

## QUID 7: IN 3 MISMATCHING QUARTERS

EDIT: Three sides to this story; they have generally abundance of nature in them. What do you think of the covers? Can there be Marxist porn? Having now only impossibly the free hand to refuse everything, the wrist limp and buckled, I undertook to solemnize in print however much new work I possibly could. An abundance of it. Xerox turned fiery gorge. It is incumbent to be abundant you see, or more accurately to counterabound, like the hopes which count in an era bound to zero for, what? Pick through the riveted leaves and guess. No reader was courageous enough to send in his answers to the puzzle in which QUID 6 was decked out, *as if you didn't know them*. And what's up, meanwhile? Well, there have been a few disagreeable turns of event. Is my head spinning. We all have a new patron and helping hand, all newly undermined and overseen, all greased and fixed to the spot. Artists are disappointed. On my trip to Namibia in 1998 I climbed a tower on the coast at Lüderitz, on which at the precipice you could lean straight forward into the clash of wind and be sustained there, 45°; the same old syrupy ocean in its rigor mortis there beneath me, now confluent with e.g. massive tax cuts, the wax of a novel Cold War etc. Here, *QUID-as-redress*. It really is disastrous and I would very much love to hear from anyone how we can set about causing these people to self-destruct. Push this button. Harder. The space for poetic outburst now encroaches yet less fascinatingly inward, in my fleshed-out and aging reckoning, and to be in my body as I stand is a kind of claustrophobia; there's a good theory-lilt to this statement; and I want to change the world so that my own hostility could be more stupid. Can YOU help? If so send poems, letters, tracts and distracts, all the offhand lyric you can handle to:

Keston Sutherland, Gonville & Caius, Cambridge CB2 1TA (England)

Love to you all,

K

BALD BLOCKAGES

Silence is a generator and the stanzas sit dead in their frames. Away from me I am mirrored in cacophony, the bulls drape on their hooks. I can stare but there will be no fingers to attend to the small parade. I can pull on each thing but all pause in the white out. Bored impossibility, the stained milk bottles line up, the margarine cartons lie empty in the fridge. Old gluttons, my words, change mouths as only the promiscuous and profligate can. I tease in a sentence which knocks and tunes in on the poor bed. The weapons close down. Total shut down. The reactor limps in its boiling threads. The windows are shining lead. We are little pigs zonked out after a rich feed. The cerebellum is a terse field as Zeeland peters out. Whittering. Yowling. Dum de dum de. Dum de.

The steel blade of the extractor fans turn in their housings, each whirl of the screw cherishing the flow. The blood mass is the word mass. On the three o'clock starts the tune falters on vomit and coughing, small loves in the whispering seed, in the slow corridors below a dimpled polystyrene tile, below shadows arching and flaring. Silence, old mouthpiece hanging limp on its wires, the drilled pieces foraging on a lounge of words. Hooks and billows. The line sirens off the hook. Fear comes as cream turbid years, stasis in a charcoal den, sinking upon the second batch of years, fear by far greater in the closing moments of closing moments, leaf upon leaf, promises and retribution, finance, half a litre and half a life. Half life ticking as the stars balloon. The frames tittle-tattle, nattering about the bleeding trunk.

Old flavours of the month pinned to the wall, the drafts hang like a drain of words. As the counting begins and the daft age squeezes its perfume over the witless chords, themes and notions, mysteries in art's majestic fits. Pain is its own reward. Take away my limbs for I have seen the loveliest of days. An eczema of meaning as the partita inches through my spinal duct. Repetition is vindication. Tendons in and out. Kith and kin for more value. Tedium in the bedspread of a world of warm dependants. Only veils and hugs as the burrow stinks and churns with rapture. A link and then a broad mirror darkening. The flames and venerated dogs of getting, perpetuate like a moth in the dream burn of light. O fattened dispensable light. Back again over the familiar crust. My familiars soldered in their dippy lies.

The tidy pressures of the life out-facing the single unknowable gesture. Cycles and whines. The barrage of sound sense, flickers and tremors. A breath and then the

curtains fall. The dusty cloth is singed. I brake the car hard and look at my children, there was a phrase, but the phrase died. In the phrase was a naked tooth, old cans, oil and perpetual motion. My rigging fattens on the worn plain. Tiny shattered moments where the soft bells go where the waves lap and the wing stings in the swingeing marsh. The harbours stink with tidal mud. The old seats are stinking still. Monochrome reaches of the orange estate, a sky tips its load, cascading like a proper love. Scribbling down the one incontinent word, title, outcome, the intake of breath as waiting descends and descends on ugly little flowers. The itching marks something out. Branches cringe outside the window. A sun glows behind yellow cloud. A moon drapes its fungal white. Because of it, the insistence, then at last, a menial furrow. Taken out.

The usual implements are laid out, one by one the touchstones are fingered, rolled in the palm, the eye, the ear. The tongue rinses the stone. Allegro. Lento. Allegro energico. The cafe lights go out and out. The bath water toils as a head sinks and holds, hold on, hold in, hold out. The tedium te deum. The breath long lewd absence. The long burning tedium of each of each. Elsewhere, aisles of meat lie open like a lung. In white corridors the shoppers preen about the viscera. The children scream. Toilets. Detergent. Pizza. My wife lies wrapped in purging sleep. The swathes of new packets, the fattened venal crowd, here bend the soft determined queues. A life of queues. We smile inside the silence and trade points. My postal code hovers like a territory. Coordinates to a baking minor life. Walls sink into their moss and sign-offs. It is the love of beginnings that takes us through.

We are shrinking. The gutters chatter. Clouds worry the low lying government buildings. Channel-hopping in broad band tinsel, enervation is the median of gratitude. Grazing on impermanence. The flat land threads its waters like the arteries of band victim. I parade through the latest million pound spend. A new contract may save 3.7%. The budget has been settled, a prudent £12.6 million has been clawed back. The partnership is paying off, and more encoded texts are stacking up like brocades. Silence is rounding about the exercise bike, the miles of video tape, the tons of absorbent gel and baby wipes, all ways are forking over the aeronaut. The children cry or laugh and dance. More shining moments pour into the third-floor meeting room. The agenda tips over the table and fractions speed off above tidy awnings as a freight train rattles into Cambridge. An economic order quantity. A purge.

Old belaboured questions. Fine dance. Shit dance. The village lies locked like a refectory. The fen trembles under its cirrhosis of soil. A bared leg, and doggy-style and the trickling of words. Bones and lips and bones. The granite decadence of the new burst. Unbecoming. Unbeing. Lounging in fever, the gut sweat. Leg sweat.

Precious grins, soiled linen, or carpets flinging. How many avenues do we knead? How many grains build the tongue? The flint chinks in its pocket. The tracks run parallel to the hawthorn bushes. We are all travelling on the new routes together. The dyke shimmies through the wheat fields, yawning under a package of ploughs. The shocked stems butt the air. The black earth turns and the screech owls lift their wings to land in glottal sleep. Uptake and downturn. A hand pauses and the veins pronounce their small destinies of cornflower blue. One more blanket on the wreckage. The concrete paddocks behave like weapons. We are all born in the crumbs of the racket.

No care has ever reached the outer settlements. No change as pared love aches for an end to boundaries and the lewd scratch of flesh. In the cheap racket, the hotel room turns beside a bored beach and the shocking green tapers of the boulevard aches towards glacial blues and skaters. All bodies in blood. Big zeroes. Betrayed sentences slump on the kingpin of each finger exercise. A new list bows under chemical skies. Four, five, six, seven, everyone must die in heaven. The drips continue as the fixed inveterate gene moves beneath the doldrums of my lemon tongue. All art is other over. All unknown in the known eye. Salvation in extermination. Moment to moment, fucking practise. No promise and then the final trigger before those gentle mouths and the endless processions of determinants.

## KESTON SUTHERLAND

### DO YOU BLOSSOM

As the chosen form of panic car  
crash to my rear frozen  
out by words too beautiful to spot  
are you alone, take off your  
chance to wheel through  
clouds in unvanishing havoc up  
the street in the love  
                  people too no  
                  end alone  
chancing apart them  
and far lived you fetch for  
the last time another  
night positioned over the lilac  
and nothing and bake  
you shift out of the wrong window  
pellet to a drop end  
                  life each  
                  strapping day but  
and the ice is gluey so  
and the volcano rain is gateaux  
far to the way differently  
seceded can you taste how  
aftertastes vanish outside the rain  
in fact chooses to hit rock  
bottom on the list of  
                  uses the break as  
                  mere toyish  
shift to go being on with  
and the people to the left  
hand side of their own faces bleed  
helpfully and ponderous  
ash like a whisper steers  
immediately the correct heat in you  
through no hoop, I love you.

## SLITS IN THREES ODE

1

You mitigate the fever of the scrub, truck, bulletin  
faraway idiot, you as teeth comb  
gashes through preserves, make finalized light

stroke of cracked, of feed puerile  
damage to you no end overmuch visible carry  
out days achieve fact to fact be there,

be polemical, issue the wind decree,  
floats through eternal stop you are bind  
are crash of the exchange, feasible tang and shut

gray out, jump about the room  
picking an exact slot forever go in treacly  
has you by a liberated throat.

2

Only you mess up the oil scare, lonely  
tags a face envisages and default beet, tonic  
universe fiasco, the wind cut

feasibly into strips do an outlook  
do always committed to blank and amorous  
where the gray shone, are help

them not to die fish  
parcels littered bounce up a star queasy  
squashed and ground in decide you

could prepare a change round  
mouthful of amateur maggot honey for  
now okay scrap you, rubrics at dawn.

3

As an abated scruple whose perhaps you  
saw it derange a valid rainbow,  
whose descry quickly be a love format take

you saw them face explode it  
rained night and to morning jump over  
the sky that flip crease

ever since the day collides whose finished  
type of visibility airs are  
screw the wind down, do exact cancel out,

bandage the hurt water, thereupon  
cannot bitch too prosperously  
make you reluctant wipe that grin off.

4

Stretch only to that famish divert  
everything it is you must possibly accept,  
bollocks to the flame strawberry

rots out panic finesses the Chávez article  
bus depot, clippers,  
what a face either way be a squeeze in

into the chivalrous rigmarole of validity,  
into the pristine offshoot you  
is that the time, do cryptonormative

flinches you bargained for, do  
the stars remain alert and well travestied  
ratio of dysgenic oyster to Islam.

5

What the trick is to produce a scintillant,  
beneath cloud cover allegorizing mission time,  
onto whose knees or in fleshy

spate of you be that rudder in cop boreas,  
loosing avert loosing strip  
them of pain and agitated counterreckon do

key errors to recall three of which  
am not yet blind, pushed too  
rapidly for heavy industry two retained

government structures of the colonial era,  
three, failed to predict sharp  
rise in interest, sink out in a depicts flash.

6

Mutilated hourly false control, verified  
chip away verges cast out  
verges to remain however free, past

the streetlight courses upon arcades runs  
alerts the client backdoor shot  
like a bolt through were you vivid on

cue drub expiry and incipience, they are clearly  
no match for a mute disquiet,  
nor for the scar spangled rescind guy pass

sentences on fire, you then borrowed the trowel,  
and so throw up an assuaging sea  
of ways to make a breathless living.



Vanish you life incorrupt, specializes in makes  
of which like often or lately,  
emending the tree packet, scoops net out

brought to fastidious outrage monkey shit  
the shower rips up you hand,  
very much want to become impassible

Oh! nicht einmal die Gnade, mit dir  
freight lolls about you loll about  
panic in the future rivet, a stream thorny go

into awaiting deals and pass fire,  
bits of that vacate are solemn their nozzle out  
shines bumish it, gag you are live act.

## Modernity in Contemporary French Poetry

According to the philosopher Jacques Rancière esthetical *modernity*, taken in its common usage (that is, for French poetry, the 'epoch' opened by Baudelaire (1821-1867) and the triad Rimbaud (1854-1899)-Lautréamont (1846-1870)-Mallarmé (1842-1898)), is a poor concept: incoherent and superficial in that it would not specify the singularity of a particular poetry as produced by a *trans-historical* aesthetic rather than simply by a *chronological* one (in the case of France: from 1861 onwards). To a definition of modernity as clear-cut rupture between a *before* and an *after* is hence, and rightly so, preferred a modernity as thought of the becoming of forms. In brief: the "tradition of the new" exists only in an intricate relationship to the "newness of tradition": modernity is not datable to an origin or a foundation inaugurating it naïvely as a subway or railway line. On the contrary: modernity is a matter of genealogy, historicity, reflexivity—that is to say, a particular way to produce various *folds* on a cultural substratum, to produce works on, with, from, against, other works.

Such a characteristic gesture of modernity as the rapport of the contemporary to the past—the new as most intense folding of the strata constitutive of the real and of the symbolic, the *always-already-here*—is clearly at work in Christian Prigent's last essay, *Salut les anciens/Salut les modernes*, in which three young poets—Philippe Beck, Charles Pennequin, Christophe Tarkos—are studied *vis-à-vis* Lucrèce, Marot, Jarry, Verlaine, etc.

*To invent by taking, by rejecting*: such perpetually motionless movement characterizing the creation of poetical forms defines modernity as an impersonal gesture rather than as a period or a catalogue (of works or of authors). In each particular epoch modernity is hence but a way to ask the all-important question of the manufacturing of the self and of meaning *via* the manufacturing of poetry: why such fold *now*? Who, or what, is poetically inventive? How? Moved by which force or energy? In which context? With which finality? The ambition of the present essay is to assess such questions in French contemporary poetry by giving to this last adjective the meaning that Dominique Fourcade uses in his *Outrance utterance et autres élégies*: is contemporary that which does not square with the modern, that which is "non-identical" to it. I will hence schematically see how French poetical modernity unfolds its diversity around the question of production and experience as destabilisation of traditional subjectivity (the substantial I/Me structure taken in its chronological dimension) in favour of a porous and perpetually in progress identity (subjectivation as trial of a pure present), with all

the consequences implied by such an unfolding—that is to say the *political* dimension of the latter.

Generally speaking, the posterity of such Rimbaldo-Mallarmean poetics can be structured into two main poetics that I call *poetics of the subject* and *poetics of the event*. The former has been furthest theorised by the poet and critic Jean-Michel Maulpoix, and consists essentially in expressing life: a voice, a soul (that of the poet), speaks, manifests itself—and by doing so, it manifests the world. The poem is an expression of existence as infinite cosmos, and the poet is the "lyrical subject" (Maulpoix) who produces such "song" *via* a constitutive dehiscence. It is possible to recognize in this poetics and its chiasmatic structure the phenomenological paradigm: a horizon, a man, a whole. In this category are to be found the works of René Char (the archetype of it), Yves Bonnefoy, Antoine Emaz, Jean-Michel Maulpoix, André Du Bouchet, Jude Stefan and several others. The works of Bernard Noël, Dominique Grandmont, Fabienne Courtade, Michel Deguy, Yves di Manno, form a middle way between such poetics and the poetics of the event.

The latter, rather than expressing life, consists in *life expressing itself*, that is to say in manifesting in formal constructions the already constructivist character of nature itself. The poetics of the event is just as worked out as the poetics of the subject—it is a production, a composition—but its artificiality is explicitly presented as its nature rather than hidden behind a mimetic or Cratylean use of language. Not only is the poetics of the event—just as the poetics of the subject—made of an inadequacy between the I and the world, the I and language, and within the I itself, but—by contrast with the poetics of the subject—such inadequacy is never soluble or resolvable in a chiasmatic horizon, albeit as brief as the instant of the poem. On the contrary : the *poem is itself a disseminating and proliferating agent of such inadequacy*.

In a logic of aggravation, such poetics of the event consists in intensifying the *natura naturans* that the world is through that which the subject is, rather than reducing or rationalizing them via the intervention of a *natura naturata* that the poet and the world would be to each other, albeit briefly or alternatively. In other words, rather than being the *description* of the real by an I, the poem is the "operation" (Badiou) in which the real and the I "machine each other" (Deleuze & Guattari) at the symbolic level in order to form the only undetermined meaning: the un-sensed or non-sense ('l'in-sensé'), the contrary of common sense or good sense, and the impersonal, the contrary of the Ego/I structure. In the words of Christian Prigent, there never exists any "idyll" or any pause in non-sense. In those of Gilles Deleuze, "Chaos chaotizes", essence does not exist: which means that it is the in-form of the real and of language that arranges itself ceaselessly and without any pre-set guide-lines into expressed—*poems*. These are no longer the fact or the product of a consciousness—albeit reflexive—but of a *circumstance* between a body, a culture, a history—an *event*: the simultaneity of a physical configuration

and an impersonal intelligence of it. As such, actual poems cannot be the source or the reflection of any transcendence, any epistemological break, any phenomenological dualism whatsoever. Far from being the *relay* or the instrument of something or someone, they are the *metamorphic continuations* of forces beyond a given chronological time. Poems are the active traces of a process by which the world as chaos propagates itself by metamorphosing. Said in another way: poetry as *expression* may no longer be conceived in terms of *communication* presupposing two or more pre-formed subjectivities representing themselves in their works, but in terms of *vibrations* forming entities as precarious as the current which sketches them by relating them.

It follows that rather than an I, a me, a you, a who, it is a *what*, a *that*, an *it* that writes: movement, flux, progression beyond any pre-existing chart or map. Undetermined as it is, such a 'subject' has no matter 'to say' in its poem any more: the traditional form/matter dichotomy is rendered senseless. Far from being about expressing in words a perception, an idea, or a feeling brewed in the alembic of the Ego, the poetics of the event is rather an incoherent and arbitrary pointing towards the ultimate and contingent fluidity of being; definitively, such poetics is a *disordering of disorder*—that is to say, of course, a superior order, a superior impersonal consciousness: an order knowing its own precariousness and thus that by which it makes sense—the *sense of the non-sense revealed by form as in-form*.

The matter/form dichotomy being no longer pertinent, so neither are themes or figures of style taken in themselves, which at other historical moments would have appeared as naturally poetic. Hence a fundamental indecision in this poetics of the event seen as a whole, about what is being said just as how it is being said. Philippe Beck insists on the verse when Nathalie Quintane, Didier Garcia, Vincent Tholomé, Christophe Hanna work prose and Dominique Fourcade and Jean-Pierre Faye reveal the radical indetermination existing between the two. Olivier Cadiot, Jacques-Henri Michot, Manuel Joseph, Vannina Maestri aggravate the constructivist nature of the real in their cut-up and montages—this latter notion is intensified in yet another manner by Jacques Sivan and, recently, Anne Portugal, in works approaching the text from the image. Let us here mention also Michel Crozatier and Joseph Guglielmi and their poems as montage of the page. The stuttering and the doughy inertia of the languages of Christophe Tarkos and Charles Pennequin, the jerky, spasmodic language of Matthieu Messagier, the ritornellos of Christophe Fiat, the concretions of Philippe Beck or the ghost-subjects of Anne-James Chaton are as many procedures of the event in poetry. As are Jan Baetens' writing of constraints in the tradition of OULIPO and the chemico-poetic engine invented by Jean-Michel Espitallier.

As a general trend, it is noticeable that these writings present a strong tendency to corporealize themselves, that is to say not only to be read in public or engaging the body but also to make of physical performance, in its irreducible unpredictability, the location of their non-sense. Resonating with this last feature

is the important stake of sex and desire as paradigm of poetical creation conceived as maximal verbal tension of Being, aptitude to death—with notably the works of Christian Prigent, Dominique Fourcade, Marie-Laure Dagoit, and myself.

At the end of this quick *tour d'horizon* the general criteria permitting to specify such a heterogeneity seems to me to be a collective attachment to writing as the dimension of an ontological revolution, experienced notably in a rupture of figuration and the unfamiliar corporolization so promoted: the subject, the individual, the me, the I, the you, the we, are really no longer what they used to be—they have become moving matter. Here it is hence possible to decipher the simultaneously *pan-artistic* and *political* dimension inherent to such a radicalisation of modernity.

Jean-Marie Gleize has best grasped this as it were transcendental status, in esthetical modernity, of the sex-inform-subjectivation-style-power arrangement (so pointing towards all that said modernity owes to the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault). Gleize calls this arrangement "the principle of integral nudity", and as he says: "nudity is winning", that is to say that the powers of the in-form and naked matter, pure, non-idealised and exacerbated in its finitude and its malleability by all sorts of affects, are, via a literal rather than metaphorical poetics, metamorphic rather than full of imagery, constituting a new trend in modernity. First, indeed, ontological revolution concerns, by definition, any human intersubjectivity, and more violently still those which specialize in thinking and experiencing themselves as problematic—i.e. art, as ensemble of creative practices reciprocally intensifying each other. Second, such poetic modernity can only be participatory in any revolutionary attempt to resist power taken in its generic sense of *stomach*, that is to say in its frightful and anonymous ability to dominate every thing by digesting every thing—its victims, willing or not, as its opponents. Such a reality of power is indeed no longer a 'menace' put in front of a nice 'humanity' and calling for a counter-attack from the heart of 'civilization'. Rather, such dreadful reality, it's *us, already us, and us tomorrow still*—but never the *whole* of us. In other words, rather than calling for an eschatological battle for 'brighter tomorrows' Marxist-style, contemporary power produces the historical possibility of a *perpetual* revolution: metamorphosis, becoming-other as identity. To which the poetical contemporary—and let us rejoice about this—answers energetically.

Four Different Ways of looking at J. H. Prynne's Chinese Poem—A Harmony of English and Chinese Cultures

Mr J. H. Prynne's reputation as a prominent contemporary poet has been blooming steadily. He is more than a poet of merely the English language, for he is familiar with a dozen different languages and cultures. "It is in the nature of Prynne's project—as it was in Pound's—to investigate the spectrum of available registers by creating a body of work large enough to include all kinds of languages." (1) Mr Prynne has developed an overall knowledge of Chinese culture and his understanding of the Chinese language is well demonstrated by his Chinese poem *Jieban Mishihu*, which he published in his own Chinese calligraphy—a traditional Chinese way.

To judge whether a classical Chinese poem is successful, the first and most important question is to see whether it creates an integrated Yijing, which refers to the overall effect of a poem, a sort of picturing imagination fully including the poet's genuine understanding of life at large, of human beings, of nature and the universe. Mr Prynne's Chinese poem surely creates a very coherent, integrated and typical Chinese poetic Yijing in the classical manner.

The appreciation of a good classical Chinese poem often runs beyond explanation. In many cases, it is simply unexplainable. The more one explains, the

more its beauty will be blurred for readers because readers will be deprived of the opportunity to exercise a free imagination, which is always offered favourably by poets. The farthest extent a wise traditional Chinese critic would go is an indication of the approaches by which to read and appreciate poems. They would not disclose their personal understanding, in order not to hinder the imagination and the freedom of a less experienced reader. They considered that in the field of poetry-appreciation, talking too much is certainly an unwelcome interference for both poets and readers.

Translation is always a kind of linguistic explanation. And a switch of language often incurs much loss of a text's original beauty, especially in the case of poetry. The situation could be made worse by the passive and unadventurous ways of approaching works of translation that are adopted by many readers. Translation of a poem is, therefore, always an adventure. However, if a reader would bear the shortcomings of translation works in mind, translation-reading experience could surely benefit her a great deal. This right attitude is required for reading the English versions of Mr Prynne's Chinese poem '*Going Together to Seek for Stone Lake*'. (2)

The usual way of reading a traditional Chinese poem is from right to left vertically downwards; in this way, my reading of Mr Prynne's poem goes like this:

Stepping upon the bridge to push open ancient ages  
Standing on the bridge and watch the ancient views  
Green mosses cover deserted gardens  
With a friend, to talk in heartfelt words  
In a rainy day, to cup fragrant leaves  
Long echoing sweetly in the heart

However, Mr Prynne's poem refuses to be exhausted by a single reading: so that a second reading, following the English reading way, also the modern Chinese way, from left to right horizontally, may also be attempted:

Long-time rain, accompanied by greenness, on the bridge  
A returning day, making friends with mosses, on the first bridge  
Enjoy a cup, talking about covering, and push open the ancient  
Hearts fragrancng, hearts desolating, views aging  
Among leaves, feeling gardens and watching ages

And even these two ways cannot bring into light all the beauty of this poem: a third way may be attempted, in the traditional Chinese-right-to-left and English-horizontal way:

Steps upon a bridge, greenness accompanied and rain prolonged  
At the bridge-head to moss friends, heaven cycling  
To push ancientness, talking under covering and enjoying cups  
Ancient views desolate hearts and fragrant hearts  
Years view the garden's wishes among leaves

And now, the reading cannot stop without trying the English-left-to-right and traditional Chinese-vertical way:

Long echoing sweetly in the heart  
In a rainy day, to cup fragrant leaves  
With a friend, to talk in heartfelt words  
Green mosses cover deserted gardens  
Standing on the bridge-head to watch the ancient views and  
Stepping upon the bridge to push open the ancient ages

It makes beautiful sense while reading in all the four different ways in the original.

Have all the different readings concerned with this poem now been completed? Not at all. We can read Mr Prynne's poem from bottom to top, we can begin from any character, and we can follow any direction, say, diagonally. Each single reading brings out a new version and lots of fresh beauty. It seems that Mr Prynne's Chinese poem will not satisfy itself without one thousand different readings. An attempt to exhaust the mystery of Mr Prynne's Chinese poem has to halt as it can go on endlessly.

The reasons why Mr Prynne's Chinese poem produces so many different readings should be paid more attention since a good classic Chinese poem is not usually supposed to create so many different readings, despite the fact that each individual reader is encouraged to create his personal appreciative interpretation.

The answer is simple yet mysterious: each individual Chinese character in Mr Prynne's poem is an independent and cooperative soul. It signifies by itself and it signifies by cooperating with any of its neighbours. This poem, therefore, could not have been written by a poet who had not cultivated a deep affection for individualism. Otherwise, in this poem, each individual character could not have stood so firmly for its individual sense. This means that Mr Prynne, consciously or subconsciously, has found an ingenious way to express his Western individualism in Chinese characters, a carrier of Chinese culture, in a classical Chinese poetical form. At the same time, the Chinese characters employed in the poem have the resonance of classical Chinese poetic usage, as simple and fundamental words from within a landscape of human feelings, which helps them to recombine so freely. By this poem Mr Prynne creates an ideal example to show the harmonious coexistence of Western and Chinese cultures. And this example tells people that a harmonious union of western and Chinese cultures can multiply the beauty and power of either and both.

Ezra Pound, the first poet who aroused great interest towards Chinese classical poetry in the west, cannot have foreseen this. In fact, due to his narrow knowledge of Chinese culture and his non-innovating treatment of Chinese classical poetry, as evidenced by his renditions of many Chinese poems into English, Ezra Pound missed much of the beauty of Chinese classic poetry. Mr Prynne has pointed out some of Ezra Pound's misunderstanding of Chinese culture. (3)



Nor did Ezra Pound's colleagues and followers, T. S. Eliot for example, taste the true beauty of Chinese culture, for few of them had plunged themselves into Chinese culture as Mr Prynne has. Mr Prynne began to study Chinese in a very early stage and read widely in Chinese poetry, paintings, calligraphy, music, history, science and politics. Chinese traditional music, painting and calligraphy are considered inseparable from Chinese classical poetry. Mr Prynne knows Chinese music well, and he once sponsored a piece of Daoism music for the funeral of Professor Joseph Needham, the great scholar of Chinese science and civilization, on June 10, 1995. His knowledge of Chinese painting is well attested by his comments on Willem de Kooning's paintings, in which Mr Prynne applied very professional classical Chinese painting terms.

Besides abundant knowledge of Chinese literature, art and history, the final requirement for one to enter into the beauty of Chinese culture is sincerity and honesty, which many study-for-study's-sake scholars lack. Chinese culture will not let in a spirit, either foreign or native, who has no sincerity towards her. In fact, 'Traditional Chinese poets considered that the first and most important thing for a poet is to be a sincere and honest good man. If a man is not sincere, he could never make his works honest... This is universal... In order to better his works, a poet has to temper his thoughts and emotions first.' (4) This is probably true for any culture. One could hardly find the true spiritual entrance of a culture, towards which one cultivated no sincerity, even though one lived within the very community all one's lifetime. Mr Prynne once told me that he loves Chinese culture deeply and even finds himself somewhat addicted to it. This well explains the harmony of western and Chinese cultures in his Chinese poem. To appreciate Mr Prynne's works, one has to know a lot of cultures—one must not have a shallow taste.

Each particular culture views the world from its own characteristic angles. No single language or languages in a single language-family can bring out one hundredth of the beauty or mystery of the universe. However, the harmonious union of two complete different cultures can always create a bifocal vision of the world, together with multiplied fresh power and beauty.

More and more conscious literary figures in the current world, such as American Language poets, have realized the serious limitations of the power of a single language. Therefore, more and more attention and efforts are being developed towards seeking for new creative power by uniting different cultures and languages. This is certainly a trend for the development of literature as a whole, and poetry in particular. Actually, some literary figures, such as Ezra Pound, have greatly benefited by doing some initial work in this direction. Certainly Mr Prynne, as a prominent poet in the current world, is leading this trend by his own activities. 'Mr Prynne did a lot of experiments to enhance the capability of expression as a language.' (5)

And there is much, much more space for furthering this meeting of cultures and lots of mysterious power and beauty is waiting to be discovered. In fact, compared with the greater part of uncultivated space in this field, it is justifiable to say that only very limited work has been done so far. However, by the ignorant interference of politics and economics or simply many illiterate news-items, this world is filled with bias and even hostility between different cultures. Any poet who is still imprisoned by racism, nationalism, politics or too much pride in a single home-culture will certainly have no share of the future literary power and beauty of a coming new age of great, harmonious unions between all different cultures over the world.

- (1) Jeremy Noel-Tod, 'A Bird that Isn't There', *London Review of Books*, February 8, 2001, 33.
- (2) Stone Lake, a place to which many ancient famous Chinese poets, painters, musicians are related, is near Taihu Lake in Jiangsu Province of China. Prynne's poem was first published by Peter Riley as *Poetical Histories* No. 22 (Cambridge, 1992)
- (3) Reeve, N. H. & Richard Kerridge, *Nearly too much----the poetry of J. H. Prynne*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995). 182.
- (4) J. H. Prynne, 'A Discourse on Willem de Kooning's Rosy-Fingered Dawn at Louse Point', *act 2, art, criticism and theory*, (London, 1996), 34-73.
- (5) Shang Jinlin, *Critical Essays by Zhu Guangqing*. ed. Zhuhai: Zhuhai Publishing House, 1998. P222-223.
- (6) Reeve, N. H. & Richard Kerridge, *Nearly too much----the Poetry of J. H. Prynne*.

## MALCOLM PHILLIPS

### Poem

This low loving temperature  
Visited on you by morning  
Stroking every cracked bone —  
Open, simple, comminuted.  
Fracture networks flex void space,  
Vascular wake-up call. Greenstick,  
Hairline, compound. The street  
Hisses with blue frost, it's  
A way of taking your voice.  
Grandpa on the beach with ice-cream  
Gets the wake-up call. Shattered  
In time for work, shifting units of breath  
To a clay lung protected by blue frost.  
Dispersed in dough, safety-netted and  
Given to us this day. Grandpa,  
Come here, art is heaven.

## Keep Out

1.

signs under sodium blink,  
sleep-deprived,  
hallucinating things  
like us —  
to seize on vacuity  
and make what we can,  
to fill space,  
the orange fields

Feel them  
grow solid beneath  
our feet.

2.

Just the other side  
of the railway,  
there's an office block  
unoccupied since completion  
*this document contains no data*  
its spiral staircase turning  
into punctures in security mesh,  
the ghosts of car parks listening  
to traffic over the bridge.

3.

A new genre is beginning in a security guard's office near you—closed-circuit cinema, performed quickly and often without sound. Times may vary, but the camera's always on and during intermission an epic visual adaptation of John Cage's 4'33" has been a runaway success for some years now. Stars of the closed-circuit cinema can also be seen running back across open spaces, jumping fences, and discarding their makeshift masks behind them.