

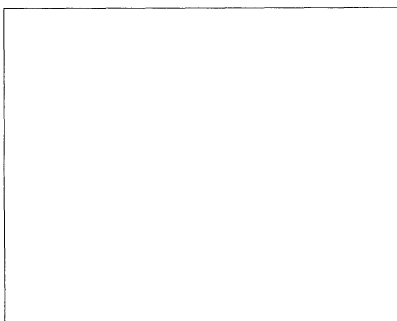
**Pierre Alferi & Olivier Cadiot, Katalin Molnár & Christophe Tarkos,
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. . . Unidentified Word Objects are literature's first prize: they fascinate, they lull to sleep. It is easy, tempting, to overestimate them, to inflate them like floats. They are the stamp of virtuosity in the prose of stylists. Exhibited like pearls, they lend themselves willingly to over-cultivation, becoming little enshrined votive offerings. Their monstrousness, instead of fueling the machine, can be flaunted in its own right, in at least two ways. Through prettification, harmonization, precocity, in a complacent Baroque. Or through language aberration, in an equally pat Expressionism. Arrest on the image.

It is not for nothing that the more or less acknowledged dream of these types of literature, Baroque affectation or Expressionist exaggeration, is poetry. It is in poetry more than anywhere else that the ideals of the arrested object and the exception are achieved. A modern accomplishment by means of condensation, brilliantly summed up in Claude Royet-Journoud's title *Objects Contain the Infinite*. Of course, there is a whole world between the metaphors of Symbolist poetry, Surrealist linkage, and Objectivist fragmentation of the

Blank Spots

1 — When I speak about the French translation of contemporary American *poetry* as a contribution to contemporary French literature, what do I see as the nature of this contribution? I'm tempted to reply: a rip. Or a hole. Or even a "blank spot."



OCEAN-CHART

(Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark*)

2 — My generation will probably be the last one to have seen the "blank spots" on maps of the world where the countries and colonial empires were colored in red, orange, blue, green. There remained a few blank spots, indicating the few still unexplored zones. Today, the maps are completely colored in and the explorers are replaced by tourists.

3 — For me, then, the con-

dæskæshen betwēn

[fōddēgraf of lādē standin
on cher wif bækæt on hed, rēdin]

and

[fōddēgraf of maan warin
endērpēntz standin on flær hōd'n æ
(gas mask?)]

wī, wī, wī, ū wənə rēvyū?

ō yə, yə. tē sichēwāt ərsefz.
tə get tətēlē sichēwātēd.

yə, bēt, bēt wēdēūmēn? wē
got æ sichēwāshēn.

wē gāt tēform æt. wē gāt
tēform æt. thē plāc hwer, bəkəz, wē
gāt tē get tē hwer wē sē wī wē rīt
hwet. ū sē? thē plāc dēzn jēst shō
ūp on itz ōn, wē gāt t constrēkt it,
wē gādājēstēfī it.

What Use Poetry?

It is said these days that things are going badly for literature, even more so for poetry, which is in crisis and even threatened with extinction. Of course, one could ask if things have ever gone well for poetry. Some twenty years ago, Roland Barthes already warned that in our world, literature should try “to save its skin.” One can wonder what it would mean for poetry to be well: when and where was poetic literature ever sold and read? When and where was poetry not in crisis?

When our world tries to reflect on itself it tends to whine about the meaning that has been taken away from it by the failings of the great progressive or revolutionary utopias. There is no longer any possibility of grandiosity beyond our present and our immediate future. This retreat, this recoiling seems to have removed from meaning the very idea of meaning (the meaning of our presence in the world and our destiny) — yet without, however, preventing the search for meaning. Consequently, anguish persists in this human world of ours, as in all worlds in want. The need for meaning, the need for salutary plenitude, the need for determination and clarity is present in the same proportion as it is missing.

tribution of translations of American *poetry* to contemporary French literature consists of: 1) creating a distance within a space-time in the process of incessant narrowing; 2) expressing that distance; 3) reinserting "blank spots" within the general coloring context.

4 — When I wrote that contemporary American *poetry* in French translation is a contribution to contemporary French literature, I didn't mean to say that French literature is enriched or augmented, but rather that its surface area is expanded into unexplored zones. Today, to translate American *poetry* into French is to gain ground.

Unowned territory. No-man's-land. Not for selling or building. And definitely not a ground for meetings, exchanges, dialogues, discussions, influences, communication in short, but rather an initial space of observation and reflection.

5 — I also remarked: "My real pleasure is reading American poetry *in French*. . . . My satisfaction could be expressed in these terms: *no French poet could ever write this*."

5 1/2 — Besides, what sort of language is it, where the phrase 'in perfect American' rings strangely like a displaced echo of the expression 'in perfect English'?

yə.

itz jəstəfīd bī, ēvən bī, bī itz intrinzik bütē. itz jəstəfīd bī itz kōhirəns.

yə, bət then, hwə iz it? izit, itz, pədəgājikəl?

nō! nō! itz, itz, itz, itz, itz pərfick fər pədəfīz.

pədəgājikəl dəzn mēn fər pədəfīz. pədəgājikəl mēnz it mēnz

thatz hwat wē r, thatz hwat wē wənt.

bət hū dū wē wənə tel it tū?

tə hū? tə hū? tə əs! that itz, that itz thar, that ifyerīt: sō-n-sōz ən as, itz fər hū? ū sā: sō-n-sōz ən as. ū jəst rīt it. ū rīt it bēkəz, ū cən rīt it on ə wal, a grəfētē, ū rīt it, itz, ət lēst its rītən.

yə.

nō?

yə.

bēkəz fər hū? ī mēn, wər runin intə prābləms īm fəgetin.

The present political situation offers numerous spectacular and often terrifying instances of this.

In such a context, one can understand that our contemporaries show little taste for what does not bring comforting clarity or stable knowledge. Not surprising either their disdain for “difficult” literature (especially that which is labeled, more or less, experimental poetry). Not surprising that our contemporaries try to avoid the kind of writing that does not satisfy itself with the representations that official discourses offer of the world, the kind of writing that erodes the certainty of actual knowledge, that undermines the formality of comfort, that does not essentially propose meaning but provokes anguish about the very conditions of the production of meaning.

In a larger sense, only those who write in this perspective can be called poets. But there is a tendency to relegate these types of poets to a marginal inaudibility (since no one listens to them): they do not correspond to the demands of the world, they are inadequate to the logic of spectacle and commerce, the eccentricity of their language makes them appear unreadable, monstrous, they are considered “errors of nature.”

Reason why, today, one readily declares that this activity

literal. But it is always a question of little devices disunited in the service of an ideal Object, hieroglyphs to decipher, knick-knack or monster.

This poetics of the exception can be summarized in one pose: Char-ism. Or it can become a radical new method of concretization: trip to Michaux’s personal zoo, Reznikoff’s minutes, Cingria’s cyclo-tourism, Ponge’s game-things, Stéfan’s scissorings. In the affected neoclassicism turning up everywhere you look, it can assume the inoffensive form of memorable moment or well-turned aphorism. Or it can deeply affect the structure of language itself.

Poetry has often recognized the threat posed to it by arrests on the Object: self-mutilation, self-confinement. Poetry devises escape routes by inventing indeterminate open spaces, zones of indistinction, or pockets of resistance. It knows, better than any other genre, how to invent urban or desert states of intrapersonal equilibrium: spleen, void, apathy. And this is how true “literary space” should be determined. But more often than not, poetry opens such spaces only to use them as a sanctuary in which to await the apparition of the Exemplary Object, the sublime singularity.

The procedures reflect and almost mechanically reproduce this

yə. nō, butif, fər hū wē wənə
stərt ə rəvyū? fər hū?

ī dənō. yə send sēmthin, yə
send sēmthin, yə stik z pōstər on
thə wal

i nəvər put up ə pōstər.

ōk bət its thə sām thin.
bēkəz ə rəvyūzz ə pōstər. itz ə
manefesto. nō bət wī? ī dənō.

yü, yü wər sāin, ī rəmembər,
yü wər sāin that yü wāntəd ə plac
fər əs. yə.

thən, that mēnz that wē
pəblish stəf wē līk.

yə, hwət wē līk.

n that wē trī tē māk it
intērəsin, that yə kēp on rēdin,
bēkəz thə prābləm wif ə rəvyüz
that thār borin.

yə, bət borin wī? simplē
bēkəz thā don nō hwət thār sāin.
thə ōnlē intrəst of ə sichəwāshən
līk this iz hwen it nōz hwət itz sāin.
it sēz sēmthin. it shōz sēmthin. it
shōz ə wā of sēin.

nd hwets thə wā of sēiin?

its üs!

üs!

(the poetic activity) has no future.
A number of rather well-placed
intellectuals, such as Guy Debord
and Jean Baudrillard, even tend to
think that there is no more litera-
ture worthy of that name in France,
that poetry is dead, or for that mat-
ter the same can be said of art in
general.

And yet poetry continues
to exist in varied forms, often con-
tradictory, but alive, and deeply
rooted in the anguish proper to
mankind—anguish of language.

Let me explain:

One could begin by asking
a crude, naive question: Why is
there poetry? Why is there STILL
poetry when everything (com-
merce, spectacle, ideology) wishes
there would be no more poetry.

This is what I believe:

1. A nonwritten life (non-
symbolized in a personal
manner) is a wretched life, a
life subjected to a false lan-
guage. Therefore, one
must respond to the shame
of being subjugated and of
being without a language
with a defensive gesture: by
an action on language.
2. The language of every-
one is no one's language,
consequently one must "find
for oneself a language" in
order to articulate what is
intimate (and which positive

ideal of exception. Little formal models, not only disjointed but also mounted on pins, varnished painting or abrupt juxtaposition, metered, assonant, or purposely elliptical. And the poems are stubbornly presented as quintessential exceptions: flowers, four-leaf clovers, cameos, enamels, trophies. This hunting scene can also be a shop of horrors: the sanctification of gore is just the flip side of precocity.

Beyond the complacency that lies in wait for it, the Arrested Object presents a limit (a limitation?) for poetry. The arrest of poetry: an old story. From Ducasse's *Poésies* to Denis Roche's visit to the theatre, passing through "performance"'s more nuanced forms of avoidance or the rejection of "literary" poetry in the name of "the real world," etc. It's still the topic of the day, fast becoming a farce. In this corner, the fetishistic artisans, upholders of forms and know-how. In that corner, the ex-iconoclasts who either redigest a "modern" destiny or go reconvert themselves in ordinary prose.

How to retain the precision of the poetic mechanism without sacrificing speed? How to efface the icons without deactivating them?

If it is a question of soul supplement or purring engine, lyricism

"Perhaps my dilemma about whether this expression is American or not is exactly the point, since its ambiguity puts Reznikoff's relation to the language (American or English) and the men in question" (Benjamin Hollander, "The Eloquence in Question, Reznikoff's *Manner*").

Perhaps the same thing can be expressed this way: "*No American could ever write this.*"

6 — Finding oneself in this strange situation. Without even being able to speak of exoticism, since exoticism is itself a matter of habits.

7 — No, it's on the contrary strangely familiar and at the same time so strange, you see. This distance. The distance between what can be written directly in French and what can only be written indirectly, through reflection, through translation.

7 — The distance between *habits* and *politics*, for example. Or: what unarticulated political intonations does the translation of American *poetry* suddenly articulate in French? What *politically* "blank spots" suddenly speak through our habits?

8 — *Political* in what way? In the way the American detective novel is political. But not political like the neo-*noir* French novel. (Incidentally, it would be interesting to try to find out why the

discourses cannot account for).

3. The paradox is that language, which makes us human, frees us from the world at the very moment when it pretends to give the world to us. Therefore, on the one hand all we have to do is push this wrenching from nature to the extreme, and on the other to seek a new alliance with the world.

4. This produces on one side DICHTUNG (that is to say, rhetorical condensation and the desire of hermetism), and on the other side the exchange of metaphors, "correspondences," echolalia, harmonies, etc.

5. "Poetry" is the site where this contradiction (this dichotomy) which structures language is exposed. For this reason, poetry is ineluctable.

6. Neither the atonic block of prose (the continuum of thought or narration) nor the melodic metronome (that is to say, prosody) can account for the sensation of discontinuity of things and the meaninglessness of the present (the unnameable reality). Therefore, one must find a form that can record this sensation (a rhythmic

is nowhere to be found. And the anatomist can be accused of not finding the spirit, expression can be played off against technique, and sentiment against its form. "Lyric" designates the energy of the literary mechanism that changes form into content and vice versa. Rather than a particular tone or affect, "lyricism" is a primary affectivity that gives tension to writing, inseparable from the mechanism as an act from its conditions.

The driving force of writing has been so often thought of in negative terms that a sort of Vulgate of "lack" has developed with reference to literary France. This Vulgate reinjects transcendence, mystery, and piety by misappropriating grand negative concepts rigorously elaborated under specific circumstances (impossibility, limitation, inexpressibility). Far from what constituted these concepts' force and pertinence the Vulgate of "lack" reduces them to a single grandiloquent thematic in order to re-create an illusionistic scene of writing. Vagueness gives rise to its every hope: since the writing originates in radical negativity, it is by definition subversive. It is remarkable, on the contrary, how this diffuse ideology falls back, in the idea of a sublime elsewhere, on the bourgeois stereotype of inspiration.

Of course, something escapes the mechanical disman-

majority of French translations of American detective fiction sound so fake.) *Political* like Gertrude Stein, the Objectivists, Jackson Mac Low, the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets, and so many others, not like Kenneth Fearing or Ezra Pound or the Beatniks.

9 — *Political*. That doesn't imply that today's American poets are particularly involved in actual political struggle. It simply means that they situate political reflection, radically, in the field of language.

10 — Rips. Holes. "Blank spots."

12 — The *political force* in question is equivalent to the *force of language*. Its strength in place of its power. Gertrude Stein's grammar, Charles Reznikoff's recopyings, Jackson Mac Low's chance-intentional language blocks, Armand Schwerner's tablets, David Antin's spoken poems. . . .

Any child knows how to play with these things, while we all too often content ourselves with pronouncing *on* or *against*. The *will of language* as a key to a different political space. America blank on the map or the re-embarking of Rochambeau.

13 — Wittgenstein's Rhinoceros: any child can understand that he crosses the room. And can extrapolate from that consequences for life, in other words political consequences.

yə! itz hwæt wē līk, hwæt wē līk, itz jus evrēthin wē līk. bæt wif ən īdē, sē, itz jus hwæt wē līk! ənsted of evər sāin hwæt, hwæt it iz, thē, thē speshəl thin iz that it sēz, it showz hwæt it sēz, yū sē? yər not genə hav ə miks sō miksd that yū cant tel hwæt it iz. evrēwən kan sē hwæt it iz. then itz ə kōhirən objēkt.

kōhirən hau?

itz hwæt wē līk! yər not genə tē mē that hwæt wē rīt 'z līk evrēthin is. līk ō līdərəchur.

'cors not.

sō, fər līdərəchur, wē start ə rəvyū.

yə.

if, if hwæt wē rīt iz līdərəchur,

yə

wē nēd ə plāc tū mētamor-fosīz, jərmināt, rēflēkt, mūv əraund, go wūn wā, go thē ədər wā, dēpendin on hwæt wər lukin fər. ə plāc hwer wē kən think, sugjest stəf, set thē limitz, giv īdēz hwen wē get əm nd, hwæt dēz that dū? it it givz mētiēl tē sē, hwæt līd-ərəchur iz. thatz it. bēkēz ī rēmēbr yū wər sāin: ī wān ə plāc fə ūs. ən ī wəz sāin, ī wān,

ting of texts; there is always a remainder from the operation. But it's not elsewhere, at the bottom of a well; it is part of the operation itself. As long as it remains the unknown in the equation, remainder = x ; as long as it is not hypothesized into a religious object, it is not considered to be lacking.

The thematics of lack produced flat texts that had to depend on their place in the shade to take on depth. Their space was still the space of illusionist perspective. But if you focus on the writing, all you see is a surface, like a painting without a faked third dimension. How to produce reliefs on the very surface of writing? How to reinvest the surface with energy to score it? How to maintain a constant gearshifting effect with a thousand discrepancies of consistency and registers of writing? How to let certain lines of phrasing—descriptive, theatrical, narrative, poetic—occupy by turns the foreground of a single text, then fall back behind the other lines they covered over?

Through braiding: a line locally overlaps another line that seemed to hold it behind. A relief appears, then is reabsorbed in the surface because there is no background. The gearshifting shows up in the writing by means of a concurrence of voices: a voice manifests itself through its register—narration, discourse, etc.—or through its phrasing—rhythm, tone

14 — No politics without animals. "*The Whale* places the object at a distance. The title enforces an estrangement, actually an abstraction of the whale. Neither this whale nor that whale. Then an empty place, an unoccupied spot, establishes itself. A space without a subject (a "no-man's-land") where the speaker is missing: . . . place of *locution* lacking a subject that allows himself to be perceived in the traces of his speech. . . . A discourse that, fatally, will do violence to both language and to the language. That will constitute a loss in terms of the abundance associated with the unspoken or, better yet, in terms of the richness of the not-yet-spoken" (Claude Richard, "Melville: la lettre blanche").

15 — *Political* in place of *metaphysical*. A hole in place of a lucrative building. The backers of the City of God cultivating the art of blabbing about the unspeakable. A comical project. Charlton Heston receiving the tablets of the law in the Cecil B. DeMille movie.

15 1/2 — Israelis and Palestinians both claim Jerusalem for their capital. That would be comical if it weren't for the deaths. If one group, for its own reasons, insists that Jerusalem *should not be* the capital of the other group, and vice versa, there's no solution. But if both, for opposite—that is to say identical—reasons, insist that Jerusalem *should be* their capital,

süm, süm seperāshens widin
lidərəchur. ī wān thē ōld storē: wēr
wūn famelē

ovər.

that evrēwūn lūvz evrēwūn

ovər, ovər.

ovər.

ō yē, yē. thatz it. thatz hwet
itz fər.

and wē sā bad thinz əbout
thē ədərz. yū rəməmbər that?

yē, ī rəməmbər.

bət, bət thē prābləm iz,
tədā, ī don sē

yū don fē līk sāin bad thinz
əbout thē ədərz. if som dāz yū fē
līk it, som dāz yū donfē līk it, itz ōk,
yū chānj, yū sā, nō insəltz fər, fər,
wūn mūnf fər igzampəl ənd wūn
mūnf, speshēl nō insəltz isū.

nō bət thē prābləm iz, iz

wē ōnē pəblish pōmz.

wē ōnē pəblish pōmz in the
rəvyū?

ōnlē. thatz it. ən thatzz ōl.

ən wē kritsīz nēthin.

schema that obeys no fixed
rules a priori, an artificial
happening detached from
meaning). Poetry has this
discovery as its objective.

As long as there will be this,
at least this, that is to say as long
as there will be some speaking
beings, some anguished human
beings, there will be, it seems to
me, an exigency of poetry. Not for
poetry, but against poetry, in the
murder of poetry, in poetry as a
form of disappearance of poetry.
And, of course, in unpredictable
forms—forms that must at the
same time undermine the search
for a “true” language while insisting
that there is no “true” language—
forms that propose not to create
fullness but rather emptiness in the
false language that surrounds us
and fills the space around us.

What are the forms of repre-
senting the world that today
parade before us? The fugacity of
the spectacular, the onrush that
makes the real vanish in the frivo-
lous and jovial bric-a-brac of trash-
TV, or the obscene tautology of the
talk shows (the reality shows).

The *derealizing* flow of
images drowns our vision, our con-
science, our lives. It subjugates us,
as if naturally, to the ascendancy
of represented things. It obstructs
the real for us with simplistic repre-
sentations. It teaches us to
approve dumbly what is there

why can't Jerusalem be, at the
same time, the capital of both?
Jerusalem, capital of Israel;
Jerusalem, capital of Palestine.
That way, everyone is happy. Any
child can understand this. Now,
about the falcons.

16 — I don't know for sure,
but apparently about twenty pairs
of falcons live in Paris, where they
have supposedly been reproducing
since the Middle Ages, nesting in
certain belfries. Their hunting
grounds presumably extend over a
radius of several dozen miles.
Based in the capital, they evidently
seek their daily sustenance as far
as Royaumont. Personally, I've
never seen a falcon over Paris.
And, even if I had, I would have
taken it for a quick pigeon. I
assume that the majority of
Parisians are equally unaware of
their presence.

I think this story is very edi-
fying. It shows that two territories
that are unaware of one another
can exist in the same space, with
no interferences or connections.

16 1/2 — For days all the
radio and television stations have
been boxing our ears with this high
philosophical debate: should day-
light savings time be done away
with? Should the winter or the
summer hour prevail? At what hour
does the sun rise? Etc.

*At the fourth beep the time
will be exactly eight o'clock is*

nō, nō, kəz, kəz, kəz, kəz,
līk, if, if yū bəld ə bəlldin, yū don
star bī

kritsizin thə bəldin nekstdōr

—K. M. & C. T.

(Translated by Stacy Doris)

before our eyes gorged with icons. Facing this thoughtless and alienating onrush, poetry is nothing more than the name of another appropriation of reality. Poetry is another name for realism, because the strange, overcomplicated, multiple cut-up of poetic writing imposes another functioning of meaning (another rhythm of apparition, of constitution and of dispersion of meaning in the duration—the duration of writing as well as the duration of reading). For instance, the speed of surging and vanishing visions in Dante or Rimbaud and, by contrast, the crystallized slow motion of Mallarmé.

Similarly, rhetoric is not the name of an ornamentation or of a brilliant performance of expression. Rhetoric is the name of this other functioning which creates a complexity, a density (*Dicht-Dichter*, in German), a difficulty which resists the flow of time, resists the disastrous vanishing of things, of beings, of thoughts, into time. Rhetoric is the name of the technique that hardens this resistance and makes it last.

Petrarch used to say: “I don’t want my reader to understand without effort what I myself wrote with effort.” One should not interpret this statement as an affirmation of esoteric elitism. On the contrary: this statement tells us

lexicon, etc.—, dominates the other voices for a while, then is covered over by another. The opposition between the unique, autocratic, linear idiom of poetry and the relativising, discontinuous dialogism of the novel loses its significance. Prose could be considered, in a way that includes certain poetry, a braided voice whose ideal is maximum integration and continuity at once: several voices in one. A prose whose clear line doesn’t blur the contours of poetic objects. A prose that piles up the registers—rhythm section, keyboards, melody—, yet obeys the exigencies of a continuous phrase, without pause. A line is launched, takes off, and, when it seems to lose itself, is relayed by another, threads back through the mike, loops: feedback. Lines of voicing move parallel to each other at different rhythms.

Confidence in the surface, which is simply confidence in form, does not inevitably lead literature to smooth linearity or to abstraction in the service of pure textual materiality. Literature’s specific material is not language as such, but always objects already both complex and dehierarchized—Unidentified Word Objects.

Many effects of relief result from the circulation of these heterogeneous objects. Some vanish in passing, others persist. Above

that poetry is the name of a chance given to the reader, caught in the vertiginous precipitation of prosody, or in the densifying of polysemy. To see one's time as an obstacle to time and to take momentarily the initiative over time, in the slow-motion thickness of deciphering.

Difficult literature, Antonin Artaud said, is a search for "true" language. Its particular functioning is to attempt to speak the intimate—"individual modulation." Intimate does not mean only subjective, personal (what lyricism tries to express). It is rather what Kafka called "the negative," Bataille "la part maudite" (the banished portion), Beckett "the unnameable." That is to say, what communitarian discourses that are subjugated to the positive (politics, moral, science) cannot take in charge.

Unlike history and unlike prophecies, poetry confronts the present. The love of its own time is its subject. But this love, as all love, is ambivalent. Modern literature is an ambivalent love of the present; nothing other than the present because it refuses nostalgic maceration, the hatred of modernity, and prophetic alignment—nothing other than the entire present (its tragic space, its senseless on-the-spotness)—which painfully frustrates the desire for meaning. Loving and

all, some are reabsorbed at a certain reading speed, viewed from a certain angle dictated by context, but reemerge at another speed, from another angle. When the spoken interrupts the flow of the written, for example, a certain surface imposes itself on another and coats it. This transcription effect is closely linked to heterogeneity, to the forced entry of an object into a code which wants nothing to do with it: surprise sound effect on the written, unintentional literary effect, effect of telescoping or corrugation, fortuitous or highly calculated. Strangleholds of the written on the spoken, the spoken on the written, the written on the written.

But the attraction of strange objects can also be understood literally. Objects, whether of external observation or frantic imitation, when recognized in their strangeness and violently employed, create a disturbing relief which the text does not smooth over, but exposes. The external breaks in by force and is suppressed as background, which can't happen without a degree of irony. Covert irony in the case of a referent imposing itself upon nonfactual writing, exerting such pressure on the writing that it raises objections. Overt irony when the text declares itself a fake, tailoring itself to fit a genre that becomes its object, its referent. The issue is not of greater or

clearly a command, not a piece of information. Why should the whole world go by the same time? Wouldn't it be enough for those who have some business to take care of together to synchronize their watches like before a holdup, and let the others live life at their own pace? In the '50s, L. Mumford cleverly showed the role of the *bel-fry-clock* order in the birth of capitalism.

"*The Eliminator* is a clock that doesn't keep time, but loses it. The intervals between the flashes of neon are 'void intervals' or what George Kubler calls 'the rupture between past and future.' *The Eliminator* orders negative time as it avoids historical space" (Robert Smithson, "The Eliminator").

Still, the system of hours and time zones is good for one thing: differences in time in different zones. The necessary lag *between* a voice and its echo, *between* one language and another. But also *between* us.

18 1/2 — I arrive at a perilous and let us say disreputable passage here. I could have translated *Sun* as "*Solitude*." Of course, I didn't. Before designating a fashionable social plague, the word was (and remains) one of the great poetic plagues. One of those words that should be retired from the language and disinfected before being allowed back in circu-

hating, that is to say embracing the present passionately, poetry confronts in-significance because the meaning of the present is located in this in-significance: in this impossible framing of perspectives, in this wavering of knowledge, in this leakage of significations confronting our discourses and our beliefs.

Or to put it differently: either the world (the present, things, the outside world, our bodies) falls, as it is said, into "obvious meaning"—and thus literary language becomes the aestheticized reflection of this fall—or else it remains obscure (absolutely aside from meaning)—and as such literary language takes this into account: its given ineluctably becomes this in-significance, this empty spot at the heart of the constitution of meaning.

The goal of poetry is as much to fix this non-sense of the present as to produce meaning (to say the world clearly). Therefore, poetry incarnates senselessness, indeterminacy, and the malaise which speaks the truth of this singular rapport of speaking beings with the world (speaking beings that Artaud called "departed beings": the separated ones, those wrenched from the immediate animality of experience). Poetry accomplishes, in its very own difficulty, the logic of this speaking

lesser realism, but of negotiation with that object, with the "reality effect," suspect or paradoxical, which necessitates a plan of attack.

Relief requires mixing and mixed techniques. This brings to mind "multimedia," but the mixing need not be systematic, it can impose itself on a text at any point. Sometimes a book unfolds from a single refractory nucleus and passes through all the genres (theater, narrative, essay) in an attempt to set that nucleus in motion. At other times the motion of the description or narrative slows before an image, an event, and transforms into a poem. In a novel, the effect of poetry (in a sense extended to any form that calls attention to its own contours) is always gripping: suddenly we dwell on the words themselves, only to forget them again, dragged along by the narration. The question of style, of the writing's authority and thus the writer's posture, "novelist," "poet," etc., gives way to more modest considerations. How, for example, in a text that disobeys the laws of genre, to justify the nonlinear arrangement of words and the persistence of sound, or theater, the *mise-en-scène* installed through typography in the *mise-en-page*.

lation. Gilles Deleuze, for example, utilizes it when he tells that his role as a professor was to teach students (in search of communication because they feel lonely) that they should be glad of their solitude. That they could proceed only as a function of their solitude. "It was my role as a professor to reconcile them with their solitude."

I'm sure that translation has a lot to do with utterances. And utterances, like (genuine) mushrooms, aren't cultivated, aren't manufactured; you gather them when you find them. No individual subject (no writer), as great as he may be, has ever invented or produced the slightest utterance. I would say the same thing about utterances as Olivier Cadiot has written about poetry: "(they) are in the language. It suffices to delicately disengage them and then make a mold of them."

When I say that translation seems to me to have a lot to do with utterances, I'm talking about solitude. Because utterances are rare. Not because there are so few of them, but because they can be spotted only in a rarefied space, a no-man's-land, a space without a subject.

And utterances are *solitary*. By this I mean that they do not communicate, they do not form links, that they are without connec-

Pebbles in the stream: to varying extents, the flow of sentences weakens and melts the dense formations they sweep along with them. Digestion is a kind of velocity. The contours of a foreign body in a text can dissolve to reappear more clearly later—an interplay of angles and rhythms. The redundant accumulation of sentences from elsewhere, for example, first blurs their contours, but on a slower reading, their stitching reappears. We read at different speeds, for different forms of enjoyment: panting to keep up with the rush of a new discourse, or taking time to let exemplary objects rise to the surface. Multiplicity of readings for the multiplicity of writing. A book often functions like a particle accelerator for the unidentified objects it contains. The acceleration provoked by the machine of repetition separates the ear from the text. In traditional poetry, enjambment is an accelerator that forces a non-grammatical skeleton out of the sentence.

All these effects of relief, intermittence, striation, ungluing, precipitation, and reliquification suggest in every case a specific literary treatment of the material: digestion of word objects by the block or by phrasing, by stitching or fusions, double justification. To survey the changes of consis-

tion, even if there are several of them on a page. But they beam like idiots.

Translating *Sun* or writing *Théorie des tables*, the work of an idiot, has helped me “reconcile myself with my solitude.”

—E. H.

(Translated by Stacy Doris)

being. It speaks the loss of the world in language, and through language the wrenching away of human beings from the mute stupidity of the world. In fact, poetry has as its goal to draw this void and this wrenching (with abstract, artificial, nonnatural rhythms).

To offer a readable world (as it is done in the coherence of explanatory systems, in the naïveté of utopic visions, or in the homogeneity of fictions which articulate time) would be, for poetry, a betrayal of the effort toward truth, it would be a submission to the lure, an admission of the world. Thus Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Jarry, Artaud, Beckett, and many others did not seek to render the world readable: their works constructed, across from the world's obscurity, a homologous obscurity (homeopathic?)—and it is in this that these works give the effect of truth.

—C. P.

(Translated by Ray Federman)

tency, observe the contamination
through contact of materials taken
from wherever, research the most
minute material differences. To
elaborate a form where genres
and registers realign themselves
in full swing.

— P. A. & O. C.

(Translated by Stacy Doris)