

## QUID 15: EDITNEID

Dear General Reader,

You asked me recently why I maintain that I am afraid of you. Some facts:

- ❖ I am a moderniser. I have options which pose difficult choices, yet the choices made will help determine whether the radicalism of the early 21st century will reproduce the progressive principles of the past hundred years or will be founded on new values and visions. This is my dilemma. I have to see the potential appeal of an alternative politics of the new.
- ❖ The shift to a mass system of poetry as an art has imposed immense pressures on poets, thinkers and educational institutions, but little has been done to articulate and address the changes in you required. Partly for the very reason that I am afraid of you.
- ❖ My activity is broken up into a series of tasks that lead you through the process of building up information, providing the tools for analysis, before posing a final task that asks you to use my knowledge and to evaluate the extent to which you can be described as 'asset-led.' An explanation of the grounds for this would mean going into far more details than I could even approximately keep in mind while talking to you.
- ❖ HPT1800551: Our problem is that the roles of poet and reader have become blurred.  
HVR09052341: The fatal error of thinking that feeling and practice form a continuum.  
HPT1840525: You have worked hard all your life, above all for me.  
VS41: The fatal error of thinking that theory and practice form a continuum.  
CRE12: Foolish levelling of the playing field.  
HPT1800113: No effective internal critique.

**View basket.**

**Edit basket.**

**Your basket is empty.**

- ❖ Tired of the same old illusion of choice of the same things up for debate over what I can and cannot say only allowing the bitterness to be flushed away for a moment in an artificial existence without knowing what you truly desire? Then fuck it, this is for you. Make it more yours and more in your own hands when you write a poem to:

Keston Sutherland, The Owner of *Quid*  
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Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9QH

kms20@hermes.cam.ac.uk  
www.barquepress.com

## Tom Leonard

### The Fair Cop

a cop came to see me  
but I didn't know he was a cop  
I'm so trusting!!  
and I said sit down and have a cup of tea  
and he sat down and had a cup of tea

and he was a young man  
a nice looking young man  
he reminded me of my son  
the taller of my sons  
very discreet  
a good listener

and I said would you like a banana?  
I eat bananas like a gorilla  
but the cop didn't want a banana  
he asked me if it was all right to use a dictaphone  
and I said of course though I don't really like dictaphones

and he was interested in all my life  
and he wanted to get a few things straight  
it would help him with his work  
and I'm getting old  
there's bits of me beginning to pack up and go  
and I like helping the young  
it is one of the pleasures of old age  
what else is there for the old to do?

so I told him all I could  
and I was very free and honest  
I like being free and honest  
I like those days when it all comes together  
and you know your own story  
and you know your own place in the world  
and what you have done and why

and he didn't say very much  
come to think of it he didn't say very much at all  
but he had a nice smile  
and he seemed a good listener  
so I talked and I talked instructing the young on my path through life

and only once did his expression change somehow  
only once did his eyes sort of flicker  
and that was when I was talking about terrorism  
and how they all use the word terror now instead  
and I told him I noticed when the change first took place

I said I remember it being Ariel Sharon  
how he kept saying terror terror terror terror  
fighting terror war on terror fighting terror war on terror  
all instead of terrorism

and now the word's over here

and how this reminded me of the way words would change during the seventies  
how news bulletins would change a word even in one day reporting Ireland  
how the words on something would evolve to a kind of more acceptable slant

and I told him how I used to rant on then  
I laughed how I used to rant on then in the seventies and eighties  
all this stuff about changing the laws for the Irish situation  
how they would bring the diplock courts over here when they felt they could  
how they would find another emergency over here when it suited them

I was really relaxed talking to the young man I know the story of this place  
I grew up in it I have eyes and ears  
I try to find out different views  
it's part of being free and honest that's what I was so keen to tell him  
it's not part of being a member of anything it's just part of being alive

but there was something about that mention of terror  
something about the way he reacted to me talking about it  
looking back it was almost as if he was suddenly on the job  
and his face changed just that wee bit, his eyes caught mine just for a second

though it was only a couple of days later  
when I was up for the toilet in the middle of the night  
I was up for my usual four o'clock pee  
and I'd decided to have a cup of tea and a banana  
when it suddenly dawned on me  
just out the blue

jesus christ that cunt was a cop!  
that wasn't a nice young man looking for the wisdom of the old  
that cunt was a cop!  
it's the War on Terror! he was part of the war on terror!  
and that's why his eyes changed when I spoke about that

of course you can never really be sure of these things  
you can't really tell there's no way of knowing  
who can you trust? can you trust anyone ever?

there seems to be so much being spent on this war on terror  
so much about how we need to have more secret police  
how much we need more phonetapping  
all the news about threats to the fabric of our society  
how the whole world is being taken over

it makes me wonder just because I keep questioning it  
I can't help it it's just the way I am  
I like to be free and honest  
I hate language that isn't free and honest

that's just the truth of it  
I can't put it any other way

and I keep opening my mouth and saying it  
what else is there to do when you're growing old?  
you can't go to your grave without having said what you think

I suppose they just have to keep files on people like me  
if I was one of them, I imagine I would

Mark Mendoza • [untitled]

Go little as if  
into the immediate scales of practised fantasy  
a Catherine wheel, jail just passed, they discern full bodies &  
draw thought's wait at insular  
well. Ruin; you would  
be its pitted store, teatimes during siege. The rain  
dithers what the stableboy didn't write, a maid made of trash  
into the foyer for  
tinnies, shelter  
less wordy; shivering in with a confirmed strip  
finding the resultant niche, WELCOME six digits,  
two extra this round – that's smart honey.  
Play *aussi*,  
captive of spam &  
pea fritter when labium slime is rental keepsake  
burn-. They owe as if stacked, parent bored before  
forked PRESENTATION to market. Down the Morris flow  
a bad joke produces an exact erection. A few more  
Euros in  
a vinegary fist.

The knife slid from her hand to mine, I forget I smiled.  
Watch it peter, to come & blank in the bold face  
underlining. They don't intersect but fly fly away across  
milky sidebars. Play Chekhov at the booty chest & you too  
harvest your father's  
father. Track  
the enemy in the street, until he goes home "aim carefully  
my children, gifted ongoing loss & renewing majesty  
anxious to crowd many lives into a bestial life;  
Attendance profane while pathos abstracted the rounds,  
zooms to a neck brace in arrears. It's not your fault I am  
innocent of  
pleasure, sadness  
losing to ire. Try the regular, then upsize: it seems as if  
were incapable of making a beginning at all. As if, it seems  
the subject were laced with recent structural failures. Candidates  
wrote messily *cost in extreme numbers of lost. . . In summary*,  
they find it difficult to right without acquittal; not me  
but as if that tries

Chris Goode • An introduction to speed-reading

**A**loha Generalissimo! your speed-reading dollars, your plenty, it is to serve you on a platter, thus taking these advice. **How to approach the text** The text is devil-sticks. The text is "what goes down stairs" i.e. Slinky. The text is one one thousand two one thousand three one thousand monkey on the council lungfish farm. **Tip:** The eyes should move independently. The left eye should overtake the right eye on the straight. The mouth should blow indolent spit globes, the correct embouchure is shown in fig. 8. **Tip:** Hold the text as you would hold a bad red cabbage i.e. away from you and preferably out of the window. Scold it without remorse, say BAD CABBAGE, say that. Stick it in the shredder marked Deutsche Bank. **Tip:** The text is an ornery slut you push a starting pistol up its gaping wimbledon hole it will moan like a blind calf shove it on up. **Ways of disabling the text:** (1) pin-down (2) half-Nelson (3) "Matt Thorne, the idiot novelist." **Tip:** Make the cat read it. **Getting started:** First read the page as a bitmap. What is a text what a image so on *ad plasmam*. Readers possessed of 'the funk' (see fig. 9) may use multiple algorithms to analyse the stroke edge: oh mother she will go wandering off. I've never had a multiple algorithm. Well then baby take an average. Plunder the good earth. **Reading myths, #1:** "Reading is linear." Au contraire Claire, reading is in a bent hoop belle of oval what blatant Valerie blent is what that, obviously. **How to get more out of the text:** In the first stages of reading, the objective is to obtain as much meaning as possible from the text. Synthetic word-splitting enzymes such as Phonemase can help improve meaning yield by up to 98% per cent / exploded banana republic. Throw me a dry-loving bone here mailman / the pulp wash process: make sure jellification of the text is avoided during concentration. During what. During concentration I think he said. It's more of a blip. If that's a blip I'm Quincy. **Pod:** There is in the town of Coblenz a poor man who is bewitched in this way. In the presence of his wife he is in the habit of acting after the manner of men with pamphlets, that is to say, of practising reading, as it were, and he continues to do this repeatedly: nor have the cries and urgent appeals of his wife any effect in making him desist. And after he has read two or three pamphlets, he bawls out: "We are going to start all over again". After an incredible number of such pamphlets, the poor man sinks to the floor, utterly exhausted. **Tip:** Hey! Have a shit fit. Do a benny. Do a brassica. Replace every fourth thought with "Bo Diddley" (fig.10). **Tip:** Stick map pins in its outset. Find a sturdy looking-surface. Before it goes swimming down Filibuster Cove change its mind, its arrows, cut its Speedos henry: salt mustard *virgula* shopsoil. Leave it to Beaver at the tan-skin crossroads heading south. **Tip:** Undertake to read the text in a smoky environment. The text will think it is on fire and the words will form orderly queues and proceed to the nearest exit. **Tip:** Disrobe the dirty begging text and lube its wilful vertices. The text is a reverb chasm awaiting steamboat operator's contra-

snatch. **Reading myths, #2:** "Reading is a laborious process and is time-consuming." Nothing could be further from the sofa. Get a mandrel bent exhaust system. Install an underdrive serpentine pulley. Grab a witch-hammer. Make your fucking Hispanic pool-cleaner move the book while you keep your eyes absolutely still as if you were in some kind of academic catatonia or waking lifestyle narcosis, pausing once every minute or so to gargle your dark brown spawny piña colada. Allow your mind to wander from (a) sea to (b) shining sea and (c) back again. **Tip:** Phone society. It's society's mess. **Tip:** a note on bookmarks. [insert bookmark note here] **Bullet point:** "When a text, proud of its interior-exterior relations, deceives its reader, then the king should ensure that it be torn apart by dogs in a place much frequented by people." [Holy Book Of The Smurfs 8:371] **How to read this article:** (1) Cut the head off. You might want to hang it upside-down first. (2) Run a little faster than ever before. (3) Make your children pull out the feathers. All except the wings and the anus. Cram the feathers into mother that'll learn her. (4) Burn the skin. (5) Cut off the oil gland. (6) Divide the text into verso and recto. (7) Don't touch the pooping bag unless you are absolutely convinced you are Anish Kapoor. (8) Climb into the refrigerator. I mean live there. I'm absolutely serious. Shut the door the light goes out you're in the dark with the lights out. Jailbait you suck freon issue. What do you want George Herbert Softy Walter etc. For more useful and exciting information about chickens, click here. If your text starts to urinate while you are holding it / Clam rage. Clam cram rage. Bate rage. Premium rate clam-bake chromium rage. More rage types after this message. **Tip:** Check out the periods, the full stops I mean, the full points, they're see they're like little nipples it's such a crying pity they don't make a tongue noise. LA. LA. LA LA LA that's suspense dots. To be continued LA LA LA. Little hard nipples all in a row I'm getting a bit emotional. **Remember:** You have the right to make a citizens' arrest. **How reading is achieved:** The position sensors on the ocular ligaments (fig.11) are used to transmit position coordinates back to the control station, where a graphical representation of the eye is displayed on the operations screen. The logic control processor / pick up turnover / was that a mule or a fog I saw. A disappointing end to a brilliant career. **Tip:** Climb up on a ladder. Have your father climb on the roof. Now both jump at the same time. Who has the most gravitational potential energy? Who do you think will be travelling faster when they hit the ground? **Tip:** At five fifteen in the morning (fig.12) too tired to masturbate watch some semi-recumbent dickweed called Bubble reading a book also called Bubble while a tv camera films him turning the pages (one every eighty-five seconds) and the rest of the housemates are in bed dreaming of a travelogue gameshow they might one day present possibly called Birth Canal or Jackalheads or Foghorn Leghorn's Bunghole Blunder or Dunce-Bothering Almost Live from the Metropole. **Reading myths, #3:** "All parts of a book are of equal value." Quasi-mystical bullshine. Do not read the parts in Latin. Do not read the page numbers. Do not read the bit where she's telling him how she's been hurt before and she can't go through that again. Do not read the pictures. Do not read the source code. Do not read the very very short words (which are rubbish) or the very very long words (which are likely to be medical and therefore indecent). Only read words where the vowels occur in the correct order e.g. 'facetious'. Do not

read both L's in the word Corelli. Once you've read the words 'Mormon' or 'gangbang' once, remember them, and you'll never have to read them again.

**Reading myths, #4:** "Shab shabi dishab shabi da shahre sham ashub shod. Shishehgar shashido as shashash shisheha shish hesaro sheshsado shast tikke shod." This myth is, actually, true. **What to say in a speed-reading emergency:** I don't see my Audi! I don't see my BMW! I don't see my Buick! etc. etc. Oldsmobile! I don't see my Plymouth! I don't see my Pontiac! etc. my Shrdlu! etc. etc. my Volkswagen! **In conclusion:** Generalissimo, ladies and gentlemen, we are speeding towards our destiny hold the children's soft heads their delicate chins launch the hyper-legible sparrows at the cave-mouth lurch we got a bleeder waits for no man the problem is the paper it's written on it's too hot to handle I mean literally I mean this paper is too hot to Jesus too Jesus too hot to hold —

*(Notes: The treated story in the 'Pod' section is taken from Part II of the Malleus Maleficarum. The base quotation in the 'Bullet point' section is from the Manu Smrti. Reading myth #4 is a Farsi tongue-twister; the translation given at source is as follows: 'One night, yesterday night there was unrest in the city of Sham [Damascus]. The glasses were scared and wet themselves so much that they broke up into 6660 pieces.')*



**Luśka Mengham**

**Keptabs.**

flesh blot  
to find yourself  
as steam  
flying at the air  
in beats  
muscle rapids  
electro-canzone number  
raw paper as a means to idealise  
blackly  
rumble and resemble  
and flatly tender  
there's a girl  
in negatives  
heel-dance of the summer hate  
racy other  
lip-capped indifference  
quiet face  
to ever touch the footnote  
would leave a coal fire  
run of lights

**Ben Watson • Space**

Address to the Cambridge Poetry Summit 9-11 January 2004

'Shiner' by Richard Caddel:

One star overhead, sound  
of night frost crackling. We  
follow hard with all our  
lives, there's nothing more

of it than space. In this dark  
enfolding, we've all just our-  
selves, memories, our breathing  
individual. Standing

lost so alone in this music  
or walking or listening  
for what light, what plain  
morning we're moving towards –

The poem ends in mid-stride with an em-dash, as if the poet were anticipating his own death...which did actually occur in April last year. Caddel's deft deployment of words and unambiguous life-philosophy mean that, for some readers, his poems are the very definition of lyric. The poem appears to have no literary apparatus, the meditation is unperfumed, stark, existential. However, this simplicity is part of a knowing strategy. Far from being an undefended register of spontaneous thoughts under a night sky, the poem establishes correspondences with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Frost at Midnight.' One way of understanding modernism is as a distillation or refinement of previous cultural forms. Coleridge's poem proposed faith in the continuity of experience between successive generations as a replacement for religious comfort. Once their historical work is done, classic texts like 'Frost at Midnight' are honoured for their aesthetic charge: poetry can emerge as for-itself, as autonomous. 'Shiner' creates a pared-down, modernist Coleridge with such assurance, it's a surprise to go back to 'Frost At Midnight,' and discover Coleridge's poem was not actually an existential confrontation with individual mortality, but stuffed full of other people—the poet's cradled infant, 'this populous village,' 'sea, hill, and wood,/With all the numberless goings-on of life.' Coleridge's poem promises that, unlike the poet, raised in the city, his child will grow up conversant with the beauties of the countryside. It's about time and generation in the grand sense.

Caddel, on the other hand, begins with 'One star overhead,' a cosmically-defined individualism which is only possible if time, and the revolution of the earth by which we measure it, were frozen in its tracks—or if the poet, like the sacred city described by Mircea Eliade in *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, were situated directly beneath the pole-star, on the axis mundi itself. "... sound/of night frost crackling. We/follow hard with all our/lives, there's nothing more/of it than space." If "all our life" is imagined, it must be over (avoiding the dialectical objection that if "we" are doing the

imagining, we must still be alive). In Caddel's poem we become hard like frost, like fossils, like stars: eternal objects in eternal space. Indeed, contrary to the mundane materialism of modernism's focus on technique, Caddel hints at transcendence: the last line, "what light, what plain/morning we're moving towards," could be the joyful awakening which Christianity promises after death, at least for the saved.

I haven't picked on Caddel's poem out of spite, least of all to dishonour the dead. Actually, I didn't pick the poem, it picked me. West House Books sent it on a flyer eliciting orders for *Writing in the Dark*, a posthumous publication edited by Caddel's widow. According to the flyer, Caddel actually wrote these poems in the dark, using a "hand-held Psion with a backlit screen" - so "we've not all just our-/selves, memories, our breathing/individual," we've actually got the latest in high-tech consumer products. On the flyer Tony Baker is quoted from *Northern Review*:

He was a man whose entire art derived from the generous tenacity with which he held to the everyday business of living well, of living kindly. I doubt whether he ever allowed a word into print that hadn't been measured against what he understood to be the fullest meanings of what it is to be human.

Now, is criticism of such statements in poor taste? In her talk about bereavement and 9/11 to the Birkbeck poetry seminar in 2002 ['Grief Work in a War Economy,' *Quid* 9, 6-24], Andrea Brady gave a historical account of how political leaders have used grief to mobilise their populations for war. She pointed out how death can be used to close down intellectual discussion and censor debate. My argument is not with Caddel's widow and publishers who wish to remember him; my argument is with those who see his existentialism as defining the "poetic;" and also with definitions of "the human" which exclude those ranks of humanity who for some reason fail to understand "the fullest meanings of what it is to be human." This is what Theodor Adorno called "the jargon of authenticity," a deep-sounding gloss which can be applied to any political position, however cruel in practice.

What is it about statements like "with all our/lives, there's nothing more/of it than space" that appeal? Surely it's the way it asserts the right to metaphysical speculation. Poetry—lonely and individualist, written by the solitary man under the stars on his handheld Psion—has become the last resort of mystical and religious impulses which in earlier times were handled by organised knowledge. "Space" is Caddel's (and everyone's) natural-scientific, secularised term for "everything," or the One. In the *Philebus*, Plato defined dialectics as finding the right steps between the One and the Many. Is the individual contemplating the eternal stars capable of supplying the right steps? The reply from the Marxist Left is no—ever since Heraclitus, dialectical thought has stressed the crucial role of time. Someone can go down to the same river, but they've changed, different water is flowing by, everything changes. However, the mere assertion of left versus right, or time versus space, is antithetical to poetic and cosmic thinking. People are going to gaze at the stars and wonder about life whether or not Marxists give them permission. As Matthew Collings might put it as he strides about some gallery and talks to the camera, "because that's what poetry

is all about." The dialectician's emphasis on time feels one-sided and unsatisfactory, like a dogma, inimical to the freedom and risk of poetic creativity. However, there are determinations beyond simple political affiliation or theoretical prejudice concealed in this debate: they have to do with what the money form does to social relations.

When Frank Zappa released his 1979 album *Sleep Dirt* on CD in 1991, he superimposed vocals by Thana Harris on tunes which had previously been instrumentals. Ignorant of Marxist categories, and out of sympathy with left politics—indeed, during his lifetime, critical of trade unions, protest marches and actually-existing communism—Zappa was particularly alert to authoritarian uses of scientific concepts. Amidst the gloppy sincerity of the 60s commercial rock scene, he was a dadaist; in a genre which was a bourgeois-idealist steal from the materialism, honesty and directness of the blues, he was a polemical historical-materialist. The lyrics he added to *Sleep Dirt* were from an aborted musical he'd written called *Hunchentoot*. Its heroine was Drakma, the Queen of Cosmic Greed, who plans to invade the planet earth, but falls in love with *Hunchentoot*, a giant spider. The tune "Time Is Money" opens with the observation

Time is money but space is a long, long time.

This introduces two considerations which the ontological opposition of individual consciousness to cosmic space cannot handle: namely, capitalist social relations, and Einstein's discovery of relativity. In reflecting on what it is to be human, Marx started with an immediate and glaring fact: under capitalism, to be human is to be a commodity called labour. Labour is paid for by the day. Capitalism is a system of extracting maximum surplus value from that time period, so that return on capital invested—again measured by time, but this time at a higher level of rationality, per annum—may be competitive. It is this logic which explains the persistence, even in wealthy countries, of anti-social measures like welfare cuts and privatisation. Marx's introduction of mundane issues like land rent, capital and wages into philosophy degraded the afflatus of Hegelian idealism in a provocative way. Such Marxism chimes with Dada poetics, which derives moments of giddy hilarity from the juxtaposition of incongruous realms of discourse, but it offends existentialism, which yearns for a timeless grasp of verities. I read the collected poetry of J. H. Prynne as an attempt at a timeless ontology which, in its materialist vehemence and self-consciousness, ripped recognised discourses of profundity into dialectical cognition of temporary verbal clusters and liaisons. Prynne became a dadaist because class society is objectively absurd.

Recognition of the commodity destroys the aura of the work of art. In modernist poetry and philosophy, this recognition does battle with asocial ontology. This is symptomatic of the class struggle which capitalism never fails to provoke: between the emancipation of labour promised by communism and the protection of property interests by war and fascism. The ubiquity of Heideggerian concepts in French post-structuralist philosophy (and hence in American poetics) was begun by Alexandre Kojève in his lectures on Hegel after the war. It was writ large by Jean-Paul Sartre with Existentialism and perpetuated by Jacques Derrida. This jargon blurs the outlines

of class conflict (for the intelligentsia, if not for striking workers or rebellious youth). The result is that the academic humanities have now achieved the insipid social-democratic solution, where a pinch of the radical left—a quote from Benjamin or Khlebnikov or Mayakovsky—is balanced by a pinch of fascism—a quote from Heidegger or Ezra Pound. Such "balance" leaves the status quo and the degradations of capital uncriticised. In a bizarre manoeuvre, today's postmodernist political theory even uses the concepts of Heidegger—a member of the Nazi party—to "theorise" the unutterability of atrocities perpetrated by Nazi policies. In this context, it might be useful to recall what Nazi ideology actually was, why it was invented, and how it achieved hegemony in Germany.

In 1946, Max Weinreich of the Yiddish Scientific Institute published a book called *Hitler's Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crimes Against the Jewish People*. Weinreich set up the Yiddish Scientific Institute in 1925 in Vilnius in Lithuania. Its aim was to transform Yiddish, a folk tongue and culture, into a vehicle for reputable historical studies. In seeking to exalt an oppressed people, Weinreich's project was kind of like jazz in its own peculiar way. Weinreich travelled to America, and studied at Yale, and to Vienna, where he studied with Siegfried Berenfeld, the psychoanalyst. The Nazi-Soviet pact of October 1939 signalled the end of the Yiddish Scientific Institute in Vilnius, and Weinreich relocated it to New York. He became a prestigious academic in the United States, holding professorships at the City University of New York, UCLA and Columbia. His institute must've been well financed, as it built up a massive archive of documents about the Nazi regime and war effort, including books and journals of Nazi racial science, propaganda, and even top-secret internal memos. After the American invasion of Germany, boxes of documents—far too many to be read by the Nuremberg judges—were delivered to Weinreich's institute in New York. *Hitler's Professors* is an extraordinary work, written with scholarly precision and righteous anger, naming names and even listing those—including many non-Germans—who'd attended international conferences of racial science before the war. After its first publication in 1946, Weinreich's book wasn't reprinted until 1999. For anyone who believes that Nazism was an incomprehensible outbreak of irrational prejudice and bootboy racism, reading Weinreich is salutary: the Nazi regime employed thousands of brilliant scholars and academics to justify territorial conquest and genocide. Weinreich's book was republished because of the fashion for "holocaust studies," but it cuts through the mystifications generated by that discipline.

However, the reason I'm talking about this book here is for the light it casts on modernist poetics and postmodernist philosophy. Although his life was spent elevating Yiddish as a language and culture, Weinreich didn't make the American mistake of seeing race rather than property relations as the determining factor in politics. He argues that it was the emancipation of the Jews in the French Revolution of 1789 which made Jews the symbol of everything reaction detested. He points out that an especially virulent form of anti-semitism was brought to Germany by Tsarists fleeing the Russian Revolution of 1917, including the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a forgery by the Tsar's secret police. Anti-semitism was a rallying call for a German ruling class battered by defeat in the First World War, a workers' revolution in 1918 and setbacks in its imperialist ventures. But Nazism also had a metaphysics, and this was centred in the vaunting of space over time.

Students of that rather unrepresentative slice of European culture called "English Literature" can be rather startled by a book published by Wyndham Lewis in 1927 called *Time & Western Man*. The idea of a polemic against the concept of time appears quixotic. Actually, *Time & Western Man* was fully in line with fascist ideology in Europe, though it requires a book like Weinreich's, which documents an eclipsed period in western thought, to understand this. A victorious America adopted Nazi missile technology wholesale; it had to be a little more circumspect about appropriating its ideological weapons. Nazi ideology claimed to be applied or activist Darwinism: the survival of the fittest was the theory, National Socialism and concentration camps were the practice. In *Origin of Species*, Darwin's fundamental concepts are variation and selection. In its flamboyant abundance and myriad mutations, Nature throws out countless genetic variations, which are then selected to suit the environment. Significantly, the Nazis chose to ignore variation, thus making their "Darwinism" totally unscientific. The key terms for them were *Auslese* (selection) and *Ausmerze* (extinction). Moreover, in their haste to formulate a politics from Darwinism, the Nazis had to suppress an obvious objection: natural evolution is accomplished over millions of years, whereas historical time is measured in decades, and in wars by days or hours. Time is a consideration which the pseudoscience of racism would rather do without.

Germans were the first to establish history as a scientific discipline. Marx and Engels could only have come from the German intellectual ferment, where Hegel had made the study of history the sine qua non of all intellectual comprehension. Little of this, however, was useful to a political movement that required justifications for militarism and conquest. Therefore, a "revolution in ideas" was proclaimed. The Nazi concept of *Lebensraum*—"space to live"—is notorious, but it was merely one of a constellation of new terms. There was also *Raumdenken*, thinking in terms of space, *Raumfühlen*, "perceiving space," *Raumordnung*, "rearranging space," and—this is where the academics got really excited—*Raumforschung*, or "space studies." In 1935 Hitler set up departments for the study of the "space question:" the *Reichsstelle für Raumordnung* and the *Reichsstelle für Raumforschung*. In October 1936, a new journal appeared: *Raumforschung und Raumordnung: Monatsschrift der Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Raumforschung*. The Reich Minister of Education wrote the following introduction, printed on the first page:

The entrance of science into the study and arrangement of space will by necessity introduce it into the fundamental questions of National Socialism: Blood and Soil, People and Space [*Blut und Boden, Volk und Raum*]. Through this task, German scholarship will both take and give power.

The study of "people and space" sounds innocuous, one can imagine such a project in a university today, but it's actually just a reformulation of the famous Nazi couplet "blood and soil" (blood means people; soil means space). Conceiving society as "people in space" avoids considering the actual force which moves them around, which gets them into work in the morning, and which allows them to go on holiday, or which today gives them less and less leisure time: money, or wage labour. *Raumdenken* meant thinking in ruling-class terms: a national struggle over territorial sources of

surplus value. Weinreich points out that enthusiasm for killing Jews meant that the Nazis occasionally ignored economic rationality, but in general financial accountancy was incredibly rigorous in the Nazi period. The Bauhaus was closed down because it "wasted tax-payers' money:" every aspect of life, including forced labour in concentration camps, and the hair shaved from the heads of gas victims, was scrutinised for economic potential. Armed with the slogan "people and space," academics and journalists could draw a veil over such accountancy. They could ignore the classic capitalist equations between time and money, labour and wage, equations which in periods of crisis and clampdown produce inhuman results. Funnily enough, it was during the 1980s boom, when all kinds of sharp practices were being made involving property and time (Docklands and riverside investments, the "futures market"), that the postmodernised humanities suddenly discovered that "space" was the great topic which their Marxist predecessors had ignored.

Weinreich points out that the Nazi concept of space allowed them to call an invasion of another country and its colonisation by Germans by another name. Everything to the east of Germany was simply "*Ostrum*." This "was to show the average German that he would move into a historical-cultural vacuum which he would have to model for the first time in modern history." If Prynne is right in interpreting the free, borderless space of modernist American poetry as an echo of America's history of expansion westward, then it's hardly to this poetry's credit. Indeed, it makes free verse as complicit in the lie that the "Wild" West was originally unpeopled as any Hollywood Western made in the 1940s and 50s. When Charles Olson decided that he was no longer a Marxist because "space" was now more important than "time," he may have been reacting against the Stalinist/Sartrean travesty of Marxism—history as the extinction of the subject—but fell for a quasi-fascist solution. If he'd listened to Walter Benjamin rather than Ezra Pound, *Call Me Ishmael* (1947) wouldn't have been a celebration of American victory over Japan in the Pacific:

I am interested in a Melville who was long-eyed enough to understand the Pacific as part of our geography, another West, prefigured in the Plains.

We forget the part the chase of the whale played in [the] American economy. It started from the shortage of fats and oils.

[Whaling had a] leading role in making the Pacific the American lake the navy now, after a lapse of 100 years, has been about the business of certifying.

[For Melville, the Pacific was] an experience of SPACE most Americans are only now entering on, 100 years after Melville. Of waters, as Russia of land, the Pacific gives the sense of immensity. She is HEART SEA, twin and rival of the HEARTLAND. The Pacific is, for an American, the Plains repeated, a 20th century Great West.

Melville understood that America completes her West only on the coast of Asia.

Given this uncritical enthusiasm for Yankee imperialism in the Pacific, it is nothing short of staggering that during the time when this imperialism was producing the atrocities of the Vietnam War, Britain's best poets—J.H. Prynne and Iain Sinclair—became infatuated with Charles Olson. This infatuation, along with that for the fascist Pound, injected a liberal equivocation into self-styled

"modernist" poetry in English which has made it an impossible terrain for serious Marxist critique. John Wilkinson's inability to discern the utter uselessness of the postmodernist circumlocutions of Barrett Watten ['The Failure of Conservatism in Andrew Duncan's Criticism,' *Quid* 12, 2-7] is merely the latest example of the many casualties our "radical" poetry has sacrificed to the juggernaut of Anglo-American studies. Only by stepping outside its rules and omissions—Andrew Duncan's deployment of Punk, my demeaning emphasis on Frank Zappa, Sean Bonney and his Asger Jorn—can we get a handle on its ideology.

In other words, contra Caddel, there is "something more of it than space." The denial of time by poets and philosophers is both fatuous and sinister. The superficial bustle, changes and decadology of the commercial media are indeed bewildering and alienating. But Fascism supplies a reactionary solution: Hitler's "Thousand Year" Reich, which pitched classicism versus capitalism. However, historical research shows this classicism was a spectacle of permanence plastered on top of rampaging exploitation that was destructive and extremely unstable. If criticisms of capitalism fail to expose the actual forces at work—the time-based pressures of return on capital investment, the exploitation of labour, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall—they regress to calls for timeless, unhurried contemplation of nature, like Adolf Hitler attacking "Jewish" art criticism because it equated eternal art "with the products of our modern sweatshops and fashion industries." As Dada discovered, it is precisely when classical art and the products of mass production are placed in juxtaposition that light is shed on both: how images prop power, how money is generated.

I'm not arguing that spatial thinking be made taboo. Unlike the reformists who banish the socialist utopia to an ever-receding future, turning history into a never-ending tread-mill, the revolutionary left knows there will be moments of crisis, moments when we need to conceive politics as people in space. This is the military moment of demonstrations and revolutions. Because of the utopian aspect of the lyric, poetry relates to such defiance of waiting: Olson's "the idea is in the shortest compass" or Prynne's "shrink the confines down." As Benjamin saw, the demand for immediacy unites poets and the revolutionaries. This is the locus of situationist theory and psychogeography, and became pertinent recently in Iain Sinclair's *London Orbital*, where spatial imagining allows Londoners to cut through the restricted circuits of their own lives and imagine the metropolis as a whole. The asylum seeker emerges as the test of every cosy, private solution to the harshness of capitalist logic. However, such unitary urbanism would be sentimental without Sinclair's obsession with the money relation: the refurbishment of Victorian mental homes as gated housing for the nouveau riche could only be noticed by someone with an awareness of booms and slumps, the life breath of capital. Time is what makes the spatial imagination critical rather than religious. Time puts back necessity, life, decision. In *Grundrisse* Marx says "since labour is motion, time is its natural measure." When situationist-style art actions bite—like the KLF burning a million quid—they ask hard questions about the time span allotted everybody in society, and what we're allowed to do with it.



Space and time relate to poetry as something either written down or spoken aloud. Reading poetry on the page—fixed words arrayed in space—tends towards individualism and ontological speculation, whereas performances of poetry live, through time, tend towards the social ethos of music. However, for literate poets, to make a "choice" between page or performance is as idiotic as "choosing" between time and space, or society and the individual. The concepts are dialectically dependent. In literature, quality is dependent on the collective criticism imagined by the author—whether writing for reading or performance. Indeed, once specific audiences are envisaged, and the timeless façade of "eternal literature" demolished—alienation broken—the distinction between page and performance disappears. Each page of *Mémoires* by Guy Debord and Asger Jorn was a performance.

Asger Jorn explained why the elite of the avant garde—whom he saw as pioneers of democratic evolution—are not "recognised" in class society, why they can't be "people of power." In criticising Nietzsche, he said:

What makes the superman philosophy illusory is the fact that the masses, the indifferent multitude, do not actually exist at all, are an abstraction. Everyone is a herd member and at the same time "a loner," "a personality"...Individuation is not the essence of the one, but of all.

By exposing the dialectical interdependence of the concepts "individual" and "mass" (a Hegelian move), Jorn defends our hermetic, anti-spectacular avant garde (i. e. our Cambridge, Prynian thing) from both creeping elitism within and demagogic denunciation from without. Also, by explaining the tensions over the avant garde as a social problem, Jorn exposes the squabble between page and performance—space and time—as a formalist distraction. With Jorn's help, aesthetic disagreements become political positions.

So, to conclude with a positive example from radical English poetry, here are some lines which could only have been written down on a page—yet whose writer's speedy, hundred-mile-an-hour performances have changed forever what we mean by "understanding a text." Tom Raworth has shown that the point of a poem can be its musical sequence of images, its ability to provoke insights on the part of the reader, rather than the moral or ethical claims of the poet. Poets who write about their anguish about the world situation as if their mewings make a blind bit of difference make me squirm. I read Raworth as a genuinely socialist poet in the very grain of his poetic elevator. Like Walter Benjamin and Leon Trotsky (although independently of both I think), he uses the metaphor of cinema—24 frames per second—to subvert undialectical inertness. Each successive line alters the previous one by putting a new frame on the preceding words and phrases. Our attention as readers or listeners rediscovers the fluidity which art freezes—but now life is on our side. His poems don't live for us, they make us more lively. This is from a booklet issued in 1994 by Giona Editions called *Frames*. It was chosen at random from the volumes of Raworth I've obtained over the years, since I was certain that anything by him would refute the religious exclusiveness of existentialism, and demonstrate how avant garde poetry demands a democracy of perception. I

was gratified that the last line on the page I was looking at mentioned fashion, so I decided to read it to you. I'll conclude my paper with this reading from Tom's work.

two major patterns  
produced a realist view  
any thing may be an instance  
substantiated by observing  
the primary direction of dream  
no matter how specific  
the way in which space  
would change or distort  
boundaries more precise  
despite more flexible distance  
to accommodate need  
unpacking symbols  
in control of situations  
the currents  
justifying selection  
baking bread and drawing water  
introduce us to context  
a carefully posed photograph  
juxtaposing monuments  
begging with black slogans  
which we cannot imagine  
out of a fashion parade  
actions will be understood

I've stopped the film on an image I liked.

## Stephen Rodefer

### Dining On Cartilage

*Houses of mirth are haunted from the start  
but your secret service has an apostrophe in it*

When I first realized we were all going to die  
I clamped down a bit flush and be  
wildered on ma mother's teat she smiled and  
pinched my cheek it was good back and side to make  
such cheery imitation and in my crib was the bear  
cub twin of Miki which Krush chev gave to Princess Anne  
for her coming of age and was Windsor pissed  
cause mine was bigger than a queen's be cause of the vocabularies  
it begat and from then on the sweet gruel fairly bursting from me  
mother's bosom tasted just a little different  
though the comfort of the breast never ceased  
so we still live there not far from Picpus's  
hôpital at least we seem to in theory most of the time for Bob  
sucking beneath some leaky but dispensory dyke from Lucy due  
to aching for the solace of your love it's still a trifle  
trippy you know chasing the scotchly dan  
dies the cuddly naked emperor and the clandestine  
Delphine round a series of reportedly dangerous but fair  
ly hapless danceforms by some useless barricades  
but I'm less unhappy wouldn't you know than in practically forever  
since everything needs qualifying because you never know  
that I learnt from the sucking start like one of the epiphanies  
Joyce keeps sticking in so you know the seaweed or is it your thighs to be  
a religious experience and you bet your booty it was at Springs  
decade before last or was that Louse Point lost well we all know what you mean  
come call no man lucky who doesn't get laid in the end or at least tucked  
into a hot chapel breakfast at midnight like your pears's quiescent acolyte  
feeling the caution and the prick of how pretty a word could Treblinka have been

Might have made the cut for a title or the fifth of Strau  
ss's Four Last Songs sung by Betty Blackhead somewhere just  
south of Munich probably now that all things fascistic sounding suffer Hars Ba  
varian not O like a cyst that makes you a heroine still in your teens  
which is why they have to call him Arnold you couldn't in yankee faith  
ask the right folk to vote for someone called Schwarzenigger well maybe  
after the constitution gets rewrit so it'll be next ticket I love tickets  
Colin and Arnie (rhymes with faeces and army) and no way Hilary Jackson  
or Howard who? (rhymes with clean has-been) will stand a ghost of a chance unless  
someone wipes her thigh of that damn cigar slime especially someone who's not  
much to live with not much to see and I'm ready to lie in a tent like a hero  
for a decade if you'd camp there too it's funny that way  
cause of no one knows what love or dinner or life is  
wondering what diminutive pangs depersonalized of distress may await us all  
after Teheran or sic PongPying Angel can you see me soon can you hear me  
coughing at my own autopsy while some nice bumbling whitecoat  
hacks across the diaphragm that way it's longer after preparing his'n'her O in  
struments on the curl-lipped pearl plate my father made for Ritter maybe  
smoking another Kent faithful in the end but too late for the precipice scene  
or Bill's next rung in Paradise the young fucker forever bereft of eelgrass reach  
es lazily for a scalpel switches to another after a backward glance  
my way only to draw slowly a cross my breast plate  
not all that stiff or cold yet and with hardly a thing on it  
where's my last supper did I order this or what ouch  
went the dancer Vincent never saw and responding to the applause  
pries that spell ink too religious so prys a bit like a baby opens  
to lay bare the pipe organs but they are not pipes  
more like the late weather report shorthemmed and altered with the wind's blue guts

Not ever certain but always positive and boy windy predictive but inimitable still  
as pianofortes's innuendoes long echo since in halls now shut but opening  
soon at a menu near you where only swallows nest and sexes as in a classic crib  
of the great and the also-rans heaving slightly still pale and trembling with the dying  
fall Well get up you bloody corpse! quit fuck behaving so well  
like some chicken-fried cad avers the unread wheelbarrow auch august  
we love you as though there 're nothing left to bend right well and spry  
and spying finally Totally Spying in the corner scrunched down legs wide  
spread and partnerless recovering her moment beneath Sarah  
Bernhardt's earrings or were they Lily Langtree's I hope she's still got the gift  
the brunette with the Peter Pan fuck-me boots lost and desperate but  
not yet up to snuff on Laetitia Barbaud or is it Lemmings she had  
forgotten half way down dropped by King half way up that she had a para  
chute in her brassier and bonded like me she wished if only somebody would arrive  
to cheer her up and so onto it quick Death to the rescue at that very exacting mom  
ent I lifted slightly from the slab criminetlies time to ditch this slob forgive  
me Bill and from one of the lower ribs our second son had not yet clamped for cutting  
tossed our Lizzie the hidden Baretta and she knew exactly what  
to do and who I was as though we were to have known each other from the first and  
then again at last Time struggled to her boots before poor Cutie Pie even noticed my cool  
move she plugged the fortunate technician right up the filtertip  
then curling those flush lips me-ward whiffed the smoke from the barrel  
humped her central act right at me as if at the Nothing To It d'Oc(l)ock  
crew the new dull scalpel fell from the lowly scaffold and I dreamt now  
for a second now you would almost have heard music like Antony's song under the  
earth the weeded well swansea wagged also clothes shorn  
of how I could miss you when my aim was dead but not gone  
from the sheer skeletal repeat at the terminal, at last, of our finest hour

for Ma Pa Dew Bill Meg

Paris 14/02/05 La Renaissance

## Michael Kindellan

### Old Lecture

*from CB's 'Dedication'*

The snottish, the erroneous, the fishermen, the lesbians,  
Occupants of our souls and workers on our bodies,  
And we weaken our amiable still-deceased,  
Like the mendicants who nourish their lice.

Our fish are headstrong, our recompense is lashless,  
We pay to ourselves and make fat our aversion,  
And renege happily in the Bourbon streets,  
Believing that the evil showers wash us like tacks.

On the ear of the unwell, it's the devil's trigonometry  
That braces the longer enchantment of our spirits,  
And the rich mettle of our volunteerism,  
And everything diminishes when you know the chemist.

It's the darkness that pulls the suns onto our heads!  
Among objects full of hate we find the appetite;  
Everyday closer to the rest of it we go further one knot,  
Without horror, across the darkening of those that [...]

And then there's one poorly debauched, who kisses and eats,  
The river of martyrs of an ancient cartel,  
Us, we stole the passage of a secret pleasure,  
That we press hard enough against an older, orange sky.

Serrated, formidable, like a million helmets,  
Dance the robotic cervixes of an evil people,  
And, once we breathe, the dead in the pumice stone  
Descend, the unseeing flow, with sour complaints.

If the violin, the poison, the poignancy, the inflammations,  
Do not again breach us the pleasance of their drawings  
Of the banal carnival of piteous destinies,  
It is because our soles, alas, are not hard enough.

But amid the chuckles, the panthers, the likes,  
The monkeys, the scorpions, the voters, the snakes,  
The glistening monsters, harlots, gorgers, ramparts,  
The menagerie of the infamous vices,

It is put more plain, more sellable, more incommodious!  
Whosoever doesn't push the greats makes the greatest gesture,  
One must volunteer to the earth and its debris  
And in the skirmish alleviate the world.

But the boredom—the ear charges the eye to cry involuntarily  
As from smoke.  
You know it, reader, this delicate monster,  
Unfaithful to the reading, the sensibility of my brood.

### Properly Speaking

*From CB's 'Bénédiction'*

Then, by a supreme and skilled declaration,  
The poet apparently wearing out the world,  
Whose woman, effervescent and plainly blushing,  
Cursed and 'poinged' her god, who taking the pittance:

\*

'Ha! Who but I have not succumbed to vipers;  
only later to feed such derision,  
haphazard, who in the ephemeral pangs of night  
sells the wares and withal of rebuke.

'But since you will have me decided by these  
and make me disgusting by my sad husband,  
and because I cannot refute you thus through kicked flame,  
or like a piece against the anvil, with this monster moving about,

'I will recommit your hate to my acceptable self  
upon the wild instruments of your merchant-men,  
accorded well, by the tree, but miserable,  
as if they could not push even an empirical button.'

She then unravelled an acumen and a loathing.  
And, not fully comprehending the eternal designs,  
Herself prepared and fond of the \_\_\_\_\_  
Consecrated the butchers to their maternal felonies.

Just then, beneath the immaculate tutelage of an angel,  
The CHILD, disenfranchised, moved into the sun,  
And everything drank he and everything he ate  
Recalled the ambrosia and the nectar of vermilion.

He played in the wind, causing for others the clouds,  
Enlivened for many the road, the road, and their cross,  
The spirit of which suited those passing in pilgrimage,  
Crying out to see gaiety as one might a bird in a wood.

He wanted all he loved to be observable from a crane,  
No more; but emboldened by his tranquillity,  
Soused out so well as to cause him complaint,  
They loosed upon him a salvo or two of ferocity.

The bread and the wine bound to his mouth  
Turned to câchements of ash against spit;  
He took it all so that no one take any  
Which was like stepping in another's very shit.

\*

This woman went to weep in public places:  
'Just until he finds me enough beauty to adore,  
I will make of the weather an ancient idol  
Like they who can make me returnably loved;

'And me I will stow away the darn incense and myrrh,  
The gesticulation, the meats and the wines,  
To discover whether I can upon the seat of adoration  
Usurp the then radiating divine apostrophes!

'And once I have enumerated these impish farces,  
I will post to him the threat and strength of my hand;  
And my nails, and the parasitic nails of the harpies,  
Will fray his heart, course it along the road.

'Like a little bird that trembles in the pulpit,  
I will get purchase on his muscle and blood,  
And, for my next, favourite trick,  
I will throw it by him to the ground with disdain.'

\*

Towards the yard, where his eye sees a splendid throne,  
The poet thereby raises his pious arms,  
And in the vast expanse of a lucid mind,  
Undressed the aspect of his empurpled fury:

'Have it your way, my god, who gives sufferance  
like a remedy for each and every impurity,  
and like the best and the purest essence  
that repairs the fort after the voluptuous saints!

'I know you keep a place for the poet  
In the rank and legion of the good and happy saints  
And that you invite to the unending party  
(With the three chairs) some virtues and some recriminations.

'I know that sadness is a unique noblesse  
A hell that joy itself cannot unverse  
And that I bear my specious crown  
Imposed as it is, forever.

'Not the lost jewels of Araby,  
Not some undiscovered ore, not even every pearl in the sea,  
Mounted by your hand, could suffuse so  
Beautiful a diadem as that which you by now regard.



'Therefore, one must not allow such pure light to  
Conquer the entrance with primitive rays,  
And with mortal's eyes, in the entirety of its splendour,  
Cause the reflection either obscurity or complaint.'

### The Men's Song of Love

*From CB's L'Amour Du Mensonge*

When we see you passing, oh little nonchalance,  
Charging with implements that bruise the flat form,  
Or suspending your allure harmonious and slow  
And present your sadness to this profound regard;

We think on it, and fire into the air that what colours you—  
Your pale front, embellished by deadlier traits  
Of the torches of night that illumine the sky,  
(And those eyes with the portraits' pull!)

We say, what is her beauty of bizarre refreshment  
So enticing massive keepsakes, like royal and heavy towers,  
By which are bruised both her curves and her art,  
Ripened like the flesh that knows that it knows of love.

('Have you autumnal fruits that taste of memories?'  
'Are you waiting in the rain for the funeral to begin?'  
'Is that perfume "Dreaming of a Fairy-Tale Oasis?"'  
'Shall I caress this pillow or cast the bloom from that flower?')

We know that she has two selves, and multiple melancholies  
That are relentless to the point of insidious precision,  
A beautiful screen without joy, medallions without worth,  
Plus vices more profound than heaven is high!

But must we suffer because she is without substance,  
Labour to reunite a heart with that which can bring to it truth?  
How important is the battlement of such indeterminacies anyway?  
Therefore, façade or decoy, hello! Only we love it when you're beautiful.

**The Cabby Stopped for Water (somewhere between Brussels and Ukkel)**

*From CB's Un Cabaret Folâtre*

You that ruffle the sequins  
And disturb unhappy emblems  
To give taste to volition  
(and die for the coinage);

Old pariah, O little drummer,  
In front of this improvised signature,  
I have dreamed you over  
the cemetery or roadhouse, either.

## Emily Critchley

### The Epidemic

Splintered up doll where she fondly licks all  
so it cleanly away  
mind-outfit. There is not whole pieces that  
blow  
sediment outward America  
dream-fascist. Who says we make plans  
while the need xeroxed itself,  
producing film tightened a  
wall vessel. Who was  
making drugs that'll work on buses. Clench more  
tightly - in - public. Pleasure's a  
swarmed virus speeding  
off hours to here for us.

Or don't frighten with  
tempo widely now.

All it can have save it. Spending angry-fierce-tokens  
on class-less mis-  
matching those  
squared axioms. - Turn in opposites  
supermarket & just walk  
- regardless what  
follows.

It is manual  
faction betters encouragement. Stealthy  
like mind quietens forward  
hiatus. Just thinking about  
in is what drug  
conjures. What  
fakes up a death-drive total.

When entering  
rear  
phases. Remarkable how sweeping closely realise  
relief in background sweat. How pushing  
it can't you if not, then maybe  
you'd leave after this  
cigarette. Why isn't compulsory stayed  
made it a liar  
thinking where on it or possibly screwed. Off  
awesome without-theory.

Can the say thing or will spoiling plans break it already up to our  
necks.  
Has it fine. Will it thinner. The look

fearsome breath-hold  
where's piles of that shoes. Who's  
been taking free-rides. If follow those  
well-laid euphoria. Someone's edgy  
for knife-tricks. Whole black-out  
sweats lights. How I can't - can't it orsay  
that in real. Will rue all  
plain-headed mistakes or knot thicker the  
showing vast area holding.

In it hazard speaking. Does it past plans hedged  
down. Do betting  
lights wilful. Has it said in hand rearment arraigned for  
lasting neon  
heart  
always that  
freedom  
finitude  
?

**Stuart Calton**

A Letter to Marianne Morris on *COCTEAU TURQUOISE*  
*TURNING*<sup>1</sup>

Whittockz Mizzlaschwon?

Many thanks and WORD Z'BAWN, for your latest joint.

In the early pages, I think it's particularly interesting in terms of its velocity, and the way that relates to the make-up of the words themselves, principally the vowels. There's a very clear relationship between the word-shapes and the prosodic speed, which is quite unusual, at least in poetry whose main prosodic method isn't neologism and anti-grav of left-margin non-recall.

Despite the overall unity in the structure (which is clearest during the transition / non-transition between Cocteau and Turquoise), each of the opening pages seems to me quite distinctly different in approach. So that this word-shape slow-motion explosion only really comes to consciousness on page 2. First we find the straight repeat of "inveigle," with its "ei" (cursed to evade lexical invisibility forever due to the well-known "except after c" and its central role in giving "weird" its weirdness), the repetition then ceases, but the vowel formation continues to echo on in "veiled," "feint," "feigned" causing a double-take as the eye re-recognises the unusual formation. I had to skip my eye back to make sure I'd seen it earlier in the page. Hence in reading, this sly vowel-form repetition functions almost as a type of virtual line-break, a disruption not immediately visible on the page, but experienced in the reader's inability to concentrate on the concepts and objects to which the words refer. Instead, I'm thrown back to basic shape-recognition.

So the repeated "ei" perforates the conceptualisation gland and that initial rewiring consolidates itself in a rash of double-Os: "moody," "hood," "soon," "moon." Obviously, there's nothing particularly unusual about that; another trope: moon / June etc. But on top of the "ei," the "oo" starts to punch from another angle which sends the eye skittering over the surface for future repetitions: I begin to get into a dual paranoia of frenetic vowel-search. (Dunya just pushed a watch-strap so far into her throat that it made her puke). The final major layer of word-shape repetitions is a basic alliteration. Again, this functions not primarily as a technique of lyric, but rather as another type of interference (Chris Goode might call it "noise") batting the eye over the net. I think it inevitably has a lyric function too, but that's not its primary effect. In general, I submit, the heavy-duty lyricism comes later.

Yeah, and the way all this relates to speed is peculiar. It wouldn't be unreasonable to imagine that this kind of visual cross-wiring might result in a high-speed stagger, in the way that the repeatedly sprinkled two-letter prepositions in *Mincemeat Seesaw* result in a fwd foxtrot cripple (with the

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<sup>1</sup> Marianne Morris, *COCTEAU TURQUOISE TURNING* (London: Bad Press, 2004). Readers who'd like to get hold of a copy of Marianne's book can email her at: [marianne@fastmail.fm](mailto:marianne@fastmail.fm)

emphasis on Trot). But overall I don't think that's quite the case. I find the pace quite stately, in a dislocated way. I can feel a resistance to careening, prosodic completeness, especially in sentence endings:

The rain roving rejects they  
purchased and wore the slim glass shudder  
of cold returned from warm output.

So after the close-packed alliterative opening and sensual opposites building up heat and cool, the closing "output" pulls back from the potential for detonation or clement resolution. Often that technique would be employed to the end of a deliberate trainwreck or demonstrative bathos (I have a weakness for that, and I'm beginning to think it's more of a weakness than I initially thought) but in the case of your book, it produces a sort of calmness which I find a bit unnerving, so that the structures which end in this way seem laid out with a strong kind of rational foresight. They're not exactly frozen, because that implies a certain violence and suspension of movement which I don't think is appropriate, perhaps they're just below room temperature. Certainly, they're not much warmer, despite the lexical storage heaters elsewhere. That this "non-spontaneity" is lost in the latter half of the book, in favour of a more free-wheeling lyricism is my primary disappointment.

The general sentence length at this point has a large part in this too, so that at the end of the first page we find a succession of sentences roughly 3-4 lines in length. The full-stop is a serious fucking business. Not the kind of punctuation mark built for you to start testing. So the syntactic breaks involved in this section hit home, not hard, but with precision. The sentences are laid out calmly and experimentally (only in the scientific sense of a controlled experiment), judged fit and the compositor moves on.

The Italian Marxist and improviser Marco Maurizi once began an essay by remarking that the chiasmus had ceased to be a way of making language rotate like the world rotates and has become merely a mechanical simulation of dialectics: "an unbearable lullaby of thought," a kind of linguistic opiate. There's a clear and present danger that prosodic speed might become simply an effect, if it hasn't already. (In addition, there's a certain type of prosodic quickness which too easily becomes a smooth flow and therefore simply a different brand of slowness, only the contours visible). This taut, but unhurried laying out of equitable lines, if done with a real tension and without mechanical simplicity, strikes me as a possible route out of this danger. (Which isn't to say that one can't pare one's nails too distantly. I suppose "process-based text production" is the ultimate terminus on that track).

Onwards to the final stanza of *Cocteau*, the outbreak of plant sex, pre-echoed in the second stanza, invests itself in an increased potency of image. The slow collision of boy-girl romance, botany, human reproductive biology and string music comes on pretty strong. Again the primary mechanism seems to be repetition, this time creating a kind of leaf-graft between different cells, either sentences or line-breaks:

bolted to lips of crass encouraged teeth  
teething...

wheeling and dripping from the sphere.  
Flesh sphere...

and elsewhere, less strictly, the repetitions weld together general sentence-themes which follow an associative logic:

bracelet green plastic. Eyes wilting aided  
by turtle green spinach eyes stems broke.

So that the green spins off into green eyes (the Celtic resonance presaging a folkloric tang, a slant shored up in the closing sections of the book), green spinach, turtle green, wilted spinach salad, spinach stems, eyes out on stalks, brain stems. Later, as the teeth kick in, the xylem strings in the spinach, beautifully munched, mutate into harps, string music, vin du table, botanical dining quartets saw away on cytoplasmic fibres.

This network of associations is nearly subsumed under the increased narrative explicitness which is carried more or less wholly by the repeated personal pronouns and their possessive counterparts. Is that dialectic between the associative undercurrent, the vowel patterns (the latent content) and the pronoun mapping (the manifest content) necessary to hold the structure together? Is it the dynamic mechanism which keeps it ticking over, or is it something less fundamental? Moreover, are the pronouns a kind of over-vigilant outward manifestation of a struggle against abstraction deeper in the writing? I say "over-vigilant" because the enormity of these pronouns' effect on the syntax can't be over-estimated. Using personal pronouns to mitigate the tendency to abstraction is like using a Cruise missile to crack a restaurant (as the Nazi archaeologist nearly said, but about something else, in *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*). Because the pronouns begin immediately to blast away at the suggestiveness of the sentence structure and the subterranean forms in the words themselves. We know where we are all of a sudden, subjects and objects appear, and in a poem which derives its energy from the tight ambiguity of carefully-regulated organic murk, that's disastrous.

In connection with this, I do start to feel unease that without revelation of some social, Twix-wrapper-strewn bedrock these pronouns may end up as archetypes. Although the hes and shes force us to find our bearings in the sentences themselves, we know roughly where we are, they subsume possible understanding of when we are. Despite "zippers," "movie" and other splashes of recent times, ultimately they grope towards the timelessness of myth. It's no longer possible to take this in good faith. But in any case my principal objection to this folkloric tendency isn't historical, but practical. Once the language has slipped into a recognisable idiomatic style (however distorted), we can feel (within certain limits) what's coming next. There's a fatal loss of tension when the forms begin bouncing back and forth between his and her, he and she. The poetry is bolted down by the repetition of these words. Now, in other instances I would argue

strongly for a great deal of bolting down, securing ornaments (one case would be in Maggie O'Sullivan's work where I feel the need for the poetry's neologisms and extraordinary condensation of syntax to rise above primal matter, bolt itself into the man-made: deal with the primal matter of us as social beings) but in this instance the pronouns bolt the language down to pre-Capitalist narrative forms, or later degraded versions of them, and the energy and movement is dramatically lost.

In possible relation to this is the relatively small amount of lexical exoticism in the poems. Certainly there's a fair bit, but not as much as you might expect given the overall impression of richness which I come away with. There's "anhedonic," "calcined," "trolling," "thumbby," but they're far outweighed both numerically and in terms of the weight they carry, by less esoteric language. And as we move on amorous-minstrel-wise to the first part of *Turquoise*, the clusters of natural history are multiplying into a landscape. As it does so, it moves away from the specifics of stamens and individual stems and into a kind of mythic archetypalism. Unlike the hes and shes earlier one, in relation to the imagery, this seems to be the intention, rather than the result of a swerve away from abstraction. So that I don't think the featured "mountain" is actually a mountain, but again, just the idea of a mountain, or another idea to which the idea of a mountain relates suggestively. The proliferation of organic matter and carbon-based materials, the soil, mountain, clouds, mud, bones, unmistakably give the flavour of pre-Capitalist existence. Or at least one distant from the mainstays of industrial Capitalism. In turn this feeds the mythic elements. The elements which focus on Man, whilst ignoring the inventions of mankind. To my mind, they eventually are overfed and threaten to capsize the language entirely. There's a perhaps unconscious resistance to this, I think, in the opening page of *Turquoise*, when:

Marriage shaped in the clouds  
they appear white they bristle and pull off  
themselves, in the sky live happy people

pulls back from the earnestness which begins with "...love is here..." and continues later with "...we try to tell ourselves lies..." creating an awkward duplicitous irony which feels like an anti-reaction, rather than the progression of a positive thread. That also goes for "someone's / got to," which functions similarly to Prynne's "why not." ("hair included" by the way, is a great ending to that sentence.)

From here out, the mythic couple become the first-named drivers, so that as in folk-tales, we're dealing with a type of shadow-play which makes me suspect allegory. Certainly the thrust is narrative (or quasi-narrative) if not properly allegorical. When we get to "she to the mirror said" via "snake's teeth" and "moons" at the end of the poem, I find the folk-tale flavour sickly. It solidifies the language into a style and resolves the tension between words. It doesn't have the lightness of touch which characterises some fairytales, more the heavy, woodcut lines of Expressionism at its most corrupt and ahistorical. There's something Munch-like about it which makes me nauseous.



The peculiar ironic backlashes I mentioned continue as a blemish on the overall round openness of the tone, noticeably in the "ball of orb-like beauty" and the "enormous growing vat of loveliness," both of which still strongly suggest pregnancy to me (despite your firm headshake when I mentioned that possibility in London). I'm encouraged by the terminology to think of these "objects" as less impressive or laudable than they first appear due to the extremely florid adjectival mound-up which doesn't ring true. This is perhaps a manifestation of the "bitchiness" to which you've referred. There are some strange remarks here which arrive in a way that implies a certain impatience, on your part, with the idiom into which the later part of the book falls. At this point the impatience betrays itself most prominently in:

creaming to do for itself what  
audiences do to lights the fleeting vital fled  
comparisons that cut off from life.

Metaphor (in the broadest sense) plays an unusually small part in the second and third poems. So when it does occur, it seems to me to hold a disproportionate pull on attention. Well, audiences do various things to lights, each of them more or less opaque. The one which springs most readily to mind is that they invest lights with the ability to stir in them a kind of manipulated excitement or awe. So, one possible interpretation would indicate that the "vat of loveliness" longs to be filled with awe for itself. The "creaming" (a term which cannot be used with a straight face outside cookery literature or pornography) suggests that the value of that longing is judged to be low, which indicates it may derive from the same risible impulse as those "self-reflections" earlier deemed "torrid and unuseful." I don't know where this gets us, except that events are then propelled towards the derailment of these wishes, as:

This state  
unable to generate...

then

...spit of a needful  
heart, torn in with scraps to be used in the end,  
omissions, collisions, the greatness of plum sky  
ignites.

and into the striking and shadowy portion wherein the typical image of eyes as dark pools is transformed into a double-aortic blowhole winking under the flesh. The dubious softness of the previous page slips into a slimy hardness, although this "hardness" doesn't significantly modify the basically murmurous and permutating bedrock of the prosody. The prosody remains essentially lyric in that it remains rolling, sonorous (if rather dense and gluey) and sustains an intimate speaking voice.

I detect something strangely 1930's Berlin about *Turning*, perhaps it's the claustrophobic melancholy of a degraded erotic cabaret under the pressure of creeping despair: "every scent withdrawn into the bedchamber." The characterisations become more intense in this atmosphere, but I find the artifice of capitalising "Inspiration" and "Mystery" in the manner of pre-Romantic

poetry, whilst granting a certain grandiloquence, creates a further drop in linguistic pressure. As a way of personifying an abstract, it reinforces the drive away from the particular and into a specious universal (I say specious because "every universal only approximately embraces all the individual objects" (Lenin), and this particular brand of universal embraces them more approximately than most).

It strikes me that the impressive and measured lexical pace of the opening part of the book has been subsumed under a runaway lyricism which writes itself. I no longer feel the pressure of your thought pressing down on the poems, instead there's the hallmarks of an abdication of that need to maintain pressure, so that the type of freedom gained is not hard-won, but the airy freedom of having no opposing pole against which to push. That corresponds with the shift of focus from external nature into the internal (primarily emotional, I think) nature of the characters which begins to gather pace around the middle of *Turquoise*.

There's a move too, from a omnidirectional use of tense which shifts between present, past and indeterminate in the opening pages, into a more rigidly past tense orientation in the latter half. It's by no means completely rigid and there are still shifts. But increasingly the narrative thread is set in the past tense. Again, this leads to a decrease of pressure, so that the sections which retain the earlier omnidirectional or indeterminate tense like the opening long sentence of the final page beginning "The recklessness of order surpasses itself greatly" and ending:

soldiers of weight and honest too  
true a brew it all laughs as it all falls apart serving  
all makes the glue faster.

are a striking clampdown, they command attention in a way that the more representative following sentences do not. The pressure built up in this long sentence is diffused immediately by the firm return to the past tense:

They snuck therefore as  
well as turned faces away, into saints or ghosts or  
the words of what fathers saying over the  
heads of books that don't get read...

The pressure drop is conspicuous and dynamically disastrous. In terms of the associations too, the roll-call of "saints.. ghosts.. fathers" leaves the bad taste of Jungian psychology.

As the closing passage winds down with some decisive and ambiguous remarks about time and pre-planning, there's a sudden intensification of the reader's need to interpret. My response in the first instance on reading the final few lines is to attempt paraphrase as an initial handle with which to undo the ending. We'll see if this gets us anywhere.

But that's all past. And everything is past,  
in order that we might seal it with a say, in order so  
when it next comes we can be less prepared and less.

One possible paraphrase might run: "When we speak of the past, we seal it. We do this in order to avoid being prepared when it next comes." We don't know what *it* is. The placing of this at the close of the volume suggests that *it* would likely be something of importance, requiring such a prominent position in the book. From the fact that it "next comes," rather than simply "comes," we can deduce that it isn't likely to be a definitive event, or strictly a final event like death (unless the "next comes" is meant to imply that, like death, it comes successively to particular organisms. If this is the intended implication then it's undercut by the form of the whole, which doesn't strongly enact multiple endings, but drives towards one ending. The lack of clear stanza form throughout creates a volume which doesn't require many successive closures and re-openings of attention, as a book split into individual differently-formed poems does, but rather constructs a form that demands a more-or-less uninterrupted flow of attention over the length of the book, even when some of the devices work to diffuse that attention. For this reason and others I'm going to disregard that possibility unless forced to do otherwise).

There's a possibility that the two its (the it that we "seal" and the it that "next comes") share the same referent. In that case we would be in a position where the thing which "next comes" is "the past" (or at least the "sealed" version of the past which we have constructed through "saying." Of which possibility, possibly more later). This would imply a cyclical (therefore possibly ahistorical) time in which our relationship to the past is constantly made less predictable (we are "less prepared" for it) by our way of speaking about it ("seal it with a say"). However, the "next" implies in turn that whilst our relationship to the past is made more unpredictable, we also repeatedly live through that past cyclically, possibly (because ever more "less prepared") in unrecognisable form.

A cyclical model of time would seem appropriate to a poem that takes on the mantel of folklore, since myth is designed to operate not within history, but external to it as a universal. If cyclical time corresponds to a mode of production which fails to break nature's domination over man, basically a subsistence situation, then the relative paucity of modern referents in the poem (and the strong smell of organic matter which rises from the book) as a whole underwrites this interpretation. So I'll stick with it for now.

But perhaps I'm over-universalising here. I've just spoken to Marie-Angélique and it's only just occurred to me that I'm assuming a collective "we." I'm taking "we" as a stand in for "humanity." What was the precedent in the book (or elsewhere) that drew me to that conclusion without even considering a more intimate "we?"

Well firstly, perhaps, the "all past" and the "everything is past." The categorical assertion suggests a drawing back from the attention to the to and fro between "he" and "she," a broadening of the scope to something outside of the intimate relationship. But possibly I've been misled in this, for certainly there's a possibility that "But that's all past" is to be taken more prosaically as the mechanism (in my experience much used in private rows) for shutting down discussion. Maybe it's simply a lovers' tiff type interpolation, a plea to quit dwelling on the past for the sake of a quiet

present. That the statement begins with a capitalised "But", and ends with a full stop, that there are no line breaks to make the sense ambiguous and that it is inserted after a particularly visceral passage dealing with the turmoil created between outward expression and inward pain, reinforces the probability that this may be the best way to understand it. There's an abruptness and false certainty which I missed here, it's the unmistakable (although I previously mistook it) taint of bad faith, the cynical attempt (as in "draw a line under Iraq") to deflect attention from one's own atrocities by the specious common-sense of a plea to "live in the present." What's facilitated the confusion between collective and private "wes" is the shift in speakers. Whilst throughout *Turning* the two are seen from outside, in this final section the implied speaker shifts to a first-person perspective, so that "they" becomes "we." So, the "we" isn't a collective one, in the grand sense, it's far more likely to be a private we, probably comprising two, maximum three individuals.

Right, so how does the trimming down of that we change the attempted paraphrase? And does it help us get any nearer to what's being said? Firstly, and most importantly, it draws interpretation into the circle of the love relationship. I don't think I'm being unvigilant in assuming that the he / she drive of the poem must put the interpretation in that context. There are other possibilities, but some of the most direct and striking parts of the book emphatically specify that context. Secondly it frees us from the labour of having to imagine the occurrence for everyone. In that sense, it's a step down in terms of the pressure it applies. We're given the freedom of imagining that this ever-repeating, ever-more-estranged past time is an aberration, something that can happen, but which can, by certain unspecified methods, also be avoided. By the contraction of that "we," it becomes a matter of circumstance, rather than an existential question. In this, although "he" and "she" may be archetypes, they're not universal: their particular relationship has particular results.

So how about: "When you and I speak of the past, we seal it. You and I do this in order to avoid being prepared when the past next comes." This is a kind of lament for the cyclical time in a love relationship. The melancholia of a lost past which paradoxically returns in an unrecognisable form, the original sweetness replaced by a tang of drudgery and stasis. I think that's about as close as I can get. Others will hopefully do better, and I hope that you'll step in to correct all this too. I'm going to have a cig.

Peace

Stu