



MY POETRY

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## My Poetry

*for Bob Perelman*

My poetry does seem to have a cumulative, haunting effect – one or two poems may not touch you, but a small bookful begins to etch a response, poems rising in blisters that itch for weeks, poems like ball-bearings turning on each other, over & over, digging down far enough to find substance, a hard core to fill up the hand. It's through this small square that my poems project themselves, flickering across the consciousness, finally polarizing in the pure plasma of life. The reader grows impatient, irritated with my distancing style, coming at him in the rare book format, written under not one but two different kinds of dirty money, & knowing me to be an english teacher.

“The Protestant Poem”<sup>1</sup> & the prose piece “He Was”<sup>2</sup> typify my tendency to write over-elaborated series of possibilities which become arid & abstract. It's possible for even the best current poetry to sink into oblivion without wholly justifying itself through such an absolute renunciation of mediocre success. “The Protestant Poem” & certainly, “He Was,” are not arid, they're great (except maybe, “kaleidoscopic world”). My poetry is “curiouser & curiouser” as it makes a descent into the rabbit-hole where descent becomes the subject of the poem's concern: a dazzling dimwittedness that makes sense of its mackerel-textured absence. A respectful abstinence from knowing what I'm doing? Therefore, my style seems to have fallen apart, deteriorated in the three-year interim between books; some kind of decadence has set in; it has become problematical, not to say impossible, because if it limits itself to the traditional language & form of a literature it misses the basic truths about itself, while if it attempts to tell those truths it abolishes itself as literature. Chiasitic sentence: not true, MAKE IT NEW, caps, has always been the case, it's what literature means, should mean.

At this point, then, we begin to glimpse what is the profound vocation of the work of art in a commodity society: not to be a commodity, not to be consumed, not to be a vacation. Isn't this the piece talking to itself, hoping to be overheard, & contradicted. Because, the interest evident in the construction, rhythm of the sentences, obviates the need for the content. (Not to deny the feelings, of course). And I, as you probably

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<sup>1</sup>*Tight Corners & What's Around Them*, Black Sparrow, Santa Barbara, 1974.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

do *not* know, am a sucker for children in pain. If you allow Cézanne to represent a third dimension on his canvas, you must allow Landseer his gleam of loyalty in the spaniel's eye. I really don't think I'm demanding too much. The idea that poetry is good for a person & should be choked down like a horse pill is ridiculous.

All night you've been stiffed  
upstairs across the bed as if  
composing, I plump up your  
pillows, & measure my tread in  
the hall. Off & on I hear you  
snoring & nearby. What else  
is there? Isn't this Saturday  
morning – isn't that Alice out  
side, in the snow? I stare her  
down however long it takes. You  
get up to relieve yourself & we  
encounter in the parlor & ask me  
whatever am I up for? This  
passes for communication.

This is a good example of Jay Gutz's work. Bill Bisset inhabits an entirely different poetic & spiritual universe, & so does Jay. Like Blake, Bisset is a visionary, mystic poet who makes his own rules of poetry as he goes along. Trying to mount a woman with half a hardon is infinitely more terrifying than anything you can trot out from Blake. More terrifying? I should read more Blake. Malcolm Le Grice, the filmmaker, proposes a distinction in structural films between the "compositional" (work=composition) & "problematic" (=problem, e.g. people who want to write language & not poems, just as McClure wants to write his body). Bernstein composes using a vocabulary which at all points (nearly) proposes itself as the other – this vulnerability, constantly expressed, is a sign of what (why does he insist on it?) – yet "what I want to call attention to is that there is no natural writing style" which of course is exactly what Barthes was saying in '53, *non*? These are the poles & what moves the piece is that there is no resolution, point of equilibrium. Here too, the problematic mode proposed as a strategy for composition, as such – this whole body of poems is a big jump forward for me, in that I'm no longer writing "just poems," each work is somehow myself.

*Able to Describe the Verses*

Able to describe the verses more sad each night.

In the night like the two of them between my arms.  
They kissed like tarantulas beneath an infinite sky.

She quizzed me, I quizzed her back.  
As if I had a friend with big fizzy eyes.

Able to exactly as I said before.  
Thinking that I can't go on. Feeling lost.

Ear to immensity's night, immense with her.  
On the other hand my soul turns rocks into paste.

What does it matter my love can't guard its shame.  
The night is starry & she isn't with me still.

So much for death. For song with its laws. For laws.  
My soul is not contented with having lost her someplace.

As if she were here, I admire her hair suit.  
My heart her hair suit, & she isn't in it.

The mismatched night blanks out the mismatched trees.  
Our sisters, those who entice, the same backwards  
as forwards.

I don't know why, that's certain, perhaps I should ask her.  
My voice grows furry as it blows about her idea.

The other. Be the Other. Come kiss me like before.  
Her voice, her clear form. Her infinite pupils.

Why I don't know for sure, maybe we'll discuss some ways.  
The short tan of love, the large tan of oblivion.

Why is night like the two of them between my arms:  
my discontented soul with the beauty it has lost.

Although this sea is the ultimate sadness she can cause me,  
&, as I told Sean, this is the ultimate paper boat  
I shall make her.

I suspect people won't understand why I think this is language-oriented

writing, but it certainly is. I'm a "mind" poet rather than a "body" poet, terribly involved with trying to understand my processes. There are too few memorable poems.

The stars  
are insatiable holes, we argue, I hold them  
Davy lamps. The stars  
are. The night is  
cold, I slurred the word, is  
coal, I said, & she heard, the blonde kiss holding, Gold.

The "insatiable holes" are spaces created by desire; substitutions around a phonemic center create phrasings & cadences of great intensity as they seek to "fill" an erotically-charged context. It was a *cold* winter, we were out of *coal*, she was sitting on a *gold* mine. Engels writes poems on the disjunction between a consciousness doomed to ask ethical questions of a body & natural order incapable of giving certain replies; I, on the other hand, am more concerned to show the disjunctions inherent in the field of discourse itself. It's like I've moved from tight corners to perfect circles. Still so tight. It's all so every word utterly true, & at one & the same time, utterly flip. Shiny as glass . . . slippery as glass.

I don't like it, for hurting my head, & I mention it only to relate myself to a particularly productive current in American writing, one associated mostly with prose (e.g., W. S. Merwin's recent narratives, or those of Raymond Federman & Ronald Sukenick). The hipper among you will be able to identify what drugs went into each one of these sad works & god knows, there is hash, speed, coke, opium & alcohol in all of them. Quasimodo was right – Mozart was right: *Bald, oder nie, & Bob's your uncle*. I cannot say the word *e, y, e* anymore . . . there is no *e, y, e* – there is only a series of mouths – nothing strange about my powers of speech, so many typos that work, sort of.

### *My Typos*

The long tea high of love  
– the tranquil distances  
from *m* to *o* in amor soldered  
& *o* says *o*, don't stop:  
  
you ask me why *o* insists on existence

& *a* means your life is complete?  
Who can precisely explain  
*o*'s moment & *a*'s fragrance to Rosa

& persuade her to drop her  
inhuman arrogance?  
If not her pants?  
O *n*, that intercepts what's past!

The world is *not* all that's lowercase. The environment I most readily take into myself as subject is the feminine, my intense interest in mummy being the inner space I most characteristically bring into the writing place. OPACITY – *si*, mysterious cohesion/cohesive mysteriousness, no – is the magnet, what brings anyone *into* the work of another, the announcement of the new *within a specific matrix*. The matrix of the mature artist is largely determined & governed by his own works:

this is the essence, where mine  
& the general nightmare mesh.

I work in monochrome, & am *all* attention. What I choose to write "about" is another problem. I constantly delve into confession & what Frank O'Hara called "personism." That's one form of contemporary *hubris*. So, *Birds of the West* was a birdwatcher's book I was using. All of it seems to me individual & skillful. The constant erasure of signs for presence leaves the poem an an interstitial agent in the service of intentionality, & the uncertainties & doubts which Keats saw as the essential conditions for poetic creation become the characteristics of generation in any form. The non-instrumental, which gives instance of what stands for itself & so not a call to revolution or a representation of the struggle & how it is peopled, but an instance of it (product, the unalienated or re-integrated itself: while still putting off (& on) other myths of "presence" which turn on a misunderstanding of how language operates & how we operate in it, which is to say no *e, y, e, s*).

The blurb on the book says the usual blurb-things. "David Bromige writes carefully, with *pleasure* – which is the point." Well, which *is*? I am the author of previous books, which is the point. A stunning achievement. Good images ("as carefree as a coffin-nail commercial"), & often a good use of language. "Still there"<sup>3</sup> is a remarkably clear,

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

unaffected, beautiful poem. The poem ceases to be a process of discovery. You go to step on the boardwalk & it's rotten. I try to transcend my petty anger & bring you into an area of engagement under the rule of Poetry. Notes are made along the way toward a remembered edifice. Even a divine physics cannot make categorical thought-determinations of realities intuited in the plain, ordinary way; as little as divine omnipotence can bring it about that elliptic functions should be painted or played on the fiddle. The tone is objective, rendered ironic by contrast with the monstrous behavior portrayed. What does the "one who knew this" know? It's about some chick whose husband was at the war. The mind's always going west. It's really about the style & aplomb & frame of mind needed to bring it off:

like in the long-ships, at the war to elude us  
he's waging over the dwellings where we might've lived  
because from his birth, those grooves in the heavens  
had been manifest as soon as remarked on  
& the good bright glint off their wolfram wings  
Dum dum de dum dum.

Anyone for "Lili Marlene?" In my poetry the search shows, & so do the seams often, but my poetry gains authenticity from its deliberate ruggedness. Bull shit. Everywhere there is the tension of an incomplete sentence, an ambiguous antecedent, an unnatural act, an illogical causality.

A sentence, as the expression of a  
complete thought, is not natural &  
does not exist in nature. Is not  
natural & does not exist in nature.

The prose pieces are of a deft, dead-pan order, hinting at more than they state. It's difficult to say whether this prose makes too much ordinary sense, for it is less zany & irritating than *Tender Buttons* – as if that were some kind of discus mark set in 1911 for extra-syntactic competitors. Yet is it teasingly nonsensical when it is most clipped & aphoristic. One thinks of Cummings at his most tricky in some instances: pixie, pigstye, pistils, stilettos, & e, w, c. The disclaimer at the end suddenly opens a double-bind; it HAD happened before – the previous page, the previous time.

But what, then, to make of disclaimers: by what agency are they rendered? The poem I like best is:

#### *The Sign*<sup>4</sup>

A slight, simple poem is slight & simple, & for A. R. Ammons there's no getting away from that. I've been thinking lately about some sort of code of ethics for reviewers. Everywhere the ceremonies of the Phallus are rehearsed, questioned & continued. It is that agonizing lust to express with which I can personally empathize. My book *Threads* used a rhetoric which reminded Diane Wakoski of Eshleman's work, & both of us together brought to her mind the language of Michael McClure. Students can learn to write better-made poems but those poems with their elegant turns of phrase, their vivid imagery, even their conceptual excellence often seem to add up to nothing. To a wisp of smoke, like the poet Mark Strand, whose work is filled with beautiful lines, ideas & images & yet seems to add up to a zero. When holes taste good, we'll put 'em in our bread. She kept remembering how easy it had been to read *Darker* (Mark Strand, Atheneum, 1970, 47 pp.), & how pissed off she'd been at the poems all the way through, feeling they were hollow & empty & loving the beautiful language & wondering why that beautiful language didn't seem beautiful to her the way a Lorca poem would with its beautiful language.\* But she did not wish to waste any time detracting from one poet to praise others, feeling that too much of that is done in this nasty world. The poet A. W. Purdy was grateful:

I have a very low opinion of the Black  
Mountain "method" of writing poems  
(which is partly the exclusion of any  
other method), & have seen some of  
David Bromige's reviews of myself &  
others before.

<sup>4</sup>*The Gathering*, Sunbooks, Buffalo, 1965.

\*Possibly she had in mind these lines:

We stopped for grits.  
Three carbine-carriers came.  
The dusk of her kneecaps  
& the gorillas in her heavens.

And I entered cunt. Clayton, weeping buckets  
her adventure a gentle gazelle,  
in the teahouse of the pizza parlor  
came, furiously, gnawing on all within reach.

Either poetry is real, real as, or, as Shelley for one believed, realer than, life; or it is nothing, a stupid & stupefying occupation for zombies. Freud's condensation & displacement are figured here in the poetic tasks:

Not the cracking of the ashtray on my  
skull was the indicator but her  
repeated scream, What do I want with a  
husband – never once my name.

This syntax like algebra seems not unlike that which Hoffmannsthal claims for his early lyrics. For me, also, everything disintegrated into parts, those parts again into parts; no longer would anything let itself be encompassed by one idea. Single words floated round me; they congealed in e, y, e, s, which stared at me & into which I was forced to stare back – whirlpools which gave me vertigo, &, reeling incessantly, led into the void. A few years ago there was a fad which entailed going to the laundromat, putting a dime in one of the large dryers, & jumping inside. This works in a short poem. But many of these poems aren't short. One is a very long nine pages:

Whoever stood furthest up the trail was master  
of the trail.

Pitiless duration – I suppose that's well here I am & it's the morning & I've got a day to get through & tomorrow there will be another. And there'll be a lot of dependent clauses & you have to go out & support them. There's a whole struggle in there that breeds murder. My own father was forced to go out & commit murder, not once but a number of times. All I ever did was unplug some tubes, doc . . . . But there is an insistence, almost purely sexual, which would apportion the poem as a longer event than is popularly conceived in 1973.

#### *Psychoanalysis*

Often people fuck merely in order  
to keep from having to talk

but I don't remember everything  
else I said.

I have a strong imagination which sometimes interferes with the poem & becomes distracting. Suddenly, "the sight of this creature/turned them (the "two" "friends": twin children of adversity) & they fell to arguing." It's the trouble with all museums.

If it sounds as if I'm too loose or sloppy, that is not the case. Example: This burg isn't big enough for both of us. I just pulled the strings. I'm not the craftsman George Ellenbogen is, & in some of the poems I appear to display no craftsmanship whatsoever; nevertheless, at the personal surface I'm one of the most appallingly human of the west coast poets, perfectly willing to reconcile myself to whatever comes along on a given day, hence enjoy this moment, that moment, no questions asked, no answers needed. No theory today escapes the marketplace. All are put up for choice; all are swallowed. The writer is the widow of an insight. Slandering Croatia with a false esteem. It was the last class-meeting of *Eros & Civilization* & we were eating brownies. What can look at itself is not one. Many Europeans & Orientals speak English far more vividly than those of us for whom it is Mother Tongue. So, one evening, being driven on a winding road by our friend Stella, & narrowly escaping being struck by an oncoming truck, I screamed, she reprimanded me, an intense awkward silence ensued relieved only when 3 sentences appeared before me, a prompt sheet passing across the windshield:

The truck had nearly struck their  
car. He had screamed. She had  
asked him not to.

I spoke them aloud & the mood in the car turned on a dime. It could also read "One's Poetry." For my poetry is informed by something inside that doesn't flinch & won't budge:

Because a cold rage seizes one at whiles  
To show the bitter old & wrinkled truth  
Stripped naked of all vesture that beguiles,

Because it gives some sense of power & passion  
In helpless impotence to try to fashion  
Our woe in living words, howe'er uncouth.

I like the way these poems scan; they are tight, rhythmical, colloquial,

oblique lyrics. I find it exciting the way the terse English accent breaks through at times, asserting facts:

The hornéd moon to shine by night  
Amongst her spangled sisters bright:  
*For his mercies ay endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure.*

& more facts:

The water o'er the pebbles scarce could run,  
And broad old cesspools glitter'd in the sun.

This is just to say I've gained the art & language in which I bring my readers deeper than any consideration of a personality to the awareness of a living man – hence in reading these recent books of mine one may find oneself in a solitude & a – “Tight Corner,” I might call it – edge or risk of Being that seems even as it is most mine to be speaking for a depth of one's own inner being. Climb bean sort of is substitute destiny. Extremely useful & succinct on the problem of writing verses literature. Silence amounts to the same thing, recommended for university & large college libraries:

*Sign on Librarian's Desk*

REVENGE

I could never have done it alone. The self to write about the products of the self which the self tries to make as selfless as possible, in order that they may be seen to come from the true self, by involving it with & invoking it for contiguous other selves (readers). The constantly shifting perspectives of the sentences. Even a lower limit, speech, & an upper limit, song, leads instanter to song –

You make me dizzy Miss Lizzie

– & to a speech, where soon enough we get pygmy, tangled, spittle, spread, bobbles, bangles, broads & rich or poor. One does not inherit an audience: one builds one, a reader at a time. I join these words for four people, some others may overhear them. This air of seeming indifference toward the reader often succeeds. Join now.

## Six of One, Half-a-Dozen of the Other

*First comes the poem,  
then comes the prose.*

– The Sixpenny Opera

## 5. Some conclusions

The idea that a representative assembly should be *condensare* to a whole nation is venerable, an average sample of ordinary men conclude quite reasonable. "That's a Babbitt!" Desired: a handsome family man to represent one. It is a matter of being ABLE to draw correct conclusions from A about b. But AN idea "ADEQUATE" possibility of AMBIGUITY ALSO, A certain difference between typicAlity And representAtiveness, the Crucifixion. This is cleArly true, thus, truly cleAr. The painting asserts, alleges, actually, an aggregate, that should be accurate. You abstract criteria, great men of Emerson. Be yourself, a substance in one sense seeming to practice the meaning of "fairness" (or "marbles"). And those alleys of yesteryear, where now? The nudge downtown. Arrest thief! You know what you can do with fire. Two pinetrees put their heads together, with a little love-dart halfway down.

## One Spring

It hailed. 0.06 inches were precipitated where the instruments are kept. At least one driver found his windshield wipers clogging. High winds drove the hail into the orchards of apple, pear & prune. It hailed on the new Vacu-Dry plant, an independent, publicly-owned corporation, making instant apple-sauce for the government. During the following night, thieves walked off with the bus-bench.

Next day samples were brought to the inspector. The leaves were shattered & the fruit already indented. Though the sun shone bright, some wisps of high cirrus appeared shortly after midday.

Next day dawned clear & bright, & by the middle of the afternoon the thermometer registered 73 degrees Fahrenheit. That night the valley-bottoms were free from frost. Next day began well also, the sky a clear deepening blue, the light flickering off the eucalyptus leaves.

At Goat Rock State Park, a man sat in a car, inhaling carbon monoxide. Sunset occurred at 6:35. The weather continued fine & warm for the remainder of the week. Some black lambs were gambolling in one green dell. Their dams had recently been shorn. The fence looked very old.

It had been built by coolies in the last century. That night, a ringtail cat showed up in a passing pair of headlights. The driver thought it was a raccoon. The ring-tail cat is neither cat nor raccoon, but more closely allied to the bear. It dropped to 44 that night; next day, it rose to 86.

The blue sky was no longer a strip, & beneath it the earth had risen grandly into hills – clean, bare buttresses, trees in their folds, & meadows & clear pools at their feet.

But the hills were not high, & there was in the landscape a sense of human occupation – so that one might have called it a park, or garden, if the words did not imply a certain triviality & constraint.

A person shopping at the market paid 89 cents for a pound of ribroast, 17 cents for a pound of cantaloupe. Corn cost the shopping person 49 cents for 5 ears; tomatoes were 2 for a quarter. Edward Bartlett, who had been a ranger with the State Beach Parks Service for about 12 years, reported Monday to be Maintenance Co-ordinator for the River area of the State Park System.



This was a promotional transfer & he would be working with rangers along the coast also. There had been two suicides in the park last week, one at Goat Rock & one at Blind Beach.

All the new restrooms were in & the old ones were being removed. The warm weather had brought large crowds to the area over the weekend. It had been foggy Saturday & Sunday mornings but the ocean was fairly calm & boats were able to bring in good catches. Elsewhere, low tides two feet below the lowest on record concerned farmers, who feared a rise in salt-content of that water they employ in irrigation. "The tide is out," said Farmer Warner Tallman, "And as far as I can see, it'll never come back." This day the stock market finished lower, partly in reaction to the President's foreign policy message & partly the result of normal pre-weekend evening-up of pressures.

In late trading Burroughs, Walt Disney & Corning Glass were up a point or so apiece. The following morning was clear & sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely & the grass was richly green. A student was arrested early in the day after the car he was driving struck the State College Library.

A man who was stealing \$250 from a service station made up a story: he worked there, & would say that he passed out after two gunmen forced him to take some capsules & beer. When he woke up, they had rifled the place.

He would be due for sentencing within three weeks, having entered guilty pleas to charges of filing a false felony report, & petty theft. Days passed, & a 31-year-old woman stabbed her sister-in-law to death in a bar on Tuesday evening.

Wind again last weekend & our hills were beginning to look brown. The grass had had a much shorter season - less feed for the sheep & an earlier fire hazard. The first began at 2 p.m. at the home of C. Hodges. Hodges was pouring gasoline into the carburetor when the fuel ignited. All the electrical wiring was destroyed in the '58 Olds. 15 firemen responded to the fire which was extinguished within 10 minutes.

At 8:45 p.m. a '65 Olds caught fire at the Phillips 66 station. The ignition had been left on while the car was being worked on. The wiring under the dash & the hood was destroyed. This fire was out within 10 minutes also.

Between 11:15 a.m. & 3:15 p.m., a human being entered a residential structure, pried open another human being's dresser drawer & a tin box inside that drawer, & removed \$8,800 in cash.

Taxpayers had not built a school, staffed & maintained it in order that children should echo the revolutionary clatter from the state colleges.

Fog came in sometime Saturday night & hung on all day Sunday but it was very warm & pleasant for gardening. As soon as it got warm in the valley one noticed an increased interest in real estate at the coast. Warner Brain, recently hospitalized, returned home, able to get about again. The day dawned bright.

The pre-dawn light was green, a function perhaps of dust or even smog, over the valley eastward. Then bright orange, & then the rim of the sun appeared behind the mountain range that forms the eastern edge of the valley. Some people boating, swimming or fishing or otherwise visiting the river & perhaps also some other large creeks could have been startled to see a gigantic & nightmarish rat, as the animal is fully as large as a raccoon, brown like a rat with a long scaly tail, over two-thirds of its body & head-length. It has very glossy yellowish-brown to dark-brown fur, & which is covered on the outside by colorless guard-hairs, that you do not see.

The enormous hind feet, about 6 inches long, are heavily clawed & widely webbed. After the first shock of seeing it wears off & you begin to realize that even large as it is it is still hardly large enough to attack & eat a man, the observer is inclined to say, "O well, just another animal!"

But it is not just another animal, creeping silently inland & tearing up whole plants.

That afternoon, a skindiver fell off a rock & stabbed himself in the side with a fish spear. It was a relief that the wound proved not fatal. County Coroner Andrew Johansen had his work cut out for him. He continued to investigate a blaze that claimed the life of two men early Tuesday.

Johansen said the pair had apparently driven another couple from the cabin on the Johnson Ranch earlier that night. The fire broke out around 4:30 a.m. The weather for the weekend was overcast but quiet. They had been using a kerosene lamp.

Sunday the wind came up & blew the fog away for a while. Tress Aiken

reported the lupine at Duncan's Landing was beautiful this year. Her friend, Georgia Herring, answered that we were fortunate along the coast that we had wild flowers from early spring through summer. The rose cactus in the gardens were blooming this year with their tall stalks of small, starry, yellow blooms. At grange last week Mrs. Aiken had used these blooms with some nasturtiums & an orange cactus blossom to make decorations for the hall.

The seasons must be changing. Here it was June & we were having a very heavy mist called rain. While it would do some "rejuvenating" of the springs from which our drinking water comes, it would also damage some of the fruit crops. So it was a proper day for the wedding. The home was decorated for the occasion with spring bouquets. That afternoon the couple carved their initials in the family birch tree.

It was the bright day they had hoped it would be, had feared it would not be, those performing in the school auditorium: Russell Beach with a yo-yo demonstration; Fred Wilkoff, Kathy Collins, & Dan Elder, vocal trio; Jeremiah Day, acting out a memory skit; Mrs. Schlobohm presenting a driver-training monolog; & Loren Wilbur's class, performing their skit, Watermelons for Aquarius. More performances were being planned.

Elsewhere, students paid tribute to police officers. The Student Body President said, "We know the police are getting a pretty raw deal at Berkeley & other state colleges. If it wasn't for their courage & dedication we might not have a college to attend when we graduate from high school." Two sounds rent the peace of the day.

According to Highway Patrol reports, the car, westbound, went out of control & hit a mailbox. The other was a shot of some light-bore gun. A 14-y-o boy had accidentally shot a younger boy in the foot with a BB gun. The wound in the bottom of the foot was not deep, Jimmy's mother later reported. But she was frightened that next time he might be hit in the eye.

Young Eric told police that the wound was unintentional. The shot may have ricocheted. Police took Eric's BB gun & gave him a lecture. It is illegal to discharge firearms within the city limits.

A young teacher named Ward had informed the school board that his free time, which the board had so graciously donated to the outdoor

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education project without asking Ward, or offering him any type of extra compensation, if you ignored a few quarters' worth toward gas mileage, were no longer at the board's disposal. To work beyond his contract would require the board pay Ward time & a half above his hourly rate, & double time on holidays. "This is after all no more than any plumber asks," said Ward. "The Board member who voted for my ouster is a plumber - for the record." In the afternoon, it poured.

Night fell & nocturnal animals left their burrows & nests to steal abroad - some for the last time. Some motorists slowed at the sign "Deer Crossing"; by others, it was overlooked. In those areas the fog reached in to this night, it gathered in the stands of eucalyptus & Monterey cypress &, condensing, dropped like rain (the fog). From Washington, where it was tomorrow already, word came of the first major contract to be awarded on the 80 million dollar dam project. Work was to begin almost immediately.

The next day I woke very early. The sun had only just risen; there wasn't a single cloud in the sky; everything around shone with a double brilliance - the brightness of the fresh morning rays & of yesterday's precipitation. I went for a stroll about a small orchard, now neglected & run wild, which enclosed the little lodge on all sides with its fragrant, sappy growth. On the slope of a shallow ravine, close to the hedge, could be seen a beehive; a narrow track led to it, winding like a snake between dense walls of high grass & nettles, above which struggled up, God knows whence brought, the pointed stalks of dark-green hemp.

Those of us who remembered the May 5 stabbing at Skip's Bar noted that Margie Denise Doneza, 31, was pleading innocent to murder. Susan Myrtle Bogue, 30, died in the hospital with a 9-inch butcher knife in her back. It was stuffy in the courtroom. The heart of the city had been rendered barren by a recent earthquake. We were glad to be home.

Warner Brain's daughter visited Sunday at the Brain home. A week before, Mrs. Warner Brain & daughter, Mrs. Deborah Johansen, met two women friends from Colorado, & all four drove to Lake Tahoe for the remainder of the week. Mrs. Brain returned home Friday evening. They chatted persistently in familiar tones. Few realize that their life, the very essence of their character, their capabilities & their audacities, are only the expression of their belief in the safety of their surroundings. The courage, the composure, the confidence; the emotions & princi-

ples; every great & every insignificant thought belongs not to the individual but to the crowd: to the crowd that believes blindly in the irresistible force of its institutions & of its morals, in the power of its police & of its opinion.

Cornices, eaves, canopies, & similar architectural features may extend four (4) feet into any required yard. A woman may report dog abuse: especially if the dog is left on a 6' x 3' porch & keeps barking; the dog abuse will be due to the size of the porch. The owner of a laundromat might catch a man emptying garbage into a laundry garbage can & washing his clothes in the toilet, & warn him. A man in a stereo store has shot a victim in the foot. A woman with suicidal tendencies could reportedly take 20 unknown pills & go out driving. A person has to be taken to hospital after being hit by a car on N. Main St. If a man has discovered two burglars in his home, & the burglars have tried to convince the man that *they* are the actual owners of the house, & it doesn't work, they may be arrested & taken to county jail. A man reportedly hit by another would not press charges as he felt he deserved being hit.

With the white cardboard boxes held high above her head, & with her robe open, flapping behind her, a young woman leaped high & for a moment seemed to float above the top strands. She landed running. Pieces of her white robe adhered to the wire barbs.

Along the side of the country lane, back where her car was parked, a county employee was mowing the wildoat grass. He was turning over in his mind a report he'd read that morning at breakfast. Narcotics & drugs was the health topic of greatest concern to local residents. "How to understand the Bible" had been the most often checked Bible topic in the survey conducted by the Christian Brotherhood Church. 23.7% had checked that one.

21.5% had checked "Why so many churches?"; 17.5% had checked "What does God expect?"; 15.7% had checked "Life after Death"; 15%, "How to pray"; 15% "What is faith?"; 13.6% wanted to know about "Money & the Church"; 12.5% were curious as to "World situation & prophecy"; 12.5% also wondered, "Is the Devil real?"

The other Health topics had been, & in this order of concern: Prevention of heart attacks, What can be done about cancer, Help for arthritis,

Tips on gardens, Weight control, Mental health, Nervous breakdown, Help for smokers, Emergency first aid, Physical fitness, Ulcers. Sweat ran into his eyes.

Concentration was required, to keep the blade from shattering on a concealed roadside rock. He was allergic to pollens, & wore a kerchief across mouth & nose, like a bandit. Across a small flat meadow some careful rancher had tied strips of white cloth to his barbed wire fence, to prevent people from walking into it in the dark. A Volvo was abandoned directly in his path.

Raising the blade, he drove around the foreign body, then, lowering his instrument, resumed cutting. The kingfisher spies a fish or frog in the water or on the bank & dives down to seize it. He will often fly straight down into the water like a flying spear.

The dipper, on the contrary, either walks about over the rocks in a shallow part of the stream, picking up with his bill the insects he finds, or may calmly dive down into a pool & walk along the bottom & over the rocks picking up insects & eating them right there, not later. Such soft greens & grays, after the hot white days! It's a strange thing that when the fog comes in it seems to deaden all the normal sounds except the bird calls. His & los for this week: 52/100 - 57/104 - 58/106 - 55/93 - 49/81 - 47/79 - 47/76 (Wednesday thru Tuesday). It is worth noting that the weather records for the City are actually kept by a person who lives on Green Valley Lane, 4 miles outside city limits, & where the range in temperature tends to be greater than in our town. The end of Main Street is looking good.

Superior French Laundry folks painted their building. Safeway is always super clean & probably one of their finer stores. Goodsports & Ernie's Liquors reflect modern merchandising techniques, & so does Robbie's Grill. All doubtless show significant growth in revenues. Owners keep their store areas clean & neat. Who wants to wade through litter & debris to enter a store?

Pretty Proserpine Day, 14, the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Christian Day, is examining a basket of plump, ripe raspberries at the Handsome Goat Ranch on Green Hill Road.

What I do remember is when Karen appears. I'm in love with Karen. Her hair is long & fine & silky, knotted & tangled this morning from sleeping god knows how or where. At last she finds her purse & there it is, her comb. She goes into the hallway where there's a handy mirror. Nils Nilsson pom-poms on. There's a scream. It's Karen. Nils & I dash through the doorway. I've gone, she says. She points to where the mirror should be & it's not. She's laughing hysterically now but not so loud we can't hear the profound groan from the kitchen. It sounds like one of the cows, trying to give birth. In the kitchen we find the norwegian, who has determined with himself to do the dishes from the night before. He had never seen so many dirty dishes in all his born days. The mirror is there with them, in the sink.

## By Visible Truth We Mean the Apprehension of the Absolute Condition of Present Things

The kind of prose anybody can read. One Saturday night after the poetry-reading we went to a cafe to discuss it. Syntax like a clear window giving onto reality framed anew. Actually we went to a streetcorner near to 3 different cafes & discussed which of them would be best. How I saw it – I stake my life on such assumptions – shows me the way. None of them had room enough to accomodate everyone who needed to be there if no-one was to be left out. One leads instanter to the next, no matter I had those percepts. Driving home, later, we saw a remarkable sight: one car had to stop suddenly because of something we couldn't see that was happening ahead of it; & the car immediately behind the first car, had to jam its brakes to avoid a rear-ender. Painful, this disposition of each necessary element, as if a lawyer wrote it. Now the driver of this second car begins to blare his horn & one of its passengers even squeezes (this car is loaded) out of his door & brandishes his fist at the offender. We are reminded once again that justice is a passion. Even the interruptions give it authenticity. The first car, now able to move ahead, did, the second car with a squeal of the tires in hot pursuit. And then it was we noticed that the second car was driving with its lights off. And still we hold there are times when we can bear witness to the present condition of absolute things.

## My Career

I can't abide people who start to talk as soon as they enter a room, without pausing to check out what's going on in there. That's what I think about growing up late in a slow time. As for sleeping dogs, shout & turn purple. My first words were "Fort" and "Da" so they put a box turtle in my crib which I took apart to see why it didn't tick. Fixed tunings and scales were invented, and the charm of single notes. A veil of melancholy slipped over my eyes and it was strange, this kid was putting stresses on syllables that were seldom under stress before. He got little more than a polite hand, or fingering, for words are not only the keys of persuasion, but so full of holes a bus could drive right through. Simply ask for a transfer. You gonna ride a *boxcar*?

It was very dark inside the fish. Trying to think without jumping. Little more than a fingerling, at the fascinating question, How did music begin? Kissing Joyce King in the fishmonger's doorway on Cricklewood Broadway – the world allows no hermits! There are two tragedies in life: the little yes, gone on a breath; I forget the rest. Time went haywire: there were always people in the time. Nothing taught sex was important: I could see well, if that's what a magnet is. "You liked my body?" "Yes – was that what it was?" And she was right, I represented a system. So, it was broken up. This is history. One blots out another. My voice ran on easily and garrulously, carefully dressing panic.

You won't see me in silk suits and Cadillacs, but I could never divorce them, and under the saint's robe one always senses the presence of the goat-foot. BAA, MAA. "Books! You get right out of this doorway!" To himself he was a man with a mission still unfulfilled. "Is Patience talking? Is Patience talking – God, do I hear her voice!" Competition is the keynote, sometimes winningly justified as cutthroat. Were all these rejections qualified? Had he indeed been a mere hunk of matter? Was his first wife really a tramp? He paused to scratch and thus upset the assembly plant. He selects with care that which is appropriate; he rejects the superfluous; too much discontinuity threatens the identity of the person. "Just such as I am done with, hopefully." Wholly opposed to the use of examples which Plato introduced and philosophy repeated in its poetries ever since: as matters of indifference in themselves. The carrier of these projections may even become a special enemy, perhaps a *bête noire*. "That's my last duchess, browning on the spit." What is too

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silly to be said is sung. Lully died somewhat prematurely as a result of poor medical attention to a wound incurred by – of all things – striking his toe with a stick used to beat time. I lived on adrenalin. I surveyed the panic of rich women. What bliss when the iris came into being!

In 1968 I was 34 and, with something over 40 years of productive writing ahead, and my greatest yet to do, the life to follow had been marked out: gathering the ends and threads ten years in the making from the words of the best, the spells and blessings uttered in tight corners, out of my hands. If the artist is to endure, a change from the fevered pattern finally emerges. J. calls this new method a "sculpted creativity." I learned to read all over. I was never into that thing about building a saleable character. Either they like me or they need more time. Each person's work seems to depend on and be connected with his neighbor's, and the whole posse appeared. But though he could make all these things, it is mentioned as a remarkable fact that with all his ingenuity, and after many efforts (for he made many), he never could make a wicker basket. These wearisome sickening little personal novels! Solemnity is a sign of fraud. Let's do something big for America! The crux is what happens in it, not a thesis or position – the texture, not the deductive or inductive curse of one-track minds. The door stood open. The long-sloping fall of haunches from the socket of the back sobbed bitterly. Logic might be unanswerable because it is so absolutely wrong. We're all plucked apples, so, let's make cider of a large question. The ant went up the plan.

## My Plan

Heidegger, interpreting Hölderlin, says that to be human is to *be a conversation*. He himself is outside exchange, plunged into non-profit, the Zen *mushotoku*, desiring nothing but the perverse bliss of words. A scientist has a test-tube full of sleep. In hieroglyphics the meaning is embodied in the figure itself. Nothing will fit if we assume a place for it. And in turn the straitness or strictness of even the most universalizing mind imprints upon its works a style, a cruelty, a making us see & feel in this unique personal way. God, the atheistic humanists had said, was to be followed by Man. The universe strives to be what it truly is to be; &, *this fetish desires me*. After thirty years of staring at one true phrase, discover that its opposite is true also: one perception must lead instanter to the next.

What it comes to is ourselves, whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. Yet with all this I can't account for the great *horror* attached to incest:

I am that I am  
from the sun  
& people are not my measure.

The isolation of the American artist in society, so often lamented, is actually parallel to the furtive & unacknowledged role of artistic method in the American mind. How can beginning & end beginning with white in iron end whom with lent. By the time that it is here they have had it & it is what they selected. It is not the Greeks I blame. Through hostility towards art, the work of art approaches knowledge, on several more planes than the arbitrary & discursive which we inherit can declare. Any writing which suppresses the Third Term (a further perception) is thus trapped within the idealism of the signified. The world is not made up entirely of versions: my wife's eyes bloom in the cave; the rules have been obvious enough. She goes everywhere she can: I would know her anywhere. And when meeting, people say, What's new?

There are those who want a text without a shadow, without the

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"dominant ideology": but this is to put the cart before the horse, based on the assumption of a harmony that doesn't exist. Well, to hell with it. Would you look at the actual car or only at the specifications? Or the dream in the peasant's bent shoulders. Scenery is one thing that can't be eaten. Yet immediacy is no more beyond dialectics than is mediation. A sentence is not emotional a paragraph is.

Because I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish & foolish hope of *reasoning* others into an approbation of this particular Plan, I was unwilling to undertake the task:

Because the lovely little flower is free  
Down to its root, and, in that freedom, bold.

Ever since the seventeenth century, freedom had been defined as all great philosophy's most private concern. It had an unexpressed mandate from the bourgeoisie to find transparent grounds for freedom: "& me, me, what am I doing in all that?" I want to purify the words of the tribe sometime during the next year. Of course it may be said that if the difference is felt & is not discoverable to the eye & ear then what about it anyway? There are no perfect waves.

So it takes excellence to kill sails. The way of the world is stupid & obscure & must be so to fit man's intelligence. The necessity that the poet shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided. The group's opinion dominates due to opinions that reign outside the group. By the brokenness of his composition the poet makes himself master. Death is difficult for the senses to alight on. What it comes to is ourselves. To write that essential book, a writer doesn't need to invent it, since it already exists in each of us; he has only to translate it. Why stop there? This is my plan.

From Hole  
#2  
OTTAWA 1990

INTERVIEW

With David Bromige\*

I had the material for Red Hats [Tonsure Press, Ohio, 1986] in four sections but then I thought, nothing distinguishes one section from another, and I didn't much care for that. Then I thought, I've got seven letters in the title, I'll take this work and break it into seven sections and I'll have some quote key terms, starting with the letter r, that will help me build the first section, e the second, d the third, and thus on... In writing this book I was very much aware of the way language precedes meaning, and I wanted the reader to be able to perceive this, also: it is a major import of the work. I had the title before I could know what-all it "meant"--and I had these various phrases and sentences before I started to put them together. In other words, I had these units of meaning that I had collected over time, and then I played/worked with them until I could see places where they might join, or resist joining. I had meaning in the micro range without any in the macro range. I was quite pleased with these micro units, and I am quite distrustful of writing that presents the big picture, so the big picture is kept deliberately shifting by my method here of questioning whether one sentence leads to the next or whether they are juxtaposed by other means than linear meaning. It's the opposite of "topic sentence" writing. What Charles Olson had to say against the topic sentence made sense to me. He couldn't do without it, even in his verse. But he pointed the way and I wanted to find means to do without

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it...And the question is always how do you get from one sentence to the next. Is there a narrative continuity, maybe, or is there a connection by logic, maybe maybe not, and of course it depends from person to person whether that's there or not...

He rooted in his belief. I'm your puppet. The typewriter is not realer than the mouth that it spells, telling it what to say. The concept reality takes the margins and centers them. She stood on the machine to be weighed. He held her. Summer breezes do not distinguish the thistle from the genitals, which is what makes them so exciting. Sitting, he came back to earth only to spring up suddenly, gradually becoming convicted.

"Convicted" where you might expect "convinced", saying that we are guilty of our own convictions I guess. And you can see or hear the devices whereby one becomes "convicted" in this paragraph, whether linkages of meaning or sound--"exciting/sitting"--with the puppet/puppeteer ("he held her") figure bobbing in and out. To be rooted in your belief is to be like a tree with its feet in its sacred place no doubt. But the trouble is that a belief can be quite misguided, something earth that supports life in a tree never can be. The analogy has definite limits. Isn't it rather--I appear to have thought--like a pig rooting for acorns or truffles it hopes are there, seeking belief?

...Again, from later in Red Hats: "Reality becomes relative, a repression of revolution via tolerance, romanticism its reified reflection. Rationality's reduction becomes representation." This is obviously also from the R section. I lay the r on thick here so that it gets to be like a tongue-twister, Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, threatening the sense with nonsense. Such sweeping generalizations have that aspect and I was simply trying to bring it out, to call attention to it. Not that the assertions are untrue, but half-true, rather glib and instantly calling to mind any exceptions...Or leastwise, examples. And one does ensue:

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"Her garment glimmered in the gloaming. A tight white sweater to make her boobs look big." I was talking with Bob Hogg over the weekend and found that he as I had an English Victorian father--mine born in 1898 and Bob's actually born earlier. I think it gives us both an edge in this matter of diction and the changing realities it stems from and evokes. I mean that "garment", "glimmer", "gloaming", are merely historical to most people today, but they were actually real to us, they had currency in the home, and/or the attitudes they embody did. There's a Victorian pedestal sense of women in the alliterative sentence there. And then, by the 50s, coming to America and coming of age sexually, the reality is much closer to the "tight white sweater" sentence. And now it's 1986 and the woman too has changed, as it says in my text. "Nor is the observer carved in sleep too deep for punning." Writer or reader, neither is a passive witness, we must change, must be changing, too.

Louis Cabri: So "to follow form", as Hubert Aquin put it, needn't mean a more rational method, even when it's a first-order question of how to organize the language, nor lead to ornament.

D.B.: It also becomes part of the content of the work, though. For example, take this, from the beginning of section T. "Typicality enralls with its particular failures." And then there's a little imagined scene. I pick a seduction scene because the general statement was derived from musing on the entire matter of what's involved in sexual addiction. "'My husband doesn't understand me at High and Academic--you'll come, can't you?', 'Indefinitely.'" That's the entire process in a nut's hell, sic! The cliched come-on on the wife's part, the jarring pragmatics where she manages to convey her address to this other man, the streetnames that say euphoria and "it's academic" i.e. a foregone conclusion, and the eruption of the repressed material in the pun of "come" together with its male worry. Then the last word with its connotations, the defensive vagueness playing for time but also the unendingness of addiction... Years before I wrote this a friend had said, not at all in the context of sex or seduction, simply to stress something, "Oh indefinitely!!" meaning super-

definitely, like inflammable is superflammable or something. And "you'll come, can't you", instead of "won't you", was recalled from someone else's slip of the tongue. Little shifts like these, that can be telling, I enjoy and I would say that my association with the so-called Language poets in part has come about because I do like to have careful readers and they were the most careful readers I could find.

L.C.: Your earlier writing was amidst Olson's, Duncan's...

D.B.: Yeah. And Creeley. Duncan's most, because I'd see him every week, he was my mentor I suppose, my first book was dedicated to him. One difference I would see is that there are poems in that book [The Ends of the Earth, Black Sparrow, 1968] that appear to be instead of the Poem that would be there if it were Duncan's book, that let the very form itself take the form of questioning the form. Often, I've been working out propositions that you can find in Olson, Creeley or Duncan, although they might themselves not acknowledge that those propositions are there and to be worked out.

L.C.: Extending their poetics?

D.B.: Absolutely. And in a way I think this might have been different if Language poetry had been read in that light, as an extension, however severely qualified on occasion, of Projective Verse.<sup>1</sup> The Language poets themselves were not really enthusiastic to be seen that way--they were more interested in the differences.

L.C.: As in Grenier's line, I HATE SPEECH.

D.B.: Right. Because really what Bob Grenier means in that essay, I think, is, I hate the representation of speech as currently practiced in American poetry. But if you think of his books like A



Day at the Beach or Phantom Anthems, these books seem very much utterance-based. But the utterance is isolated from any dramatic scene. It makes its own occasion, instead of taking place within a (however sketchily) evoked scene as so often with Projective Verse.

But I would add that, at the time [late 50s, early 60s] the idea of Projective Verse was thrilling because it had this wonderful immediacy to it that otherwise wasn't available. But after a while you look at it and you start to say Well but--and Bob Grenier said Well but it could be more immediate, if that's the point, and for Bob I think it is. I love his work.

L.C.: But immediate in a different sense, because, as in Red Hats too, I get a sense there are phrases or sentences which are trying not to be owned by anyone, or by the same person or framework--implicating all...

D.B.: ...I notice that often when I get reviewed the lines that the reviewer quotes are lines I've picked up from somewhere else. God help us all.

L.C.: So that whole sense of--at least, the idea of ownership by a subject, within the idea of an author behind the text presenting "I" in the poem, these experiences, owned by this person who is represented in this poem for others whose group self-representations will differ but hey it's democracy, is where the difference lies.

D.B.: Yes. After all, it becomes the reader's experience as soon as it's read. Why insist that I, David Bromige, own it or owned it? However, this brings up a related matter. And I recall Barry Watten articulating this concern--I trust I won't misrepresent him, now. It's that one's words be one's own, wanting the words to be one's own and not another's, not the culture speaking whenever one opens one's mouth. When you think about the problem it really

is always present, and the struggle therefore constant. It can seem a kind of utopian or chimerical quest, but you know these aren't necessarily bad motives, and they serve the productive demands of an artist also, since they can never be fulfilled for more than a moment. They're not fully realizable I don't think since I believe with Lacan that language already puts us in the position of the Other. I don't see that there's any way that one can write, really ever quite, get totally present at one's own words, using...ah...ah...putting it in one's own words, because they come to us from others. And however I try to have the arrangement of them be, to speak what I want spoken, there's always going to be a certain margin because the reader's involved with a different field of reference.

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<sup>1</sup> A contradiction at the heart of Projective Verse is responsible for the deterioration in the poetry of its principal practitioners. But it is also responsible for much of the (apparently quite different) poetry that succeeds it under the general rubric of Paratactic or Language-Centred Writing.

Olson couldn't be clearer about it: "A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it...by way of the poem itself...all the way over to, the reader...[T]he principle, the law which presides conspicuously over [field] composition, and, when obeyed, is the reason why a projective poem can come into being...is this: FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT. (Or so it got phrased by one, R. Creeley...)." This writing would not be possible until one had gotten rid of "the individual as ego, the 'subject' and his [sic] soul, that peculiar presumption by which western man has interposed himself between what he is...and those other creations of nature which we may, with no derogation, call objects." One was to ask the fact for the form, as Emerson advised long since. "Nothing will fit if we assume a place for it," as Creeley put it, and he went on to remark that "[t]he forties were a hostile time [for writers as Olson and himself]...Poems were equivalent to cars insofar as many could occur of similar pattern...[there was an] assumption of a modal, of a means that could be gained beyond the literal fact of the writing here and now."

What these and other edicts about poetry indicated--at least to one who came to them at the outset of a life in poetry, brought to these sources by the vivid and uncustomary poems owing much to such pronouncements--included an effacing of self in order that an event might speak: if the author appeared as an I or a s/he, that would only be "to give witness not to the thought of [him/herself]--that specious concept of identity--but rather, to what [s/he was] as simple agency," as Creeley phrases it.

But there was a twin imperative in PV: "[w]e can only know another's rhythm with our own" [Olson, "Poetry and Truth"]. This tendency to blur the distinction between subject and object--"objectivism" ...was...used in some sort of necessary quarrel, I take it, with 'subjectivism'. It is now too late to be bothered with the latter--and to dismiss the difficulty in favor of the projective--the assumption, so to speak, that first impressions are or might as well be regarded as correct--closed the door that Olson had just opened: with the very means to transcend the subjective, namely, to knock out peculiar presumptions, to hand, Olson's dogmatism vis-a-vis the inescapability of the personal, set the scene for himself, Creeley, Duncan, Levertov and others to demonstrate a growing rigidity of verse-forms: as each of these began to confuse his/her rhythm with the objective world, the latter proportionately disappeared behind a style of writing that, far from transferring "energy from where the poet got it all the way over to the reader," interferred absolutely with that process; substituting for it a recognizable PRODUCT--the Creeley poem, the Olson poem, etc.--which, as instrument of discovery and definition, started to resemble the cars Creeley was pleased to be so scornful of in dismissing his precursors.

Still another PV imperative enters the picture here: that the poet find his/her voice, in order to establish presence. "Voice" shortly became equated with recognizable style, became a rigid system which put paid to any hope of a poetry that could present the objective in its dialectic of truth with the subjective. The latter won, hands down. All "subjects", i.e., manifestations of the objective, became occasions for the poet to demonstrate a particular style, then, by a further twist, to be taken as

guarantee of authenticity. The bitter truth is that this false identity only guaranteed inauthenticity.

This truth is all the more bitter because the means to transcend it were always close to hand. In Maximus, Olson writes "only my written word//...to acquire complete/ concentration (the con-/ventual.)//...It is not I,/ even if the life appeared/ biographical. The only interesting thing/ is if one can be/ an image/ of man," and this foregrounding of the written word echoes also in "Poetry and Truth": "I'm trying to give you your language...[a]ny act of yours or my life or anyone else's...[is] not actually that life but its act or production...That is something which is essentially our language...the language you have by having been alive."

But the fetish PV made of the utterance--of the specific person, the poet's, utterance--led to a similar fetishization of the written word, because of the need to preserve the utterance (and the utterer) in writing. It had to be on the page just so.

Just so, it had to be on the page.

This liberating turn-around left PV behind, enmeshed in its struggles to perpetuate the subjective, the person of the poet, and this despite early successes and the best of intentions. Therefore these PV propositions were abandoned and waiting to be taken up by subsequent poets.

LP practitioners have demonstrated in an amazing variety of ways how the subjective (and its attendant curse of style) can be transcended, by acknowledging (first) that the "objective" approaches us through language since we as interpreters of the real are already occupied (pre-occupied) with language.

Clark Coolidge was at the (PV) Poetry Conference in Vancouver in 1963. By the late 60s, he was writing a poetry freed of (a) topic sentence, b) obligation to fit in advance any measurement of the whole, c) subject (Olson: "I didn't know there was a subject"), d) the requirement to present thoughts ("The play of the mind" is what Olson demanded in the place of "thoughts"), e) reference (Creeley: "a poem is not referential or not importantly so"), f) the poem given to the reader free of authorial interpretation. And CC is widely acknowledged as the clearest precursor-figure to LP.

To sum up: PV poetics proved more radical than PV practice. The very initial success of the latter may have condemned it to subsequent failure (fixing its poets in the coffins of their particular styles). It was up to LP to take PV poetics and use what could be used therefrom. This has been done.