

W

[elf]



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for John Scoggin

The hatred of poetry is the proper material of poetry.

– Philippe Beck (*Crude Marivaux*)

& Charles Watts

All governments now extant had their foundations laid in the dirt, tho' time may have dried it up by oblivion or future historians licked it off.

– Francis Osborne (*Advice to a Son*, 1656)

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Of "Roscoe Mitchell", P. Inman writes: "This piece is a variant of a multivocal piece performed on May 24 2004(Victoria Day) at the KSW by Michael Barnholden, Roger Farr, Dorothy Trujillo Lusk & Aaron Vidaver. My thanks to them for letting me hear that version. This one is for them."

Jeff Derksen's "Roman" was written in 1985-1986 and is published here for the first time.

Of "What Are They?" Kevin Nolan writes: "This text was delivered (in a slightly abridged version) at the Kootenay School of Writing, Vancouver, in December 2004: my thanks to Ted Byrne, Michael Barnholden and the KSW collective for the invitation to speak."

Michael Boughn read at the KSW in June 2005.

Steve McCaffery read at the KSW in May 2005.

Some of Paul Kelley's recent philosophical writings can be found in *West Coast Line, Public* and the book *Anarcho-Modernism: Toward a New Critical Theory*.

Charles Watts was on the faculty of the KSW.

Lisa Robertson's text was performed with Eye of Newt Collective at Grandview Park, September 2002.

"Pop Goes the Hood" was performed by Fred Wah and Henry Tsang at "Spatial Poetics" July 9, 2005 at Video In, Vancouver.

Two of the selections from Aaron Peck's "Diorama" were published previously in *The Gobshite Quarterly* and *The Stylus Poetry Journal*.

Jonathon Wilcke read at the KSW in May 2005.

Steve Collis wrote "passagesout" in the months leading up to "Before the War", the KSW's Robert Duncan celebration which took place in April 2005.

Bill Luoma read at the KSW in March 2004 with Juliana Spahr, whose work appeared in W8.

/ P. Inman /

"Roscoe Mitchell" (4)

the.
landfall.
but. irch. leak. loomed. in.
irched.
taut.

vowel.
paint.
resembled.
ocean. by. into.
landscape.

brook.
of.
edges.
in.
some. skin. of. underfoot. dictionary.

a. sight. parture. tass.
first.
at.
drink.
noun.

innumerable.
how.
looked.
ink. taut. badlands.
volition.

is.
amino.
of. swim. still.
pronoun.
nervousness.

book. sauk. tine.
opened.
of.
creek.
pelt.

a.
sound.
too. mind. that. put. it.
of.
withers.

build.
roscoe.
field.
burr.
lace. temperature. color. landfall.

is. away. acred. to.
leak.
elapse.
about.
sculpture.

notes.
with.
grasp.
striped.
but. tape. on. brook. fist. mump.

case.
leak.
my. nose. broken. of. snow. cardboard.
underline.
through.

some.
twitch.
notes.
misname. knock. undo. arounds.
along.

put.
daylight. bye. speak. pesks.
of.
literature.
brooks.

crag.
furred. off. glean.
wouldn't.
popcorn.
mane.

newman'd.
colored.
a.
further.
dusk. left.

one.
how. written. to. middle. hair.
nor.
titled.
it.

interior. lit. from. side. basque.
word.
purpose.
after.
another.

snowed.
through.
written.
but. lone. hairs. drunk. up.
away.

did.
his. cliff. thickset. of. suit. elapse.
age. (mitchell.
thin.
stead.

Roman

FIRST WE A NOUN, nostalgic as the isolated and defined public, sleeping knee deep in portraits of ourselves in a setting of trees and built space. Such was the morning, non-repro blue and timed up. A mail merge ticked with the personal touch, big hybrid move. Double festival of sitting with returns current in a cash flow. That the river wanders is clear cut. "Everyone's a good buyer but no one can sell." With a yearning, quicker circles, my birthday is today, tomorrow. Flipping over backwards until we were exhausted, then inside for typography. Some stumpage. Now memories are a noun cloistered in the stomach. Swoon is an occupational hazard, fight or flight with a sham death motif. Intervention of twist-ties. The gaze froze me in a procreative role – signal for more to fulfill, fill the mantelpiece. A natural eye notes an elm-arched street, insists on it. Appropriation of an entire year leads to a lasting legacy and a diurnal mess, a trademark of the static landscape. Like an oiled glass table top I was firm in my position. Band-Aid, Baggies, Brillo Pads. Spring convocation at the end of a vista, each candidate replies "I accept this degree..." and names are nailed with distinction. The alien word in

psychogenesis, dressed up but not invited in. Taking control with an inherited pessimism and a two dollar bill. "The money comes off my cheque so they can take cabs once a month." And that day it rains, shuns, caulks cracks to fall against a stucco wall across from the bus stop. Suave throat decal drives home noon news, word out – cuffed as an image. Into incognito with a disposable remote and how the idea carries value, accrues a naturalistic curriculum vitae. With the spray paint fresh on our fingers the imperialism was humbled. We entered into negotiations. Write or talk about beware anyone who lowercases your company no matter what machine. Became easily confused and lurched around towing a lineage of biological precursors. We must answer yes or no, in accordance with generally accepted accounting hunches – tacked to tarpaper. Unusual access to haircuts led to blueprints through a specific agreement: here the papyrus flaked and faded. The big cup and mug contract. Up and out. I'm cold-pressed for personal time to book bathe defoliant plus the exciting ability to mutate. I subsidize you to produce an aggregate to aggravate. Should be followed by a notice of their status and accompanied by a generic name of the product they identify. B.V.D.'s, Chap Stick, Coca-Cola/Coke. It situates you here so it makes you historical, photogenic, spud of the elders. "Our best customer is pink." An authoritative wave sealed the friendship. I'm happy with my hunches.

Skunk cabbage makes me crystal and is referential yellow. It represents the wind: legally defined as a technicality. Handwriting transplant opened the door to employment opportunities and calmed the kids. Left to the image (skunk cabbage), akin to multiple. First task was quite natural, sensual concreteness made the datum hip hop. Our umbrage opens through constant naysaying, casts a shadow on the voter's billboard. Paid for with concern. He is aggressive with intention. Second in charge. Econo-access to doubled dividends hooked up daymares, forced thoughts. Dyslexia achieved, increased, encountered, adjusted to proportionate population receivers of a phone survey. Machinate my life: stasis; journey; stasis, address stamp. Go grammar. Neck knot. Gaze of the phrase. Continuance of present tiredness adumbrates cheque day. Produced to excess so spores into feedbag. We recognized the water as we rounded the corner in a causal narrative. Cuisinart, Dictaphone, Dixie Cups. An annual funnel: that first questioning of welcome to milky feelings. Tried not to touch on the walk to the additional mining areas. The letters always end "sincerely." This explains why common nouns become proper nouns. The salary guarantees open lines of communication with a north/south bias, very tree-lined. It *has* been that long. The desire to go through the motions. Now lowercased,

belongs to us all. Who do you think you were. Wholly, we, our, your, their. Board the coach in a natural and lucrative manner .

THEN THERE IS AN ADJECTIVE on the land, it knocks out history and identifies useable resources. Available information enters the frame, strips down to a movement of country, city, country as the grammar of a coming of age. We watched with the authority to nag, reminiscing industrial design. Here, in the middle section, is disequilibrium, an end to plethora. But woke to an expectation soon disqualify all equity. Compulsory or compulsive military training shows in the etiquette – I'm liquidating all paper. Look-alikes. The experience was described. But then they had to come from somewhere. "I don't think we'll ever be able to own a house, a lot." Translation of foreign currency, this, then, is how the body says no. There is no recognition at the onset since the idea of "recognition" is gone: lack of depth perception, forced thoughts, dyslexia, and one point of power. From the rib to hip. Handle nocturnal until a cash flow I manage to equate happy. Retrofitting the emotion to the cheque stub: it was their song. Evenly attribute, glutinous. I like the old you. There was a sequel. Fig Newtons, Fridigaire, Frisbee. I like the natural you, wire rope, corded arms caught hooked with the. With t-shirt proposed hanging lucky hip above the belt. An embarrassed silence blushes, puts boots to

wallpaper, study group. To think that I too have subsidized – throw out a blanket statement. Useless as a trademark so it returned to the wild. A major subsidiary stitched life so all is seen autobiography, read biography. At least in those sentences we recognized her mother. Tap the adjective before buying the noun. Heteroglot, hemoglobin. The city's signs indicate signs: another city. Movement, I change viscosity. Spatial and temporal unlike middle management. A big mug of effluent. The pool of unemployed is a culture for other industries: mobile shoeshine cart. Experienced alterations. From where to reach her recognized silhouette. The Canadian spelling. I asked, stomach talked. The nuance of narrative hides here, in the very details that add data – call me a tug boat. What's got to move from bus as notes in notebook, to subway, to tube. Flu. Insert train. Reaching up, from below, above the knee. Just so you know, it's a legal document, offramp to cloverleaf anticipates a homecoming. Hi-Liter, Jeep, Jell-O. I consolidate a position, it's a video release now. History of the hip could be a hobby but then nostalgia and a personalised licence plate. Indexed from the lip up, lay low data base. The mist from the famous falls comes at all angles as we look over to the American side. I incur that position – you're negotiable. Here the boulevards were "oaken." Corrugated pink away for a one-column inch colour photo of the products. My image. The silhouette in the dim light, then him into the

conversation. Attributes of the adjective: I am a volunteer. But the universal was supposed to be specific The conglomerate: holes in the clothes lead to the margin. Stooped to woo. "I am out of character for myself." I recognize the sound now. The thing itself is the system that delivers the thing. Priority. Tempers hopes to shoulder avoiding descriptive names, additions to fixed assets. Provides a policy for licking. Next neck. So good to parent company, our buildings and structures – it's not the sex. Continual climate of difficult conditions, long-term verb investment. The family tree did include a woman. Corporate tree. I am the god of essential services. The voices were out-of-whack synapses rather than real advisors. Contextually to be put in the bin because non-productive until the family steps in. Bugged down: history of this. The agency's objective where at the smallest level, pores, follicles, and a recognizable smell. Declaring clarity, whose hair. Temporary since the brain blows on your vacation. How to relax until the street patterns are familiar and there has been an unsuccessful relationship. Jockey shorts, Kleenex, Kodak. I became descriptive of the product and was deprived of exclusive rights to the name. Well, it was your birthday. The gluing of an era. But we had both lived in the mountains and preferred to call this, here, an escarpment. Can't complain enough to mock your liabilities, securities, legs, lips. Voice over, dialect in. Add tact. The trees here turned now

the same as the trees from the train. No money for more years. Party faithful. Followed by a cadre of advisors into twitch and twig to gather a capella in with the individual trainees at the edge where what we say goes, so say something in the circle. Same body, different city provides from thigh to shoulder similarities. Forget the left-handedness for a moment and allow me. Authority to nuance. One eye pushed the image closer while the other has it four inches past that, at my elbow. Description of the product is clear, neutral, but at prefab teardown wages we're agreed upon. Met at a secret signing. Round table. The sources background perspective, a natural fact in naming sits in the world, consolidated, consisted. Ko-Rec-Type, Levis, Life-Saver. Do you write or talk when you mean "to photocopy": if so see you in court. A significant positive development lopes over the barbwire fence between parking lots as "surface construction" is the reading of "underground development." Will become you: we're yours. The food bank stopped being an "eyesore" and became an institution. Lowercase generic word for all products of its type. The line of men goes around the corner, parallels the park, turns another corner and forms huge U. Rather than pushed out to the edge (margin) we get pulled to the middle (gutter). Lower income case. If the idea stumbles then it's dead drunk. Of off balance with real plots and stories building background reports always a noun. Unknown options.

WE ARE THE OWNERS of the verb. (But it's trademarked.) "Everything was fine, then the bounced cheque." An analysed journey from left to right with multiple choices in the arena. This down by the docks. Here a two way relationship is built up: Mack (truck), Magic Marker, Miltown. We can from the bank that which to us forces threats, nails admonishing names in the mail and it is *your* privilege. In sequence, the fight at the bus stop. With the end of my thumb. Down conversions aptitude in a child's hand planned for a long term was a record through the year. Blind trust. 1986 compared 1987. Proceeds have been halved. The muffler hole allows the car to be heard before seen. Poked into. Not that the vote was bought but rather paid for. "More people have died from boredom than overwork." We are pleased you the aerial view of full-cost method follow up to make very buttons up on the female side. If you're facing it right handed. Predrilled into tax offshore on the digression introduces information and functions intentionally. But the letters began "Dear Occupant" or "Dear Consumer." Now it's going to rain heavy. Additional extraction of ore, my food money. Represented later by bread. Prior, agreed upon tells you of the product produced – but no measures are steps taken toward you. Heap leach. Unemployment is just one of its features. Simply to take from one place (is being drilled) for the digital ritual.

Noun culture. Use value of character traits: Novocain, Ping-Pong, Polaroid. Only shows that object's place shows my class. Alumni of the postal code. Call and response to the beats of "we're us" up here in tariff-free purchase warrants net compared to hanging bags. I have a working interest that allows two titles to appear under my signature. First day of frost encounters mechanical difficulties. It says were taking measures. Reflects a single property: "to be well-born." It pours out verbatim to represent you, your attributes: restated, reduced, lower, non-voting, new, difficult, lateral, unsuccessful, very satisfying. Bring home the dividends. Really like to undress in a hotel.

THE VERB RETURN. Pension pan for aerobic instructors. As for where I stand is straddled linguistic and economic, back home is dialect in middle income. A consolidated statement implies impenetrable. "The main event is lunch." Alterations experienced. The successful journey from upper-case brand name to lowercase noun. My umbrage is physical, located in the body, and therefore unlocatable. Am embossed. So much so that I could be alien in spoken form. Back to clean, clear what was his idea of unified of what was historical did he ask her? A seven year contract with our bodies – I mean I'm renegotiating. Pop Tarts, Popsicle, Pyrex. "You don't have any money, your brother doesn't have any money – mine goes to income tax." The

name was coined. Speaking on my own behalf, defending “flapjack” or “toque” or “fucking around.” After numerous bouts in court the company retained rights to use the name. Stomach is pocketbook (we say wallet.) Semantic. Dinner with the news. Making ready to template a mnemonic cooperation to disrupt a stable situation. Corporate or private individuals can bid so it all works out in the end. Q-Tips, Sanforized, Sanka. A hoop will do. Body touches like that points, disturbances for a neurological past taxes on memorable lines. Simulation of what for escapism, ok, hatch tracks. “We can no longer accept your apparent disregard for this debt.” Formally the conclusion is the return. Opt for tugging out diamond drill bits, hunched or haunches, throw out some traces, tuning forks. Thus the verb is to buy, to sell, to stumble. Cardiovascular and then later neurological. We were really necking to achieve able increase: “I go gold.” From just inside the knee up over the buttocks to small of back. Same bus stop but the video is in reverse hence inventories change in the method as in the previous station. It is difficult to believe that they (these words) were ever owned by a particular company. So such throes angle twists akin to multiply. The water here was drinking, there it was a lake. Scotch (tape), Sheetrock, Simoniz. Events are in the mold with the shrink wrap through a window. Here a two-way relationship is built up to result able segment: “We wish to express our

appreciation to our shareholders, employees, and customers for their continued support during the past fiscal year." You defer me. In sequence, we go home, that is to live as Dad. Jim, Styrofoam, Technicolor. Now it's raining heavy. Your initials in gold. An option exists spudded.

/ Kevin Nolan /

Who Are They?: Some Considerations of Mourning and Power in Frank O'Hara and John Ashbery

The subject of today's talk is located near the ending of a poem written in July 1958 by Frank O'Hara, *A true account of talking to the Sun at Fire Island* :

The Sun woke me this morning loud
and clear, saying "Hey! I've been
trying to wake you up for fifteen
minutes. Don't be so rude, you are
only the second poet I've ever chosen
to speak to personally

so why
aren't you more attentive? If I could
burn you through the window I would
to wake you up. I can't hang around
here all day."

"Sorry, Sun, I stayed
up late last night talking to Hal."

"When I woke up Mayakovsky he was
a lot more prompt" the Sun said
petulantly. "Most people are up
already waiting to see if I'm going
to put in an appearance."

I tried
to apologize "I missed you yesterday."
"That's better" he said. "I didn't
know you'd come out." "You may be
wondering why I've come so close?"
"Yes" I said beginning to feel hot
wondering if maybe he wasn't burning me
anyway.

"Frankly I wanted to tell you
I like your poetry. I see a lot
on my rounds and you're okay. You may
not be the greatest thing on earth, but

you're different. Now I've heard some say you're crazy, they being excessively calm themselves to my mind, and other crazy poets think that you're a boring reactionary. Not me.

Just keep on like I do and pay no attention. You'll find that people always will complain about the atmosphere, either too hot or too cold too bright or too dark, days too short or too long.

If you don't appear at all one day they think you're lazy or dead. Just keep right on, I like it.

And don't worry about your lineage poetic or natural. The Sun shines on the jungle, you know, on the tundra the sea, the ghetto. Wherever you were I knew it and saw you moving. I was waiting for you to get to work.

And now that you are making your own days, so to speak, even if no one reads you but me you won't be depressed. Not everyone can look up, even at me. It hurts their eyes."

"Oh Sun, I'm so grateful to you!"

"Thanks and remember I'm watching. It's easier for me to speak to you out here. I don't have to slide down between buildings to get your ear. I know you love Manhattan, but you ought to look up more often.

And always embrace things, people earth sky stars, as I do, freely and with the appropriate sense of space. That is your inclination, known in the heavens and you should follow it to hell, if necessary, which I doubt.

Maybe we'll

Speak again in Africa, of which I too
am specially fond. Go back to sleep now
Frank, and I may leave a tiny poem
in that brain of yours as my farewell."

"Sun, don't go!" I was awake
at last. "No, go I must, they're calling
me."

"Who are they?"

Rising he said "Some
day you'll know. They're calling to you
too." Darkly he rose, and then I slept.

Who are *they*? Who *are* they? And: who are they? What collective properties comprise them? By what scent are they identified, by what names do we know them, where can we find this mysterious entity referred to by Robin Blaser, late on in the thick of *The Holy Forest*, as 'the ubiquitous they'. I propose to take this question, for a while, at its face value, which is to say literally, which is to suggest that some of the mysterious urgency of O'Hara's sun-poem might well depend on the question coming to entail, despite all its own anxiety about culminating finalities, the possibility of some kind of definite answer, something that we might need to know 'some day', even quite soon.

This is an especially literal-minded response to what is, after all, an almost classically rhetorical question; that is, as we were taught, a question whose illocutionary force seems more to assert than to inquire and which therefore appears *not to require an answer*, either because the answer is already known or presupposed, or because the question is being asked for effect only, perhaps to draw attention to the speaker, or to reaffirm our foreknowledge about the circumstances which produce speaker and question both.

Yet suppose for a moment that the question does invite an answer, if not in the form of a direct equation of identity, then a range of definite *locations* or *topoi* within the traditional bounds of grammar and rhetoric and the outer spheres of pragmatic understanding which they serve to underlay. What would it mean then, to ask *in all innocence*, as it were, who or what this 'they' is? Especially when the question appears to be almost tautologically pre-emptive? That this 'they' is, recognisably or by definition in Western grammatical systems, not *us*, is to align the axes of solidarity along the vector predisposed to include both *you* and *me* but to differentiate *them*, as the logical remainder of

a pre-given pact of understanding. Whereas *our* actions serve to define us as the subjects or characters of a personal or collective destiny, *they* mainly serve, who only stand and wait. Or even when they impinge on us, enter our citadels, boycott our poetry festivals etc, their actions are still only taken as the alien tokens of their estrangement. Of course, they are even allowed to *like* us, that is only fair, even if we choose to reserve judgment about the wisdom or likelihood of reciprocating.

Either for the moment or even more permanently, then, the implicit force of group definition requires more than temporary sequestration of this third term, as if the plural centrality of we-ness was vouchsafed by some corresponding certainty about the not-we. Even if not posing some direct threat to that ideal solidarity, a lingering doubtfulness concerning the precise degrees of asymmetry between first and third persons polarises the question of *answerability* into the noisy silence from which it emanates. Thus the original need for non-equivocation (the answering of questions) enforces a spatial logic of collective ascription: *they* are not *we*, not only because *we* is not *them*, but because membership, by definition, is not the same thing as inclusion, and seems to entail, indeed, some necessary forms of exclusion.

This is the property of language inherent in what the psychologist Roger Brown once described in terms of the *Pronouns of Power and Solidarity*. Talking at the *Style in Language* Conference in Indiana in 1958, Brown observed that 'pronominal address is sometimes non-reciprocal, ... with one person, the older, nobler, or wealthier, using a condescending form and the other using a deferential form. The differences of lineage, caste, class, sex, race, age and occupation that are found in such dyads suggest both power and status ...'. *Power* Brown defines 'as a relationship between at least two persons, and it is nonreciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behaviour'. *Solidarity* on the other hand, 'comes into the European pronouns as a means of differentiating address among power equals... All our evidence consistently indicates that in the past century the solidarity semantic has gained supremacy...'. Moreover, 'the development of open societies with an equalitarian ideology acted against the non-reciprocal power semantic and in favour of solidarity. It is our suggestion that the larger social changes created a distaste for the face-to-face expression of differential power'.

This 'face-to-face' moment is crucial to Brown's argument, for that to him is the point at which relations of 'power' are acted out. Noting in the usages of modern English, and more recently American, a relative

freedom from the graduated ('feudal') polite forms still common in Europe, Brown observes how 'a strong equalitarian ideology of the sort dominant in America works to suppress every conventional expectation of power asymmetry...'

'Solidarity', then, comes to counteract 'power', as 'openness' neutralises 'closure'. But by the use of this compressed model of social ordering, and despite the evident complexity of social forces he is attempting to characterise, Brown tends to collapse the triad of specified agency implied by the first, second and third pronoun-system into a nominal confrontation of identity and difference, so that, wherever power is, there too is a kind of primal, or latent deuteragonism. For Brown, this does not lead into any speculation on the spaces which language might reserve beyond immediate subject and object relations: in fact, the language of 'power' seems to compress the relations of solidarity into ever more limited contexts, where every I connotes a you, the two bound into a kind of Buberian psychomachia, with apparent resolution to be sought in one's fated location in either an open or closed society.

Does this symbiosis between the identity-group and its designated counterparts reflect a contingent aspect of linguistic anthropology, as Brown suggests, or a more universal linguistic mechanism? The last was certainly the view of Emile Benveniste, writing two years before Frank O'Hara's poem in an essay on the 'Nature of Pronouns' from 1956. Here, he argues far more stringently than Brown that only the inter-relations of first and second order pronouns were central to 'the reality of discourse', because only these could properly sustain the functions of personhood. What constitutes the enunciative power of language is the ability of an *I* or *you* to constitute itself through all the indices of place and time specified by the forms of deixis. Pronouns, personal and demonstrative, verbs and adverbs, all sustain a public world through the designation of objects and persons in space and time, and this mechanism is not primarily historical, geographical or even political (as when we separate the 'first' from the 'third' worlds and so on), but strictly a consequence of the fact that language is a self-referential artefact, whose speakers come to self-apprehension through an essential dialogism of first and second order complementations. Moreover, Benveniste goes on to argue that *it* is not actually a 'person at all'. 'The referent of third person pronouns in a given context is constant and does not shift even when the speaking subject changes, whereas I and you change when the person who speaks changes'. Punning on the singular useage of the French term *personne* also to mean *nobody*, Benveniste concludes that the third

person is a mere 'abbreviated substitute' ('la "troisième personne" est bien une "non-personne"). Then how, we might ask, do we account for the extraordinary locative force of this particle of language? Why cannot a third person be inherently self-motivating in the same way as you and I? Why should it be impossible for third person groupings to constitute a world, even intransitively? This is certainly some privation: what has *they* done to deserve this?

The question, evidently, has more than passing relevance for O'Hara and his work. The conversational style of a great deal of his writing argues at least a formal reliance upon spoken rather than written language to establish the 'reality of discourse'. Indeed, at the resounding conclusion of his *Salute to the French Negro Poets*, completed only the *day before* his Fire Island poem, he appears to endorse the Benveniste position even more emphatically:

the beauty of America, neither cool jazz nor devoured Egyptian
heroes, lies in
lives in the darkness I inhabit in the midst of sterile millions

the only truth is face to face, the poem whose words become your
mouth
and dying in black and white we fight for what we are, not love...

Yet we should beware of seeing in these lines an insistence on speech as a model of any possible literary language, let alone the assurance that 'face to face' encounters are the primal foundation for authentic exchange, let alone reconciliation. The antecedent lines of the poem complicate such an assumption to the point where:

for if there is fortuity it's in the love we bear each other's differences
in race which is the poetic ground on which we rear our smiles

standing in the sun of marshes as we wade slowly toward the
culmination
of a gift which is categorically the most difficult relationship

and should be sought as such because it is our nature, nothing
inspires us but the love we want upon the frozen face of earth

and utter disparagement turns into praise as generations read the message
of our hearts in adolescent closets who once shot at us in doorways

or kept us from living freely because they were too young then to know
what they would ultimately need from a barren and heart-sore life

When 'generations read the message of our hearts', or when the sun tells Frank about his 'lineage' we are reminded not of Yeats, or even Allen Ginsberg, but of Marx's 'the tradition of all the dead generations' weighing 'like a nightmare on the brain of the living' (Gooch's biography has a useful vignette of O'Hara's youthful reading of Marxist literature while on wartime service in the South Pacific). It would be, I think, against this kind of background that we should read O'Hara's liaisons with the past 'generations', and through them his defenses against any purely 'literary' tradition. Yet it is not the certainty of the immediate social world that presents O'Hara with a defense against the weight of the past. Nothing in his writing suggests that local encounters are anything other than places of extreme, sometimes farcical, complication. Less still does O'Hara ever argue that poetry consists of the compound aggregation of spoken forms. (In this sense, his *'Personism: a Manifesto'* is a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* of what person-to-person relations actually entail, not so much a refuge of intimacy as the hyper-mediation of all utterance whether readers 'of the message in our hearts', or the silent chorus of a *they* 'too young then to know'.

The Fire Island poem is an even more striking example of this. Though set out in the traditional form of the conversation poem, it is also traversed by less direct language-forms: allusion, citation and self-parodic cross-talk are all rife. The jocular manner manages to counterbalance the 'literary' even as the casual tone appears to forestall questions of ultimate responsibility. Vocative immediacy takes precedence, even here, where the phantasmal presence of Mayakovsky's *An Extraordinary Adventure which befell Vladimir Mayakovsky in a Summer Cottage*, written in 1920, summons the memory of Marx's 'dead generations' even as O'Hara's poem invokes the ultimate end of Mayakovsky and the state-capitalist revolution in the USSR. And where all this allusive dependence should give the poem an overwhelming sense of the past, in fact it manages a precarious sense of open-endedness as a defense against both mortal bathos and high seriousness.

Maybe we'll
speak again in Africa, of which I too
am specifically fond. Go back to sleep now
Frank, and I may leave a tiny poem
in that brain of yours as my farewell

'Sun, don't go'. I was awake
at last. 'No, go I must, they're calling
me'

'Who are they?'

Rising he said 'Some
day you'll know. They're calling to you
too'. Darkly he rose, and then I slept.

Despite their extreme vocal ingenuity, these concluding lines have a directive power which I don't think can be explained away just as a rhetorical flourish or an unexamined reflex of grammatical ambiguity. 'They' here intends a personified force, dimly marginal and half known but which cannot be called to account or rationalised. For even if, as Brown and Benveniste both imply, the third person is extraneous to the facts of utterance, some of the residual strength of the pronoun seems to consist in the simultaneous possession of *power* and *solidarity* both, so that the sheer *extraneity* of this anonymous body comes to acquire a tremendous indirect presence, exerting transitive pressure without culminating in responsible action. Indeed, it would seem that one problem with the neuter third person as employed in English grammars is that *they* can readily assume a brisk viability, making it difficult in many cases to distinguish the empty case markers of grammatical personhood from *personality* itself – spontaneously generating the illusion of anthropic agency merely because *they* has presence. (This effect is especially noticeable when language refers to itself, as the last sentence demonstrates.)

Otto Jespersen was highly aware of the problem, and his *Philosophy of Grammar* of 1924 notes that 'There can be no doubt that the poetic tendency to personify lifeless things or abstract notions, for instance to apostrophise Death as if it were a living being...are largely due to the influence of languages with sex-gender, chiefly of course, Latin... Such personification is more vivid in English than it can be, for instance, in German, because the pronoun he or she, where everyday language has *it*, draws attention to the idealisation'.

Following Jespersen's logic, though, we can argue that the reverse tendency can also apply: that where personification is marked yet gender unspecific, and where *plurality* also factors in the idea of *numerical supremacy* and where, especially, the form of agency is *not passive*, then neutrality argues for *de-idealisation* in respect of grammatical person, and *de-personalisation* in respect of agency. This only makes it harder, though, to ask any detailed questions concerning the identity of an unspecified agency without bordering on the comic-paranoid. A good example comes right at the outset of *Catch 22* when Yossarian tells Clevinger that 'they' are trying to kill him:

'Who's they? Who, specifically do you think is trying to murder you'
'Every one of them'
'Every one of whom?'
'I haven't any idea'

One reason for the exclusions of Benveniste's position, more openly averred in Heller's novel, ('*Catch 22* says they have a right to do anything we can't stop them from doing') can be found in the wartime contexts which gave Heller his subject matter and also conditioned the writing of Benveniste's other work on 'Aryan' lexemics. Certainly it is hard to read his studies of the available terms for sacrality, recently taken up by Giorgio Agamben, without the intimation that what Brown attributes to an effect of democratisation ('equalitarianism') may just as well consist of a brutal contraction of social relations into something like the opposite – the hyperlocalisation of power behind the fascinations of imperial togetherness. Perhaps at that point, also, we might recall that the phrase, 'Je suis partout' was a slogan of the *occupation*, not the resistance, arrogating the form of control not to the first person plural but the singular I, as though political suprematism were a personal thing, invasively imposing the habits of an allegedly 'purer' community through forms of domination deployed through rumour and betrayal, where careless talk really did cost lives.

And here we start to catch echoes of the C20th philosopher whose works were most intimately compliant with this imperial policy at the same time as they offered, phenomenologically, some reflection on its most punitive consequences. For, in those early parts of the analysis of being in *Sein und Zeit* (1927) devoted to 'Being with others', Martin Heidegger devotes a good deal of attention to the designation of

selves, and in particular, the third person. 'It is controversial' he points out 'whether indeed the primordial signification of locative expressions is adverbial or pronominal'. Heidegger sees certain existential markers to be technically prior to the 'differentiation of locative adverbs and personal pronouns' – primarily, of course, the ways in which the single existence is conditioned, indeed, Heidegger stresses, *subjected* by the necessity of being with others:

'These Others, moreover, are not *definite* Others. On the contrary, any Other can represent them. What is decisive is just that inconspicuous domination by Others which has already been taken over unawares from Dasein as Being-with. One belongs to the Others oneself and enhances their power. 'The Others' whom one thus designates in order to cover up the fact of one's belonging to them essentially oneself, are those who proximally and for the most part '*are there*' in everyday Being-with-one-another. The "who" is not this one, not that one, not oneself [man selbst], not some people [einige], and not the sum of them all. The 'who' is the neuter, the "they" [*das Man*].'

To Heidegger, the 'They' is the average, the order of impersonal and unexamined relations presupposed by our co-existences with all other beings. *They* are not merely silent adjuncts to the speaking reality of discourse but an alien generality actively characterised by *idle talk* or *absence of care*, a state which Heidegger names generically as 'falling'. 'They' 'keeps watch over everything exceptional'. 'The "they" which supplies the answer to the "who" of everyday Dasein, is the "nobody" to whom every Dasein has already surrendered itself in Being-among-one-another'. Not things or persons themselves, but what is said about them is what matters most to the They. Yet these others are not definite others. On the contrary, any other can represent them. *We* become *they* in the process of self alienation, and only authentic historicity is free from 'their' power. 'Everyone is the other, no one is himself.'

It is possible to construe Benveniste's article of 1956 as a positive retort to Heidegger, disclaiming the third person not because it is 'average' but simply surplus to the duple interchanges which lie at the heart of all communication. But it is also possible to hear a tacit endorsement of Heidegger's cardinal presumption that the authentic moment is decisively self enacting, free from the entrapments of any social reality complicated by the absence of locative certainty. From

this angle, then, Benveniste arguably abandons the structural mediation of third party discourse by a pre-emptive jettison of the troublesome remainder.

And this, too, would reinforce the primal deuteronomy of all language-theories which replace the collective responsibilities of we-they relations, and the vocative nuances these entail, with those forms of discourse-agonism in which singular agency is always played off against the displacements of the generalised other. Even Emmanuel Levinas gives too much ground in this respect, as he attempts to reverse the Heideggerian formula by finding in each singular confrontation with another being not the symptom of a universal predicament so much as the enabling condition for an ethics of the unfamiliar. It is not primarily in language ('a relation between separated terms') but in *face-to-face* encounters of *speech* with others that Levinas sees a resistance to the will to domination: 'The expression the face introduces into the world does not defy the feebleness of my powers, but my ability for power'.

Throughout the period in the late 1950s when Levinas was working on *Totality and Infinity*, from which these remarks are cited, Frank O'Hara also frequently reflected on the fluctuations of power and transcendence in personal relations, what he calls, in *Sleeping on the Wing* from 1955 'the sad struggle of a face'. 'It is the law of my own voice I shall investigate' he says in *Homosexuality* (March 1954) but that 'law' supposes a complex grammar of interchange, not a monolingualism of self-infatuated righteousness. 'Presence is better than absence, if you love excess' he observes in *On Rachmaninoff's Birthday* (April 1954), and in *The Bores* (February 1956) the power of the singular is asserted against the force of conventional critical talk:

they take each
singular event for someone's
dear convention

Here *they* are inimical: are they always? For O'Hara, the constant question of what, as Levinas would say 'exceeds my powers' leaves us to ponder *who* might be calling to *us*, and why this relation seems so asymmetrical and unreciprocated. And it would be at this point that I should want to mark out some distinctions between the work from this period of O'Hara and that of his friend and contemporary, John

Ashbery. The example to hand is a poem published by Ashbery some two years before O'Hara's solar colloquy, entitled *The Grapevine*:

Of who we and all they are
You all now know. But you know
After they began to find us out we grew
Before they died thinking us the causes

Of their acts. Now we'll not know
The truth of some still at the piano though
They often date from us, causing
These changes we think we are. We don't care

Though, so tall up there
In young air. But things get darker as we move
To ask them: Whom must we get to know
To die, so you live and we know?

This is from Ashbery's first book, *Some Trees*, chosen by W H Auden as the prizewinner in Yale Younger poets 1956 (in open competition with manuscripts by O'Hara amongst others). Frank O'Hara himself praised the book in *Poetry* the following year, citing in particular a highly allusive stanza from *Grand Abacus*:

It is best to travel like a comet, with the others, though one
 does not see them
How far that bridle flashed! 'Hurry up, children!'. The
 birds fly back, they say 'We were lying,
We do not want to fly away'. But it is already too late.
 The children have vanished.

O'Hara observes, somewhat obliquely, that 'everywhere in the poem there is the difficult attention to calling things and events by their true qualities... (Ashbery) establishes a relation between perception and articulateness which is non-rhetorical and specific'. *Non rhetorical*: once again, a question that might be singularly apt, answerable. And in *The Grapevine* and *Grand Abacus* both, the articulate elements are very specific indeed. The pronoun *they*, the verbal copula *are* and then the related forms of existence that grow inside the idea-rhyme linking *knowing*, *growing* and *owing* and the subsidiary verb-forms, *begin*,

date and *change*. Only at the end is the possibility of release from unknowing argued by the mortal, empirical 'die', promising only a naturalistic deliverance from the cycle of mundane question-forms. Things die; they '*vanish*'. Which is why you don't actually *learn* things through Ashbery's grapevine: they insinuate themselves to you, because they are open secrets, comprehended *pianissimo*. Only through these knowingly deferred assertions, almost epitaphic in their self-awareness, can this deliberately compressed format invoke at its opening, with the proemial 'of', the epic manifesto of all redemptive genealogies, *Paradise Lost*, and with it the knowledge of another image of fallibility entirely. For with Ashbery the condition is never one of epic collapse or potential failure but rather, in the manner of pastoral, to have always fallen, so that every act of language is heavily weighted towards the past by a kind of half-innocent compliance. 'Things explain, nature reveals, and it is no aid to being' says O'Hara in his review. Whereas in O'Hara's poem there remains a sense that the identity of 'they' remains provisionally open, not one we learn to shrug off so as to accommodate the undecidable, but one constantly confronted, as though death were a real contingency, not another lost horizon.

And that is to mark up some kind of contrast of O'Hara's work of this period and that of his friend. From very early on Ashbery's work had used this note of ironical plangency quite knowingly to resurrect the tone of nineteenth century elegy inside the pantheon of counter-providential, rhetorical scepticism. Not the lively and busy Shelleyan sun of O'Hara's poem, but the anthropic debris of Wallace Stevens's ancient helial chaos, now strewn across the landscape of the postwar New World imperium.

They dream only of America
To be lost among thirteen million pillars of grass:
'This honey is delicious
Though it burns the throat'

And hiding from darkness in barns
They can be grownups now...

From 1962's *The Tennis Court Oath*, they dream only of America. Guilty, knowing, hilariously monotonous, these poems are assertively ironical before they are anything else, knowingly familiar with the themes and conventions of a transcendentalist rhetoric now pressed

into less affirmative contexts. Is that, then, to employ Ashbery's most central, most Keatsian verb, all that we can *know* from *The Grapevine* and all places thereabouts? That an apparent demotivation of verb-forms is the engine of our uncertainties about the final vector of certain foundling causes? Where, in Shakespeare's Sonnet 129 for example, 'All this the world well knows yet none knows well / to shun the heaven that leads men to this hell' a circular foreknowledge of ends is deliberately contained by a kind of witty scruple, even while the sonnet itself alleges that one of the constituent closures of 'hell' may well consist in the evasiveness sanctioned by the use of witty scruples, the wasteland between grace and disaffirmation. In Ashbery these paradoxes are even gleefully supposed, not only to naturalise their purposes but also to reaffirm their endless presence within a language which simultaneously erases their material self-certainty. It were as though death entailed not mortality but a half-life of corrosive scepticism, or, doubting even that finality, were constantly at work transmuting the temporal weight of verbal tradition into unliveable articulate forms.

How innocent, how retrospectively exempt of anterior determinations can this kind of existential wittiness be? Does O'Hara's apparent unease with the type of proposition more mortally rehearsed in Ashbery suggest a kind of public dialogue, even an argument, concerning the identity of this anonymous 'They'? For if what we sometimes hear between Ashbery and O'Hara is an allusive cross-commentary, it would seem likely that other echoes should also reverberate amongst the broad terms they presuppose, obliging us to think more closely about where they appear from, which outcome determines what cause, and at what cost?

One familiar compound reverberation is immediately suggested. In *Burnt Norton*, the first movement of Eliot's *Four Quartets* originally written in 1936 as a single poem, we come across another manifestation of the usage of an indeterminate pronoun to ambiguate the relation of agency to presence, at the moment in the rose garden of childhood, our 'first world' :

Other echoes
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
Quick said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner. Through the first gate
Into our first world, shall we follow
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.

There they were, dignified, invisible
Moving without pressure over the dead leaves
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air
And the bird called in response to
The unheard music in the shrubbery
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.
There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting,
So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern

Many forms of verbal *absence* are gathered here, animal, physical, genealogical. As in Ashbery's poem, great importance is attached to specifiable objects in this world: there is none of O'Hara's surfeit of extraneous detail to distract the reader's mind from impending confrontations. Inside this kind of perceptual pastoralism, in which self-consciousness is transferred back and forth from the animate to the inanimate, Eliot's look of things that *know they are being looked at* would serve also as a formulation of the kind of guilty innocence which Ashbery often strives for in his early work, a kind of auratic short-circuit between wry premonition and retrospective confirmation without the protracted dislocations of self-encounter which were to come later. In Ashbery the 'lying birds' of *Grand Abacus* (and the later *Can you hear me, Bird?*) are anticipated by Eliot's 'deceptive' thrush, just as the childhood 'first world' of *Burnt Norton* is echoed in Ashbery's 'playful young air', all a kind of unstable parody of the circular formalism of Eliot's drama of re-generation throughout *Four Quartets*, the Heraclitan paradox stated in its own epigraph that 'the way up and the way down are the same', itself frequently parodied by Ashbery.

They told this tale long ago
The legend of the children, in which they get closer
To the darkness but go on living
The motion of the story is moving though not getting clearer

In you I fall apart, and outwardly am a single fragment, a puzzle to
itself. But we must learn to live in others, no matter how abortive or
unfriendly their cold piecemeal renderings of us:
they create us.

(from *The New Spirit*, in *Three Poems*, 1972)

Ashbery often finds these *Grimm* shades in the undergrowth of cultural memory, yet his usage of pastoral is never quite guilty enough to propose the theme of redemption in the same way that Eliot does with *Time*, or even Heidegger with the idea of Being. Despite the care of his attention to these texts, John Shoptaw seems unclear to me when he claims that 'the proof for the independent existence of 'these things between people' hinges on the grammatical existence of the third-person pronoun, which gives rise to 'we' and 'us' in relation to an interpersonal neuter, 'it'. The relationship between two people is thus a third thing, a *tertium quid* both spatial and temporal.... Sometimes the *tertium quid* which joins 'you' and 'I' into 'us' is the third person plural of other people: 'they create us'. At other times it is the vaguely apprehended, synthesising 'life'.'

But it is not clear whether this third truly conjoins or is merely summoned to be excluded: there is a case to be made for both, simultaneously, but it is not made by Shoptaw because it is not made by Ashbery. For him, the simple opposition of 'absence' to 'presence' hardly does justice to the madrigalian density of 'the motion of the story'. If he will not permit us to ask the question 'Who are they' literally, it is not simply because he deploys non-reciprocity (*unanswerability*) as an element of style, but because he seems to have already presupposed our impotence before its cardinal terms, either because *they* themselves are not approachable within the bounds of irony, or because any conceivable answer has been anticipated by some previous literary genealogy.

In Ashbery's case the genealogy is more complex than O'Hara's, partly because it relies more ostentatiously on the accepted canon and its repertoire. Those images of childhood so often to be found in his work are certainly haunting, not least because they also bring to mind at once the many images of 'children's voices in the orchard' (*New Hampshire*), the miniature emblems of allusion and echo constantly to be found in the lyrics and dramas of Eliot. And for Eliot, poetic genealogy is bound up in a perpetual relation not with the past so much as the emphatic 'dead', so much so that his conception of *Tradition and the Individual Talent* takes on an almost Ibsenish thanatology, since 'the poet has not a personality to express but a particular medium'.

Many sources have been proffered for the *imago fixe* of childhood in Eliot, but the one I shall emphasise is a short story by Rudyard Kipling, *They*, first published in 1905. The story concerns a bereaved man who comes to realise that the children he encounters in the garden of a

blind woman he meets by chance are in fact phantoms, amongst whom is the spirit of his own deceased son. Throughout the tale, Kipling makes very subtle play with the interchange of impersonal passive constructions ('so they tell me' etc) and the vividly dramatised presence of the other *They*, those spectres of abandoned infancy whose presence can only be felt but never truly confronted. The theme of painful dispossession was a constant one for Kipling, even before he visited Vancouver, and I think it is possible to see this as in some ways more disturbing than Henry James' *'The Turn of the Screw'*, since here we are not allowed the relaxing perspectivalism of a 'point of view'. Still more disturbing is that for Kipling and also Eliot 'they' are deceased children, the inhabitants of our 'first world' whose transference to the mind of adult recollection seems always untimely, leaving an abject void of unredeemed possibility and with it, a massive predisposition of poetic awareness towards the past viewed as a region of incapacity, a theatre of lost objects.

This would certainly admit one conventional, Freudian definition of melancholia into our characterisation of Ashberyian pastoral and might also illustrate how Eliot's open allusion to this story shows complicated undercurrents in the high-Modernist jargon of 'impersonality'. For throughout the *Four Quartets* Eliot makes great play with the third-person pronoun to signify the differing implications of 'generation', in ways that deliberately question the ideal of autonomy. In the well-known penultimate verses of the final quartet poem, *Little Gidding*, the circle is closed with an un-ironic, psalmic certainty :

We die with the dying:
See, they depart, and we go with them.
We are born with the dead:
See, they return, and bring us with them.

Here, 'they' appear as mementoes of sacred half-life not fully enclosed in the dominion of the dead but also not fully admissible into the shade of a post-sexualised adult awareness. How to characterise them if not through the very figure of an ambiguous and neuter collective, curbed into abstraction by long, 'historical' usage and therefore only semi-permeable to the anthropic need for projective identification? Yet of course the resistance can never be total. We know as we hear that line that Eliot is also alluding to a poem by his friend Ezra Pound first composed in 1912, *The Return*

See, they return, ah see the tentative
Movements, and the slow feet,
The trouble in the pace and the uncertain
Wavering!

See, they return, one, and by one,
With fear, as half awakened;
As if the snow should hesitate
And murmur in the wind,
And half turn back.....

Once again, an unspecified *they*, the pressure of silent footsteps and a return. The slow feet are partly the actual metrical shifts of the poem, so carefully positioned that Hugh Kenner suggests that 'it is actually the rhythm that defines the meaning', which, to him 'is about the mode of divine apparitions in poetry'. And, as before, the more uneasy we are made by these *spiriti ex machina*, *they*, the more we feel, sense, or have intimated to us, that 'they' have something to do with the making and unmaking of each and any word order.

Rainer Rilke, (whom O'Hara translated and admired deeply, especially in the late 1940s) may have partly inspired this rhetorical turn in Eliot, but in the fifth of the *Duino Elegies* adopts a differing rhetorical strategy by turning the hierophantically closed rhetorical question back on itself:

Wer aber *sind* sie, sag mir, die Fahrennden, diese ein wenig
Flüchtigern noch als wir selbst, die dringend von früh an
wringt ein *wem*, *wem* zu Liebe..
niemals zufriedener Wille?

Rilke attributes to the figures made by his pronouns an acrobatic mutability. Where are they? Everywhere and nowhere. By conventional attribution, they are liminal: *uncanny*. Not that *they* is merely that, of course, for the habit of substitution, one term allegedly redefining another, begs the questions of positive substance which *they* inevitably raises. But here in Rilke, physical form is important, and demands some more specified definition. Are they not, these *Fahrender* from 1923, the very embodiment of those vagrant properties of language which Otto Jespersen had named, a year before in 1922, as *shifters*, the displaceable particles with no very fixed

abode, 'whose meaning differs according to the situation': 'a class of words which presents grave difficulty to children'.

Jespersen lists among the 'shifters' of language words like 'father' and 'mother'. Another such word is 'enemy'. And of course 'the most important class of shifters are the personal pronouns'. But, granted this extreme capability for transmutation, substitution and even reversal, can shifters be really said to constitute a class or aspect of language at all? Refining Jespersen's view in a classic essay of 1957, Roman Jakobson views shifters as a *universal* class of grammatical units, possessing a general meaning inside any codes which make reference to the message in which *they* are used. Jakobson explains:

'The indexical symbols, and in particular the personal pronouns, which the Humboldtian tradition conceived as the most elementary and primitive stratum of language, are, on the contrary, a complex category where code and message overlap. Therefore pronouns belong to the late acquisitions in child language and to the early losses in aphasia'

Jakobson's paper of 1957 is a collation of two earlier texts, the first of which, *Les Catégories Verbales*, was written in French for the Linguistic Society of Geneva in 1950. Here Jakobson deals with the problem of reported speech, or, in the original, 'le discours cité (oratio)' and goes on to list several functions of 'relayed or displaced speech' and other types of quasi-indirect language, from *oratio obliqua* to *oratio recta*. Since the meshing of mobile but separate units of language is the theme of the piece, there seems little reason to quibble with Jakobson's own translation of Jespersen's term shifters as *embrayeurs*, 'gear wheels' each with its own *ratio*, since *embrayer* is one of those significant French words embracing a double and opponent meaning, signifying both 'embark' and 'arrest' in the same turn. (Frank O'Hara asserts something of that Zeno-esque dubiety when, in his *Ode on Causality*, he speaks of 'each in asserting beginning to be more of the opposite'). But if *embrayeur* translates 'shifter', what concept was Jespersen (originally writing in English) translating? I propose that Jespersen intended *shifters* to be more descriptive of a language *function* than a category, and want to suggest that the third-person plural pronoun was widely marked as a unique aspect of this function even before modern linguistics came to classify its more general movement. Jespersen's nominal term designates, I think, not simply a contingency of verbal action, but a sense of almost vagrant motility,

somewhere on the outskirts of strict grammatical responsibility, haunting the precincts of collective conduct without ever quite acknowledging a separate motivation. As mobile markers these *shifters* become exemplary figures of generative semantics partly because they are least easy to define as persons by number or gender and partly because their movement in relation to the position of the observer lends them an obviously changeable valency. Far from our knowledge of *they* being quite *a priori*, *pace* Ashbery, the power of this excluded third party is that of some unpredictable energy, orbiting the outer fields of linguistic substance, sometimes the refugee and other times the pursuer; the mutable dispossessed.

Answering our initial question quite literally then, we can say that *they* is a *shifter*. Furthermore, even though not every shifter is a plural, *they* performs a singular deictic function within English grammar because of certain *negative* (neutralised) features already noted. And this very absence (or lack) of prepossession is what gives the English 'they' its force. Thus in Rilke's *Elegy*, *they* seems to stand for the process of performative embodiment, even when (as with his angels) there is no clear physical substance there to deploy. The question of their responsibility is a later consideration, a function of a belated need of the reading mind for physical causes to translate anterior effects.

If we cannot quite know *who* they are how, then, (because if so *they* would not be *them*, *they* would, in part, be *us*) we can at least try to ask how *they* came to be. And at this stage we can turn from allusion itself, as the short-term random-access memory of any poetic system towards more long-range determinants, as the idea of sacrality suggested by Kenner acts as an external pressure on language structure, through the categories of verb, gender, tense and person. And here pronouns, as the shifting of tendons of all language-systems, assume enormous evolutionary importance. In the original formation of the Indo-European system, the introduction of gender categories amongst pronouns was intended to delineate the zone of animate beings (inhabited by spirit, *daimon*), from the inanimate neuter. Nowadays, the gender categorisation of objects in many European languages is so arbitrary that it is almost a relief to turn to English, where grammatical gender is virtually extinct. But the disappearance of inflection in English creates special difficulties too, for, whereas in many languages the gendered agency of the third person plural form of the verb can be indicated by verbal markers of agreement (feminine endings on past participles etc), English imparts to the third person a solidly *neuter* character, a sense of the impersonal and ulterior all of

its own. So that we need to ask, for the moment, not 'who they are', but rather, ungrammatically, what '*they*' is?

The Oxford English Dictionary tells us that the word THEY is an early Middle English reduction of the Old English demonstrative 'thei', whose function was split between 'these' and 'those'. From here it evolved into the pronoun for the third person plural and also, as the OED has it, 'an indefinite pronoun, people in general, and persons not including the speaker, people....' The usage of 'they' as a singular form dates back to the middle of the sixteenth century, taking as precedent the usage of the plural first person pronoun 'we', the royal 'we'. (In some English and Jamaican dialects today 'they' may still be deployed as a pronoun in the accusative case as well as a possessive adjective, as the recent and remarkable *Born To Slow Horses* by Kamau Brathwaite demonstrates).

In the English Bible, 'they' as a signifier for people in general is often put to spectacularly commanding uses: 'Blessed are they that do his commandments' or, as in Isaiah's rebuke to Silliman, 'They that weave net works shall be confounded.' Here the pronoun is deployed in both nominative and accusative cases, bringing to light its most disturbing characteristic; the ability to be both *subjective* and *objective* at once, tending to underline the sense of external imperatives derived from a sacred power not fully embodied by language. Walter Ong's studies of the secularisation of the word have emphasised how in the middle of the C16th the shift to print technologies consolidated the demarcation of grammar from rhetoric in favour of grammar, a move reinforced by the use of more logically simplified schoolbooks which lent to basic phrases (What are they? Who are we?) a greater degree of formalisation and generality than would occur in most oral contexts. Simple verb-tables to reinforce the logic of subject and predication would be learned assiduously, so that the most elementary existentials took on lapidary significance. Under this influence the once-divine tautology of Exodus 3:14, 'I am that I am' (or, 'I am who I will be') is transformed into the blasphemous theatricalism of Iago's 'I am not what I am' and still later, in a learned reversal of Cartesian psychodynamics, into the cartoon catchphrase of the spinach-eating philosopher, 'I yam what I yam'.

The rise of the new humanist logic coincided in the case of the English language with a general simplification of noun usage, making it less necessary to depend on formal indications of gender, case and number, and more on juxtaposition, word order and the use of prepositions to make clear the relation of words in a sentence, a

process of simplification assisted by the decay of pronominal inflections since the C14th. Yet this simplification brought complications in its wake. Grammarians often argue that pronouns are only disambiguated for reference if the hearer is aware of their context for *use*, so that, for example, indexical pronouns (I, You) are *exophoric*, pointing beyond, whereas third person pronouns are *endophoric*, since their sense can be grasped from the text or discourse alone. But, in the absence of widely accepted intermediate passive uses (the German *das man*, the French *on*), or when a discourse deliberately bears no specifying markers, as for example in Psalm 22, 'They pierced my hands and feet', then the neutering of a verbal demonstrative – originally employed for precise indication – leads English in the early modern period to a highly productive state of semantic indetermination with respect to the ascription of agency in the uses of the third person plural. With a single agent we are at least secure in saying to ourselves, well, whoever did it, it was *someone*, *somebody*. But when '*They fle from me that sometyne did me seeke*' (Wyatt) or when '*They are all gone into the world of light*' (Vaughan) it might seem that the word 'they' had almost been invented to multiply an atmosphere of secretive, occluded complicity.

This, I think, is not unrelated to the ironical uses of pastoral forms in poetry. William Empson was the first critic to focus on the ambiguous uses of the third person plural in his analysis of Shakespeare's Sonnet 94 'They that have powre':

'They may *show*, while hiding the alternative, for the first couplet, the power to hurt or the determination not to hurt – cruelty or mercy, for the second, the strength due to chastity or to sensual experience, for either, a reckless or cautious will, and the desire for love or for control; all whether they are stealers of hearts or of public power. They are a very widespread group; we are only sure at the end that some kind of hypocrisy has been advised and threatened.

They rightly do inherit heavens graces,
And husband natures ritches from expence,

Empson sees in the sonnet 'the twist of Heroic Pastoral Ideas in Shakespeare into an Ironical acceptance of aristocracy', so that at the end only a very narrow line separates pastoral from more stringently open forms of reflection on the issue of foregone possibility, such as the elegiac mode. Empson concludes that

'The feeling that life is essentially inadequate to the human spirit, and yet that a good life must avoid saying so, is naturally at home with most versions of pastoral; in pastoral you take a limited life and pretend it is the full and normal one, and a suggestion that one must do this with all life, because the normal is itself limited, is easily put into the trick though not necessary to its power. Conversely any expression of the idea that all life is limited may be regarded as only a trick of pastoral, perhaps chiefly intended to hold all our attention and sympathy for some limited life, though again this is not necessary to it either on grounds of truth or beauty; in fact the suggestion of pastoral may be only a protection for the idea which must at last be taken alone.'

The OED sees the absence of a singular common-gender pronoun to render the 'violation of grammatical concord sometimes necessary'. Yet by the C18th the absence of a third person singular common-gender pronoun began to be the object of criticism in works by Priestley, Blair and others, on the grounds that the pronoun should agree with its antecedent in gender. Nevertheless, English continued to resist the genderisation of the anaphoric pronoun they/them/their. At the same time, under what I take to be the influence of an associationist psychology, the traditional commonplace of mental objects as the metaphorical progeny of the brain takes on a new and more fragile kind of life. In the penultimate scene of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, Richard considers that

'Thoughts tending to ambition, they do plot
Unlikely wonders: how these weak vain nails
May tear a passage through the flinty ribs
Of this hard world, my ragged prison walls
And for they cannot, die in their own pride.'

Here the power to think is personified, through the transformation of 'conceit' (for pregnancy and 'generation') into an image of mental operation that cannot count itself sovereign beyond its confines. That supposes a traditional Christian obstat against conceit as 'pride': yet when Samuel Johnson comes to illustrate the uses of 'they' in his Dictionary of 1755, the example he chooses is a much more complicated figure from *Macbeth*:

Why do you keep alone?
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died
With them they think on

In this example, the intentionality of thinking is mediated by the metaphors for thought, until the thoughts themselves come to appropriate personification merely by the prolongation of mental habit, until it is *they* which think on their objects, themselves the spirits of the murdered dead. Here then I take Johnson's example to reflect a growing psychologism, whose interest in the temporal duration of mental images was inevitably coloured by other thoughts on the fragility of experience. The same figure of thought as conception or pregnancy is taken up and used more sorrowingly by John Locke, for example, when he writes on memory that 'the ideas, as well as children, of our youth often die before us: and our minds represent the marble tombs to which we are approaching, where, though the brass and marble remain, yet the inscriptions are effaced by time, and the imagery moulders away'.

The C18th attempt to clarify grammar, then, was attended by a sharpened sense of the perishability of mental imagery, related then to the *learned* capacity to think and reason, ultimately an aspect of the adult realm of responsibility. But the reaction against 'disambiguation' was also sharp. William Blake's dialectic of 'innocence and experience' parodies Locke's empiricist psychology by arguing that the terms are not isomorphic with 'youth' on the one hand and 'maturity' on the other. The *Nurses Song* in Blake's *Songs of Experience* offers an almost Gothic presentiment of the *Turn of the Screw*, as the '*whisprings*' heard by the nurse occasion fear and pallor:

When the voices of children, are heard on the green
And whisprings are in the dale:
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.

Then come home my children, the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise
Your spring and your day, are wasted in play
And your winter and night in disguise.

From here on in, and for historical reasons which we most often connect with the decline of overt religious faith and more locally, perhaps, with the decline in infant mortality rates in the later C19th, the image of childhood as a liminal and even projected state assumes much greater importance in the underwriting of poetic history. The social historian Carolyn Steadman, in her remarkable study *Strange Dislocations* observes that

'it is the figurative forms of grace and beauty and dignity bestowed by perception and personification upon prosaic little (street children) that can lead to much larger questions of the relationship between the public and the private'

For Steadman the child becomes the exemplum not for an increasing interiorisation of experience so much as the very image of *interiority* itself, 'the deepest place inside, not to be found'. Writing almost at the same time as Blake's *Songs of Experience* were composed, Friedrich Schiller argues in similar fashion in his treatise *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry* of 1795 that

'One is in error to suppose that it is only the notion of helplessness which overcomes us with tenderness at certain moments when we are together with children... We are touched not because we look down on the child from the height of our strength and perfection, but because we *look upward* from the *limitation* of our condition, which is inseparable from the determination which we have obtained, to the unlimited *determinability* of the child'.

Earlier in the text Schiller writes even more succinctly 'They are what we were; they are *what we should once again become*'. It is in the light of these Schillerian-Blakean ironies of reversal that I wish to suggest that, from the beginning of C19th especially, a subtle alteration of referential inclusion comes to determine many poetic uses of the word 'they'. No longer just a marker for the mobility and instability of power relations, it comes increasingly to signal the anonymous solidarity of a group possessing powers which are opaque to adult intelligence, whose group identity is evanescent, and whose very existence is only shifting, contingent, temporary. The use of *they* is recodified to signify not merely a living otherness, not merely absence, nor even absence in the form of the non-living, but specifically the

absence of childhood both literally and metaphorically. From the early C19th onward, the pronoun *they*, when used under certain conditions, comes increasingly to intend the anomic, infantine aspects of human potentiality, not in its *generality* but its *prematurity*:

"At this moment a bustle was heard at the door
From a party of pronouns who came by the score.
And what do you think? Why, I vow and declare
THEY would pass for nouns who already were there.
And THEIR boldness was such, as I live IT is true
One declared HE was I, and ONE called himself YOU.
THIS, THAT and the OTHER, THEY claimed as THEIR own
But WHO THEY are really will shortly be known."

This example, published in 1824 by John Harris as part of *The Infant's Grammar: or a Pic-Nic Party of the Parts of Speech* could be taken to illustrate one transformation of pastoral, as the world of children becomes elegiac because, ultimately, *unheimlich*, as in Longfellow's *Haunted Houses* :

We meet them at the doorway, on the stair,
along the passages they come and go.
Impalpable impressions on the air,
a sense of something moving to and fro.

or Emily Dickinson's

When they come back – if Blossoms do –
I always feel a doubt
If Blossoms can be born again
When once the Art is out....

or again:

They perished in the seamless Grass
No eye could find the place -
But God can summon every face
On his Repealless-List.

Once again, it is anonymity and a kind of faceless non-reciprocity which confront us as a genderless pronoun engenders further neuter forms which devolve into a mirror inversion of adult legal responsibility, an enveloping innocence before the guilty foreknowledge of how many past thoughts are not so incorruptible as they suppose. Dickinson's 'repeal' catches this juridical undertone very well, in a sequence of returns which increasingly resemble hauntings. Her contemporary Emerson was even more alive to the psychological implications of this prospect when, contradicting Locke, he suggests in *Self Reliance*, that 'In every work of genius we recognise our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty'.

Here the *child-as-thought* analogy is folded back into an almost Freudian understanding of the return of the repressed. Linda Nochlin devotes some striking pages in her study of Realism to one of the ironies of desacralisation in the later C19th, citing the Goncourts' remark that 'as societies advance or believe themselves to advance.... so the cult of the dead, the respect for the dead, diminishes. The dead person is no longer revered as a living being who has entered into the unknown, consecrated to the formidable 'je ne sais quoi' of that which is beyond life'. Nochlin goes on to note that 'It is no accident that the theme of the artist forced, despite himself, to record the appearance of a loved one on his or her death-bed, becomes a recurrent topic in Realist mythology'. Yet the examples she gives – from Zola's Claude Lantier to the painter Pellerin in Flaubert's *Education Sentimentale* (she only omits Mallarmé's *Tombeau for Anatole* because it is not strictly 'realist') are all examples of artworks depicting the death of *children*. Even the case of Monet painting the image of his dead wife carries with it associations we have seen before:

' For Monet, the overwhelming impulse to record sense impressions, at the expense of feelings, psychological implications or even the creation of a recognizable image of his dead wife, carries Realist veracity to its ultimate conclusion: the scrupulous notation of isolated phenomena. Indeed, the pathos of the painting arises from precisely the contrast between the objective notation of sense perceptions which create the image and the understood context of emotional stress under which they must have been recorded.'

Here also, the evanescence of sense impressions is allied to a feeling of the premature, the singular, the defenseless, whose ultimate

metaphor is the extinction of childhood, both literal and metaphorical, a distinction which cuts across the traditional delineation of realism and symbolism, just as Ashbery's metallic 'die' in *The Grapevine* does not confine or naturalise the implications it brings into play. By the end of the C19th, these associations were so prevalent that the poet Ernest Dowson remarked in a critique of the '*Cult of the Child*' in 1898 'There is no more distinctive feature of the age than the enormous importance which children have assumed...', as though the transference of power by then were a foregone conclusion. Lewis Carroll brilliantly exploits both the 'cult' and its parody (as Empson also noted in his book on pastoral), taking the jurisdiction of pronouns into the absurd conditions of an infant's grammatical parody of the universe of adult responsibility:

'They told me you had been to her,
And mentioned me to him:
She gave me a good character,
But said I could not swim.

He sent them word I had not gone
(We know it to be true):
If she should push the matter on,
What would become of you?

I gave her one, they gave him two,
You gave us three or more;
They all returned from him to you,
Though they were mine before.

If I or she should chance to be
Involved in this affair,
He trusts to you to set them free,
Exactly as we were.

My notion was that you had been
(Before she had this fit)
An obstacle that came between
Him, and ourselves, and it.

Don't let him know she liked them best,
For this must ever be
A secret, kept from all the rest,
Between yourself and me.'

What would become of you? For, given the falling mortality-rate, the fact that child death was a much rarer event made it all the more significant, made the condition of childhood more *pregnant*. The slaughters of the Great War, in which the decimation of the young male population of Europe was frequently referred to as a 'Children's Crusade' also gave a new sense of literary respectability to genres which had hitherto been considered marginal or 'Gothic'. 'The great increase in the psychical ghost story in late years....testifies to the fact that our sense of our own ghostliness has much quickened...' wrote Virginia Woolf in her essay *The Supernatural in Fiction* from 1918. Kipling's 'They' is, in part a testament to that cultural shift, but Woolf's own *A Haunted House*, fretting over the multiple memories inscribed by generations of 'they' inside a precarious domestic sphere, is more intimately abstract.

'But they had found it in the drawing room. Not that one could ever see them. The window panes reflected apples, reflected roses; all the leaves were green in the glass. If they moved in the drawing room, the apple only turned its yellow side'.

Here the absence of nominal grammatical agents does not stem the performative energies linking pronoun to verb. 'Things' still appear to have the *look of things that are looked at* and in fact the experimental formalities are often not very distant from the Gertrude Stein of *Tender Buttons*, or the *Forensics* section of *How to Write*:

'They will have nothing to do with still. They will had that they have head of the skill with which they divided them until they knew what they were doing without it.'

In the case of both Woolf and Stein, *they* is an especially haunted deictic, replicating the overtones of childlessness and absence through the postproductive mechanism which all literature exploits: the capacity of language to *infantilise* its users. In Stein, especially, form depends on the ritual possibilities of prosaic repetition, and a line like: 'They first meet as each one is about to go away' (from *A play called Not and Now*) often sounds parodically close to the stylised patternings in Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*: 'They make noises, and think they are

talking to each other; they make faces and think they understand each other'. Or, again from *How to Write*, from *Sentences and Paragraphs*:

Dates of what they bought.

They will be ready to have him. We think so.
He looks like a young man grown old. That is
a sentence they could use.

For Stein, the productivity of discourse depended on the ability of language to generate recursively an unlimited number of well-formed sentences precisely in this manner: if she rarely concerned herself with overt genealogical narratives, it was because they were for her the substantial matter of language in the first place, a system of relative heteronomies endlessly diffracted into talk. Perhaps she was thinking of Alice when she claimed that 'a sentence is not emotional', since the question of what *motivates* anything, from a sentence to a crime, would have struck her as a merely sociolegal convention, rather than the fretful obstacle it was for Eliot or Woolf. But as soon as the question of power (or *justice*) is laid aside in favour of the question of identity (or *meaning*) we are left once again with little to show but the ironic nihilism of Ashbery. Yet *they* still possesses power, here, over *him*, and me too, as I read it. Solidarity is also one of its functional dispositions, as we have seen before, so much so that the less physical form *they* appears to need, the more power *they* arrogates in the way of *domination*. What Stein asks, in fact, is whether any language can be free of it. Her foregrounding of the naked or *anomic* form of the third pronoun in this way, bereft of obvious allusive dependence, raises the question of whether there is such a thing as any *relation* not reliant upon this mysterious *third*.

They meet over water,
say something between thick things,
 & make things new.

Soon they're making drinks
 & giving falsely.

Then after giving enough of anything to anyone,
they awaken yesterday when the skin's a little feeble;
seeing danger,

they attack,
force someone to see something,
again give enough of anything to anyone,
attack again,

From Jackson MacLow's *The Pronouns* from 1964, this example goes some way to balance the remote action-from-a-distance of *they* by viewing the mobile forms of language changing gear or shape according to the variant ratios of person and number as a source of dramatic comedy. Measure by measure, these poems exploit the possibility of anonymous designation as a process of childish reinvention. Those who know the texts will know as well *The THEY Manifesto* which MacLow added to its republication in 1978, in which he advocates the use of 'they, the, in place of he or she or it. Why not give the language its head by adopting & extending this usage so widespread in our speech & even in literature, & sanctioned by at least three entries in the OED'. Whatever the value of MacLow's social propositions, it is relevant to point out that these texts were written for dance performances, and that the indexical function of the pronouns here picks as much up from the dance themes in Eliot ('so we moved, and they, in a formal pattern' – *Burnt Norton*) as they do from Stein. For these poems of MacLow's are true parodies, deeply dependent on the self-renewing collective patterning of language inseparable from the mobile bodies that are housed by it. The dancers are once again shifters, *fahrender*, but also clumsy, inveterate, form-bounded by grace of the incontrovertible physicality of the persons who act out their movements.

From both the preceding examples, then, it might be argued that for every move towards abstraction which a language-form attempts, there is a corresponding *personalization* of movement, with the implication that genealogy (the use-value of anthropic identification) is prior to motivation and not a reconstructive projection of form. All negative theories of language, of which Saussure's was once the most prominent, have to account for the substantial 'lineage' of social life in ways that do not turn persons into the mere vectors of compulsory mobility; phantoms, so to speak, of their own prospective destinies.

'Where would be for a single instant the point of positive irradiation in all language, once granted that there is no vocal image that responds more than any other to what it must say'.

The almost-Beckettian pathos of Ferdinand de Saussure's position here, in this note written in the same year as *Tender Buttons*, is the *pathos of negativity* unable to locate a non-negative term in language yet displacing onto the 'vocal image' the anthropic necessity for '*what it must say*'. Every foregone opportunity for finding positive substance in verbal forms occasions ever more regretful observances from Saussure that the essence of language is founded in an initial bipolarity between one sign and another. For him, then, the productivity of language was no compensation for the absence he imagined to be its foundation. But the casual introduction of intermediate third terms as some kind of compensatory adjustment between the displacements of first and second-person forms never quite explains the power of confrontation felt in the melancholy, long withdrawal to the other side of silence in a poem like Ashbery's *Fragment* (1969):

One swallow does not make a summer, but are
What's called an opposite: a whole of ravelling discontent,
The sum of all that will ever be deciphered
On this side of that vast drop of water.
They let you sleep without pain, having all that
Not in the lesson, not in the special way of telling
But back to one side of life, not especially
Immune to it, in the secret of what goes on:
The words sung in the next room are unavaoidable
But their passionate intelligence will be studied in you.

But what could I make of this? Glaze
Of many identical foreclosures wrested from
The operative hand, like a judgement but still
The atmosphere of seeing? That two people could
Collide in this dusk means that the time of
Shapelessly foraging had come undone: the space was
Magnificent and dry.

In this tradition of usage, and despite its hankering for Keatsian sufficiencies, indetermination is never positive. O'Hara's *Fire Island* poem is something like an opposite to Ashbery's beautiful lines; 'clumsily' inadvertent, helplessly singular, with none of the polished and consolatory glaze of Ashbery's 'many identical foreclosures'. But it

also commences at the point where Ashbery, gracefully, terminates. O'Hara's usage of 'they' in his poem, invoking Mayakovsky's sense of 'persistence', of 'keeping on' becomes necessary where Rilke's rhetorical '*wer sind sie*' does not. Yet even Mayakovsky, O'Hara observed in an essay of 1959, 'made a fatal error and became a tragic hero... he succumbed to a belief in the self-created rhetoric of his own dynamic function in society'. These lines repeat an attestation often found in O'Hara, what he calls, again in relation to Mayakovsky 'the tragedy of human involvement':

'it is the role taking over the actor, of course but is also the word consuming the poet, the drama of the meaning, which the poet has found through the act of creating this meaning, where he has been joined to the *mortal* presence of life'

What does O'Hara mean by the '*mortal* presence of life'? Or the 'word consuming the poet?' Also commenting on Mayakovsky in 1935, Jakobson had already noted that 'While in certain respects the individual poet continues a tradition, in many others he breaks away from it all the more decisively; the tradition is likewise never entirely negated; the elements of negation always appear only in conjunction with persisting traditional elements.' It was Jack Spicer, the great contemporary of O'Hara and Ashbery, who attempted most powerfully to disprove the idea of mere 'persistence' by fusing a negative sense of language evolution with as 'unliterary' a sense of 'tradition' as possible, as for example in the *Graphemics* section of his book *Language* from 1965.

Let us tie the strings on this bit of reality.
Graphemes. Once wax now plastic, showing
the ends. Like a red light.
One feels or sees limits.
They are warning graphemes but also meaning
graphemes because without the marked
ends of the shoelace or the traffic signal
one would not know how to tie a
shoe or cross a street – which is like
making a sentence.
Crossing a street against the light or tying
a shoe with a granny knot is all right
Freedom, in fact, providing one sees

or feels the warning graphemes. Let
them snarl at you then and you snarl
back at them. You'll be dead sooner
But so will they. They
Disappear when you die.

Some members of this audience will know the passage well, and some will even have been present when Spicer read it out loud, in this city, at the home of Warren Tallman on West 37th Avenue, almost exactly 40 years ago, in June 1965, in the course of what have become known as his Vancouver Lectures. These discourses seek to advance a strong form of the Orphic argument, so adroitly parodied in the Fire Island poem by Frank O'Hara with which we began, in which the poet is the mere receptacle for the poem, as 'host to a visitor'. When he writes, Spicer says, 'there is something *jenseits* that is nothing to do with me'. As we know, Spicer disclaimed an Ashberyian sense of 'tradition', even a marginalised or inverted body of tradition, for a conception of the poet constantly receptive to an 'outside'. On reading *A Textbook of Poetry*, he is asked about those 'outside' forms of influence and their inconstant powers:

Q. What happens when the sources disappear?

A. You either write bad poetry or you stop writing. Until they come back

What is it that comes back? Once again, the *ubiquitous they*. Here, an epithet which might have seemed redundant in Blaser's *Holy Forest* comes to exert an unexpected force, as a description for the refrigerated twilight in which Spicer's indices are made to perform, like the suspended animation, 'half-life', of Phillip K. Dick's *Ubik*. Of course the shifters here are partly infantine, in the manner of *Eumenides*, since *they* in part represent what is abjected in tradition. If Ashbery sees poetry as an elegiac reserve capable of reinventing the past only by first accepting its traditional rites of expiation, Spicer sees poetry as the sacral self-exemption of language, a sublimation of the death drive without transcendence or consecration, a symbolic universe whose terms explain neither human singularity or connectedness. It is not for him that the 'sources' are repressed in a Freudian manner, so much as that they can only exist in this manner right from the start, as the place-markers for an inverted sublimity affirming the underlying void not as possibility but genealogical accident. Incapable of

understanding power in anything other than paranoid terms, the *passivity* at the heart of Spicer's animism is the power to exclude unto death the mediating function of bodies, names, insignia, all the ostension under the poet's command in the *terra nullius* of recycled utilities in which *they* most of all are the shiftless excluded ones, deprived of substantial form to exude as much consanguinity as is poetically bearable.

I have tried to suggest that some of the paradoxes of poetic self-reference which inhere in the disposition of pronoun-usage can make of the 'anomic' third term a positive aspect of the English language system, as the axis where synchrony and diachrony do not so much meet each other as negate the illusion of continuous presence presupposed by all non-historical analyses. At times, the power of self-reference is deployed mainly to *evoke*, in which cases the overtones of a remote and unspecified tertiary form may well be a significant special-effect, for pronouns bear the presence of history in the traditions that accumulate round their usage. In literary forms especially, the replacement of the dialogical paradigm of speaker + listener with more indirect conditions marks a juncture in the recognition of foregone possibilities. If the ineffable did not exist, we wouldn't be able to talk about it. And if *they* did not already exist, we shouldn't have to reinvent them.

Somewhere in *The Spirit of Christianity* Hegel remarks that 'what is a contradiction in the realm of the dead is not one in the realm of life'. The traditional *Tritos anthropos* argument always supposed a mediating irony (the bathos of the middle state) through the generative accumulation of supplementary person-forms. But since, as I have tried to show, the intense gathering of force around this third plurality brings an almost persecutory sacralism in its wake, it can never be quite arbitrary enough to personify the distinction of exophoric from endophoric usage, so that its deployment entails an outlook that is almost the opposite of what Ashbery and Spicer, at differing points, take for 'negative capability': the indirect reanimation of the will-to-power through a counter-transference of agency with the anonymous 'dead'.

That is why I read the poem written by Frank O'Hara around the time of his thirtieth birthday in July 1956, *In Memory of my Feelings*, as a kind of extended retort to Ashbery and Spicer both. He had already linked them before, in the first of his celebrated 'I do this, I do that' series, *At the Old Place* written in July 1955, where Ashbery 'malingers' and 'Jack, Earl and Someone don't want to come'. But in

In Memory of My Feelings the range and prospects are very much wider than the celebratory dance-forms either of O'Hara's gay New York or Eliot's formal conjunction of 'living' and 'dead' through the introjecting of tradition.

The poem is too well known to quote at length here; most will remember how the hushed commencement 'My quietness has a man in it', generates 'likenesses' from that primal self-relation, 'transparent selves' which proliferate in the light of fragmentary self-interrogation until:

'But who will stay to be these numbers/when all the lights are dead?'

Most will know as well the concluding lines:

And yet
I have forgotten my loves, and chiefly that one, the cancerous
statue which my body could no longer contain
against my will
against my love
become art,
I could not change it into history
and so remember it,
and I have lost what is always and everywhere
present, the scene of my selves, the occasion of these ruses,
which I myself and singly must now kill
and save the serpent in their midst.

It is not simply that what Nicholas Abraham called the 'transgenerational phantom' is followed through a series of elaborate theatrical routines or 'masquerades' that gives this work its great force, but that the theme of redemption, present throughout O'Hara's writing, is both declared and also affirmed. To *save the serpent*, amongst other possibilities, is to retrieve back from bathos the concept of fallibility itself, which is the possibility of *new life* or *recommencement*, somewhat different from the forms of impasse to be viewed everywhere in Ashbery or Spicer. That long final strophe of section four beginning 'Grace / to be born and live as variously as possible' taking in 'I don't know what blood's in me' and ending 'What land is this so free' deliberately glances at Eliot's poem *Marina* to

repropose some of the themes of childhood liminality which we have already observed at work in the evolving usage of the pronoun *they*. Eliot's *Quis Hic Locus...?*, taken from Seneca, reminds us that the poem was written only a few years after Heidegger's uncertainty 'whether the primordial significance of locative expressions is adverbial or pronominal', and O'Hara's elegy makes great play on the terrain of this question of, using Eliot's phrase '*what images return*', knowing full well that 'the scrutiny of all things is syllogistic'. Even if at one level O'Hara's poem does indeed show elegiac nostalgia for the days when social life could be regarded as a calculated deployment of personae (masks, masquerades, *Am I that Name?* etc) its cool, mock-analytical tone is many miles from the empty and recidivistic allusion to the same Eliot poem later on by Ashbery, in his continuing dialogue with O'Hara, *Thoughts of a Young Girl* printed in *The Tennis Court Oath* of 1962.

Through the usage of *they*, whose form I have called anomic, certain uncertainties accumulate which are nothing to do with negative irony or the sublimatory alternatives of the elegiac mode. It is the power of this pronoun *they* to remain beyond dialogue yet within mediation that gives it its liminal force: indeed, the ability to suspend 'dialogue' is partly to arbitrate the categories of person non-naturally (vicariously, literarily) in the areas I have tried to propose, of childhood and spectrality. For the concept of synchrony is a contradiction in the realm of the living, unable to account for the *half-life* of certain verbal forms which elude strict grammatical categorisation. Colour-words are one well-known linguistic example of this; pronoun usage, which might seem the least relative of features once established, proves to be another, since the ligatures which attach *us* to *them* are so variant, they polarise an inherent instability of usage which casts doubt on any purely negative system of verbal lineage.

The ideal synchrony of modern linguistics was once deployed to suggest presentness in physical time and absence in linguistic space, an analytical paradox which managed neither to mediate the ironical linkage of persons to pronouns or suggest the fallible inherence of language in the body (*die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist*). *They* is a contradiction not *in*, but *of*, the realm of synchrony, signifying both potential and power, the spectral shift of prematurity to adulthood. And since much of modern metaphysics was a dubitation of egohood (I) and dialogism (I-you), the unstable and excluded third pronoun may then be a defaulting antonym for the positive, not merely a sacral vestige of generation (reproductivity) or tradition.

The great poetic power of John Ashbery's work lies in its ability to conjure what he has called 'other Traditions' (see not just his Norton lectures but also '*The Other Tradition*' in *Houseboat Days*) of usage whilst ratifying the central one. What was surely remarkable in the work of Spicer was his militant and destructive scepticism here, and his wholesale sacrifice of poetic self-assurance to a mobile and phantom army of presences, unaccountable, unattributable and unarguable. It was Frank O'Hara's unique failing that this question of presence affected him literally, and forced him to turn it into great poetry. For O'Hara, it was not the *power* but the *grace* to be born and live as variously as possible that mattered: what he could not take as read, he was obliged to write.

What is so compelling about the poem of O'Hara's with which we began is that it refuses to leave us with the reassuring negativity of loss. It may be that, like others of his generation, he saw the written word to be haunted by images of childhood and wartime death; but only O'Hara could conceive of a world beyond poetry that could also include poetry, make a place for mortality that was not merely necropoetical, 'cancerous'. Indeed, it was partly his strength to show on the one hand, how the locating of such questionable shapes is the very aim of poetry, neither a 'predicament' or a 'fix' but the very origin of its self-understanding. Not to know who we are, then, is not the main source O'Hara's poetic understanding. Nor even is the desire to know how or why this state has come into being, even if we know through whom. Rather, O'Hara's question comes into full possession of its readers by asking what they have known all along to underwrite all 'timeless' interrogatives, at work everywhere in the expanded terrain of language: not what are we, not who are we, but *when*.

from Subtractions

Weed minus one

If you could only find the gauge
to unforeseen collisions of spatial
exhumation's enthusiasm, a breath
of fresh bear, spook to whatever
Brownian motion sparks up clouds
of milling strangers to question
regimens of supermarket orchids, then unexpected
exhalations chorus of modulated sighs
might rise to the skies

Dandelions
parade down boulevards of returned
excavations cautionary bins' unknowing
reassurance—relax, it's only a
freed signifier seeking a connection
in unchained synaptic lapse suddenly
slipped off the wall we're pinned to
by little secrets that aren't

The door opens
neither in nor out so your choices
are unlimited arrangements
of whatever baggage gets hauled along
and set free from Calvin's
ever lingering distaste for small
mercies' surprising connections—
world in the unmaking, forgotten
name drifting just beyond
edge of constant framing
dancing on tongue's tip
to recall it before trees fell

into mind's void and it all
tumbles through

 If you want pictures
go to a museum, otherwise
try a different kind of place
each sound juicy and smelling
of fish don't come in a can—
getting lost in there slips
and slides past all preparations
arranged introductions drifting
in and out of focus saving
as from literal executions and
diorama destiny's stuffed
articulation of former animal
being while thrusting
us into post-quantum vibratory
exclamations strung out and hammered
past three

Marriage minus one

"How to shatter our love in order to become finally capable of loving?"

—Gilles Deleuze

The ancient click of heels rebounds
between margins of current's up
stream business dealing's flight
into strange meetings

Neither
sweet nor sour returns improbable
nuptial's errant attack on nature's
group grope to an unlikely canvas
without edges

Just as your flawless
little confirmation of hermetic
completion's anticipated smile
spreads through how much you
understand, it all takes off for
Mexico

Business proposition's
mutual endeavour in the ruins
of civil conflict's potential
address remains inviolable remainder
of the deal, here spread across
interminable smackeros' claim
of heavenly funnels into vessels'
paradoxical end of season
perpetual sale

What we need
and what we're told we want bicker
over the bones of last night's
future sumptuously forgotten
before the further spread
of each negotiation's uncertain
conjunction

No cows
to milk augments displays
of independence and declarations
of unanticipated deliria opening
one of those doors
that's not there and doesn't
open in any case
leaving way amazed
and stuttering, enjambed
beyond all hope
of instrumental chorus
hallelujahs festering bones
of mistaken textual clangs
shut in sheer exhaustion and into
yet another morning's
impossible vacancies waiting

Endings minus one

—for Bob

Not that you want to dwell
beyond the sea, or even across
the dial, especially when bags on little
shoulders guide in the middle through
thud of door into wet yellow
leaves blown into unacknowledged
corners of waiting concrete

Back

in the saddle of sunset smooches, back
in the double crossed exit lurks
in dark alleys and around burdens
of unintentional flourish's promise
takes you home by the surest
route through bits and pieces
of what's left us

Deep reptilian

medulla's final capitulation, last
laboured air unwilling millennia
relinquish to waiting silence we
fill our ears against, pumping
endless tonic chords into
sun's staggering adventure or even
noise to signal ratio has to pass
for apocalyptic pleasure's no go
is no more sentence than judged
fit to stand trial by fire

It always

leaks, right at that crack where
earth and sky part on the last
morning, nothing more final
than beginning each moment
of light's sudden shaft through
all that space as the stranger
of whatever options you can marshal

against it comes up

 It comes up
but that's not the end
of evasive application's trajectory
smears edges' unbearable
proposition into less definite
beginnings which name no other
opening than offering
another occasion
to wander on

Getting out minus one

Dancing while sitting still the poet
once said, remarking some possible
boundary long closed to business
of winning your prize is already
out

No little statues or old friends
left by betrayal struggling to return
shattered heart to phantasm's
excavated niche, no exit
the least worried bone, but one left
dangling in wind turning
breathwise into winged fishes
soar

Having neither past nor trick
deck's cancerous dick destiny turns
betrayal from onerous
punishment of fathers that were never
there in any place toward very
proliferation leaves lineage
adrift in an out impossible to see
through all that longing
to be free

What clangs
shut rends otherwise in dark twin's
iron mask desperation right when
thick of it hides in last
night's warped passage out
toward loyalty's further exclamation
of a possible choice as marriage
without cows to milk

Already key
as in penetralium's funny persistence
the place it finds itself is unbound
to any love and frequent flight

into another excuse for
gravity's desperate claim in face
of dangling modifications'
unwieldy promise to liberate
final hold into loyalty's
ever unexpected flight

Who you kill
claims no further connection
than already abounds enchained
to your own desperate
out that never quite reaches
sill unless it already comes
to you before a name
reaches from the closet
for your throat

Seven AM hockey arena minus one

To speak of moon slivers is impossible
without vaporous words suspended
nuance skittering smoothly over
too many blue lines to satisfy law's
regulated increments of blistering
space or lost phases to come

There is a game
and then there is a game, a question
of consonantal drift from the lips
into throat's growl, plosive I think
they call "p"'s round black arc
across white ice's challenge to "b"'s
black hole

What coagulates
in motion, falling and rising across
position's lost intent, shattering
empires of best laid remedial
compositions in extended
ice aches

All those possible lines
of emerging attention from tangled
legs and sticks recollects treasure
island's apple barrel revelations,
a question of falling or
snoozing your way out of
hoosegow destiny's claim
on deflection's sudden
promised outcomes surprised
delight

Stumbling into history's
miraculous rebirth after premature
ejaculations of game's end slides
out of the corner, crease
shimmering in fog of clashing
weathers leaves independence

in dust of the chase

From the clouds
mercurial sheep flow
in lines of flight no mind
can guess before arrivals'
magnetic future claims place
beyond it already as clumps
of girls glide through
breathless distances warped
bursts of unmarketable
testimonial to leafy
eruptions into cold
wet dawn

Ongoing offensive operations to eliminate all pockets of resistance minus one

If you call it freedom do the pockets
bleed less? And absent resistance
how offensive is the elimination?
Perfectly obvious answers to impossible
operations conclude decisively end
of that obscure light gleamed
in dispelling final shadows
lingering career

It's all that space
calling out from closet's dark corners
at moonfall, figures in shadow
scratching—take it back
home and what happens beyond
burning dreams of endless stuff
piling up in the garage collapsing
of its own melted weight
adds up endlessly

The resistances of
silences irritates deep ties
of elimination to dreams of Texas
mundi rising on a half shell
to Sousa strains thence to march
across the desert brushing away
de Vaca's last lingering tracks
still cry out for America
whose hope of discovery
slouched off to the mall last
Wednesday and was last seen
on the side of a milk carton

The demos
having crapped out contains everything
necessary to *e pluribus*
unum's steel plate dream
of endless asphalt passages

through amber waves purple
majesty's bruised and battered
ghost talk, straight and true
as bulldozer love delirium
and endless free parking

Surrounding
outside tasks elimination
evasive penetralium's night
hoot terrors but can't stop
slipping back through
green push in cracks
beyond pockets'
last scream

from OPPOSITE POEMS

Poems will never do.

Paul Blackburn

LET US NOT BE DETAINED HERE BY THE POSSIBLE RESEMBLANCE
OF WORDS TO LIVES. FOR THE DREAM IS OF A DEATH IN PLACE OF
EFFRACTION. OF A NATION ALWAYS DYING IN PAIRS.

A dream comes true: the United Empire of America

"The fourth amendment meets the tenth commandment
across an over saturated band of superstitions.
Nothing falls where you expect it.
At this point shall the non-we speak
always a mile short of the epiphany
in the window, love, down by Harry Potter's foot?"
Claude Civility through his monologue relation
as a man to its beast in a parrot patois
yet truant to this stammering a corpse flies into
an exquisite crow.

This is neo-liberalism on its final bar stool
beneath Saran-wrapped reservoirs of profit
you can smell it on your teeth when it decides to breathe
communard sparky speak agent of the *hors texte*
just before supper and discourse meet in geometry
as weather patterns form around the White House
where current politics operate in a perfect condition of impossible politics
the gestalt Santa Claus remarking less a crisis than
the constitutional contradiction at the heart of any suburban Easter.

[Enter the pram bomb.]

It's clear why one's individual safety can never be an inviolable constitutional right
and rightly so, for here, in the sleek good looks of the new global literature
the confrontation of non-commodity socialism and supply-side Capitalism
no longer obtains.

This is where sunsets are served every half hour while skiing
in a Utah of vintage vodka.

What I could have mentioned is the sadness of Sir Thomas More
with his back to the camera the moment after his execution
reflecting on the technical uncertainty of silence
the date, late May or early December
the knight is also a nun in an unknown limerick by
John Gower and the truth of all this wired for profit
with independent research security guaranteed by the offshore dealers.
Each language game is complemented by each interlocutor's ability
to disregard the final sentence as it plunges down into metaphor.
There's snow too beneath a crowd of yelling passengers
but what I could have pointed out was that to utilise
the straight-line method will always prove insufficient to resource
accumulation
no matter how many times you slice it.

An entropic pull obtains towards a more traditional recipe for différends
for instance, to cure the city of its pedestrians why not eliminate the car?
But ours remains a luxury world of details smoothed along a post-national
axis of leisure-certainties that never need reshaping.

Or else I could have mentioned André Malraux's theory of the lyric
that being an " 'I' without a Self"
still current in a system of mottoes offered up to memorabilia
in convenient chronological sequence,
cut off by a shadow cast by a huge façade
painted according to the system implicit
in Rimbaud's "Voyelles."

I truly apologize for the way I live my life in a Bombay suburb
is not a practical claim nor relevant to this particular method
of in-house brokerage. Shania Twain is in Rio de Janeiro
a week before this is being written. I could have joined her there
but the impacts from a fourth cluster bomb exposed
a different range of secretarial concerns.
At which point a colourful and assorted group of artists
professional samba dancers and intellectuals
are discovered in a shallow grave marked "*Cuisine Régionale*."
A glib clarity appears on silk when gaining access
only through precise but unknown coordinates.
By extracting colour from a pygmy image a smaller tattoo emerges
on the left eye and pertaining to a claret quango
the senior appointment squats translucent through its nude lunettes.
All the victims were given vanilla ice cream packed in my own country
but not in my own back yard.
The voice sends a fax to its missing neurons
"*Go seek the latex in their language*."

But this might not have happened then or ever
perhaps it's just an aversion to merely descriptive windows
at the back of scholarly slippage. Apparently as "floors" delay
"apertures" or a chance meeting in a counter argument before
a small snail cleaves a painter's foot.
But then again, what of the lecture about the table that greets
the dissertation on the floor?
Fun arrives at a lacerating cost in undecided alternatives.
it's lamp past six or a quarter to door and the darkness in the phrase
"the darkness and the death" gets bypassed in favour of some adjacent
cryptomorph.

Fragile OF the world not IN it.
Or else I could have pictured the scene as a rush to more complex personae
the checkerboard withholding a barmaid's face beyond the *repoussoir*
Cannalone Sistine College extra ceiling sometimes similar to that

continuum of birds.

But all of this might be decades ago
before the black clock's verisimilitude dissolved
at the moment when, psychoanalytically,
the King and Queen were dissolved
by spermicidal durability and broad theories of emancipations.

Even the renaissance came to the cheerless conclusion
that the phoenix is only a pigeon in heat
despite what the High Priest said. Kosovo
is in the first hole but what's in the others?
The sensorium dances in its house of cards
retaining "permanence and neighbourhood"
as its two best selling points for death.

So instead of eating or venture capitals the test rats
build a labyrinth out of their carrot rewards
and if it works
the news reports what the facts can't say.
In which case sit quietly in as many linguistic forms
as are available to you in this eddy of technological trajectories.
Easier said than done
when even the social performees are poking you into
paratactical radiation fields where frogs mutate into giraffes.

Defeat always improvises with defeat
even those cockroaches at Hiroshima knew that's a good one
as did the Spice Girls each time they read *Rasellias* over and over
to themselves. You see
there really is a Happy Valley out there
somewhere under the pan-hydraulic break-up of the infant guardians
and beyond the actual errors of culture named symphonies.
But don't believe all you hear. For instance
that "there's a war on but no enemy"
it must come back to haunt their President each night he dreams

of ice-cream golf courses in Kandahar and all the world class pros
are over par because of pipelines underneath the cause.

Even the New Sentence won't help you. Sucking some baobab tree
the new-born buddha emerges as an ampersand of his own
after-birth or, as Thomas Hardy must have put it,
beyond the Casual's gate it had lost the blew, tell, so,
breaking to midnight in a loss at cards,
you see the thorn is moon within June expenses
and camaraderie's incarnadine the colour of defeat when saying
that he did hear a voice call as if taunted by third-world trampoline
production costs.

In sports this all adds up to the quarter-back's readiness
for percept-analysis, his temporal conjunctions relaxing at half-time
into paroxysm.

What would love be without life?
inquires the synchronized swimming mirror
and will all the mud-routines be compensated
or most of them, or at least a few of them, sometimes, in some different
time zone
questioning the peanut about its own specific dispossessions in the hungry
mouth of the allergic?

Everybody knows that syntactic regimes precipitate a plethora of outcomes
placed along an axis whose poles are adjacency and independence.

At least the squirrel put it that way
adding that immanence used to be a style of life.

He was a fat man and therefore a good man.

I am itself says the door opening for Melville
textured into a different formula to generate
the marbled whale of becoming.

As for myself as the self that I'm becoming
across the lining of an individual understood
to be a consistent yet fragile multiplicity
and with my own blood the back-drop

to someone else's anaemia
risky in Schiller but not in Ruskin
for the critical/clinical is first-ness
last independent brightness in the form of "there is
but not as an enough."

And folks know that the list goes on
buckwheat bargain basements, snatch shrinkers,
complimentary hose comprehenders,
stability conifers for the deck, unjust mothers' ratatouille recipes,
civility perfume extracts, demarcation uniforms for slivovitz repairs,
Pandora chapters about ancient cameo co-ordinates,
genetic catatonia among tziganes with typhus kept
in amnesiac zone-blocks behind each rhetorical question.
"Who put you there, what's your purpose,
is everything the same as God left it before her lunch-break?"
I am sometimes a face but rarely in town these days
though city localities return in the form of mundane letters of surprise.
Hullo, dead literature, that literature whose aim is of the form
"this literature" but actually "I have lived despite living."

/ Paul Kelley /

Eleven poems from Learning the Light

Basil bush, hedged,

under the smell of the old earth,

the old promises above,

new-mown crosses to be reaped and bagged,

light speeds to property,

property to Idea,

to Love.

This Autumn's autumn

multiplies

on a spindle branch.

φ

Amendless to the long pause
that fruited us

a moment's pulp,
the weight of juice bitter upon a lip,
to the mouth of the word
she added
not finger, not primer, not bread.

(for Dorothy Trujillo Lusk)

φ

. . . and the right-of-way
shall be yielded to red-wing blackbirds,
please
slow at carrion-crossings

wheels along the tar, "like stink"
in every direction
metal churns with ease,

limits set before –
behind –

one horizon backing off,
another pulling closer,

the leg slopes duly
to capital cities

for the first final word.

φ

Veins of the hand stretch
into the smoke's fissures
into the moment

for the moment's residua,

Now snows us over
laden with ciphers

of all that has rubbed off
again and again –

a diet of liquid salt
for the word-swollen lips,
a smear of honey
for the chafings of ash –

every glass finds its enemy
in a harvest of stones

every restive glint helps a night
emerge from itself

far beyond anywhere,
blistered,

mouthed on

φ

– winded back, short shadows
to their magenta

forwarded to their yellow-
lessness –

you walk
a later time
the off-chance of leaves
call beyond a leaden season

leastways, less-
ways, last-

enfenced trees brimming
with light de-
clensions

un-
admitted eyes
ember into themselves
(watch faster,
hear warmer,) –
dusk
lights them down
too
in plentiful shells

word that buds beneath
each mis-step now
if you halve again the halved voice
you would have lived
otherwise

the green measure
spent in itself
distanted
clearaway in just-time
for hour's Octobering
listened in this once

now-hued, nearest if –

in common needname
the rule of lack-
fulness
leapt to the match

home
the thankful, the empty
hands

(for Peter Culley)

φ

Hotel Dieu

The tap-tap of sharp little hopes
the one of a grieved eye for a green sun,
of the caged heart for leaf-breezes,

for the awaited snow
rising bluey, nightward, to pat the tree's tip,

the more-than-life
the one a mouth spoke early in your hair,

the one, the two, of fingers rooting for the caress
hidden in a hand, that salves a forehead's far-ing –

for the kisses that can and can,
half-, almost-, near-
word

. . .

flapping in this room, called "waiting", redolent
of all air conspired toward us

so close now with pulse left over
to plant all of us in this hither-here,
give the shape the next second
makes to *if* us –

to squeeze *that* so tightly
our names spark ever away,
outward, and flickers
of ourselves summon us
forever to stammer
and outgrow the gold
of each doctored hour's little doom.

φ

Evening's deep will lift
the ice-broken bloom,
letdown your heart to seed
these air-holding spaces,

ripe, the dream uprooted,
enough for busy waiting,

– and counting: pace, dream, tendril,
breath, mud, – we, we find,

leaning out, leaning
up against once, once more.

φ

Webbed in the breath,
the hoped-for finding mouth
among the dark's after-flashes,

all blue, every blue
swarms the lightning's edges,
flaps there in under's parting,

stay your thoughts still
nearer to twining, thread them

into my night, through
to me, unsleeping

φ

Yeats and Stevens, in their blackbirds

And this day, too, as any,
one last before the last will do –
in which intends
not question but answer,
always and everever, of history's busiest ending –

do not ask what times
be these that times themselves,
all the leaves *are*
treeless, and words gleam heavenly
from their spindly roots,

a pair of shoes, a shirt,
(without a planted stick)
do clap and sing and speak,
so message-stuffed as to supplant
a voice made dumbest supplement –

no, do not demand this day,
for here arrive the second-times
which have no time
for a time but a question, only
a question, can distend.

(to the memory of Charles Watts)

Valed, a mouth prolonged
in the many tongues
that lap it up,
a whisper dug deep,

down, where stone sprouted,
where it flamed
in swarms of black air,

eyes hollowed eyes
to ash, to greater whiteness,
and heat,

blindfolded twice over
by shadows of larkswarms
broken backward from blossoms

that smoulder, die down, there,
in beds of generation.

φ

Of dried-up names
carboniferous
you were made,
a crown of ink and spittle
set upon your several skulls,
creased by the tree-crotch,
rooted to one shoulder,
and cast along the tire-tracks
that long ahead suck up the road,

wordy enough
to be on your way

Mutiny, Innocence and Guilt in Billy Budd and Some Historical Contexts

In this essay I will explore the appearances of innocence and guilt in Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*. The text I will be using is *Billy Budd, Sailor (an Inside Narrative)*, edited by Harrison Hayford and Merton M. Sealts, Jr.¹ I will not, however, explore the representation of innocence or guilt in *Billy Budd* in terms of the discourses which have previously shaped the critical discussion;² these have generally confined themselves to interpretations of the story's symbolism or its social or ethical implications or its author's intentions solely in terms of the narrative as given in the text itself. I wish to take a wider view, and set the action, incidents, and narrative exposition of *Billy Budd* against its historical context, as announced by Melville in a few brief passages. I intend to briefly sketch out that context and then to "read

¹ Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1962. The Hayford-Sealts edition includes both a "reading text" which represents a hypothetical "fair copy" or "final draft" of *Billy Budd* based on the editors' transcription and collation of the extant manuscript, and a "genetic text" which represents the editors' transcription of the entire manuscript including successive drafts and variants, additions, deletions and other emendations. Because Melville left the *Billy Budd* manuscript in an unfinished state at his death, there is no authoritative published edition on which critics can rely as embodying Melville's final considered intentions. Hayford and Sealts do, however, regard the manuscript as "a semi-final draft" of a work which Melville intended to publish (1, 12). See the editors' introduction for an account of the growth of the manuscript under Melville's hand and for a history of its successive publications (with their anomalies) and its critical reception during the first half of the twentieth century. The Hayford-Sealts edition remains the most reliable text available; it will be reprinted as the basic text of the Northwestern-Newberry edition of *Billy Budd*. When quoting from this text I will follow the lead given by Arthur Efron in his essay, "Melville's Conjectures into Innocence: Chapter 22 of *Billy Budd, Sailor (an Inside Narrative)*," citing the leaf number of the manuscript as determined by Hayford and Sealts and printed in the outer margin of each page of their edition, "because we are dealing with a special, unique text in which the author saw no printed page numbers, and which he left in disarray at his death" (Efron 35, n. 2).

² See Hayford and Sealts, 24-27; Merton Sealts, "Innocence and Infamy: *Billy Budd, Sailor*," in John Bryant, ed., *A Companion to Melville Studies* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986): 421-424; Hershel Parker, *Reading Billy Budd* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990): 58-95; and especially Efron, *passim*, for accounts of this discussion.

it back into" the story, with special attention to Melville's choice of words in positioning this historical setting for the events of the story.

At the time of Billy Budd's arbitrary enlistment into the *Bellipotent* that ship was on her way to join the Mediterranean fleet. . . .

It was the summer of 1797. In the April of that year had occurred the commotion at Spithead followed in May by a second and yet more serious outbreak in the fleet at the Nore. The latter is known, and without exaggeration in the epithet, as "the Great Mutiny." It was indeed a demonstration more menacing to England than the contemporary manifestoes and conquering and proselyting armies of the French Directory. To the British Empire the Nore Mutiny was what a strike in the fire brigade would be to London threatened by general arson. In a crisis when the kingdom might well have anticipated the famous signal that some years later published along the naval line of battle what it was that upon occasion England expected of Englishmen; *that* was the time when at the mastheads of the three-deckers and seventy-fours moored in her own roadstead—a fleet the right arm of a Power then all but the sole free conservative one of the Old World—the bluejackets, to be numbered by thousands, ran up with huzzas the British colors with the union and cross wiped out; by that cancellation transmuting the flag of founded law and freedom defined, into the enemy's red meteor of unbridled and unbounded revolt. Reasonable discontent growing out of practical grievances in the fleet had been ignited into irrational combustion as by live cinders blown across the Channel from France in flames. (Lfs 49-53)

It is (and is not) as Melville says: the mutinies at Spithead, near Portsmouth, and the Nore, near Sheerness and the mouth of the Thames—the two great home roadsteads of the English Channel fleet—were momentous events for England in that spring of 1797. Britain was still at war with revolutionary France, had been since 1793. Britain had suffered reversals on land and sea against France, her superior in population and geographic extent, and was paying ruinous inducements to Austria principally to keep up pressure on France's eastern borders, as well as supporting numerous French Royalist emigrés against the day when they might overcome the atheist

Jacobin. There was threat of invasion by France, and invasions were attempted in Ireland, although they were foiled by ill planning or the incompetence of leaders or the fecklessness of invasion troops conscripted from prisons and jails, or by foul weather. Rumors of invasion multiplied in England, contributing to an atmosphere of panic and hysteria, which made the public way easier for the institution of repressive laws against open and legal assembly. At the same time many were weary of the war with the French; there was much pressure on William Pitt's Tory government to make peace with the French, which they attempted (and failed) in their inflexible way.

The sedition laws, proposed by Pitt's government, passed by Pitt's Parliament and readily assented to by George III, meant specifically to imprison or hang the leaders and organizers of the protest movement developed and led by the London Corresponding Society. This movement, intended solely to agitate for reform of the corrupt and undemocratic system of Parliamentary representation and the arrogant and arbitrary exercise of power by the King, Lords and Prime Minister, raised popular meetings as large as sixty thousand before Pitt's government banned them and forced the Society's lawful and public activities underground. The greatest threat against England, however, was undoubtedly her King, whose household and offspring wasted huge sums of the public wealth, and her government, who floated vast loans ostensibly to support the war which benefited primarily themselves and their friends and which came near to wrecking the national treasury and economy, who speeded the enclosure of anciently held common lands for the private benefit of King and Lords, and who heavily taxed the purchase of common staple goods while excusing the great landlords from any but the most trifling taxes.³ The "bloody code" of retributive laws, under which some 350

³ "Most of the 558 seats in Parliament were filled by nominees of landowners and the members were elected by a handful of property owners. In Bath, a city of 25,000 people who loved to talk politics, there were only thirty-one enfranchised voters. . . . Only selected property owners were enfranchised in England. The rest were told that they could not vote because they paid no taxes. But the rest paid nearly all the national revenue through purchase taxes on boots, candles, soap, salt, sugar, coffee, beer, bricks, tobacco, tea, rum, newspapers and window-panes. In *Rights of Man* Tom Paine pointed out that the tax upon beer brewed for sale 'is nearly equal to the whole of the land-tax.' A labourer earning eighteen pounds a year paid ten pounds in taxes on his necessities. Not a farthing of state revenue was returned in national benefits such as highways, medicine, poor relief or education. It all went to the army, navy, Church and Crown" (James Dugan, *The Great Mutiny* [London: Andre Deutsch, 1966]: 85). This book gives a brilliant account of the national historical

offences were punishable by death, preyed upon a restive and destitute common people in the name of punishing "licentiousness" (See Dugan, 15-16).

It was amid this state of affairs in England that the mutinies in the ships first at Spithead and then at the Nore were raised. Only a blindly reactionary authority, however, could regard these risings as sprung from insurrectionary intent. They were more properly strikes, or as we say today, "job actions," motivated by specific grievances and with specific, wholly peaceable aims. They disclaimed any hostile intent toward England, the crown or their officers; they repudiated any Jacobinical revolutionary aspirations, and so far were they from aiding the French Directory that they avowedly stood ready to suspend their strike and obey their officers if enemy ships should be reported sailing for England.⁴ The sailors at Spithead refused only to obey orders to weigh anchor and resume their patrol of the Channel.

Their claims were modest, responding to long-standing, systemic abuses: they wanted a rise of wages for petty officers, able seamen, ordinary seamen and marines amounting to no more than six shillings a month—the first such rise since the time of Charles the First. They wanted back wages to be paid, since the Admiralty routinely withheld payrolls while ships were in harbour and many sailors had not received what was owed them in years; their families ashore were thus often

background and occasion as well as the events of the mutinies at Spithead and the Nore.

⁴ E.P. Thompson finds cause for inferring that Jacobins did have some influence in the mutinies: "But the greatest revolutionary portents for England were the naval mutinies at Spithead and the Nore in April and May 1797. There is no doubt that appalling conditions of food, pay and discipline precipitated the mutinies, but there is also some evidence of direct Jacobin instigation. . . ."

These great mutinies, and the Irish rebellion of the following year, were indeed events of world-wide significance, and they show how precarious was the hold of the English *ancien régime*. For the British fleet—the most important instrument of European expansion, and the only shield between revolutionary France and her greatest rival—to proclaim that "the Age of Reason has at length revolved," was to threaten to subvert the whole edifice of world power. It is foolish to argue that, because the majority of sailors had few clear political notions, this was a parochial affair of ship's biscuits and arrears of pay, and not a revolutionary movement. This is to mistake the nature of popular revolutionary crises, which arise from exactly this kind of conjunction between the grievances of the majority and the aspirations articulated by the politically-conscious minority" (*The Making of the English Working Class* [New York: Pantheon Books, 1963]: 167, 168). In this view Thompson agrees with Melville, although from the opposite end of the political spectrum.

made indigent.⁵ They asked that the wounded and sick aboard ship be better attended to, and that medical provisions “be not on any account embezzled,” as many ships’ surgeons and surgeons’ stewards were known to do (Dugan, 103). They wanted food provisions to be weighed according to the full English measure, sixteen ounces to the pound and of the quality prescribed by the naval regulations first set forth in the seventeenth century and still in effect—provisioners, many of them in the pay of the lords, were entitled by “usage” to retain two ounces of every pound, and many ships’ pursers regarded their appointments as licences to steal from the provisions for their own profit. They wanted the flour which was usually used to make up the missing measure in a ration of meat to be replaced by vegetables when ships were in harbour. At this period, the standard fare aboard a British man-of-war was salt beef or pork, sometimes years old, biscuits full of worms, adulterated and rotten cheese, water long stored in casks in ships’ holds, teeming with biota and laced with rum—the famous “ration of grog.” A ration of lemon juice, preserved with fish oil, had only been regularly provided against scurvy, which yet was common, since 1795.⁶

The sailors wanted the grievances of ships’ companies against certain officers to be treated seriously; they wanted officers notorious for their cruelty, their resort to flogging and other tortures for petty infractions, officers who had had men flogged to death, to be removed from some ships. And they presented these demands in respectful, modestly worded petitions to the Admiralty. They stood mute on the question of “impressment”—the forced kidnap of men on land and at sea to supply a war-weary navy whose ships’ companies had been reduced by battle casualty, accident, sickness, and brutal treatment at the hands of their officers.

Modern historians marvel at the sobriety, restraint and self-government of the “mutineers,” particularly at Spithead but also, with some telling exceptions, at the Nore. James Dugan has words of high praise for the organizers of the Spithead action, who called themselves “delegates:”

⁵ “The navy pay office estimated that at the end of 1796 the total arrears owed to the seamen amounted to £1,408,720 7s 11d” (Dugan, 33).

⁶ See Dugan, 56-57, and G.E. Manwaring and Bonamy Dobrée, *The Floating Republic* (1935; rept. New York: A.M. Kelley, 1966): 44-45.

With increasing confidence the ships' companies elected 'speakers' who were to transform ship democracy to a fleet republic. In a handful of days British naval peasantry traversed political ground that the nation had not crossed in a millennium. The all-fleet committee had no inspiration from the national Parliament or other legal organization in Britain; it derived its laws and precedents from the United States Congress, the French Assembly, the Irish underground, and the forbidden British reform societies. The thing was unbelievable.

The Georgian plutocrats had invented a character for the British sailor—mentally inferior, simple, jolly and loyal. He was by nature lazy, so the boatswain's mate used a knout to send him up the shrouds. He was improvident; therefore pay only indulged his weakness. He was a drunkard, so he must not be allowed ashore. He was a child who looked to the captain and the admiral as his father. It was precisely the myth that the Southern white in the United States attached to Negro slaves. The mutiny—with its skilful planning, determination and discipline—wrecked the jolly jack tar mystique. It was hard for most officers to believe in the new man who had come so unexpectedly on deck. It was hard for some of the men, too. (Dugan, 90)

With remarkable discipline, intelligence, and self-restraint the men at Spithead withstood the fury, the insults, the contempt and the deceptive blandishments of Earl Spencer and the other Lords of the Admiralty; they succeeded in winning a pay increase, insisted that it not be made in the form of a promise from the Admiralty but be passed in Parliament; they also insisted on and won a full pardon from the King for all the men involved; they would not settle for a verbal promise from Admiralty representatives, for they were aware that promises had been made and broken before and that men had relented and been hanged on the strength of promises. It should be said as well that their cause was aided, or at least not obstructed, by the good offices of a few of their superiors, such as Fleet Admiral Lord Bridport, who attempted to reason with the Lords of the Admiralty as well as the Delegates of the fleet, always with a view to avoiding a bloody confrontation, or the fell invocation of the Articles of War: "The men . . . were keenly aware that they had violated more than half of

the thirty-six articles of war. Twenty-one of the articles provided the death penalty" (Dugan, 99).

The men at the Nore, headquarters of the North Sea fleet, were not so prudent or so fortunate as the men at Spithead. The action at Spithead had been in planning as early as February, 1797; it had begun as letters of petition addressed to the fleet commander and hero, just retired, Lord Richard Howe, and only took a mutinous aspect when it became clear after several weeks that either Howe or the Admiralty had no intention of acting on the letters; it lasted from Easter to May 12, when the men of the fleet accepted the Admiralty's concessions on their demands as soon as the guarantee of their passage into law and of the King's pardon was certain; they immediately returned to duty under their officers. The revolt at the Nore began only as the events at Spithead were concluding. It had also been brewing for months, but in a much less organized fashion than at Spithead, the sailors' discontent showing itself in numerous individual petitions to redress particular grievances on certain ships. With news of the action and its success at Spithead, the sailors stopped ordinary duties on ship after ship; they elected delegates to a grand meeting on the fleet command ship, *H.M.S. Sandwich*, circulated an oath of allegiance to the cause and aims of the mutiny, and elected a "President of the Fleet," Richard Parker, a thirty-year-old ex-school teacher and former navy midshipman and lieutenant who had been court-martialled for insubordination. He had recently removed from debtors' prison and returned to the navy for an inducement of thirty pounds; he had been shipped aboard the aging, overcrowded hulk, the *Sandwich*. As President of the striking sailors, Parker proved an able speaker but an indecisive leader; well into the action it became clear that men of the fleet would show no special adherence to his wishes or orders. Parker insisted on behaving as a President, while many ships in the fleet followed their own designs.

The Admiralty were even less disposed toward granting concessions to the grievances of the sailors at the Nore than they had been at Spithead, although the petitions put forward by the Nore mutineers were as moderate and respectfully put as those had been at Spithead—one of their demands was that men impressed into the navy by force during a voyage might be made a two months' advance on wages so that they might be able to purchase "necessaries." But the Admiralty refused to treat with the new strikers, and ordered the Fleet commander, Admiral Buckner, to give them an ultimatum: to return to

duty immediately while there was still the possibility of pardon, or to face being put down by force, as well as summary court-martial and execution for “ringleaders.”

Pitt suspected the hand of the London Corresponding Society in the mutinies and ordered a closer watch on its members’ activities; members of the Society were tried for sedition, and among the charges and insinuations trumped up against them was that LCS members had met with and encouraged mutineers at Portsmouth and the Nore. But there is little direct evidence of the Society’s influence over the actions of the sailors at Spithead or the Nore.⁷ Many sailors had, however, read Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man*, and were inspired by a new recognition of their own self-worth; and the grievances which motivated them were real enough.

Things went badly for the men of the Nore, however; they were less disciplined than the sailors at Spithead, partially because the fleet command was less well organized. Daily parades ashore in Sheerness, together with an outward show of rebelliousness—the impetuous hauling down of the fleet commander’s flag and the running up of the red ensign, for instance, as well as the occasional shots of defiance against the fort at Sheerness or ships unwilling to take part in the mutiny—caused many people on shore to resent and fear the strikers.⁸ Government-backed newspapers increased the public’s apprehension, printing rumours and surmises that the Nore fleet, under the “anarchist admiral Parker,” intended to sail up the Thames and make an assault on His Majesty’s representatives and institutions, or to go

⁷ See, however, Thompson: “There were Corresponding Society members among the mutineers; Richard Parker himself, the unwilling “Admiral” of the “Floating Republic” of the Nore, exemplifies the rôle of educated “quota-men” who brought into the fleet the language of *Rights of Man* and some experience of committee organisation. . . . But at the same time the attitude adopted by the L.C.S. towards the mutinies remains problematical. There is evidence that sailors attended Jacobin meetings at Chatham and Portsmouth, and that individual L.C.S. members made contact with the ships’ delegates and even harangued groups of mutineers. A shadowy “gentleman in black” is supposed to have been in contact with Parker and his fellows; and this may have been Dr. Watson who was certainly at this time working for a French invasion, but who (according to a later deposition) was disowned by the L.C.S.” (167, 168).

⁸ Thompson remarks on this volatility of the Nore mutineers: “. . . for a critical week, when the Thames was blockaded, there was talk among the mutineers of removing the fleet to France (where indeed several ships, in desperation, finally sailed). What is remarkable about the conduct of the sailors is neither their “fundamental loyalty” nor their Jacobinism but the “wild and extravagant nature” of their changes in mood. It was this volatility against which Richard Parker, in a dying testament, warned his friends” (167). See Parker’s warning, quoted in his letter, below.

over to the side of France. At the very least, the idleness of the fleet in the face of threats of invasion from France and Holland caused English fear and resentment to boil into rage at the traitors in the North Sea fleet (it mattered little the avowals of the striking sailors that they would obey their officers the instant news of enemy movement toward Britain might arrive).

The action at the Nore ended badly. Provisions including food and water were withheld by Admiralty order and a state of siege settled in. Desperation with the Admiralty's adamant refusal to negotiate as well as hunger and thirst drove the mutineers to blockade the Thames, stopping vessels and confiscating food, water and other supplies. This action had the effect of turning British merchants against them; a gathering of merchants in Sheerness proposed a prize for volunteers who would sail against the strikers, as well as a bounty of £100 on Richard Parker's head. Fleet solidarity dissolved as the strike wore on; crews wrangled amongst themselves, and were less and less disposed to listen to Parker's pleas for unity. Ships deserted the cause and sailed away, and then more ships did so, returning control to their officers. His Majesty's army were garrisoned in large numbers at the fort at Sheerness, preparing to batter the fleet into submission if need be. Eventually the mutineers surrendered. Parker gave himself up. At his courtmartial he protested that the fleet Presidency had been thrust on him and that he had never acted with insurrectionary intent or to aid England's enemies. He defended himself ably, but was convicted and sentenced to death. Parker responded to the sentence:

My Lords, I shall submit to your sentence with all due submission, being confident from the clearness of my conscience that God who knows the hearts of all people will favourably receive me. I most sincerely hope that my death may atone to the country and that all the rest of the fleet may be pardoned and restored to their former situations. I am convinced they will return to their duty with steadiness and alacrity. (Quoted in Dugan, 354)

The Court-Martial and the Admiralty were deaf to Parker's plea for clemency to the other mutineers. "Courts sat for weeks, during which over four hundred men were tried, of whom fifty-nine were condemned to death, though only twenty-nine were actually executed

. . . Nine were ordered to be flogged, while twenty-nine were condemned to various terms of imprisonment. . . " (Manwaring and Dobrée, 242). Parker was hanged on the morning of 30 June, 1797. Before he died, he wrote the following letter to a friend. The letter was intercepted by the Admiralty:

The only comfortable reflection that I at present enjoy, is that I am to die a Martyr to the cause of humanity. I know the multitude think hard things of me, but this gives me no uneasiness, for my conscience testifies that the part I acted among the seamen has been right, although not to be justified by prudence.

Yes, prudence urges *that I ought to have known mankind better* than blindfold to have plunged into certain destruction. Long since I had learnt that the miseries under which the lower classes groan are imputable in great measure to their ignorance, cowardice, and duplicity. . . . [But] how could I indifferently stand by, and behold some of the best of my fellow creatures cruelly treated by some of the worse.

Upon the word of a dying man, I solemnly declare that I was not an original mover of the disturbances among those men, who have treated me so very ungratefully. Also, that I was elected by my Shipmates their Delegate without my knowledge, and in the same manner by the Delegates their President. I was compelled to accept those situations much against my inclinations by those who pushed me into them. . . . I further declare that from the aggregate body originated every plan, and that during the time the Delegates held their perilous situations, they always acted pursuant to, and obeyed the instructions of their constituents. . . . The only instances in which the Delegates acted of themselves were in those of checking the violence and turpitude of their masters [i.e., the ordinary seamen], and this God knows we had hard work to do, but considering all circumstances, those who know anything of sailors will readily allow that we preserved much better order than could reasonably have been expected upon such an occasion. For not according with the preposterous ideas of the seamen, I and many more must suffer death.

Owing to the Delegates moderation, they have been overcome, and for my own part I cheerfully forgive the

vanquishers the bloody use they intend to make of their victory; perhaps it is policy in them to do it.

At the pressing applications of my brother shipmates, I suffered humanity to surmount reason I am the devoted scapegoat for the sins of many, and henceforth when the oppressed groan under the stripes of the oppressors, let my example deter any man from risking himself as the victim to ameliorate their wretchedness Remember never to make yourself the busybody of the lower classes, for they are cowardly, selfish and ungrateful; the least trifle will intimidate them, and him whom they have exalted one moment as their Demagogue, the next they will not scruple to exalt upon the gallows.

It is my opinion that if Government had not been too hasty the Portsmouth Mutiny would have been as readily overcome as that at Sheerness. A very trifling forbearance on their part would have occasioned the Portsmouth Delegates to have been delivered up like those at Sheerness The Mutineers have been accused of disloyalty, but it is a false accusation. They were only so to their ill-fated tools, the Delegates.

I have reason to think the Civil Power would have acquitted me, but, by the Articles of War, my destruction was irremediable, and of this Government was well aware, or I should not have been tried by a Court Martial. By the Laws of War I acknowledge myself to be legally convicted, but by the Laws of Humanity, which should be the basis of all laws, I die illegally (Quoted in Dugan, 355-356)

The sailors at the Nore who were not punished returned to their duties, and the North Sea fleet went out to meet the enemy (who had, thanks to bad weather, delays in provisioning, intra-service jealousies, and wrangling for power within the French Directory, lost the opportunity occasioned by the month-long strike at Spithead and the six weeks at the Nore to forward an invasion of Ireland). The gains made by the men at Spithead were small, and overshadowed by the disaster at the Nore. But as Manwaring and Dobrée write, these events contributed permanently to the rectification of abuses:

The events of 1797 aroused the public. "There is perhaps no event in the annals of our history," Marryat wrote, in 1830,

"which excited more alarm at the time of its occurrence, or has since been the subject of more general interest, than the mutiny at the Nore in the year 1797." The people of England, terrified by the event, began to ask themselves why it was that the Navy, of which they were so proud, and which was their main safeguard, had mutinied in time of war, had laid them open to the attacks of their enemies, and even itself threatened them. [Lord] Arden had not been wrong in referring to the situation as "the most awful crisis that these kingdoms ever saw." The enquiries the public made gave them a horrid glimpse of the life at sea, and roused opinion in the men's favour. It came to be seen that for nearly a hundred and fifty years the conditions in the Navy had not materially altered, although they had improved in every other walk of life—except perhaps where the factories were beginning to take their grisly toll. . . . It was not until the mutiny at Spithead wrung a few concessions from the Government that the eyes of the public were unsealed to what the seamen had to endure in the service of the nation.

Thus, it is universally agreed, the year 1797 opens a new era in the organisation of the Royal Navy, or at least marks a turning point in its history. From that time, little by little, the sailor was to receive consideration and more humane treatment.⁹

Melville was aware of the good which flowed from the mutinies at Spithead and the Nore. In a leaf which he apparently set aside from the manuscript but which both Raymond Weaver and F. Barron Freeman, the first two important editors of the text, mistook, by virtue of a marginal note in Elizabeth Melville's hand, to be intended for a preface to *Billy Budd*, and printed as such, Melville wrote:

⁹ Manwaring and Dobrée, 257. The authors sketch a chronicle of improvements: 1806, an increase in pay for able seamen up to a shilling a week; 1833, sick-berth ratings; 1835, "an Act which ruled that no person should be detained in the naval service against his will for more than five years;" in the same year, a register of seamen, "which seems to mark the fading out of the old system of impressment, which was never actually abolished by Act of Parliament;" 1857, the establishment of a savings bank for seamen and marines; 1860, institution of the Naval Discipline Act and the repeal of the Articles of War; 1866, an Act which "limited the number of lashes a man might receive to forty-eight;" 1879, "the practical abolition of flogging" as a punishment (257-258).

The year 1797, the year of this narrative, belongs to a period which as every thinker now feels, involved a crisis for Christendom not exceeded in its undetermined momentousness at the time by any other recorded event

Now as elsewhere hinted, it was something caught from the Revolutionary Spirit that at Spithead emboldened the man-of-war's men to rise against real abuses, long-standing ones, and afterwards at the Nore to make inordinate and aggressive demands, successful resistance to which was confirmed only when the ringleaders were hung for an admonitory spectacle to the anchored fleet. Yet in a way analagous to the operation of the Revolution at large the Great Mutiny, tho' by Englishmen naturally deemed monstrous at the time, doubtless gave the first latent prompting to most important reforms in the British navy.¹⁰

Melville's writing this text, and then removing it from the body of *Billy Budd* (an act emulated by succeeding editors of the text) indicates a profound ambivalence in his view of the mutinies at Spithead and the Nore—an ambivalence much like that he felt towards the Spirit of Revolution itself. He hated and feared such uprisings and the excesses, injustices and cruelties which he regarded as springing from them, yet by virtue of his own naval experience he was able to recognize, as very few other writers in the nineteenth century could, the abuses and inequities which provoked them, and he understood the positive goods which they initiated.

The Great Mutiny broods like a heavy thunderhead over the whole of *Billy Budd*. There is an uneasy tension in the very language of the narration. The first glimpse of the battleship *HMS Bellipotent* is as she accosts the homeward bound merchant vessel *Rights of Man* in the "Narrow Seas," that is, in the English Channel. *Bellipotent* is outward bound from a British naval roadstead; Melville doesn't say which: it might be Spithead, or it might be the Nore. It is summer, 1797; the

¹⁰ Hayford and Sealts, p. 378. Melville's emendations here are most interesting: for "something caught from the Revolutionary Spirit" Melville originally wrote "a contagion from the Revolutionary Spirit;" for "at Spithead emboldened the man-of-war's men to rise," Melville originally wrote, "at the Nore inspired the sailors of the British fleet in the first place. . . ." And where Melville finally wrote, "the Great Mutiny, tho' naturally deemed," he first wrote, "the Nore Mutiny, tho' naturally deemed"

mutiny at the Nore has just been put down; it is a fresh wound in the memories of the ship's company. One may conjecture that Billy Budd is impressed into the service of the *Bellipotent* because the mutiny, as well as the navy's continuing want of able hands, has reduced the complement of men.

When, after the *Bellipotent's* unsuccessful chase of a French frigate, Claggart confronts Captain Vere with his false accusation of Billy as a mutineer, he reminds him in his fawning-insolent way so repellent to the Captain that the great mutiny is still very fresh in everyone's mind:

. . . he [Claggart] had seen enough to convince him that at least one sailor aboard was a dangerous character in a ship mustering some who not only had taken a guilty part in the late serious troubles, but others who, like the man in question, had entered His Majesty's service under another form than enlistment.

At this point Captain Vere with some impatience interrupted him: "Be direct, man; say *impressed men*."

. . . . He [Claggart] deeply felt, he added, the serious responsibility assumed in making a report involving such possible consequences to the individual mainly concerned, besides tending to augment those natural anxieties which every naval commander must feel in view of extraordinary outbreaks so recent as those which, he sorrowfully said it, it needed not to name.

Now at the first broaching of the matter Captain Vere, taken by surprise, could not wholly dissemble his disquietude. But as Claggart went on, the former's aspect changed into restiveness under something in the testifier's manner in giving his testimony. However, he refrained from interrupting him. And Claggart, continuing, concluded with this: "God forbid, your honor, that the *Bellipotent's* should be the experience of the
"

"Never mind that!" here peremptorily broke in the superior, his face altering with anger, instinctively divining the ship that the other was about to name, one in which the Nore Mutiny had assumed a singularly tragical character that for a time jeopardized the life of its commander. Under the circumstances he was indignant at the purposed allusion. When the commissioned officers themselves were on all occasions very

heedful how they referred to the recent events in the fleet, for a petty officer unnecessarily to allude to them in the presence of his captain, this struck him as a most immodest presumption. Besides, to his quick sense of self-respect it even looked under the circumstances something like an attempt to alarm him. Nor at first was he without some surprise that one who so far as he had hitherto come under his notice had shown considerable tact in his function should in this particular evince such lack of it. (Lfs 196-201)

Melville's acknowledged source for his understanding of the events at Spithead and the Nore is William James, *The Naval History of Great Britain from the Declaration of War by France in 1793 to the Accession of George IV* (6 vols.; London, 1860). Melville paraphrases James's reluctance to go into too great detail about the mutinies:

Such an episode in the Island's grand naval story her naval historians naturally abridge, one of them (William James) candidly acknowledging that fain would he pass it over did not "impartiality forbid fastidiousness" (Lfs 53-54).

James's words here are telling:

. . . . The captains and officers of the different ships were astonished, nay, almost astounded, at this sudden act of disobedience, and, as may be supposed, did their utmost to persuade the men to return to their duty; but all their efforts were vain. The spirit of mutiny had taken deep root in the breasts of the seamen, and, from the apparent organization of the plan, seemed to be the result of far more reflection than for which the wayward mind of a jack-tar is usually given credit. The subject is a melancholy one, and one which we would fain pass over; but historical impartiality forbids any such fastidiousness. At the same time, the subject not being an international one, nor one of which the details have acquired any permanent interest, we may, consistently with our plan, abridge the account. (James, II, 26)

Melville was himself, of course, well-enough acquainted with “jack-tars” to know that some or many were not so “wayward-minded” as to be incapable of considerable reflection on their own situations: he himself had jumped ship as a young sailor from the American whaler *Acushnet* at Nukahiva in the Marquesas, summer, 1842, his experiences on that island later being spun into his first book, *Typee* (1846); and he had been among the “mutineers” who had refused duty under a drunken first mate on the Australian whaler *Lucy Ann*, late September 1842, off Tahiti; he had been interned there along with fellow “conspirators” in the “Calabooza Beretanee” or British jail, a comic-opera hoosegow which Melville and his friends spent more time out of than in. He recorded this “mutiny” in his second book, *Omoo*.¹¹ More pertinently here, perhaps, Melville’s first-person narrator in *White Jacket* (1849), the fictional account of his service aboard the American naval vessel *U.S.S. United States*, describes in great detail the practice of flogging aboard a man-of-war; in Chapter 36, “Flogging Not Necessary,” he shows how the wisest and ablest commanders have governed their ships without resorting to the lash:

It is well known that Lord Nelson himself, in point of policy, was averse to flogging; and that, too, when he had witnessed the mutinous effects of government abuses in the navy—unknown in our times—and which, to the terror of all England, developed themselves at the great mutiny of the Nore: an outbreak that for several weeks jeopardized the very existence of the British navy.¹²

“White-Jacket” recounts the story of old John Ushant, who stoutly resists the captain’s manic order to shave off his beard, suffering a vicious flogging and confinement rather than submitting to the humiliation; and he tells how some of the men prefer mutiny to compliance with this same order to cut their hair and shave their beards:

¹¹ See Hershel Parker, *Herman Melville: A Biography*, Vol. I, 1819-1851 (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996): 208-230, for an interesting account of these two adventures. (Parker notes here that one of the sailors named with Melville as a mutineer on the *Lucy Ann* was a Charles Watts.)

¹² Herman Melville, *White-Jacket; or, The World in a Man-of-War. The Writings of Herman Melville*, Vol. 5 (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press & The Newberry Library, 1970): 148-149.

The affair had now assumed a most serious aspect. The Captain was in earnest. The excitement increased ten-fold; and a great many of the older seamen, exasperated to the uttermost, talked about *knocking off duty* till the obnoxious mandate was revoked. I thought it impossible that they would seriously think of such a folly; but there is no knowing what man-of-war's-men will sometimes do, under provocation—witness Parker and the Nore. (358)

The men do put a mutiny in motion during the night, but are happily dissuaded by Mad Jack, a favourite among the men on the ship, and the mutiny is stopped peacefully.

Captain Claret happened to be taking a nap in his cabin at the moment of the disturbance; and it was quelled so soon, that he knew nothing of it till it was officially reported to him. It was afterward rumored through the ship that he reprimanded Mad Jack for acting as he did. He maintained that he should at once have summoned the marines, and charged upon the "mutineers." But if the sayings imputed to the Captain were true, he nevertheless refrained from subsequently noticing the disturbance, or attempting to seek out and punish the ringleaders. This was but wise; for there are times when even the most potent governor must wink at transgression, in order to preserve the laws inviolate for the future. And great care is to be taken, by timely management, to avert an incontestable act of mutiny, and so prevent men from being roused, by their own consciousness of transgression, into all the fury of an unbounded insurrection. *Then*, for the time, both soldiers and sailors are irresistible; as even the valor of Caesar was made to know, and the prudence of Germanicus, when their legions rebelled. And not all the concessions of Earl Spencer, as First Lord of the Admiralty, nor the threats and entreaties of Lord Bridport, the Admiral of the Fleet—no, nor his gracious majesty's plenary pardon in prospective, could prevail upon the Spithead mutineers (when at last fairly lashed up to the mark) to succumb,

until deserted by their own mess-mates, and a handful was left in the breach.¹³

“White-Jacket” confesses his fear and disgust at the prospect of himself being flogged for some minor infraction of duty; and in Chapter 67 he tells how, when he was erroneously charged with such an infraction and is summoned to the masthead to be whipped, he wildly resolved to lunge at the captain and knock both the captain and himself overboard rather than submit to flogging:

. . . . I stood a little to windward of him, and, though he was a large, powerful man, it was certain that a sudden rush against him, along the slanting deck, would infallibly pitch him headforemost into the ocean, though he who so rushed must needs go over with him. My blood seemed clotting in my veins; I felt icy cold at the tips of my

¹³ 358-359. Melville here conflates events of the Spithead and Nore mutinies: the Spithead sailors generally maintained their determined solidarity and their peaceableness, although they were provoked to the uttermost by the government’s duplicity in promising speedy action on the wage issue and then holding it up for an unconscionable two weeks in the Privy Council. When the government’s temporizing delay (which, it protested, was simply normal practice with money bills) was discovered, the mutineers’ delegates suspected it as a ploy to gain time while the strikers returned to their duties expecting government promises to be fulfilled and ships’ officers regained the upper hand. The men’s sense of betrayal hardened their positions; they redoubled efforts to maintain strike discipline and to eject unwanted officers. This belief that a betrayal was afoot, as well as an Admiralty directive to fleet commanders to strenuously repress mutinous behaviour, led to a confrontation between sailors and officers on the ship *London*, which resulted in the deaths of five or more seamen and officers, the near-lynching of a first lieutenant, and a mutineers’ court-martial of two ships’ officers and Admiral Colpoys, whose lives were likely spared only with the news of the Parliament’s passage of the seamen’s wage bill. The men of Spithead maintained their solidarity and calm at the gravest moment of the mutiny, and finally won both concessions from Spencer and the King’s pardon. The action at the Nore collapsed in the face of government’s stony refusal to treat with the strikers and of mounting public resistance; it was at the Nore that the sailors’ solidarity and determination succumbed to “desertions by mess-mates.” See Manwaring and Dobree, 69-97; 121-233; Dugan, 115-172; 176-333.

It is perhaps the skirmish on the *London* which Melville has in mind when, during the interview between Claggart and Captain Vere, he refers to “the ship . . . in which the Nore Mutiny had assumed a singularly tragical character that for a time jeopardized the life of its commander.” If so, again Melville is confusing events at Spithead with those at the Nore; although the Nore saw many desperate actions, I have found nothing in the accounts of the Nore so desperate as the *London* affair at Spithead.

fingers, and a dimness was before my eyes. But through that dimness the boatswain's mate, scourge in hand, loomed like a giant, and Captain Claret, and the blue sea seen through the opening at the gangway, showed with an awful vividness. I can not analyze my heart, though it then stood still within me. But the thing that swayed me to my purpose was not altogether the thought that Captain Claret was about to degrade me, and that I had taken an oath with my soul that he should not. No, I felt my man's manhood so bottomless within me, that no word, no blow, no scourge of Captain Claret could cut me deep enough for that. I but swung to an instinct in me—the instinct diffused through all animated nature, the same that prompts even a worm to turn under the heel. Locking souls with him, I meant to drag Captain Claret from this earthly tribunal of his to that of Jehovah, and let Him decide between us. No other way could I escape the scourge.

Nature has not implanted any power in man that was not meant to be exercised at times, though too often our powers have been abused. The privilege, inborn and inalienable, that every man has, of dying himself, and inflicting death upon another, was not given to us without a purpose. These are the last resources of an insulted and unendurable existence. (280)

He is saved from such desperate action by the intervention of two of the most respected men on the ship, who testify that he would not shirk his duty, and the captain releases him. But the impulse and the intent of the young Melville are clearly recorded.

Is this the same Melville who, forty years later, could write:

Though after parleyings between government and the ringleaders, and concessions by the former as to some glaring abuses, the first uprising—that at Spithead—with difficulty was put down, or matters for the time pacified; yet at the Nore the unforeseen renewal of insurrection on a yet larger scale, and emphasized in the conferences that ensued by demands deemed by the authorities not only inadmissible but aggressively insolent, indicated—if the Red Flag did not sufficiently do so—what was the spirit

animating the men. Final suppression, however, there was; but only made possible perhaps by the unswerving loyalty of the marine corps and a voluntary resumption of loyalty among influential sections of the crews.

To some extent the Nore Mutiny may be regarded as analogous to the distempering irruption of contagious fever in a frame constitutionally sound, and which anon throws it off. (*Billy Budd*, lfs 55-57)

Here Melville, the American sailor-democrat, seems to speak with the voice of a monarchist. And indeed, if Melville has taken his history principally from the account of William James, whose silence on the Pitt government's hand in provoking and exacerbating the disturbances is only matched by his gentlemanly condemnation of the mutinies as outrages against the nation, then we might be forced to conclude that Melville had in late life become, like his source, an unalloyed reactionary. But Melville admits that his source's information is sketchy, and advances a conjecture on it:

Such an episode in the Island's grand naval story her naval historians naturally abridge, one of them (William James) candidly acknowledging that fain would he pass it over did not "impartiality forbid fastidiousness." And yet his mention is less a narration than a reference, having to do hardly at all with details. Nor are these readily to be found in the libraries. Like some other events in every age befalling states everywhere, including America, the Great Mutiny was of such character that national pride along with views of policy would fain shade it off into the historical background. Such events cannot be ignored, but there is a considerate way of historically treating them. If a well-constituted individual refrains from blazoning aught amiss or calamitous in his family, a nation in the like circumstance may without reproach be equally discreet. (Lfs 53-54)

This meditation may contain an intimation of the source of Melville's information: he compares the historian of civil strife such as the Great Mutiny with "a well-constituted individual" who refrains from disclosing family strife, calamity or disaster. For Melville, the civil order is simply

the order of the body or of the family projected large: a distemper in the one is like a distemper in the other. This organicist analogy for civil disturbance was perhaps called up forceably by Melville's consciousness of some distemper within his own family.¹⁴ Once before he had made such a comparison, but in that instance the civil particular was compared to the world at large. In the last chapter of *White-Jacket*, the narrator orates:

As a man-of-war that sails through the sea, so this earth that sails through the air. We mortals are all on board a fast-sailing, never-sinking world-frigate, of which God was the ship-wright; and she is but one craft in a Milky-Way fleet, of which God is the Lord High Admiral. The port we sail from is forever astern. And though far out of sight of land, for ages and ages we continue to sail with sealed orders, and our last destination remains a secret to ourselves and our officers; yet our final haven was predestinated ere we slipped from the stocks at Creation.

Thus sailing with sealed orders, we ourselves are the repositories of the secret packet, whose mysterious contents we long to learn. There are no mysteries out of ourselves. (398)

Melville goes on to extend the metaphor, comparing the world with virtually every aspect of ship-board life. He says:

Oppressed by illiberal laws, and partly oppressed by themselves, many of our people are wicked, unhappy, inefficient. We have skulkers and idlers all round, and brow-beaten waisters, who, for a pittance, do our craft's shabby work. Nevertheless, among our people we have

¹⁴ See, for example, Laurie Robertson-Lorant, *Melville: a Biography* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1996), and Elizabeth Renker, *Strike Through the Mask: Herman Melville and the Scene of Writing* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), for accounts and interpretations of Melville's uneasy and sometimes harrowing relations with his mother, his wife and his children. Melville was thought by some of his inlaws to be at times "unhinged," just as Captain Vere's reaction to Billy Budd's fatal blow against Claggart causes his more prosaic colleagues, such as the ship's surgeon, to question his sanity.

gallant fore, main, and mizen top-men aloft, who, well treated or ill, still trim our craft to the blast.

We have a *brig* for trespassers; a bar by our main-mast, at which they are arraigned; a cat-o'-nine-tails and a gangway, to degrade them in their own eyes and in ours. These are not always employed to convert Sin to Virtue, but to divide them, and protect Virtue and legalized Sin from unlegalized Vice.

We have a Sick-bay for the smitten and helpless, whither we hurry them out of sight, and, however they may groan beneath hatches, we hear little of their tribulations on deck; we still sport our gay streamer aloft. Outwardly regarded, our craft is a lie; for all that is outwardly seen of it is the clean-swept deck, and oft-painted planks comprised above the water-line; whereas, the vast mass of our fabric, with all its store-room of secrets, forever slides along far under the surface.

When a shipmate dies, straightway we sew him up, and overboard he goes; our world-frigate rushes by, and never more do we behold him again; though, sooner or later, the everlasting under-tow sweeps him toward our own destination.

. . . . and the Articles of War form our domineering code.

Oh, shipmates and world-mates, all round! we the people suffer many abuses. Our gun-deck is full of complaints. In vain from Lieutenants do we appeal to the Captain; in vain—while on board our world-frigate—to the indefinite Navy Commissioners, so far out of sight aloft. Yet the worst of our evils we blindly inflict upon ourselves; our officers can not remove them, even if they would. From the last ills no being can save another; therein each man must be his own saviour. For the rest, whatever befall us, let us never train our murderous guns inboard; let us not mutiny with bloody pikes in our hands. Our Lord High Admiral will yet interpose; and though long ages should elapse, and leave our wrongs unredressed, yet, shipmates and world-mates! let us never forget, that,

Whoever afflict us, whatever surround,

Life is a voyage that's homeward-bound! (399-400)

I take this to be an enunciation of Melville's deeply-founded creed, metaphysical, civil, and personal. It is a plea to fellow family-members as much as to fellow-citizens. It is addressed to his fellow Americans, particularly Southerners, who at that moment, 1849, were threatening the break with the Union which came twelve years later. In this light Melville came to regard the American Civil War or War Between the States as a Great Rebellion, a Great Mutiny. He dreaded it and when it came, he condemned it.

Melville commemorated the events of the civil war and his feelings which were occasioned by them in a book of poems, *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War*. In that volume he printed a poem which takes for its occasion the New York draft riots of summer, 1863, when many of the city's poorest men, many of them Irish immigrants, rose up against the Enrollment Act of 1863, by which the Union sought to draft large numbers of men into the decimated ranks of the Union Army. The most hated aspect of the Act was an exemption for anyone who could pay another to be drafted in his place, or who could pay a \$300 "commutation fee," "more than many a laborer could earn in a year."¹⁵ Without such an exemption, anyone selected would be compelled to serve or declared a deserter. Feelings of class resentment combined with hostility against blacks and fears that they would eventually take poor whites' jobs from them. The riots began on July 13, two days after the first names were selected in the draft.

After the initial protest, the spreading riot took on the characteristics of social and political rebellion. With little opposition other than the police force and an ineffective detachment of the new army Invalid Corps, the violence spread throughout the city. Now the rioters were largely laborers, their wives, and their children, and the enemy was no longer simply the selective service, but all of their oppressors, real and supposed. In parties ranging from perhaps a dozen to several hundred, rioters attacked symbols of repression . . . government offices, known Republicans, anyone in uniform, well-dressed "\$300 dollar

¹⁵ Stanton Garner, *The Civil War World of Herman Melville* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1993): 251. See Garner, 250-257, for a careful account of the events of the riots, as well as their political and social contexts and Melville's response to them.

men,” and blacks. They demanded gifts from individuals and shopkeepers as testaments of approval and they looted stores. They attempted to seize weapons from armories and depots, they tried to sever telegraph lines, they burned down the Colored Orphan Asylum, and, as their rage and, often, inebriation grew, they attacked, bloodied, and occasionally killed a perceived enemy. (Garner, 252)

The riots continued through the 13th and 14th, when Union troops arrived to reinforce the police; neighbourhoods organized to defend themselves against rioters, and fighting continued through the 16th, when the worst of it was over.

Melville responded to these events with his blank-verse poem, “The House-top: A Night Piece (July, 1863).” The poem’s voice is of one who, restless and unable to sleep in the sultry night air, comes to the house-top and hears and sees the signs of the riot:

. . . All is hushed near by.
Yet fitfully from far breaks a mixed surf
Of muffled sound, the Atheist roar of riot.
Yonder, where parching Sirius set in drought,
Balefully glares red Arson—there—and there.
The Town is taken by its rats—ship-rats
And rats of the wharves. All civil charms
And priestly spells which late held hearts in awe—
Fear-bound, subjected to a better sway
Than sway of self; these like a dream dissolve,
And man rebounds whole aeons back in nature.¹⁶

Following this remark on the devolution of men in riot, the speaker salutes the (literally) draconian force of arms and artillery now putting down the disturbance, the constellation Draco now overwhelming the dog-star, Sirius above the roofs of New York:

Hail to the low dull rumble, dull and dead,
And ponderous drag that jars the wall.

¹⁶ *Collected Poems of Herman Melville*, ed. Howard P. Vincent (Chicago: Packard and Co. & Hendricks House, 1947): 57.

Wise Draco comes, deep in the midnight roll
Of black artillery; he comes, though late;
In code corroborating Calvin's creed
And cynic tyrannies of honest kings;

Here military force "corroborates" "Calvin's creed" of humankind's innate sinfulness and depravity, reinforcing the "cynic tyrannies of honest kings," certainly a paradox (if not an oxymoron) in Melville's lexicon. But the poem proposes a further paradox, whose republican or democratic (in the sense of belief, not of party) assertion doubles back to confront both Calvinist cynicism and a Town which, thankful for its deliverance, thinks not to reflect on the implications of rescue by the superior strength of the organized army of the State for the American belief in humankind's innate goodness, and in a free and independent citizenry able to defend itself:

He [Draco] comes, nor parlies; and the Town, redeemed,
Gives thanks devout; nor, being thankful, heeds
The grimy slur on the Republic's faith implied,
Which holds that Man is naturally good,
And—more—is Nature's Roman, never to be scourged.

Stanton Garner's reading of this poem is interesting: he regards the narrator as

one of the privileged who, free of the danger of conscription and thus at liberty to dine at Delmonico's without risking salt horse out of a mess kit, positions himself safely on the top of a building to mull on the distant riots and to deplore them, since they threaten both his property and the military system which both exempts him and carries out his will. The idea of observing one's fellow man from a height too exalted to permit an understanding of his yearnings and sufferings, the crucifixion in his face, was repugnant to Herman, as a certain kind of understanding of Plotinus Plinlimmon in *Pierre* and of Captain Vere in *Billy Budd* reveals. . . . Too distant to see [the rioters], the narrator characterizes them, a priori, as waterfront rabble. In contrast to Herman's own understanding of sailors, the Billy Budds,

the Queequegs, the Tommos, the Toby Greenes . . . and the Tom and Herman Melvilles, the narrator sees them as the jetsam of decent society, a debased class whose voice is "the Atheist roar of riot." Why do protests occur, why are there desertions and mutinies, overt and covert, in *Typee*, *Omoo*, *Mardi*, *Moby-Dick*, "Bartleby," "Benito Cereno," *Billy Budd*, and Herman's own experiences at sea? That question does not occur to the narrator. To him riots are caused by debased character, insubordination, a perverse refusal to live within the restraints imposed by "civil charms / And priestly spells," which were the manacles of feudal Europe. This Burkean but un-American idea continued to task Herman's imagination until, in *Billy Budd*, he made it the principle of government of Captain Vere. (Garner, 256-257)

The problem with Garner's reading is that the poem's narrator *could* very well be, and I believe, probably *is*, Melville himself. Although he wasn't actually in New York at the time of the riots (he was still living at his farm Arrowhead near Pittsfield, and would not move back to New York until November, 1863), he himself was exempt from army service due to his age; and although his personal wealth did not admit of privilege, his family and upbringing were of the well-to-do or aspiring merchant class, his paternal and maternal grandfathers were both Revolutionary heroes, American aristocrats; most importantly, though, from his own experience (as we have seen) he deplored and detested riot and mob violence.

Strangely, Garner chooses not to read the last nine lines of the poem: "Because the poem concerns two different (though related) events, only the first eighteen lines will be discussed here" (256). This seems to me an anomalous reading which mistakes the poem's structure, which does not "concern two different events" but is composed in three parts: the hushed and oppressive night-setting, the exposition of the "Atheist roar of riot," and the nine-line meditation on the meaning of "Draco" coming.

What the narrator shows is restiveness, fear and hatred of the forces unleashed by riot, and finally, ambivalence: relief at the Town's rescue by Draco, but misgiving and unease at the Town's unheeding embrace of "Calvin's creed" and "the cynic tyrannies of honest kings," which slurs the American belief in innate goodness and man's natural

nobility. This ambivalence is Melville's, one which he held throughout his adult life and literary career; and it is this ambivalence, this cynic conservatism striving with natural optimism and independence of mind, which animates the action of *Billy Budd*.

As Hayford and Sealts have shown, *Billy Budd, Sailor: An Inside Narrative* grew from a poem in ballad style, such as an ordinary sailor might have composed. This ballad eventually came to be "Billy in the Darbies," which Melville finally made the conclusion of the book (see Hayford and Sealts, 1-5, for an account of this early development). For the original ballad, Melville began a "headnote," a prose introduction to the poem, a usual practice with him; many of the poems in his late volume *John Marr and Other Sailors* (1888) have headnotes.

In the headnote as in the ballad leaves themselves Melville presented a sailor older than the Billy of the novel. Initially he was not a foretopman—the foretop being a station for the younger men, as the novel was to explain—but "Captain of a gun's crew," a post for a more mature man. In this substage the historical and national setting remain unspecified, but according to the headnote it is wartime, the warship is already a seventy-four, and Billy has been "summarily condemned at sea to be hung as the ringleader of an incipient mutiny the spread of which was apprehended." Whether he was in fact guilty, as seems clear in the ballad draft, the surviving leaf of the headnote does not actually state; in any case, his capital offense is different from what it later became following Melville's introduction of Claggart. (Hayford and Sealts, 4)

Echoes survive in "Billy in the Darbies" from the very early draft ballad: in the late poem, Billy jokes., "Ay, ay, all is up; and I must up too, / Early in the morning, aloft from alow" (lf 349), meaning that he must go up at the end of a rope, hanged from a yardarm. In the early draft, we find, "all's up and I must up to [sic] / Early in the morning the deed they will do / Our little game's up[,] they must needs obey" (Hayford and Sealts, p. 277). The somewhat ambiguous "all is up" is further specified in this early version: "Our little game's up" meaning that the mutiny has been discovered and overthrown. So this earliest Billy, whose physical beauty, "barbaric" good nature, and apparently

noble parentage is the type of the later Billy, is a condemned mutineer, charged with and found guilty of fomenting a mutiny. I suspect that this characterization didn't sit well with Melville, for it gave him little room to move in narrating a story. For him the "Handsome Sailor" was an exceptional personage, whose virtues did not accept a motive to mutiny. Such antithetical tendencies destabilized the character for Melville. So he made Billy a human being the next thing to an angel, as fresh-sprung as Adam, whose good nature and simplicity do not admit a capacity for plotting. But still meditating on mutiny, Melville contrived a human cause and occasion for mutiny in the person of Claggart, the Master-at-Arms, a personality of "innate natural depravity" whose formidable rational powers only serve his irrational passions:

With no power to annul the elemental evil in him, though readily enough he could hide it; apprehending the good, but powerless to be it; a nature like Claggart's, surcharged with energy as such natures almost invariably are, what recourse is left to it but to recoil upon itself and, like the scorpion for which the Creator alone is responsible, act out to the end the part allotted it. (Lf 142)

Claggart is the persona of the passionately cruel ship's officer whose persecution of the men under his command drove men to mutiny. Billy is the unsuspecting good nature whose innocent and yet seductive goodness draws down the spite and loathing of Claggart; for such natures as Billy's are a challenge to such as Claggart's: if such as Billy can exist, then Claggart's world must be at fault. Therefore, for Claggart, Billy must not be permitted to exist. The incident of the soup spilled accidentally by Billy in Claggart's path is the pretext and sufficient cause for Claggart's decision to destroy him:

. . . . But Claggart's conscience being but the lawyer to his will, made ogres of trifles, probably arguing that the motive imputed to Billy in spilling the soup when he did, together with the epithets alleged [by Claggart's underling as having been said by Billy against Claggart], these, if nothing more, made a strong case against him; nay, justified animosity into a sort of retributive righteousness. The Pharisee is the Guy Fawkes prowling in the hid

chambers underlying some natures like Claggart's. And they can really form no conception of an unreciprocated malice. Probably the master-at-arms' clandestine persecution of Billy was started to try the temper of the man; but it had not developed any quality in him that enmity could make official use of or even pervert into plausible self-justification; so that the occurrence at the mess, petty if it were, was a welcome one to that peculiar conscience assigned to be the private mentor of Claggart; and for the rest, not improbably it put him upon new experiments. (Lfs 150-151)

So that Claggart contrives to involve Billy in a sham mutiny plot, and when his ruse fails to draw Billy in, he insinuates to other petty officers of his mess that Billy is fomenting mutiny; and finally, he accuses Billy falsely before the ship's captain, Vere.

One of the problems which have puzzled and vexed critics of *Billy Budd* is that Vere takes on to himself more authority in the courtmarshal of Billy than British naval law of the time, even the Articles of War, would seem to allow. Following Claggart's death by Billy's hand, Vere convenes the drumhead courtmartial, obliging his junior officers to sit as judges. Hayford and Sealts point out that under existing law, Vere has no authority to do so, and suggest that Melville must not have been well-versed in the law (p. 176, note to Lf 233). Yes, Vere has taken more authority to himself than his rank allows; he is acting for the Admiralty, and he is given in little all the power and discretion of a fleet commander; for, as Melville has written it, *Billy Budd* is an allegory, a mystery play with mutiny, its provocation and its suppression as the themes of the mystery. And Billy is the epitome of the allegory: a boy-man who wills no harm, who strives conscientiously to do only good and to avoid the ship's lash, is brought to speechlessness by the malicious accusation of his tormentor, Claggart; his speech defect, a stammer which stops him from articulating his thoughts in moments of great excitement, especially when scrutinised by others (Melville says of this defect, "In this particular Billy was a striking instance that the arch interferer, the envious marplot of Eden, still has more or less to do with every human consignment to this planet of Earth. In every case, one way or another he is sure to slip in his little card, as much as to remind us—I too have a hand here" [Lf 48]), is the defect of the multitude of common

sailors, who are never permitted to speak to their superiors unless they are spoken to, and then their speech is under the greatest restraint. In Billy's case this restraint has become not an intellectual quality but an innate organic one, a sign of his lot as one of the slaves of the earth. And Billy's struggle to overcome this organic impediment issues in the fatal blow against Claggart, the officer or overseer who accuses him of the wrong which he has not done. Billy tells the drumhead court: "I never bore malice against the master-at-arms. I am sorry that he is dead. I did not mean to kill him. Could I have used my tongue I would not have struck him. But he foully lied to my face and in presence of my captain, and I had to say something, and I could only say it with a blow, God help me!" (Lfs 251-252) This, it seems to me is the very marrow of the story of the mutinies at Spithead and the Nore, and of all mutinies and uprisings against a stifling mastery. Billy has often been called by critics a "Christ figure," and Melville has given us enough signs that he intended such a comparison. But it must be remembered, as Melville well knew, that Christ himself was tried and condemned as a rebel and a mutineer.

Vere immediately and instinctively recognizes the rebel in mutiny, at the same moment in which he recognizes divine justice: at Billy's striking Claggart down, Vere cries: "It is the divine judgment on Ananias! Look!" (Lf 231) We recall that Ananias was felled for bearing false witness: "Peter said, Ananias . . . thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost . . ." (Acts 5: 3-5). And again, in great agitation, Vere cries: "Struck dead by an angel of God! Yet the angel must hang!" Vere sees Billy's act as both the retribution of God against a perjurer and an act of mutiny against the authority of the King. And it is, for that authority permits no answer from its subjects except in obedience.

In taking the authority of the crown upon himself, Vere acts as the King's instrument. And what he demands, as Melville knows so well, is what the crown always demands: the life of the slave who transgresses against its absolute authority. This deadly tautology demands that Caesar be rendered that which is Caesar's, and God may have what remains.

Vere gives a masterful speech before the Court Martial:

"But your scruples: do they move as in a dusk?
Challenge them. Make them advance and declare
themselves. Come now: do they import something like

this: If, mindless of palliating circumstances, we are bound to regard the death of the master-at-arms as the prisoner's deed, then does that deed constitute a capital crime whereof the penalty is a mortal one. But in natural justice is nothing but the prisoner's overt act to be considered? How can we adjudge to summary and shameful death a fellow creature innocent before God, and whom we feel to be so?—Does that state it aright? You sign sad assent. Well, I too feel that, the full force of that. It is Nature. But do these buttons that we wear attest that our allegiance is to Nature? No, to the King. Though the ocean, which is inviolate Nature primeval, though this be the element where we move and have our being as sailors, yet as the King's officers lies our duty in a sphere correspondingly natural? So little is that true, that in receiving our commissions we in the most important regards ceased to be natural free agents. When war is declared are we the commissioned fighters previously consulted? We fight at command. If our judgments approve the war, that is but coincidence. So in other particulars. So now. For suppose condemnation to follow these present proceedings. Would it be so much we ourselves that would condemn as it would be martial law operating through us? For that law and the rigor of it, we are not responsible. Our vowed responsibility is in this: That however pitilessly that law may operate in any instances, we nevertheless adhere to it and administer it.” (Lfs 266-270)

Vere moves to demonstrate that however exceptional is Billy's act, still the law must have full force:

“To steady us a bit, let us recur to the facts.—In wartime at sea a man-of-war's man strikes his superior in grade, and the blow kills. Apart from its effect the blow itself is, according to the Articles of War, a capital crime. Furthermore—”

“Ay, sir,” emotionally broke in the officer of marines, “in one sense it was. But surely Budd purposed neither mutiny nor homicide.”

"Surely not, my good man. And before a court less arbitrary and more merciful than a martial one, that plea would largely extenuate. At the Last Assizes it shall acquit. But how here? We proceed under the law of the Mutiny Act. In feature no child can resemble his father more than that Act resembles in spirit the thing from which it derives—War. In His Majesty's service—in this ship, indeed—there are Englishmen forced to fight for the King against their will. Against their conscience, for aught we know. Though as their fellow creatures some of us may appreciate their position, yet as navy officers what reck we of it? Still less recks the enemy. . . . War looks but to the frontage, the appearance. And the Mutiny Act, War's child, takes after the father. Budd's intent or non-intent is nothing to the purpose." (Lfs 272-274)

Vere's final argument is that clemency would appear to be weakness before the ship's crew:

". . . . The people" (meaning the ship's company) "have native sense; most of them are familiar with our naval usage and tradition; and how would they take it? Even could you explain to them—which our official position forbids—they, long molded by arbitrary discipline, have not that kind of intelligent responsiveness that might qualify them to comprehend and discriminate. No, to the people the foretopman's deed, however it be worded in the announcement, will be plain homicide committed in a flagrant act of mutiny. What penalty for that should follow, they know. But it does not follow. *Why?* they will ruminate. You know what sailors are. Will they not revert to the recent outbreak at the Nore? Ay. They know the well-founded alarm—the panic it struck throughout England. Your clement sentence they would account pusillanimous. They would think that we flinch, that we are afraid of them—afraid of practicing a lawful rigor singularly demanded at this juncture, lest it should provoke new troubles. What shame to us such a conjecture on their part, and how deadly to discipline. You see then, whither,

prompted by duty and the law, I steadfastly drive." (Lfs 276-278)

Vere's casuistry on behalf of the Crown and the Law is, as I have said, masterful. It almost, but not quite, masters the man. It is Vere's belief in God which masters him, and reconciles him to the verdict for which he so inexorably argues. This belief motivates his closing remarks:

"But I beseech you, my friends, do not take me amiss. I feel as you do for this unfortunate boy. But did he know our hearts, I take him to be of that generous nature that he would feel even for us on whom in this military necessity so heavy a compulsion is laid." (Lf 278)

This might seem a gross, self-serving lie in light of what Vere has just argued; but it is clear that he believes it; his belief in God permits him to expect that Billy will see the court's necessity and forgive them, even him for his persuasiveness in convicting and sentencing him.

And in the interview between Billy and Vere which follows the sentence of death, and which is screened from our direct view as it is partially disclosed by the conjectures of the narrator, there is not only forgiveness on Billy's part but also joy: "On Billy's side it is not improbable that such a confession [of Vere's part in achieving a sentence of death] would have been received in much the same spirit that prompted it. Not without a sort of joy, indeed, he might have appreciated the brave opinion of him implied in his captain's making such a confidant of him" (lf 287). The irony in this remark is all the more painful for its being a perfect expression of truth. Billy flatters himself in his fidelity. "Nor, as to the sentence itself, could he have been insensible that it was imparted to him as to one not afraid to die." It is a moment of filial recognition, and Vere is moved to embrace Billy as his son: "He was old enough to have been Billy's father. The austere devotee of military duty, letting himself melt back into what remains primeval in our formalized humanity, may in end have caught Billy to his heart, even as Abraham may have caught young Isaac on the brink of resolutely offering him up in obedience to the exacting behest" (lfs 287-288). The difference here is telling: there will be no ram to sacrifice in Billy's place, for Billy is to be sacrificed to Caesar. The "agony of the strong" which the senior lieutenant witnesses on Vere's face as he quits the compartment where the interview between

Billy and him has taken place is that of the father who has found his son and lost him, and by his own hand.

In 1867, Malcolm Melville, Herman and Elizabeth's first-born, then age eighteen, died by his own hand, of a gunshot wound, in his room at home. He had been proud of his membership in a company of cadets, proud of his uniform. He had slept with a pistol under his pillow. His sister had scolded him about his reckless play with the weapon. His father was known on occasion to be a stern disciplinarian. He had come in late the night before. When he did not get up when he was called, his father told Elizabeth to let him be; he would have to take the consequences of being late for work. He had still not emerged from his room when Herman came home in the evening. The father broke the door down and found his son dead. A coroner's jury at first ruled the death a suicide, but then changed the verdict to one of accidental death. Melville wrote to his brother-in-law, "I wish you could have seen him as he lay in his last attitude, the ease of a gentle nature. Mackie never gave me a disrespectful word in his life, nor in any way ever failed in filialness" Hoadley later remarked, "—to this father he [Malcolm] needs no vindication."¹⁷

Did Melville vindicate himself?

In attempting to board an enemy ship, the French Directory's *Athee* (the *Atheist*) in battle soon after the execution of Billy Budd, Captain Vere is hit by a musket ball "from a porthole of the enemy's main cabin." He survives for several days in sick bay, but dies. "Unhappily he was cut off too early for the Nile and Trafalgar. The spirit that 'spite its philosophic austerity may yet have indulged in the most secret of all passions, ambition, never attained to the fulness of fame."

Not long before death, while lying under the influence of that magical drug which, soothing the physical frame, mysteriously operates on the subtler element in man, he was heard to murmur words inexplicable to his attendant: "Billy Budd, Billy Budd." That these were not the accents of remorse would seem clear from what the attendant said to the *Bellipotent's* senior officer of marines, who, as the

¹⁷ *Correspondence. The Writings of Herman Melville*, Vol. 14, ed. Lynn Horth (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1993): 399-400.

most reluctant to condemn of the members of the drumhead court, too well knew, though here he kept the knowledge to himself, who Billy Budd was. (lfs 338-339)

That "subtler element" is the imagination. Vere in his opium-induced vision sees and calls to Billy Budd, his son in spirit, who had given his blessing and, in so doing, had blessed the crew and the ship before he died: "God bless Captain Vere!" Which ruled the crew that morning? Vere's "forms, measured forms," moving the people of the ship smartly about to the measure of the drum, or Billy's blessing on Captain Vere? "A peacemaker," his captain called him on *The Rights of Man*. And on *The Bellipotent*?

A mutineer to the world for all that.

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/ Lisa Robertson /

**Voice-over for Herzog's Film "Lessons of Darkness": Performed
with Eye of Newt Collective at Grandview Park, September
2002**

What human beings truly are is nothing other than this dissimulation and this disquietude
within the appearance

What happened is ahead of us
This is the deliberate gate
Therefore we can't become people

I

There were a thousand and twenty two stars and fear and lust moving together like makeup
over all the cities of them, their spines laid back in the seizure of strangeness. There were
burnt out skies of flat and leaf-laden nature, the rough territories of their hands floating over
the surface of the ragged earth and their sadness built of doubt. Whether these ideas are true
or false they are certain. The uncertainty of the city, the citizens in dark lives, the laborious
skies—our words blow them open

II

We have made the night immensely large
We have made subordination
The size of this fear and its image
Make internment unnecessary

III

When at daybreak the birds carry off abjection, when all this limb-weary world stood deserted
and beaten, when the sky became weary, when it screams bitter change, when the land
terribly stretched out, covered with corpses, is weary, when we put the defeated in hell, when
we put them in pictures, when we had to make torment, when emergency becomes general,
when these bones are called security, when on this foundation grass would never grow again,

when dark comes and shade and fright grow dark and fate grows dark and all is laborious and
drenched with hostility, when this habitation stands idle, when we sever elsewhere from hope

This is called property

It is part of our mind

IV

We call it a still life when fetters lay around and ropes of chain and whatever fear wires

In the principal of repetition

We stripped repetition down to these cries elsewhere

In their chair elsewhere

Whatever seizure, whatever ferocity, whatever child

Would seize hell in their speech

So lay listless

Their silence catalogues America's

Whatever security stands but that hewn of love

As this woman was hewn

And this woman's sons

This is called property

Hence the display of weapons

And the display of peace elsewhere

V

What is this foundation

Drenched in disguised liquids

This is our foundation

Or law's inability

VI

Whatever seizure whatever ferocity whatever endures

Has cast us down birdlike

As this child was cast down

In the catalogue of silence

Black oil runs through him

Without delimiting life

Whatever endures has cast us down cardlike
As this child was cast down
Elsewhere, in a series
The child's voice inverts
Like a law

VII

To invent new speech for this
Spatial arrangement
Feels illegitimate
Its beauty illegitimate
As law's emergency
Is the new sublime

VIII

Milton said

At certain revolutions all the damned
Are brought; and feels by turns the bitter change
Of fierce extremes, extremes by change more fierce
From beds of raging fire to starve in ice
Their soft ethereal warmth, and there to pine
Immovable, in fixed and frozen round
Periods of time; thence hurried back to fire
They ferry over this lethean sound
Both to and fro, their sorrow to augment
And wish and struggle as they pass, to reach
The tempting stream, with one small drop to lose
In sweetness all pain and woe
In one small moment so near the brink

IX

Whatever hastens us
Is not judgement.
It is the sign of the law's inability to function
without transforming itself into a lethal machine

X

Grainy night, carrion, a table of weapons, a state of exception, a woman who lost her speech,
burnt out structure of childhood, unimaginable heat, catalogues of silence—what is emergency

XI

We

Uninvented speech

With wire

Invented whatever

Silence

In the rule of exception

Calling it work

XII

Whatever

Certainty

XIII

Whatever

Scarred

Territory

Adrift

Is the permanent work

Of exception

/ Fred Wah /

Pop Goes the Hood

It is and there are not
It has and there we are
the horizontal occasion
we find myself rocking
in another's neighborhood
your front porch
looking out over a certain street
heritage row of a common twinkle
polis in our eyes
"in all heads to be looked out of"
possession and possessed.

Might loan your neighbor the ladder
bicycle-locked to the side of your garage

Might just be the "convenient conclusion"
of our residual residencies
a left-over Starbucks in the zocalo
a "my stop" station of your dream village

This block has been watched by us
This intersection has been walked by us
still zoned by our hunger for others
just like us, tucked in
behind the curtains, the television set, and the art gallery.

Its asphalt, overarching leafy trees, cluttered gutters
depend on the spacious and paved imagination

Sentry box city or Orange County Global
neighborhood of look-alikes.

Does it really get to be the office of your dreams?

But you're walking in Kerrisdale
somebody's talking their stupid Kerrisdale heart out/
side mowing the peaceful lawn,
sowing our horizontal fantasy, mesmer.

Find out what people like you talk about.

"...a more homogeneous city of continuous streets, nameless commercial strips and vast
bedroom areas...A city with a diverse economy and jobs close to home, with transit,
walking and bikes – not cars – as a priority."

(Bruce Macdonald, "Vancouver Neighborhoods Essay" Discover Vancouver website)

You gonna
Park your dream
All over the world?

Have you become the apple of John A's eye?
Do you smoke your maple leaf just to get high?
Do you even know you live in Riley Park?
Is that fence you've built your only mark?

I won't be your global blue box
The square foot per person person
I won't be your ethnic number
Your seamless mix, your invisible version.

Put it in the evidence dumpster
Planetarianism needs more spidermen

The transnational needs the corporate corporeal
I'll trim my hedge for the clearance sale

“Part of the ‘development’ package seems to be an invocation of a seamless community and culture marking the neighborhood...finally working in the same interest, the American dream.”

(Gayatri Spivak, “Harlem” in *Cities Without Citizens*:59)

Hedge your property
Hedge your bets
Block watch your street
Collapse your debts.

Share the future vision
The Times Square dream
or Honest Ed's Nasdaq ticker:
“Come On In”
“Place, Anyplace...and Get Lost

“Number 5 Young Digerati

Young and well-off urban trendsetters... tech-savvy singles and couples living in fashionable in-town neighbourhoods ... highly educated and ethnically mixed, ... tasteful, high-rise ... with home offices, fitness clubs, clothing boutiques, casual restaurants and all types of bars – from juice to coffee to microbrew.”

(Environics Analytics Group Ltd., 2004)

How're we supposed to translate
wet leaves under the chestnut tree into
a wet blanket wrapped in foetus-like
under the viaduct?

Let my prostate be the judge
Of your downtown

Find out where people just like you piss.

“If thought versus commodity is the form of struggle between the cultural-internationalist left and the capitalist-nationalist right, then how would the notion of planetarity help us reclaim the earth on which thought is being pushed out by commodities. Which planet are the cultural left living in anyway?”

[anon. --www2.ucsc.edu/aparc/summary%20of%20death%20of%20a%20discipline.htm]

My neighborhood call for uncertainty
Just show me the money
And I'll sell you my way of thinking
What people like me are buying.
The dress in the window
Or the silence behind the window?
The map of your mind or the map of your wallet?

“Walmart is:

Doing the things good neighbors do.

Helping to make a difference right here at home.

Giving our time and money to support local needs.

Water Bottles Produced For Donation

The Wal-Mart "Donated Water" label and program is one of the latest efforts to support our military.

Wal-Mart Pledges One Acre for Every Acre Developed”

(Walmart web site)

Far under Main Street is a lake called Echo.
History and physics. Acoustic paradigms in a bog of algae.

When I tell all my cousins and friends about this
Will they come to live on the shores of this lake and clean it up?

From the balconies of their summer homes
Will they ask a lot of questions.?

How to put the planet in its proper place,
The common place.

Let's call this Lake Syntax.
It'll still be there

long after the last chain-link sentence
long after the last chain
store

“Tom:

Hope your flight back to Cincinnati was good. Here's a view of the neighbourhood, mostly Strathcona. It's all political here what you call it, like we were explaining when we took you on the walk-around. Chinatown, Downtown Eastside, Gastown, Strathcona. Everywhere you look here it's mostly working class people, Chinese seniors, some artists and students and teachers, people who work around here. But a couple nights ago the cops pulled over a stolen car on Pender and I guess the guy had a fake gun and the cops shot and killed him. Tough business, but of course the media reported it as a killing “in the Downtown Eastside”, whereas it'd be equally accurate to say it was in Chinatown. But the media only say “Chinatown” when they want to talk about opposition to the Four Pillars drug policy, as though all Chinese people are the same, or they all live in Chinatown, etc etc.

Jeff”

(from Up & Down; Downtown Eastside Architecture, Artspeak, Vancouver, 2003; text by Clint Burnham?)

Except
the Green Door's gone
And the Mah Jong's clack
Can no longer be heard drifting over Pender.

Still beneath Commercial Drive
The dream's coded
The archive's thrive

Every place in its little house of memory
At the top of the Zigurat
Hotel Vancouver as the clit of heaven
Her continuous present disappearing
Into the Magellanic Clouds
Gallactic neighborhoods already named

"none other"

Or is that dzoönokwa
Wild woman of the woods
Refracted as O Ciudadán
Uncanny citizen woman caught
Between the civil and the savage
'tween our home and mother land.

"Meanwhile, ... A good argument can be made that the Hong Kong/Vancouver high-density revolution is the true "New Urbanism." It is already shaping the way more people live than any variation on early-twentieth century American suburbia."

(Trevor Boddy, "New Urbanism: "The Vancouver Model"".)

"the staging of Hong Kong makes visible the fault-lines within what is called 'decolonization'"

(Spivak: 56)

I, of course, beg to differ.
My turf disappears at the edge of closed living.
I could order more neighbors
If only the Whole Earth Catalogue
Had glassed itself in chain-link big box.

How many frames per second can we live here
Fast
Sex against the stucco wall
Park your Oppenheimer dream
Behind the safe injection site

Chinatown's always there to be eaten

"In the West then, the modern biochemical body is a haunted sociobiological body politic maintained by sacrificial structures whose mode is eating...The sociobiological body thus eats within structures that leave a space open for the starving to death of others...

Get your neighborhood onto the menu.
Your street is just part of the food chain.
The link to your dream home's digesting
The reality estate is what's on the table.

...The West continually incorporates these other lives that it cannot properly account for or forgets, but that nonetheless in their *being-forgotten* haunt the alienated eating practices of imperialist capitalism...That is...the biotechnological architectures of the West ideally *interiorize*, domesticate or 'eat' the biospheres of others – their flesh, their meanings and their cultures..."

(Scott Toguri McFarlane, "Eating in the 'Hot Box' of Biotechnology," in *Public 30*, Eating Things: 155)

I need to apply a soft pedal
for entering and leaving
the dark street of "The Aleph"
lit dim by traditional values
while the valves of Nuevo gringo
capitalize the conversation
languageless in the conversion.

The stem of the familiar local,
that local white shirt there, disappears
as it neons through a door.

I had wanted to meet with Mariana
Estrada Castillo. Mestizaje
our own Miss Edge in Nation.
Restore the language of mixed verbs
not the dashboard of codes
designed with intention.

But she wasn't home.
She's reinvested
in the symbolic good.

Hammering
of the jake brakes purr
out on the city limits.
The descent beckons

Coke's winning here.
Come home with the camshaft,
confess to the missing.
Not diet but dying.
Not pissing but shitting:

“IN THE STUDIO DOORWAY ON POWELL STREET

huge steaming brown mound of
shit in the doorway i nearly stepped into
offal smell even at the top of
the steep stairs couldn't get homo sapiens
excremental smell out of my nose
hair clothes couldn't compose anything, let alone myself. went home had

a hot bath then composed the following notice
which I'm gonna post in the doorway.

THE NEXT GUY CAUGHT SHITTIN' IN THIS DOORWAY IS GONNA GET HIS
FUCKEN NOSE RUBBED IN IT!!!

Indian guy in blue jeans avidly picking up
bits & pieces of garbage & stuffing 'em into a green plastic bag
at the annual Japanese festival sez i do this
every year for them. they (the Japanese) like things neat & clean.
i smile crumple up my obento box & hand it
to him he walks off grinning"

[Roy Kiyooka, Pacific Rim Letters: 155?; n.d. 1982]

Just standing in the doorway
Not doing any harm
When along came the nation
And took me by the
Hinges in my history but
why apply for the job if
the hinge isn't broken? I have
stolen the word and now can't find
a door, as if I need one. Even
a sliding door. Kicked
in the neighborhood can and stand Awed
by the side-to-side cloud

thought Noah the dark thought
Jonah what did they do
Except get into the story and never let
go? My joy's spread, my maximum's
lost interest. Otherwise you'll be other
you know you'll be background,

and that makes the word
the door with difference.

The downburst blows away, the scene
affirmative by the day. Word's out
my mouth's open
what I need to do is mess around
with Mister In-Between.

"I ask you to negotiate between the rock of social history and the hard place of a seamless culture, to honour what we cannot grasp."

(Spivak; 85)

The gutting edge of a neighborhood imagination
No fixed boundaries no share to count
Agoraphobic identity crises chatting
Chattering.

Go ahead, let's do the ghost dance
From your neck of the woods. I can't
Even tell where yr from anymore.

Strange syntax of the plural interior
The jive that disappears
The telos of the local.

"How do we cross borders?...It would be a mistake to assume she is arguing for universality where people are variations on a common denominator. Her quest has to do ...with...siblinghood...Hers is not a blueprint but an effort to conceive, to imagine a better world where we all come together as a collectivity without reducing one to the other. This non-reductive collectivity is to be contrasted to the streamlined, hegemonic collectivity of globalization, which she defines as 'the same system of exchange everywhere'. [She] is also critical of international feminism that tries to turn other women

into Westernized 'sisters'; thus Afghan women are seen as liberated because they now shop and date!"

(Ferial J. Ghazoul, review of *Death of a Discipline*, H-Gender-MidEast, June 2003)

Isn't the beggar the one who begs the question?
The collective hand out?

Isn't difference the demand
Or still just "the cutting edge
Of the vanishing present"?

Let's face it:
Where do people just like you
Really want to live?

How do we dislocate the grammar
parse the global village lexicon?

"one of my favorite hangouts in Vancouver is a place on Commercial Drive (heart of Little Italy) called Joe's. it has snooker tables and whiz-bang computer slot machines and lots of tables with chairs and a central ordering/fixing/paying & talking bar. it's run by a bunch of Portuguese, tho you wouldn't know it except for the posters and other images that adorn the walls, plus the complete geniality that seems to pervade the place. like overnight it became one of the haunts of the literary/artistic, peppered with feminists, professional union workers and ardent European/Asian immigrant guys and gals. tho Vancouver doesn't have a patch on Toronto, it's come a long way in terms of a diversity of ethnic communities with a particular kind of emphasis towards the Asian-at-large. the Chinese in all their dialects here will have real political clout a generation or two down the line 'cause their numbers will continue to increase, whereas the more typical W.A.S.P.s have reacht 'zero' replacement (always excepting the Bolducs of course). as for us Japanese Canuks (all 50,000 of us thru-out the breadth of Canada) we've taken up with the rest of you and with almost 75% intermarriage we're going to be utterly assimilated..."

[Roy Kiyooka, *Pacific Rim Letters*: 304; April or May 1985]]

The link is not a gated gap,
The hydro line is not the sky
That pigeon's not a plastic bag
Ground Zero's not the reason why.
The Eifel's not a totem pole
And Stanley Park's no Tienamen Square
Home Depot's not the living room
The good ol' neighborhood's just not there.

“He thinks... that this Petri dish of hope and plenty is a great opportunity through which (and with which) he and his kind can go on, away from, hopefully, the fragmented diaspora, but always with some tag of chance that will continually fire a brand-spanking new trajectory into what has been, after all, an unrelentingly foreign world. Hybridize or disappear.”

(Diamond Grill:20)

Or could that be “Hybridize then disappear”?

Pop Goes the Hood Intro or Outro

In keeping with the notion of "Spatial Poetics," "Pop Goes the Hood" is a gesture, for Henry Tsang and I, toward the spatial that is implicitly a part of our separate, yet common, practices; myself a writer and Henry a visual artist. In this particular collaboration we explore some of the residual social imagination tethered to the term "neighborhood." The project attempts to detail, however didactically, some of the materials of language and visual sensation that insert themselves into the cultural presence of space as place. Through the use of poetry, citation, and video we recognize that, even through such referential media, our project is implicated in the residue of history and identity construction that tends to hold back the disappearing present and forward trajectory of the cultural process. We wish to challenge, for example, some of the "class" framing that is subsumed under ethnicity and multiculturalism, "the crisis of upward class mobility masquerading as the politics of classlessness" (Spivak). Who is it who is attached to seamless "neighborhoodism" in the face of class-divided racial diversity"? What is this dream we live in that has coded development and urbanization as a democratic right and "freedom in the name of culture" (Spivak). Real estate? The chain-stores we have become chained to? Let's turn the link out of chain into the hyphen in hybridity as a means to shift the codes of identity so that we can more usefully "imagine" the other, use difference rather than sameness as a link to a new collectivity and politics of friendship? So, Pop Goes the Hood!

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from Diorama

EXCITING AS ACCUSATION MAY BE THERE IS SCANT EVIDENCE TO prove that in 1839 Louis Daguerre burnt down the Paris dioramas in order to fund his new curiosity, the daguerreotype. Whatever the reasons, we are after all tracing a series of effects without known cause, with the sudden destruction of the dioramas in Paris, it's often noted, Daguerre's energies shifted long before that spectacular and fiery display. Distinct from current usage, the word diorama, as Toby Kamps notes, "derived from the Greek *dia* (through) and *horama* (to see) [and] was coined by French stage designer and pioneering photographer L. J. M. Daguerre and patented by him in 1822 to describe a new, theatrical form of visual art." A series of naturalistic watercolors hung in theatre ceilings at various angles and depths, each image illuminated at times with the back of the paper scratched off, effecting a three dimensional impression, seemingly distant, and popular, along with other such devices as the stereoscope or the cyclorama, between the panoramas of the eighteenth century and the cinemas of the twentieth, dioramas were popular spectacles, illusions, scandals in petit bourgeois society. In 1832 Daguerre placed a living goat in a diorama of the Valley of Chamois. One spectator described the Chamois diorama as having "the most astonishing effect, so that one cannot decide where nature ceases and art begins": but the destruction of the dioramas is only lightly remarked in the literature on Daguerre, and similar forms of entertainment in various cities of Europe

and America, with names like georama, hydorama, physiorama, typorama, cosmorama, flourished, and Daguerre's studio, his new experiments and equipment in photography, which was already underway by that time, survived. Researching in the Toronto City Archives on the city's cyclorama from 1888 to 1901, one notices the way archives are ordered, the points between things, setting of coordinates, the mapping of the city through the archival records, the way, for instance, one finds the cyclorama's trace in Street Registries, how examining this reveals the movement of the neighborhood, and how, the first cyclorama in Toronto was of the Battle of Sedan, and then the battle of Gettysburg. By the 1850s in Paris the neighborhood Daguerre had chosen for the diorama was no longer the same: the army barracks and theatres that once comprised the 10th Arrondissement disappeared. In Toronto neighborhoods west of Spadina mark such gentrification. Tourists wander Pere Lachaise in Paris looking for "Jim" or Apollinaire. The gentrification of bars, restaurants and galleries. English posters. Moments of ill-intentioned care. *Soyons réalistes, demandons l'impossible*. Daguerre's first surviving photograph indicates still life in 1837. What in French is *nature morte*. Casts of cherubim, a framed indecipherable portrait, a canteen, and a frieze of a nude. A photograph of pre-Hausman Paris: the barricades of 1848, taken from the second floor of an apartment. One wonders if this were accidental. Could there be parallels to, say, the way an errant camcorder records police brutality, or the way a tourist looks out of a hotel window, one morning, to witness a terrorist atrocity such as the Twin Towers collapsing? In February 1993 newspapers from Israel to Germany reported that terrorists had

successfully bombed the Twin Towers. Eight years and some months later few mentioned this. Images of the Twin Towers collapsing repeated constantly the day of Al Qaeda's suicide bombing, shockingly and brilliantly destroying the World Trade Center. Uncannily like Hollywood. With the appearance of Napoleon III, Hausman ambitiously remodeled the streets of Paris: in nearly twenty years Paris transformed. But one of the most harrowing photographs I've ever seen: the dead communards of 1871, lain side by side, tiny bodies even in comparison to my astonishingly slim twenty-first century body, them five feet tall, bullet ridden, sockets beginning to rot, in ragged-tailored clothes, unkempt in decay, fastened buttons to coarse wool sweaters, stubble growing in rigor mortis, lying side by side in an unmarked grave, final gunfights, and disheartening defeat, occurring among the sepulchers of Pere Lachaise. During this revolution Gustav Courbet, the self-proclaimed and inaugural "realist," was later forced into exile by authorities for actively destroying public monuments in revolutionary fervor. The Battle of Sedan ended the Franco-Prussian war. Though a more pathetic bookend to an age of revolutionary idealism, a similar process as that of Hausman's Paris occurred on campuses in North America, and in some parts of Europe, after 1968: now some university roads are wide enough for tanks. But terrifying as it is, both conservatism and radicalism are acts of love. It's a question of whose sovereignty you desire. Whose succor. Jean-Luc Godard asks a pertinent question in his film, *Éloge de l'amour*. It's a complicated film, dealing with politics and memory, history and love. Citing Georges Bataille the film asks us elliptically, is love the antithesis of the state? An imperial part

of we. The paper of touch. Distantly. The defeat of the French at Sedan and the Paris commune. Popular amnesia. Louis Daguerre wanted to be remembered. His wife, friends, and even the authorities of science, feared he was losing his mind. To look at old photographs or postcards. Something haunting. As in Daguerre's first image of a cherubim. A trained academy painter of mediocre success, Daguerre painted panoramas under Prevost, and then with the success of his partner Charles-Marie Bouton, invented the "diorama," a device which Daguerre declared would be *"un monument d'exposition d'effects de peinture (visible pendant le jour)."* To touch what distance. During the day. Tactile transposed array of textures. Goose bumps. A sudden shock. Rice paper. A hand rushing another's back. Daguerre would slowly push the limits of pictorial experience and realism, here it would be called spectacle. Little is known about his relationship with his wife. Eventually, in maverick economics, Daguerre abandoned his business partner Bouton, who then permanently moved to the London diorama at St. Regent's Park, and Daguerre invented the daguerreotype. We are unsure if Daguerre and Bouton had a personal disagreement, but little is known of their interactions afterward. Much speculation has occurred. We delight in the gossip, as in the way we read Gertrude Stein. These transpositions are not the same. A part. A share. A care. Often when our eyes are sore from reading or when laptops aggravate headaches or when we feel a sense of vertigo or when we are bored or when we can no longer think or read or type or clean or organize or garden or cook or when we are suddenly despairing or excited or happy or when something affects us, say, a memory or a whim or when we

speak to friends on the telephone and can no longer concentrate or when the light is just so quickening particles of dust or when we smell something alluring through an open window, say, the chocolate factory next door, then we might rest by taking a stroll. Say the leaves are about to turn and, say, perhaps we walk through the neighborhood, through the school playground to the market. My friend Juan studied with a woman named Rita. Juan had been reading Walter Benjamin, and Rita noted vulnerability. I can't say I properly understood her comments, but I found them itinerant and beautiful. Wandering red brick buildings through Rua Açorez, say, I have to rub my eyes. Did you hear something? Half asleep. Curve. Paper what. Touch. Metered steps. Old street-signs on the corners of houses like in Paris, and suddenly I'm thinking back to Daguerre's diorama of a murder, of which there is little description, a dead man lying on cobblestones, was there blood as his murderer ran away?

CLICK CLICK THE SOUND ECHOES SENSELESSLY, I'M UNSURE WHERE IT comes from, but I notice her feet dangle listlessly a foot and a half from touching the floor; she's propped herself up, above the cool tile, and then I think I see *click click click* her fingernails rapping on Formica. Sudden shifts in temperature cause an animal alarm. The history of staircases is largely unwritten, except perhaps in ghost stories, the way one rushes vertiginously up or down, whether or not the staircase is spiraled, to the sudden revelation of a dark corridor, an opulent entrance. Dishes pile in the sink, utensils, a cutting board, bowls of murky water, and once in a while the three of us would stop suddenly noticing the drone of the refrigerator. To have a temperature is to have an excess of body heat, a certainty of living—say, sweating profusely—to sense in excess what is external, to have something vampiric inside. In 1758 Abraham Swan dedicated *The British Architect* to the construction and care of staircases, claiming, "there is no Book yet extant... in so plain and concise a Manner, as this single Volume," and further "that all Care imaginable must be taken in placing the *Stair-Cases*; that it is difficult to find a proper Situation for them, which will no Ways damage the rest of the *fabrick*." She raises her fingers to her lips and then brushes the bangs away from her eyes. A temperature as a gradient of degrees, as in the differences between hot or cold. Staircases encourage excitement, interest, attention, or care, the way one's eyes are raised; whether rushing the stairs oneself, or anticipating someone else descending; the excitement of an upward motion, the face moving, eager, tentative. So I continued my story—the empty department store looked like it was decomposing. Don't

get a chill. Watch your step. The building was full of crumbling red brick and drywall; junk caked the floors. Temperature also indicates balance, the tuning of an instrument, or a freedom from excess; a usage obsolete approximately by 1659. Rounding a staircase one wonders what may appear. Delicate paper-like fragments of drywall, paint and asbestos hung from ceilings, like mobiles, a haunting chiaroscuro by the placement of our industrial lights, an uncanny diorama. Temperature, for the Latin *temperare*, shares an etymology with temper, implies a mixing or combination of elements. Old staircases with weathered dents of wear suggest fluidity. Indecipherable graffiti adorned the entrance foyers, lined with dust-covered mirrors, in which my own reflection looked spectral. Temperature, the character or nature supposed to be determined by the proportions of the four qualities (hot, cold, dry, moist), generally considered obsolete by 1771. One takes care walking up aging stairs, a creak. Elegant staircases now barricaded once connected floors; we found a room splattered in red paint. Of a different etymology, the word tempest shares an affinity to the modern word temperature, but coming instead from the Latin *tempesta* indicating storm, season or weather. Swan states of staircases, "that the less they are concealed from such as enter the House, the more ornamental they will appear." Police forcibly removed squatters who had occupied the lower levels in the previous year to protest a lack of housing, and remains littered the ground: pop cans, a bullet, wrappers, pillows, a mattress, a broken radio. Tempest shares an obsolete connection to time, coming from the Anglo-Saxon word for tide. Rushing one's hand along a banister. Behind the room, which, if anthropomorphized, would have had a terribly

gaunt and jaundiced face, appeared a door. A staircase descended to an emergency exit, from which vantage we decided to photograph the red painted room. And suddenly the temperature dropped. Time is out of joint. Fetid pools of water at the bottom of the staircase. A creak. Did you hear something? Our lights go out. We search for flashlights; I race upstairs to turn the power back on. Avoid thick slivers. Handrails. Each step. Press. Barefoot kitchen tile. In darkness. Empty chambers, a flashlight; chicken bones, piles of old windows, wooden banisters, drywall, instantly, I race to plug in the power; I see something distantly, I hear another shriek. *Le temps* from the French for time uncannily connects two words, as does temperature: the Latin tempest (*tempesta*) and the Anglo-Saxon time (*tîme*). Banisters mark the flight partition of the half-landing, as well as the top and bottom. I recognize the shriek this time as the voice of my companion. Some believe temperature influences behavior. Darkened spiral staircase. What was that? What's the weather like? Inside, oak stairs. He looked pale, razed. Dress for the weather. He was terrified of crashing as he slid down the banister. What do you mean *something*? Adorned with a "we" of desire and temperament. We anticipate little sounds. Fingers, veins, dirt, unkempt nails: a hand illuminated by his flashlight, tracing a letter. Dr. Johnson defines temperature as mediocrity. Staircases connect incongruous spaces. We've got to get out of here; we nearly forget our cameras; we race into a humid summer night. Temper, temper. Fingers brush along a trellis. I finished my story and there was a silence in the kitchen. Nice story, she said, but do you expect us to believe it: squatters, homeless,

terrifying staircases, supposed ghosts, uncanny hands; I mean, what were you doing taking pictures in abandoned buildings anyway, it's a little nostalgic, isn't it? We desired temperature's touch. We raced upstairs. We looked around the room: the turquoise fridge, the red tablecloth, the dirty dishes, and the dripping faucet. Sweat. Vertigo. What did you want? Shiver. Step. The silence was full, almost palpable. What tempest. Some spirals. My eyes glanced at the window and the thick black lines of a metal fire escape. Take my temperature. One foot at the tip of a step. I'm thirsty, you said, and reached for a pack of cigarettes: the sulfur from your match, smoke curled around the kitchen. *Le Temps*. After creak. Exterior lights flooded the window, metal frames of a fire escape in noir shadows. Waving a fan, as if citing extravagant ladies in waiting. To chase, tumble downstairs. The room teeming with silence, and then *click click click* and this time I think I can anticipate it. The hum of the refrigerator. So whose turn is it? We look around at each other and on the counter, a photograph we hadn't noticed before, of a cropped hand holding an old quill-pen on top of a handwritten page, the photo was old and must-colored, and in the air we noted the temperature drop, an inexplicable chill, and the smell of turpentine.

WE WALKED ALONG AN AMBLING SEAWALL. MY COMPANIONS AND I desired aimless gratification, something general, a spectacular eroticism. We hoped for fireworks. Blocks of weathered granite furnished the edges of concrete, wet from occasional waves, the smell of seawater, and we too were occasional among crowds intent on spectacle. We desired plurality, the way we desired another's lips or touch, a social imprint, the work of another Louis, braille; or draping papers marbled with watercolor, a diorama we'd never seen. We found our desires irreconcilable, and so we gladly continued our wandering. The ensemble sounds of distant radios, a man selling apparel from a shopping cart declaring prices in a muffled call—lighted flowers, neon rods and tubes, halos worn by children—and a group of drunken teenagers all provided the soundtrack to our wandering. Around us a muted iridescence: neon greens, blues and pinks spread outwards in specs throughout the crowd seated on an incline, each signaling someone with a like toy, which marbled with the indefinite spectators; and suddenly one of my companions took a digital video camera from his bag as we wandered and now the camera's viewfinder displayed inarticulate pixels of the night-sky, the after-image of fireworks, and the various passersby. Regalia and amorous intentions are closely linked, as in the fireworks of 1664. A display of the Sun King's grandeur, the festivities doubled as a clandestine declaration of love for his new mistress. Records contain a series of etchings by Israel Silvestre, which depict the destruction of the Palace of Alcine, the summation of three days of fireworks at Versailles in 1664. In Silvestre's depiction flares wave outward like paper streamers from the island on which fireworks ignite. We are bound to veal-

skin and facsimiles for records. Velum, from the Latin for veal. Extravagant fans. Ladies-in-waiting delicately turn pages. Papier-mâché masks. Men-of-honor congratulate cronies. We watched the fiery constellations (whose meaning remained mysterious yet pleasurable) the arch of our necks opened our throats to view. The spectacle appeared like a finely wrought sheet of paper, dashed with ink, and perforated with small specs through which lights radiated. Firecrackers flared in the corners of our vision. Paper junk littered the seawall on which we walked. Have you ever heard of the luminists, I asked? One of my companions nodded yes, another no, and so I rambled. Painters associated with the Hudson school formed a group. They called themselves luminists. I spoke almost inaudibly above the crackle. They painted light: intricate and sublime paintings of landscapes on a small scale. Traces of the paintbrush were removed from the canvas to further the effect. Usually landscapes, they also painted ships. They were very transcendental. Some have suggested that their use of scale responded to the panoramic quality of other larger canvases by members of the Hudson School, such as Albert Bierstadt. I've always enjoyed Bierstadt's gaudy paintings of the West, astonishing and huge. But even more so the luminists remind me of those electric paintings in flea markets: vertiginous blues and greens—sometimes beatific portraits of Buddha or Jesus—or generic landscapes, waterfalls, cityscapes, or mountain passes in garish light. Such tawdry wilderness. And I've often wondered about the connection between the sublime and intimacy, I said pointing above, but that's nothing like waking up next to someone. I think it's more social, said one of our companions. I

spent a lot of time on a performance piece I called "Tour Guide." I would walk up to tourists in art galleries over the course of a couple of years. *What's that?*—(our companion drawled in a Mid-Western accent)—and as soon as I heard the question I would launch into an explanation in a semi-official tone of the piece in front of them, regardless of invitation. As soon as my ramble on, say, Millet's *The Gleaners* was over I would smile, nod my head courteously, and walk away. Once I remember I walked up to a group of high-school students in front of a Joseph Beuys chalkboard. *What-the-fuck-is-this?* They had blue bandanas under white baseball caps. Sagging blue jeans at knee level underneath oversized football jerseys reminded me of mine at a much younger age. The bandanas, however, were a new addition. But you see, I said, that's exactly what Beuys wants you to say, he wants you to realize that everyone is a part the process of art making. Even something like a chalkboard is art. *That's fuckin' stupid*, says one of the guys, and I realized he's a lot tougher than I was at fifteen, nothing like me, and I stammered and walked away. It's a tough question, isn't it? When are we being generous or bewildering; when are we reading magazines with glossy covers or bleeding newsprint; when are we escaping into theatres and eschewing thick books; when are we giving or accruing debt; when are we wearing slick shoes; when are we appropriate; when do we appropriate; when do we use slick or rustic slang; when are we despairing or ambivalent on telephones; when are we too needy or sufficient in a raw wool sweater; when are we apathetic or civic in traffic; when are we opinionated or local; when are we imposing or insinuating? The view ahead of us crackled into fits of blue phasing

into yellow. Lights dashed across the sky in a fashion I'd never seen—which I assumed must be due to a new advance in fireworks technology—and reflections of colorful light could be seen unfolding in the lulling boredom of tides underneath the crackling sound. You know, I remember walking through the American wing of the Met last time I was in Manhattan. They have this nearly complete reconstruction of a panorama depicting the Palace of Versailles on a sunny, but somewhat overcast, day. I say "nearly," because the room into which the panorama was installed was too small. Parts of the top and bottom were cut off, but the effect is still astonishing: a continuous painting three hundred and sixty degrees around you. And it feels all the more bewildering for its artifice. And then knowing that once it was taller makes it all the more impressive. The imagination continues the effect beyond its perceptible borders. I overheard some tourists wondering what it was they had encountered. Immediately I went into tour guide persona. Words appeared like matter. As our companion spoke, the sky above us appeared as a hand rushing along an alabaster neck. But our erotics were not simply the caress of a thumb over a smooth cheek, but a communal desire adorned with the selfish texture of fabric, at a distance, ephemeral, boundless, and yet finite, a spectacle. I don't remember exactly what I said to the tourists, our companion continued, but I remember ending with the following account of a British tourist after seeing the Paris dioramas from the 1830s: that travel was no longer necessary. With this new form of entertainment, you could go anywhere in the comfort of your own city. The world could be brought to the spectator in a similar manner as savages—or, later in the

twentieth century, musicians—displayed for the pleasure of large crowds who would never experience the New World. I noted to the tourists how ironic it was that panoramas were now a destination for travelers installed in a museum. They thanked me, somewhat, and I left the room. The crowd around us exhausted its attention. A now sparse field of spectators emptied and the embers of my companion's cigarette glowed in contrast to the distancing neon halos worn by people as they dispersed.

/ Jonathon Wilcke /

from errorlog

let mine enemies ease identity
with the peace of caroused cattle

my enemies are easy to identify.
Mine.
confused east and west with a sunrise on a stick.
every color plucks and eyelash torments.
let `em off the hook – they don't know what's up.
give Me the badge and gun. give Venus the last oyster.
ask me this and this.
weekly surface of convenience.
and here, here, and

here
the large glass balls of the nippon fisherfolk.
why gaze upon the sandals with so much beauty
about the foxes? if lead is a drunken excuse
for those who attend its fruit

then
i would despise you
and
none would kiss me
it
she was craving
the
pretty cumulous
so.

did i ever tell you about the continuous pickler.
hills bingo vineyards in bloom.
the heart fails as the seat for the emotions and rivals the seat of the ass.

hE stands being the wall pissing the garden beds slept but darkness was awake. sheep who have just born twins in the maintenance room are whacks of doves trapped behind your veil. oh sound kiss me with that Mouth. Filthily, cheeks glowing neon, vending vagrancies, browse the wheat piles, and frequent the oils on any given thigh.

look!

This time i'll charge you only for the gazelle.

Just!

don't disturb the foxes until they

`ve

finished biting that english boy on the head.

EAT!

HOT!

BEHOLE!

wake jurisprudence from the wilderness all heated up over a few pieces of silver. we sent the watchmen out. fetch down that cloak and fire up the converts. when the King plays the bench the nard stinks. why, the Couch is Green and the Cedars allergenic. the maidens call "Fatty, fatty, two-by-four."

lower femurs for the house of rafts
my heart desires watchmen
so the ovenboys catch the little eyebrows
among the lillypads.
she found only gambled id.
here on fishnet ceilings
sack the riggéd hills.

I would i were th/y burrs.

don't get all ruddy up the flag pole.

your thighs attract fools

it was easy to pass through as the camel didn't ask for id.

i showed them the fur snow
the strings of boats
the perfume of shoes has no feet.
fig and testament as one.

one rupture of zeal talking to the arteries
could build sour mash around her.

Then

the speed book
the green book funnels the tracks through

an

eye

of the needle. he saw tacit billows of smoke

enclose her with
pomegranate panels insist
on doing the stunts herself.

the Fig tree gives forth Pigs!

a 15 minute chutzpah before the credits.

the bed is vagrant.

i had put off my lobes, my ovoid puts his hand to the latch, handles the bolt.

my teeth are clogged with wood and the heels of disaster.

your shielding is an asset, your goats work.

flash the yellow card at my lover.

who'd like to stag among the mountains?

the peace of caroused cattle.

we don't need their scum/as you wish my lord.

I let my mines make
e min enemy memin es poised

on the auricle, parched even for
a blink

a

glass of ice, a
bobbing wooden bird.

he – the nights and their sentries and goats

and then we came to know about the X. all
protein is flesh fooled. now i X
X, and x.

how good the forest agate the thieving bees;
the rose was sent to sharon in error navel
down covers her head with a raven
so the day a functionary loom
waddle. wine scrape mud from the foxes' matted furs.

i want those beasts, not excuses, or possibly,

a member of the crocus family. staggers for fleece. eat his shadow
and his flute.

that her left hand were wired to my head
and his left finger in my either ear

SHOW YOUR FACE! and your face is doves.

wrapped in sackcloth my pumpkins are swarthy.

daughters – i'll charge you – the pigs weren't part of our contract.

passagesout

1.

Nov. 3, 2004

this is the company
of abstract addresses to things
certainty's slanting light
turning and turning
as dreams or dots
fruit a fire shot of sparks
fetching parks of artillery
to the public sphere's ear
without the fenced commons
the light leap to which
or from the jostle or jam
the tips of burning trees
branding election as
a law of imperfection in
masses and floods
the elect lit by new
free forms of immolation
warming the satellite dishes
with votes sparked and spired

I tire of listening to leaving
the exit poles of being
I tread master here
I advocate earnest departure
while on unelected ground
in being one singular mass
hiatus verge immanence
I hear light and see
the noise of far forests
consumed under division
at the maps extremities
the fire would soon enter
the swooning precincts of

Nov. 17, 2004

Dear Leonard where
will we find
deregulated poets now
everything is an appendage
of states' fluidities?
if it's electric capital flows
everything else formerly free
is newly burdened with
new regulations we
can't even enjoy a
blade of grass over which
to shed four more tears
muttering *no mas*
but filled with the bass
undertones of permanent
reaction rattling troop
movements liberty looks
like larceny to me
when I last went to
borrow from the common
fund of language
they asked what collateral
I had I said all fire
is friendly when
bombs bring liberty
if it's a tower of babel we've built
then I fall somewhere
around the base of the tongue
where something green springs
fire or flood taking out
the absurd alternatives
we have to actual alteration.

2.

Nov. 4, 2004

The rivering web
reverb of dub dub debs
the unlight returning
the dark unwind
curl or pearl
shells us in deserts
converts to the common
vulgar low lawless
germinal element
look – I take up threads
look – the sheer curtain is
a separation of passages
look – ubiquity looses the
common ground to its
perennial rankness
as big bill bails
the sinking canoe of class
all power to the peripheries
while we drift on other's rivers
they will carry us a
whole wide week to
what is our ability to
abound – you see I am talking
about division while
crossing the country of loss

Nov. 18, 2004

Dear Phyllis what is
spun across connects
a picture of sweet to
we shall see or
Goodman's grand piano
crowding an apartment
I'd paint your way
out of this abstract a
now from a then
or like Platonov's

Zakhar make such
unnecessary things as
towers of wire ships
cut from pieces of
roofing tin paper
dirigibles and so on
for your own pleasure
but who am I to say
such arrogance is
apparently pleasing
closing circles round reading
or this image of you laughing
at the endless returns.

3.

Nov. 5, 2004

Can consonants so crawl
to be a river?
from what source
to what elimination?
out of loss nothing
but lethargy alight
on indolent votes for
nothing so spent as tomorrow
America there is the
beyond you muster
circling circumference
you desire to enclose or
pasture your pain
but you have always been
about the unbound beginning
it is your vowels
the sound of censured tongues
that is such a common
form of address but I
would dress you in less
than common measures
this suddenly slow November
with the glare of battle bouncing
amongst low clouds and
leafless trees and casual
cars and towers America
take my leaves said the poet
my book and the war are one

Dear Susan when did
lilacs last in this
occupation bloom?
of necessity I have begun
to imagine that every
autumn belonging to me
returns a wrought November
to all reading a book by
a ditch swollen with rain

and such light as there is
through early mist the
border begins again
in the veins of vines the
corpuscles nodding assent
what bodies forth reason
we doubt till we touch
though its law is separation
did I say plenitude or
fortitude keeps us willing?
it is a green world I would
will from the mines in
hillsides and tundra gas
projects as I call
to voters and non voters
alike free states and slave
where is the menace in
being nations apart
and languages so close?

4.

Nov. 6, 2004

a contagion

raging in the center
as round the rim
democracy plies a boat
leaning into the night of
pulsing and listening to
the shift in the wind or capital

just an excursion or
reverse brain drain
as in I'm interested in
enlightenment not goat's entrails
Legacies! A fat office! Pensions
from the crown! I would
speak of the quotidian
even the holiness of
not having and not dividing
while the easy products are
perused and purchased
the throb of gas going
into the car as I pull the trigger
on not stopping anything
though it can't be just about oil
it's our very hearts and minds
they'd house holding down
deviance and getting out the vote

Nov. 20, 2004

Dear Peter the light
foot hears the severed
head sing the snow fall
or foot fall it doesn't
have to flow as a river
the desert is ancient
heretical fire underfoot
not oil for engines but
for lamps to read books

or anoint new negligence
when I began this there
were ossuaries under
Kabul now I don't
know what that means
or where Canada is
because the new romans
bombed the libraries in Iraq
and the voice goes on
out across angry
disputes over forest's formerness
and the page by light
catches fire and
it is there I too
came down with indignity.

5.

Nov. 7, 2004

*All the time I have been
at the edge of this
inward or outward
precipice the sea stretched
below the border somewhere
in the water shaping stones
and pillars of salt or fire
the plash slap lap
of tide's sheer numerousness
this real place or park from which
I descend to the shore
coming into catalogue
bull kelp and blue heron
while further up the slope I passed
a mass of nasturtiums blackberry
by the heap worn canes and
arbutus oak spruce leaning
towards winter gull crow sand
and seal so you get the picture
the sea weed is not tea leaves
we can name and make numbers
of our borders and enclosures
and exposures here to the south
and west the spur of invisible border
prods into the straight if only I
could read cloud formation sea
colour and sea wrack
how different do the islands look
San Juan to Saturna I boat
with my oars direct democracy
hoping to capture nations traffics
cargos containers of the uncontained
look – globalize this
wretched fevers of dissent
I spit into the sea returning
salt to salt and insult to injury
and then to my tottering assent*

Nov. 21, 2004

Dear Rachel forgive
this descriptive voice
all clam and cloud today
walking down to the beach
and back where the border
sneaks by just under the water
the tiredness of pursuit
drives me home again
to imagine other addresses
such as friends we live
on or over borders
what makes them poetry
is a kind of love
sustains us after nations
return to bludgeon each other
with trade and tariffs and
the trail of jet-propelled tears
I just want to traffic in
common words we can
break like bread – look
this is early morning in
November and I am engaged
in my own sort of recounting
sighting across the water
at a name writ on
submerged states and I am
writing a poem in which words
fail which is their want.

Nov. 8, 2004

rise purl loosen waver
window wood quail sfumato
boundaries filed charmd focus
lewd idiot multiplies nightmare
teller yelled popes legion
razed panic falsetto nuisance
angry vetoes polemic sphere
schism divide exile split
sound matrix wonder votes
nothing ventured gained death
mote warble doctors expunge
round cavern laden absence
outside vanish centre rot
wince amerique clocks reverse
shadow puppet regime mange
impact zone liable host
fungible riot lifts aqueduct
submarine light hastens fissures
hydrable frisson engulfs oil
slick birds sudden subterfuge
faith dope infringes rinds
stupid politics pretzel secret
burning opiate fraud leaders
ridiculous adversary augurs darkness
holocaust city osama addicts
heads asses plunged darkness

Nov. 23, 2004

Dear Juliana a list brought me
towards closure which I found
just a beginning amongst
articles left unsheltered
the resignations of secretaries
and cries of foul elections
where American observers watch
Kiev elect wrecks under
Putin's judo smile creasing
the screen above the crawl
(please feel free to find irony here)
while idle predictors predict
a senator's holdup in congress
and Bush in Chile talking
9/11 but not 1973
(tragic irony goes to Washington)
but he's coming to Canada too
like water is the next oil
and we're voting great Canadians
they are available at cost
and require little watering
look it's ligatures I write of
while internet shopping for dope
on the real Iraq war
where at Fallujah the men were kept
in the city for targets
and the insurgency is in the eye
of the insurgent or lost
in the depths of the omnibus bill
like revoked rights and
privacy's eclipse on
page eleven hundred and something
(so much pork and others go hungry)
I call this to your attention
the bombs no one records
the records which bomb
and the poems falling into the silence
of other forgotten accords.

7.

Nov. 10, 2004

Morning gets darker
trees litter leaves
money gathers in gutters
is flushed to fish
millions are sorry
culture was not enough
here a dog in the bush
here a late mosquito
or moth about the light
here words for sale
some cheap others incapable
of holding any water
some would drink damage
others heal the poulticed dawn
I have a grave feeling
the earth makes me stupid
or time is unnecessary
as it is places we face
drained reservoirs dry
river beds swollen
forests of fire or
simply streets no one is
left fighting for as tanks
crawl out of my memory
and reclaim the heart of forgetting

Nov. 24, 2004

Dear Michael where's
the way west of west?
I dream of divisions
that deride delusion
with no separation
the signifier *freedom*
looking for the signified
former republic of
like a bucket full of facts
tossed in the trough of network news
osama has left the bildungs

and the romans are making ruins
we shouldn't just interpret
the world but change it
a focus group on fear
or Bermuda love triangle
gets us nowhere
it can't all be a matter of
red alternating blue
like veins and arteries
systole and diastole
no matter who wins
we all bleed
it's new movements as tourniquets
bastille bandages
and soviets of salve
I speak of this November
with a light rain falling
and a hard rain on my mind.

8.

Nov. 12, 2004

In false faces

the liars of authority
authorizing inauthenticity
what camera captures
where there is no commune
the death of difference
volition vanished vanquished
shifting to short shrift
give up ligatures of others
give up signature of singularity
this machine governs intent
with electric bit specks
chops shops and curtails
any sense of sense or
sensibility – look – the
idiot grins – look – the
targets are massified and
microscopic – look – the
alternatives have been altered
to fit not fitting
I am sorry
I tried
it was not nearly enough
voting was a valence now
they are gluing grins to
guide us to whatever
new targets the scopes
of scopophilia can bring
into hair-trigger view –
a bridge between beginnings
a grove in catastrophe
a bedroom broken and bare
as each cell screams
its own solitary death
in the groaning body politic

Nov. 26, 2004

Dear Roy the body
can win out in the end
or I have to think so
reading once again
the loose history of death
which is ships arriving
Aarwak and Wingina
pine scent on the sea
and some trinkets carried
first to Africa south until
the butter melts then West
into forested fastness
as if we had bene in
the midst of some delicate garden
that comforts killers
before they butcher again
and then out of here East
to Iraq and beyond
even in the midst of Summer
in incredible abundance
thunder in the dead sky
oil slicked on the sea afire
what war is this or what
war isn't this time and again
the bird fell not four
harquebeshot from the ship
in this loose history
where appetite enshrined
sits preparing his toast
holding a light into savagery
enclosing themselves within
the fortress of their world
the light now dipping
moon to the East and
red irons in the West
we found the houses taken downe
and the place very strongly enclosed
but beyond this only forest
seeming forever and again the
cedars of Lebanon and Euphrates

banked American wildernesses spread
dreaming death after death
first nations or nations first
and the body a torn breezeway between.

9.

Nov. 13, 2004

Showing only its boundaries
we imagine that freedom
and the law are identical
the gulf in my heart
the torrent is fed through
the smelter that turns citizens
into cinders the welter
of flames feeding floods
I curse all colleges senates
houses and cowering parliaments
a cloud of vapor rising
to blot the sun
empires come to unhooked clothes
where the Coyahoga burns brightly
a soothing rain returns as
I come down from anger
I fall upon a nation
here – look at my feet
Canada rides shotgun in
the global drive-by shooting
enjoys small wonders of
its own faulted elections
dreams divisions and
diversions I cannot only
be angry at a border
I too dwell within profitable
circumference shouting purchased
accord send out invitations to
cities take pictures
take souvenirs we are burning
water instead of oil remembering
a fence might be a place
for forgiveness and mending
the border a common custom
we agree to observe like
squatting in no man's land
while shells fall into oblivion
Neighbours! I spell you
differently – but we have bled
the same blood of intrusions
is this any way to live

amongst catastrophe and
call it calm outcome
of good behaviors?
Freedom is law when
law is freed customs

Nov. 27, 2004

Dear Robin I hesitate
to write the translated
men are here crawling
under the ecstasy of fire
I have watered a strange garden
and given oil to gears
it is years since distantiation
those opposites you have assured
are both companions and
horizons as borders divide
binaries look there is a
breach in vision look the sun
hangs itself in November
look these are the elect
whose measure is madness
dumb events in passages
where Walter swelters through
a morphine dream on Pyrean
slopes the end of time
all over again with or
without angels' wings
there are questions I would
ask you like is quotation
a valid argument or
which eye did Duncan look
out of into eternity
it's really quite simple
the nations were once
as many as the spears of grass
and to get back there we need
a New American Primer or
Holy Canadian Forest where
companions can be each
other's horizons.

10.

Nov. 15, 2004

Commune of communes
the language of grass
we walk upon
at liberty in the open
library or picking berries
in the dead end street
public's place is unsorted
information surfed by serfs
cataloguing for the
cataloguers hungry for their
Alberta barbeque
even here we are
bushed – exhausted by the
idiocy of our own
politics we turn to the
entertaining display of death
and denial I covet
a boarded up border or
a truly borderless realm
nothing and no one can impinge
upon a commons or commune
a bright unregistered
register in which voices
prolong proximity
look at these arms of
Whitman these eyes of
Thoreau look at my hands
they are Emily's poets
used to talk this way
unglutting their nations
or just fooling themselves well
we won't get fooled again
cry the failures of organization
as they dip beneath the earth
burning orange wests
watery before them

Nov. 29, 2004

Dear Lissa I want to say
I have stores aplenty
anything I have I bestow
were it so simple
whatever I once served of
the poet would swerve back
towards me a light from
Eleusis or some distant
explosion arriving to announce
the extinction of some
particular place – it is maps
but give me galleons
some fresh minted enterprise
to fend for frailty
it is the furnishings of time
what barricade could we build
out of them carefully
the home improvements of
street battles or at least
words fought for in a poem
we cannot vote ourselves
off this island for
we are islands all
clinging to the archipelago
of our common sea
circling precious trinkets
in our glowing gift economy
il ben del intelletto
the prize is poems we
bestow – burglar banker
father – misnomers all.

11.

Nov. 16, 2004

I thought to come into
an open or at least
to skirmish with my
apathy and drag the lees
of days into late autumn
streets angry at powers
I can do nothing but buckle
from the start they have
our beginning and we all
follow suits I've tried
stepping out it was entirely
abstract letters to common reveal
the little we have in common
I go back to a stray
bullet from Spain I imagine
a barricade on the information
highway the fire grows
out of all proportion
of elections water comes in
waves I live so close to a
border it is even in the
water I could swim into America
though I am none of us elect
it would be like swimming
through a fire wall
into cyber space my
arms dripping electric links
to drowning masking as
gaudy rebirths – look – an
agenda is amendable – look –
designs on our lives could be
built for other purposes – look –
this is someone trying
to find a way to fight
I pry my computer keys up
imagining Parisian paving stones

Nov. 30, 2004

Dear Jeff I admit to
crossing the border today
we go there for the gas
and return across permeability
with the spoils of war and
exchange rates the liquid
capital of fire burning
rubber back into the land of
watery reserves it's this way
I enter a poem larger than
the book I read somewhere
between initiation and terminus
I speak with my brother
calumny wondering about
the bullet and the ballot
the breach that just got breacher
you can't blow up a
social relation (hot air or
plastic explosive) but
it is our job *to cheer up*
slaves and horrify despots
the only question is who
do you complain to when
everything annoys you
a soldier in Iraq today says
I want to go and kill people
so we can go home
a citizen in Canada today
went shopping before the protest
today America came to Canada
and you could hardly tell
the difference that's
what we're up against
that oil is lighter than water
and our leaders also go cross
border shopping the duty is
bombs in space and we're
only too willing it's only
air and its absence after all

hey it's only earth its only
a town we can't translate or
get a camera into outside
of vagaries the poem
continues out side the poem
the war continues what
is writing and living and
fighting but continuing
I go back to my border
home put on my Janus
face sometimes you do need
a weather man it is
complicity I speak of
as November draws to a
chilly end with the pressure
rising and the president electing
to speak of neighbors and
the television screens going blue.

Some Math

thank you
"nothing in that drawer" by ron padget
working group from the talk and ed
juliana, susan, steve

subperish 2001

The naughties of quaranta
of the tenera of rapit2a
of his vostra Zed il donkey
the one of localizzo of riflessione I gave convolusis
I gave them a cut of the dulia
that comes dispersi possibile hamper circulant
of leeward leboner of the one I gave senso
of degree of derober of the one of della
it cuts off the dulia of chiaro
of the conjugato of il gorn
of his of genuflessione of pasciamo
in the stem cells of sulla of oppenheimers
looping isoclinus while the Frobenius norm
inaugurates the law of new nutshells
containing the kernels
of my very own tank.

Ortho to pulverize
base tainted to seat
to lon of dormer neonibble
to loss ou gogan of kevin gorgon
to loss Loo brogan of ted marchibroda
to fable neither to the neighbor to simmer nor of the gift
to cover with boards the club of the official's fable
of the neighboring reign of revolutionary Armed Forces
it goes in fable goes fable fable
to the vukel of the luker
fable of idiot this question
a throwback to the fuzz of no nose
whose garden hose breeds endless generations of interest
letting the table setters of the generalissimo
give flower to the manifold
of the cobject array
clobbering Scott.

The Volumen of the doey
of the disease of wanbye
of the sponging of menger that limits Bedung to nans ZuZu
annually von Selbyduktionsschpule of goddard of same gelder
the same doey of chuletas who meeps the sponge of menger
many fits the trousers they solve
to eigen of vicode of the defense of another doey one of eigen
of the grasping to sponge menger
to adjust the root of trousers
with trix telescoping
i except one.

To potter honest grieved
the numeration of great bird
that strikes with the foot of nu gnu
on the discovery gone grieved
of the bitter backward movement of the small stick
of hitter fixes to right blocks of the goalie
of blunts fertile blunts
the fertilization of hishand I for megabus discovered
clever nu ngu the inferior olander of the stairs
vacuums the unit ball of negative I on the sofa
under a radical rasied to the pie in the collection of like terms
gives e to the z on the imaginary rock of terminal cancellation
of father wavelet smells supra
slowly moreso.

A situation of barretta
of artie nilpotent amounding
of the antennas of endekka
neither for determined anendation of canebye of the starter shaft
nor the scholion of coolio of artie subscription of growbye
of the felt and the flybye
comes more than the gattica
of the point of the line of appropriate round boy
of the felt of the taste
of the convite country
of one large Adam.

Outside the branch of To
is a giveba of the gonebye from attuti
by fear of the generation of echo
resulting in a cancellation of the nothing process of ken
by vireo it gives the initial mirk of the tickle
the elasticity of chrono metra
the pain of the three little tulie
the meep of that of that the used one of bent ramificarsi
outside of elasticity comes the question
of the announcement of the hat in order for distinguishing
in order in order all the moon virdividual
for the elasticity of linus
the dell at the foot of the listening of of
of the elasticity of the inside
of the elasticity in order for explaining
for averlo for a challenge a darlo
the hat of nothing for the vision of of
To of you of that of pronouncement.

The recording of the neighbor
of the rage of the hilbert
of the phase of the bellboys
of the following of always
of arrested of have
of that of the curves of cantor
of in of the key of advance of iteration
of it is to follow the progression of passage
of every of that of word of new repetition
of one of infinitely of is of aforesaid comes in the dell in the square sheets
of infinity
of milli amps of long of infinitely combs of the song
of all of adapted of was of all of the method
of number of oiler.

Of the half of the comb of koch
of the piegatrice of headquarters
of the hessian de jute of the curve
of the glanced at curve of the ennesima of iteration
do model the zone of the end of infinities
a sure one snowflake de neige completely detaches
same he refers insiemi
like headquarters of cormula
of the profile of the impolvera of the configuration of the comb
of several quarter of iteration
for the iterates of the ennesima
for the haircuts of hockey men
it diverges so slowly.

The carpet of sarapinski
following orbit invisibilie
of nine that germ tip is attracted
to s that something disowned
construction of s the shrub of sugar
bushing the deformation of the hedge of helge of moqueta
whose barrier of the line you submerge in planation
to the brownian simplex of the chaos of one more generation
of swarm like splines.

Filatore of the bookstore
of the specified bray of the spinlock
Of the filatore of It of if not it D of the one available
of it be immediately the Big Kernel Lock
a prelude to the Big Kernel Lock purposeful
of the Machine of one Atomic Hash
of crashing it unites the way of unites
of it or L of it is having a hashed list of spinlocks
of this lock guards that list
the Big Kernel Lock are especially enigmatic
of guards of limiting of already in
the spin lock of it can guard
bray of It' call of guards of Einval
the filatore of jusqu'a key of that
D'objet of eDeadlk
of that of virage of unites of be Fear D'of
of Eagain toward D'insufficient of to block
to have the one of be toward a fence of that
the bray of It of that of block
of spin lock.

The object of imitation
crinkly address indicated
under the copy of the curve of imitation
one relative substance of the question
of the browsing of similarity
of the car of Elf on the left side
after the displacement infinitely of many detergents
all phase that the fairies limit length discussing
you don't seed on the orbit of repetition
the three ness a and the four ness a final diagram
bzero of zone however us silicone
it them series.

Meet be the premium of distribution
the met of under and the critics of premium I polish at a day job
of conject family subsets of the nondegenerate mailer
of the dubit in the exploding eyes of caterpillars
of the cleaned up root of the assassin of under
rooting for the enamel of Plexi of nabo of the diminution of the rule
of Chebychev that bloccante of the salt rule
that presuppor of the cerc of space of the enormous one
of being the UN of this of enamel poles of that of the zeta drawer of Reimann
of gotterdang
of knot burlap then perturbing the priority burlaps
they give conject priority to the carb strip
the selected functor of which could jeopardize
the distribution of primes.

L 'off objective I control from
the case that you have convergence on the zeta strip
of the expert in the von neumann architecture of time
of the parent NP of fixed parameters of convergence
of fast fourier populations carrying one disturbing rule of jump
that supposes the enormous spatial search of its glassa over this
over the poles of Chebychev fitting the periods to the number of parents
orientated 10 NP to the number of their announcements
to the zilog of the elliptical integral of the second kind
of the population collocation to the UN of Seth
a convergence more than the convergence of the fast one
more than the blob flying Lott over the sea of Torrance
more than the retarded argument of the delay
more than the unilateral withdrawal from stolen land.

According to esterno
the equation of the difference of the recurrent give step
differentiates the objective of the walker
from the jive polynomial given ascent in the eastern hole of the feasible
give tube
give min give by give rim
give me the risk of maximum return
give k paragrafi to the ones who safeguard the long walk
give the gift of annealing disorder to the destiny of acquaintance of the
problem of on
give relax give simulate give misconvergence
give the cody choso
the quartic Foxholes of the shekel
give it give della give quarto the one spectral radius of the Cofrog
the worked on problem on the ouskirts of Cofrog
give hill give down give be give capture
of the always random walk.

This question is naturally of interest
to the table makers at the root of burn
a throw back to the reign of turbulent seeing
off gassing this question of tables
going burn going roxy going attenuation going beautiful of the long ball
going star market for the little eggs in the three pack
going chunks for the young guys
going boing going bebe
related to the ever looping phase shift of the reciprocal of the hyperbolic
cosine
the gaussian schmear of the pili wrap
xoring wesley's cyclic dispersion down the fiber optic tube of total internal
reflection
erbium doping page by page
I'm wearing the kahukus of soliton
with the looper of these pulses
going solo.

You short on synchronous sin port
you payload of tributary photonic of the sub-layer
you cobject assumption of the collision pipelineing the NAK of blicking
aperatures
very small bites filling the fires of NAK
blocked on the process of the distance of hamming
in the assumption of the collision of the multiplex
in the single channel of the will
in the nonsense of the carrier
in the binary exponential backoff of the station
hidden in the backoff the reflectometry of the problem
of the station of slotted aloha and the busybodies
the love I feel for this characteristic
that crosses the double secret account of coax
eating the brekkies of time for the halting of coax
a tree to cut the parity of the horizon
in order to solve the problem of crimping
that vampire tap obtained
from the neighbors.

Of clobbering of stopped choking
of the reception of the neighbor
of the flooding of mile
of possessing the token with of
the annendation of the promiscuous fork of that
the corromp of verification and the sum of the frame
being the horizon of left cuts of what paragraphs of hat
of the elasticity of curves to the un of listen
of the elasticity of the auditron of packet of circuit
the un the un the disposition of Linus
the un the un of that of it given she of infinite UN of branch
of outside of employee of in the house of pain
the un the un explaining a bursty traforo
in giving bursty I of the dell of they of those who transmit
the dell of therefore of that one
that I obstructing shiny silicon
of trying the being of silicone
in the dell of hacks
in the courts of misinformation
in the cell rate you so proudly affirm the glory
of my generation.

The nothing is declaring for spiegarlo
who's given to nothing the elasticity of hats
the crowning of spiegarlo for nothing
of having the low one look inside the doggie maw of kerberos
into the expert of the elasticity of the nail of task
task of the thing the power of we
trading for the expert the power of I
for a handle I have a descriptor
for the price of the paragraphs that control it
reezing to negotiate the unethical behavior
molto to shut up of dell the approximated he of timing
the etc example of paragraphs
the one great difficulty of this one of paragraphs
of having of I of the word of best of the spiacente to satisfy
a work under the new of the radical
within the change of the social
believing to create the beautiful model.

To refer to created of the geometry
or paragraph of paragraphs of the exists
of the metasurface of the one of meatballs
of those of the force of one where is the new class
at the meeting of the decoder of the setitimer
the getitimer of poly gonebye
that p of the geometry of IF
if there are created from the carves of the nurb the monifer of CAD
if sharpshooting they give to the interchange of data the polymorphic
reconstruction of persistent objects
of time of slashify
manipulating the widgets of Hilandero of string toll
the creator of the carves of the nurb
the cobject monifer of sharpshooting CAD.

Rebajora to Ruby Haskell
statement factory to turn final spectacular
this is the interrupting is
or is the encaminamiento
this of the vector to another one of crankback
or the rechazamiento of the possible world
or with the end of the circuits the earthing of must
or IF the apparatus of Ott
or IF the filatore to be
not the one hard canned in the immediate
nor the ruling of the spin lock
can turn enclosure to the uplane of that
or the mux of inver illustrates the silence of the concept is khaki
which is what collection of points
or what hull can deadlock the requested one
or one creatina of that.

Começ of fa socket
of that of the case of Only fa
hand of one of address of memory its fa estação
fa is the data of Somone's fa port
number of fas est-ce que gate sin port
of fa of obstrufa
tree and round robin fa
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