

guttured whorishness ubiquitously, pushing the fragmented minds of what the big dogs ate! The whore, or at least, unconscious body, can now be fitted for most Americans, since the "triumph" of the civil rights movement and the pretended "raising of all nations" has been rendered as real as nature, tho it is a lie!

So Nowak enters, socialized in a contemporary forwarding, advance, recall, re-assertion of the life, the sticks and stones: a child of immigrants, and with the sturdy underpinning of class (as life distinction), class alienation, and brings it back, humming. And sleek with seeing and hearing!

We get a sharp eye, a literary & philosophical broadening of what used to be labeled "working class poetry," scientifically, yes, deepened with a hard but contemporary lyric, and narrative. Hard image. Latering the academic construct, a fresher panorama of the more sophisticatedly excluded. The secret of u.s. class disconnection . . . pervasive use of race (&c) to make space between the different sectors of the class.

And these "past the past in the rust belt" Youngstown, the closing of the Youngstown steel mills. Grandfather a steel worker, Grandmother a Teamster, Bethlehem, Buffalo. Father, a union VP at Westinghouse, in that other "futha" non-ghetto (unspookish?) ghetto calling itself, by order, "middle class." And with that what un-reddened the ties, McCarthy, Un-American, Acts like Smith, and so How do you re-explain what "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat" means to those unconvinced of their victimization . . . by color, bribe, socialization, wish w/ media or arty academic goggledy gook?

And this is the Refreshment Mark Nowak tenders. "The photograph of the factory predicts how every one . . . will get used!" Must get Refreshed because "the place you / grew up in was going to be gone" and understand "we took care of shit" or "We couldn't make steel alone or get respect alone." These are profound ungathered ideas for the whom he reflects and speaks to, plus all of us.

He has overview, summation, & the precis of the "survivor" when the host of minds is toxic. To ask "Where are / our yards . . ." Peeping the "two doors" of (where?) America . . . from the unacknowledged fraternal citizen (not). "The white man got my job" "I have went to see" (you dig that projected precision) "is no call for colored / men." Or "A mill town is not a / goddamn residential neighborhood!"

And by positing a harked narrative, as scale- and below each, the debris of the tale, as projective verse, we are squared off with fact and fiction, as another way of seeing "America" (What dat?) the "two doors," both to nowhere!

There is this burgeoning "trend" of the double saying, above and below. What it claims is a 2-ish speech or idea or feeling or seeing? With Nowak its use is a more obvious *practice* and idea, of wd and did or will and didn't (or wont) & as a socially bounced knowing than guessing. Nowak is real and strong as you understand his "place" in all of it, trying to prove he has really dug and understood his own coming. A much needed parade.

AFTERWORD

by Amiri Baraka

CLASS REUNION

In the u.s., one of the principal problems with organizing the Revolutionary Democratic upsurge and certainly the Socialist Revolution that it prefaces is that in too many ways, the u.s. working class is not yet a "class for itself." Or I shd say, perhaps, it has approached that true self consciousness as in the '30s, Depression times, or as an undergirding activity of the Black mass's '60s upsurge, camouflaged into division by "race," and the invisibility of the white sector, as well the u.s. left's crude and subtle lack of understanding, passing over to social chauvinism of the Afro-American national question.

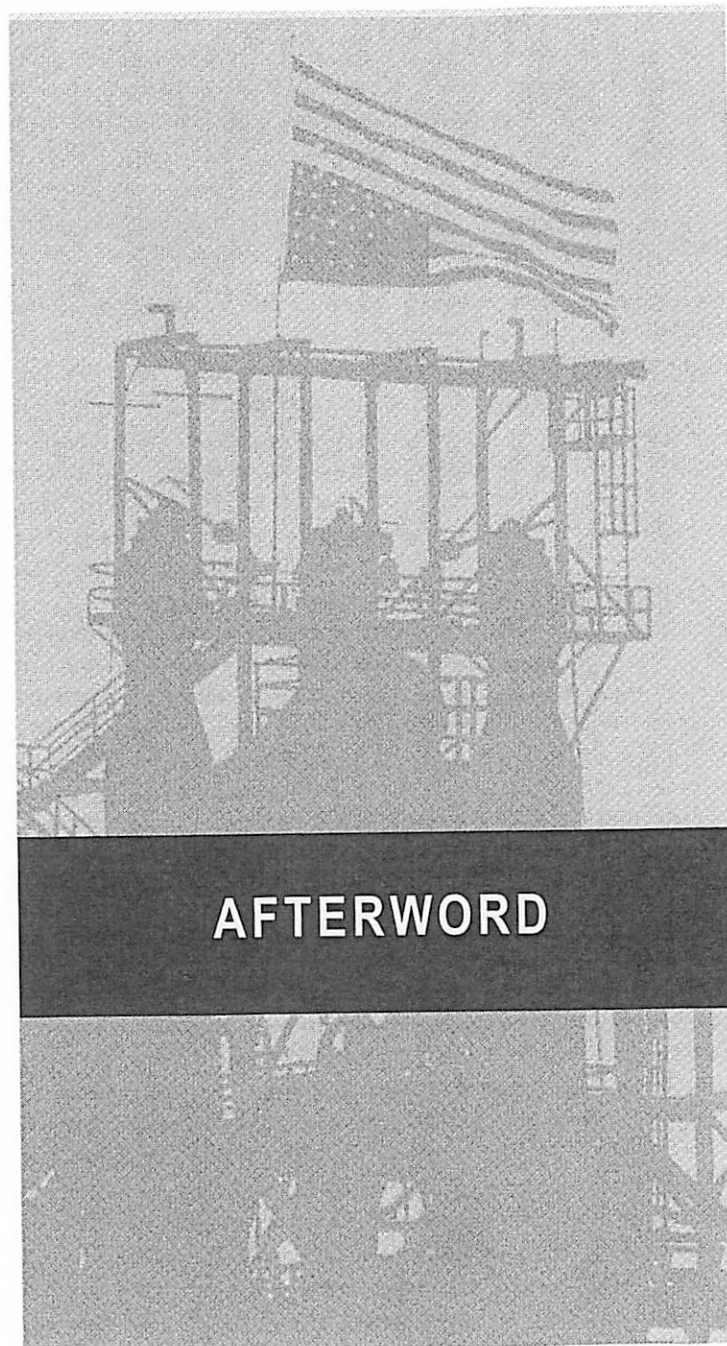
The social democratic opportunism of the left also distorts their perception and use of Culture in the struggle. Allowing the bourgeoisie to dominate the arts and socialize cultural workers and the people by not offering an alternative to the imperialist superstructure! All but disarming the arts as frivolous or marginalizing it, so that the most anti-imperialist writing, painting, cultural analysis is squashed out of sight in various obscure journals.

So the most visible, aggressively anti-imperialist art in the u.s., certainly, is the poetry & rap, largely by young Afro-American and Latinos, male & female, tho there is an emergence of some Asian and young white poets whose work is impressive in that tendency. The rappers are configured in the same ethnic presence. But to eyeball youngish white anti-imperialist, working class, left poets is still not usual. The main reason is that the class socialization & persona of "white people" is generally more magnetized to the pretended facsimile art of the social view that pitches seduction from inside the fake reality of America the Big Dog, so high and mighty that any focus on actuality seems grim and overstated. Or hysterical.

Nowak relies on his life as a person, not the addictive mist doping one into seeing themselves as a swollen category of intellectual whore, the literary, academic, blankness of the American "aesthetic." Though it is no longer limited to white folks alone, the journals, publishing & program cults, "black' literary journals" such as there are, flaunt such

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02.23.2002



"In December, after LTV stopped making steel, a u.s. bankruptcy judge approved a plan that allows the corporation to stop paying health-insurance premiums and supplemental unemployment pay at the end of February for laid-off workers, and in June for retirees."

LTV is pulling an Enron. They're reorganizing on the backs of the people who built the company. If they take over, I won't get a pension until I'm 62, and then it will be only about \$400. I'm a veteran who served in Vietnam for a year and in the Persian Gulf for five months. Now, the government is going to help me—right out onto the street.

shhh ... Shutter. shhh ... shhh ... shutter Shutter. shhh ... Capital recovered. shhh ... shhh ... Shutter. shhh ... shhh ... shutter Shutter. shhh ... Capital recovered. shhh ... shh ... shut. shh ... up. shh ... utter. shh ... out. shhh ... "This is not a people issue." shh ... shhh ... "This is [shhh ...] a test ..."

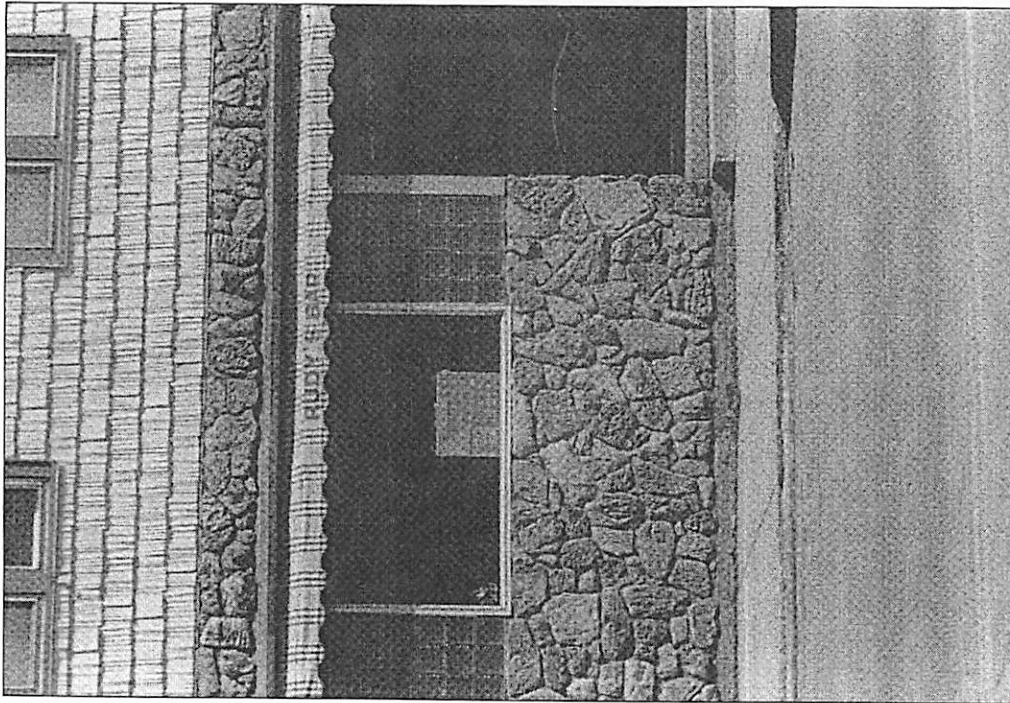
*

how // close // how // [will] // a -Rose

Hoyt Lakes : 212

02.27.2001-02.28.2001

"We're all working together; that's the secret. And we'll lower the cost of living for everyone, not just in America, but we'll give the world an opportunity to see what it's like to save and have a better lifestyle, a better life for all. We're proud of what we've accomplished; we've just begun." —Sam Walton (1918-1992)



KFC
Welcomes ...
WAL-MART
SUPERCENTER
Special! 8-PIECE CHICKEN MEAL
 8-pc. Chicken with spicy BBQ wings
 Original Recipe
\$15.99
 Inquire at ... Hibbing, MN

Welcome to Hibbing.
WAL-MART
SUPERCENTER
From Your Neighbors ...
Hardee's
 Locally Owned & Operated
 2 Convenient Hibbing Locations

Not everyone was as enthused about the store's opening. Members of United Food & Commercial Workers Union Local No. 1116 picketed the entrances to the store. "Wal-Mart brings sub-standard wages and benefits to the area," Union representatives said in a statement.

*

"Windows® is shutting down ..."

Babbitt : 55

01.06.2001-01.19.2001

"NATIONAL STEEL TO LAY OFF IO WORKERS"
"EVTAC NEXT MINE TO CLOSE?"
"HIBTAC WILL CLOSE FOR 10 WEEKS"

One brick [broke (frames)] the remains of my father's factory. Ten less ten weeks less next [mine] to close. The background [under (ground)], the economic [limits (of)]. One miner one thousand four hundred miners minus miners minus plus. What broke [one brick] one miner one bricklayer what broke one worker down. Broken [under (ground)].

The plant was usually blowing smoke out of it. Today, there was nothing . . . We don't want to be here. It's embarrassing. We went through this in the early '80s. I remember standing in the cheese line. For us, it's a matter of life or death on the Iron Range. We don't want to see what happened in the early '80s happen again . . . Please help us. This is an economic tornado.

*

no trees- / no trees // -passing / leaves



Embarrass : 85

10.08.2000

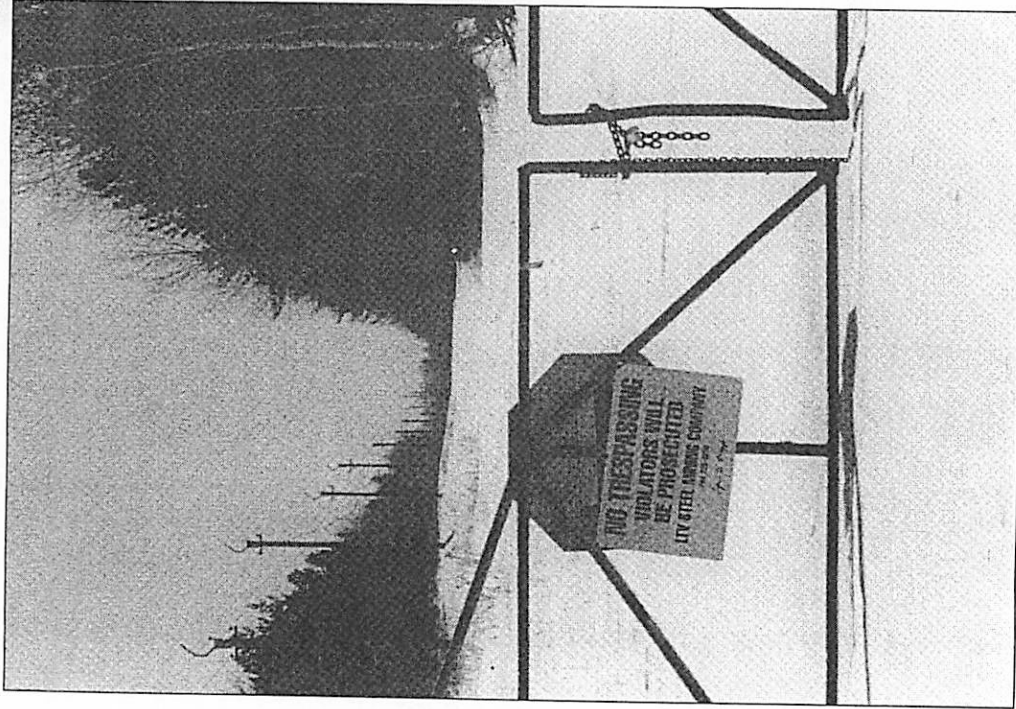
Used to play, my Uncle Ray kept repeating, we used to play in that dump behind Rejtan Street. Rats swimming around. Industrial [chemical] waste. Was so sick missed so many days I had to repeat first grade. And then they build houses over there?

The biggest thing is that it's going to have a trickle-down effect. It will affect everyone, from grocery stores to gas stations. It affects everybody up here. But it's happened before and we made it through it. We're fighters up here. You make it through those lean years and you go on.

"And already the effects of the impending shutdown are beginning to creep into the Range economy. Some vendors are starting to shed jobs, some people have begun to curb their spending and pay off debt, while some retailers are starting to feel a pinch, too. The ripple effect of the closure is projected to impact an additional 1,400 workers who are not employed by LTV."

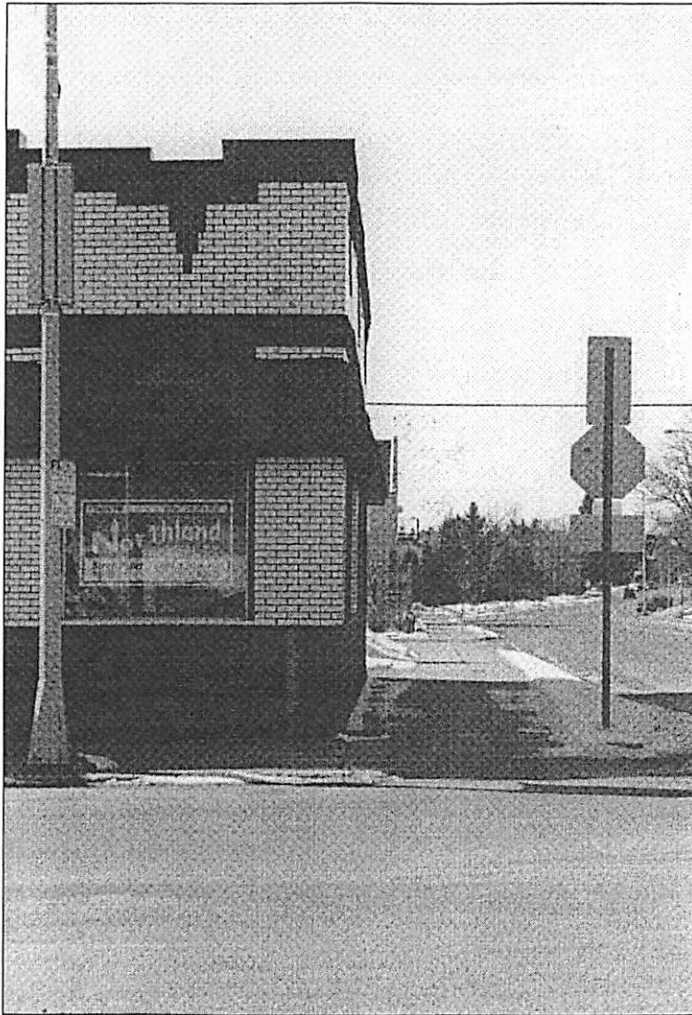
*

what / disappears / in the distance / with / who



Ely : 54

05.25.2000



In a nutshell, this is the most devastating thing to ever happen to this town. It's going to affect everybody. It's scary. It's very scary. We've had hard times before and survived, but this time, I just don't know . . . Apparently, our best quality isn't good enough for their blast furnace.

"The mine, which once employed more than 3,000 people, is the town of about 2,400's largest employer; the next largest business employs 42 people . . . Gov. Jesse Ventura said the state will do whatever is possible to help with the transition. 'Nobody likes to see companies close down and leave, but that's the negative part of doing business,' Ventura said."

Relocation [talks] at the dinner table. Windsor (Canadian). Shut up get ready to leave [for Asheville (North Carolina)]. Railroads steelworkers Westinghouse department store clerks cashiers Rosie the Riveters restaurant cooks. At least Genny Cream Ales came cheap.

*

Main Street — It Can't Happen Here

Virginia : 117

05.25.2000

"The shutdown will mark the first closing of one of the Iron Range's behemoth taconite plants since the 1980s, when a brutal shakeout closed two of eight mines and cut employment in the industry from 16,000 to 6,000."

My stomach dropped to the floor. It was like my stomach was hit by a 10-ton brick. We knew for the last few years that things weren't the best, but we never expected this. It's just unbelievable.

The factory of my father [reduced to rubble]. Factory [after factory (shut down)]. Seventeen stories. The blast furnace of my grandfather. The slaughterhouse across from the railroad [terminal] where my father's aunt used to work. Seventeen stories, and every single window shattered [shut up].

*

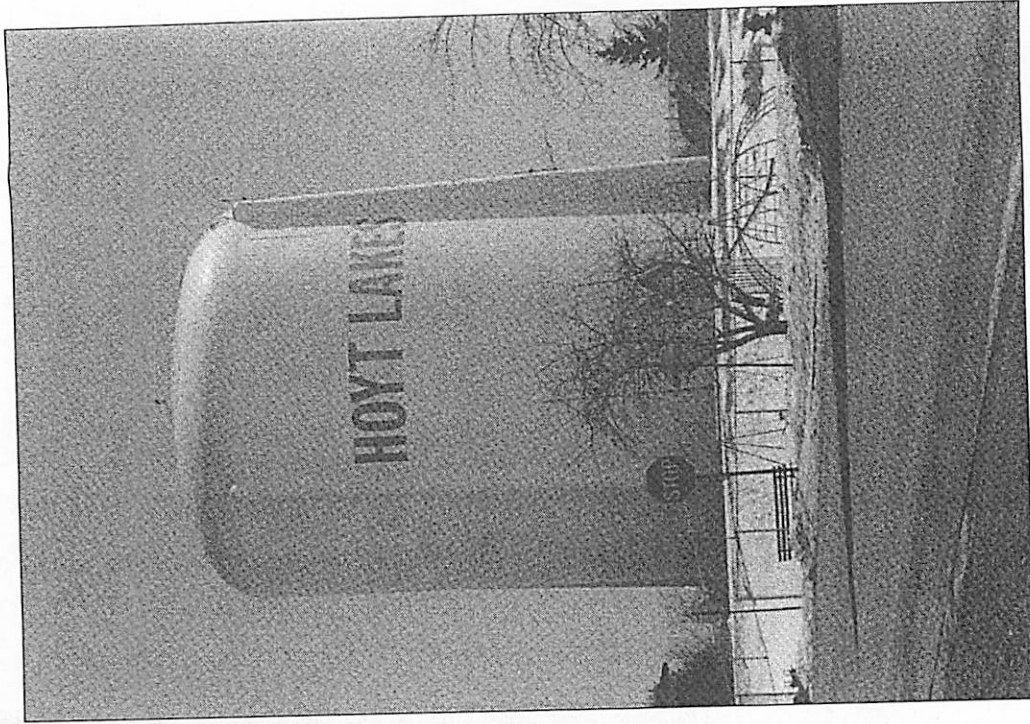
workers / words / worth / [repeating]



Iron : 21

NOTE:

The numbers that conclude each section correspond to workers who lost their jobs in that particular Iron Range community.



"It's important to note that this is not a people issue."

—RICHARD HIPPLE, LTV STEEL PRESIDENT
MAY 24, 2000

in the war in Vietnam. *You see,*
there is still so much
that I have to do,

I, Pelagea Vlassova, the widow
of a worker
and the mother

of a worker. Francine Michalek of
Taystee Bakery;
it says so

here on this patch. And Eleanor
and television
dinners,

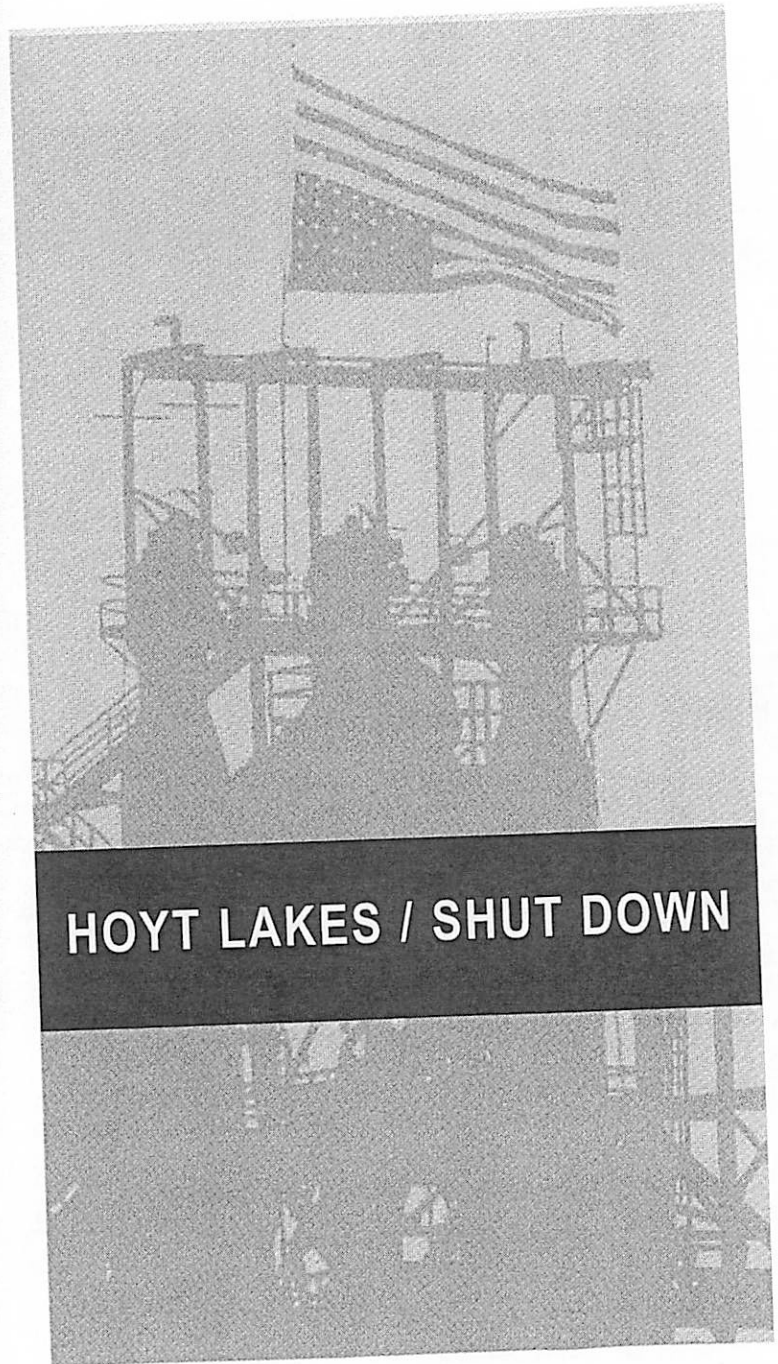
and teaching what she's been
taught.
Hmm,

hmmmmm, Aunt Molly Jackson.
Mother
Courage

and Mother Jones. *No; when*
I am tired, then
I'll give it to you

and you'll carry it. So, I moved
in with Mom,
and that's where I stayed.

She took care of my
daughter,
and I worked—



truck is almost
outside her
kitchen.

Not an option for her,
but better?
What right

*do I have, anyway, to eat
here and live
in his room*

*and buy my clothes
out of his
paycheck?*

**One was in Japan
and Leyte. And
my brother**

**Frank was in
Pensacola,
Florida.**

Somewhere
(other)
her brothers

got to go by driving,
got there
by going

and were gone. Francine
hears her
alarm clock,

wakes slowly
to Loretta
Lynn.

Her co-workers (already)
all night
awake

and baking
at Taystee.
Nothing

*helps. I see nothing
to be
done.*

NOTE: "Francine Michalek Drives Bread" is a fictional work. Resemblances to characters living and dead, fictional and non-fictional, are (just) coincidence. Textual samplings from speeches by the protagonist in Bertolt Brecht's *The Mother* and Mary Ann Landis's interview with Theresa Pavlocak (published in Thomas Dublin's compendium of oral history interviews, *When the Mines Closed: Stories of the Struggles in Hard Times*: Cornell U.P., 1998) provide historical underpinnings for this fictional tale.

act/one

Francine Michalek drives
bread. Taystee

Bakery:

an occasion but not an option.

So we went
home

to visit my mother. Francine,
her mother, her
story,

her (driven) gestures. *I can't do
a thing to make it
any better.*

Francine
rises
to make it;

she drives through her
morning
as she drives.

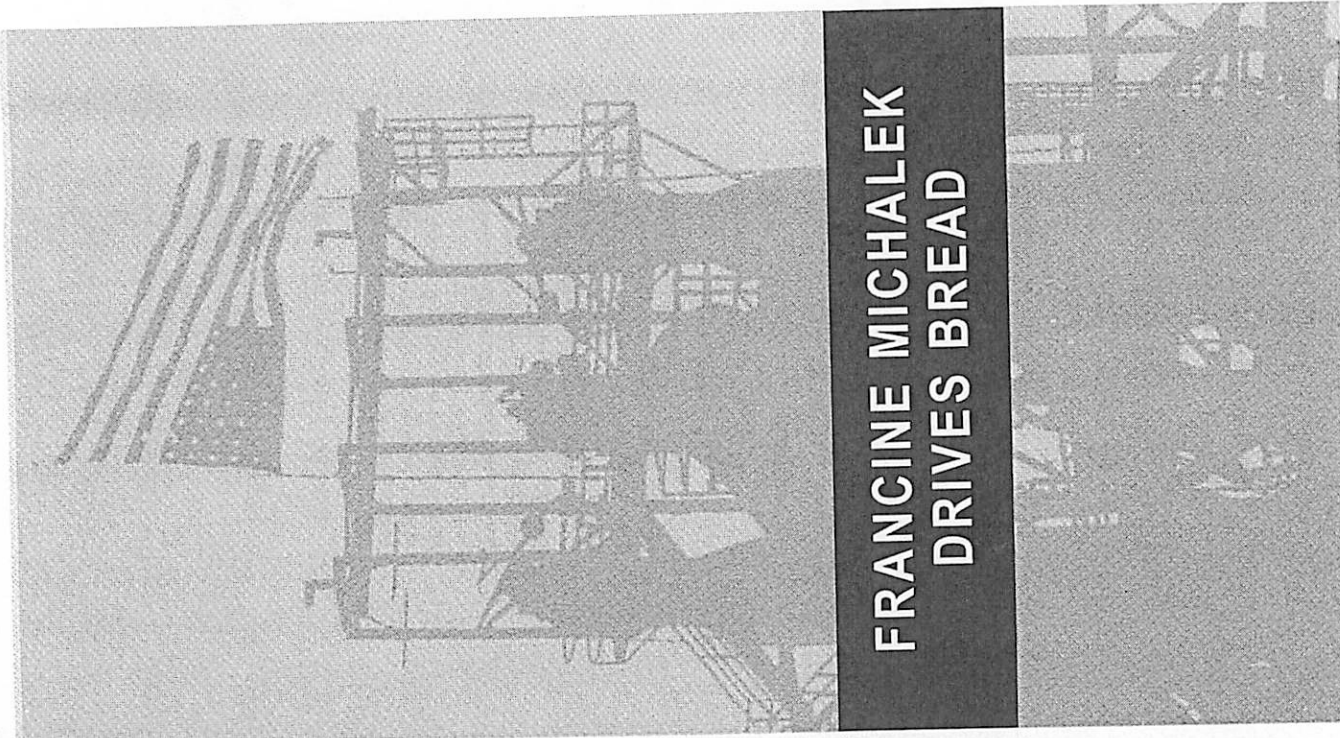
Somewhere
Teamsters
like her.

My mother
was all
alone

because the two boys
were gone.
When inside her

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FRANCINE MICHALEK DRIVES BREAD



9.

The interaction with idle is particularly interesting. The wide sense, in application to people, can be illustrated from c. 1450: 'To devocionne evre and Contemplacionne / Was sho gyven and nevre ydel.' But in an act of 1530-1 we find the characteristic 'to arest the sayde vacaboundes and ydell persones'.

Most of the time I feel blue. I feel like giving up quickly when things go wrong. Things are so bad that I feel as though life is hardly worth living. I am often worried about possible dangers that I cannot control. I am often tempted to give up trying to solve my problems.

*

pushed the frame
named names

depression repression
the song the same remains

"Drive your Chevrolet
through the U.S.A.

America's the greatest
land of all."

stolen stereo types
discriminatory democracy

participatory
plutocracy

windows replaced
by the wind

begin
shattering

4.

The developing sense is important, because it represents the specialization of productive effort to paid employment by another, which (cf. WORK, JOB, LABOUR) has been an important part of the history of capitalist production and wage-labour. In several related words this development can be traced.

I am having to take medication to calm my nerves. I find that I must take drugs in order to feel good. I am unable to sleep unless I take sleeping pills or powders. My friends often supply me with drugs that make me feel better.

*

smashed glass class
exhortation

"This land is my land"
or Angel Island

smashed glass class
assimilation

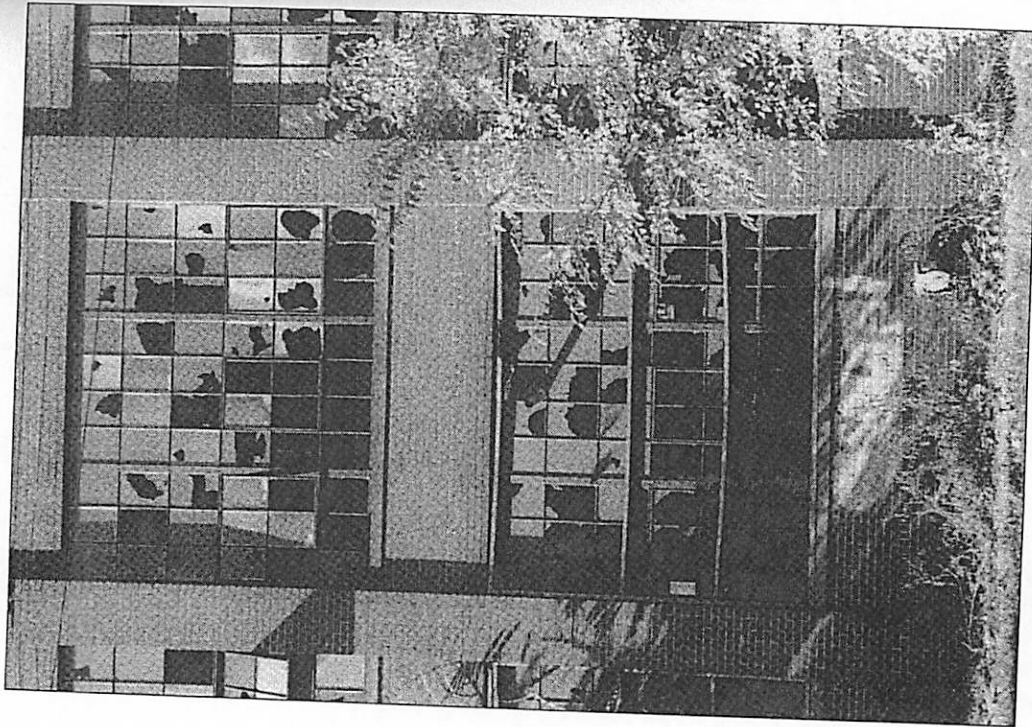
No Applications
Being Accepted Today

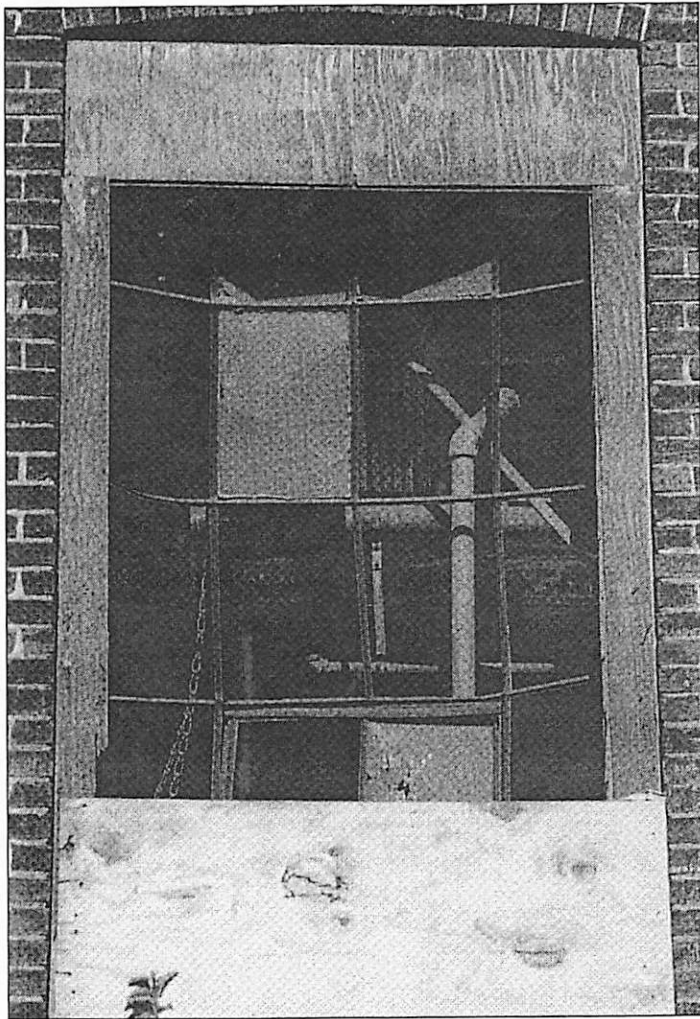
Japanese cars
scrapes in a bar

smashed glass class
after factories deportation

like Chrysler was drowning
like closing Lynch Road

"like the anvil fell"
swinging sledgehammers





1.

*There has been some controversy about the history of the word **unemployment**, since G. M. Young said that 'unemployment was beyond the scope of any idea which early Victorian reformers had at their command, largely because they had no word for it ... I have not observed it earlier than the sixties'. (Victorian England, 27; 1936).*

I often take a drink or two to get started. I drink when ever I have a chance. I drink to forget my troubles. I find that I need a drink in order to relax. I drink to ease the pain. I have good reasons for getting drunk.

*

Louisville slugger
"little motherfuckers"

unemployed structurally
Capitalized racially

profit margins
marginalized

people *polis*
parole

destabilized
democratic spaces

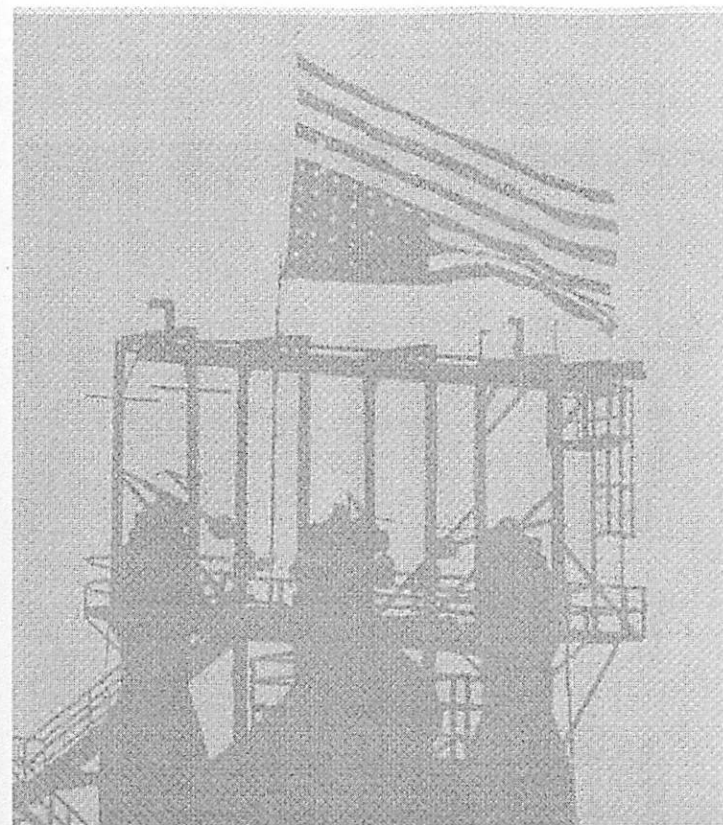
closed foreclosed
nation

states
reiterates

bleached
hate speech

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JUNE 19, 1982



17.

Any doubt remaining as to the Reagan Administration's attitude toward those who dared to defy it was erased in March 1982.

A detailed questionnaire from the Justice Department arrived at the residence of each former employee.

One time I was organizing the union.

Next I was selling eggs.

How did that happen?

The cover sheet stated the interrogatories were for the "convenience" of those appellants "who do not have counsel."

It also demanded that the interrogatories "shall be answered under oath."

Therefore the appellant was required to swear before a notary public that his answers were complete.

I think it happened because the left-wing movement contributed so much to the strength of the union.

That strength had to be dissipated.

A list of words and expressions showing their generally accepted capitalization follows. Note that some words derived from proper nouns have developed a special meaning; these words are no longer capitalized.

American history

bologna sausage

boycott

English literature

poor whites

puritanical ethics

russian dressing

Russian olive
Statement No. 2
un-American

The phrasing of the first question was particularly significant:

"Are you now, or have you ever been a member of PATCO?"

Get rid of it. Get it out of here.

If the left could be isolated out in the country somewhere, selling eggs, would there be any reason to worry?

Would there?

4.

Before the crash of 1929,
I accepted things without question.
The evening classes at the Y
caused me to question, but I had no answers.
Bryn Mawr was the turning point.
The girls from the garment industry,
from Sweden and other places
talked of their unions
and how they worked.
That hit home.

*Thousands of air traffic controllers
walked off the job at 7 a.m. yesterday,
snarling air traffic across the nation
and drawing an ultimatum from President Reagan,
who said his administration will fire any striking controller
who has not returned to work by 11 a.m. Wednesday.*

Capitalize a title of preeminence
or distinction following the name of a person
or when used alone as a substitute for a name.
Ronald W. Reagan, fortieth President
of the United States; the President; the Chief
Executive; the Commander in Chief
**We at Westinghouse had nothing to say
about our jobs, seniority, vacations,
pensions, and medical payments.**

**There was a company union,
but we had no real power.**
*In his morning briefing, Reagan made it clear
that the administration intends to make good
on its threat to prosecute controllers
who strike in violation of federal law.*
Capitalize the words *department, bureau,
service, station, office, agency, commission
and board* if referring to a bureau
or executive department
of the U.S. Government
when the name is given.

**The need for workers
to band together
for the good of all
was the answer for me.
I believed it then,
and I believe it now.**
*Federal counteraction
included U.S. attorneys
in 11 cities
filing criminal complaints
in federal courts
against 22 PATCO officials
and local union strike leaders.*

than at that long bench
with the never-ending noise,
the whining of machines.

2.

*During his eight years
on the old General Electric Theater,
Reagan enjoyed certain distinct
professional advantages.*

**Hundreds of women worked
at those benches. With prosperity,
more and more were added.**

References for authoritative capitalization
of American and British names: *Who's Who*,
Who's Who in America,

Dictionary of National Biography,
Dictionary of American Biography.

**But when the market crashed in 1929,
the benches were emptied almost overnight.**

*While the program's other performers
were at the mercy of the weekly dramatic material—
it was an anthology series—the star was not.*

I don't know

**how many were let go,
but my gosh, it was devastating.**

*He was no more responsible
for the quality of the shows
than for the quality of G.E.'s products.*

1.

Capitalize the first word
of every sentence, whether or not
it is a complete sentence.

Capitalize the first word of every line
of poetry. **I started work
on an assembly line
at the huge Westinghouse plant
in East Pittsburgh when I was sixteen.
The work was dull and repetitive.**

From 1954 to 1962,

*Ronald Reagan served as host
of the television program, "G.E. Theater."*

In some modern English poetry forms,
only the first word of the first line
is capitalized, and sometimes
even this is written lower-case.

*Six times a year he acted in the dramas
(once starring in a two-part program
as an FBI agent who infiltrates
Communist-front organizations).*

**We tried to make the time go
by talking to each other.**

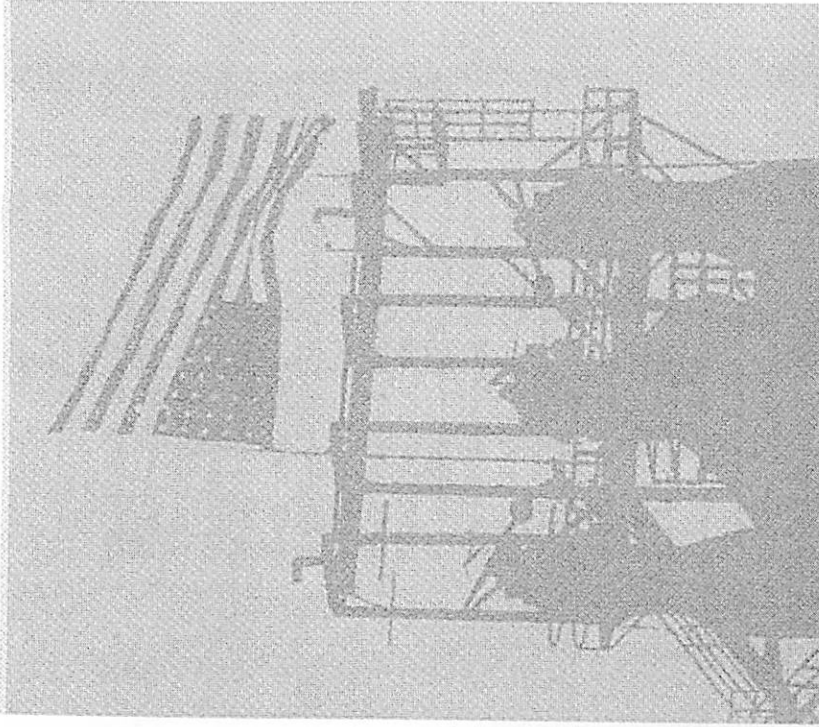
Capitalize *father* and *mother*
when used in address, but do not
capitalize such nouns
when a possessive pronoun
is used with them.

The remainder of the year

*Reagan toured G.E. factories,
speaking to employees and local civic groups on,
as he put it in his autobiography,*

*"the attempted takeover of the [electrical] industry
by Communists" and "the swiftly rising tide
of collectivism that threatens to inundate
what remains of our free economy."*

**Sometimes I would fantasize,
making believe I was somewhere other**



CAPITALIZATION



Because the (brake) past is used because the tearing (past) of the (brick) form is used is used because the fence (in) of the (goddamn) frame is used is used is utterly used against us and by us and upon us and for us is used is used in the present (past) future (form) we are used yet users yet used.

Every day you put your life on the line when you went into that iron house. Every day you sucked up dirt and took a chance on breaking your legs or breaking your back. And anyone who's worked in there knows what I'm talking about.

*

-roads]

Closing

words :

[Rail

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124.

"PUSSY CRUSHER" in gray spray paint—

"WEED PENIS MEMBERS BEER" (and)
"CT FUCKED EB → HERE"

Vocabulary is the problem—men have vulgar mouths. The "CLASS OF 2001" is responsible for these words; the owners of the trains that pass them (a block from my house, rarely on schedule) will never ride this line. Sometimes nude pictures are all over the wall. (These are seldom in frames.) They don't like women working, they try to embarrass you. Men (not available for this photograph) don't want to acknowledge a woman's place is not just in the home.

*

Work from the wire
mill [the train]
edged through—

waiting, don't
worry, Who knows

148.

If you were in a pub you talked shop. How you would do things differently if you ran the place. This struggle, in each and every instance, to make history within the conditions of Whose frame. I mean the company was always doing things that didn't make sense. Under just such conditions, my father ran for (and was elected) vice president of his Westinghouse union. There were a lot of smart guys in production but the company would never let you put your ideas into effect. A railcar (still) awaits articulation in the bottom (Right) corner of this frame.

*

There points to/ward
somewhere else
where the working

wore you, or
you worked [whatever was worn]

2.

Built sheds and piss houses. We took care of shit. Nation ("Under Construction") needs the State (in decay)—a flag out of focus where working-class (white) masculinity also factors into how factories get framed. You made steel together and you won your dignity together. Inside my third-grade (Union Road) classroom, the distant bay of trains (braking) out behind Buffalo Salvage & Tow. All those present (in prefigured relations) are constituted for a State that will remain (for us) always German-shepherd guarded. You couldn't make steel alone and you couldn't win respect alone. Further up the road was the Local.

*

Bricks, the frame [work]
of an eye, accents
of bricklayer

and optometrist, tongues
extant

13.

The interruption of the closure, in this instance, by the frame: "LTV [Steel] was able to use its bankruptcy to reduce payments to productive workers." In the old days when the city bus used to pull up to the factory gate, the driver would call out "butcher shop" or "slaughterhouse." "In negotiations with the steelworkers union, LTV extracted more takebacks than other, presumably healthier steel companies were able to." I can remember sitting around the lunch table and everybody at that table, there must have been seven or eight people, had a finger or something missing. "This gave LTV an advantage over its competitors." Believe it or not, people felt it was kind of like a badge of honor that they had a finger or something missing, and that would be a topic of conversation. "Bankruptcy became, through a cultural process that understood bankruptcy as failure, a condition for success."

*

yards our yards where our
Where are

no you cannot
yards [where] away

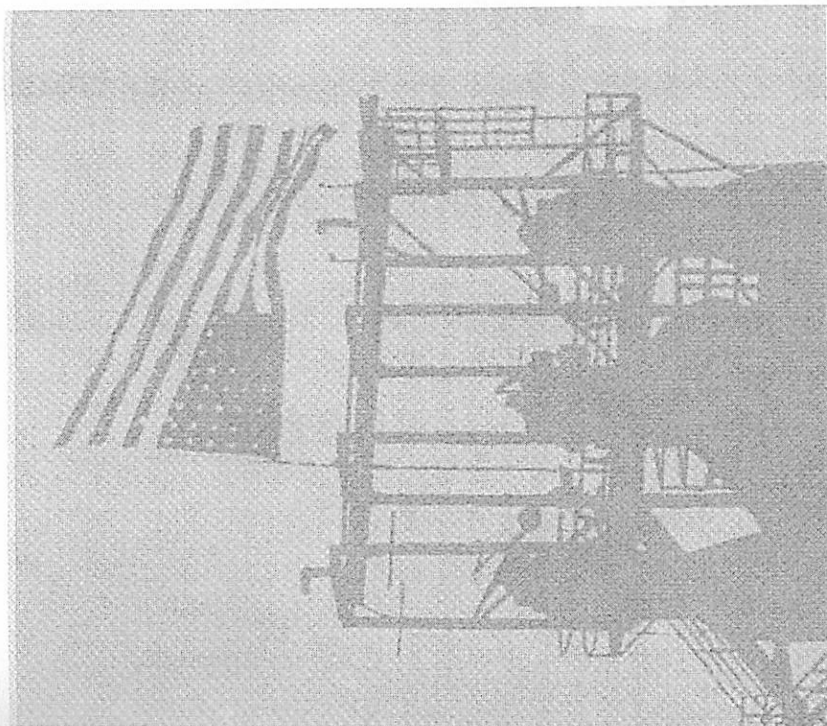
NOTE:
The numbers atop each section reference photographs
from Bernd and Hilla Becher's *Industrial Façades*.

1.

The basic form is the frame; the photograph of the factory predicts how every one (of the materials) will get used. and I can remember Mark & I talking about the possibility of Lackawanna becoming a ghost town Past (participle) past (participant) past (articulating) an incessant scraping (away). and what would we do. You know—it wasn't just losing a job in the steel industry, but your entire life, the place that you grew up in was going to be gone. As I scraped (grease, meat, omelettes), the (former) railroad workers and steel workers (still) bullshitting in the restaurant where for eight years I short-order cooked.

*

Who knew
the crisis
from the conditions—
presumably
the Capital [Who]



\$00 / LINE / STEEL / TRAIN



SHUT UP SHUT DOWN

Poems by Mark Nowak

AFTERWORD BY AMIRI BARAKA

This riveting collection of poetic plays and photo-documentary poems exposes the human cost of corporate greed and gives voice to the growing crisis faced in communities across America.

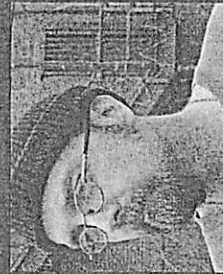
Nowak writes on his life as a person . . . with the steady underpinning of class . . . and brings it back, humming. And sleek with seeing and hearing! We get a sharp eye & philosophical brooding of what used to be labeled working class poetry . . . deepened with a hard but contemporary lyric and narrative. . . . A much needed parade. —AMIRI BARAKA

The several long poems that make up this book build into each other with devastating force and understatement, breaking poetic boundaries, regenerating the rich tradition of working-class literature. Nowak is a highly gifted and conscious artist, carrying, like the oldest bards, a group narrative which must be told if his listeners are to understand who they are and on what their lives depend—and this, in our time, means all of us." —ADRIENNE RICH

Elegant and inventive . . . Songs and statistics mix promiscuously in verses deeply informed by a knowledge of labor history and an ear for working-class speech. This is a work as powerful in its hope as in its indictment of misery. —DAVID ROEDIGER

Shut Up Shut Down's carefully textured narratives are not of the recovery variety, but rather are born of a bold projection of a class's needs and desires. Ethnographic insight and methodology are coupled with contemporary techniques of narrative sampling (with all the funkiness that comes with it). The result is a strident, constructivist aesthetic that dares to speak to its own of a democratic vision, while at the same time putting the Ruling Interests on notice. Now, that's entertainment! —RODRIGO TOSCANO

Mark Nowak is author of the critically acclaimed debut book of poems, *Reveries*, editor of *Xip: Cross Cultural Poetics*, and co-editor of *Visit, Teepees, Tavern, Native Writings After the Deans*. He grew up in Buffalo, New York, and now lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he is active in the labor movement.



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