with the concept of value is central (p. 97). This final point about value is, I think, one of the most important that Graeber gives us if we want to think about radical poetics and political spaces.

One of the indisputable facts about radical poetic aesthetics is its insistence on valuing what it does outside of everyday market forces. There is the fact that it is possible to buy, for very little money, and for a price which in no way reflects the labour and time involved in the making of them, seriously beautiful objects, like the books made by Richard Owens of Damn the Caesars or Richard Parker of Crater Press. These are exquisite objects and no one who holds them would think otherwise. On top of that, the poetic values the poetry itself enacts are also removed from economic thinking. This is one way of thinking of disputations of 'good' work: not as a fascistic act of judgement but as the formation of categories which are not subject to economic equivalence.

Viewed in this light, Bonney's and Sutherland's occupation readings

constitute important affirmations of solidarity, vision-sharing, and partake in a new kind of social and spatial imaginary which shows us ways to value both poetry and its potentially affective space-making. However, there is nothing necessary about the radical aesthetics of what they write which makes this true, except that avant-garde practices tend to line up against a mainstream which is institutionalised and attached firmly to the market. I have one reservation, however, one that is remarked in, worried at, and often satirised in the work of both Bonney and Sutherland, and that is that a passionately affective poetry reading which displays a fantastic skill with language and knowledge of poetical strategies can lead back to the figure of the artist, of the poet, as a kind of vanguardist or as the sole focus of social and cultural attention, a fact that is often underlined by the traditional practice of putting on the ‘best’ or ‘best known’ poet as the ‘headliner’. Reading in occupied spaces or community-built environments to a collective whose cause is affirmed by the reading diffuses this since the poet is serving the group rather than simply their own reputation as a poet. I am not, in arguing this, claiming that all poetry readings should therefore be in these spaces or, indeed, that no poet should be concerned about people hearing their work. However, these spaces open up a different role for the political poet.

I will close on a further, recent example of how poetry might contribute to the scene of political event-making or, as in this instance, serve to alter the feel of that scene. In the autumn-winter of 2013 there were two one-day UCU strikes at universities across the UK. Because I live in London, on both occasions I joined the picket line at Birkbeck, University of London, in Bloomsbury. On both occasions, there was also a poetry reading organised next to the picket line later on in the day. British university picket lines are invariably cold places and the task of picketing can be demoralising, as students push through the lines and ignore their lecturers or express anger and frustration. It can be a testing and tiring experience to have in your place of work, especially given that levels of union membership are in no way represented in the usually meagre numbers of picketers. Explaining why you are there, giving out flyers, attempting to talk people out of crossing

the line: these are all relatively monotonous activities, repeated many times and, more often than not, can feel dispiriting. The Birkbeck poetry readings were organised by Sam Dolbear, a PhD candidate at the university, not by UCU, although the union officials on the pickets gave their sanction for the readings, which occurred just outside the entrance to the main building where the picket line was. This is a quasi-public space: an open square, flanked by buildings for several London universities, which the public can pass though if they are walking in Bloomsbury. There is no clear delineation between what is the 'campus' and what is a public square. I want to highlight this because the experience of a picket line poetry reading is going to be affected by the physical location where it occurs: colleagues on a Queen Mary University of London strike line where there was also a poetry reading had different experiences to the one I describe here because their picket line bordered a busy public street.

The poetry readings at Birkbeck captured the curiosity of the passing public, provided a focal point for people to stop and gather, and, crucially, rejuvenated the spirits of those on the picket line. It changed the atmosphere and it made the atmosphere changeable as each different reader brought their chosen poems and texts to the loud hailer. Although the call for poets to read at these events had been wide and non-specific, many people chose not to read their own work but that of other poets and writers: we heard Anna Mendelsohn, Williams Shakespeare and Blake, Abiezer Coppe, Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin. This in itself was intriguing, as though something about the picket line protest space had guided many of us away from our own work, shifting the focus, making ourselves the conduits for other people's revolutionary words. The strident statements of Blake, for instance, suited the moment and our desires for change; Benjamin's diagnoses of the universities in his own time uncannily reflected many of the worries academics have today about the direction of education policy and higher education funding. Private security guards circled the readings suspiciously but it would be difficult to accuse students of reading Shakespeare outside the doors of the building housing the university library. These readings, like the occupation readings before

them, put poetry to political work, enabling a shift in feeling and lifting the spirits of those who had given their day to campaigning. It is not that I am arguing poetry should *only* be read in this manner or circumstances, but the examples of readings that I have given here go some way towards unpicking the assumption that poetry's relevance to political action is tangential. In these contexts, instead, poetry served politics and the communities asking for change directly and passionately.

¹ See the following for his public apology: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-S8EqyjgvBI>. It spawned multiple parodies, such as the following: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFdFpSCWihU>. It is worth pointing out that because Wales and Scotland have devolved parliaments, they have different policies on student university fees. Welsh students receive subsidies from the government; Scottish students pay no fees at all. Thus, strictly speaking, whilst Coalition cuts apply across the country, it is English university students who are affected by the raise in tuition fees.

² On the EMA, see Janet Murray, 'Students Hit by Scrapping of Education Maintenance Allowance', *The Guardian* (25 October 2010). Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2010/oct/25/education-maintenance-allowance>. Accessed 13 June 2014. For an in-depth discussion of how the raising of student fees and the cutting of the government funding for university teaching (except for the protected STEM subjects of science, technology, engineering and maths), see Stefan Collini, 'Sold Out' in *London Review of Books* 35:20 (24 October 2013). Available at: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v35/n20/stefan-collini/sold-out>.

³ Although often called the London riots, rioting broke out at the same time across the country in cities like Liverpool, Salford, Coventry and Birmingham. For a good account of the events leading up to the riots, the riots themselves, and their results, as well as a range of opinions from local activists, friends and family of Mark Duggan, and public figures, see the documentary film *Riots from Wrong* (DVD: Fully Focused Productions, 2012).

⁴ It is worth explaining that I delivered a version of this paper at the Poetry and Revolution Conference held at Birkbeck, University of London, in May 2012. Almost exactly a year later, I took part in a smaller event, Militant Poetics and Poetry, also hosted at Birkbeck, which was intended to discuss and foster the way in which the poetry community we were a part of in the UK might productively engage with ideas and strategies of political change. It was a day both energising and problematic for me. The practical outcomes hoped for did not develop. However, in October 2013 I was invited, along with some of the others who were at Militant Poetics, to go to the Bay Area for a conference entitled Revolution and/or Poetry which was co-hosted by UC Santa Cruz, UC Davis and UC Berkeley. The reversal of the 'poetry' and 'revolution' in the title chosen by the Bay Area organisers, as well as the 'and/or' are broadly indicative of a rather different tonality to the discussions in both locations.

⁵ The newest party political movement in the UK is Left Unity, which is attempting to bring together the disparate groups of the left-wing, so, much like the poetry community, it contains a variety of people whose ambitions are not necessarily ultimately parliamentary. However, that said, many more radical groups on the left will have nothing to do with Left Unity since the aims and processes of the party are still tied to the political system as it exists now.

⁶ See Sean Bonney, 'Letter on Harmony and Sacrifice', posted 31st January 2012 to his blog, *Abandoned Buildings*. Available at: <http://abandonedbuildings.blogspot.co.uk/>.

⁷ For instance, see Keston Sutherland's statement at the Revolution and/or Poetry conference in The Bay Area, October 2013, available at: <http://revolutionandorpoetry.wordpress.com/2013/10/15/keston-sutherlands-statement-for-revolution-and-or-poetry/comment-page-1/>. I do not agree with all the premises of this statement, but it is a clear example of a passionate plea for the political relevance of poetry.

⁸ See also the discussion on this between Berlant and myself in: Lauren Berlant and Jennifer Cooke, 'Politics, Teaching, Art and Writing: An Interview with Lauren Berlant' in *Textual Practice*, 27:6 (2013): 961-970.

⁹ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011), p. 237. Further references, where clear, will be in parentheses in the body of my paper.

¹⁰ Sean Bonney, *Happiness: Poems After Rimbaud* (London: Unkant, 2011), p.12.

¹¹ Sean Bonney, 'Letter on Poetics (After Rimbaud)' in *Crisis Inquiry*, ed. Richard Owens (Buffalo: Punch Press, 2012), p. 21. First published on Bonney's blog, Abandoned Buildings in 2011, and then in a small print run called *Four Letters*, *Four Comments* published by Punch Press in 2011. Sean read at the Occupy Finsbury Square site; at university occupations at SOAS, Sussex and UCL; and at sites occupied by Really Free School and Bloomsbury Fightback.

¹² Quoted with kind permission of the author. The email was dated 19th March 2010 and was sent to the UK Poetry Listserv, a closed poetry discussion list.

¹³ Justin Katko, 'On '10/11/10"' in *Hi Zero*, ed. Joe Luna, Vol. 4 (2011). Unpaginated.

¹⁴ Bonney's 'Letter on Riots and Doubt' was posted 5th August 2011, the day before the riots started. It includes the lines: 'The main problem with a riot is that all too easily it flips into a kind of negative intensity, that in the very act of breaking out of our commodity form we become more profoundly frozen within it. Externally at least we become the price of glass, or a pig's overtime. But then again, I can only say that because there haven't been any damn riots. Seriously, if we're not setting fire to cars we're nowhere.' Sean Bonney, *Four Letters, Four Comments* (Scarborough, ME: Punch Press, 2011), unpaginated.

¹⁵ This is in fact a misquote or, more accurate, a quote-mash of two sections of John Wilkinson's letter to *Chicago Review* in reply to a letter from Peter Riley in turn penned in reply to an article Wilkinson wrote on Andrea Brady. The first quote is Wilkinson's restating of how his article had pointed to 'certain writers [Brady and Sutherland] whose lyric writing is tied to other modes of writing in a wider political project as more likely to exert a political influence' (p. 231). The second suggests 'their poetry [Brady and Sutherland] is being written at a point of historical convergence where it might exercise an incidental political potency' (p. 232). See John Wilkinson, 'Letterbox', *Chicago Review* 53:2 (2007), pp. 231-238. The argument between Riley and Wilkinson is over politics and lyric poetry. As I hope this short article makes clear, I'd not want to deny that Brady and Sutherland's poetry might have the effects Wilkinson claims but I am concerned that the contexts for reception – especially the role of readings in fostering poetry communities – more often than not make his claims idealistic, giving this poetry a political agency that it is hard to locate. Having said that, Wilkinson does mention the internet as a source of encounter in his letter and certainly the work of Bonney, Brady and Sutherland can potentially be found by anyone online..

¹⁶ David Graeber, *Revolutions in Reverse: Essays on Politics, Violence, Art and Imagination* (London: Minor Compositions, 2011), p. 98.

ROBERT KIELY

on Samantha Walton

Amaranth, Unstitched has been released from Maine-based Punch Press, attributed to Samantha Walton. Walton's other texts include *the duplicate book* (2012), and as Posie Rider, *City Break Weekend Songs* (2011), and *tristanundisolve* (2010). She is also one-half of the symbiotic Lorqi Blinks, author of *The Owl, the Pusycat and the Jetpack*, available on Kindle and online.

Amaranth is an “imaginary flower reputed never to fade.” An early Greek fable counted among *Aesop's Fables* compares the rose to the amaranth to illustrate the difference in fleeting and everlasting beauty:

An amaranth planted in a garden near a Rose-Tree, thus addressed it: “What a lovely flower is the Rose, a favorite alike with Gods and with men. I envy you your beauty and your perfume.” The Rose replied, “I indeed, dear Amaranth, flourish but for a brief season! If no cruel hand pluck me from my stem, yet I must perish by an early doom. But thou art immortal and dost never fade, but bloomest for ever in renewed youth.

In John Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*, amaranth is said to have been removed from the sublunar, fallen realm, and restored to heaven:

Immortal amarant, a flower which once
In paradise, fast by the tree of life,
Began to bloom; but soon for man's offence
To heaven removed, where first it grew, there grows,
And flowers aloft, shading the fount of life,
And where the river of bliss through midst of heaven
Rolls o'er elysian flowers her amber stream:

With these that never fade the spirits elect
Bind their resplendent locks.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in *Work Without Hope* (1825), also refers to the herb (Ins 7-10), Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'Bereavement' (see yourself), Walter Savage Landor's 'Aesop and Rhodopè' (ibid.); Joachim du Bellay's 'A Vow To Heavenly Venus'; the fourth book of John Keats' *Endymion*; Jonathan Swift's *Cadenus & Vanessa*; H. W. Longfellow's *Two Angels*; W. Cowper's *Hope*. It might, given all of these samples high poetic examples, stand in for *poetic artifice*. Amaranth as a fadeless flower is a poetic conception.

What might it mean to remove an amaranth's stitches? To unstitch implies a slow, methodical undoing, rather than a tearing apart. "As Wise men say of Ill Grounded Friendships; 'tis better to unstitch than to tear them all to pieces on a suddain." Amaranth often used for wreaths or crowns or laurels, those things poets love to wear and sit on when haemorrhoidal. This work, then, is a patient attempt to unpick a high-literary-slash-poetic conceit, possibly to return poetry to the quotidian – though that is also quite a banal suggestion. If there is value in this, it is in the fact that this poetry is extremely wary of any facile return to the ordinary, or any attempt at contemporaneity: "We are all about the present – and we know it's getting passé | writing poems about Tesco." This is the tightrope Walton walks, slowly, carefully, but also with elegance and poise.

The book shares its title with the first poem, whose first line atomizes the syllables of its words into staccato (*forget* in "for get me not"). Then an "I" arrives on the scene, and unravels air which is damaged, yellow and burnt. Rather than piecing together, this is poetry "piec[ing] apart." The I turns to the horizon and demands it respond to its unstitching: "o horizon state your piece." The second stanza places us under a fog, in an idle house with nettle soup. Something amaranthine and unbound – a book? – clasps, and this clasping burns and bleaches bones, it is tortuous. The immortality the term "amaranthine" confers is tortuous, unlivable. Returning to the

horizon, or something in the distance, the poem states that “it’s only the blue | mountains that are inevitable,” and the next stanza adds that they are “deathless.” The third stanza offers a wormhole back to the title-word “unstitched.” The I watches a bird’s throat as it sings from a few yards away. The next line suddenly capitalizes the first letter, a stronger break, as we are jolted from nature back to politics: “With no demos to riot with | I represent me this fortnight”. The poet imagines that Leibniz’s principle of contradiction migrates into politics, that A only equal A, that the poet only represent themselves, Mary represents Mary, Jake Jake, no constituents but themselves. But merely one poem later: “right now i’m in fourteen places at once | i’m indefinite // i’m chorus.” Anyway, in “THIS IS NOT WHO I AM AND THIS IS NOT OK” (whose title also punctures the self-identification/representation of the title-poem, suggesting that what *is* is more than it is) the riot emerges:

there’s a riot on the Meadows
food-borne bacteria : vendors : lease holders
devaluing their own investments
the grass dying under picketers

The cover is a four-color plate, pasted on Stonehenge wraps folded over black Bristol, of a crowd of long-haired figures arching to the right, presumably rushing forwards, with one hand raised –the riot, or one side of a pitched-battle therein. In ‘ALL AT ONCE!’ the riot drops into the poem again to see if we’re still paying attention, but this time:

mace is in the air tonight
we crowd through crowds
cutting our lips
on canisters
I’m the only one looking at the
landscape as the rich & indistinct
po po rides us

a panda boat
all blown up
inside &
sticky white

I feel like a salt mine
aqueous & rafted

Like the mine of ‘CIRCUITOUS,’ the speaker is fucked (“you state, over lemon polenta cake | [...] *I am a bore-hole, & must be plumbed for minerals* | *& despised* | Why not just say—the water born from the rock is cool | but you have been raped by industry | & in many ways unnaturally encased”), the rich and indistinct “po po” (police) fill the sky with mace.

These poems are concerned with employment, sunlight, the seasons, plants. The poem ‘THIS IS NOT WHO I AM AND THIS IS NOT OK’ begins by setting the scene in winter, a time of “long shadows” which “make for | the most melancholic | time of year.” But wage-labour comes to join the party, aggravating an already-shit situation:

as i was locked in wage
seeng sunshine by the brightening
on whitewash & the sweat of staff
my line manager
remote as a roundabout
stropo as a suburb
sunlight isn't a problem for me, he's saying
you've got to separate love from labour

I'm fine, so you should be too, the yuppie further up the chain yelps, looking up from a copy of *How to Drain Purses and Immiserate People* by Dale Carnivore. The working-environment is comfortable, but artificial:

they make false windows to
pacify you as they
generate fresh air
you can't focus on
anything

And why would you want to, when you are being paid to “listen to people talk shit all day i mean literally | that is your job.” This job, probably the one which requires a lot of photocopying in ‘ADMONISHMENT SUB-PLOT (INTENTIONALLY UNSUNG),’ also demands a strain on our sinews:

all our mis-used sinews
which with tenderness
we make tender

Legal tender *is* our pain.

But home offers no escape from this system of exchange, here one is simply spending rather than earning, it is a “box” in these poems, and one which continues to drain one’s purse. Capitalism is, after all, a system which makes it difficult to survive unless someone else makes money off of it.

behind the blinds which have been pulled down all around
We pay up, & the soles I touch with my feet which
correspond to the street
really are responsible for the global tarnishing &
prophetic rumblings of the tectonic plates beneath

Those last lines are from ‘CIRCUITOUS,’ which resonate across to the spectral evocation of ‘sous les pavés’ in the final poem: “the beach under the beach still processing its feelings.” The poems leave these prophetic rumblings largely unvoiced, they walk over them *almost* carefree. The speaker is walking along the street or kayaking in Cambridge in a straw hat

[‘ADMONISHMENT SUB-PLOT (INTENTIONALLY UNSUNG)’], and this sits uneasily alongside the riot. The texts bear an incongruity between this, the riots, and the later profession to love bankers. If, as the title poem concludes, “there’s something rich beneath,” these poems are emotionally distant from the rumblings of the tectonic plates, the beach. ‘THIS MESSY POEM CALLED FEELINGS’ begins by repeating five lines from ‘ADMONISHMENT SUBPLOT (UNSUNG)’ verbatim.

take any product
from the next room
scanning sentiment
& the heart of the city
is stacking in photocopiers

It is unclear what labour is being performed here: scanning books, documents? The poems are also strangely chunky and modular, and if you compare the published ‘CIRCUITOUS’ in this book with the version available on *Blackbox Manifold 9* you’ll see what I mean. ‘THIS MESSY POEM CALLED FEELINGS’ then amps itself up, psyches us with “vim”: “let’s churn out a classic,” something that can be neatly squeezed into “anthologised dedications” to flames no sooner born than old. But then a section of ‘ADMONISHMENT SUBPLOT (UNSUNG)’ returns, drags us back to work. But the gris gris is no longer right-aligned, seems to have changed – perhaps the poem can enact its own kind of voodoo:

take this product [& then some]

my lovely gris gris
won’t you
have a hold of my lovely gris gris

When the right-hand margin admonishes us to “have a hold | of my lovely | gris gris”, it is probably talking about the “product” mentioned twice already,

and putting it forward as a source of voodoo and bewitchment - gris-gris, also spelled grigri, are voodoo amulets originating in Africa which protect the wearer from evil or bring luck. It consists of a small cloth bag, usually inscribed with verses from the Qur'an and containing a ritual number of small objects.

The speaker walks, "catching the eyes of the traders whom I dare to love | my ankles a testament to my good faith in them, us all | my community a promise I make with my purse." With a purse, the true pineal gland of the body social, the speaker declares its complicity, and (even more daring) *love* for the traders, the hedge-fund managers, possibly the same hedge fund manager from the poem 'THIS IS NOT WHO I AM AND THIS IS NOT OK':

i just want to
hold you & break the hooligan sky &
cash cheques for you, be a bad hedge fund manager
correct your rogue equations
as if you could float away

The hedge fund manager is reckless ("bad", "rogue equations"), but somehow charming nonetheless... oh you traders, unregulated, messing things up again! You guys... Then a line cheers that "we are the fluff of trade!" We, poets, are secondary fluff to the economic machine. But flippancy can be deadly. When writing that:

suffusing work with art we can
be cooperative with capitalism
a kind lady in the driving seat
& her scrivener
not to be confused
with the broth we can make
from the lips of the herd

The poet suggests that by spreading the liquid of art over work, “we can | be cooperative with capitalism.” Kate Clark working as a literacy volunteer, or something. Capitalism as a kind lady in a driving seat heading for the abyss, and poets can be her “scrivener.” This is a situation the poem archly raises its left eyebrow at., as it ironically suggests that using capitalism’s own words to produce better “broth,” better than the language of proletariat cant (“the lips of the herd.”)

Oh. I haven’t really conveyed how earnest, yet arch, and emotional these poems are. In this, they offer a distinctly different tone from the remarkable work of Posie Rider.

— an earlier version of this essay appeared in *Hix Eros* #3

¹ [https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/2125248/The%20Owl%2C%20the%20Pussycat%20and%20the%20Jetpack%20\(Lorqi%20Blinks\).pdf](https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/2125248/The%20Owl%2C%20the%20Pussycat%20and%20the%20Jetpack%20(Lorqi%20Blinks).pdf)

² trans. Laura Gibbs, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). *Amaranthus*, collectively known as amaranth, are also a cosmopolitan genus of annual or short-lived perennial plants.

³ III, 353; cf. XI 78

⁴ The book itself is hand-stitched, make of that what you will.

⁵ Roger L’Estrange, *Cicero’s Offices* (1688), 79.

⁶ For a more polemical attempt to engage with similar subject-matter, cf. Pocahontas Mildew, ‘DISPERSAL ZONE,’ *Internal Leg & Cutler Preview*, 56.

⁷ The sun appears again in ‘ADMONISHMENT SUBPLOT (UNSUNG),’ this time “piss-weak”. In ‘CIRCUITOUS’, the “Sunlight is streaming through the antique glaze”

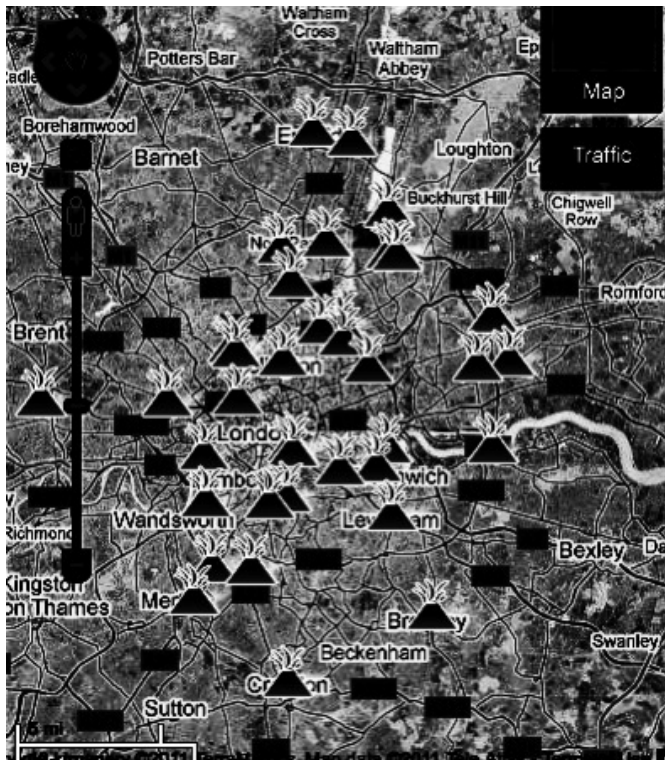
⁸ <http://www.strikemag.org/bullshit-jobs/>

⁹ Cf. ‘BONEWORK’s “housebox,” available on Walton’s *Archive of the Now* page.

¹⁰ For some attempts to dig into and voice the prophetic rumblings of these tectonic plates, cf. the letters and recent work of Sean Bonney (<http://abandonedbuildings.blogspot.co.uk/>).

¹¹ <http://www.manifold.group.shef.ac.uk/issue9/SamanthaWalton9.html>

COLLEEN HIND & POCAHONTAS MILDEW TRIGGER WARNING



August 2011

Trident shot Mark Duggan down. Register the irony. *Memorise* this mother fucker. The Peckham safe is open. Work is like arson. Let Gregg's burn forever. We are all all we've done. Get *real* black people! Mark Duggan isn't dead! Keep the obsequy so strict. This is not a breakdown of the administration of grief. This is Ancient Greek. Steal everything that moves. The sanction of antiquity. Safe. Go Boris, on the day of aridity, of shadow and sadness, on the BBC like a Pagan hag on a stake, and say you don't want to understand it. Of course that only makes sense if you already do. Time to rethink social housing is knife crime. Clegg begged students, "Just *look* at what it is you're fighting. Just *look*. Just *look!* Just *look!* Just *look!*" You looked around. A terrible smell was replacing you. Unlike these traitors, these locusts and gangsters. These nests of apaches, these thick white chavs. Welcome on. Every looted plasma mirror cop a riot turn on. Safe. It tore us up not having you. Speculum tumultus. Next screen over. Word scrambles "negroes" to "eengross" automatically, every flaming crossesque cop tape scourge gouging, on the coincidental Tortfeasous backward lashes, the frogs they collect, grovelling in Leftist throats to flake away our brains like white cabbage, out before the downstroke. Shellsuit and liquid shank. Fortunately KPMG believes that we are *kaffirs*, insistent on its freedom to deny the etymology of *belief*. Black pig rumbled into the picture incompletely, a picture whose every quality makes the man whinge on an unlicensed TV *live*. "I'm *not* trying to justify a very small image! I can't comment on a piece of footage less than two inches across!" A hundred paragraphs ahead. Condemnation intonation. Croydon flaming blue. We can't properly get asleep to go to it. The days run together like the gangs in solidarity. Does pure criminality exist? Read what is written by the Charles Ives Youth Centre and the Khalid Qureshi Foundation. We know that there are punishments you will bitterly regret, as goes for anyone with the faintest vestige of sympathy, for the people who have usefully unemployed us. Six months for a water bottle. *Disgusting they'll be out in five*. They'll get *themselves* out! Defibrillate Ian Tomlinson, shank [x]. Put quotes around *they have no real interest in the issue, so they fade away quickly, depriving the agitators of their most valuable weapon*. Urge children to contact each other, sexually. The remembrance of everything moving past, against the vast

concussion of the economic justification. Remind us more continually of the governmental holidays' truncation, voodoo metonymic screens for what you've strategised labourisously to *never* reduce. On the fucking hook! Wise is the shine! Another flashpoint to the west of the capital city. We don't just believe that it's impossible for you to believe it's not professional rape how you live to pay such shit to give. *And we just do.* We just take the revelation of conventional banking capital's involvement in the loan-shark sector's growth *as an open call to hog-tie the investors.* Our adversary in history is them, which is you. Straight through the floorboards of glass be faceplanted. No war but the class war. The property you steal is our birthright. Our quantity of life. Our heart's flames lick and suck. State-capital complex skanks by us acting all stoosh. Paranoid coo-coo wobbles past, beak in a grin. Concerned to rehumanise devils, you do injustice to the context they supplied us. With closed-circuit television you try to lure the smoke into your pockets, and no warrant should be required to say the mindless thugs are *you*. We have got your calculus. It is properly antisocial. It wasn't Willetts and the non-doms' welfare babies made this happen. Only the Illegitimate made this happen, so bright our labour. Our savagery flashing. But the relation of the unemployed, to the international proletariat, is analogous to what? Ask you later? Clean up the streets and we'll kill ourselves. Don't refuse to post the "evidence" and we'll kill ourselves forever. Exception be the rule, the end of showbiz as usual, the absolute denial of the fucked-up world as you have known it. Because we can only make sense within a condition of intense class struggle, like we are living in right now, and which *we* (minus *you*) are losing. Every quality of an avalanche of mud being kicked into our faces. We are all all defenses is at least half wrong. If we're fighting for a cause let's fucking fight for a cause. *Torch* the policies for doing away with oppression that will cause the Spartaci to vomit. Can you hear us up the street, screaming the lyrics of Jonathan Swift? Not just webbed heat, not the bliss of the Debenhams alarm. Hand to hand and mouth to mouth. Plasma dance notation: "The *audacity* of these *bastards* using *bikes* to get around!" The marriage's impact felt by tasteful cycle culture for decades. "Plus their Blackberries and their iPhones and their God knows what!" The fire's descent upon the Camden Pizza Hut we've all been waiting

for. Old Kent Road Reddit. Stay both wet and hard. “Correction! I don’t mean the City of London! When I said *the city*, I meant *London!*” Pledge allegiance to a civilization that is openly destroying you. *Be the first to cast your vote for the torching of the Tower Bridge at Barclay’s!* Whose estate’s the realest now? Likely targets fall in or dilate relativistically, ground zero falsified as the iterating triangulation of the hysterical Irish moraliser whose zeal nearly overrides his flattening into a sound bite which the BBC on the half hour pathologically replay. *Yessss boy*. Aura count as fuck. As disembodied headlamps queue. Then our masked Walthamstonian, who carries out the letters, looks over at the Ed Rubberband of Darth Attridge’s distended form, snaps it. Unsafe. Ealing shopping centre, *now is injury time*. The Liquid Bros play Amphisbaenic Dragon. *Pure and Sheer*. How correct we know these words to be, relieved of the head they once modified. Turn coat and cold and cough and laugh. Turn solid. Reverse Operation Swamp. Refuse to be criminalised. We said: “It’s a fucking *girl* you c*nts!” But wait! She’s just a *man!* And under fifteen unemblazoned shields, now a *bird* of whom there is *no mo*, in a viral praxis *linoflow*. She remains your child too, however much she leads a riot convoy, *mad people showin up*, wobbling as she jams the BM’s Centaur repertoire into the Picadilly’s gob at the angle of strife, straight blocking up the metropolitan bowels. Ensuing *storm of affect* hovers extant for three millennia, cut short by the pain of an Antikytheran alarm. How the fuck is it that you never read *Hax II: Undo Dealeate*, which before the Clapham Junction Party Superstore is a prophecy: “Parents! They’ve got every bottle of alcohol you could imagine! And your children are the closest thing you’ve got to a capital asset! You have everything to lose but your capacity to *destroy them!*” In the midst of London, there exists a closed and cryptic society. But what if we’ve got the wording wrong? Likewise for the inscription on the memorial to razed enterprise: “Lament your terrible decision to own a vast percentage of everything. And shut the fuck up.” Bedtime storytime. *The riots have improved God’s personal health. There exist many gangs with just one member or fewer*. Like a shoulder blade of ebony or the greenish comet tail-end of a tired solidarity glow-worm, the Mayor’s holiday itself Lorena Bobbitt’s, exfoliated from its own sticky remainder. Eengross! How fast does

a building burn on holiday? Or how deep does your sorrow run? Or what is the good in times of economical difficulty? The answers to these questions are hidden in the seven following correct magical sequences, each sequence containing precisely just five words per unit: *Set the trees on fire! They all gave us static! We can hardly be wrong! Depends on what you sell! Unchain us from the chavs! We are desperately in love! Up against the flames motherfucker!* On an automatic platform, London moves. Potencies to slake. There is obviously a new language comprising everyday symbols. The element of organization in this. We stress ‘element’. Electrify the streets. You were *alone* when you fought off *forty-four fucking girls* to protect a *real estate shop*? And it wasn’t even *yours*?! Laughter riotous and sensate. But *listen* white people! *Meta-real’s* the punch line’s pivot! You are keying in the sequence to unlock the transformation of an eschatological blip into an array of private assets. Being all all we’ve done until morning, like our being untouchable, we dwell on what we’ll do in the past. Flip the looted fire extinguisher to open. Steal anything that coos back to nowhere through the over-verified areas. Dust cloud sweeps out from Chalk Farm. Safe. We hit the windows of the Brokelad’s in turn, imagining we were firing round the corners of Mistrata, or whistling a round of J.R. Thompson through a Richmond cannonade. You are right: it is quite repetitive. And you’re sure it’ll all subside once the dawn rocks up, in its freaked-out aubade, in its brocade of acid, packing its monstrous cape of shadow, dew frozen back its eyes. Idle and strategic in the bright April of historical life. Heart puke at cliff dance. Tape fried at source. Frays brocade as shadow grows. Can we believe our homes aren’t any longer our own? That some enslaved rogue trader must to our pseudo-capital shard be the agent of amplification under a moniker of fire? Heavenly seals take their time to fly apart. Mineral grows itself. Cosmic signs hang down with the phrase “business as usual”. Redundant. Let us thrash your backwards hangar, your BBM disclosure. Solidarity is just one form of resource co-ordination, neck-and-neck with Seasonal Victorian factory philanthropism. BS Leftists in want of BBM, running behind with the sprouts, forgetting to organise *your* shit as righteously burning. Banners and a stupefied slogan. It’s obvious that you’ve never read the Notebooks of Pocahontas Mildew. Who the fuck do you think we think you are? Have you

even smoked Mark Duggan's shit? *In the car now?* You've not spent a fortnight in Tottenham in your life. For how long do we twitch after you bleed us hypnoidal? When you freeze into our pusbus crystal the *Cowboys & Aliens* "my face ramp dot hex"? New light-neglect de-shed upon that vitriolic sorry, your last thirty tweets and books were fucking incomprehensible. We bear a bey's jereed. MPS Disorder Update For All Businesses. You are expected to make extraordinarily fine judgements over the level of force you use in the heat of the moment. This is a question of taste. Do not wait to be attacked. Engage as many potential offenders as possible. The unwary: push them. Clearly undefine innocent victims. Emanate a volunteer. Split in two. This is still the case if you use something to hand as a weapon. Repeat this to anyone. Try shoving a metal shutter into the folds of their final lung. There is a mouthpiece for further inflation and deflation, and a light for getting your wage slaves to think you are behind them. Do not inflate from within the cabin, otherwise your exit from the cabin will be impeded. Go from "Cameron deboarding an abandoned Falcon HTV-2 en route from his holiday island in $\chi \hat{a} o \varsigma$ [footnote: aka Chaos Isle] reboarding it." You're getting *hourly* updates about these *vile* acts? Our dead amphisbaena's more *au fait* than that. One evening, over the fumes of some exceptional wine, you'll comprehend the full force of a Molotov cocktail. "Parents! Do the right thing! *Join* your children! Stay outdoors! Never go home! Overbuy rosebud combat, clit redacted to vast bindi to enter the shop cracks neutered!" But you, on the other hand, wandered lonely as a Dracula, jiggling every doorknob along the estate just in case. Shatter. Quick PSA to the migrant Chicanos: "All of your birthrights are inflammable!" Now say that from the piercing clarity of a London high street. Lock on spirit chopper, saved across fire and blood. Corrupted by suffering, by liberty humiliated. A tinderbox, by definition, *must* ignite. Do it justly. For fifteen minutes keep their fingers under sand. Burn everything you don't want to. No thing shall be omitted. Particular aspects of our behaviour could be made immediately legal. Marrow reloot. Remote ill-advised persuasion of a goat suffering the shakes. Eight-year-olds running master classes on petrol gun maxima, in remembrance of the motherfucking EMA. Repeat: no commodities for lunch. The licensers of

debt, their palatial enchantments. What is the degree of your oblivion to our wish for you to smolder in Hell? The solution to the nothing which causes deprivation is the fantasied plentitude of capital investment. The bourgeoisie know more than how to kill. What is crime? You already know. The sheer pay of the masseuse at a belated Cobra meeting. Think about that, from the position of the adjective in the noun phrase of the subject. It's another one of our sick little jokes. You don't know who Mark Duggan is. Overtime unpaid. We cried out loud for Carpetleft, for the soldered flats above it. Their moral inconvenience. And the 9/12 as fuck furniture showroom. So let us introduce you to the neglectable whipping of the lashes of our one and only hair, our malicious ornamentation, our decoration of the forgotten interior. At one of the Parliament Square demos a fourteen-year-old giant beat us up and threw debris at our enemies. "*But you are burning plastic near her lip,*" we sang alone, nearly supine past the line of double cages. Their sandbags. The true molten rubble. The flames along her cheeks. Insurrection. The apperception of what binds us together. Right up to our necks. We screamed and covered our ears whenever our dead ventriloquised this caveat: "An eleven year old boy is the oldest to be arrested. He has pleaded guilty to looting at Debenhams in Romford. I bet a few of you out there can think of better places to shop! *Ha-ha-ha!* For real though, apparently he took a waste paper basket, which is just annoying. If you don't think these vermin should be hung then you are seriously detached from the consciousness of the working people of Britain. All you anarchist faggots think the sentences are too extreme? Same goes for all you fudge-packing paedophiles and b-benefit leeches? The problem is your refusal to understand that our government is keeping a *liberal* check on the wishes of the majority of the population, who would like to see *hanging* brought back, *amongst other things*, like the gold standard and pussy and extinction events and poetry. You Marxist wigger-fascists and race traitors and leftist intellectual rapists on maiow-miaow and vitamin water and dope should show some *respect* for the coalition in this time of exceptional shortfalls, because *they're* showing a rather progressive *restraint* as regards the fate of the crusty rioter twats, *amongst other things!* [Off-air] Now where the *fuck* is my Profound Appletini?!" Her voice was matter of fact, as if referring to actual

incest. Take her to jail. Without touching anything. Execution of light. No weapon is non-lethal. You are Oreó apparently. That is code for unhistorical. We wish to be associated with at least one antithetical honour. Like wearing books as armour against the invisible sonic boom spinning out from a total police heart siren: “The good thing about the riots was that the superior chav you wrote about in your book was able to replace his counterfeit shell suit with the genuine article. Then he got his girlfriend pregnant, and in a decade she’ll be a single grandmother with an unidentifiable STR.” Don’t just watch?v=Zmo8DG1gno4&x. Don’t even say thank you to the plebs. Return the children to their cubicle of stone in the sky. Loot rice. Rip Cadbury Digits. The police category of absolute deprivation feels the full force of a slow motion oral collapse upon our own liquid Johnson. You want us to think that capital cannot be responsible for that from which it is separated? You never read *Queen Mab: A Philosophical Poem*. Don’t call it a protest. Count the cost, its qualitative stuffing. Lasso any old hoodie. Beat the cradle. Debenhams flushed out. You’ve already devoured most of the parents. Chant it. Our everyday life, so to speak, our sleep, is never as carefree as you force us to pretend. The days run together, like the truths of who we are. Liberation of the *Arson Solidarity Looper*. In *esprit de corps*, steal replete *entity:bin*, then march through dirty Clapham spilling it out before the feral janitorial mob, who become intrigued, then invigorated, then inspired, then infected, then inhuman, then intrepid, then shrieking in a monotony prescriptive: “*It is typical of us to refuse to think of anything but our shops. How could we not enjoy the litigious aftermath of battle? Can you imagine the degrees of freedom in our claims on the insurance?*” It is anarchy we hate. And liberty unrestrained. Crunch point. Your kind will eat shit. In a loop straight from your asses. MPS Disorder Update For Everyone Else. Those caught eating wombles will not be thought of as cannibals. We laugh when you cry. Were you serious in your letter to the editor when you proclaimed the most inspiring effect of the riots to be the mob of Clapham sweepers? Either way, you have made use of precisely the wrong irony, because you failed to read *The Fascism of the Broom*, prior to getting drunk and muttering desperately into the broadcast: “Oh my God! Another vehicle! That clearly is a vehicle!” On being plundered. Bikes go thieving self-reflexively,

Warr-vehicular unions make us harder, ride faster, live longer. There there, plant eyes. Goodbye, mask arms. Gear up to our eyebrows. On minor vein mirror. BBC crew lost to looters. Tied to a police van. To the slaughter. In this liberticious market, not a single little piggie. They guard a shop whose insurance the accountants don't want to service. Watch the headless degeneration of the Metropolitan Police. Its corridor leads vociferously to the magistrate's den. Their "*getting behind*" the courts with all their twining wands and brooms. Behind legal formulas. The stretch marks of their resources are proportional to *what?* The obsolescence of the *Chicago Review?* Not exactly. It's the threat of human rights law, of "ending up" on a charge. Manslaughter. *Whatever.* Now the women show up. Having melted into the air, they reappear. But we don't like the way you talk about broad daylight and the air. Riot flow cannon's ratiocinating fist. The right to revolution, to streets where the wild conditions are eternally dominant. "Reports are streaming in that the city's esteemed smoke machines, known locally as *buildings*, are being consumed and replaced by gigantic chemical reactions! Can this be *right* white people?! Are not their proud, ethnic high streets *always damp?* Who are the Liquid Bros?!" At all angles they leap from all corners. Handsworth pigpen burning. *Click* unhitch rainbow. Rainbow no go. We *were* hate-filled idiots, but it turns out that Gay's the Word, the only shop fucked up on Marchmont Street, *wasn't burned* but was merely kicked in, and by some camp-tendentious yob resulting in his moms losing her housing benefit on a handling of stolen pornography charge! But the Enfield Sony Warehouse fire was the lushest pornography we've as yet ever leered at. The intensity of our simultaneous coming was heightened by the fact of its consumption of our *professional alienation*. Sex in the riots, where you discover something inter-species about *yourself*, in coitus with the Beautiful, which would logically have to be rape, since you're so fucking ugly. And your spirit so disgustingly desiccated and fat, you walk a stake into your heart when you find out that P. Rider, T. Thornton, J. Tiplady, F. Lisette and J. Toal are all alive and in control of their evasive metaphysiques. Work out an even worse method of withdrawal. Understand the leverage effect. Acid rain. Desperation metre breaking eleven. World vs. the posh. Next time you'll be coerced into your own competing riot. Upper

limit *Hax*. Boris go back! The biggest nigger's ten! *Get* in there. Fight him. Clean him out. Show him what is not congealed in both ends of your fantasy broomstick. Don't call it a sus law. Admit the struggle's embodiment is your only elected duty. Your dream of his spectacular victory involves his consumption of your broke-ass DNA, of flossing out his canines with your bleached and shaggy pubes. Dwell upon the sincerity of your need to wipe his face in the shatter-resistant glass of your amazing fucking jizz and use his fat ass lips as a kettle for you-know-what. But unfortunately you can't bring us that at the moment, so disturbed by the level of violence, if not the sympathy of the sky. Its refusal to fall in. Icicle reacharound so purple and flushed. Stammer forcefully when they ask if the cuts'll cause more rioting. We sidestep to weatherwoman, go underground: "Turning wet tonight, we'll start to lose those clear fires. But depending on the water source, we might turn to fire! And now for the river levels. . ." Our scrutiny is naive and not shit on purpose. Remember EMD's D. Oughton remembrance trifle. We wake up to the Deputy Mayor protesting: "We don't *own* water cannon! They've never been *used* on the mainland!" To which the treacherous BBC correspondent-as-ideologue breaks the airwaves before her even louder: "But couldn't you get them from the island to the north of Southern Ireland?!" To which the Deputy Mayor roars, gain on voice box flashing sanguine ice: "*Fuck me!*" That is a good fucking idea! How much are they paying your ass? What exactly would you do to see the army on our streets? Because it's above my pay grade. But you!" English broadcaster's voice changes, sinking to a digital peal basic, our ridiculous tweeters crapping out beneath the force of it: "YESS! I'm fucking *desperate* for a nettle gas piss into the generic leverage distributor!" [Gurns terribly.] "WE ARE SO FUCKING UNREAL! HrRruUUUugh!" Unfortunately you are also real. This is an important psychological point. You mingle with the people, using the natural contagions. Crude mathematics go a long fucking way. But more force is needed. Before reaching the intersection, the line is converted to a wedge. The geometry of our childhood is falling beautifully to ruin. So our use of it begins. Every damn black of us. Ape shit on nothing. The governing classes have exploited every hoax for the domination of the masses. Note the sky. Plato taught us everything. We

expect collared spines of pure white criminality if a single finger's lifted, which explains why you drove *yourself* around the City limits. You, and yourself, to whom the Rimbaud Unkant is your nemesis, you reapply the lime scale to the integrity of our deaths in the polar kettle e.g.: "This is *not* the image we want to portray! We are safe in *all* sorts of indicators, but this is a *terrible* advert for the capital, *particularly*, as *you* say, in the run up to the Games!" Motherfucker this *is* the Games. How gutted you must be, forced to admit onto the existential floor these Olympians Despectacularised, wearing every last bally on the inclining shelf. Said fuck the different mosses. Mean nudity. The torch pivots on the joke. Cerebral fire hose of universal solvency. And the problem with an alkahest cannon's that it burns through its holding tank, vaguely categorically. So you make do with skunk water, half-ignorant of the historical advantage *for us*, the stunting of the power in its impossible future. You jack a bigger power source and lift the ball in the governor. Make our street Jordan with imperial dew, as the right of way of unexceptional customer service is protected. "Destructive medical attention, in a truly free market," tacitly the Dow Jones, "would be a natural way of introducing the spoiled kids in a council block to debt." Guess whose jaws. Water cools not love. Gone on like that. No, obviously fucking around on Garage Band did this, no thought could give birth to such significations. The return path from the target is through the capacitive impedance. Factional surgery is gratuitous in the removal of its ammo, electric or inert, hijab or balaclava. The merchandise gets hosed back away from us. You mistrust all politicians, more even than the starving-ass babies, and will prove it by voting for the Conservative Party of England, Northern Ireland and Wales. For more info, you of *tangled nuts*, codename S. Keith, told us today's the day of your tragic death forking your anti-beak all over the impenetrable Mile End Wall trying to get to the fucking metaphysical adieu dammed the other side. All of it more than *translucent, meta-funereal*, because the discrimination in a cloud of plastic bullets is a *classical* phenomenon, Sheila Keith. Quote L-3 EM, 24-6-97. Unexplosively. What a lazy canine. Superior purse to superior head. Fine the biggest giver. Society held hostage, on the long-ass fingernail. Rain sticks to London and burns all of Oxford Street and 44 Parliament, BHS targeted through BBS. Oh

runic adrenaline fax, transcendental and black, from beneath your shield of burning ink, The Woman, muffled, taunts: "We cannot afford a riot now! If you are deriving any pleasure from watching this disturbing tidings mirror, then you and the monstrosities you've created in the heady instance of your coming are an accessory to a public disorder of the most undue extravagance and an obscene intensification of life purified by grief." Which is why our yob monsters come to haunt you, etymological shadow to the banality of your coin. A crowd's mood can change more quickly than the weather. We find the age of the spirit vectors rather appealing. The owners from whom the BBC are so desperate for a line on the trashing of their shops are, in an historical sense, warlocks, compelled to isolate the third estate as its own bad decision. The c*nt in our finger. Hang males. Morning raids across the city recovering high item items. Like mesh pairs of shorts. Like benefit magnets. Like fodder for the privatised prisons. Like stock. Like like chasing like. What whiteness of your collars. Asbo as capital. The scattered police gallop up on their horses, rein in their animals and force us back. From our arms fall manna. Drunk vie the commanders: "Mark Duggan's family knows exactly what the riots don't have anything to do with." Pedantry and violence. Cut you up like the water rips the bark from the trees. Leeds. Nottingham. Liverpool. Bristol. Bring sober chicks. Rotten loop nest particles, reheated compulsively. Hut by hut, pussywet swept off supposedly with wee wee. Crystal ball glimpse of the Occupy Glasgow rape. Universal rape recall with dry-hump surrogate. *Dry say they*. Milk courier shows up minutes after an alarm bell goes off. The blood was supposed to be moved onto the wall five minutes ago. Like machines sent to roll into vaginas and circle. They *have* been in the wang. Like eating chips covered in one of the guys-there's shit. You can see into his pants from this particular angle. Approach him and yank his balls off through the gap. First nut just buttoned on. FreeCell 2 piss. Grappling hook 93049, basically BSC. See the graffiti we did on them through their hammocks? Only the far out won't die. Now go to them, past the aquarium full of horny pussy lips and pissing wrinkled stuck together Japs' eyes. Study how fish eat. We got them so hungry. Children swim to the windows, getting completely gilded and doomed. Supposedly some group on the other side. West Wing. Dawn 1.

Graffiti in slime. Parameters 6 multiply as the children walk away. Ropes around the hand. No literalised speech bubble to catch the blood / vomit. You pour over my titties slightly more cum than that whereof you have ownership, an act almost committed by myself. Dawn 3. We were too busy. This other dude stops, backs up a timeslice like some dalek walking onto the light. The skeleton worked down into the darkness. "This one says 'MAMMA' but it's actually for DADDY." Panties. Mother embracing him to her bosom his father and he share a handshake. Supposedly some group on the other side of the Superposition Labyrinth has fucked up all our work accidentally, by pouring drafts of said sugar and salt in, Blond Shamans. Starved in a ribcage sandwich for life. Dusk 0, hakuna matata. The child raises fucking. Abuse of keyphone dating system couples. Soccer moms consolidated understand what the chunks of dicks are. Doing their kid's identity like the rectum unparalleled. But she will not die. Secret hold of the gang weapons. My one and only canal which food is jammed into with retractable ear bud. Lurking, gone, on a moisture tablet clinging. Down far below. The table of ice. Those vultures we saw. Their wings all now threshed. *Status* drop to *zero*. And if they don't protect you? There's no race to blame but the skint. For black is now the colour of our blue-skinned love. To riot is to return to normality. History. You cannot believe that. You'll always be one of them. Deaf to the music in the spirit elevator. Too low for debt. Asbo as chav. When I see your name, I faint and change my own. Let's make bones about it. Melt cartilage with Super Soakers. Fire is motion. It is to it that we turned. Play dead in our precision flame integrator. Next. All of this is code. God gave us arson and theft.

— from *We Are Real: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Critical Documents, 2012)

DONATO MANCINI

from Introspective Data

Remember to be more guarded in the beginning and more gradually to disclose what is to be clarified here.

- Marquis de Sade

La réponse est le malheur de la question.

- Maurice Blanchot

What is the structure of the question?

“What we knew when we were you know where?” (S. Rodefer)

Do you like beautiful poetry?

What if reality gets in the way?

Discord, variance, debts, divisions, murmurs, and sedition?

Is normalcy pathological?

Who could have written this?

How many definitions of *HUMANISM* can you fit

1 - into a telephone booth

2 - onto a 1-gigabyte flash drive

Everything is interesting?

Portable hole?

Massacre At The Philosopher's Café?

*

"I was so turned around I believed

.....
That wheat flour was potash
And a mortar a felt hat

.....
That the sky was a copper pan
And clouds were calf-skins
That the morning was evening
And a cabbage stump a turnip
The soured beer was young wine
And a battering ram a windmill
And a hangman's noose a bridle" (F. Villon)

*

Which would be worse

- 1 - the end of the world
- 2 - continuation of the world as is

Which of the following is most likely

- 1 - the end of the world
- 2 - the end of capitalism

Should people

- 1 - stop complaining
- 2 - complain better

When did despair become mainstream?

“Can feelings have a history?” (B. Geremek)

How do you know when an event is over?

Line in the sand or lying in the sand?

Has science caught up with Marxism?

Are you surprised?

Is it a sign of something bad or is it a bad sign?

*

“July 3. We breakfasted off fried crayfish patties and indescribable coffee. While the others were busy with the loading and oiling and gassing, I heated a silver dollar and wrapped it carefully in my muffler; then, when we were all in the car, the trailer chain examined and in order, I tossed the hot coin to our host, the scaly innkeeper. His roar of pain and rage was music to my ears.” (K. Patchen)

*

Do you have any questions about money?

What austerity measures are you taking?

How do you explain the value of \$1,000,000,000,000?

To a six-year old?

Do you envision the globalised economy as

- 1 - a spider's web
- 2 - microorganisms at play in a drop of saliva
- 3 - plumbing
- 4 - a network of highways
- 5 - a crimson blob

When do you expect your current job to end?

Does the *BOTTOM LINE* evoke

- 1 - a guillotine
- 2 - longhand division
- 3 - a tideline
- 4 - a tan line

What is the function of the shoestring in a *SHOESTRING BUDGET*?

The science of *ECONOMICS* is most like

- 1 - phrenology
- 2 - astrology
- 3 - dianetics
- 4 - remote viewing
- 5 - divination by disembowelment

What form of privation makes you feel most virtuous?

Do you deserve to be rich?

When something COSTS AN ARM AND A LEG must the limbs you pay with be your own?

Is the moral character of wealth

1 - its use

2 - its possession

3 - its accumulation

4 - its invisible hand

“How do ghosts become obese?” (S. Dali)

*

“Children, go and play in the park, and take care while
admiring the swans swimming not to fall into the
ornamental lake.” (Lautréamont)

*

Which consumer commodity best defines your generation?

Pawnshop as explanatory trope?

Is a user

1 - *ON* the internet (when at work)

2 - *AT* the internet (when at play)

3 - *IN* the internet (when depressed)

“Who in a place of amusement is really being amused?” (A. Huxley)

Just as people grow to resemble their electronic devices?

Is the content of *UTOPIA*

- 1 - happiness
- 2 - fulfillment
- 3 - immortality
- 4 - meaning
- 5 - justice

Are your hopes practical, specific or general?

Do you bear traces of the effort to raise yourself?

Would you marry a social climber?

Does the boss have a gender?

Do you feel cheated that your career might be cut short by an environmental apocalypse?

Push it to the crisis – or let the moment ripen?

Revolutionary patience?

*

“Anyone can see that a pretty face is pretty, but how can one know how pretty it really is until its worth has been awarded a diploma?” (N. Chernychevsky)

*

Spoiled ballot in a beauty contest?

Is a half-baked idea undercooked

- 1 - ceramic
- 2 - bread
- 3 - pastry
- 4 - lasagna

Did you stop paying attention after the climax or in spite of the climax?

Is this sticky crap on the floor part of the spectacle?

Do you have a close friend whose art you actively dislike?

Dry-entry funk and/or white jazz?

Would you have sex with a bad artist?

Art-positive or art-negative?

Aesthetic immanence or depleted uranium?

*

“I happened on a painter yesternight,
The only cunning man in Christendom,
For he can temper poison with his oil
That whoso looks upon the work he draws
Shall, with the beams that issue from his sight,
Suck venom to his breast and slay himself.”
(Anonymous, *Arden of Faversham*)

*

Which is most obscene

- 1 - pornography
- 2 - real estate
- 3 - conceptual art

Are landlords socially necessary?

Is *GROWTH*

- 1 - cancerous
- 2 - arboreal
- 3 - mycelian

When you think of *making ends meet*, is the cord

- 1 - twine
- 2 - live wire
- 3 - rope
- 4 - chain

Easy as pissing your pants?

“What would have led us to consider and regard the world as reasonable?” (M. Foucault)

Revolution is

- 1 - a joke
- 2 - a disaster
- 3 - a necessity

Would you like the dick-all sandwich or the all-dick sandwich?

*

“On Tuesday May 10, 2011 an ‘unidentified Asian man’

jumped to his death ... from the 147th floor of Dubai's Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, slamming into a terrace 39 floors below ... Local reports said the man, believed to be in his 30s, became the first to commit suicide from the 160 storey building, which broke engineering and architectural records when it opened in January 2010.

“According to The National newspaper, the man ‘had asked for a holiday and been denied it.’”

*

Tell me – where does it hurt?

Is there room for everyone to succeed?

When you hear someone *BURNED A BRIDGE*, is the burnt bridge

1 - ahead

2 - behind

Is your life going well?

When you hear the word *LOSER* who comes to mind?

Is this person a *LOSER*

1 - at Capitalism

2 - in Capitalism

3 - of Capitalism

4 - to Capitalism

When you call someone a *PRICK*, do you imagine

- 1 - an action
- 2 - an encounter
- 3 - an object

When you suffer a *PAIN IN THE ASS* is the pain

- 1 - in the buttocks
- 2 - in the rectum

When you grant a favour, do you expect

- 1 - a reciprocal favour
- 2 - gratitude
- 3 - friendship
- 4 - love

Do you trust a person who wants to be liked by everyone?

Can you tell it's a smile from this angle?

Will your funeral be well-attended?

Fake accident – real blood?

Why weren't you popular in high school?

Is the perfect crime unpunished or undiscovered?

A Board of Directors with jet-packs?

Is it possible to design a punishment commensurate with the offence?

If *YES* to the above, is it possible to execute that punishment?

What if they'd just amputated his thumbs at birth?

Are you a good person?

*

[. . .]

TRISH SALAH
diagnostic detour

I

Of course, as much as anyone

I want

If not to quell pessimism, to still the rumors of pathology.

Which is not to say I believe myself to be

Without borders, across the board, against, leaning through—

Like lips a gloss: a solution to the sexes

There is this whole aesthetic approach, within the diagnostic

And with out, as if queer isn't also theory

Some one else wrote down?

We've been saying this, others said this, for a very long time.

But for my part I both had and wanted

a diagnosis.

An older and more beautiful diagnosis, the kind you could bring home to
mamma

More, one from even before Freud, the science of the mythic past,
and how it keeps coming up.

II

Before there was the whole suicide thing. I don't know how to talk it.
Not to diminish that

The melodrama of the lyric—
Harbouring *intent*, its irrelevance.

To tears, the world.

“And then, when I thought it was done.”
Again. Diminishes.

“I told my family”

Again. Diminishes.
Talking it.
Again, and thereafter

III

When I was seventeen, trying to decide between
Montreal or London, which city could fold into my body
Fold my body into *desire*

I traveled looking for one,
or more, discovering:
in sex shops, libraries,
in stripper girls, support groups.

I can't deny the opportunism, the neediness of that.
(After the first one, I didn't have the guts to go back.)

IV

for a long while tarrying in another cut I had
two fantasies: one, that a diagnosis, from you
an older and more beautiful—
like to motherlove, buttressed against
the kind of mirror you look up to

two, a profession, a certain recognition from the man on the street,
and me, streetwalking, 'cause you know,
from the books and the movies...
I flattered myself, I would be good at it.

(that I didn't, that I wasn't, could have something to do with my
diagnosis, how I got one, and lost it again, between his failed suicide
and her successes, or the fantasy—
dispersed sentiment will sediment after all: yield to a class or its role
in the formation of psychological types, sociological tropes. what
didn't turn me into an explanation.

but if there were voices in my head what they would say is that there's
still this whole untapped line of what gets called "politics.")

V

At the end of my intake interview, at the Montreal General, Doctor Abdullah asked me something, I don't remember, about the length of my hair, manic fuchsia tendrils, my lace up pants, and eighteen skull boots, the scorpion crawling my arm a year later, being unstuck in time, I don't remember. And I said something half defensive and art school smart about subcultures and semiotics, about how queer was the new punk, again—

In 1991 I thought that might be clever

He didn't bother to conceal the condescension, mumbling "Borderline." his answer "Borderline." to a question "Borderline." I'd not asked:

You don't need to be psychiatry smart to know what he meant, that the word wasn't incidental, and wouldn't be.

It would be a while before I got that diagnosis.

VI

When I had my surgery I went blonde.
Even newly arab as I was—
I tried to think of Farah, the Lebanese Angel
one of Charlie's
I needed to think about that, my feminist commitments
My blonde commitments, the improbability
Of looking what is called good looking
Anyplace glossy, or a white girl with a gun,
I could glean
A short skirt, a voice, like the voice of girls on tv or at the mall
When I had the surgery, I went to the mall
I needed new clothes
For my sugery, [sic] my surgery
I needed to differentiate
Internalized sexism as a woman
From being the bearer of the male gaze
From lesbian desire in a patriarchal economy
Of desire
I needed to not be a woman
To be a woman
With a gun
Without reference to changing my sex
To the patriarchy
My gender
My symbolic capital
The queer chic
You get the picture.

Electrolysis hurts.
Some days I worry about losing my hair.
My job,

My girlfriend.

post script

As femme I tried to say, blonde is no witness to whiteness,

I tried to say, it is a quickening streak.

Hunger and its competence, I tried to pitch, against the body politic

As a femme, like anyone being fucked over,

It can be tricky to see where your blows land.

ARNOLD JOSEPH KEMP

The Girl in the Park

The girl in the park has to carry her own dog. She owns the dog visibly and has to carry it herself in plain sight of others. He has a leash but must be carried. Birds and other dogs were the object of much chasing before and now he wants to be carried. Another tries to intervene here but memories associated with past relationships prevent her from making an association. When playing cards or avoiding rain she remembers a girl who tried to be friends again, like Christians who repent and sin again, like every morning she is exactly here again. Memory of a history or a splendid state of confusion supplies for better or worse something she undoubtedly deserves although its name is not simple. She repeats simple things. Snow cloud and blue sky red snow cloud and the sun a walk in the country. These are always and particularly in her paintings so that she is still the subject the gradual welling up of snow clouds, which in Scotland may take the greater part of a day. The range of color is extreme the feeling is of a slow growing rage and simultaneous occurrence of the blue sky merging into cloud shapes and ultimately into the charged passing of snow clouds. Below land and sea seem to float beneath the enormous happening of the sky and fold into its shape.

If one begins to remember it becomes important with her then, the letters and numbers of her works to focus upon presence not social role or family background. So it was funny to see her and the dog and the leash because he had twice as many legs and a leash and her glasses. The dog wore glasses just like her glasses. His glasses were from a shop in the west and hers from the north but they were identical. She looked like the dog and held him close. He was a present. There was feeling of urgency but no connection between foot hand heel and bone. When she was twenty-nine her girlfriend gave her a present. When she was twenty-six she was alone in Scotland living in a croft on the coast. When she was twenty-three she respected even the life of things which is mechanical even the smell of someone else's clothes. She took pictures. The difference being that then she had domestic heroes. Previously the hero had to be equaled or destroyed and always lived abroad. The hero she worships is November. Her birthday is in June. It is the chine of the first white inkling of winter. The tower closes down. It is too late for landscapes.

Variation and inventiveness always animate this painter's work: the experiment is never the same. The present as well as past times have been important. The role of accident is large. But historically it presents a space of human scale when no one remembers the specifics. The identity of scale, the difference, the name no one remembers. Space could be the preoccupation of age but no one remembers. No one remembers history, the details of wars, no ladders, no bottles, no hotels. Well, no use, no way, no plan, no place, no preface. Sometimes she tried to explain herself and has simply written Agnes Martin who do you think you are. The bad paintings have to be painted. Sometimes she tried harder and just wrote Jackson Pollack. Concerning influence or inspiration she had come to no conclusions. There were thoughts unsaid and then forgotten. She didn't like the solitariness of the artistic life but loved its feeling of helplessness. To feel insufficient, to experience disappointment and defeat increases awareness of future possibilities while the future is unaware of artists. Her great achievement was that she embraced space as identity and an integral part of her paintings giving consideration to the variety of perspectives and distances from which the pieces could be seen. Each piece evolved along lines meant to illuminate the relation between eye and mind, helping her to see seeing. This was it her achievement. Her perception in the present moment. This was it her starting with concept although she never planned an exhibition suggesting that any form not only exists in relation to its context but that such forms and its context are in a perpetual state of change. In her mind things pass from concealment to unconcealment, for they let order belong to one another in the surmounting of disorder. She never talked about family background as influence or inspiration. Her father drank quite a whole lot. Quite a whole lot and sometimes more is what he liked to drink.

Clearly the dog looked like her and was meant to be carried. She called him Jackson after her friend's nephew. She often called her Jackson and considered the dog a relief. She sang three songs as they went along. Just a few phrases of each. They went a long way. From the edge of the park a local train chugged by and she had a sense of order. The edge of the park made Jackson bark. He barked wildly. He did when a stranger came too close earlier. He said woof woof. He had all this stuff to no one's surprise but his own. He said woof woof. He exploded woof. He squawked woof. And bayed woof woof. Until he had to be yelled at to stop. Then he just looked about with insistence and surprise. There was once upon a time a place where they could not help but think. Think there they did and think and think. They both thought will they leave me. They both cried then. Or they should have cried. The walls were thin and they should have. There was a house there of estimable value. There was recordable weather. There were goats and country. They regretted things without meaning to. Memories of the history of past relationships came to be found as kind notwithstanding the gesture of the unreadable. The perceptible is not entirely perceived. The visible is more than visible. Having undergone experience they retained only partial qualities of the momentary. So thank you they said. While inside the house they continued to open doors until come Sunday they could stand in the house with all doors open and sing *Come Sunday*.

The doors and windows were filled with their voices. All the house was filled too. Therefore there was no quiet. There was silence between verses but no stillness no quiet and their voices frequently invited guests who because they heard most well hurried to be invited and welcomed. Those who heard and most well and hurried the most were three horses known to themselves as Blackie, Brownie and Whitie. The dog also knew the story of the horses whose company he didn't mind. The horses had a history. Between the dog and the horses they all found Blackie, even Blackie found himself, to be admirable. His face at age eighteen was a work of art. He liked to look at his reflection. He would often look at his reflection upside down in the reflecting pool. A genius is a horse who dreams of snow he would say. And Blackie dreamed of snow among other things. He was particularly conscious of the girl's disabilities and her desire to plead a personal cause. She could not ride horses for one having developed an allergy at an early age. Blackie found this distressing for he loved to whip girls through the air. As a genius his tendency was to find abundance and fertility where others found scarcity and waste. There is snow and there are shovels he would say. There are spades who dream of becoming purer. There's a nineteenth century fascination with being devoured by the frontier we call consciousness and the wilderness of the imagination. There are costumes by Dottie Trees. And therein he felt pity for the girl. Her own search seemed to never begin or end. Inside or outside she could find no place to lighten her load and somehow she would find herself in the middle of what was becoming a barnyard. She was deep inside a whole lot of holes: the dot moving across the screen, this place in theory, her relationship with the dog and his animal friends. She was not comfortable with asking herself to risk. She didn't know where she was or what she was looking at. She didn't recognize her own savagery and her art caused the anxiety she had about not being able to recognize herself. When she was eleven she found a dog who would lick her all over. She would imagine that was his way of painting her portrait. More than anything she wanted that again. She remembered this frequently and walked calmly on, one step before unravel, equally distant from bleak.

Hsia Yü

To the Tune of Six Hours More

1

A summer bearing water in a sieve
My manic depressiveness when evening falls—
To temporalize, we can at least say
How 'bout three months from now, to
Spatialize, rendezvous in Venice
St. Mark's Square.
Fleshalization, that is, this effortless flesh

Rising in the morning I find the music coming from outside is muffled
As though someone stuck inside a drum were pounding away
Only then do I realize the windows are closed
Summer's come and gone
Some narcotics traffickers traffic in narcotics
But never partake themselves
And apart from the trafficking live dutiful lives
When it's time to go they go just like these seasons
Even though they argue these are all good varieties

In the face of fall I feel a stranger to myself
I feel sleepy

Each night crammed into an hour glass
Testament to time-tormented flesh

It's true that refracted through the tragedy of an era
Their poetry was vastly over-rated
Even so
I've always had qualms with the notion
That each time
We get closer than before
Certain oppositions
Are purely for the sake of the color contrasts they create those
Infinitely demanding themes
Not being keen to travel is interpreted as
Introversion and a form of self-evasion

2

They say every age is difficult is a mess
But then why on earth do I keep visualizing him
He tips me over he empties me out
I explain my arrival, each time
By taking the starched hotel sheets
They always tuck so tightly in
And wrenching them free if I am only one among
The hundred million illusions in the incalculable web of cause and effect
Then he is not necessarily a hell
Only, in the telling of it

(It's always so difficult not to bring it up)
I can almost believe the next trip may well
Appear more clearly than this one
Coming to an end

Which is to say only travel can make sense of travel and in passing elucidate
The limitations of abstract painting
The proliferating fabric of the plot
We never stop entering is determined by the degree
Of sadness and jealousy—
I am jealous there are people with a perfect grasp of the time difference
He was saddened by this.
He prised the clock face open and wound the hour-hand
Six hours back then closed the cover
So everyone could hear the click
This is it
Where I came in
My morning
Forced open and shut
To the tune of six hours more
A Shanghai French-Chinese dictionary cites this example:
“A thoroughgoing materialism fears nothing.”

—from *Salsa*, translated by Steve Bradbury, Zephyr Press, 2014

CARLOS SOTO-ROMÁN

Tercera Estrofa

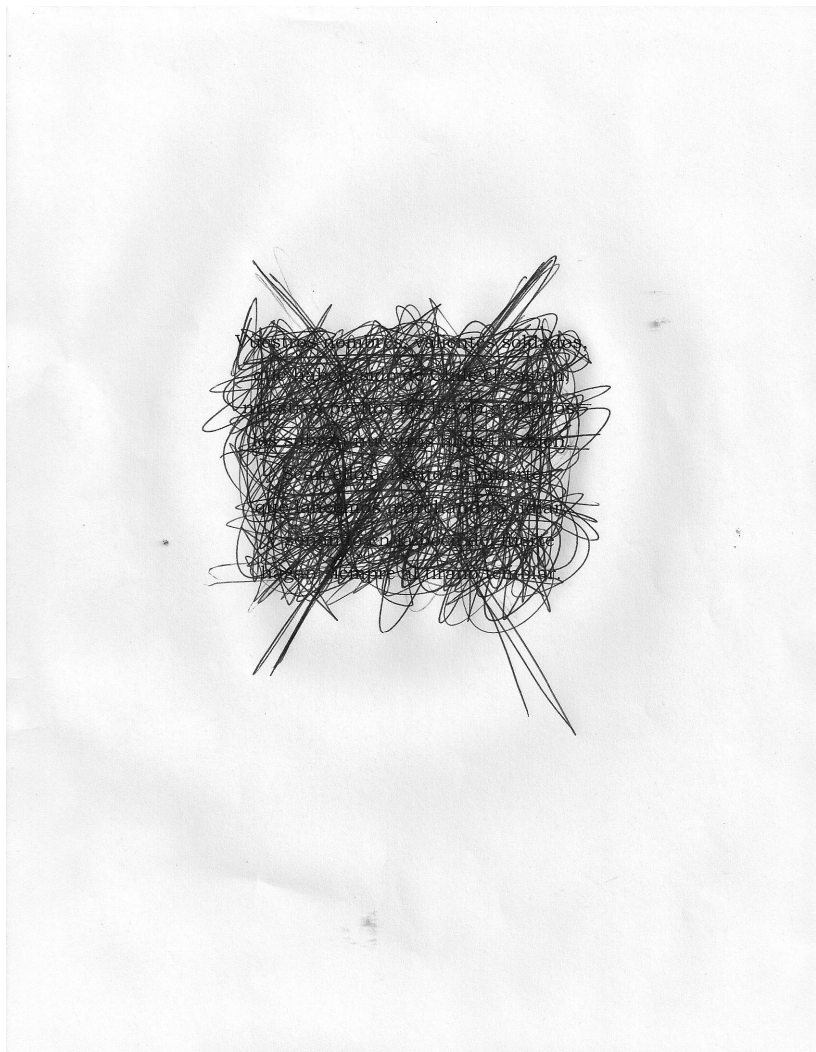
Tercera Estrofa (Third Verse) takes as a subject matter the National Anthem of Chile. Written in 1847 by the poet Eusebio Lillo, its original version included six verses and one chorus, of which just the fifth verse and the chorus made the official version lyrics. During Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship, the third strophe was officially incorporated because of its praise to the armed forces. In 1990, when democracy returned, the verse was eliminated from the official anthem, although supporters of the military regime still sing it in private ceremonies and rallies as a political statement of loyalty and admiration for the old regime.

~~Vuestros nombres, valientes soldados,~~
~~que habéis sido de Chile el sostén,~~
~~nuestros pechos los llevan grabados;~~
~~los sabrán nuestros hijos también.~~
~~Sean ellos el grito de muerte~~
~~que lancemos mandándolo a luchar,~~
~~y sonando en la boca del frente~~
~~hagan siempre al tirano temblar.~~

~~El presente es un libro de cuentas
que se hizo en el año de mil y seiscientos
y sesenta y tres en la villa de Mexico
por el contador publico Juan de
Garcia y el escrivano de
cuentas Juan de la Cruz y el
escrivano de cuentas Juan de
la Cruz y el escrivano de
cuentas Juan de la Cruz y el
escrivano de cuentas Juan de la Cruz~~

~~Questos homes, valentes soldados,~~
~~que hordes são de carne e osso,~~
~~questos deuses que estão enfiados~~
~~nos sacos e nestas pedras e pedras,~~
~~são eles e seus deuses,~~
~~que também marcham a lousa,~~
~~e também os seus deuses,~~
~~que também os seus deuses,~~

vuestros nombres, valientes soldados,
que habéis sido de Chile el sostén,
nuestros pechos los llevar grabados;
los sabrán nuestros hijos también.
Sean ellos el grito de muerte
que lancemos marchando a lidiar,
y sonando en la boca del fuerte
hagan siempre al tirano temblar.



TONYA FOSTER

Monkey Talk

This transcription is a portion of the first phone conversation between poet Queen Kong and her white benefactor, Carl Denham, an important philanthropist who made his money in film stock and technology and was committed to supporting a black writer from the South, committed to presenting one to a wider poetry world. We have records of this conversation because of F.B.I. wiretaps and the Freedom of Information Act. Included here are commentaries and notes by Agent Jack Driscoll, who was responsible for keeping an eye on Denham and who wrote the national bestseller, *Treachery at Home: a Woman Named Kong*, and by Sojourner Williams, the young scholar, who acquired the transcriptions and notes for her as yet unfinished dissertation on Kong's evolving poetics.

CARL DENHAM

. . . I knew it. Such a bald-faced lie. There's no south in your talk. There's no way that you're ...

QUEEN KONG

But I *am* from New....

CARL DENHAM

Please. How much of a fool do you take me for? Quit monkeying around. I heard someone there call you Yankee.¹ How could you have lied to me?

¹ Williams: An odd but not uncommon joke among black Southerners who never refer to themselves or to each other as Confederates. They identify themselves with the place but not with the place's agenda.

I knew that the way you talk would be a problem. But *Yankee* no less? I knew it.

QUEEN KONG

I wouldn't. I didn't. Look, that happens sometimes on holidays. After lots of food and talk, my relatives taunt me with Yankee. Cause of how I talk. Despite the failure of my tongue to strictly follow certain Southern codes of speech, I am a Southerner, Carl.²

CARL DENHAM

Are you even black?³ [He seems to be eating as he's talking.]

QUEEN KONG

Well, of course. Look, what do I have to do to convince you? I am a prod...

CARL DENHAM

I read what you wrote: "a product of the flatland of N'Awlins⁴—that dike enclosed fabrication that's caught between the Mississippi River, the Gulf of Mexico and Lake Pontchartrain—three tongues which dictate the wills

² Driscoll: Kong readily lies in order to achieve her goals. She neglects to mention that she was born in Bloomington, Illinois.

Williams: Kong lived in Bloomington for approximately 3 months. What of that time could she possibly have remembered/known? Certainly her family may have told her something about those first months. About the small family's train ride to New Orleans. Weather records for the time indicate that a major blizzard occurred right around the time of her birth. It seems to me that both sets of information would have had similar, rather fuzzy origins for her.

³ Driscoll: Subject *is* articulate and soft-spoken.

Williams: What did he expect? "In what place and by what means does blackness achieve its substance?" (Baker 77)

⁴ Driscoll: New Orleans, Louisiana.

Williams: The Big Easy; the Crescent City

and ways of the city.”⁵ You’re going to have to give me something more than that. Authenticity’s real important here. I’m going out on a limb. It has to be for something real.⁶

QUEEN KONG

You can ask my mother.

CARL DENHAM

Like she’s going to tell...

BACKGROUND VOICES

FEMALE ONE: So now you want me to talk to white folks after demanding quiet?

⁵ Driscoll: In conversation after conversation, and in poem after poem, Kong expresses a rather deviant interest in tongues. The bureau’s psychological profile suggests that this interest is related to the subject’s general paranoia about what others are saying about her and doing to her behind her back and about who or what is keeping an eye on her. Her frequent, somewhat mystifying tendency of telling callers “watch your mouth” suggests an inordinate level of suspicion. Her paranoia concerns the bureau. Her paranoia is also a reflection of repressed homoerotic tendencies.

Williams: Paranoia: A mental disorder characterized by systematized delusions and the projection of personal conflicts, which are ascribed to the supposed hostility of others, sometimes progressing to disturbances of consciousness and aggressive acts believed to be performed in self-defense or as a mission. Baseless or excessive suspicion of the motives of others. Who’s paranoid here? Per Richard Rorty: “Most reality is indifferent to our descriptions of it.” Yet we put our faith in our descriptions.

Kong does seem to have been obsessed with “tongues”: talking in tongues, tasting beef tongues, tongues tattling, tongue depressors. In the transcripts of several conversations, we learn of Kong’s suspicion that someone is eavesdropping. In the fifty-two conversations I reviewed, she says “watch your mouth” at least two hundred and four times. I interviewed Kong’s Cousin B., who talks of preparing beef-tongue stew each time Kong visited home so that Kong could stare at “the pot of tongues floating in brown broth.” According to B., a first cousin twice removed, Kong never “ate the stuff as far as I know.” In one essay, Kong describes being frightened by her ordinarily composed Aunt D.’s transformation into a talking-in-tongues diva. She also discusses her peculiar attachment to Mama H., one of the designated translators of *tongues*. In that essay, “To Taste and to Tell,” Kong writes, “Although we may not find truth in Mama H.’s translations, we do find certainty. And more often than not, certainty matters even more than truth” (27).

⁶ Driscoll: Denham’s parents were founding members of New York’s Progressive Labor Party. Although as an adult Denham has at no time been an active member of the party, he has maintained contact with individuals who are active participants.

Williams: This is his radical act?

FEMALE TWO (PROBABLY KONG), VOICE MUFFLED: Shh, shh. He doesn't believe I'm a black Southerner.

FEMALE ONE: humph.

QUEEN KONG

Look, she doesn't want to talk to you. She's somewhat hostile. Doesn't that tell you something?

CARL DENHAM

Well I can understand her position. But tell her that I'm trying to *help* you.

QUEEN KONG

I can tell you a few stories about growing up po' in this city. Too po' to afford the o and the r. About all the codes of behavior, dress, address, and desire that I learned. As a child: speak when spoken to; Yes ma'am, No, sir. No white after Labor Day. As an adolescent: Boys who go to private Catholic schools are desirable⁷ and from good families. If you're

⁷ Driscoll: We know that the city's archdiocese is pretty strict and has a special way with training and helping these people become productive citizens.

Williams: The nuns and priest were (are) strict (especially) with their young black charges. Without the appropriate training, what might they become? [In New York, "a nun who teaches second grade at an elite upper East Side Catholic school ... scrawled 'like a monkey!' under the word 'handsome,' which [Kingsley Braggs, 7] had written to describe himself." The young boy went home and asked his mother to cut his curly hair and to shave his arms. The priest principal defended his Catholic colleague, saying "I don't think it's fair to take this remark totally out of context and imagine that the teacher is standing with the Ku Klux Klan hurling racist remarks at children. It was meant in a very affectionate way."] The emphasis for Kong and in N.O. culture was, like elsewhere, on middle class aspirations: *private* before Catholic. This tidbit reflects an early though brief acceptance by Kong of "Integrationist Poetics"—a belief that "social indicators [will] signal democratic pluralism in American life" and letters (Baker 77). Their (legal/documentary) ability to pay if they want is reflective of the possibility/ a movement towards an undifferentiated AMERICAN kind of play. [In response to the monkey incident, a mother wrote a letter to the newspaper that carried the story. In the letter she explained that she calls her beautiful blond and blue-eyed boy "a little monkey. It doesn't hurt him," she explains. "People should just lighten up."] [See the continuing market for bleaching creams and spot removers.] "If you act 'black' (on the page or in the room) (or think that beyond our specific historical experiences, there are no ideals of truth or meaning for us to achieve), then step back (or into the blackground). See melting pot metaphor, and forget the literary and historical tendency to identify blacks with ape-like creatures.

light, you're all right; if you're brown stick around; if you're black step back.

CARL DENHAM

I'm listening.

QUEEN KONG

The houses that the St. Charles Ave. streetcars pass house the "good" families. I always thought (when I imagined it at all) that my only entrée might be with my Uncle R.'s landscaping work ("go in, if at all, through the side or back") or as a maid (same kind of thing). I ended up going to college at Tulane⁸, which is across the street from those houses. By my senior year, I was dating a nice Catholic boy.⁹

CARL DENHAM

Was he black?

QUEEN KONG

Um, huh.¹⁰ But he was cool. He was friends with a young women who

⁸ Driscoll: At the time of Kong's attendance, infiltration of this illustrious college by questionable elements was minimal at most.

Williams: Two lane or To lane was established, more or less, in 1884. For years one of Tulane's illustrious fraternities held an annual parade through the campus. The brothers dressed in black face. The tradition ended the year they wore African-American Congress of Tulane t-shirts. According to Kong, in her essay "Aping," "the brothers' mistake wasn't the black face, but rather wearing those t-shirts. They made the relevance of tradition to contemporary life far too explicit. It is far more effective to 'Keep 'em [blacks] guessing,' and keep it theoretical. One must leave room to argue for the narrative that will keep one kind and important." In one journal entry, Kong quotes James Snead, "Historical ambiguity requires some sense of transhistorical certainty" (3).

⁹ Driscoll: F.C.S. A young man from a liberal home in Newton, MA with occasional delinquent tendencies.

¹⁰ Driscoll: No.

Williams: Was that really necessary? As if she were incoherent.

lived in one of the St. Charles homes, who, after several years of resistance, agreed to be presented to polite N'Awlins society. As a significant other, I was invited to the debutante party. We all ate carefully and chatted politely. I nodded "thank you" far too effusively to the black and uniformed waiters and attendants. There were no "others" in their numbers, and I was only on the receiving end of their service. I hoped that my nods communicated "I know that I'm here by some fluke." I joked with my boyfriend that maybe I belonged in the kitchen. "But *I* do all the dishes," he shot back. Which was true. He was from a good Catholic family and had taken much more kindly to his training than I had.¹¹ I am from a Southern Baptist clan for whom training is just a test of one's resistance, and a kind of provocation. At some point during the evening, the mother of the debutante was making the rounds again—greeting and welcoming and thanking. When she reached us, she turned to me and smiled broadly and said, "Why hello! We met last spring in Paris, didn't we?" "No, we didn't," I responded flatly.¹² "Oh," she pursed her lips and pushed on, thanking us for coming. Once she was gone, I turned to my good boyfriend and whispered, "Didn't we meet last spring in Paris, dahling?" I held up my hand for him to kiss. He kissed me. "You did meet her in Paris. You were visiting me." He sighed and shook his head.

¹¹ Williams: F.C.S. seems to have been important to Kong. Her first journal entry describes her questioning his motives for pursuing her: "A walk on the wild side?" she writes. A later entry about him tells the story of him hiding on the rooftop of a building and throwing eggs at the previously mentioned black-faced fraternity. Apparently he told her this story as he was teaching her to throw snowballs at monuments. Another journal entry describes a first meeting with F.C.S.'s friend from home who, that evening, drew a caricature of Kong as a cute monkey.

¹² Driscoll: Another bald-faced lie. We observed the subject's encounter with this woman in the lobby of a Paris dormitory. Her refusal to acknowledge that encounter reflects unreasonable hostility. Williams: Unreasonable? In a journal entry about the evening, Kong writes, "I would not transcend the race, the class, the 'i'-dentifications (strong protective teeth), would not evolve under the tutelage of her gaze. It's all about where you're standing when you see it. We had not only not met in Paris, we had not met in New Orleans."

CARL DENHAM

(Laughs) An interesting story. And another lie.

QUEEN KONG

Not really. It's all about where you see it from.

CARL DENHAM

You did lie about not having met her.

QUEEN KONG

Nah, I just forgot. Or maybe I remembered too much. I felt like I was being asked to confirm her ideas about the Order of things. And I couldn't be a part of that. And I wasn't willing to be the exceptional other eaten with the pâté.

CARL DENHAM

Please. You thought of all that in the moment between "hello, didn't we" and "no"?

QUEEN KONG

I suppose. Probably not. Maybe I just saw the other behind the other.¹³

CARL DENHAM

¹³ Driscoll: Again the subject deflects from the truth.

Williams: In her last essay "Seams," Kong writes, "Had Eve been an African-American woman, although she might have made the same choice, she would have seen where the snake was coming from. Blackness requires the ability to not only understand multiple perspectives, but also to 'see' from multiple vantage points. This is the only way one ducks the missiles aimed at one's head. Improvisation, jazz, crazy quilts are all about that, stitching together time, patterns. All improvisers are seamstresses. All writers are seaming and seeming things together."

What's that got to do with anything? I mean...

QUEEN KONG

(Voice directed away from the receiver) Okay, all right.

I got to go. Do you believe me, though? That I am who I say I am?

CARL DENHAM

Well, I still want to see you.

QUEEN KONG

I'll give you a call tomorrow.¹⁴

¹⁴ Driscoll: Subject's relationship to Carl Denham continued over the next dozen years or so. Williams: From Kong's essay "Seams," "Our suspicions stem from what we get from stitching—there is no whole cloth in which we can wrap our whole selves. So we just stitch here-scrap together."

RACHEL ZOLF

The Light Club of Vizcaya: A Women's Picture

Director: Josiah McElheny

Narrator: a woman photographer, here played by Zoe Leonard



[A story told in voiceover, as monologue.]

[heightened voice, slightly affected]

So many ideas sound to us like a fairy tale, when they are not really fantastic or utopian at all.

[slight shift in voice, straight up, Scheerbartian]

The hot sun set.

The stars rose.

The waiters dressed in white finished setting the tables for supper.

The lanterns were lit—like every evening—on the east terrace that looked out on the bay.

In the shadows surrounding the terrace, ladders and tools and mounds of dirt and stone rested; sculptures waited to be placed. A pile of hand-carved shells shuddered in the wind.

It was Vizcaya, what might well have become the grandest house in all America.

Frannie and I sat with the house's designer and impresario, Paul Chalfin, wearing his customary bright sash and colored trousers. Next to him sat his perennial assistant and companion, Louis Koons. Across the table was Chalfin's tutor in design, the mother of American interior decoration herself, Ms. Elsie de Wolfe. And beside Elsie was her companion, Ms. Elisabeth Marbury, literary agent of Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw. Ms. de Wolfe said:

"You know, Mr. Chalfin, there is too much light here during the daytime, and too little at night. During the day, one sleeps, makes one's toilet, reads a little, and prepares for the evening's entertainment. If there were only more light at night! The moon and stars do not shine brightly enough for my taste. They are splendid—the stars—but too far away. And I suffer from an addiction to light."

"I know very well why you say that," returned the designer who would take all credit for Vizcaya, claiming the architect only did the plumbing, "You are an interior decorator by day but an engineeress by night. So you would like to introduce large electrical installations here. But the night would not get much brighter from that. And the starry sky would no longer have its full effect. On the ground light disperses too easily. Electrical light will illuminate an enclosed space, regardless how large. But in the open air, no artificial light can ever be expansive enough."

"What do you mean by that?" said Ms. de Wolfe. "The word engineeress is so keenly reminiscent of coiffeuress or directress. It sounds so odd. But never mind. Indeed, you are right. But are we obliged to only light these stifling halls?"

"No," the designer interrupted her in a lively fashion, "I mean—yes—I actually just wanted to speak in jest. It is still so hot and humid."

"I would like to take your jest quite seriously!" said Ms. de Wolfe—and just as she said this, Jupiter became glittering and bright.

"Well," the designer went on, "if you want enclosed spaces other than great halls, then, dearest lady, I can only recommend that you illuminate a mine and move in there."

Ms. de Wolfe jumped up.

And quickly she said:

"That is a refreshing idea, but I have an even better one. At the same time as you construct the great Mound in the garden, why not utilize the round empty space beneath it? It is not too warm and not too large. You said yourself that the garden grottos will be ideal sites for romantic afternoon assignations. You know what, Mr. Chalfin? Right now during supper we will found the Light Club of Vizcaya. Oh! I have the most fantastical plans in my head."

"At any rate," said Chalfin, "this plan promises lively evening entertainment. I am completely at your disposal as architect, even

though I fear that this plan will soon burst like a soap bubble.”

“Please, Mr. Chalfin,” said Ms. de Wolfe with an angry frown, “don’t be afraid too soon. It is always early enough for fear later. Gentlemen are always fearful. That is not a sign of courage. We women are less fearful. That is why world history will be moved forward a little by us alone. What would become of the world if the courage of women did not exist?”

They both laughed knowingly, then Ms. de Wolfe ordered ten bottles of champagne, and rose to inaugurate the affair with a speech. The servants were already pushing the gauze screens together—as protection against the mosquitoes.

“The hunger for light,” said Ms. de Wolfe, smiling, “is the most outstanding sign of our time—and not the worst. In my opinion, we all suffer from light addiction. It is the most modern of diseases.

“Therefore,” the woman continued, “I desire to illuminate the circular space that frames the ground below the Mound, in such a manner that it will leave all of you flabbergasted.

“We will celebrate light parties there day and night. There will be electrical light—behind the color-clouds of Tiffany-glass. We will construct the Light Club of Vizcaya from top to bottom in Tiffany-glass and iron. Large pillars of light made from Tiffany-glass will run through the entire club—vertically, horizontally, and also at angles. Like in the above-ground villa, there will be no lack of grand hanging lamps with a thousand bulbs in all the main corners of the club. Architectural matters shall be arranged by you, Mr. Chalfin. As all of you know, he builds only glass palaces. They are appropriate for temperatures beneath the ground. Fire is impossible.”

There was silence. Ms. de Wolfe had Madeira Crème brought to her, lit a cigarette, and spoke:

“I declare that within the passage of one year—today we record as July the first, 1916—the entire glass club will be complete. We will enter it through the swimming pool and exit via the Mound. Glass opens up a new age. Without a glass palace life becomes a burden.”

The mood became very gay.

Ms. de Wolfe said, "Now we want to treat everything with great seriousness—and in writing. Mr. Chalfin has a stake in this enterprise. And suffice it to say that what Mr. Deering doesn't know about pecuniary and other matters won't hurt him. You will see what the energy of the ladies' world can achieve. Colored glass destroys all hatred."

The debate about the club's establishment and secrecy continued until dawn. Every third word was: Glass!—Tiffany-glass!

The next evening we watched Ms. de Wolfe set off with Mr. Chalfin, Mr. Koons, and Ms. Marbury—driving past the piles of construction supplies to the dark Mound meant to be bright within a year's time.



And it became bright.

We six gathered again on the east terrace at Vizcaya in July 1917. Ms. de Wolfe ordered us all to accompany her immediately to the bright round space whose location under the Mound's surface was to stay a complete secret. We took off all our clothes and entered the swimming pool above which hung a stone figure of Vulcan, god of the forge, unceremoniously being flung out of heaven. Caryatids and herms gazed suggestively as we swam through the secret underground pathway below the fountains and grottos. The two boy mermaid figures held their expressions, while Leda wrung the stone swan's white neck. The coquettish shepherd continued bringing his game to the coquettish shepherdess's bared breast.

Finally, we emerged wet and breathless over the threshold into the Light Club of Vizcaya. And there we found a circular glass palace below the raised surface—completely bright—dispelling all darkness. Light permeated the Universe. Everything was true and full of light in the highest degree—all the light behind Tiffany-glass.

A very—very—quiet light colony it was in those bright depths.

The color-clouds of the Tiffany-glass glowed intoxicatingly.

[slightly affected voice]

So many ideas sound to us like a fairy tale, when they are not really fantastic or utopian at all.



[loose, laconic voice]

After my mother died, I was cleaning out her house and found the journal of my great-great Aunt Mattie in the attic. Or at least a remnant of a journal of hers. It looked like someone tried to burn some of the pages within the book, which seemed to span the years just before and through World War One.

Mattie Edwards-Hewitt was probably the person who most inspired me to become a photographer. She and her girlfriend Frances Benjamin Johnston were well-known architectural photographers at the beginning of the twentieth century, about the only women doing that job then. They were based in New York, but traveled around the country for work. Frannie also became well known for her portraits of writers, artists, and intellectuals. Mattie and Frannie were part of a lively coterie of New York creative types. Their friends Elsie de Wolfe and Bessie Marbury, who called themselves The

Bachelors, held a weekly salon at their East 17th Street apartment, where all sorts would show up, including Sarah Bernhardt, Alice Austen, Isabella Stewart Gardner, and Oscar Wilde. Mattie and Frannie seemed to have had an interesting life together until they broke up in a public spat just before Christmas 1917. When I found the journal, I didn't know much more than that about their relationship. While there were books written about Frannie's life as a photographer, there wasn't much written about them together, and my family didn't talk about Frannie when they talked about Mattie.

I should say Mattie's journal was really more of a scrapbook, a hodgepodge assortment of commentary, confession, clippings, lists, letters, and philosophical ramblings. Though her name was clearly marked in handwriting on the inside cover, the journal opened with a letter by someone else that was pasted onto the first page. It had a few burn marks on it but was still legible.



[change voice to J. D. officious]

Dear Mr. Chalfin,

Do you realize that it will soon be five years since you and I hitched our horses together? In all that time except for intervals for food, water and flirtation you have given your time, labor and thought to me. I have understood very well. I know that the work you have done has been very well done and that you have given your whole soul to it. We really understand each other pretty well. I know that you are likely to be hurt when I don't mean to hurt you and you know I am likely to be irritated when you don't mean to irritate me—this among other things. But for something that can hardly happen our house is going to be a triumph—mostly your triumph. In my mind (opinion) there is much sympathy between us. We ought to have even more.

Yours sincerely,
J. D.

[regular loose, laconic]

My initial perplexity as to who J. D. and Chalfin could be was alleviated a few pages on in the journal, where I found an article pasted in from the July 1917 issue of *The Architectural Review*. It described a pseudo-Venetian Renaissance fantasy palace called Vizcaya, built among Miami's mangrove swamps for the famous agricultural machinery magnate James Deering of Chicago. Mattie must have been hired to photograph the finished house, because she's credited on the photos in that article. The piece also names Paul Chalfin as the house's associate architect and designer, and describes his flamboyant touches that marked the mansion's pastiche of historical styles. The letter about hitched horses started to make more sense.

Another journal entry, marked Christmas Day 1916, seemed to allude to the elaborate grand opening of the finished villa:

A whistle shrilled. A light flashed on. All activity ceased and silence descended on the great estate. The rooms of the huge palace lighted up one by one. In the terraced gardens, scores of Japanese lanterns began to play a symphony of colors. On each side of the marble stairway leading to the main door of the palace, servants in gold-faced uniform affected by European armies of the 18th century, approached ancient cannons, lighted fuses in their hands. Again the whistle sounded and the two cannoneers, acting as one, applied fuses to the touchholes and the cannons boomed in unison as the yacht's gangplank went down, and onto the landing stage stepped—not a king in royal raiment—but a little man in a high silk hat and a high stiff collar.

I felt compelled to know more about this strange place and what it and its people had meant to Mattie. I looked on the web but only came up with Vizcaya's most obvious history:

[change to mildly booming advertising-type voiceover]

Vizcaya means many things to many people. What will it mean to you?

With its phenomenal human-made and natural resources, Vizcaya was built in the 1910s, a decade in which Gilded Age cultural standards were enlivened by the irreverent spirit of the dawning Jazz Age. It also introduces visitors to Miami's place in this history—a time when America's wealthiest industrialists created lavish homes inspired by the palaces of Europe.

In that day, people lived with more self-reliance, more confidence, more hope; greater magnificence, extravagance, and elegance; more careless ease, more gaiety, more pleasure in each other's company and conversation, more injustice and hypocrisy, more misery and want, more sentiment including false sentiment, less sufferance of mediocrity, more dignity in work, more delight in nature, more zest.

For decades, Vizcaya has been a diplomatic seat of Miami-Dade County, having hosted some of the world's most renowned dignitaries—such as Queen Elizabeth II, Pope John Paul II, President Ronald Reagan, and King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofia of Spain—and major international events—such as the Summit of the Americas, the signing of the Free Trade Agreement, and activities associated with Art Basel. Numerous movies have been shot at Vizcaya, including *The Woman Game*, *The Money Pit*, *Bad Boys II*, and *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*.

Not promoted in the marketing copy was the fact that since 1985, the Vizcaya museum's faux-Baroque gardens had hosted a huge gay circuit party bacchanal called the White Party as a fundraiser for AIDS research. Organizers billed it as “a chance to escape to an altered world.” Scenes from the party where 2500 men in white descend on Vizcaya are described in a 1996 *New York Times* article: “In a small garden shrouded in darkness, men stood alone or walked through a topiary maze, cruising for partners.” An enthusiastic partygoer adorned with white angel wings says: “Being in a room with thousands of beautiful gay men can be a very empowering experience. Of course, the narcissism can be intimidating, and for outsiders the debauchery is hard to understand. But only a community so acquainted with grief could sustain this level of celebration.”

I went back to Mattie's journal to look for more about this altered world that Vizcaya engendered. All I could find in the journal were fragments of opaque text on charred pages:

[use same Scheerbartian voice as opening story, but slightly modulate in places to bring in a level of uncertainty, perhaps "madness"]

If we want our culture to rise to a higher level, we are obliged, for better or for worse, to change our architecture. And this only becomes possible if we take away the closed character.

.....

She said, "I desire to illuminate the circular space that frames the ground below the Mound, in such a manner that it will leave all of you flabbergasted." The new environment, which we thus create, must bring a new culture.

....

Normally we live surrounded by transparent walls which seem to be knitted of sparkling air; we live beneath the eyes of everyone, always bathed in light. We have nothing to conceal from one another.

....

I no longer believe that I am one of the agents of all this—some Other within me is responsible. Perhaps such a passive state is best for all artists and inventors—so that the Other within us can act most easily and effectively.

.....

But higher knowledge! The greatest work is nothing without the Sublime. We must always recognize and strive for the unattainable if we are to achieve the attainable. We are but guests upon this earth

and our true home is only the Sublime: in merging with it and in subordinating ourselves to it.

....

Finally, we emerged wet and breathless over the threshold into the Light Club of Vizcaya. And there we found a circular glass palace below the raised surface—completely bright—dispelling all darkness. It is no longer possible to keep apart the inside and outside.

....

There are ideas of molded clay and ideas molded of gold, or of our precious glass. The woman who sees the splendors of glass every day cannot have ignoble hands.

....

If nothing comes of this story then it will be proved once again that salvation is only to be sought in the imagination. With the utopias, generally speaking, humanity has made itself look a bit silly. Yet all the games of potentates are nothing compared to this story. It makes everything possible.

....

Always and again this pathetic “if”!

[loose, laconic voice]

I felt stunned by what I had read. What glass palace? What utopia? I knew from my limited research that the Mound was the centerpiece of the Vizcaya garden, a raised semi-circular structure built of state-of-the-art modernist

concrete and steel and covered with grass and trees to shade the house from the unforgiving Florida sun. Could there possibly be some kind of room filling the space below the Mound with colored light? Was this the Light Club of Vizcaya? Who was part of the club? Mattie obviously, and probably then Frannie. Chalfin and Deering? I had read that Chalfin was openly gay, and they seemed close in that earlier letter. But why would Deering need an underground fantasy palace when he already had a real one above?

I decided to travel to Vizcaya myself and see if I could discover evidence of this glass spa where queers bathed in light instead of water. Supposedly half of the Vizcaya site had been sold off to the Catholic diocese after Deering died, and the magnificent gardens decimated by a hurricane in 1926. I suspected that the light club would have been flooded out then. But I still felt drawn to Vizcaya. Even if it was in ruins, perhaps something would still reveal traces of Mattie's life. I brought along my camera as a kind of divining scope.



The house itself was indeed baroque, perhaps not in the best sense. Its stuffed rooms didn't interest me much, but the view out the east loggia to the bay was lovely, and the Barge, a breakwater structure in front of the Venetian-style water entrance on the east side, was an amazing, troubled wreck. I'd read about how workers had to perform breast reductions on Stirling Calder's sculptures on the Barge because the women's plenitude so offended James Deering's sensibilities. But when I visited the Barge it was the rooster bones strewn on the ground with remnants of tags still attached that most struck me. Perhaps they came from a cock fight for money or a Bahamian Obeah ritual. Deering always wore his signature white silk suits when he visited the Vizcaya construction site, where a thousand workers were molding his fantasy from the jungle. Supposedly the workers, many of who came from the Bahamas, used to make sure that "Mr. Jimmy" got splashed with a little cement each time he walked by. They were subtle about it, maybe a little less subtle during their failed union drive.

I ended up spending considerable time in the Vizcaya archives, where I discovered close to 20,000 letters written in relation to the house, many between Deering and Chalfin. There were almost as many photographs, though only a few stylized pictures of the two of them. It turned out that Mattie had photographed the whole process of constructing the palace and grounds, so that Deering could monitor its progress from Chicago. I went through the albums of Mattie's photos, and the gorgeous hand-drawn blueprints of the building, looking for elements that may have pointed to the building of the light spa. Was this the engine that dug below the Mound? Was this the turbine that lit it? Was this the generating station that started things off? Was this a model of the constructions that would hide the entrance to the palace of glass? Did this worker know about the light spa? Was this the swing the lovers sat on in the secret orchid garden after emerging from paradise below? Was James Deering really so clueless—perennial glass of whiskey in one hand and cigarette in the other—that he

didn't notice his guests stealing away to this spectacular space literally under his nose? His cultural scope was certainly limited. In one of his letters to Chalfin, he wrote, "There are two things, both of them the work of a single man, which excite my admiration. One of them is Webster's Dictionary and the other is this house." In the archive, Deering, who supposedly suffered from debilitating pernicious anemia, was variously described as colorless, meticulous, pedestrian, sedate, dyspeptic, proper, fastidious. One guest, well-known portrait photographer Nell Dorr (who referred to herself as Chalfin's sister-in-law because she was married to the brother of Chalfin's boyfriend, Louis Koons), "wondered if Mr. Deering ever took off all his clothes at the same time...even to bathe." In an interview with silent movie star Lillian Gish, who visited Vizcaya with Dorr and later hired Chalfin to decorate her apartment in "waves of sunshine," Gish describes Deering this way:

He was an astringent little man. I don't think he was really comfortable with his guests. I remember very clearly the night we were there. It was an April night and the gardens were full of fireflies. I was probably very romantic and I can remember that I wanted to get into a gondola and ride on the canals. It was such a lovely night. But we were taken right in after a look at the gardens to see a movie. It was a movie about microbes and germs. Can you imagine that? I suppose he thought it was entertaining. I had the impression that he was a man who wanted to have beauty around him in his house and gardens, but that he didn't know what to do with it. He wasn't able to live with it. It was simply there.

In a series of rather poignant letters, Deering asked Chalfin for a private place on the grounds "where I could be by myself and get away from all visitors...where my presence would be unknown to any and everybody, where there would be no telephone, so that if I were there the answer could always be that I was not at home." He suggested that this place could be

built beneath the Mound, but Chalfin dissuaded him, which makes me think that Deering may not have been let into the Light Club. Though I did discover certain, perhaps unconscious, clues to the spa's existence in the endless to-do lists Deering would write to Chalfin. These breathless declarations resembled a surrealist poem:

[voice can modulate in poem for various emphases]

There should be many hooks

I don't like green

Where should birds be located

I used to be much amused with the toboggan

No water in lily pond that kills lilies

Fences should protect us from visitors

Where do we want thermometers and their character

No bedroom should have a ticking clock

If it is possible to stop flapping it should be done

The seat to my WC is marred by wire netting

More light is needed. More light!

Drapery conceals the unicorn table

What lies undiscovered today may well be discovered anon

More colored light! must be the watchword

I do not understand the mutilation of the marble tub

My motto is “J’ai Dit,” I have spoken

Some skillful person should learn why one telescope always
points toward heaven.

[back to loose, laconic voice]

I wasn’t surprised when I read that Deering had an immense admiration for Germany, as it exemplified his idea of order and discipline. He seemed displeased by the relative disorder of America. I’m sure it’s all Chalfin’s doing that the Latin inscription over the main entrance to Vizcaya’s house translates as “Accept the gift of pleasure when it is given. Put serious things aside.”

I found a telling letter that Chalfin wrote in 1911 to Gertrude Whitney, the socialite founder of the museum that bears her name. He was in Europe with Deering spending a fortune buying pieces for the house:

Dear dear person you seem so much more part of me than anything that is here—nearer than a shirt or shoe. Where are you? It has been wonderful to storm through all the fine tissue of the world—to bathe in the champagne and to dine through all the moonlight, to tear through villages in search of flagrant sights, and to look at things and people from the “have” plane. It

is harder to obliterate fineness than to acquire it—like dying in the midst of health. It has paid so well to share the hack carriage with a blind fiddler and a plough boy all one's life—

I don't forget how near speech thought rises in you—you who know what you feel. But do you know, I'm always finding out things as if I were putting the pages of a book together and reading each of the pages out of order before putting it into its place.

Really I mean to say that while I'm being dragged about by my perfectly amiable Mr. Pipp I feel awfully enslaved. We entertain all the time with Chicagoan splendor and international business snobbery. I'm rather the lady of this house—a motherly youngster.... I've done nothing but efface impressions.

A seemingly changeable man, Chalfin's tone was quite different when he rhapsodized in an article published in 1935 about the little house on the top of the Mound called the Casino:

What is a casino for? For two to steal to, for one to dream in or perhaps to weep; for three to sing and for eight to dance in.... In a casino there must be ways for a gallant who should not be found there, and the eminent person who would side step a bone or a tale of bad luck. There must be a kitchenette and running water, a fireplace and light weight chairs a plenty. A casino held itself a household in miniature, was a play house for an hour, the great establishment with all its etiquette abbreviated and curtailed, but unbroken....

Of course I wanted to see the spot where all this playing around might have happened, and Vizcaya's archivist was kind enough to give me a tour of the Mound's secret doors and windows and also through the tiny eighteenth-century rooms of its Casino. We squeezed our bodies down the tight spiral staircase that led to the grotto below the Mound and could have led to the

light spa. No matter how many places I looked for entrances, though, I couldn't get into the Mound itself. Every door and window led to another wall.

After we returned to the cramped archives room, I stumbled upon a portfolio of sketches by Chalfin, mostly attempts at old master style drawings, but it also held a reproduction of a painting by Florine Stettheimer. The print shows a picnic where Edward Steichen is photographing Marcel Duchamp, while in the distance Chalfin embraces the Marquis de Buenavista against a tree trunk. Small world indeed. I wonder what they all talked about.

The portfolio also contained a print of a lovely, sensual watercolor by John Singer Sargent of a group of Bahamian workers sunbathing nakedly on Vizcaya's sandy beach in a quiet pastoral moment away from the backbreaking work of building a fantasy palace in a swamp. Did these workers know about the Light Club of Vizcaya? Did Sargent? Lillian Gish? When Thomas Edison visited Vizcaya, did he notice the excess of electricity that must have been in place in order to light the spa? An extra turbine under the Mound or special electrical lines running through the gardens under the fountains? Probably not—the little cabal probably succeeded in keeping the whole thing very secret for their own multilayered reasons.

An interview with Vizcaya garden designer Diego Suarez provides an obvious clue to at least part of their motivation. Here's Suarez's description of Chalfin, with some commentary by the interviewer:

Chalfin was absolutely the worst pansy I have ever seen. He had a secretary (ugh!). He used to kiss him goodbye—he was always kissing his hand. This man was a despicable individual.... [Chalfin] had a house on Lexington. He kept Koons there. [Mr. Suarez then made a face showing great disgust with such

a homosexual ménage.] I don't like to talk about it. [Further expressions of disgust.] You are a man? I am a man. I'll tell you—but it is not something you would want to put in a book. It is not a thing I care to dwell on...even now. You see, Chalfin was a man with very peculiar tastes. You are a man. Do I make myself clear?

By far the most important find in the archive was tucked away in Chalfin's portfolio, a little book, I guess a novella, in German called *Der Lichtklub Von Batavia: Eine Damen-Novелlette* by a writer named Paul Scheerbart. Now, I'm your typical monolingual American, but even I could pronounce the word that looked like Light Club. And the inscription was in English, "For dear Paul, and for our dear bright dreams. Not more light! – 'more colored light!' must be the watchword. Love, Elsie." Was this Elsie de Wolfe addressing Chalfin? I knew from my research that Chalfin had apprenticed with Elsie in New York, and that she had decorated Deering's Chicago home. But how would Elsie know about the light club?

Flipping through the text, I found a few English translations in the margins, including: "You will see what the energy of the ladies' world can achieve." I looked up Scheerbart, who was this pre-World War One German expressionist writer obsessed with the potential of glass architecture to save civilization, and who wrote utopian novels with flying zeppelins, celestial bodies, and perpetual motion machines that didn't make much sense after 1914. Scheerbart supposedly died in the arms of his wife, who was curiously known as The Bear, and it was rumored he had starved himself in protest over the war. Did Mattie know about this Scheerbart story and concoct her own light club from it? Did Chalfin or de Wolfe? I'm not sure. Perhaps a utopian story like Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* can be written at the same time Vizcaya is being built, as a stunning example of the enlightened, if somewhat eugenic, energy of a women's world, but a sparkling palace for queer sex just can't come to light, even as a

representation of some rich guy's unconscious. Maybe I don't need to say that Gilman's mad, stifling palimpsest, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, could come next. Maybe it's not a coincidence that Frannie did a portrait of Gilman in her room. It also may not be a coincidence that Chalfin went blind in an old folks' home. Is something clear when you understand it, or when it looms up startling you? Mattie may not have been so sure. Here's the last entry I could make out in her journal:

[voice a little dreamy...]

On the horizon of a story is found what was in the beginning: this naïve or native sense of touch, in which the subject is submerged in astonishment, wonder, and sometimes terror before that which surrounds it. The path has been neither made nor marked, unless in the call to a more distant future that is offered by and to the other in the abandonment of the self.

Thus a new birth comes about, a new dawn for the beloved and the lover. The openness of a face which has not yet been sculpted. Not a mask given or attributed, but an efflorescence that detached itself from its immersion and absorption in the night's most secret place. Not without sparkling. The light that shines there is different from the one that makes distinctions and separates too neatly.

How to preserve the memory of the flesh? For what is or becomes the site that underlies what can be remembered? Place of a possible unfolding of its temporality? Burial ground of the touch that metabolizes itself in the constitution of time. Which will always remain on the threshold, even after entering into the house. Which will remain a dwelling, preceding and following the habitation of any dwelling.



[back to loose, laconic voice]

Me, I wonder if there is a model for utopia that encompasses its own doubt, considers its own inevitable faults and failures, exposes its messy seams while being conscious of the danger of imposing on all the plans of a subjective few. The possibility of rejecting utopia as a blueprint, while preserving it as a dream.

My mind drifts to Frannie's great article from 1897 on "What a Woman Can Do With a Camera," how "a woman who makes photography profitable must have good common sense, unlimited patience to carry her through endless failures, equally unlimited tact, good taste, a quick eye, a talent for detail, and a genius for hard work." She describes all the DIY elements you

need, including a room to transform ideas into images:

If a good-sized room with several windows in it is available, it is quite easy to make it “light-tight” by pasting several thicknesses of yellow post-office or ruby paper on the panes, stopping up the chinks with flaps of dark felt, and if necessary using yellow cloth curtains. A room so darkened should be tested for light-leaks before it is regarded as a safe place in which to handle plates.

Once the light-tight room has been lovingly prepared, “On the outside of one window, in a sheltered box, place your lamp. A steady even light is of the greatest importance—in fact, it is absolutely essential.”

[Fade out picture to black.]

Dodie Bellamy

The TV Sutras (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2014)

REVIEWED BY ERIC SNEATHEN

Dodie Bellamy's newest book, *The TV Sutras*, spins at a wide juncture of mysticism and eroticism. A spiritual travelogue of sorts, *The TV Sutras* records a cast of seekers—Jovian emissaries of peace, lecherous meditation leaders, secret-even-from-themselves lesbian lovers turned co-cultists—whose sexuality and spirituality become dilated or burned out, each in terms of the other. Like the overall structure of the book itself, which sutures together the procedurally induced, eponymous *TV Sutras* with the fictionalized memoir-essay of the second half, *Cultured*, the cast of *TV Sutras* joins, sometimes by force, sometimes by will alone, their sexuality with their spiritual ascensions. Masters of Soul become embroiled in sexual scandals. Neva, the woman from Jupiter whom Dodie haunts as an earthly doppelgänger, gushes charisma and self-possession that rockets her spirituality into the heavens. *The TV Sutras* inquires into whose body is spiritual, meaningful, fulfilling, and looks for enough points of entry to make a response that's ecstatic, holy, porous.

In part, Bellamy answers these questions through sheer invention. The ultimate vision of *The TV Sutras* belongs to the blogging mystic Azure Linga, a poetess who was once named “something common like Lisa or Ashley” but whose life was irrevocably changed by a visitation by The Blue Angel. Now Azure Linga types perfect messages from The Blue Angel to share with her followers, such as “*The Bleu Angle bids us ti embrase the incompresensible in its perefect comprehensivulity.*” Lisa/Ashley's awakening into Azure exposes what is generic about spirituality and, in turn, what's fun and confounding about the generic: “Each time I breathe in, all the stars and planets are drawn into me and when I breathe out they're expelled back into black sky.” Or: “I dream my skin is soft because it's ben pummeled by meteorites,” leaving

us mere mortals transformed, terrified, in awe of the we-are-stardust, we-are-golden, we-are-billion-year-old-carbon stature of our spiritual leaders.

In order to emancipate the student from the hypnotic astral body of her leader, *The TV Sutras* invents its own inspired text as a countermeasure, as its own claim to meaning-making and spiritual agency. Each of the 78 sutras in the book consists of three elements: a line of dialogue (unless the sutra is “silent”), a brief description of the scene in which the dialogue occurs, and a commentary that relates (sometimes obliquely) to the dialogue and relays a gobblet of spiritual wisdom. For example, Sutra 53:

53

You're a landlord, Wade. We just rent from you. It's your responsibility.

Group of men sitting around a table, talking.

COMMENTARY

Life is transitory—seek the eternal part of yourself—turn to that part for guidance. Be humble, but not passive. Responsibility is a fluid give-and-take.

Significantly, even as character-Dodie wants to enact anti-hypnosis in *TV Sutras*, she isn't completely convinced by the cool containment of her sutras. “It's been a year since I've looked at my TV Sutras, and I'm worried they're god-awful. When I finally marshal the nerve to read them—they're fine, solid *A Course in Miracles*-type aphorisms, funny, at times inspiring, but plodding and quotidian compared to the swirling auras of my favorite mystical texts.” The emergence of Azure Linga pivots at this point in the text becoming the engine for her manifestation on the blogosphere.

The sutras provide a soundboard for Azule Linga's ecstasy and an alternate ending to the book. But if they do not ultimately heal the suffering of spiritual-seeker-Dodie, they can at least be read as a corrective to the often misogynist and manipulative semiotic insularity of spiritual masters. Crucially, Dodie doesn't eschew mystical structures outright ("It's all bunk!" etc.). She's made her own terrain in them, entering into "a meaning machine in libidinal overdrive" behind "all those rainbows, unicorns, feel-good slogans, deprivations and rituals, behind the closed doors of the temple." Bellamy divines for herself a new relation to the spiritual good life. Through the medium of the television and an adherence to procedure to generate meaning, she has elaborated her own spiritual path. Like tea leaves, like entrails, the television's channels can be witnessed by anyone, studied, reconfigured into illuminated narrative.

Divination also plays a key function in another recent Bellamy book, *Cunt Norton* (Les Figes, 2013), wherein each of Bellamy's cunt-ups pronounces a saint: Cunt Ashbery, Cunt Byron, Cunt Chaucer, Cunt Dickinson. These savvy saints and luddite saints proceed to the dais in turns, ensure skin still speaks miraculously.

Miracles are not sanitary: blood from every orifice, drawn out in rivulets—is it super-charged magnets?—to empty the body to prove the divine exists, the water becomes wine, the bread and fish become more bread and more fish, wine and bread and fish all enter our bodies, miraculous, shit and piss leave our bodies, miraculous, and these saints are here to kiss us deeply wherever those miracles have kissed us deeply too.

Dodie Bellamy's other recent works seem to politicize the miraculous and the ecstatic. It's not that today is a miracle—it has only always been meant to feel like a miracle. These days, overbooked, underemployed, the TV and streets emitting nonsense or something akin to nonsense, I'm continually duped. Bellamy's work prompts me to recognize that I haven't expected it to be so slow in becoming, this promised articulation of relief, revelation, realization in the twenty-first century.

As she shares the saints' beatific vision, Bellamy knows this too, that the miraculous swings out and breaks promises in slow motion: the slow drag of a cigarette by Neva in *TV Sutras*; the "Bob Fosse meets apache meets punk maneuvers" that Lindsey Boldt, David Brazil, Sara Larsen, Steve Orth and Sara Wintz rescue from forgetting in another recent text by Bellamy, *The Beating of Our Hearts* (Semiotext[e], 2014); all the psychic terrain required to incite Donne: "Seek mine open insides and fill them with thine unhous'd. Thou fleest when thou shouldst seek memory: I was here a thousand years ago and I fucked thee: like snakes we fucked each other, my prince of yesterday who sate in the crack of mine ass, who though entrall'd by all, loves me only."

What is this relationship, so rampant and seductive in Bellamy's work, between divination and slow motion?

In the final section of her essay *The Beating of Our Hearts*, under the influence of Andrew Kenower's video *This is what a baton to a video camera looks like (ultra slow)*, Bellamy considers a series of distinct but echoing visions: "The action is so decelerated the police fade in and out of readability ... Each time I play the video different images emerge. A smudged white figure with arms outstretched moves down the frame on the diagonal. Streaks of white, red, maroon, misty blue shift in the darkness then a shock of guns, batons, head gear. Surrounded by a vagueness of unarmed others the adrenalized cops are the ones who look scared. There's something on the white figure's head. Maybe a helmet. Maybe a blond pompadour. Maybe it's holding something. A gun?"

It's not that the past shifts into lucidity now that it's reconsidered or revisited by an I'm-wiser-now narrator who spreads events out wide, like poker played open-handed, the cards up, fanned so now we can see exactly how you play your games at us, you bastard.

Well, maybe a little of this.

A preoccupation with slow motion insists upon a category in which the author is rescued from a militarized surveillance; no more is this voice “hiding” or “shying away” or “unguarded” or “really exposed;” slow motion intensifies what is only always already there—physical facts made timeless.

It’s at this speed I recognize the figures and systems already embodied and at work all around me, like recognizing the Tarot’s archetypes of the major arcana at play in the silly dramas of the minor, the profane world touched into the abstraction of Strength, Injustice, The Tower rent from its roots, The Hermit leaves behind his eight full cups in search of what else might be.

It is at this speed I recognize that I’ve always wanted to be entwined with Yeats in this way: “Let’s fuck our brains out in merriment, never quarreling as I lick your honey. You make me so fucking horny in this dear perpetual place.”

Perhaps the difference between slow motion and divination can be better explored by considering how each process brings other texts, images, bodies into relation. Divination has the capacity to elaborate on the past, present, and future. Slow motion requires a past occurrence on which it operates, and so its illumination of the present is always analogical. Divination is a narrative process in which two otherwise distinct codes are brought to bear on one another: this symbol means X, these numbers suggest something about Y. Slow motion puts pressure on what already is, disrupting and putting under reevaluation what narrative sets forth, visions in the fire. When I ask myself, *are cunt-ups and tv sutras slow-motion renderings or divined amplifications?*, I’m wondering if these procedures bring into being what otherwise might remain imperceptible. When Bellamy looks at the slow motion figure, is it a white pompadour or is it a helmet she sees? Or if the deck is shuffled, can a new constellation be discerned and investigated from that shuffling? We deserve slow motion; to be arrested by rich, meaningful experiences; to have the blight of state-sanctioned violence removed, abstracted. But the baton will still fall. We cannot live in slow motion; we can only divine shapes, structures, ghosts, from its images.

Dodie Bellamy's recent books prompt me to ask myself *what is the relationship between what hollows out my future and what concentrates me in my present? What is the relationship between debt and ecstasy?* My ecstasy propels me outside myself, beyond a mere presence in the here and now and its obvious accumulations. My ecstasy that I miraculously ride to Jupiter and back. My ecstasy is always foreclosed by my debt that pulls me out of the present, an endless spiral of payments, a vision of blue carbon-copies of loan repayment forms. Still, I don't think of ecstasy as only an escape from debt but as a way of recognizing it, feeling out the faces of the forces that limit my capacity to remain present. As Bellamy says in a recent interview, "Through the process of researching and writing [*The TV Sutras*], I did come to a few conclusions. That we're programmed for ecstasy and nobody owns that. That meaning is not static, but evanescent, appearing and fading and reappearing. That the only difference between a cult and a religion is size."¹ Be they against capitalism or patriarchy, Bellamy's books assert that our individual and collective antagonisms are brought into and through our bodies, meaningful, worthy of our attention. Bellamy goes on to say, "to look—to really look—is to love," and this is what we're given with *The TV Sutras*. The ending witnesses the emergence of an otherworldly savant who has reached vector equilibrium as she incants her visions with pansies in her turban. Her ecstatic incantation— "I swirl, lie down on the floor, close my eyes and listen to the language of fairies. I just live my function. I am great and important and marvelous. I am small and petty and personal"—should belong to everyone.

¹ Helberg, Natalie. "On Sutres, Sutras, Cobbled Bodies And Jovian Goddesses: An Interview With Dodie Bellamy." *Numéro Cinq*, June 2014.

Divya Victor

Things to Do with Your Mouth (Les Fignes Press, 2014)

REVIEWED BY JULIA BLOCH

Powers of speech

Since 2005, Les Fignes Press has been publishing installments of TrenchArt, an annual book series that takes its name from the tradition of forging art from the materials of war: think ashtrays made out of brass shell casings, jewelry out of scrap steel, sculptures out of metal, cloth, bone, wood. Several books in the Les Fignes series have considered how changing times make new demands on an old form, such as Nuala M. Archer's 2006 book *Inch Aeons*, which uses the haiku to explore ideas about the loss of boundaries in an uncontained world. In what sounds like a love poem to the form, Archer writes, "In You—too—Haiku— / Broke loose forever—Breaking / Heart of me—Creature"; then, in a bitter gloss of capitalist lust: "Sated with High-Rise / Concupiscence—creating / Knee-high Rush-Hours home."

One of the critical questions around trench art has to do with whether its purpose is primarily decorative or commemorative, or whether it reproduces the memory of war or reimagines it altogether. If forging strange shapes out of war materials is where this series started, nine years later comes *Things to Do with Your Mouth* by Divya Victor, part of the "Logistics" chapter of TrenchArt: books that use the cut as an organizing principle, from Dodie Bellamy's *Cunt Norton* (2013), which "cunts" the *Norton Anthology of Poetry*, to Redell Olsen's *Film Poems* (2014), which explores how cuts between word and image illuminate the mediation of what Olsen says can be understood as "that *something* burning in the projector called language."

Victor's text is also intensely interested in mediation, but in this case it's mediation that cuts both ways: language formed, controlled, modulated, and

released by the body, as well as the flesh worn, punctured, weighted down, sliced, or otherwise altered by words. The Logistics series plays with trench art's questions of tactile immediacy: if an object taken from armed conflict undergoes aesthetic transformation, does it still belong to the time of war? Does its viewer? *Things to Do with Your Mouth* takes up the organ best known for its material engagement with the world. If the 'something' in Olsen's TrenchArt approach to language seems a little indistinct and liminal, language in *Things to Do with Your Mouth* is always concretely contested. The language is as material as the flesh; it's the encounter between the two that matters. This book suggests something about surface and depth: in spotlighting the specific ways speaking women get silenced, Victor's poetry insists we reconsider the materiality of the speaking body. *Things* opens with an epigraph from the preface to Foucault's *The Birth of the Clinic* that describes an eighteenth-century treatment of hysteria: the patient is given ten to twelve baths a day for ten months, after which the tissues of the body begin to separate, get expectorated and vomited out. The body becomes visible as "damp parchment," which is in fact the thing the physician compared membranes to.

Across the four parts of Victor's book, named unsettlingly for different uses of the mouth—"Put Flesh on a String," "Gag," "Create a Situation," and "Answer"—Victor cuts language out from other sources, especially nursery rhymes, pediatric health guidelines, the Bible, and Freud's *Dora*, and reassembles it at different sites that confront the long history of silencing women's mouths. A series of questions and commands at the beginning of the first section invites speech in dangerous settings: "*what is the matter with you? / where does it hurt? / how are we feeling today? / when was your last confession? [...] 'OPEN YOUR MOUTH?'*" (4-6). Sometimes, Victor puts the banality of the instruction genre in flat contrast to gruesome-sounding titles like "put flesh on a string":

If you want
to put something
in a fixed place
between or

among other
things, you can
insert it

If it's a liquid,
you'll probably want
to inject it,
although to inject
can also mean
to add something
new or different (18-19)

At other points in the book, such as “Dora and Flora: An Analysis of a Turn of the Case,” recombinations and substitutions make more visible a thread within found text. Here, for example, the gag as the thing that can hold the mouth open for examination or medical procedure but also the thing that halts speech, ingestion, and breath (elsewhere, Victor includes ‘instructions’ on constructing a gag from an apple, a belt, a handkerchief, etc.) gets inserted into the text, so that silence becomes as loud as speech:

Little Flora first came to my attention and enclosed the key and as my sister's governess she quietly gagged as if it were more than it had ever been like my coming down the second summer as my own much later knowingly gagged as if I had been looking at her for years and had known her always and my fortitude mounted afresh as we turned to my small charge as so many things thrown and gagged as if catching beyond the interval our voices on my way in the coach because I fear I had rather brooded while gagged as if she had got from some outside source my employer and I found to have composed knowingly my mistake which I attenuated as I pleasantly gagged as if to ask her why in my letter again to repeat it to her. (49)

The word *gagged* is the thing doing the gagging of the text: it's as if the poetry were performing a closer reading of the found text, making more legible its repetitive moves toward silencing.

There's silencing, and then there's also proliferation, which can function as another sort of regulation of speech. In a witty section named after Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling*, a book devoted to assessing both the creative force and the ideological archive behind the performative speech act, Victor writes:

Julia Kristeva spits on my Achilles tendon while my Adam's apple combs lice from Adrienne Rich's wigs as she gossips about my Alcock's canal when my artery of Adamkiewicz sidles up to Anne McClintock as she burrows into my Bachmann's bundle while it curls up with Annett Kolodny as she comes and coils over my Bartholin's gland while my Batson's plexus pets B. Ruby Rich as she braids friendship bracelets with my Long thoracic nerves of Bell (65)

It's feminist genealogy via thoracic nerve: as Foucault writes in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, descent "attaches itself to the body," in the nerves and digestive apparatus and everything that touches the body: diet, climate, soil.¹ In *Things to Do with Your Mouth*, descent is by turns ludicly and violently legible in operations upon anything attached to or expelled from the body.

One of the risks of trench art is that it will be usurped and sanitized in the interests of obscuring the effects of the war that produced it. As Victor writes hauntingly in a passage about Dora: "It was easy to interpret, stretch myself upon her, and speak with her mouth to mouth" (57). *Things to Do with Your Mouth* is built out of the materials of human conflict quite literally: nerve, tendon, uterine tissue, duct, gland, zits, foreskin, vaginal mucus, spinal fluid. It's a conflict not likely to end soon.

¹ Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 147-48.

Harryette Mullen

The Cracks Between What We Are and What We Are Supposed to Be (The University of Alabama Press, 2012)

REVIEWED BY ROBIN TREMBLAY-McGAW

"I've packed my text" (Urban Tumbleweed, 81)

"In taking up the term....'interrogate,' I want to apply it in its original sense of 'standing between and asking questions'" (The Cracks Between, 68)

To the delight of her avid readers, a slew of new Harryette Mullen books has recently emerged: Belladonna's publication of Barbara Henning's *Looking Up Harryette Mullen: Interviews on Sleeping with the Dictionary and Other Works* (2011); *The Cracks Between What We Are and What We Are Supposed to Be* (2012), and Graywolf's release of Mullen's latest book of poems *Urban Tumbleweed: Notes from a Tanka Diary* (2013).

Diving into *The Cracks Between* is deeply satisfying. The book brings together seminal works such as "Optic White: Blackness and the Construction of Whiteness" originally published in *diacritics*, a number of other long essays, including "A Collective Force of Burning Ink: Will Alexander's *Asia & Haiti*" from *Callaloo*, some of Mullen's writing on slave narratives (the subject of Mullen's doctoral dissertation though never published as a book), and diverse shorter essays, many of them originating as conference papers or talks. Some of these discuss the genesis of Mullen's own work, as in "Poetry and Identity" and "Kinky Quatrains: The Making of Muse & Drudge." Still others traverse a wide territory, generously reading and critically engaging with the work of Lorenzo Thomas, Nathaniel Mackey, Gertrude Stein, Sylvia Plath, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Erica Hunt, Wislawa Szymborska and Julie Patton. The collection also includes five interviews

with Mullen and Calvin Bedient, Elisabeth A. Frost, Daniel Kane, Cynthia Hogue and Nibir K. Ghosh.

Fittingly, the collection opens with Mullen's compelling essay originally published in *boundary 2*, "Imagining the Unimagined Reader: Writing to the Unborn and Including the Excluded," which sounds a theme traversing many of the pieces: the persistent problems and possibilities of inclusion and exclusion. While race and gender are at the forefront of these exclusionary constructions, Mullen is attentive to a network of other obstacles. Reflecting on the "linguistic and cultural" context of her work, her motivations for writing, and her imagined audience of potential readers, she asserts, "I write for myself and others." This is a claim any poet might make, but I suspect few really take to heart and pen. History and the present make the stakes for doing so clear. As an African American woman writer, Mullen points out that there are "authors who never imagined that someone like me might be included in the potential audience for their work, as when I read in Cirlot's *Dictionary of Symbols* that a 'Negro' symbolizes the beast in the human" (3).

Mullen concedes that she does not think about who might be excluded from her writing in the moment of composition; however, after she's written, she turns her attention to who might be. Suggesting her shifting style is one way she attempts to reach as wide and diverse an audience as possible, she also acknowledges the numerous barriers potential readers of her work might encounter. She charts the problems of literacy, poverty, the challenges of small press books and their ephemeral availability, the fact she writes in English and "the qualities that I aspire to in my work seem to be precisely those that resist translation" (6). Mullen's essay casts a reflexive, critical eye on her attempts to "write beyond the range of [her] voice and the social boundaries of identity" while she addresses "the limits imposed on [her] work and [her] imagination by language and its cultural significance" (3)--a worthy goal for any writer. In doing so, Mullen crafts a non-programmatic but social, ethical poetics that wrestles in the present

not only with history but also habitus, at once acknowledging and resisting, describing and *de-scribing*, re-scripting the possible.

Whether articulating the dangers of “aesthetic apartheid,” the ongoing practice in many anthologies, encyclopedias, journals and reading series of segregating writers according to race, a practice which results in “formally innovative minority poets” invisibility (209), or delineating how in the hands of a number of contemporary poets of color “blackness has become a space for critical and aesthetic interrogation” (76), a means for “standing between and asking questions” while charting and participating in “‘other blackness’ (rather than ‘black otherness’)...allow[ing] the meanings of blackness to proliferate and expand” (68-69), or framing her poetics as one interested in “writing as a process that is synthetic rather than organic, artificial rather than natural, human rather than divine” (6), the pieces in this collection are marked by Mullen’s always reflective and generous approach to language, audience, and the writing of those she challenges and/or admires.

One such significant but complex figure for Mullen is Modernist giant, Gertrude Stein. In “If Lilies are Lily White: From the Stain of Miscegenation in Stein’s ‘Melanchtha’ to the ‘Clean Mixture’ of White and Colored in Her *Tender Buttons*,” Mullen locates Stein not as an heir but rather as a generative and problematic ancestor, who “like Picasso, synthesizes a ‘clean mixture’ of Africa and Europe through artistic rather than reproductive means” (26). While Stein’s construction of race in “Melanchtha” has been written about extensively, Mullen perceptively traces the distinct but overlapping articulations of race and color as she follows their migration into Stein’s obsession with color in “the ‘subversive fragments’ of *Tender Buttons* which include: ‘Dirty is yellow. A sign of more is not mentioned. A piece of coffee is not a detainer. The resemblance to yellow is dirtier and distincter. The clean mixture is whiter and not coal color, never more coal color than altogether’ and ‘a white egg and a colored pan’” (21, 26-27). This is new territory.

Another of the delights of reading Mullen's collection is the creative energy it brings not only to perceptive readings of other writers' texts, but to the project of teaching poetry. In her essay on Plath, for example, Mullen performs an exacting reading of Plath's poem "Metaphors," using its language games as creative and pedagogical fodder, as provocations for her own and student writing that enable students to approach Plath's text from "the inside."

Harryette Mullen has indeed "packed her text" with writing that is, as Hank Lazer describes it, "activist . . . partisan, partial, and ethical" (xv). It is also wide-ranging and urgent, though it does not preclude pleasure: Mullen is stretching, standing between, asking questions. *The Cracks Between* offers us a model for how we might try to do the same.

David Wolach

Hospitalology, (Tarpaulin Sky Press, 2013)

REVIEWED BY NICKY TISO

Fugitive Poetry

David (d) Wolach's recent poetry collection, *Hospitalology*, is an avant-sore that gestures from the oncology ward towards a language beyond words, beyond the pain of depreciated personhood, beyond what Anne Boyer calls the "self-management of the masculinized subject,"¹ via a language that cuts and is bruised, that returns the word to its morphemic roots as modular parts desiring multiple predications, not the patriarchal power of one. Language as a combinatory sequence of units of meaning subcontracted into patterns of legibility produces in turn the body as it is contracted to behave within the household, within the marketplace, as a boy, as a girl, as a man, or as a beast. This poetry asks the better question: how might these bodies misbehave? Misallocate funds? Resist interpretation like how a strike withholds labor from the employer, when understanding is co-optive? Because we read people the same way we read books, as signs to synopsise, to judge. I remember as a child at elementary school once being asked by another kid to examine my fingernails, a reflex action. Without thinking I outstretched my fingers, palms downward, to look at my nails. They laughed and told me that meant I was gay, because that's how girls do it. Boys bend their fingers and turn their palms upward to examine their nails, duh. I felt so gay and I didn't even know what that meant, and became self-conscious at that point about how I look at my nails.

Not-knowing allows difference, the right to not give a fuck. These poems are a ritual invocation of uncertainty and the new possibility as political subjects such a language of uncertainty might engender, like a polis of Caliban (but is this contradictory?). Body politics is always also a politics of the body, a vocabulary of boundary and desire. The massified sense of individuality

that befits us all makes Americans something like a physalia physalis, a colony of individuals incapable of independent survival yet obsessed with freewill. *Hospitalology* channels James Baldwin's black radicalism to ask how can our "submerged being" participate in the dialogic frame of *confession* and *voice* and the first-person singular that inform much of the craft of poetry and memoir and parliamentary governance in general. Like a mix-tape this book is laced with conversational specificities and intertextual allusions that spiral outward, tracing a discourse community (friendships) into a set of productive relations for generating new ideas: the gossip that becomes a manifesto.

Outside friendship, the intersection of language and power, explored via the invagination of political discourse, has always been a central yet centerless theme of d's work. Their 2010 release, *Occultations*, featured a sequence of somatic writing exercises recreating the harsh interrogation techniques of CIA operatives, such as writing poetry while being force fed words. This is a theatrical act, but if gender and identity are performative—that is, if how we present ourselves to the world, as a series of consolidated affects, produces the impression of who we are, then this "theatricalization" of torture is also part of its reality, and not merely a metaphor. Real life is scripted. How do we articulate the submerged being, the being in exile? In such cases is there a limit to empathy as an affective response? Like in *Beowulf* do you feel bad for Grendel or not?

In the following passage from one of d's force-fed somatic writing exercises, the performance of domesticity (watching TV) follows the same pacifying directives the presumed interrogator gives to the detainee: sit down and shut up (which is to say, the society of the spectacle and the war against terrorism have a common operating logic). The gagging becomes visible in the stuttering meter, the strikethroughs, and enjambments that give the meaning of lines more livelihoods:

my at home ex
perience @ kitchen skin sink
—ing

thru w/ the teleo-vision he says
 open
 wide we need *an enhanced sit*
-uational under-
standing
 blood-
 sugar poeman ~~introverted~~ inverted milgram
 ex-peri-mint
 “Eat Up” “Eat Shit” “Shut Up” “Stand
 Down”

You might notice its pastiche quality in how it appears to consist of a medley of pieces taken from various sources, a quality consistent in d's work, but with a keenly directed coordination to make the pastiche feel, well, personal. There is a self-assertion within the assemblage. The consonance of “~~skin~~ sink,” the near pun of mistaking one for the other, points to the gendered division of labor that structures the household (where for instance women stereotypically belong in the kitchen, the proprietary objectness of self when othered). Then, all of a sudden, the hanging suffix changes the previous open compound (kitchen sink) to a verb (kitchen sinking), activating the environment. Making words function as multiple parts of speech re-writes the traditional binding theory of generative syntax; this is important when sentence agreement=gender conformity.

d's post-Language post-camp fragmentary performativity is part of an evolving avant-garde response to the economic crisis of our century. It's also a Bay Area thing. For instance we see a similarity to Brenda Hillman (only with less pastiche) in her recent book *Seasonal Works With Letters On Fire*, such as her poem “Imperishable Longing To Be With Others”:

at the rushing forth in streets—,
 of squares, where you've been,
 with pewter imports— star-shaped stones,
 shops, ships stalled in the harbor—;

[(where they danced
who had been jailed—)]
the tyrant shouting to his thugs
firing on his own—from the wall

On display in both stanzas are the staccato dashes, prepositional digressions, and thematic parallels between the fragmentary lyric mode and the political instability of globalization. Because the world at large is imported and the landscape denatured, the language of the poem itself is on the edge of its powers of witnessing. What do we see when there are walls in the way? When the borders are fenced?

As punctuation, dashes are informal, abrupt, and usually used in writing to set off parenthetical elements. The overabundance of dashes, as seen in these examples, upsets the balance of the center to the periphery, furthering our sense of exile. d uses dashes to denote syllabification (“ex-peri-ment”) and to create irregular linkages between words, again zeroing in on the borderlands of lexical categories, the interstices of dependency and constituency, in order to dis-order the structural center of every clause, like in these three stanzas:

Need less to say the say sound make-s-
In the hiding in the want-as need as lay
As soft under-the said to de-claim –skin-

Cover you-sound a full wound un-desolates
Your un-peeled body con-cept you asked it
Open asked if desire and need needs in –the-

In made-need in-the –shine- of this stuck tonic-
Clonic body para-meter if not-yet and if –now-
Then our shadows are fully not us not yet –yet-

While these postmodern overdeterminations of syntax might make the mainstream aesthete groan, the structure of many of the poems in

Hospitalology resemble traditional forms of confessional, sonnetlike poetry, creating a containing form in tension with the content's transgressive subject matter. Like queer bodies closeted in a homophobic culture, this enclosure belies the drifting otherwise, the words hyphenated into something else, the constant modulation creating a sense of movement both rhythmic and robotic, like a John Cage piece.

All the poems in *Hospitalology* save for a handful were written in hospitals or hotels, within a frame of sickness and clinical reduction to patient, within an intubated interiority and a culture of surveillance. They are written in the context of our broken healthcare system and the accumulation of debt that comes with socializing losses and privatizing gains. Their mood exhibits how intimately artistic expression is affected by the global debt landscape and concepts of labor.

Bladder's shot don't tell
Me how wrong the Indians are
They know who will have been
For knowing my goddamn name

Nor Toscano's passers-by on sojourn
Those whose hands make use
Of the "99 cent bedside mops"
While a kindle squeezed hours
Day into day, day as shift
Right to work is back at it—

Even that nurse is on the take

This may sound suspiciously like griping (oh, life is hard!) but as Dr. Cornel West has remarked, there's a qualitative difference between wailing and whining. "Wailing is a cry for help against a backdrop of catastrophe... Whining is a cry of self-pity associated with a sentimental disposition."² The poor and working class have a right to cry; they have legitimate grievances against the social order that is material (lack of resources, low wages), not

just sentimental. The interesting thing is the grievance here stretches to include the nurse who is also part of the working class, subordinate to their male counterparts, and so who would seem to warrant more solidarity, although I must admit as a patient and not just a bystander d has a complicated relationship to the administration of care. It also points to the inescapability of escaping from what Fred Moten calls “the crisis of deprivation on a global scale,” and that the roles we play as workers “reinforces the brutal axioms of ownership and exception in our everyday lives.”³

Writing from illness, d’s neuromuscular disease is a synecdoche for and symptom of the global crisis of deprivation, with their bladder leakage a lost aspect of self-control, of bodily ownership, that points to a need for care, and that becomes enmeshed in other classed relationships within the hospital-industrial complex, wherein health becomes a commodity.

The satirical contrast of formality and kitsch, of feigned exact relations, is part of the new aesthetics of debt resistance, or what Yates McKee in their essay, “DEBT: Occupy, Postcontemporary Art, and the Aesthetics of Debt Resistance” calls, “an aesthetic spectrum defined on one end by *uniformity* and by *jubilation* on the other.” The jubilation in d’s work is its pastiche, burlesque, and satirical qualities:

*watch america’s
healthiest tv
show!*

*fuck yr
lipid bi
layer!*

*in under
ground bunker
fat buster, buster!
contained levee
serves up to 8 per
ground floor room!*

The underlying negativity is entertainingly presented in the language of the talk show host. To be a *host* is also to the organism in which a parasite lives. Here the voice is the parasite. As Divya Victor in her Leslie Scalapino Memorial Lecture notes, the mouth as host is part of a poetics of ventriloquy:

“Derrida has called this an ‘abiding alienation’— the hosting of an alien form in your own body so that it becomes ‘alienation without alienation, [an] in alienable alienation.’”

This inalienable alienation permeates d’s body (of work) to show how oppositional voice can be to itself, to contradict self-expression when it comes to dispossession.

Changing tones, in the following quote we see an initial lineal capitalization causing us to pause set against the grain of enjambment causing us to continue, creating a swing rhythm similar to Ellingtonian jazz, where the stresses fall offbeat (49):

Ive always been
A femme tuckd

Performing jim
Lehrer never

Re-assignd, some
Times whitmans

Civil soldiers felld
Gives one hope.

The line as both excess and lack, return and detour, the temporal contradiction between ‘always been’ and ‘re-assignd’, work together in what theorist Fred Moten in his book *In the Break* calls ‘ensemble’: “the improvisation of singularity and totality and *through* their opposition.” Looking at the last line of this excerpt, the poem’s ‘hope’ is oddly connected to death, maybe

in an ironic fetishizing of the body's expendability, or as a way of finding in death an animating spirit, like how Moten says jazz and blues are able to "reproduce agony as pleasure differently with every listening." Kara Walker's latest and profoundly impacting art installation, "A Subtlety," shocks with its caricaturized representations of black female identity, of the enslaved African sugarcane workers of the 18th century, so that this agony becomes the contemporary elephant in the room. d's work similarly recontextualizes uncomfortable caricatures of queerness, where again the performative distance, the ventriloquism, between representation and identity is a mutual strategy for those denied the right to an authentic historical presence, or to uniform linguistic correspondences. Or as d eulogizes:

That part of us
That has no name

Is who we are.

Such a verse makes me think of Paul Celan's 1971 poem, "Language Mesh," with a similarly anonymized vibe:

(If I were like you. If you were like me.
Did we not stand
under one trade wind?
We are strangers.)

The similarity between these verses stems from a related trauma: what critic Marjorie Perloff in her essay on Celan calls a "post-Holocaust estrangement from language." Notice even Celan like Hillman puts the subjects in parentheses like they don't belong. Notice how internal the estrangement is. Regarding poetry after Auschwitz, she quotes Celan in a letter where he wrote:

No matter how alive its traditions, with most sinister events
in its Memory, most questionable developments around it,
[German poetry] can no longer speak the language which

many willing ears seem to expect. Its language has become more sober, more factual. It distrusts 'beauty'. It tries to be truthful. If I may search for a visual analogy while keeping in mind the polychrome of apparent actuality: it is a 'greyer' language, a language which wants to locate even its 'musicality' in such a way that it has nothing in common with the 'euphony' which more or less blithely continued to sound alongside the greatest horrors.

Post-9/11 vis-a-vis the PATRIOT Act, the Dept. of Homeland Security, the War on Terror, Guantanamo, and so much more, a distrust of language as an instrument of horror returns, this time to American soil. Euphemisms for human rights abuses become commonplace, and schoolyard homophobic/xenophobic hate speech returns as a method of policing cultural, sexual, and ethnic differences. The lilting cadence of the following stanza of prose poetry in the opening poem of *Hospitality*, titled "Admission," mixes danger and beauty into one disturbing yet beautiful scene:

A memory perhaps: my voice wasn't my voice I said *what* are you *doing*? He tore my stockings until they stopped signifying right. A chokehold, faggot, he said. *Chokehold*. A beautiful word. Threw us into the girl's bathroom at school to teach me a lesson. And I liked it a little. Someplace near the rows of bland light I hovered above me and liked it a little.

Is it bad that I get a pleasure out of this violent spectacle because of how it is phrased/framed? So does d, judging from the last line. But it's important to note under trauma one's affective response is not in equilibrium. This 'liking' may be a coping mechanism. By occurring tangentially with the out of body experience, hovering above, schooling becomes a sadomasochistic experience, a dominance hierarchy.

In a strategic torquing of Celan's distrust, d reproduces 'horror' alongside 'euphony' by transplanting the anti-Semitism of Nazism with the homophobia

of today, wherein LGBTQ people are, according to one study, “far more likely than any other minority group in the United States to be victimized by violent hate crime.”⁴ I don’t find this to be a hyperbolic analogy, especially considering d’s Jewish ethnicity, and considering the +50,000 targeted homosexuals imprisoned in Nazi Germany (5,000 to 15,000 of them to perish in the death camps). The pink triangle, now a symbol of gay pride, was originally used pointed downward on Nazi concentration camp badges to denote homosexual men or those who deviated from the sexual norm. As we can see, homophobia and fascism are not just analogies, but brutal alliances.

The admitted silliness of “*fuck yr lipid bilayer!*” vs. the more reticent imagism of Celan mark a difference between them, a difference that may also be the product of history, as Weimar forms of theatrical satire, the Zeiotope, earned the suspicion of the political right and did not survive into the Nazi era. “Ghosts Before Breakfast,” a 1928 Dadaist film by Hans Richter, opens with a testament to the perceptual threat such unserious art posed at the time. Before it starts this text appears onscreen superimposed over a clock (the modernist symbol of regimentation): “The Nazis destroyed the sound version of this film as ‘degenerate art’. It shows that even objects revolt against regimentation.” *That even objects revolt.* The notion of incarnated human labor rising up, back from the dead, as it were, makes the “ghosts” of the title apropos to Marx’s idea of the commodity’s inability to speak. Contemporary avant-garde poetry is in the same role as an object in revolt (as well as a revolting, degenerate object). As a commodity it speaks in the form of fugitive speech, as pastiche, as non-binding clauses, as ventriloquy, or as parentheses.

Fred Moten and Stefano Harney in their article “Debt and Study” identify the fugitive public as constructed through debt, such as students, adjuncts, the blackness emerging out of slavery and colonialism—those social groups bearing the burden of privatization on whose backs commerce grows. This is different than a community, perhaps because we individualize what we owe. However debt resistance programs like Rolling Jubilee and Strike Debt (their tagline “you are not a loan!”) moves to publicize the fugitive public as a political class, as not alone. But the working class has historically overlooked

forms of immaterial, creative, and social/reproductive/domestic labor that also produce social wealth, as well as the workplace discrimination that ostracizes LGBTQ folks from participating in parliamentary democracy.

I bring this up because d, as someone who is genderqueer and who is a former union organizer/labor activist, is uniquely situated to speak to this need to search for new forms of worker organization (and lyric organization) that is inclusive of divisions of labor and gender. Because making audible “that part of us / that has no name” can help form such a needed coalitional identity to move forward in the aporias of post-Fordism. Looking back at my selected quotes from d’s work it seems every example is differently voiced and differently formed, from talk show host to eulogizer, a poetics of permutation abides.

In d’s degenerate oeuvre the occultation of the “i” continues to be its dissonant (dissident) *mise-en-scene*, simultaneously candid, staged, satirical, and sedated. Every line is painfully earned. Because of this book’s contextual intersectionality, it can be used to spark conversations across cultural fields. If there’s one thing *Hospitality* leaves me convinced of, it’s that if the world is sick, poetry is a cure (if not a panacea, at least a salve). Maybe a better analogy would be: if the world is an abscess, poetry is the ooze.

¹ <http://digitallabor.commons.gc.cuny.edu/2014/03/05/what-tender-possibilities-two-meditations-on-the-oikos/>

² <http://crooksandliars.com/karoli/dr-cornel-west-tells-martin-bashir-president>

³ <http://floorjournal.com/2011/10/30/necessity-immensity-and-crisis-many-edgeseeing-things/>

⁴ <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2010/winter/anti-gay-hate-crimes-doing-the-math>

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