

## EDITORS' NOTES

Please do send correspondence, poems, articles, grumbled, mordantly accepting or otherwise, anything to: Andrea Brady and Keston Sutherland, Gonville & Caius, Cambridge, CB2 1TA

We shall try to publish QUID once every month, it will be one pound per issue, here's hoping the name isn't shown in fact to be slippery

reviews of course are most welcome, any press or author is encouraged to send a book to be reviewed, we shall endeavour to find reviewers

thanks to all those who kindly offered their work for the first issue, they can keep their copyright

THE EDITORS

*Christopher Smart's America*

And when the sick man says "love me," a cloud crashes into a church.  
Believe in the nineteenth century, and supine enactments of power.  
What depths in the cellars of the odes? Am I simply trying to fool you?  
The mind drifts every so often, as the sparks suggest new  
arenas. We became friends at the dolphin show. That's  
bathos. When will they recognize my struggle to attain the plain?

"Cocteau's a lightweight." Can't even hear — if I could hear I'd be  
writing. Which I'm not doing now, no. I believe I've written everything.  
That needs to be heard. For the next several  
centuries or so. Can I cry, Rousseau-style? They are all addicts.  
Lisa Robertson approached with a smile. That's funny. I believe in community.  
All talk and no negative references to X---- Y----. That

widget was a friend of mine. The mind angles itself into attractive positions  
so as to be spied from the other end of the bar by potential  
dates. That doesn't justify the risk of pretension  
the Enlightenment took to get us wearing undies every day. It's sick  
to say this, but I love you as an extension of myself. I will be  
the first male poet ever to be / influenced by women's poetry.

## DOUGLAS OLIVER

***[Unedited pages from Whisper Louise, work-in-progress, a double historical memoir of Louise Michel, heroine of the 1871 Paris Commune, and of the author in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.]***

In my own Memoirs I have reached New York, 1988. I have married again -- to Alice Notley -- and am having to confront American poets with little time for my way of uniting spirituality, philosophy, politics, science, and art. Sailing into a contrary wind, sometimes.

Through long friendship with Alice and her first husband Ted Berrigan, and now in the eighties through the childhood memories of my two new step-sons -- constant talk of old family friends -- I had kept alive a personal relationship to New York School poetry.

When Ted arrived on the Lower East Side in the early sixties and began running C magazine, it was a meeting of two poetic generations of this school. The first generation -- Frank O'Hara, James Schuyler, John Ashbery, and Kenneth Koch -- were all alive then, and so were most of their artist friends, including some of the original abstract expressionists but more particularly the younger painters inspired by them.

Ted, Ron Padgett, Dick Gallup, the writer-artist Joe Brainard, and a little later Anne Waldman, the artist George Schneeman, and Alice herself, were principal figures in the second New York School generation, which retained allegiance to the older writers, had equal appreciation for the art of de Kooning, Pollock, Guston, and the other expressionists, but added an influence from the beauty and *éclat* found in everyday imagery by a Warhol or a Rauschenberg.

(I am tightly defining my own friendships, missing out other names which don't fit my story and also other friends whose poetics are different from my own, including Allen Ginsberg because, of course, the Beats had a New York background.)

Ted, from an Irish working-class background, developed the brilliant raciness and street-smarts of O'Hara into words and feelings that might have been anyone's had they the art to paint the poem on the page in Ted's unique way. It was a democratic impulse firmly in the Whitman tradition and of a kind the middle-class poets whose faint epiphanies fill the pages of the New Yorker today seem incapable of understanding. His later poetry had blackness in it, a sense of death approaching, but this went with humour and joyousness in a heady mix: the authentic thing that literary criticism can't easily get at.

When I reached New York, O'Hara had been dead for over 20 years, Ted for five; Ashbery was a little unapproachable in his gay circle, Schuyler shortly to die -- though I heard him give a rare reading -- and Kenneth Koch not yet a friend of mine, though he was of Alice's. I'd meet Ron Padgett round at the Schneemans. When we were poorest Joe Brainard would take us out to expensive meals and surprise us with cheques in the mail; and then he died of AIDS. Anne Waldman I'd known since the mid-seventies.

The New York School was not for a British poet to join -- Ted used to joke, penuriously, that you could join the school if you gave him five dollars. I had known about New York poetics since the sixties; living alongside its practitioners was a different experience. In that genial American chauvinism, my careful British assumptions were sometimes prejudged old-fashioned and irrelevant. At a poetry symposium the radical African-American poet Amiri Baraka, attacking Eurocentrism in US education, received standing ovations for such proclamations as: "What is British literature in this century? It's all Irish!" As part of a panel summing up this symposium, I mildly remarked that the Afro-American struggle against white cultural domination was liberating, even for me. Not since encountering the fiercely-intellectual "New Cambridge" poetry movement in England during the late 1960s had I been so obliged to rethink my poetic ideas so seriously.

In a controversial early essay on Jackson Pollock, the young Frank O'Hara, then only on the front desk of New York's Museum of Modern Art, made a remark that will take me to the heart of what I want to say.

First, he quotes Pasternak as saying that in art generally acknowledged truths must wait for a "piece of luck", a great artist who will see how to apply the truth.

"General truths" because culture can sustain more than one truth, says O'Hara. Most artists have one central truth their work expresses and if they try to sustain more they are often accused of having "no coherent, unifying style". Picasso did not escape this criticism. But single-minded coherence limits expression of the multiplicity of truths, usually by preferring one truth above another, and thus contributes to the avoidance of cultural acknowledgment.

If there is unity in the total oeuvre of Pollock, it is formed by a drastic self-knowledge which permeates each of his periods and underlies each change of interest, each search. In considering his work as a whole one finds the ego totally absorbed in the work. By being "in" the specific painting, as he himself put it, he gave himself over to cultural necessities which, in turn, freed him from the external encumbrances which surround art as an occasion of extreme cultural concern, encumbrances external to the act of applying a specific truth to the specific cultural event for which it has been waiting in order to be fully revealed. This is not automatism or self-expression, but insight.

The young O'Hara assumes here that there is an "ego" which can become totally absorbed in the action of painting. It has creative insight. One thinks of Pollock furiously but so accurately dribbling the paint over the canvas, not quitting the energy field of it until the painting is finished. Such absorption, says O'Hara, could free art from encumbrances external to the specific and truthful act of painting the picture. And this is part of the quality of New York "action painting".

O'Hara defines creative insight as a state of spiritual clarity in which there are no secrets. The effort to achieve it is "monumental and agonizing, and once achieved it is a harrowing state to maintain". It is not a mystical state, but a slow accumulation of past decisions, unifying of conflict, until the spirit can totally engage in the expression of meaning, and can act freely and with unpremeditated knowledge. Pollock's "action" is immediately art.

Pollock's 1947 statement, referred to by O'Hara, has become an art world cliché:

. . . On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be in the painting. This is akin to the method of the Indian sand painters of the West. . . .

When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of "get acquainted" period that I see what I have been about. I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well." [From Possibilities 1, 1947-8, "Problems of Contemporary Art," v. 4, New York, George Wittenborn, Inc.]

I have been greatly puzzled most of my life by a notion of the not-aware "I", in a state of spiritual clarity, reaching towards perfection in the work of art by not leaving the "inside" activity of making it. The questions are: "What is the clear ego that stays inside? What leads you outside if you get the process wrong?"

We were so short of money that I'd teach anything -- research method, French, American literature, English literature, African and Caribbean literature, science fiction, anything. Alice and I began New York-Baltimore trips to teach at an art school once a week. On the science fiction course, a brilliant Vietnamese student told me he was hoping one day to live inside a Virtual Reality world, since it could be made preferable to the real one.

Well, Louise's Virtual World of future revolution was, to her, preferable to the real one, preferable, too, to the real life she was living.

Adapting Pollock's phrase to the writing process, to remain "inside the poem" while writing it is the same as being "in your life" at that moment, so that the golden world and the real are in constant communion for an instant. Can that instant be prolonged into a life practice? Ted and Alice's unremitting poetry-life together, with all its hardships, had left an aftermath of itself in our tiny Manhattan apartment where Ted had also lived, a sense of better purpose; and my stepsons shared its beliefs. This has affected the rest of my life.

I am knitting my poems into my prose memoirs so that they won't form a separate part of my life-story. Louise had a similar belief in the wholeness of experience and incorporated her poems into her memoirs in the same way.

This financially-strapped existence had its anguish because for a while I could only manage trips to England to see my own two daughters by arranging teaching gigs in France.

Yet it's easier in New York than in Paris or London to live a non-conformist poetry-life. New York's economy has enough slack to give some support to a wide variety of poets. The reading scene is lively: a Brit like me could get to read at O'Hara's old workplace the Museum of Modern Art, or at St. Mark's Poetry Project near where he'd lived, at the multi-ethnic Nuyorican Poets' Café, and at a host of upstairs or bar venues. Substantial grants would arrive in our mailbox, unapplied-for, the fruit of a grapevine whose roots we never quite distinguished.

But again, what is that ego at work inside the creation of art?

These memoirs are not the place for difficult philosophy, so although my subject is a familiar but difficult move by Husserl, I shall try to be as everyday as possible in my phrasing.

Looking for the origin of our sense of what is true, Husserl thought he'd found it deep within ourselves in a purified, transcendental form of the ego, one shorn of all attachment to the outside world. It's like the pre-beginning of thought. This ego regards nothing else at all as an object yet -- not even itself as an object. All those objective movements of thought are, in a philosophical sleight of hand, pretended for a moment not to exist: they are placed in mental brackets. Putting all object relations aside like that, he could postulate an ego existing in immediacy, or in purified, unmeasured temporality before our mental processes have begun to divide time into intervals; that is, before we have begun conscious thought.

His transcendental ego is some luminous, truthful origin for all our activity of mind before we have had time to err.

Later philosophers have made controversial Husserl's claim to have found this origin for truth. It has been correctly complained that he used objective thinking (logic, mental brackets, etc.) to clear objectivity away so that pure subjectivity could be revealed. In other words, objective thinking had been essential to his method of discovering the pre-objective origin of its own truthfulness. This is the familiar vicious circle: thinking itself can't establish, or even disclose, its own origin because it has to think to do so. And if all objective truth is to be referred back to the purified ego from which objectivity also emanates, where is the escape from solipsism -- from the isolation of the "self" within its own world?

Fortunately, neither universal truthfulness nor the method by which Husserl purified his "transcendental ego" need concern us here any more.

I would rather concentrate on the transcendental ego, not as a pure self at all, yet nevertheless as a spiritual entity or quasi-entity.

During our life in New York, Alice had been asked by a publisher to meditate on the theme, "Homer's Art", and she was working towards her notion of a feminine epic, how it might propose a consciousness more akin to mysticism than to Homer's epic art of war. We'd go to Brooklyn where she raised a little family cash by holding a poetry workshop round the dining table in Sheila Alson's house, with cold chicken and coleslaw for supper. I'd sometimes do her class writing assignments, as I could usually get them published later.

One night she brought in a sermon from the 13<sup>th</sup> century German mystic, Meister Eckhardt, which talks of the "core soul", an utterly pure centre to the peripheries of "soul", a centre where, alone, the Christian God in His purity may know us.

The core soul itself cannot be contaminated with the everyday world; but on its periphery, it has faculties which begin the contact with the outside; they are like agents which deal in human ideas and with the external world and its creatures -- a sort of reaching out to our soiled existence so that we may act at all. From the internal core we may send a blessing outwards, but the blessing is neither a creature in the world nor the actual contact with God at the core:

A blessing is not a creature nor is it perfection, for perfection [that is, in all virtues] is the consequence of the perfecting of life, and for that you must get into the essence, the core of the soul, so that God's undifferentiated essence may reach you there, without the interposition of any idea. . . .

. . . Since the soul itself does not know, it wonders and, wondering, it seeks, for the soul knows very well that something is afoot, even though it does not know how or what.

We have here, expressed in a mystical, religious language which is not my own, at least an analogue, but one in ethical and spiritual terms, to that aesthetic clarity "clear of encumbrances" described by O'Hara in Pollock's artistic gestures. The analogue also bears a suggestion of Pollock's "not aware I" which knows what to do in the act of painting, an artistic act towards which the young O'Hara yearns. And there's another analogue to Husserl's transcendental ego seen as our foundation for perceiving truth. I must emphasise an "analogue" because it is simple to show also how different these three concepts are:

O'Hara, through Pollock, is just talking about the secular act of painting and his phrase "clear of encumbrances" need not be pushed too far, for he means the kinds of ideas and rationalisations which spoil art. Solipsism doesn't arise because a tangible operation is conducted upon paint in the external world.

Eckhardt founds transcendental knowing on the speaking of God to us in the soul: this speaking presence of the divine, which knows all things, rescues the soul from solipsism but it is a mystical solution to that problem because "all things are in God".

And Husserl works by abstract logic on the Cartesian "I think therefore I am", in which the first "I" reflects objectively on the second "I". Husserl, on the other hand, eliminates artificially any trace of the objective world -- the "therefore I am" -- by placing it in temporary brackets, as if he could achieve a logic that would escape the Cogito's vicious circle and reach the purified, original "I" said to exist before the Cogito has begun to function in time. For a standard objection to the Cogito is that it has already posited the first "I . . ." (placed it into time) before ". . . think therefore I am" goes on to "prove" its existence. Husserl has trouble escaping solipsism.

Alice also brought in O'Hara's poem, "Joe's Jacket", which considers the prospect of dying and refers to D.H. Lawrence's wonderful poem, "Ship of Death". "Joe's Jacket" impregnates itself with that darkness but comes back dazzling with beauty and art to accommodate the prospect of death within the poem.

"Joe's Jacket" ends with a stanza wrought of an irony that has been produced inside the poetic process, that is inside O'Hara's own life process.

and soon I am rising for the less than average day, I have coffee  
I prepare calmly to face almost everything that will come up I am calm  
but not as my bed was calm as it softly declined to become a ship

He borrows Joe's seersucker jacket: we are to suppose it the jacket of an "ordinary Joe", as well as the actual jacket of his friend, Joe LeSueur. But that moment brings him recall of other times when he borrowed the jacket, or such a jacket, in Europe:

and sat opposite Ashes in an enormous leather chair in the Continental  
it is all enormity and life it has protected me and kept me here on  
many occasions as a symbol does when the heart is full and risks no speech  
a precaution I loathe as the pheasant loathes the season and is preserved  
it will not be need, it will be just what it is and just what happens

"Ashes" is both a nickname for John Ashbery and of course the scattering at death. The poem has  
Kenneth Koch also in its cast: for O'Hara, art was brightly communal. "...it will be just what it is and  
just what happens" is O'Hara's action-aesthetic in its own process, expressing the actual, the "inside",  
as faithfully as it can.

Alice gave her class that night the assignment "to tell the truth in a poem". We journeyed back  
to the Lower East Side by subway and the following morning I wrote this, pretty much straight out:

### THE SOUL AS CRUMPLED BEDSHEET

Moon shoots into fummy night sky,  
worn down coin in fulgurous green,  
as we arrive at Tompkins Square Park  
after hotly debating a medieval sermon  
at Sheila's house: has the soul a pure core  
and a penumbra of ideas through which alone  
the shadowy events of every day  
come nearer the disc's intense white centre?

We go in, to watch Star Trek's portentous  
races against time: a scientist  
looks at his daughter's soil samples --  
their planet is dying; oh yes, their love is pure,  
as pure as I'd wish the daughter-love to be  
in a Britain from which I'm self-exiled.  
This is the night of the eclipse:  
by 12.30 a thumb print blurs half the moon,  
and something restless and unachieved  
follows me through sleep.

The roar of the garbage truck wakes me up  
and releases through my window screen  
the ill smell of the weekend on St Mark's Place  
like a distillation of sweet-foul bodily corruption  
around the perimeter of the untarnished soul,  
as that haunting medieval language says.  
One side of the bedsheet's rumpled  
by my writhing last night. Your sheet, under you,  
is a broad lath or a smoothed stream  
in your peace last night and again this morning  
within the whorls of our anxious river.

My back is stiff; it's urgent to pee.  
I crawl down the bed, wagging my naked ass,  
over a deep blue mohair blanket,  
so that if you opened your eyes  
my hot core asshole would be seen  
by the cool core of your soul.

From the bathroom I turn aside  
to my stepson's soiled green armchair,  
an hour to go before I make coffee.  
He's away in Europe; so I can sit down  
to read Religion and the Decline of Magic --  
when I remember I was dreaming of an Elizabethan  
child's translucent face contorted in sorrow  
at the absence of her father.

(On my return to Paris some years later, one of my bosses' wives read this poem in The London Review of Books and languidly commented, "That's rather more about Doug Oliver's 'asshole' than I wanted to know.")

Husserl calls an aspect of the "transcendental ego" the "eidos ego". Why did he use that peculiar term?

"Eidetic" is a psychological term for mental imagery in which what is remembered is literally seen in the present, often projected at will. Though it is commonest in young children, an adult example would be photographic memory, where the pages of an absent telephone directory return, vivid, to the mind's eye as if really seen. When my younger daughter, the dream's "Elizabethan child", was five or six, we took her to Walt Disney's brightly-coloured "Peter Pan" movie, and in the car going home, she suddenly exclaimed that she could literally see the cartoon images. From her excitement, it was clear to me she was experiencing eidetic imagery.

Husserl's "eidos ego" is a variant of the transcendental ego: it exists as purely possible only, unconditioned, prior to all concepts, and is sensed by a faculty Husserl calls "eidetic knowing". He gives an example of this kind of knowing. You look at a table, but hold off from thinking of its actual state, its use and physical appearance. Instead you shift your perception into a peculiar realm where all you see impinges on you as pure possibility.

(We must distinguish it, I think, from the Platonic ideal, in which there would be some wonderful table-table, an ideal form which would represent all tables that could ever exist.)

This is so hard for anyone less brilliant than Husserl to imagine that I suppose the mental operation could only be done through a philosophical rigour as difficult as a mystic's discipline;

Evelyn Underhill writing of the first stage of mystical contemplation is perhaps helpful:

Now . . . you shall surrender yourself to the direct message poured out towards you by the thing. Then, you considered: now, you are to absorb. This experience will be in the very highest sense, the experience of sensation without thought: the essential sensation, the 'savouring' to which some of the mystics invite us, of which our fragmentary bodily senses offer us a transient sacrament. So here at last, in this intimate communion, this 'simple seeing,' this total surrender of you to the impress of things, you are using to the full the sacred powers of sense: and so using them, because you are concentrating upon them, accepting their reports in simplicity. You have, in this contemplative outlook, carried the peculiar methods of artistic apprehension to their highest stage: with the result that the sense-world has become for you, as Erigena said that all creatures were, 'a theophany, or appearance of God'.

We shall see Louise believe that she once attained such an awareness, though she had no God in it.

At my own level, I have on rare occasions of mental excitement or anxiety glimpsed what I think of as an "eidetic ego". (I am not schizophrenic though I have come somewhat near that state once or twice and have vestiges of schizoid imagery sometimes.) Husserl and Underhill come close to describing the state of mind involved.

On these very rare, almost unique, occasions, all I have ever been and experienced is seen as an actual presence, immensely kind, brimming with cheerfulness, with humour and wit even, full of all my other lifelong experience of other people, things, and circumstance. All the "other" is within it in some most peculiar sense of being inside but also still outside. It is an adept presence. It seems to be created of actuality and possibility. And it patiently waits for my best development of its potential, since my own potential is to be itself.

I want to be clear that once or twice in these mental states, I have literally seen it like this in a mirror, my own face transformed into this grander kindliness. Once, it somewhat resembled the uncovered, peaceful face of Darth Vader at the end of Star Wars, but was much happier. Since it has a schizoid implication, I presume it may also have a reverse face, a more demonic, Satanic aspect which, fortunately, I have never seen.

At the age of eight or so when an Abbot and Costello film, *Lost in a Harem*, had given me nightmares, I deliberately placed into my subsequent dreams a figure whom I called "Mr Noman": he was a giant of blue gas, inside whom was a safe space on a platform like a swing; I had some within-dream knack of transporting myself to the platform. I'd been influenced by some popular version of the Polyphemus myth read by a schoolteacher, but I cured the worst nightmares, by calling up this figure and entering his safe insides. (Psychologists recommend such tricks.). Today, I believe it wasn't just an imaginative creation but a childish, instinctual sense of a wholer, saner self within me; in the terms of Melanie Klein, a sense also of an internalised good-father figure. But the "other" is "within" and "without" this eidon in an ambiguity no doubt necessary if the inner and outer worlds are to meet at all.

As I say Husserl's philosophy has not recovered from the charge of solipsism because he insisted on transcendent subjectivity as the source of apodictic (certainly truthful) knowledge. Heidegger was to suppose "being" as already thrown into the world, trammelled in objectivity in advance of any formulation we can make about it; the "self" is socially-created, say the post-modern philosophies.

Let me make my difference from Husserl and my answer to the charge of solipsism even more explicit. When I have looked into mirrors during those excited mental states the presence I see is, as I say, already full of the external world, of other people and events as I have experienced them. Not exactly as we say, "We are full of experience". More literal than that. Whatever was born into the world with my own egg has now become, is becoming, this composite entity, not solipsistic, but a unity of external and internal, something beyond the Narcissism of self.

Yet I have experienced this impossibility as a vision. That's what it has seemed like. I refrain from any spiritual or religious claim about it, except to say that my awareness of this larger entity governs my sense of responsibility for what kind of person my life creates. Why, I can't explain, though I shall later argue that my sense of the importance of the future may have something to do with it.

Nor do I fully understand how this vision escapes Narcissism, though it convinces me it does: it is as much an experience of "otherness" as of "self", even though glimpsed through the eyes of "self". It has, if you like, the social and linguistic construction of self built into it, but it is not just the socially-created self of the post-moderns. It is not the Oversoul of the American transcendentalists, or the Super-Ego of Freud, or Lacan. I don't know what it is.

It's a grave pity that many of our present-day literary commentators are so impregnated with scientism that they won't allow any spook-talk of this kind, finding it akin to Kalil Gibran or some New Ager. Poets, in modern Britain, have to be ordinary blokes, ordinary lasses. Philip Larkin ended his Mr Bleaney poem by stopping spiritual speculation in its tracks with, "I don't know".

Neither, I have said, do I. We do not, I believe, have a very illuminating modern psychology: Freud won't do for me; our notion of human consciousness is probably in transition, waiting for a new genius to provide the next generation with a more convincing model.

I'd like to operate a modesty: I can't take the reader any farther. I am not convinced this visionary ego has any "ontological" significance. Or, if it does, then its place may be some rungs up from the veriest depths; it may be merely a secondary phenomenon, a fantasy.

Nevertheless, when I write my best poetry, I sense this ego in hiding. Something that maybe knows before I do. Being in touch with it is what it means to me to be inside the writing activity in Pollock and O'Hara's sense.

It's a possible perfection that I try to remain inside. The objective world of the poem's words spins out from this more detached presence, altering, becoming a lesser thing than the speechless knowing has seemed to promise. Eventually, I'm looking at "merely one of my poems". Perfection isn't real, I presume. Yet it may appear as a presence all the same, a guide. It retains its serenity even if the subject matter is unpleasant. This is how I or any poet can go "near the edge" in a poem, how I can with utter equanimity write about seeing my dead son in a dream. Tom, as my deer, is already there, like a gaseous figure inhabiting the entity that writes.

Tom, in my dream of escaping from pursuers, rose before me aged 10, though he died as an infant. He was slightly glistening as if the nylon stocking were over his head. The glistening is how I know he exists in that deep place. My greatest unhappiness is to know that I can't get back into his innocence.

Even Louise in that false dream about a car accident off a cliff glistened in a way that implied that, though she too had entered that place in me, she was intently aggressive towards me while also full of goodwill. It's absolutely inexplicable how I know that just from looking at her, except that the dream image emanated, also, from a deeper level of knowing, not disclosed.

Meister Eckhardt:

One heathen authority once said something fine about this to another: 'I am aware of something in myself whose shine is my reason.'

In the dark cave of error, Spenser's Red Cross Knight shines with his spirituality. Robert Louis Stevenson, like Kenneth Koch a prophet of cheerfulness as a necessary sanity in art, wrote of a deeper self within shining like a lighthouse amid storms.

I have no religion because I don't believe in over-interpreting our visionary impulses so as to form dogma. If you like to cool everything down, my unusual sight of "all the self plus everything else incorporated into that entity" is of a possibility only, a visual abstraction from all I know about my life, it is a pure figment of imagination. If there were anything truly existent about it, if I really had an eidetic self of that kind, a change in mood would not alter it from the ecstatic to the Satanic, as the history of mental illness so tragically shows. I can't claim, as Husserl hoped to do, to have glimpsed universality or truthfulness. My vision remains limited by its location within my own life-experience: it is private and scarcely communicable. But my loved ones are inside this entity.

*Hymn*

Our dry tongues clambering around  
for leaden besmirched ministers  
try still the undigested splinter  
lounging emetic in the hay.

A bundle led from now open  
plains garnishes lacerated  
an unfit shop door which to feel  
I might be restored to the first scene.

He whose toes cross in the craven sky  
umbilical threshes out the  
whisper on Spitalfields market  
astro-turf, and clams the way

to all puffed offices dis-  
sentient ribbands laughing  
back their credit till the wholesome  
day, who ekes me out a sprig

of wounds and dashes in the season  
when tweezers will combine right there  
amongst the slag, and sing the May  
so long divisive canny rough.

*The Line of Definition*

What love dominates my abstract deal  
position, more now satellite revenant  
canoe or oak pew, warmth is target-  
virtuous, accords with the high blot  
stands above. To be authority so  
far kindle in dry intersected streams,  
love must not be answered but established.

Answer unpeels, wants the fool, fond  
frittering throughput mint-pole for an  
impossible current shorted in awkward  
rejoinder. Any heatspot closes up  
fontanel — to polish the taps in the  
cordoned-off, booming scotch the guest.

This can't be helped. Recognition  
has been highest strip & so depressive  
tests for accent, interrupt, regard  
for her bootstraps. No-one stops upright.  
Below that horizon are fish to fry.  
The geography is never a brutal enough

taxonomy for the sand or wind stoops  
to proffer an acceptable deal. Rig  
new shoes but they too walk historically  
fish to fowl left flapping at signposts,  
alienated only from what would touch  
with a full hand, for fear it might extend.  
Love self-tests & fetes the empty bed.

*Switch for Breathing*

The contents dog silence half-inclined to ask  
but the inclined head half-open has a gold filling.  
The entire angle in sleep holds a burning glass  
sets up wrapped in newsprint to belie crippled balance.

A picture of speech in the upright locked position  
replacing the mouth with a joke, with an ear, with a ringpull,  
the love half of the mouth paramount as wax  
ill-wept, an anathema called down on the hive.

Have nothing, have, mislay, or delete the fame of Eros  
pressurised now in a can, and it slams at the dawn's elite —  
sleep-in deferred; what actually died in the sheeting  
is sprouting in the language of the newly dumb:

*no stable hair, an apple, and the image cut  
for nothing, back in labour, for the good of liars.*



*Idylls of the worm*

*'Seventeen copies sold, of which eleven at trade price to free circulating libraries. Getting known.'*  
*Samuel Beckett, Krapp's Last Tape*

Anxieties of affluence loom large in recent gossip about anglo-this and anglo-that poetics. Words like innovative, formally conservative, language movement etc. have everyone reaching for their pillow, while yawns break out at the prospect of yet more efforts to wind up platitude city for some teleology of the new. Oh for a dogmatic slumber. The commanding heights of the anthology are best left to museum guards. If you're not on speaking terms with the organs of bourgeois nationalism or yonder imperium of American capital, you can hardly lean on conflicts of generation for context. Persistent misnomers – from the tribe of Ben to the Cambridge clan – suggest that the wranglers will brand all but the swiftest of creatures. Perhaps there are some among us who dream of being local authors, but the flags of convenience are so metaphorical. Unamerican poets writing in English have to find their own worm-holes.

Ruses of tradition seem unrecognisable save within the most clumsy affiliations of texture. Hopes for anglo-American recognitions are no less evanescent and historical. Nodding in the direction of the Eiffel Tower is the preferred style of doffing among recent American trees, while poems from before you were born are passé, just a quarry for costume effects. Cue the millennium mood music. Symptomatically, Pound and Eliot are no longer the Laurel and Hardy by which more recent comedians are judged. Such giddy prospects of judgment suggests that we're at the wrong end of the stethoscope. Didacts and autodidacts may stage great heaving bouts on their theoretical crash mats, but the academic gymnasium only trains those parts of the human sensorium amenable to the abstractions of an ideal practice. Grace amid the manifold implosions of text and context requires more tactless disciplines and steelier nerves.

Thus the residual tools in the struggle-for-recognition kit are laughably earnest, especially the much touted raindance of entryism. Museums may throw up their laureates, just as the sentries of the culture industry take pot-shots at imagined snipers, but the manifestoes are embarrassing and the theory's a bore. Poetry is no more a language game than maths is linguistic artifice. The temptation to cite science as if collage could get critical remains ideological, a mystification of cognition only evaded through the most extravagant speculations.

If there's a place for prose in the incipient cognitions of recent poetry, prose has to think through the conditions of its own possibility. The rivers of influence are no less polluted than the

sources of lyric. Openness of the field makes visible those academic enclosure movements for whom Frankenstein food is the ideal of husbandry. Readers eager for vacuum-packed competence are hardly the citizens dreamt of by those still restless within the categories of prose. But skipping among the grids and networks of prose isn't a sufficient condition for the imagining of truth. Nor can cognition recognise itself reflexively without transgressing the moment and logic of the cognitive event. Concepts are of a higher order of understanding than the topsoil of images. Leaping from cognition to recognition may sustain a game that's so purposeless as to make artifice a joy, but the mod cons and soft tissues of textual recognition remain improbably diffuse and then social. One worm's post-Olsonian mulch is another worm's campus novel.

Anyway, some blot of local or musical pleasure is needed to make the diet of worms less like compulsory dust. Put differently, the struggles for recognition active in present imaginings can't claim a cognitive status without taking in the world of prose. Feeble ephemerality of misrecognition are evident even in the most sustained attempts to describe contemporary writing. Any number of Steinian slow-mo replays won't allow the creaky hinges of cognition to eschew the forms and functions of prose. And a most local splash can't survive notice without also feeling how artifice distorts the sustaining locality of the splash. We still believe in grammar more than we know. Let's talk ripples, let's talk dirty.

If any force accrues from such cowardly intimations, then some earth's been shifted. Others prefer a stand-up kind of how's-your-father, but true hedonists only play the joker when the going gets too reasonable. If there's no place for amusement in the sensorium of cognition, why bother storming the winter palace of reason? Irony may let thought off the hook, but wit can be a sharing of spirit as welcome as a blush of sunshine on a clear horizon. In short, one worm's owl of Minerva is another worm's early bird. Then again a good laugh means never having to say get it? As the punch-lines run out of oomph, the worms of poesie rise to the surface. The call of the rain may turn out to be birds thumping out the iambic ideology of free lunch, but you know it's more fun wiggling away like live bait than chewing the deadlines of the sub-soil.

**Bit**

Ta'en again snap pack eruption  
irrigation purr said out. I's under  
said's pew age verification  
cart man authoritar cue s under  
ex e mornings all again in love again.  
Royston. Last train. Acne. Photocard.

In the narrow marrow, as it were, never, say,  
the tight why drenched in dismal occasion, all  
wastedly defining all, books of blurbs on bonces;  
mind reading no I have this here. Quite, shit,  
who loves a bit of it (she has a lot on her —  
I almost saw them do it, in the old sung winter  
nettles that is nowhere, many homes away).  
I could have went and loved that one  
day. Ah: yes: gone. Back the screwed in,  
pulled-under sharp tent bolt head aptitude of  
mercy: never. Of unreason, able cogs: me  
and Siren Bloggs — cleft her; muck is over gender.  
Weep untenable. You would not me like a dance whirr..

# T I M M O R R I S

## M o s a i c s

### - O N E -

Downcountry to the lowlands, a dove shell

downcut to its bed, crew on the footplate

flick the electric fence, trudge to the mound

more restraint  
tie down and rethink the gavage; call for

monitoring the ground effect in slow deliberate rotation, one degree conceded  
to the wary

languish in its deathly fall will crackle with  
satirical intent

served up with a flourish was a mixed blessing; but the flowers lost little of  
their lustre

each nick has its absolute moment; a  
temporary blindness hurried over shame  
business

osseous array now what

deafened pinna among the reeds, sees

fastidious as the rental he gambles on his renown; on the bark were whorls  
within whorls

he scotch-taped her legs and recited the  
scores

light up a smudge and sit with its inhale, battling for concern

down the drip-dry lane, thoroughly  
outspoken and retarded

pocket the bulbs and quickly get indoors; she slips into a back room and does  
not reappear

the passer-by could feel it as a punishment,  
the ballot bore this out; there is a joy more  
fulfilling

if it was hinted, it didn't get the pleasure; the moral attained several seconds  
too early

discovering a worm in one's apple";  
"to be galvanised out of sync is like  
watching as a plains-dweller watches

how at times in the stillness hand to hand mad with light  
as for the changing season troop into the  
labour exchange; the sun was reason enough  
to stay out  
in a theatre full of tragedy, her hair reveals her; into service following the  
treatments  
that's a one-off so let's speak no more about  
it; and on the causes of crime  
pristine sparkle off surfaces is the bridesmaid's jitters when the shadows come  
slap up the scratch coat and work in the  
colours; overcompensate the shade  
everything is in herself, which one never sees; the bird kept saying so what  
unsaddle the white horses a snip and a sneer sir, if you please;  
naked of hindrance, unseal the letter  
perfectly fluid errand; liquid amber flowing  
over the beat of an audible step  
we must endure our thoughts all night  
they met a second time, liked each other  
even more.

**- T W O -**

All thanked up and ready to go and starting to go and gathering the oddments  
and hang on  
attend to many tasks of preparation and delay; seagoing wreck  
daylight; cannot go, cannot stay a spoon clicking on a plate near  
a vision of light and shade on the trees; the  
sideband is merely plausible or the lack of a  
reason  
and simple love not attending; the trouble of the mind  
they can tell how long it has been there; thousands migrate,  
perhaps never to return  
in both countries we searched for  
a suitable place; much statuary  
and many paintings

I couldn't agree more; including our own

now much drier and far aloft sun and driving sand down what  
pass to shriek a shrill plangent and off; incomplete production  
number

she supposes it was back in time

the sailor-master brings over his authentic gait and terms are  
agreed; quick sagacious implant and set sail

it is not so easy to see most men  
of any degree; but the difficultest  
rigor is ripe

pulled out a quizzical stompie; whose turn is it to  
speak?

have no fear, it will help define what is intended

sweet vanilla on the gravel track; excellence of the divine beauty

"one function of the poet at any time is..."; they move off  
toward their cars

"there are some things I could be  
doing"; which outfit does she  
choose?

prodding the sourpuss to the point of fury; the  
departed soldier is as he is

no sound now, but tiny scraps to  
gather or lose

seems to hang still lulled to a sway, lulled to slow expire; craning for a vantage

having no need of grace, every tempered arc unteachable

released the title-music; feelings  
about familiar things

perpetual or strange

- T H R E E -

Flat out across the stipend grass and the flag unfurled

sausages in the heavy pan

liable to murmur; the

under a pink-eyed sky the weary travellers return; crafted  
from velocity and upheld by law

to populate space her greatest gift; the wind whistled through the cracks

the final breath before  
parlando; with dark sugar  
and sickly sweet

to fight

the fall had been by falsehood, and now she has disdained

point the way to many strangers; we started early that day

of triple-form and all-  
beholding eyes the phone  
rings

turned in the hand with a look rapidly approaching  
disgust; the immediate, badly cooked

chosen one of my regards, brought to perfection by the last hand

reflection to observe it;  
how fast the world  
declined

'tis no astonishing

during that lapse of time green visited green

black rider, black rider, no news?

you cannot satisfy my  
questions; she knew  
nothing of what I had  
asked

take me to the prioress,

new tulips by the road; all down to the ratio

explosion of parallax across the uniform wheat; ecstatic getting nowhere in the  
principle

all the little angels sing;  
and a little, pale star is  
on fire