ecopoetics
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ecopoetics

is published seasonally
and dedicated to exploring
creative-critical edges between writing
(with an emphasis on poetry) and
ecology (the theory and praxis of
deliberate earthlings).

Edited and designed by Jonathan Skinner.

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For the marshy places.
EDITOR’S STATEMENT

“... like taking a walk, light, in the earth.”
—Larry Eigner

ecopoetics begins (and, no doubt, almost ended) with its editor’s restlessness. Unable to stay inside most afternoons, I began to wrestle with some mundane difficulties: how to accommodate, one to another, disparate parts of the day—time spent inside at a desk, writing or reading books, with time spent outside, walking bare-headed under the sky, not to speak of the bulk of time rented out for wages?

There might be no need for such reflection, if the creatures encountered or thoughts crossed while walking under the sky somehow made their way into poems written inside, at the relative safety of a desk. But conditions for outside discoveries, in human language arts at the turn the milennium, feel narrow: generally, walks do not make it into the embattled environment of today’s best poetry.

Whether this is because poetry has turned the bulk of its energies toward accommodating, or resisting, capitalist “schizophrenia” (symptom in part of the enormous time done, by knowledge workers, at desks) or whether “nature” is more deliberately edited out by writers alert to ideological and historical trappings, is hard to say. That most of today’s poets are driven to cities, rather than exiled to the country, may also count. (Which mostly means that the sense of “pastoral” needs to be updated.) In any case, at least since Homer poetry has been working hard to lose “nature.”

Why, then, turn the poem out of doors? As our perception of the natural world continues to be refined (or forgotten), it seems that contemporary poetry’s complexities might actually be useful for extending and developing that perception. The natural world (which, of course, includes our own bodies) is still suffering the assault of an industrial age, but scientific discourse has moved on: perhaps too late, digital and organic metaphors are replacing three centuries’ worth of machine metaphors.
The developing complexity of perception is technology-induced, but it also arises from our awareness of a web of nearly unquantifiable interrelatedness that increases, ironically, with human fragmentation of that web. A further irony is that the natural history tradition which helped sharpen this awareness, a discipline of close, scrupulous observation of nature, is disappearing. The ongoing deinstitutionalization of natural history and evaporation of funding for basic natural history research (biologists refer to it as the “taxonomic impediment”) means that up to 95% of the species now suspected to inhabit the world, species still unknown to us, may remain consigned to human oblivion.

Perhaps we will begin to revalue the “nature walk,” and to venerate the humble, empirical tasks of “natural history,” in ways that were lost to the technological hubris of the last century; but with radically different senses of “nature” and of “history,” from those with which the Victorian era charged this discipline. In any case, transparent narratives of self-discovery, or solipsistic, self-expressive displays, seem ill-suited to the current crisis; art alive to the differentiating nature of its own materials may be better equipped.

From such a perspective, contemporary avant-garde poetry’s finickiness about “nature” is regretful. However, ecopoetics goes on the hunch that, in fact, a lot of nature is getting into poems these days—in ways that, furthermore, subvert the endless debates about “language” vs. lyric, margin vs. mainstream, performed vs. written, innovative vs. academic, or, now, digitized vs. printed approaches to poetry.

Of course, this is hardly a poetic revolution. Examples of sustained investigations of nature, and disciplinary crossing, can be found throughout “postmodern” poetry—from Lorine Niedecker, through Charles Olson or Larry Eigner, to contemporary poets such as TA Clark, Christopher Dewdney and Cecilia Vicuña.

The work is out there; ecopoetics merely hopes to offer a site open to the contradictions such work often willingly engages and embodies. ecopoetics would ideally function as an edge (as in edge of the meadow, or shore, rather than leading edge) where different disciplines can meet and complicate one another.
Contemporary philosophers of “globalization” demand that “we be done once and for all with the search for an outside, a standpoint that imag- ines a purity for our politics” (Hardt and Negri, Empire, p. 46). eco-
poetics similarly challenges poetics—asking poetry to step down from the “place apart” its artistic freedoms habitually invoke. Let us ask what viable range of meanings the outside can have in this global age; let us embrace, in the face of shifting borders, an impure poetics.

“Environmentalist” culture has ignored most developments in poetics since Ezra Pound. The literature of this largely Anglo-american tradition (which can be found in many a Freshman composition reader) may be “eco” (especially when it references an admirable praxis or, as it were, “walks its talk”) but it certainly comes up short in “poetics”—demonstrating overall, for a movement whose scientific mantra is “biodiver-
sity,” an astonishing lack of diversity in approaches to culture, to the written and spoken word.

While green battles on all fronts, against overwhelming corporate odds, deserve every bit of support, and while resource eco-nomics must remain the base operating system for any ecopoetics, the environmental movement stands to be criticized for the extent to which it has protect-ed a fairly received notion of “eco” from the proddings and complica-
tions, and enrichments, of an investigative poetics.

ecopoetics nevertheless takes on the “eco” frame, in recognition that human impact on the earth and its other species, is without a doubt the historical watershed of our generation, a generation born in the second half of the twentieth century. The avant-gardes of the last decades of that century, noted for linguistically sophisticated approaches to difficult issues, stand to be criticized for their overall silence on a comparable approach to environmental questions. (One does not find the same reticence among the visual arts.) It is precisely because of this historical urgency that ecopoetics appropriates “eco” (and, for that matter, “poet-
ics”)—to return them to the drawing board.

“Eco” here signals—no more, no less—the house we share with several million other species, our planet Earth. “Poetics” is used as poesis or making, not necessarily to emphasize the critical over the creative act (nor vice versa). Thus: ecopoetics, a house making.
ecopoetics is also conceived as a sort of mcu or “mobile contamination unit” (thanks to mycologist Paul Stamets for the term), cutting across divisions of labor, crossing and acknowledging linguistic, cultural and species borders.

Put ecopoetics in your pocket, and lace up your walking shoes . . .

Buffalo, June-December, 2001

JS
The first shock of a great earthquake had, just at that period, rent the whole neighbourhood to its centre. Traces of its course were visible on every side. Houses were knocked down; streets broken through and stopped; deep pits and trenches dug in the ground; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown up; buildings that were undermined and shaking, propped by great beams of wood. Here, a chaos of carts, overthrown and jumbled together, lay topsy-turvy at the bottom of a steep unnatural hill; there, confused treasures of iron soaked and rusted in something that had accidentally become a pond. Everywhere were bridges that led nowhere; thoroughfares that were wholly impassable; Babel towers of chimneys, wanting half their height; temporary wooden houses and enclosures, in the most unlikely situations; carcasses of ragged tenements, and fragments of unfinished walls and arches, and piles of scaffolding, and wilderneses of bricks, and giant forms of cranes, and tripods straddling above nothing. There were a hundred thousand shapes and substances of incompleteness, wildly mingled out of their places, upside down, burrowing in the earth, aspiring in the air, mouldering in the water and unintelligible as any dream. Hot springs and fiery eruptions, the usual attendants upon earthquakes, lent their contributions of confusion to the scene. Boiling water hissed and heaved within dilapidated walls; whence also, the glare and roar of flames came issuing forth; and mounds of ashes blocked up rights of way, and wholly changed the law and custom of the neighbourhood.

In short, the yet unfinished and unopened railroad was in progress; and from the very core of all this dire disorder, trailed smoothly away, upon its mighty course of civilization and improvement. . . .
BRUCE ANDREWS / DIZZYISTICS 10

putty pups
trick or treat
science as day-glo
beefcake beefcake pincushion
X-leaf
bodily french fries
fellated specimen jars
pink levers, tidbits
Do you understand the word ‘priorities’?
learn to dry out bread in your mouth
Your world fattens out
Macaroni & cheese breaks my heart
plankton catcall
Placebo addiction
crowd stuff
Use advice as criticism
Don’t torture the byproducts
These people are completely deluded
treetop trash eats the point
who ate all the dark meat, sweetheart
amoeba amok
mouth-to-mouth cognition
silly pressure mudpie gourmet
molecular buddies
Bio Ritmo, eat away
when it comes to fertilizer, you have personality to spare
first on the lips, never on the lips
Pacifist means vegetarian?
express thanks for food —
for our faction of the species to get to so dominate
a huger peanut of biodegradability
are dog biscuits vegan?
original language had no lips?
but then hamburger doesn’t have bones either
do the chemo
cripple the carnivore
bleed one breed
fix fat
have a nice afterbirth
what if premarital sex were carcinogenic
biosafety
electrocuting the meat
to impeach the gas tank
White Collar Crime
O.K. forget it from here on out you
45 million years gorges lake bed cut me
it’s December and it’s still warm if it weren’t
global warming it’d be nice sorta nice anyway
16 & _ miles in length 1 1/2 at widest
at 75 feet all mud but at 274 rubble and gravel
wave after wave at any rate
it was an understanding of the common sort
and as such admitted to be retainable
even by those who know better
glaciers pulled back kick and screaming
unfixed by these fixed things at first place one
hand at top and other half down and
pull face alongside so that paddle drags
twist backward and push out
stroke ends as rudder when executed properly
and two years later I can’t even get
myself to the grocery store let along pick a
long distance carrier to call landscapes
go geography is a very loose manner of talking
haven’t been able successfully
suppose it’s just that way Pickering Treaty
signed to north gave whites permission to settle
Great Lake Basin so it’s all fine for me
can’t be talked about to any purpose
first English settlers: Arora
over Seneca village destroyed 1779
Gen. Sullivan at south end at
mouth of Naples Creek there is a spring run
of rainbow trout forth largest of
major finger lakes cold against feet
and top of hand left behind rocks
water and some novelty scares
first take end of line and double it to
form loop of required size
tie overhand knot at desired point
leaving loop open bring the double line
through loop again hold line and end
together and pull loop and form knot
bear me away if you give a damn
or do it all the same if you don’t don’t bar me out
because we’re abandoned just better that way in some
various sense even so still occurs now and again
BULL SHOALS

bright blue skies and a lot of wind
conforms to a determinate pattern it shouldn’t be long before tributaries give us a few fish
opens for largemouth bass October 16 up to hatchery intake pipe at river mile 11.3
a daily limit of 6 fish minimum size 1 and _ pounds let’s go to pieces insignificantly
temp mid to high 40s can fish deeper drops near staging areas and
some of the docks that border deep water having lived somewhat unwillingly
in the first place I never thought temperance worth the trouble it took to acquire it
disparities leading to the break-up of present aspects into a future tense

frankly I’m not up to much good today
given to permutations but cannot help singularities resolved into their elements
typical post-spawn conditions from that date through the end of season will go wild bowfin release February 7
may be kept only hatchery fish low returns require release of White River system fish
and I did not know what might afterwards happen if you’ll wait a warm spell
we love very little seldomly have suggested otherwise
all we need is a good change in barometer reading will turn lake on any time now
one snag in particular at least 100 lures enough hard work can turn out fish
during these winter months on northern shore about 30 feet off
one snag in particular at least 100 lures believe me on northern shore about 30 feet off
during these winter months enough hard work can turn out fish
doesn’t seem much out of the ordinary as such never meant much to me
as such never meant much to me
just another damned up river in some manner proportionate to a shoreline
the willow flats the buttonbush the cypress tree let’s put off altogether
generally I care almost not at all for your prospects
generally I care almost not at all for your prospects
as we have still the better part of the day
if all remains as it is
A
way of
holding 191
yrs. flush time
If only to sense its
waning Way water reflects
movement of sky Seaweed
unchanged for longer than worth
counting Coldest & Deepest (1332 feet)
60 species of fish Lake Sturgeon 3 to 5 feet
olive-brown to gray on back and sides
nice white belly vulnerable to overfishing
female 20 years to mature spawns every 4 to 6 lifespan 50
Age thought of in Centuries minute by minute
90% shoreline still old growth timber Father of waters
old widower feet left to work the spinning wheel
White-Fish Point Light 1849 saw wreck of Sevona "terrible gale
& rain & fog 5:45 a.m. distress signal 10:00 a.m
cleared enough to see Steamer drift struck Sand Island Shoals 7 men lost to waves
Reid Wrecking Company salvaged 1906 light machinery
1908 engine & three boilers here and there 300 tons steel" Tells of reassurances
To resist if only to keep from holding As white specks circle in updraft above waves
Carcass of fish on beach for 35 days Birds devour 89% in first hours
insects and bacteria 24 - 7 Bones left shiny to mix w/ shell and stones Maybe a fossil in a million yrs
Feeling a mortar & its range
the radar’s plate & its scope

supple
probing the secret
soul, of a helmet & its toil

aim & scope
under the sunlit arch of daybreak
feeling alone
to the sound of piano keys

pointing to the sky
quiet light, distant
seeing, only,
arms

on the wall of the room
light bulb resting
space
horizon & capsules

sigdasys sucking heads
severed & the memorable star
blotted out
in dull shades

Tateava um morteiro & seu alcance,
a lâmina do radar & sua rede

flexível
sondava o ânimo,
clandestino, de um elmo
seu afã

mira & diâmetro
sob o arco aceso da madrugada
me sentia só
ao som das teclas de um piano

apontava para o céu,
serena luz, longínqua,
via, apenas,
os seus braços

na parede do quarto
lâmpada repousava
o espaço,
horizonte & cápsulas

sigdasys sugavam cabeças
decepadas & a estrela extraordinária
riscava-se,
em cores opacas
ETC (2)

Trying to seize the flower
half-wall
arm between bars
trying
to reach the green
stem of the cosmea
solar consolation or myosotis blue
on my fingertips

white petals of a daffodil
intact in themselves
beyond the wall
a stem flaunted gigantic leaves

beating on a constellation
useless, firetalk,
with the semblance of a dune
perhaps it was a panther

& not simply an idea
that transfigures
& touches its own center
solid, stars alighted

on my eye, as an accrual
stabs on a body
palette, stain
& burst of galloping

ETC (2)

Tentava apanhar a flor
meia-parede
braço entre as grades
tentava

alcançar a haste
verde da cósmea
consolo do sol ou azul do miosótis
na ponta dos dedos

pétalas brancas do narciso,
em si incólumes
além do muro
um caule ostentava folhas enormes

•

golpeava uma constelação
inútil, firetalk,
com aparência de duna
talvez fosse pantera

& não apenas idéia
que se transfigura
& toca seu próprio núcleo
sólido, estrelas pousavam

em meu olho, como um aporte
punhaladas no corpo,
paleta, nódoa
& salva de galopes
Trying to follow, steps voices, on the marble red, maple, leaf on this wall, of The Art . . . in the garden of Frank Lloyd Wright’s house in Oak Park, of green, faint blue-green, to capture the color of the sky trying to understand the sun yellow leaves luxuriant still with sap

•

observing in a street any really color of gold in contrast soon dry competing with autumn, red like a portable sunset in a rustproof frame before falling a red-headed girl perhaps Nolde

Chicago, October 2000

Tentava seguir, passos vozes, no mármore folha, vermelha, do ácer nesta parede, do The Art ... ou no jardim da casa de Frank Lloyd Wright em Oak Park, do verde, tênue, glauco captar a cor do céu, tentava entender o sol folhas amarelas esplêndidas ainda com seiva

•

observando numa rua qualquer na verdade cor do ouro em contraste daqui a pouco secas concorrendo com o outono, vermelhas como um pôr-do-sol de bolso na moldura inox, antes de cair, uma garota de cabelos vermelhos talvez Nolde

Chicago, outubro de 2000
Trying to understand the shape of the yellow horse in the Art Museum … morning, in the Park

(red flowers moving forward beyond the wall, another street leaves of blood) trying to capture, the possible

star, hooves-ablaze
wolf & squirrel
single & mutual
& almost a type of buddha

horse sniffing around cloud, attentive eye, vacillating with streaks of red, in the sky, petals

of the flamboyant trying to understand the light & its tall horse the color & its mute horse

in a painting by Nolde outside the window perhaps there’s rain, perhaps sun

São Paulo, November 2000

Tentava entender a figura do cavalo amarelo no Museu de Arte … manhã, no Parque

(bicos-de-papagaio avançando para além do muro, outra rua, folhas de sangue) tentava captar, o possível

estrela, cascos-labareda, lobo & esquilo, únicos & mútuos, & um tipo quase de buda

•

cavalo farejando nuvem, olhar atento, boiando, rajadas de vermelho, no céu, pétalas
do flamboyant tentava entender a luz & seu cavalo alto a cor & seu cavalo mudo

num quadro pintado de Nolde além da janela talvez chova talvez faça sol

São Paulo, novembro de 2000.
 nymph casing found in the Kleinstein Woods clinging to the trunk of a decaying tree. Dragon or Damselfly? About 3/4 inch long. Dark brown. Perfectly intact except for the opening of the thorax and the slit between the eyes on the head. The most interesting feature is the white "strip" that rings the opening.

Top view

Enlargement of opening: 4 separate hairs

These white filaments seem to be the components of the sign. They are like the frame over which the insects enter. Casing is striated like a kite.
The Elm said this like a wisper

your windshield’s wipers are mist lost vipers strong

each splinter I to pay soil your spoil

But I have no thing to wipe but I’s

waiting for the bus without coffee

so heard the story Long unwasted, ever

This tree is not what seemeth and seems but natal

sunsoakèd for flowering cry spidering of hot core home

oh mother   what’s your real name not yur surnmae

"Never call to the sea for fear of half circle c sing songs to seize You”

With a capitol Y?   that’s what the linguist forgots   pain- (in cash)

ful lettered highway-like roote bursts

The bus of white peoples on the page

the longing of grass blades to touch

dandelions sold at market to pay

For each wild sword swarms of words

telling me eye’m I but I take the name foul salmon and

I remember the wolf and bear wait just Yonder longing
“...be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead, did I say? There is no death...”
–C. Seattle, speech of 1854

Be
Bear

seeds handheld
Underground Reeds grow

bear — bees — leaves
the creation sustaining destruction
of the    U    v e r s e    of the

Belovèd borne to sweeten and rot
Bees humming B’reysheit In tha
Beginning America salted Brides

Babes of the Belly Forest Father
   Born two Witness-es
Brought back Bringing.

Constellate Ursa Major and Minor
upon this Spell cast
   by Buffalo and Turtle
upon Marauders of
Bearer

I and U be ears,
    Bear, my eye sojourner

Truth who names this land

Habitable

“Then they reached the Big House. Then they went into the Big House, to the middle of the building. Then they lowered that bear on the ground.”
–Munsee man Nekatcit
The Bowery Project is centered on documenting and reacting to the layers of debris including human kind that layer the streets of the Bowery in NYC. Specify the brief section between Cooper Union and Houston, an area that contains the remnants of SRO hotels and the remains of the 1890s Bowery that are slated to be demolished by The Bowery Development Plan in the next decade. I live a block from this section and travel through it daily. It will no longer exist by 2010; the artist coop (Kate Millett lives there) that used to be McGurk’s Suicide Hall (named so because prostitutes flung themselves out the windows in a symbolic protest of their working conditions), the Sunshine Hotel, and various soup kitchens will be extinct. My intent is not to romanticize the suffering or demonize the Bowery residents but rather to comment on poverty, class, suffering, and my own dilemma and identification as a teacher and poet one paycheck away from the street.

The Bowery Project also draws upon many sources including Jane Jacobs’s *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Also Jacob A. Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives*, Bernadette Mayer’s *Memory*, and Luc Sante’s *Low Life.*
Bowery Mind

He said it too (a man in a book about the chicken wire hotels), a mantra I had been saying all along in my head:

When they tear down the bowery
When they implode the bowery
When they blow up the bowery
When they demolish the bowery
When they revise the bowery
When they renovate the bowery
When they deconstruct the bowery

He said they suffered from Bowery mind; the residents never expected to spend the remainder of their lives in single rooms, each taken up by a long narrow bed and hot plate. I said to my husband, “We will live in this apt., these 4 rooms for the rest of our lives. This is where we grow old together. We will never be able to live anywhere else. We’ll never have the money or the time to find another place. I am 42.” At first it made me cry and then later it became very satisfying to say, “This is the bed, the room, the place I will die in. “ It settles the mind. People think it’s tragic to be old in New York City, but maybe it’s just tragic to be old anyplace.

Once people moved away from farms and came to cities, all saying this is what I did, this is what I did for posterity. Along came me saying this is what I did for poetry. A lot of people came here all at once, this is how and why my tenement exists.

A man lying in a prone position on sidewalk outside the vacant lot. The lot was covered in white poison and cleared off.

The bottles had been getting tall. I could imagine a bottle village or other folk shrine (even the Mennonites in Illinois had a building made of Fresca bottles), but the glass rising to the top of the chain links, like a transparent pool without swimmers. (Afternoon, May 8, ’01, Bowery & 1st St.)
He said he was once the most powerful drug dealer on the block and, “go fuck yourself.” I saw him later, carrying around a strange sculpture difficult to describe, because there was no comparison to it in the natural world. (2nd St. & 2nd Ave)

Man carrying a deflated blow-up doll in basket, said he would wash it and hang it on the wall to make a statement, collecting graffiti tags, said he’s going to make a coffee table book. In bodega a man said with body language, give me three numbers, and I’ll give you three in reference to lotto. We both lost the 33 million. (Houston and Allen)

Man with huge, flopping, boil on neck. His hands were empty. (April 29, ’01 Bleeker and Bowery)

An experience for which I have no comparison, can’t say it was this or that, just it was what it was. It existed. So write “It was late at night, and a fine rain was swirling softly down.... That is when I began this experiment in misery.”

Saw a man carrying a cross and a cane, wearing earphones. His sign said the government broke his legs. (April 28, ’01 9 am. White House Hotel, 3rd & Bowery)

Some might say that all I’ve done is stack up a heap of objects. Some will say it’s all been done before, and that others have done better but still I stack things up. I don’t think about it, I put blinders on. But I hope that through accumulation they’ll form a pattern out of chaos. I’ve stacked up twigs one by one building a structure, weaving and shaping, forming a skeleton out of raw garbage, transformed into beauty, maybe. With something to say to any Bowery resident or reader of poetry. I am intentionally writing for you and me.

Flowers and graffitti for Joey Ramone. (May 1, ’01, CBGB’S, Bleeker & Bowery)
Opening on a recognition of Frederick Law Olmsted's influence in American Cities, the conversation begins:

BC: That look or whatever, that aesthetic, you recognize it once you've been in Brooklyn's Prospect Park, and Central Park, and you can see it, the commonality in those designs is just beautiful, in the space, the open spaces, and nice green lawns. I couldn't articulate it, but I can see that its the same design.

DM: Did you notice that in Louisville?

BC: Not really, I think it was really, it was pointed out as a matter of honor, people were proud of it, but it was harder to tell, it might be that it's not the East, it's the South, the northern part of the South, but I'll have to go back and look again, actually. It doesn't have the vast expanse, I think it's a much smaller place.

DM: Is it part of a hill?

BC: I really can't remember, but it's in the old part of Louisville.

DM: But they've changed it.

BC: I think that parts of it have been changed, like roads and things, but I guess most of it is still there. I just don't think he had as big of a space to work with, possibly. But it is really cool to see his touch everywhere. I mean, it's a world-class park. Buffalo seems to have a lot of world-class monuments and museums.

DM: It's a nice place.

JS: World-class, that's what we like to hear. . . . See, there ...(shows Brenda a book).

BC: Oh, the Buffalo waterfront.

JS: That's where I got a lot of my tape from.

DM: We were looking at your book of Olmsted's writing. Did he have European model in mind when he was designing these parks?


DM: Vienna has a huge central park, doesn't it?
JS: It was the whole idea of the radiating avenues. It’s weird because he takes this sort-of Fascist aspect of 19th century city planning. Hausmann was putting in the boulevards in Paris.
DM: The boulevards, which were rectilinear?
JS: Yes, he just plowed through neighborhoods and created these great open spaces with long views. He was Napoleon III’s architect. Hausmann put the boulevards through so the troops could get into the center; it was like aerating the city, social hygiene, pushing all the poverty to the outskirts, or underground with construction of the sewers. Olmsted takes that and says, “well, what we should do as cities grow, they should use this model.” But he had this democratic version, where you would have all different classes with equal access to the open spaces.
DM: You have a very evocative rule, or palette; yet, in some ways, there is something “city” about your writing that some people have mentioned.
BC: Oh yes, Lewis Warsh says, “. . .of East Village politics mixed with something else,” he says in a little article in the Poetry Project Newsletter about my writing. It [my writing] is certainly very focused on place, and comes out of, well, I didn’t leave Indiana until I was thirty-one, so that’s one reason why the stories in this book, particularly the earlier things, are very much about Indiana.
JS: You had to catch up.
BC: (Laughs) it was just catching up. I was just getting it down. But then I go home every summer. It’s one of those times when I have a block of time, in which I’m using the setting or whatever found materials are coming my way. That’s why Summer Newsreel is about Indiana. It’s only this year, in the last year or two that I’ve started to write about Manhattan, and particularly right now writing about the Bowery. The Bowery also translates as “farm” in Dutch. I didn’t realize until a few weeks ago that I was still writing a “farm” poem! (laughter) I didn’t make the connection.

[After a brief discussion of Ed Sanders’s “Investigative Poetics.”]

DM: In your work [Brenda], you’re not collecting. That’s not the nature of it, to collect. You said that it is very important that the place is what you speak. Speak from? or about?
BC: Probably from in a certain sense. I mean, when I was a young girl and I thought about, I mean, I read a lot, and I thought about want-
ing to be a writer and that I would write something that I thought was not patronizing or condescending to hicks and hillbillies like myself (laughs). I would read these things where you were being stereotyped as a redneck, or an idiot because you were a rural person. So I wanted, hopefully, to convey the life of the mind, of rural life, or sensibilities or concerns or talks. So I hoped to capture some of that, even though that book [Early Films] largely reflects a lot of years of violence in the work that I did; I was an officer then. And then also just being stalked all the time as a young woman. In any Midwestern state if you’re a young woman living alone you’re a sort of target, you know, people watch you and they follow you.

DM: Do you think that has a lot to do with the great degree of dispersion of people?

BC: I think it has to do with being an object of desire and fantasy, when you’re young, when you’re eighteen, particularly. That’s like the American idea of the sexual treasure, you know, trophy. And so when I was eighteen I worked at Firestone Steel, and I was one of five women out of two hundred men in a factory, so I got lots of attention (laughs). I was the object of desire in this machine-driven environment.

JS: A good blurb for Dancer In The Dark, then. I thought that sequence in the factory was great.

BC: I did relate to the “machine” parts. The factory part you would love. I loved the factory work, and the rhythm of the factory work.

JS: [does a beatbox]

DM: But isn’t it interesting that Bjork gets those rhythms going, but she sings at a completely different tempo and bases her melodic line on that. She’s singing to some other sound. Would you say that was going on when you became a writer, that it would have to go counter to the rhythms that you were among?

BC: I’m not sure, I mean that book [Early Films] is so awkwardly written. It’s like learning to write, like any first book. I think that I was having such trouble in getting the language to do what I wanted it to do. So I think there is a lot of awkward prose. But it has a vernacular and idiosyncratic feel, as far as speech patterns go. Those are very present, the Hoosierisms and slang, things that simply aren’t grammatically correct because it is the way of hearing, and trying to get it down. Trying to get language to bend to your will. So there’s a lot of awkwardness in this particular book. Some of the speech is, just the way that it reads, a little off. Which I try to use, the offness of it. but
it does have a certain regional feel that I did want to keep, the idiosyncrasies . . . I think every writer fantasizes, has a very modest fantasy, that they could find a cheap place to live in a very rural community, and hopefully write, and write something of interest, from this very isolated place. It’s a very pragmatic, you know, just a utilitarian approach towards trying to create a life for yourself as a writer. A life that allows you to write, and to have an audience, maybe, somewhere out there, somewhere. You would send your work out to magazines, or whatever. You would be able to live on very little. You have that fantasy, I think.

JS: Do you think it’s possible?

DM: Like Thoreau . . .

BC: Like Thoreau [laughs]. Actually I’ve been thinking a lot about Thoreau.

JS: Living deliberately.

BC: I suppose so. I think you make a plan like that in the back of your mind as a writer, you know, “how am I going to keep writing? How am I going to do it?” How are you going to do it?

DM: To get to the cottage.

BC: What do you really need to have this life? And what are you willing to give up for it? How will you make it happen? It being that there’s absolutely no money. In fact, it will cost you money to do it. You give up all the energy that would go towards careers, or running a business.

JS: Or having children. All sorts of things.

BC: Yeah. It goes towards the writing instead of going towards those other of things. But it’s a different life. It’s certainly a worthy life to have, you know . . . I have my own Bowery Project as juxtaposed to the Mayor’s Bowery Project, in my poem.

IP: Oh, you’ll be the independent candidate.

BC: So we’ll see how that poem does this, if it ever ends up working. I started out thinking about surveying dumpsters, and doing dumpster diving, and writing a series of poems about dumpster diving, about objects, starting with the objects. But then I didn’t see any great garbage for awhile. That’s a big problem.

IP: Oh yes, once you start your project all the great garbage disappears.

BC: Yeah, so you go through a period where you don’t see any really cool garbage that gets you going, but then when you see some great, mysterious garbage, then you’re on again. But the chances of it coming across your way are, you know, rare.
JS: How does garbage speak to you?
BC: [laughs] Speak to me? “Narll. Uuuh, hnnnh” [laughs]
DM: What is interesting about garbage? I mean, because I think there’s always been, for artists, a sort of fascination with it.
BC: Well, it’s because they’re so poor.
DM: It’s not scatological in any way.
BC: We’re fucking poor!
DM: I see. We need that stuff!
BC: It’s cheap material. We need it.
JS: Or do you feel that it’s a more interesting topic, now, more than ever before: garbage?
BC: I think it’s maybe more spoken about. It’s perhaps not as taboo to talk about dumpster diving, and waste. Because poets and artists, and particularly visual artists, are always doing found object collages and assemblages. You go to the salvage yard to get your materials. It’s the same thing, you’re looking to the garbage for what it says about society, and it’s also a little bit of Sophie Calle, where she looks at the contents of the luggage, the things that people bring to the hotel room. And you’re also looking at what people are throwing out, and what it says about them.
IP: Yeah, it’s the same thing, it’s like describing something in an oblique way.
JS: I’ve spoken with elderly people who always tell me that in the twenties and thirties in America there was much less garbage because there was no packaging. I mean, much less packaging. You had canned food, and you had stuff in bulk, but you didn’t have a little box or wrapper around every little thing.
DM: But is that stuff still garbage? Those wrappers and plastic crinkle bags, that stuff we still reject. I mean, I think in some ways the things we deal with are things we still want to be in circulation.
IP: This is it! this is it, because . . .
DM: The other things are things that have become impossible to use.
JS: That’s what I mean in “what do you mean by garbage?” It includes that.
IP: Discarded things.
BC: Anything in the dump.
JS: Things or just materials?
DM: The object is still there, though. A piece of steel, or . . .
BC: Whatever it is that is discarded.
IP: For me, what I like about it is I’m trying to save things that will disappear and will never be made again, because what is made new is going to be a cheaper material, it’s going to last an even shorter time, it’s going to be less beautiful, it’s like trying to grab the last nice things that you can put your hands on.

DM: [begins talking with Isabelle about Electric Tower insulators and how to procure them]

JS: Are we talking about “found objects” or are we talking about “trash”?

BC: Both.

JS: Both?

BC: Because the trash can be a found object, or vice versa. It just depends on the eyes of the finder. “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.”

DM: I was going to ask about that, it was going to be the joke question, on what you feel is your relationship to the transcendentalists.

BC: Oh, well the poem I’m working on now talks a lot about transcendentalism, and Thoreau, and thinking about the Bowery as Walden, and just that sort of thing. I don’t know if that idea will . . .

DM: Great. Do you see it as a wilderness? As a place away from other parts of American culture, society, concern?

BC: Yeah, I mean, I see that the wilderness exists within the city. And so, the Bowery, with those vacant lots, the street life and subculture, is where the wilderness exists.

DM: No Man’s Land.

BC: Yeah.

DM: Where the bourgeois fear to tread, is in some way . . .

BC: Except that they don’t, they’re like buying all the . . .

JS: They like all of the property.

BC: It’s the opposite.

DM: Oh, they’re all over it, they’re buying it up.

BC: But maybe they’ll keep . . . maybe the parts on the other side of the Bowery will stay intact.

DM: So there’s something organic about what forms in those sort of vacated spaces that would lend itself to a relationship with the transcendentalists.

BC: Those empty lots. I was also thinking about the experiment in Walden of going out into nature and finding sustenance from the land, and doing that in the city, from garbage.
DM: The dumpster.
BC: Garbage, that would be the equivalent.
JS: What about animals in the city?
BC: I haven’t seen too many.
JS: Have you ever tried stalking in the city?
DM: Tracking, and hunting? You could stalk rats.
BC: It could be. I see human animals.
JS: Really, at night. There’s a guy, this guy Tom Brown who does stalking workshops in New Jersey. He’s stalked in the city at night, and there are all these packs of feral cats and dogs, and different kinds of animals that peek out at night, through holes, the lycanthropes.
BC: I haven’t seen them, there are some cats, though.
IP: Wolves.
DM: Just to watch them, just to do an ethology or something, an ethology on a wild pack of dogs?
JS: Ethology, exactly.
DM: So what happens?
JS: There are these different, parallel habitats that are happening. Birds, too, and the eagles, the peregrines that are nesting on some of the towers in the city.
BC: Well, now I’ll look out for that. I’ll have to watch for that, now.
IP: All kinds of weirdness comes from being in the city.
JS: Because you’re not the only person, the only being, that’s collecting trash and garbage, there. You’re out there with a lot of them.
DM: So it’s like Darwin, all these different species that arise on the buildings.
IP: Yes, they engineer themselves, they modify themselves, in the city, yes.
DM: They have labs? Or are they doing their own . . .
IP: They’re doing their own sensitive mutations.
DM: That’s just called “breeding” . . . “reproduction”
IP: I guess, with a little, uh, engineering taking place.
BC: [to Jonathan] Yeah, they’re collecting, too. Out there, there must be animal cultures, animal kingdoms.
JS: You’ve got a lot of colleagues out there, amongst the other species.
BC: Certainly the rats. Now I’ll have to look out, maybe I’ll add that to . . .
JS: Muskrats, maybe.
BC: Maybe I’ll pay attention to that.
JS: Just see what you see.
BC: See what I see?
JS: I’m just curious, you can report to me, just let me know, send me an e-mail,
and say if you saw something.

**DM:** So the four farming poems in Boyeye are interesting.

**JS:** The Future Farmers of America.

**DM:** I think you mentioned one, Isabelle, the one about the balls, the hayroll. That you would take all that, sort of, ubiquity of that world, I guess, and make it into a fantastic landscape.

**BC:** Yeah, there were a lot of those hayballs around that summer.

**IP:** My God! It’s true, Brenda, I mean, now I’m stuck with this for life. I’m stuck with this for life.

**BC:** Yeah, but now you see them everywhere.

**DM:** So did this happen every summer?

**JS:** You know who said a really funny thing? Brian Collier pointed out that this time of year, like, next month, they cover the hayballs with white plastic, so they look like fields of giant marshmallows.

**IP:** [laughs]

**DM & BC:** [simultaneously] Yeah, that’s true.

**BC:** They are very beautiful, and I started noticing them a few years ago, and I was trying to find some way to talk about them, because they’re so beautiful.

**JS:** But hay is a really potent substance. I mean, it’s actually interesting that its served as this kind of bucolic material and image, because it’s really uncomfortable, it makes you sneeze. It can be really toxic, actually. You get what’s called “farmer’s lung” working in silos.

**IP:** Oh come on, Jonathan. There are enough toxic things, you don’t have to attack hayballs.

**BC:** [laughs] No, it didn’t occur to me.

**JS:** It builds up nitrous oxide, you know, and carbon dioxide, when it’s first put into the silos.

**DM:** Yeah. They explode, silos explode.

**BC:** The hayballs are part of the Americana I’m talking about. Just things in the American landscape.

**DM:** These toxic balls rolling over America?

**BC:** I was thinking more of gonads.

**DM:** Yeah, that comes through.

**BC:** I was thinking of being a woman, and, you know, balls.

**Everyone:** Of course, of course.

**DM:** That’s clear, a ballsy land.
“Put it in the pot,” I said.
rosy gray patina’d sweet
awaits through pocket fuzz its
dry bowl of ham-coloured dawn
blue moon flesh of sandy skate
choky bone sandstone chain glut
bubbled up like verse or cheese
ropy humbug loosed thangs fanks

a fishy syntax supper chips
away an air familiar
giant steps back mr. p.c.
plays out big leash on slacky
collar implied sell-by thwarts
strata counts fool no one try
taking it out of your mouth

clocked glass-blower monologue
with kirk-like contrapuntals
three kinds of misc shit stritch
rounding third or so we heard
a ginger cat of balham
never arrives charm exhaust
fills expenditures damp cave
blank shiny beast of yeoville
aspirative earth heathen
turns over presley’s wormy turf
greenworld passing in traintime
walked downwind from the engine
malvern’solsonian breasts
worn to a distant pitney

damaged thanet inhalers
reprazent strand frontage
as gruelling conradesque
concealment pebbled with debt
a romanesque resentment
a lean mean archway loafer
pigshaved cornlaw evader

my flat cap forelock’s bloody
tugwaving over beans tea lino
ludo uckers you fuckers
without scale or office
can’t climb a marshalsea stack
without knuckles of woolworth
masters if our arms could reach
thumbs could oppose fingering
is half mental fretless slide
from camberwell now to mid-season loops and replacements
that taste like a deportee’s
bitter pharmacopia

if a disease skeltonic
not mental fizz nor chronic
defined by lack specific
horror honorific
footdrag ideolectic
nominally terrific
if pseudo-scientific
A LETTER FROM HAMMERTOWN
TO EAST VANCOUVER AND THE EAST VILLAGE

dear K.—

I’m planning ahead
    for the first time—

for soon it will be spring
    and then it will be the grid of appearance

upon which spring can be laid.
    That is, what is from the ground up
    becoming

will be from the ether
    managed—
        the lawns will fade to unfenced ochre,

back onto alleys, roughly narrow paved
    (the width of an Austin

from the administration of Macmillan)
    the poignant sheds will sprawl and lean

another season
    for no reason.

But all of this, though hardly molecular,
    —if squinted at through eyes oracular—

betrays conclusions scarcely singular:
    the scale is still a cap full of cabbage

resting on a bag of flew
    pulled along by a little red wagon—
what eventual emerges
   from dirty stubby fingers toes
      beggars description

but is no secret, either.
   a deer trail,
      then a dog trail,
         then Pete's trail,

then my trail. Sherpa Tensing sits puffing
   on the roof of the world—

his belief in process absorbed
   by the throbbing worm

that mutters and sweats
   at the mucky heart
      of being . . .

Thus engaged,
   rhetoric becomes prosthesis,

stagger down the parade route
   of a strange city
      within a giant face of plaster—

but speak!
   it does not.

Another grotesquerie
   affirming
      the shapeliness of all things—likewise

the saturate flowers, the seepage
   suspect, the coffee grounds
      idling in the tray—such that
progressive collapse seems itself a tender unfolding
  a rose within a bible drying,
  a whiff of distant evening cooking . . .

The winter twilight’s pall of woodsmoke
drifts and softens
even as it sears and conceals—
  just as the low millennial fog of Hammertown
cloaks the shuttered factories, dog-ridden lots and
oil-dappled pavements
  in the wispy rainments
  of authenticity . . .

I stirred the pondwater
  with a little stick, watched
  duckweed swirl
as though beneath
  February’s late ice, while
  through the bright fractal enclosures
of the alder grove
  flickers flicked, towhees wheeled
  tanagers managed—

I’m lining things up
  all in a little row
  so that the real image of spring
and the mental image of spring
  can be made to somehow agree—
the new incorporated self
  erects a kind of recording scrim, on which
  the successive domed apprehensions
  of the April sky, the
broiling surface tension of Dodd Narrows, etc.
      can be decelerated and examined—

a field guide to fields, a boy’s book of burls,
the unexamined yard, fern monochrome attribution,
dull days in the eastern capitals . . .

      the index: the big one

these wet streets, your hands
      plunged into the warm dirt, the exhaust fans
      of the endless orange tunnel that lies between us,

what of them?
      I try to think of you
      and can bring to mind
      only the great parabolic bridges
      in whose shadow you live, fist-sized rivers
      of red iron, buoying above
      the molten stream of thought

into which
      each day you are thrown!

As the day grows clear and cold
      the mind grows hazy, the wind indicating
      woodpecker hesitates
      and reverses; the earth, like a little
      boat on a calm day
      pitches and rolls, a metal stylus

on a resonating film
      of charged oil . . .
Catherine Daly / Topiaries

If I didn’t like poetry, and liked pruning, I might compare poetry and pruning, but as it is, pruning seems to involve a battle resulting in the sudden, violent death of very large entities. Perhaps it is like poetry after all.

We live in a gated all-rental community of 11,000 people. Many of the trees were planted by residents when the community was new. In the Southern California climate, these houseplants have grown to an enormous size. Behind our townhouse, there is a ficus tree that is three stories tall. It is so shady, no grass will grow underneath the tree.

Underneath the ficus tree, which was pleasantly levering up the concrete paving near its roots, I planted ground cover with little blue flowers that would grow in the shade. The workers raked up the ground cover. I had carefully selected easy-to-propagate ground cover which was shade tolerant and didn’t require special watering. The ground cover grew back. They turned the soil, killing it all. They planted grass seed. It never even sprouted. They cut an entire story off the top of the ficus, and thinned its lower branches. They replanted grass. It is a sea of mud.

The original plantings included great swaths of grass. Grass is not efficient in the desert. The management company is gradually replacing the grass lawns with water-efficient plants (xeriscape) like those I had planted.

The workers, with less work to do, must make their jobs necessary to keep them. They overprune the existing plants. After a year or so of overpruning, a plant dies. The workers then replace it with a new plant and begin the process again.
The workers are raking up all of the water-efficient ground cover and attempting to replace it with grass. They managed to kill some mint I had planted. Mint is an evil, invasive plant that makes good tea and smells fabulous. It is very difficult to kill mint, the reason I planted it. I had five types of mint: chocolate mint, lemon mint, orange mint, peppermint, and spearmint. My mint garden grew in the dirt under some Indian Paintbrush trees in front of our townhouse that were pruned to be squares on top of trunks.

A few days ago, they pruned the Indian Paintbrush, even though summer is just starting and the shade would keep our townhouse cool.
They cut down an old black olive tree in front of our townhouse. I was sick to my stomach the entire day. It was a large tree with spreading branches. An old Italian man, a neighbor, picked the olives and pickled them. Another neighbor told us there were olive feuds, with some neighbors pickling them, and others pressing them for oil, each side claiming theirs was the best option for the fruit.

They are gradually cutting down all of the olive trees in the development and planting new, little trees.
In four-fold uncrossing
does this mast of cloth
& wood lift up against
sky to carry secretly

eye of sailor, to look
out (horizon) upon
sea to see (horizon)
or perhaps small

ship, or shadow of
imaginary island
(continent); or to
look into (island)

skyline, port town,
widow’s walk and
behind that more
buildings or farmlands

that circle (settlement)
to feed. That agricultural
base. In ringing land is
either sustenance or

excreta (one then the)
(other). Eye is watery
ship crossing air
to fashion vision;

hard to see point
in flat horizon, but
low ridge of interaction:
sea spray air + water
ionization (fertilization)
kelp upon fields
trace vitamins
invisible to eye.

In ringing sea
is sustenance or
(excreta) radiation
dumping ground:

small ship opening
hull to drop
(something) barrels
dark secret sea

bottoms crevasses
opening ridge,
radiation flora
impervious to heat.

In ringing sea is
(owned) oil: sea-bed
measured in footsteps
then in miles (miles

spring from footsteps),
or meters the (size)
of human “trunk”
”torso” to drag

along the sea-bed,
lungless then lungfull
breathing in air sacs
measuring itself

along the oily deposits
and jeweled sand.
“There’s good and bad points to paving the earth.”
“No, there are only good points.”
“There probably would be many more malls, which is a major plus.”
“There may be malls, but they’ll be underground.”
“There is no correlation between asphalt and shopping malls…”
“But, it would increase pollution.”
“Oh dear. That might be a bad…”
She interrupted. “Bad? Imagine a sky, which, instead of one boring blue color—very rarely we have a hint of grey smog, but that’s hardly noticeable—there is a sky which is roiling with a thousands of colors never seen before —poisongreen, hellishred, stinkingpurple, venomeorange. That will be a fantastic sighting.”
He agreed. “Right. What makes you think pollution is bad? Everyone’s told you nature is nice so naturally you think that way. Let me ask you this: were you born in a forest or a city? The answer is generally the latter, so as you can plainly see the pollution and pavement are really what humans should find beautiful.” He continued, “We’ve got oceans right? We electrolosize the buggers to produce oxygen and there’s tons more than the fuckin’ trees can produce! We’ll have a supply until we can evolve into exhaust breathers!”
“So we’d all die of suffocation.”
“No, because we will make oxygen in the pits.”
“You know when you just went to the beach, and your feet are sandy, so sandy that you don’t want to put your shoes on?”
“Hold it!” he exclaimed. “What beaches? Beaches need oceans, we will pave over the oceans so there will be no beaches. Your problems are solved—very convenient.”
“If all of the world was paved—especially if it was paved in tar—your feet would burn a lot more. At least, mine would.”
“Feet are, of course, not meant for walking,” he said. “So naturally they would burn if you actually tried to walk on the tar.”
“So you want to walk on the paved earth?”
“Yep. And there would be no silly buildings which slow you down every time you hit one.”
After a thoughtful pause, he piped up. “I had an idea for making the paving of the Earth more efficient. We’ll send a group of pit slaves to Mars, where they will begin hollowing out the planet. They’ll bring rock and whatnot back to Earth, and deposit the stuff. On return trips to Mars they could take some of that annoying ocean water with them. As a side issue, Mars could be covered with a nice surface, perhaps copper—to contrast with the chromed moon. Mars would have to be moved closer to the Earth so we could view it better though.”

She nodded in agreement. “Well, personally, I like the idea. There’s some irrational resistance round here, though, to the efficient coating of planetary bodies with metallic overlays.”

“Efficient? What’s up with that?” he said. “Maybe you’re being sarcastic but efficient it ain’t.”

“Depends on your definition of the word efficient,” she answered, peevishly adding, “Perhaps I should have said less personally troubling.”

She then quickly changed the subject. “Now what to do with the Sun... all of that energy just streaming out of that thing, not being used at all!”

“It’s not being used exactly because there’s so much of it.”

“True,” she said. “The Sun is a model of SNR depletion... if only we could fully realize 0.001% efficiency here...”

He cut her off, exclaiming, “Inconsequentially, I’ve yet to figure out where the CTFM or those Mars people figure that plating celestial bodies could be anything BUT a waste of time. If the sky is roiling properly, how in the fuck would you be able to see it anyway?”

“Better than a waste of time... a waster of resources,” she claimed. “A waste of labor as well, but considering the pathetic existence these creatures will have, can it truly be called a waste?”

He sighed and said, “I’m not completely sold on this heavy roil thing anyway. You need some pollution so you have interesting sunrises and sunsets, but an empty blue sky has no redeeming points at all.”
'Nature poetry' is saying—any kind of anything is saying—because anything that can be sufficiently identified as 'something' to be categorized and verified in with everything else as 'that thing' (as, Nature Poetry) is not only dead-out as whatever it might be in itself, but reduced to (illustrative) rubbish as example of 'itself' (e.g., Nazis are bad, FDR was good)—while may be true and moving (our false and seductive history is mere dull—because we as demanding paying audience) are as dull as my historical self, me.
"A poem can be made of anything" — with retrospective additional emphasis (not on anybody's poetic subject matter). (Now we allow anybody more stuff!) On some odd doing it all all (mean is all) on the "can be made" looking thinking wording in ignorance of purpose or motive (or any familiar discourse) have to actually shed physical/eyeball skin which is not all the deed infect compared to learning from beginning looking shows gives.
Compared to all that due to the illustrious demonstration of Good Guy way—i—it—ought—to have been done way—it—still—could—be done—the fiction of My Town learned in accordance with vendor-friendly commerce nonsense (without even conviction of real church religion)—these two truly mysterious poems by... Let's say, Nature Poet Emily Dickinson do show the relevant different searching vs. knowing complete association in lieu of representation its out there
Further in Summer than the Birds
Pathetic from the Guses
A Minor Nation <reflexive> its unrestrictive Mass

No Ordinance be seen
So gradual the Guses
A Pensive custom it becomes
Enlarging loneliness

Antiquity felt at Noon
When August sunning law
Arise this spectral Counter
Repose to typify

Remit as yet no Bruce
No shovering on the Glow
Yet a Druidic Difference
Enhances Nature now

This is undoubtedly Quickets
Gues Shopper's locus, Cicer
or Rogue of some kind.
Four Trees — upon a solitary Acce —
Without Design or Order, or Apparent Action —
Maintain —

The Sun — upon a Morning meets them —
The Wind —
No nearer Neighbour — have they —
But God —

The Acce — gives them — Place —
They Him — Attraction of Passers By —
Of Shadow, out of Spirit, near —
Or Boy —

What Deed is theirs unto the General Nature —
What Plan —
They severally extend — out farther —
Unknown —
that they 'Heard me'

Afterward—what part of each I 'remember' seems to want

implied me to reconstruct

More of itself (the original)

which I then do. What is this shit? About? +

remaining dissatisfied unless I re-

member + recite The whole

open, over + over inwardly

(to myself:); in first light.

How could Any thing be

"Further in Summer Than the Birds"

—well, Went All About To

"How words live on in 'Boy'-wise"

Uncommonly, a decidedly Dull

genre is Taken up by a Boring

Person who writes several or eight

(or More) Daring Nature Poems.

—Bod C.
The sound that made it pick it
on the highway in the cornfields
where the corn was being good
and corn and being corn and
white and yellow, blue and brown,
the red corn, loved and green
and like the green corn, like the
way I love the ears of corn the
buds of corn, the chickens and
the ugly corn, the birds and
corn, the singing corn, to sing
the corn, and yet to sing to you
the corn, the corn that built the
plains that filled the tractors
with the corn and ate the corn,
the touching corn, the touching
in its silky corn, the white and
frothy silky corn, with white
froth corn like dirty gem of
frothy corn that says hello, the
corn, hello, hello perspective,
corn up to the sun.
A child asked Whittier “what is grass?”. So what is grass? If it’s my grass, it’s hardly as good to eat or夺得 and makes for a good cover & crop. If it’s crabgrass, it’s a pernicious weed which grows faster than you can tear at it. Bruners grow where trees for lack of moisture cannot but they also swamp swamps. Were it not for weeding, this farm would be a confusion of grasses. Residue being no option, the weeds must be outflanked; either by timely cultivating or by planting them out before they “bolt” or go to seed. Indeed, anything which goes to seed becomes in essence a weed, an invader, a “volunteer”. As kindly put to it, too became volunteer. The island, this slately leaning is filled with linden weeds and rootless iconoclasts, hoping to find a place among the second-growth. Douglas Fir.
I am a man in Nature, a man by Nature.
Outside, in cool air, in green grass, I climb
To the top of a hill in the Nature Preserve
Where my friends, the deer, and their friends
The squirrels, surround me. Together
As friends in Nature, sharing the green grass
And the cool air in which the many kinds of birds
Fly, we are moved to a clarity of statement.
Actually, that isn’t true. I don’t have any friends.
I have never met a squirrel. I do not like green grass.
I saw a deer in Nature, once, but it ran off.
That, and the unmentionable incident
With the woodpecker, turned me forever
Away from Nature. I have been told
I have the blood of a shepherd. I often think
I am a shepherd. I am Sam Shepard
And I shall not want. Sam Shepard is a man
In Nature, a man by Nature, and he loves
The deer and the squirrels and the cool air
And the green grass. But Sam Shepard
Is also an actor, and I wonder, can an actor
Named Shepard actually be a shepherd?
Or can he only portray one? Shepherding
Must be a lonely job, but I do not think it’s true
That shepherds ever turn to their sheep
For love. It would be very difficult
And possibly dangerous for a man to attempt
To insert his penis into a live animal.
One swift kick and he finds himself
Alone in Nature, no longer able to call the sheep
He has betrayed his friends, forced to wander earth
In search of his flock, or a Preserve on which
None shall judge him. Sam The Shepherd lies
On his back and gazes at the stars, wondering
What in the world he did that was so wrong.
His voice draws for me his mouth, his eyes, his face, makes for me his complete portrait, outer and inner, better than if he were in front of me. I see him in the closet pulling out the oxy-machine, it scuttles out on six plastic wheels an inch and a half apart. Gary puts his mouth to the latex covered hose and sucks in, blows out. Satisfying oxygen comes billowing down his throat, so long as he goes with the flow, like a lifeguard giving the kiss of life to a dying swimmer. He counts to ten. His headache disappears as he gets dressed, up and at ‘em. Today he’s meeting with people who do TV infomercials. They have a lunch date at Jardiniere at 1.45 for a new campaign, “good air in, bad air out.”

He called my photos, my precious photos, “smegma,” not to hurt me, just out of long habit. Anything he didn’t like he called “smegma,” and I didn’t even know what that was. Gary’s brash, confrontational style made him a lot of friends and more than a few enemies. Those who were willing to overlook his prison record usually found him an affable, upfront guy, personable, handsome and slim. He took over any bar or restaurant he was in, grabbing the chair he was supposed to be sitting in, swirling it around so he sat with the back of the chair facing his companion, his knees on either side, rocking slightly back and forth. Wish I had a little razor blade, to carefully slice squares of cloth from over his kneecaps, leaving them bare so I could bend down in that restaurant, and lick his knees. Like Mary Magdalene in Jesus Christ Superstar—“I don’t know how to love him! I don’t know why he moves me!”

He kept his system fine-tuned, but left plenty of room for improvisation. When he met me, a tiny tumbler clicked in his brain. He saw so simply how I, with my vast grasp of Hollywood stars, could apply myself to make him a richer man. He began by asking me which stars live in Hawaii.

“Carol Burnett,” I replied immediately, thinking to myself, everyone knows that silly man! I guess I had a bit of snobbery in me. I liked
being challenged. At Gavit High I was in the National Honor Society and I could have gone to UC Berkeley, but for my line of work, you don’t need a degree. I take all the quizzes in Cosmo and once tried to get into Mensa. “Tom Selleck, Jim Nabors, Richard Chamberlain.”

“Excellent,” Gary said. He was rubbing my neck to make me relax. “Do they have AIDS?”

“No,” I said. Mensa’s not so fabulous if you ask me. I went to one meeting in Bakersfield and just met a couple of aeronautics type nuts, not very stimulating. I showed Gary Radley the Internet, where he and I experimented on the “Alt.showbiz.gossip” channel. It’s a busy hive droning with squawking bees, all antennas raised high. We floated an anonymous question asking everyone on line if Tom Selleck and Jim Nabors had AIDS. In a half hour we charted 35 responses, all of them denying the AIDS connection. A queer light boiled up behind Gary’s green eyes, like fire on the ocean. A few weeks later, the screen door of his trailer went whack! as he shouldered his way in, struggling under the weight of a huge cardboard box wrapped with glossy tape. A box three feet by four feet, must have weighed over a hundred pounds. “I apply myself to insignificant (non-significant) images,” Gary quoted, whipping out the knife from the back pocket of his jeans. He slid it through the tape like a finger through cream. “Got my brochures.”

I opened the peeled box and took one. “JIM NABORS DOES NOT HAVE AIDS,” I read on the front cover. Bright red glossy cover. Text in black. “So far so good,” I said. “How’s he gonna sue you for that.”

Then you fold over the brochure and read, “WHY NOT? WELL . . . MAYBE BECAUSE HE LIVES IN HAWAII.”

“It’s for the Kona Spray,” Gary said. Kona Spray was an invention of his brother’s which they were marketing. People in Hawaii don’t get HIV, the copy says, because they bask all day and night, all year round, in the healing blossoms of the Kona plant. Now you can bring the healing power of Kona to your own bedroom or office. Kona Spray came in a little can about the size of a can of Bactine. There was a pump version too for the environmentally concerned. I hate to
think how many men all across the mainland bought into this ploy. “A system does not regulate everything,” Gary believed. “It is a bait for something.” He was saying, give people a chance and they’ll send you money. Release the arrow and a light soothing fragrance, redolent of the Islands, fills your personal space on wings of aerosol.

KONA SPRAY = KILLS AIDS DEAD

Just spray it on your dick and wear it “instead of a rubber.” The biggest mistake Rock Hudson ever made, we wrote, was not moving to Hawaii.

Inside the shiny red cover, were a few pages of the colorful Kona flowers, some blue, some violet, nestled in tight dewy sprays of green foliage. More text was interleaved across and underneath these exotic blooms. We threw the brochures at each other, red day-glo in the motionless dark air. I wanted to make love on top of them, in homage to the films in which men and women, flush with casino winnings or larceny, express themselves by fucking on money. Like Audrey in How to Steal a Million. I shucked off my running shorts and pulled my cock out of my Calvins, holding it out and dousing it with Kona Spray. It got long and hard, unnervingly so. I slid it into Gary Radley’s mouth, blocking his eyes and chin and ears with text. Slid it out, slid it in. I kept telling him, take my hot juice baby. The whole world grew red, made me laugh.

After awhile he pulled the seat of my shorts off his body, threw me onto the floor. “Clean up this smegma, will you?” said he, jumping into the shower in these cute little rubber sandals to ward off athlete’s foot. I crawled into the shower space and sprayed his feet with Kona spray. He spat my come out into my hair, I sprayed my hair with Kona spray, he said, this product will make us rich men. All I could think of was, well then, I can take a plane somewhere, get out of Gavit. I’d come back, of course. Just that I’d never been on a plane. I guess I’ve seen a lot of shit go down. Just never flown anywhere, and it was kind of embarrassing. I’m familiar with planes, from watching TV shows and movies about them. I could fake it, say I’ve flown, no one would
know. But I’d know. See the difference? I sat there, nude, on the floor of the shower, absently rubbing the semen into my hair for protein, thinking of ordering a martini on the plane. Maybe I’d go to South Beach, in Miami, where Madonna lives and Sylvester Stallone and Rosie O’Donnell.

And that awful Gloria Estefan, yuck. Where Andrew Cunanan killed Versace. Gary was jabbering on and on about “seed money,” oh, Christ! You really had to be there . . . He explained to me the twofold structure of his MLM, “Extreme Remedies.” One half of it tried to extract money from people with HIV by selling them Kona Spray and even stronger products—products that, naturally, cost more but for which desperate people would often give their last dime.

A minute later he had my throat in a chokehold. “Didn’t you hear me, motherfucker?” he’s rasping at me. Guess I hadn’t written the number down quick enough, so I scrawl it on back of a lovely inscribed photo of Val Kilmer and Mina Sorvino on the set of Sight Unseen.

When two people are bonded together the way I was to Gary Radley, the younger one doesn’t even notice many details which are bound to get him into trouble later. What I loved about him was his sternness and seriousness of purpose. And also the pale bed of dark hairs on his chest. His ambition. The way he had that Alec-Baldwin sleepy eyed hooded look, like a cobra, as though he never fell asleep, just kept watching while his mouth stertorously continued to breathe and sag. While he was fucking me I felt like the rope the snake inches up and disappears into the sky. He could do it real good and still keep a hand busy on the calculator, adding up columns of figures while spritzing my neck and shoulders with Kona Spray, with long hot kisses that left bruises days afterwards. He did all these things with his eye on the main chance, in his little trailer on the edge of town, and I . . .
Robert Kocik / from Overcoming Fitness

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Upon completion of this course you will have gained an understanding of:

Overcoming Fitness is implenitudinist—it views the world as a place of missing or omitted organs, organizations, life forms, agencies, properties and events. It sorts through the nonexistent.

An omission is an omission because its admission would be more than beneficial. Thus ‘missing’ means sorely missed. Potential works fill the air. But how many, once realized, would be salubrious? And of the salubrious few, how many prospects actually fall within one’s competence (if compete we must). Bringing life about (as we’ve learned from studying our local instance of life-on-earth) is harrowing and most improbable. Thus, Overcoming Fitness represents that slimmest chance favoring ineluctable life always yet to exist.

Aren’t things fine the way they are? Maybe so, but (I contend) only if a lack of means makes change untenable. Inconvenience is almighty! It is oppressive. (My co-workers claim that I’m able to remove the ease from even the easiest tasks—even from the automatic, the involuntary and Second Nature.) Are the given conditions, whether human made or ‘unmade’, indeed inexorable? Ours to revere or revamp?

Overcoming Fitness both conceives and constructs. A work is not conceived until constructed. Until constructed, too little is known about a work to conceive of it. Word/deed dichotomy is eliminated, or, fused.
Is this an emergency or merely urgent? Is there enough time to undo infrastructures from within or should I just take to the street? I don't want to simply be voluntarily disadvantaged.

Our meddling has reached the core. Thus, time-honored adaptation has too little time to react. This is the case for Social Darwinism as well.

Overcoming Fitness desecrates the zero-sum landscape. It reinvents incentive. It attempts to construct a viable model of benevolent behavior to set against the volatile model proposed by today’s so-called ‘compassionate conservatives’ with their carnegie-method of responsible contribution by the disproportionately rich.

For Overcoming Fitness to indeed be viable, it must be as proof oriented as it is poetic. To this end, Overcoming Fitness extends through the soft, speculative, social, hard and exact sciences to generate further scientific types, such as the Sore, Oversensitive, Insecure, Insensitive and Subtle Sciences. The role of these sciences is to provide an alternative ‘fulfilling’ description of human being. Why, are the other physical models unfulfilling? Decide for yourself, but with or against fitness as optional.

Inheritance is already being forced to respond to our works. May poetry determine phenotype! Poetry doesn't ask why two white rabbits don't produce a red rabbit but why two white rabbits don't produce a putto.


Sweet, humbling ingratitude.

Ungrateful about what, exactly? Fitness and apoptosis (programmed cell death) are synonymous. We struggle to survive because we ultimately don’t survive. We already have this inheritance. It’s given. Why work for it? That’s what I mean! Fitness is the opportunity to die without using its occasion for further ends.

As a theory, Overcoming Fitness is physically absurd. Nonetheless, it works. It agrees with a world we must not live without. Max Planck
once described his mechanics as ‘an act of desperation’. Though the quantum concept allowed him to obtain expressions that agreed beautifully with experiment, he recognized that his quantum assumption was physically untenable. Or as Gregor Mendel, without an understanding of meiosis or the particulate unit (the gene) of inheritance, could nonetheless accurately observe the patterns of genetic transmission in garden peas.

Just yesterday, I was speaking with a biologist friend, describing my implenitudinist practice. With more sympathetic skepticism than I’m accustomed to receiving from her sector she exclaimed: ‘Well, you’re going to have to stretch the boundaries of science pretty far to get that overfitness to fit.’ My immediate response was to point out that the boundaries of poetry, in all likelihood, would have to be stretched even further.

THE FOLLOWING IS AN ANNOTATED LIST OF A VARIETY OF MISSING SOCIAL SERVICES AND OMITTED AGENCIES CURRENTLY BEING DEVELOPED:

BUREAU OF MATERIAL BEHAVIORS

DEFINITION Correlating and de-correlating (1) the microstructure of material, (2) the behavior of material and (3) human behavior and then designing a desirable environment accordingly.

KEY WORDS micro-management, human-material age, untried verbs

BOOTH FOR RETROFECTION

DEFINITION This booth uses an audio input known as a poetry pop-in to set off an aesthetic reaction capable of logosome activation. The logosome—the fusing of logo-centric song/verse and originary Logos (that which manifests matter)—selects the new somatic mutation produced by this fusion and sends it through the germ barrier and into perpetuity. If art influences physiology, if artwork influences the envi-
environment, artwork influences the genome. How and to what extent? The process, start to finish, is called aurivoce.

KEY WORDS  logosome, aurivocal, artwork as non invasive genetic recombination, volitional evolution

OUTBUILDINGS FOR INADMISSIBLE DISCIPLINES

DEFINITION  Many missing disciplines remain missing because of a lack of customized meeting place. Many missing behaviors persist as missing because their furnishings have yet to be realized. Provide the appropriate place and the practice will follow. Cure for chronic interloping and commodity scavenging: design.

KEY WORDS  stealth building, parasitic pod, vestigial envelope, permitted obstructions, levitated lair, docked department, cantilevered counter-club-house.

REFRIGERIUM FACTORY

DEFINITION  A refrigerium is a place of refreshment. A provisional paradise where all there is to take care of is being taken care of. Paradise has always been one artificial containment or another. (Secondary definitions of refrigerium: a commemorative meal; an offering placed on a tomb, a place mat).

KEY WORDS  habitations, in bonis, knowledge of future happiness, sleepers

PEACE DIVIDEND  PICKUP SPOT

DEFINITION  $305,000,000,000 for Pentagon National Defense spending divided by the adult population of the United States would equal one possible peace dividend portioning. If peacetime buildup of arms is the cause of war, the only cause of peace is more war. In fact the dividend should not simply be distributed individually like a Republican tax cut. The Peace Dividend Pickup Spot would work
best as a place of community-oriented debate (with dividend money in hand) for conjuring sorely missing services. Government giveaway for novel civic incentives.

KEY WORDS rescission, transfer of funds, reprogramming

**COMIC WARFARE TRAINING CENTER**

DEFINITION Appropriating the zero sum terms of military strategy for expediting comic (drastically fortunate) civilian outcomes.

KEY WORDS attrition sweeping, phortikostics, confusion agent, dud probability, imboscata

**GYM FOR OVERCOMING FITNESS**

DEFINITION Supplanting physical fitness with manual skills practiced directly upon the omitted world—world-as-wish—the poetic plenitude.

KEY WORDS redirection of exercise, autogamy, grace

**CLINIC FOR VESTIGIAL ORGAN STIMULATION**

DEFINITION Recovery of the senses and physiological functions excluded as the body sealed around itself. Trace physiologies engaging faint physical environments.

KEY WORDS reaccomodation, alloreceptor, confectionary

**ZOO OF FAVORABLE THROWBACK SAFE RETURN**

DEFINITION Past portents. Now that the environment is changing too fast for adaptation to react, even people are already throwbacks. New dormancies. Haven for the rudely deleted.
KEY WORDS  reevolve, instinction, de-dominance

BUREAU OF MISSING BEHAVIORS

DEFINITION  Just as certain building types remain missing because their functions are yet unknown, certain functions are unknown because their behaviors are still untried. Which way of acting will bring about an unbelievable benefit? All the disciplines of the fictitiousness of theater used to attain real being.

KEY WORDS  anti eugenics of gestures, space of all possible combinations, instant custom

OVERFACILITATION FACILITY

DEFINITION  Suddenly supplied. The sense that there is too much wind at your back. That kind of dilemma—over provisioning. The need to complete works expediently enough to keep from falling over forward into the waste of perfectly good materials and momentum. As distinct from the covetousness of capital and donation by the ultra rich, implantation of a grassroots watchful eye focused on emergency apportionment of available properties, products and personnel.

KEY WORDS  omnia sunt communia

POETRY OUTSOURCE

DEFINITION  Poets ‘placing’ themselves by pursuing new roles, omitted modes of operation and revenue generation at once provides perfect architectural specifications for a location out of which such modes may be facilitated. Outsource simply means taking the role of the poet out into the society in novel and necessary ways as well as taking into poetry concerns, resources, substances and practices ordinarily considered extrinsic to poetry.

KEY WORDS  poetry beyond recognition, unboundaried, intangible equipment, pleromatic plan
PLAN FOR THE ERADICATION OF DOWNPAYMENT

DEFINITION  Borrower over banker security. Toward the condition of a voluntary (if at all) renter population. Completed privatization—occupancy, use, monthly payment makes the place yours. For example, maybe homes should be priceless while the monthly payment to the bank made by an unlimited series of owners is set ridiculously low.

KEY WORDS  O.O.O (only occupant ownership)

SECULAR SACRAMENTS

DEFINITION  Loan Forgiveness, popular beheading of Corporation-Individual, etc. The solemnization of a necessary, ‘comic’ course of action and its concomitant materials. Without which, it can’t quite happen. The key or critical difference in commitment. Democracies missing rituals and victuals.

KEY WORDS  efficacious act, proper malediction, set aside

VIATORE VOMITORIUM

DEFINITION  Sick of being-not-yet. A place to go for the elimination of undesired traits, impediments, self-concocted toxins and chronic behaviors that should be missing. Recognition of and respect for the violence of the ‘passing’ process.

KEY WORDS  ontology sanitation, upchucking fitness

ANACHRONISM GENERATOR/ACCLIMATOR

DEFINITION  Working toward a richness of modalities. Generation of new, current anachronisms, not befitting the times, as well as recovery of already outmoded modes. Backward, wayward as onward. Not just ‘bicycle’, ‘buggy’, ‘backwoods’ or ‘benedictine’ but ‘pleistocene’, ‘blasto-
cyst’, ‘philistine’, ‘pristine’ or ‘pre biotic’. Anachronisms that never were to begin with.

KEY WORDS  *apocatastasis of all types, peaceable*

**LAB FOR THE SORE, OVERSENSITIVE, INSECURE, INSENSITIVE AND SUBTLE SCIENCES**

**DEFINITION**  Extending the soft (social or philosophical) sciences out through the hard and exact sciences with a probity based equally on poetics and proofs.

KEY WORDS  *full circle science*

**INFORMED INFORMAL SECTOR SURGE**

**DEFINITION**  Format for public input into all professions. Counter specialization. Contrary to polarization of disciplines. In contrast to the popularization of disciplines, the precisioning of publics.

KEY WORDS  *civic intelligence, national curiosity asset*

**HYPOTHETICAL POST**

**DEFINITION**  All the news that’s missing or should have happened. Missing Behaviors Daily.

KEY WORDS  *portentous reporting, daily presentiment.*

**POETRY PRIVATIZATION DETOX**

**DEFINITION**  Like commerce, creativity has also been to a great extent ‘privatized’. Ward for non self-interested prosody. Poetry subsumed in other acts.

KEY WORDS  *poetic poultice jacket, civic solipsism*
CHIASMA CONSULTATION

DEFINITION  Free-arts made servile, servile acts given free reign.

KEY WORDS  involuntary fulfillment, completing the contrary, indigence disburdening, deliverance by demand

INSTITUTE FOR OMITTED IDIOMS

DEFINITION  Just as certain agencies remain missing because their functions are yet undiscovered, certain peoples and places remain missing because their constituent idioms are unrecognized or underdeveloped. [Note: Globalization will bring down the arbitrary geopolitical boundaries and inadvertently unearth regional speech patterns and speakers fit for non affinitive bonding that will serve as basis for the Fair World, as distinct from our Free(for all)World.]

KEY WORDS  under-utterance, gurgling grammars

INSTEAD INC.

DEFINITION  Development of business models opposing organizations proven oppressive. Other than the given. Not that. In particular, economy for the noncommodity. A living contradiction. Such economy creates and safeguards such noncommodity. Economy for the oddity. Econom-oddity. Economic oddity. Marketing the unmarketable. If commodity is survival, how to make a noncommodity and thrive.

KEY WORDS  polycontrariety, imagination's advocate

NOVEL GENOME REPOSITORY

DEFINITION: One of a kind lifeforms, even lifeforms without genomes! Can a new species be unrelated to all other species? Non meddling in knowns. Leaving well enough as known in order to near unknowns.
KEY WORDS divergence, saltation, evolvability, sentiment-limit, xenogenesis, post-adaptive

COUNTRY IN COMMEMORATION OF NUANCE

DEFINITION Country set aside for subtilization of incentive. Senses reopened by Oversensitive Sciences. Whether such a world once was or never was, constructively facing its nostalgia seated deeply within us.

KEY WORDS world imploded into unworldly, tender intervention, tacit dictation, better than it gets

SALTATION CITY

DEFINITION City offering unprecedented goods and services, such as those distinguished in the partial list above. Life springing from nonlife (getting the lead out) each step of the way.

KEY WORDS barzakh, cities of the intermediate world

The invention of further functions along with their realization as architectural concept qualifies these agencies as both artworks and instances of retrofection. Furthermore, construction of an agency vicariously constitutes an epic poem—how we ever got to this point as told by ‘remedy’. Each service is a fragment or replacement part of a missing materiality that nonetheless completes that entire materiality under the rule of thumb that ‘any point of wholeness renders the whole whole’. In this way these services are compatible with (non-encroaching upon) any other attempts to implement satisfying sorely missed social goods. This list is also amenable to others’ adaptations, appropriations, adoptions, alterations, extensions or customizations of the idea of missing agency. Fire must be fought with something hotter than fire. These counter agencies proposed by an ordinarily poetic practitioner undercut omissive society with the same commercial, material and organizational tools and tactics with which the omissions are typically committed. The weapon ‘hotter than fire’ is of course comedy. These are to be buildings put in
place with a great deal of levity (defiance of the forces). Levitated buildings. The levy runs to the core. For, once these indispensable services are constructed, even then, once they are working certain wonders, it will still be impossible to tell whether their realization had all along only been a farce. Success can be that sweet! The missing service supposition: there are further functionalities so terribly novel that their delineation may indeed undo the divide between creativity and creation. I’m not saying that non retrofectionary artworks commonly confound function because they have no clear vision of function (the way poetries might confound language because their meaning is weak enough to allow them to do so); but I am saying that, directly underfoot, there are unidentified functions so ludicrous and suitable that they, by way of their extreme accommodation, are amply disequilibrising (without knocking us off our feet), more than creative and heritable to boot. That’s comedy! A breeze.
ANGEL OF EXTINCTION (masked as sustainability)

Keep this secret:
suspense not sustenance sustains us.

The worst system to have ever worked out for the better is is.

(Even cheaper than not wanting one at all.)

(Without baring you teeth.)
say “everything I have is yours”.

Do everyone a favor.

Living forever already is. We just can’t get its host to react other than
detrimentally.

The dark and blinding data surpasses or subtracts adaptation with each act.

I’m a carpenter and I can only write about what I can write about.

It’s irritating to me as a scientist—people unadventurous departures from reality,

reckless jargon borrowers.

Which of the following is fatal to our kind:
A  use; B  misuse; C  disuse;
E  unattempted usurpation?

(While lack of earth—environment bypass—will be equally inherited by each.)
ALLELE OF INSTINCT (enough untried body parts to be buried in)

I’m a carpenter and I can only write about what I can’t write about.

(People are too sentimental to modify.)

Uncommodified we’d be living much shorter lives.

Why accept a body when you could be relishing thoroughly theoretical biology?

Exulting in painstakingly poetic biopsy?

Dark and blinding data—instructs those struck by the need to design instruments

the data can’t be sensed without.
The good life by now if not at the time.

What keeps us from thinking our first parents weren’t harmed by the elements?

(It wouldn’t be nostalgia then would it.)

So very little longing for that which is not.

To all those (no one) more moderate than I: the detail at which I see what is not—

a disease to be unable to merely modify.
If you dispute the claim that it’s a fatal

love with that with which you make, restore us ‘on time’, as never before.

Though circumstances beg for less.
Some brow waiting over limit, a cease-fielding flat against because a wood would be paltry awning it. Impacted sack it was quested off horizontal rut, the plantation seedless enough for upcrop through major surround. Deliberately rafted on a spite of scope. Wherever the fields are unswathing to pursue to a remedial, as slighting does by transhaul across immediate waferish bulk.

A breadth of the floor’s horizon bending into flange, a curtain of first firs in the glimpse. That a ground wave is broad scrape to everything sowing but at its broken rail there is serious coil. Trees sting to the breach. Relied in band, relaid in depth of tree pressing the cabled open.

Furrows roam in lobes. A furrow thunders by canopy, continuous to act with what season is simple off the intermittent spilt root. Co-secret along the heath long agrarian as were trees, their propping more stonily cropped.

The heath unpacked, fins of it achieve wheat or game-corn, or poor pasture floors it, usable at a dusting of feed not trodden underfoot. What is buried is retaken in desert, is earth inasmuch as thickly shaves the beds, onto it mill sockets of forest hoof. Indentation creep of a direct felling where grain precipitates boundary otherwise soothed in wheat-height, its shadowless induction.

Until a ripple of barrier breathes from the intake of edge, plying leaf through the floors, will stitch the coverless granules of the plain. A ruck at circuit splays before creep-plain but chafes with upseep, secretion early at a bound of openness jumped by root.
Doesn’t bar the trailer fields but insulates them to strip as its own spinney skimps, takes bareness off grain at large onto intimate barren survival along a lime of overhanging: adherance no nearer to non-linear warren but whose bitter fruitage won’t restalk according to strings of the corridor.

Are the trees anymore so obtaining they can pivot on the blockage, that the halting isn’t to the fore of adhesion but abated at the dedication?

Furrow landstorms approach by stealth rising in the stilt, along an impoverished ridge of the wealth there is in appending sticks. Crusty proportions of one horizontal not quite brandishing another: brush-value inquires stir of the vertical.

That the harrow has chewed the roots off allows the plantation to fathom these stalks: asides from the food-window are spindly by proxy, pressed into nurture at an acquaintance against ingest. Steer forest for what anchoring it smears off promised span, a blain out of the working crust. Unprehensile in the loft it stakes to edge. The trees rolling up banisters pole for a cavity long levelled away by outfall in the grain. Recouped spoil following up shale until bole.

Stilled to a basin without stoop, brims until the edge rails at impingement, flush at what the poles infill. Cribbed from surface once the grain of it pools a ditch, wherever some skin reservoir deflected to threshold. Knee-creep at throwings of wood, but no scooped braid yet: the fringe tapers from grains of the flat lips of earth. So much dust-ocean of passage, toward the sake of a tiny rap by trees on the hollow edge. Rising translucent, filaments give encrustation, a trench no deeper than the green skirt it flaps.
Are sparse aligning segments a resolute queue across the divisible? Its seam invokes lessening if the pincering apex installs defeat, with plight to fold outward a verge upward for the overrun. A redemption budding the natural array of contraction, a whole weave of intergrowth can pil-lage to the still of it.

If land at output, to be spared, will feed a protective crest along its ridge tremor, where tree despoil embrittles its sown trailing dyke. A wood alignment grazed smooth for rigid renewal like any untread.

A cubicle of leaf at the parting by bounds, whose cell pecks for invoca-tion: where the lip of the open isn’t breathing the disappearance but holds for relief in unpronouncing snare. Let it jam upright alive in plentiful middle of valve, stretch the field one tie-bit extra across pull of common pen.

Will this be stoma along a secondary sedge of fields whose plantation drought has long since relinquished the blame of a natural monotony? To grow sustenance about scarcity’s lane of offering unhampered by out-spread: the spurn in fruition quietens the gatherable.
NICK LAWRENCE / BEYOND CAN BE OUR MODEL


Walter Benjamin neglected to include a folder on “Weather” in the Arcades Project, his vast analytical compendium of nineteenth-century motifs and dream objects. Yet “even the weather,” as cited in the epigraph to Lisa Robertson’s exceptional new book, became in his eyes part of the endlessly recurring decor of middle-class dreamlife, on a par with architecture and fashion—until that moment when, as Benjamin puts it, “the collective seizes upon them in politics and history emerges.”

The challenge taken up by Robertson’s poem is deceptively simple. What would it mean to seize upon the weather in the way Benjamin describes, to put it to “political” use? What kind of collective might issue this wakeup call? And what history could be expected to materialize from so cloudy and ephemeral a backdrop?

The Weather takes the form of a journal, with prose sections for each day of the week, interspersed with lyric reflections under the heading “Residence at C___” and ending with a coda, “Porchverse.” Like Robertson’s previous forays into the tangles of gender and genre politics, Xeclogue and Debbie: An Epic, it’s both an expertly opportunistic reading of historical source materials and a probing investigation of the resources available for contemporary poetic community. An insert introduction from the Office of Soft Architecture, announcing “We think of the design and construction of these weather descriptions as important decorative work,” moves the question of this community to the foreground of Robertson’s project. Who, after all, is the “we” in this framing of the weather as a “temporary commons,” “the vestibule to something fountaining newly and crucially and yet indiscernibly beyond”? As a kind of placeholder for utopia—wishful thinking or realized desire?—the insistent first person plural threading the poem implicates collectivities both past and present. At the same time, it implicitly critiques the individualism so often ascribed to Robertson’s most important poetic predecessors, the weather-obsessed Romantics. By no accident, her historical sources coincide with the genesis of what is now breezily referred to as the “modern lyric subject,” usually code for the Romantic ego in all its lonely-as-a-cloud glory and isolation. In running a check on the
expected “I” of English Romanticism, the poet not only draws attention to the collaborative context of this history, she establishes a connection with more recent avant-gardes:

Days heap upon us. Where is our anger. And the shades darker than the plain part and darker at the top than the bottom. But darker at bottom than top. . . . Days heap upon us. Where is Ti-Grace. But darker at the bottom than the top. Days heap upon us. Where is Christine. Broken on the word culture. . . . Where is Shulamith. Abolishing the word love. The radical wing crumbles open.

(“Tuesday”)

One way to figure out a politics of weather, then, emerges from its opposite: reading the weather of politics. The accumulation of “social atmosphere” around collective movements—whether it be the ecopoetics of the early Romantics or the feminism of 1960s pioneers Ti-Grace Atkinson and Shulamith Firestone—suggests that the enterprise of politics inevitably produces its own weather, changing according to climate and zeitgeist. Robertson’s long-standing interest in the convergence of pastoral artifice and feminist critique takes on an occasionally somber cast in The Weather, reflecting no doubt a shift in the barometric pressure of the times. (Social) formations disperse; (poetic) movements drift apart; storm-front depressions gather. Tuesday, in particular, is a chilly day for emancipatory politics.

Yet the overall effect of the poem is emancipatory, and not just in terms of reified subject positions. If one dimension of Robertson’s “we” is poetic and political, another concerns less visible traditions of communal attention, well worth a poet’s study. The acknowledgments page at the end of the book lists a fascinating array of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources for the poet’s self-described “intense yet eccentric research in the rhetorical structure of English meteorological description.” They include Luke Howard’s essay On the Modifications of Clouds (1803), which for the first time gave a usable nomenclature to cloud-forms; Observations in Meteorology (1858) by Leonard Jenyns, later Reverend Blomefield of Cambridgeshire—natural historian, metereologist, “enthusiast of low and creeping mists,” who was invited
to serve as ship’s naturalist on the 1831 voyage of the Beagle before he declined in favor of his friend Charles Darwin; and John Aikin’s *On the Application of Natural History to Poetry* (1777), which prompted Aikin’s better-known sister, poet and proto-Romantic Anne Letitia Barbauld, to write: “I hope your Essay will bring down our poets from the garrets, to wander about the fields and hunt squirrels. I am clearly of your opinion, that the only chance we have of novelty is by a more accurate observation of the works of nature.” As important as the sources Robertson lists are those she doesn’t, surely by design: the journals of Dorothy Wordsworth, William’s collaborator and silent partner, lend the peculiar modernity of their style to Robertson’s Steinian para-taxes:

About here. All along here. All along here. All the soft coercions. . . . A sky marbled with failures. A patterned revision. And got here about one o’clock. And got here wet to the skin. (‘Sunday’)

In general, though, nothing could be further from an English aesthetic of sincerity, with its combination of self-effacing observation and transparent description, than Robertson’s baroque stylistic opulence. “Sincerity” in her terms becomes the name of a sound, a syntactic pulse or cadence—the lulling, narcotic repetition of declaratives, intensifiers, syllogistic phrases. It also emerges, under the poet’s scrutiny, as a kind of national rhetoric bent on effacing its own rhetorical traces, thus a prime example of stylistic ideology. Robertson parses out the artifice of this naturalness to great effect:

A dull mist comes rolling from the west; this is our imaginary adulthood. A glaze has lifted; it is a delusional space.

. . .
Far into the night an infinite sweetness; beyond can be our model.

. . .
It’s brisk; we suggest a new style.

. . .
Thunder, far to the south; habitual. Today has everything; we are sick with sincerity. (‘Wednesday’)

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The clausal asymmetries that punctuate “Wednesday”’s sentences are the high point of the poem’s interrogations of Romantic rhetoric, broaching as they do the relation of subject and world, description and interpretation, but as “Friday” later asserts, throughout the week “we rest on deep rhetorics.”

Ultimately, however, *The Weather* has less to do with the critique of a masculinist poetics of sincerity than with the affirmation of excess, ornament, wit, desire, extravagance of diction, and indeed the subversive pleasures of description and sincerity themselves.

The sky is complicated and flawed and we’re up there in it, floating near the apricot frill, the bias swoop, near the sullen bloated part that dissolves to silver the next instant bronze but nothing that meaningful, a breach of greeny-blue, a syllable, we’re all across the swathe of fleece laid out, the fraying rope, the copper beech behind the aluminum catalpa that has saved the entire spring for this flight, the tops of these a part of the sky, the light wind flipping up the white undersides of leaves, heaven afresh, the brushed part behind, the tumbling. (“Monday”)

Robertson takes seriously poetry’s brief for what Rem Koolhaas calls “the irrigation of territories with potential”; if less exuberantly than in *Debbie: An Epic*, she loads every rift in the clouds with utopian ore. If “the real is not enough to pleasure us,” there’s always its lovely, clinging opposite:

I feel
the ideal moulding me the ideal
is now my surface just so very
perfect I know where to buy it and I
take it off. I take it off.
(“Residence at C___”)

Much as the early Situationists turned the givens of city topography into opportunities for errant recombination and temporary urban renewal, the poet approaches the weather as a gauzy, membranous
medium of communality susceptible, like language itself, to an ecology of recycling and intentional misuse. In this conception it takes on the aspect of a “soft” architecture where “every system’s torn or roughened. Every surface discontinuous,” where the utopian imagination seizes on discrepancy as an index of the Otherwise coexisting with the Here and Now.

This is a utopian poetics of a significantly different kind from Robertson’s predecessors in the 1970s avant-garde. In an exchange with Steve McCaffery from the Philly Talks series, she comments: “My outlook is not liberatory except by the most minor means, but these tiny, flickering inflections are the only agency I believe—the inflections complicating the crux of a complicity. More and more poetry is becoming for me the urgent description of complicity and delusional space. The description squats within a grammar because there is no other site. Therefore the need for the urgent and incommensurate hopes of accomplices.” Instead of conceiving grammar as the repression of a more fundamental general economy of language (sous le pavé, la plage), Robertson sees its structures as productive of the opportunity for specific forms of intervention. Intervention requires the recognition of complicity; utopian thinking requires an understanding of delusion. Both also urgently require the accomplices that, however disparate their motives and ends, can assemble under the heading “we”—this despite “what makes pronouns, problems.” The political drift of The Weather consists above all in its aspirations toward maintaining space for a troubled collectivity, from “Friday”’s “Now we will be persons” to “Saturday”’s “it’s in you that we shall speak.” A series of indeterminate dedications, bringing the week to its end, leaves “you” the vector of an address to the future, a horizon of initiative: “We address you without economy till the last.”
The secret, she said, is to slightly undercook the muffins. To keep checking the clock each time the fox returns the fox disappears, and we retreat into eel grass within the opening pages, say June 17th. Ice, far from now emerges as a tint of grey—bookspine, us walking along Gas Well Road again photographing red phalaropes. Mosquitoes at sunset pick up southwest of Elson lagoon. From a window, wind blows in from the south snow collects in branches of walnut trees on Walnut Street in Boulder whose sidewalk, the next morning, is littered with walnuts, cherries apples that fall from trees planted before people stopped picking fruit from their front lawns. The clouds this late in the month, build, as they have all summer in the mountains, forming thunderclap shapes of anvil haze

Impossible to focus on clouds continuously shift in dimension. Now another flock passes onto the plains, the geographical stretches of Interstate 70 East across Kansas, until somewhere in Missouri trees again. But trees beyond these spotty foothill patches. Trees as Greeley wrote, with a uniformity of almost tropical prospect. Us on our way east, him traveling west, we pass somewhere within the stanza swapping anecdotes and articles—calendars, phone lists, prayer book In this section of the world, daylight is its own season. Where the sun no longer beats time and observation fissures into birds again, in quick sequence, passing along the backdrop at high tide, or hitting the breaks at the first hint of light rain.
DOUGLAS OLIVER / THE HERON  
(In memoriam: 1937-2000)

I talk only of voices either real or virtual in my ear of shadows, only those that pass over islands’ sunny turf vivid to my eye. But when I come to all my birds, all I’ve ever seen, they are too many. I talk of things unseen.

Together, they would pack the sky like moving embroidery in the white silks, browns and blacks of their great tribe, endless litters of puppies writhing, a heavenly roof alive but no progress of flight in it.

Every memory adds to this intricate plot; starting up redshanks first, and they bank, flashing white, across a sepia estuary where I felt freedom in watching their undulating patterns on the air.

They flight down but hold at mid-height: horizontal stick puppets of the Styx. The black light whitens with the harmonious wings of swan formations, the day cast over with their bright feathering.

Behind the swans the sky absolutely fills with starlings homing to roost as once I saw them over Stonehenge; gulls flock up and hold there, and brown passeriformes spring between airspaces and stop on invisible branches.

Millions of birds, crows and daws, teal, quicker wing-beated than wigeon, among mallard hordes; swifts print arrows on the pulsating featheriness; the sky is covered over with the puppy litters.

I can’t tell you all the names; I’m worried about the birds rabbling the sky. D’you suppose I can avoid even the dusty body of every sparrow, or every sparrow hawk flipping over a thicket?
Unseen, this nature crowds my mind. If there’s pulsation, it’s disturbing; if stasis it’s a painting and all the life goes out; but any sudden switch between pulse and the static is schizophrenic.

In the foreground of the multifarious flights one talismanic bird, a heron, lifts to the top of its single leg and takes off like an umbrella. Fluff in a corner of the past becomes grey flame.

Its shoulders unshackle and heave, legs become the addendum, the beak stabs out purposefully from the sunken neck. It sails. In this flight’s brevity, I find what lives for me among all the dead songs.
point: if leaves

burst surface bark
plant sight sound stiff
authors
backtrack

slimeenoughsaidgroovesseed sub branch subject

long edge

of wood-be

books
talking
forest
floor'd
mouth

w/hole
library

burrowed
eek!
text
hide

art lungs, then breathe!

out

for “groceries” — left
a side....
lung-sludge
slugs lug
to “gimme some
skin

(on the fly
glues slug
art into
make be
leaf
den book
d’ worms
oral
performance
as
space
or

a) art of a body moving in
b) the space in between

in
tension to

chew lines
save energy
stomach poets
lick envelopes
tongue bite
words

hours dragging
wound
not-so blunt
instrument
etching

take scissors to pen
ink slugs on the road
slugs race
maybe bees-knees
slugs drag about gas
drag about gas
ant up to wasps
saw tooth fly, duck-billed...
slow, sharp, sharp
slow...
sect a) side
in

drives by...

Jewel eye's bite
marks "butter"
"fly" in tact less

urban renewal,
don't even score

hollow report
do the nasty

slugs "race" to

do the nasty

(nap, o call)

tact less

insect side

spit, spit, spit

slurp, slurp

drag about gas
glug, glug

ink slugs on
the road
drive by...
- —shooting
  the changing
- —same —

breath = fossil fuel

(as we cut it all out!)

note, this mulch began with my own consumption!

—signed,
  June, buggy

montage by JS
In 1997 I received a Nathan Cummings Contemplative Fellowship, administered by the ACLS, to design and teach at The Naropa Institute (now Naropa University) an undergraduate class that would explore a three way link between poetry, bioregional studies, and contemplative practice. I called the course Bioregional Poetry. The intention was to see how contemplative disciplines and traditional Asian arts might guide aspiring writers towards a nature literate and ecologically sensitive method of reading and writing poetry. Field trips and opportunities for reading and writing outside the classroom seemed essential. I wanted to include both contemporary poetry and older verse traditions. The books on the syllabus were a gathering of Lorine Niedecker’s poetry, *The Granite Pail, The Essential Haiku* edited and mostly translated by Robert Hass, and Jerome Rothenberg’s *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Europe & Oceania*. I drew additional essays and poems from Joanne Kyger, Arthur Sze, Kenneth Rexroth, H. D. Thoreau, Mary Austin, Leslie Silko, Jack Turner, Lao Tzu and others.

It is odd on beginning this essay to note that the automatic word spell on a recently purchased (August, 2000) Microsoft Word 98 program accepts neither bioregion nor bioregionalism as recognizable words and underscores them with a jagged red line. The first North American Bioregionalist Congress was held in 1984. *The American Heritage Dictionary*, in its Third Edition of 1991, defines bioregion: “An area constituting a natural ecological community with characteristic flora, fauna, and environmental conditions and bounded by natural rather than artificial borders.”

For some years I have searched for an adequate title for the kind of poetry I want to investigate in class. Nature poetry I find useless as a term since most examples commonly cited cling to painfully outdated, neo-Victorian assumptions regarding both self and nature, and are more suited to greeting card sentiments than serious studies of literature. My colleague at Naropa, Jack Collom, uses the term Eco-Lit which is fine so long as nobody supposes it refers to a type of literature distinct from other genres. What could be less ecological? The advantage I find in the phrase bioregional poetry—not a title I find particularly attractive, but perhaps serviceable—is that it implies poetry rooted in direct experience of the immediate ecological communities, not excluding the human.
poetry that might learn from earlier models—including examples drawn from parts of classical Asia, much of the precolonial tribal world, with some surprise appearances from old Europe. A poetry also in sympathy with Modernist and postmodern dicta: Imagist, Objectivist, New American Poet, and other 20th century avant gardes. Bioregionalism assumes an implicit politics: local & globally cognizant, anarchic & decentralized, restrained in its use of resources.

To write this essay I have used chance operations inspired by ideas from Charles Darwin, Yoko Ono, and John Cage, to establish the order of certain paragraphs and the subject list that concludes it.

*   *   *   *

Each member of the class brought a local field guide. It takes about thirty minutes to climb a lowlying mesa which gives a west-looking view into the Colorado Front Range. A grove of Ponderosa pines with some flat boulders provides a shady, comfortable classroom. High above juts the distinct rock formation Devil’s Thumb. Directly across are good views of notorious climbing rocks: The Maiden, Jamcrack Spire, Mountains of the Moon. Slightly to the south stands The Matron, another guidebook climb, spookily resembling a terracotta Madonna. After compiling a list of local plant, bird, and animal species identified on the way up the Towhee Trail (Rufous-sided towhee everywhere evident with its distinctive chup chup chup zeeeee), as a group we carefully read Lorine Niedecker’s poem “Wintergreen Ridge,” with an eye to how she worked in natural and human history.

Early on, Niedecker cobbles in the words (directive) of a trail sign:

Flowers
loveliest
where they grow

Love them enjoy them
and leave them so
A photograph of the original sign appears in Jenny Penberthy’s *Niedecker: Woman & Poet*. No reason to think it’s not still there, still regarded by the local women who saved the ridge from bulldozer’s: “we want it for all time.” Here, by the trailhead, posted Park Service flyers offer a trove of colorful local names in Whitmanic catalogue fashion. They also alert human visitors to presence of mountain lion and, since this is autumn, bear foraging through the low country in search of serviceberry and chokecherry.

On the reconstructed Calendar from the Upper Paleolithic (Technicians, p. 321), the initial class meetings fall between Moon of the Nut and Moon of the First Frost. The assignment is for each student to devise their own calendar, calibrated to a childhood bioregion. November’s moon, an occasion for the collective reading and writing of renga, possibly in early snow, will rise over the traffic light on Arapahoe Avenue.

The time frame of “Wintergreen Ridge,” you could call it the fiction, is that it runs the course of an afternoon’s walk, comparable to the three hour slot of a Naropa University poetry class field trip. It stands as Niedecker’s longest poem. The deliberation and patience with which she wrote her poetry suggest that it must have been cobbled together over a long stretch of time. Notes compiled on a two hour walk in an old-fashioned dress (“an inch below / the knee / the style before / the last”), then labored over for how many weeks? “Two months on six lines of poetry” she wryly notes as her habit in an accompanying poem. Quotes and references abound: D.H. Lawrence, Linnaeus, Darwin, Henry James’s father, T. S. Eliot, Basil Bunting. (Research at home—even a class of ten doesn’t carry that many books on a hike.) Items from the local paper. Specific plants, their Linnaean classifications, descriptions, anecdotes, jokes, and life cycles. A mix of wild & garden variety flora, native & introduced, spread along the ridge of her investigation: pipsissewa.

Before starting down the class ambled across to the south rim of the mesa (startling a mule deer from its bed in a thicket). As counterpoint to any tendency towards naïve or overly romanticized views of ecology, which might avoid the planet’s current problems and crises, we took on an investigative poetics study of the bioregion’s single most alarming issue: the former Department of Energy plutonium trigger factory
at Rocky Flats. There it sits, three miles through thin air, behind a few experimental energy windmills: a string of obsolete cinderblock buildings on a low mesa. The high rises of Denver protrude like crystals behind the industrial complex, seventeen miles downwind and downwater. From 1953-1989 this “machine shop” produced triggers for the nation’s nuclear arsenal. Plutonium manufactured at the Hanford site in Washington state arrived by rail or road at Rocky Flats, to be manufactured into “pits”: the fissionable plutonium triggers that detonate a uranium weapon. Currently the site is being dismantled, the formidable laboratories taken carefully apart at enormous expense. Over the past ten years its name has mutated: first to the cheerfully optimistic Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site, then to the decisive Rocky Flats Closure Project. Can you hold a book of poetry against the electric security fence.

On the trails one can observe occasional traces of Ursus americanus, black bear: sign (berry laden scat). Advice on what to do if you encounter the animals is different for each. “If attacked by a mountain lion fight back.”

Outdoor “no matter what the weather” haiku discussion & writing, along with tea drinking, in a rocky outcropping in Long Canyon, on the flanks of Green Mountain. Topic: the different styles of Basho, Buson, and Issa, sometimes referred to by Japanese critics as exemplifying religion, art, and life, respectively. The hiss of a primus stove for tea, the study of insects on the forest floor; examining the precepts of Basho that his students transcribed in a notebook. “The bones of haikai are plainness and oddness.” Haiku as outdoor activity because the goal is: make the universe your companion.

Grasshopper cracking is metabolic cactus spine drama. Yet chance operation goes completely neglected by pundits of nature. Why? Fusty neo-Victorian beliefs concerning the person? Fear our little house on the prairie has nobody home? I summon the folkloric tumult of Darwin! The many-minded surrealists! To exorcise the contemporary nature writer’s prevalent tone: small town American pastor sermon.
Since haiku accommodates itself to the seasons and works in collaboration with other arts (flower arrangement, calligraphy, music, painting, tea) the class made a formal visit to the Japanese tea ceremony house at Naropa. One rinses one’s hands at a stone basin outside, removes one’s shoes, and enters the tiny raised building through a three foot door: humility. The tea master, a woman named Shoshana who has studied the art under several Japanese masters, guides her guests in ritual drinking: how to sit, how to bow, courtesies of the drinking bowl. This is a relaxed session: okay to talk and ask questions, discuss the history of tea, muse on its shared aesthetics with haiku. How many of Basho’s haiku precepts can you link to the Way of Tea? A leaf green powder whipped into hot water with a bamboo whisk until frothy. Then that funny crab-like shuffle across the tatami mat to serve it. “Forgive me for drinking before you.”

Basho: “There is a common element permeating Saigyo’s lyric poetry, Sogi’s linked verse, Sesshu’s painting, and Rikyu’s tea ceremony. It is the poetic spirit (furabo), the spirit that leads one to follow nature and become a friend with things of the seasons.”

In the tokonoma (altar niche in the wall) a tiny flower arrangement traditionally reposes—most commonly a single seasonal flower set akilter in an unspectacular ceramic vase. Or a piece of poetry casually dashed in black ink onto a short rice paper scroll—to set the seasonal tone. A little brazier, a cast iron kettle. What species found in the haiku anthology can be identified in our own bioregion? “A crow / has settled on a bare branch—/ autumn evening.” Everyone saves the little rice paper scrap on which is served the ceremonial tea sweet—bean paste or sesame crisp, also coordinated to the season—traditional to write haiku on—and the following week the class is able to provide the tea master a dozen haiku for the tokonoma.

“Poets go pawing over shopworn mythologies, and neglect the grand drama of evolution, the wildly contemporary theater of ecology” (Aldo Leopold). Like the haiku artist, Niedecker eschews inflated (epic) language, mythopoetics, deep image, or abstraction. “In Place of Haiku” her proud instinct that the American language might successfully do it in five short lines, end rhyme occurring on the third and fourth. One letter to Cid Corman details the contents of her sacred bookshelf. It
holds “haiku”—she does not say who the translators are. (R.H. Blyth? Corman himself? A Ph.D. dissertation is waiting for some enterprising scholar.)

Chance operation in Darwin, Thoreau, the Surrealists, the Fluxus outfit. Collaboration in renga: the hundred links, written by a party of up to a hundred poets, move through a complete cycle of the seasons. Careful guidelines dictate when the full moon appears, an erotic verse, a change of locale. Each participant brings a poetry bag full of hokku, “opening verse,” to the party, hoping one of his own will be selected to start the renga. The students cannot discern a break between Niedecker’s early surrealist poetry and her later Objectivist. Both appear, under scrutiny, equally bioregional.

Discussion of Japanese terms wabi and sabi, examination of the glazed tea bowls to see how they exemplify “plainness, asymmetry, artlessness, cracking and chipping.” Haiku works well for people intimidated by the “difficulty” or artiness of poetry since its brevity insists on direct perception: quick recording of details seen heard felt tasted or smelled. Refusal of preconceptions about the planet, about poetry, about self. No time for metaphor! Figures of speech too longwinded!

“Physician & custodian of the soul.” What, given a context of group hysteria severe enough to produce the nation’s Cold War nuclear arsenal (Rocky Flats), could be the poet’s role? This question sits hotly, urgently, persistently, alongside Jerome Rothenberg’s thesis in Technicians of the Sacred, that the shaman (tribal individual charged with redressing individual & social imbalance) stands as the archaic figure behind the poet. Song or poem as ritual device—gift from spirit world, not poet’s ‘voice’—hence found text. The poem a central element in the medica-ments, to restore a condition of health to the individual or social body? Can the poet today redress social imbalance with a poem? Rothenberg cites Eliade: “…the fundamental data of human existence, that is, solitude, danger, hostility of the surrounding world.”

A high security tour (two vans linked by walkie talkie, no one can leave the van) first through the 6000 acre buffer zone to examine (through closed windows) the ecological community. The site biologist provides species distribution maps. Then through the heavily guarded “industrial
core” (largest private security force in Colorado) on a dark windy afternoon. At the site of Tent 1 a backhoe is gingerly scraping the soil where a hundred unidentified drums of contaminants were recently found. Lacking the Old Irish “Breastplate Against Death,” a few students have swallowed iodine pills.

A Book of Events:
Bury the skull of a yak.
Bury the skull of a black bitch.
Hide the skulls of a dog & a pig under a child’s bed, or bury a weasel’s skull there, or a puppy’s, or a piglet.

Rocky Flats: 14.2 metric tons of plutonium, six to eight metric tons weapons grade uranium (some may be missing). Peter Warshall: it is not waste. You cannot throw it away. You cannot dispose of it. It will be deadly long after the glaciers have returned to carve up these mountains. Plutonium’s half life is 26,000 years (about the time back to earliest Aurignacian cave paintings in Europe; about the range Rothenberg’s anthology suggests for poetry: drawing a line from Upper Paleolithic lunar notations found in Siberia). Congress has set 2010 as the plant’s closure date. The “costliest industrial fire in history” occurred in 1969, and the fire never even breached the outer walls.

“Please enjoy your cup of tea.”
DISCUSSION TOPICS / BIOREGIONAL POETRY
(for performance)

natural history the antidote to human vanity / Gregory Bateson
half life of plutonium
phenology: periodic shifts in flora and fauna due to seasonal changes
classical Tamil landscape poetics
plainness
vegetable eye (Blake)
settlement patterns & town names along the Platte, the Arkansas, the
Rio Grande
Ikebana
global positioning system
diabolism in Western place names
Japanese crow poem
collage / cut ups / lists / collaboration
metabolism: the invisible spheres
Earth Liberation Front
eco-feminism
exquisite corpse / renga
postmodernism as inherently ecological / no single viewpoint
transparency / opacity
those who rule the symbols rule us / Burroughs
sudden vs. gradual enlightenment
Indian Peaks
chance operation in evolution
vegetable soup or duck stew / Basho
daily journal practice / Thoreau
composition of lists / Sei Shonagon
mining, timber, ranching, tourism, hi-tech: economic succession
can Wilderness exist in a world with cell phones (philosophy)
lonesome traveler
Classical Sanskrit poetry’s calibration of plants & animals to “the per-
manent emotions”
lore & language of schoolchildren / playground songs
Megafauna extinction North America during late Pleistocene
vegetation map for local watersheds
high cost of living drives students from the Front Range
animals as human / vs. Olson human as animal
many ways to go about making a work of art
does Ethnopoetics over-privilege shamanism at expense of ordinary life
(women, children)
courting songs, marriage songs, work songs, lullabies, nursery rhymes,
protest songs, the blues
wilderness not in the past but the future
Zen art of Japan
biotechnology
Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
mountain highways follow Indian trade routes
Sinapu / wolf reintroduction to Southern Rockies
haiku, tea, & the seasons
animals wander from one watershed to another plants generally don’t /
“the bear went over the mountain”
extinction of human languages an ecological concern
plutonium guardianship project / Joanna Macy
full moon poetry writing party
“Do not despise the green jewel among the leaves / because it is a traffic light.” (Reznikoff)
mountains & rivers means Nation / China
botanical index: Thoreau, Ramanujan’s Tamil anthology
wild plums, scarlet sumac / autumn in the foothills
ELENI SIKELIANOS / FROM THE CALIFORNIA POEM

In the deadyard at Dolores crumbling into dust & light is California and California’s variegated surface forgets that dust which came to bequeath them space & light, nudibranchs did I say Cachuma’s foot prints in the ashy mud of the bones of our forefathers ground up like pellets did I turn to the bones of mice bones in the coyote fox eagle shit

A spine brought to the whole length of California was laid out like a golden wheel-veil of cascades of oldest & largest living things and everything was crushed in a Catherine’s wheel

At 13, I acquired a good tan in California to brush with the gods & god squeezers & boring and smiling compliments so much less to rake and scratch the character on

as I too was raked along the bottom feeders & surface waters like El Niño doing a brody through our air/hair at the Sunday meeting I was myself a dumb dog who could not bark

at the sadness of early California, the sado-masos down from the hills and Sadducees, their desire, denial of everything dead, and the existence of angels;

California and Sadie Hawkins;

& its meadows associated with human folly, its airs of superiority, knowing the it and what it is.

And the echinoderms give up their radial symmetry. The laughable echinoderms moving back toward bilaterality like drunken teens
California in the lights of the trees
my hedon eden I rushed
to California with my eyes
closed. Bill, George, Sam, our president was there, fire rushed
down his snout like a dining rage & through
the pinelands of Banana Road, like three light fingers making waste across the ice lakes of
Jupiter’s cow moons, Io.

From the center of rice I do remember California
stitched up twice
in my memory of sleeveless shirts &
Ocean A, D or Q
behind the not tall buildings

I know nothing of Northern
North California therefore
there is none, Arcata, etc. yet I
would like to sell [you] [send] you California
& its industrial wastelands, & the Cryps
& the Bloods, the
ACTION! CAMERA! and fully-armed cactus. Each studio is a nation-
state of its own under the cloudless blue
neon & the bright
stucco Draco
of sun
of tile
of bottlebrush
of lovely picture baby
bird-of-paradise
honeysuckle
yucca
Joshua
Tree, the home
of John Steinbeck, & Mrs. McGroaty
It’s o.k. here but we don’t have any sourgrass
not so many happy lizards in the sun
seaweed sliding back toward licking the sea
sandflies, sandfleas
jogging men nasty naked along the beach & Joakim’s oily eucalyptus combusting
up toward heaven

I was swimming in the black water under-
neath my breath & then
dragged by the seaweed vines and belts

the water is yellow with sand and ecology, my friends

are being punished by off-duty fathers in tract houses they are not allowed to leave
after dark

My family is wily, we live in derelict apartments are government
subsidized, go
everywhere
at night
on shore

Oil rigs out in the water like lighted bird-palace places

In the dream of dying cephalopods

Cuttlefish feathers & things
invented by sound & light like
the Great Spangled Fritillary monarch, and magnitude
of scales, what lies in inner and outer margins of such
wings “that came with soft
alarm, like hurtless light,” and the numerous thunder
of veins

Bluebellies in strange arrangement break their tails
in weedy nooses and grow back new ones
Backs bend in the rows between crop-dusted plants, the little singing seeds sting the
fingers & stain them: red, red

Eagle shells crumbling under the eagle’s weight croaking at Cachuma Lake
“For my part I know of no river called Ocean, and I think that Homer, or one of the other poets, invented the name” The sun, therefore, I regard as the sole phenomenon

Follow the footprints inside the nerve cell; they lead to a bright door: a tiny patch of memory

a fiery trailer home amidst earlier construction action heroes collapsing into dust the bus stops here; there is no buck in this story, not for this hero except in purely silver quarters smuggled out of the house in the mouth, king snakes caught in jars

Shields are up. Come the collectors into the vast comma of our tiny house. We are collecting dust. They want money. They want to tell us we are not allowed to live in fields in the black thorax of the bull-infested land

In this dream I will make you take the train to you dressed up as miles of wooded ocean and coast-lines with no one on them. You can't see old people here because of the sunlight.

Earlier, I had my elbow in the yellowest California, we talked about the coin-shaped trapdoors on gastropods, as the possible versions of a virgin California slipped away from me into the geranium, scraggly nasturtiums on the fire escape. Here in this living-room there is no sea. Who cares about the sea?

I do

because the sea makes us land-like but think sea-like to us because I can only ever think about things swimming there; Dolphinidae, which herald love, diligence and swiftness
(and the constellation delphinus in the sky)

Issuing from the mouth of this animal is a flower: jessant, of a jerkwater town at the back of a branch-line train

where runny stars rain by like eggs, golden & locked, a hometown is a waiting place, a waiting place is static inside the heel

I therefore developed longer toes for walking on floating vegetation (jacanidae) the ancient celadon-and-shining agave lining the path all the way down to the sea

“& it is a song”

of vapors, & dust in the land of the shadows have genitals walking enchiladas chiahuahuas about the lady who brought a dog up from the border & it was a rat clouddusts of fiery piss at borders piss on the border’s red hat of Chevron’s little ice crystals like a choker, fragile string at the stinging throat of the border, chemical crystal, breach-born, brainless; the water in the gulley between California is rich in bleach

•
“It is a rule in paleontology that ornamentation and complication precede extinction” and nothing we say or think can stop it

My goal is to relate the descriptions to living animals
For who is truly flea-bitten here? in the hills hanging over beaches thatched with dark brush, the yellow intensities shining on cliffs, and below, it’s riffled with blue. Which animal?

A heady crazy mirage starts up to distort the land
Islands rise up where they are not, the concealed rocks of California float up like dark shadows; the discoverers arrive on stilts, in high masks, in the rush of collecting sand crabs witness to the holy rubble tribunal little tribal crabs in masks of bryozoa, algae, in a budding hydra’s bright disguising hosiery

“The many-formed personality phases of history shuffle,” a jack-knife clam changes to fit the new shape, but with lumps and corners; the rise & fall of riches in family lines;

Do I have a clear picture of my field?

The picture is wide & colored & varied [beautiful] with strength & energy of mind, “the tide pool stretches both ways back” to homunculus and “leaping out towards Pluto” fossil echinoderms & evolulutional series thrust toward death and renewal;

In this horology, “twist the tide pool and the stars into the pattern of paleontology and time”
Two facts have irremediably changed, and complicated, the writing of poetry for me. One was the discovery of a formally resistant poetry, rooted in the American modernists (or earlier with French symbolists like Mallarmé or an American-before-her-time like Dickinson) and running through the “Objectivists,” the Black Mountain School (peripherally the Beats) and the New York School, on into what has come to be called “Language” writing. As for many of my own generation, once the bubble of voice, narrative and image had been burst, it was nearly impossible to go back, at least not without a renegotiation of the frames. Poetry had lost its traditional rudders, and we were forced to become inventors before we could be makers.

Secondly, I grew up among the first generation to witness the true “closing of the frontier,” as development grabbed “open space” in the American west. Indiscriminate pollution of these lands by the nuclear-weapons industry, a cold war legacy, was also a player in degradation I was able to witness at first hand (living 40 kilometers from Los Alamos, the home of the atomic bomb). Early on, it became difficult for me to consider the forces of capitalism (as well, certainly, as its cold war counter-forces) as anything but indifferent to the life of the planet.

What use, then, for poetry in this moment? A time we might, without exaggerating, think of as WW III—a relentless war on the planet—whose absurdity can be encapsulated by the image of homo “sapiens” sawing away at the limb on which it is perched. There is a rich tradition of nature writing in American literature (of which Thoreau is by no means the first exemplar) that has unfortunately become, for a variety of reasons, only more formally conservative as we have progressed into the crisis. One might increasingly compare this literature to a formal monocrop that belies the biological diversity it intends and, more damagingly, that tends to overlook or remove human language from the very materiality, and relationships, it would emphasize.

Any writer who wants to engage poetry with more-than-human life, has no choice but to resist simply, and instrumentally, stepping over language. Poetry frank about the materiality of language, whether via image or sound or both—as in concrete and sound poetry—is a step in
the right direction, but not far enough if it does not move beyond an uncrirical mimesis. Williams’s leverage against description in *Spring and All* and Smithson’s call for a truly dialectical landscape practice are high marks we cannot sidestep. At the same time, this much is clear—the first source needs to be outside, starting from our houses or cities out into whatever, especially whatever immediately, surrounds us.

I try never to write a poem without taking one, or several, walks. At the same time, while working with the visual and the sonic dimensions of language as they relate to patterns “beyond” the human, I have also been absorbing and appropriating vocabulary, conceptual and even formal structures from the earth sciences—in particular those of geology, botany, biology, meteorology and the science that combines them, ecology. Perhaps more promising is a “translation condition” I find it crucial to initiate, especially as a poet of “the Americas,” with the other languages and traditions having a long history on these continents, one that far predates the coming of the Europeans. Any cross-species poetics is also, and crucially, cross-cultural.

All of these directions may complicate, enrich or hopelessly muddle the writing of poetry at the start of a new millennium; they may mistake the very meaning of the human; certainly there is no guarantee of success. But it is an experiment no engaged poetry, no poetry alive to what is most at stake in the present moment, can afford to ignore.
Death of the pollinators

the pollen touches the stigma

feels
the
female
and unleashes
a strand
of love
thread

fe faith
cun spreads dandolo
dating pain
it

"Territories of pollen are sensitive to sound"

"Playing their trumpets, the Desana precipitate pollination"

"The particles of masculine pollen then fall on the feminine part of the palm"
I am reading the news

“Death of the pollinators”

Bee bat moth bird butterfly

all dying out

who will come?

who will feed us?
the miriti palm
hears the blare
and gets excited.

(the palm and the trumpet
are bisexual
and are always played
in pairs)

In Europe, women
displayed their privates
to flax

At the sight of vulvas
the plants grew
with great velocity

Down with dresses!
up with plants!

El polen subiendo por las heridas
Pollen climbing wounds
the poem
is pollen
falling
into
you
flowers are landing strips
death on land
death at sea
come pollen come!
only death is alive

Polvito
Polen
Polvar
Penetrate
Little Pollen
Dust

New York 1996-2001
for Jorge y Connié
co on

shir T

nightside in
dayside out

turning to others
you shine

turning to self
you opaque

aluna zakwa
“voy a tejer mi vida”
“la tela de mi vida”
t shirt.
CECILIA VICUÑA / SPRING EQUINOX INTERVIEW
3.20.2001 WITH J. SKINNER AT THE BEAU FLEUVE B&B, IN BUFFALO, NY

JS: I’d like to begin by asking you to briefly describe your experiences as an environmental activist or, you know, how you’ve been “active”
CV: Hm. Ok, um, failure [laughter].
JS: At least as interesting as success.
CV: That is the most important thing. It was in the sixties, I think it was in 1965, when I read that a group of scientists got together at the Rome conference, and decided that life on this planet was in danger, and they decided to alert everybody, so this has been going on for a very long time. Even then, in the early seventies, when we had the government of Allende, in Chile, I proposed a day of seeds, where everybody could go out to collect native seeds, and grow them everywhere, in order to convert Chile into un vergel as they say, which is like a green paradise. What had happened since the arrival of the Spaniards was that Chile was becoming a desert, and becoming more and more arid. And so I always made an association between the aridity of the soil and the aridity of the mind, the aridity of looking away from all these ancient languages, looking away from all these magnificent traditions and rituals and so forth. Allende laughed, and he said, Chile’s not ready, and that was the end of that. But it was not the end of my project, because I started to do it on my own. I would gather the seeds, and I would make little almacigos, which is the arab word for, you know, the seed bed.

JS: How do you spell that?
CV: Alma, like soul, sigo with c, almacigo, which is, let’s follow soul [laughter]. And so, I could manage to create between two hundred and three hundred little trees on my own, and then I had the problem of how to disperse them. I would go to political organizations that were working in shanty towns and different places like that, so some of my trees actually grew and they are probably somewhere—a few little gatherings of trees, a few little forests. It was not a complete failure. But thirty years after that, when we again had a democracy in Chile, I proposed to do this once more.

JS: Didn’t Allende say, Chile’s not ready yet, but maybe in 2000?
CV: Exactly. Which turned out to be like a prophecy, or so it appeared. Because when there was a democracy a woman from the government asked me to do a project in Chile and it was just a coin-
cido that it was the year 2000. And I said, yes, I would like to do
the seed project. With the intent that through having an exhibition
of my own collection of seeds, which I have been gathering for a long,
long time—and these seeds come from just three places, which are the
three places where I have spent my life in Chile: the place where I was
born, the place in the mountains where I go
every year, and the place in the sea
where I also go. It’s like a
triangle; it’s all in
the central part
of Chile. And I
did the exhibi-
tion and hun-
dreds of people
came—but my
intention was that the children could take this up as a project sponsored
by the ministry of education, and this hasn’t happened yet. There was
a museum here in the US interested in having a link so that children
both in the US and in Chile could start recreating this poetic research
into the world of seeds, where the poems could be doublefold: could
be poems with words and drawings, and could be living things, you
know—seeds planted and dispersed.

**JS:** I was amazed to learn in reading *Unraveling Words and the Weaving
of Water* (Graywolf Press, 1992) that cotton—I had never thought of
this—that of course it’s the seed parachute, the seed transporter. I had
never made that connection.

**CV:** Exactly, and for example, in this cotton mother poem, where I
tell the story of how the people, the Kogi, think of cotton, they say the
t-shirts that you buy in the shop are dead, you know, because the people
who wove them didn’t think while they were weaving them, so they
are dead, and they are cold. Instead, the cloth that they wear from the
cotton they grow, is warm, and it’s warm because it has two sides: the
inside is alive and the outside is dead.

**JS:** You say, or write or sing, “palabra, cuerpo de semilla.” Could you
say some more about words and seeds and how they come together?

**CV:** I believe that there is an ancient association, of course, between
words and seeds, between words and plants. The shamans believe that
the plants are the mothers of words, you know, especially the trees; they
say that, the words flow from trees—so the fragmentation of the forest,
the destruction of the forest, is the fragmentation of song. And I take it a bit further; I say that the weaving of the seed—because the seed is in itself a weaving—I say the weaving of the seed is an organ of sound. Because the seed for me, in itself, is a sound. And this sound unfolds in the growth of the plant. I believe that a word has a similar reality—a word is a seed of sound, a seed of sound that can unfold into many other sounds.

JS: The ethnobotanist Gary Nabhan has been working on correspondences between cultural diversity and biodiversity: proposing that in areas where there are more languages—you know, alive and interacting—there’s a greater biodiversity.

CV: I think this association is absolutely to the point, yes. And it goes with the ancient idea of listening to the plants—the idea that if you know the appropriate words, somehow these words would increase the fertility of the plants—but you will only learn those songs by listening to the plant itself. So there is a mutual influence and a mutual listening between the plant and the word.

JS: Katsi Cook—at Cornell, who works with indigenous medicine, indigenous traditions, in particular midwifery—has explained that the herbal supplements you get in “health food” stores are no good most of the time, because the matter of extracting something from a plant to heal your body is also a matter of talking to the plant. There’s so many things you need to do—you must choose a plant that’s your height, you have to have a certain name . . .

CV: You have to have an exchange of energy. If this exchange of energy is interrupted, it’s like interrupting a song, you see. It’s interrupting a flow of sound, and this flow of sound has to be harmonious, it has to be a mutual benefit. The first acknowledgement is that we don’t know what this energy is or how to name it, so we pick a name, and this name has to be pleasing to both, for the exchange to take place. And the idea that you can use a plant, without giving anything in return, destroys the music from the start.

JS: Or just to grind it up and pour it into bottles.

CV: It’s dead, you see, it’s absolutely dead, and it’s pointless to even drink it; it can even be harmful.

JS: Somewhere in Palabrarmás, near the end, you quote the first pas-
sage of the *Popul Vuh*—describing the origin of the world—which is probably one of the most sounding passages of any poem ever. It’s almost like the sounds haven’t quite become words yet but they’re seeking words.

**CV:** Exactly, they are in that *intermediate* moment. And I think that intermediate moment is the most fertile of all. That intermediate *distance*—the bow, the bow of tension—because the concept of health in the high Andes and in the rainforest is all about circulation, circulation of energy. And fairness, the concept of justice and the concept of fairness, derives from the beauty of the exchange, the beauty of the relationship, not only between people but between earth and people, between water and the waterways and so forth. There is a constant exchange. This exchange is what matters—not the individuals, or just the physical realities of either the planet or a gene or whatever—it’s the music of the exchange.

**JS:** Now—to cross another intermediate moment, between sound and vision—those seeds are like hieroglyphs, they’re characters when I look at them. And I’m wondering—also thinking of the *precarios* as a kind of non-alphabetic writing—whether you view those as writing?

[Ed note: *precarios*, “precarious things”—from the Latin *precis*, “prayer”—Vicuña’s series of very small, often ephemeral sculptures and installations constructed of found objects, & “trash,” and often made outdoors, in landscape or streets.]

**CV:** Absolutely. I can tell you how it began. The origin of things usually says a lot about what they really are, because in an act there’s also a seed of unfolding future acts. For me, the way it happened was—I was on a beach the way most Chilean girls might be on a beach playing, and suddenly, I could feel the presence of this infinite beauty, of the colors and sounds of the place. I felt all this was a language, and that I needed to participate in that language by responding. This could be my place in the world—to respond to that beauty, to say: I am part of you too, here I am. And the way of doing that was to pick up the debris that was lying horizontally on the beach and make it stand up vertically. That gesture, for me was the beginning of weaving, which is to cross the vertical and the horizontal—standing whatever stick or stone, whatever bit of plastic debris, or whatever twig,
broken twig, I could make to stand—became language, it became like a word, and then the waves would instantly come and erase it. And so this language would stand up and fall, and be part again of the rhythm. So then, if you substitute the twigs for words or if you substitute them with whatever object that you find in the street, or the seeds themselves, each one is like a syllable in this language. But they are never fixed, because they are always in the process of flowing into something else.

**JS:** Do you feel that this kind of writing, whether it’s writing in sand, or writing in your parents’ garden—where they get annoyed with you for bringing all the debris back from the beach—is there a continuity between that and the writing on the page, with words?

**CV:** Certainly, because in our culture we have the illusion that the only thing that’s permanent is writing. I am a victim of that illusion too, and I am a willing victim, because of the eroticism of it—the idea that you are continually making gestures that are disappearing, because you are breathing in and out, because your skin is shedding, I mean, you’re dying every moment as you are becoming alive. I think our life on this planet is basically about that feeling, something is going away, and you are disappearing and still you want to leave a mark, still you want to *perdurar,* you see, you want to endure. So you take up this beautiful illusion that writing will do it.

**JS:** Which is the seed, right?

**CV:** Exactly, you want to manifest some love and some passion for continuity, and you accept the idea that by—how do you say in English—committing it to paper, this will do it. Although you know that an earthquake may come, or you know your books may never be published or—it’s all so precarious, writing is also precarious, but at least it gives you the impression of being a little more enduring.

**JS:** “So long as men can breathe, and eyes can see, So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.” In Shakespeare’s sonnets there’s something intensely organic about the progression of imagery and the relationship to time in living and dying.

**CV:** And we have to hold onto some of our illusions, even though we know that they’re illusions [laughter].
JS: What, then, is the relationship between words and creatures—that is, between our illusions or, whatever they are, our words and the natural world—you say “el poema es el animal hundiendo la boca en el manantial” (the poem is the animal sinking its mouth in the stream). To return to my question from another angle, is the kind of writing you do with the string on the tree that brings the birds in, and then, the writing you do on a page—are they of the same order?

CV: They are of the same order if you think of us as animals. If I set the strings in the mountain river, the hummingbirds immediately relate to the strings, because they are in their language, in their spatial language—they relate to the colors, they relate to the shapes. And in the same manner, we relate to the words on the page with our animal instincts. In the sense that we can find, you know, an emotion there, something that moves us, to rage if it’s indignant, or to beauty or to whatever—our reaction to the paper is live. Now, how do words and animals relate? That is a good question, because, in the ancient shamanic tradition, of course, all living creatures have a language, and words may be our language. But my feeling is that, in every language there are other dimensions. There is a beautiful study that relates the vibrations in the sounds of all living creatures, whether people or animals, reduced to just four variations—and this is true for a mother bear or for a human mother: one is to ask, “who is there?” The other one is to say, “my darling baby go to sleep.” The other one is “fuck off, move away.” The last one is, “here I am, don’t mess with me.” And all the register captured by sound spectrograms comes down to those four.

JS: What about, “here I am, come mess with me,” you know, like the mating songs of birds?

CV: Apparently that falls in the mother-baby, in the love one.

JS: Or it could be “fuck off” to the other males, like, “this is my territory.”
CV: Yes, well, after the four basics you get combinations thereof.

JS: Who did this study?

CV: I don’t remember; I saw it on Channel 13, on PBS, but I thought it showed the most perfect line of commonality. Because then—and this is my perception—in words, in one word, you have the possibility of many dimensions, depending on how you use the word, on what intention you put into it. And this I believe is the same with the animals: the animals relate to their own world on many levels too. There’s another study about the invention of theater by monkeys. And when you watch monkeys you can see that they know exactly how to trick, they know how to play, they know how to make fun. So all these levels are there. You look at these animals and there are certain moments when they are dreaming. It’s obvious that they are dreaming, it’s obvious that they have longings, too. A whole range of emotions and possibilities is there; it’s just that, somehow the simplifications of contemporary culture have allowed us to pretend that’s not the case.

JS: From a neo-Darwinian standpoint, functionalism is categorical—that is, if there’s one example of a non-functional act in the animal world, then supposedly the whole picture falls to pieces. But when I am sitting by the river, I see the mergansers skimming along the surface of the water and playing—you know, you do see animals playing.

CV: Playing! Having fun, enjoying themselves.

JS: And the scientists might say, well, this is seeking for a mate, or territorial behavior.

CV: It’s absolutely not the case. And you know that. I want to tell you another story. There was this movement of the river keepers—you know about this? I came to meet the river keepers of the Delaware River, who invited me to do a performance for the river. They were telling me that they had been doing all this ecological work—this was a group of activists, they had scientists and all kinds of people working there. And they were burned out, because they felt their work was very dry, was always about, you know, numbers, and about trying to convince people and trying to get people to act.

JS: Politics.

CV: Exactly. This was really taking so much energy away from them, and they wanted to have new energy, a renewal of the force—and they wanted me to participate in this. Perhaps they had heard in one of my performances one of the stories where I dream that you sing to the water, and the water is then cleared of pollutants just because of
the sound in the music. So they asked me to come and sing for the Delaware River, which I did, with a group of people who came and sang to the river, and then we swam in the river. After I went back to Chile, they had an event, and in this event, they were navigating the Delaware River with a whole lot of activists and politicians and so forth—and suddenly one of the tape recorders went off with some recordings that were not supposed to take place at the moment, and by some coincidence, they cannot explain how, the sound that started to come up was the sound of my song. It started to come out from the bottom of the ship where these people were traveling. And they told me that everybody thought this was the most eerie thing, because they thought that the mermaids were singing—that this song was coming from the bottom of the river.

**JS:** The sirens!

**CV:** An eerie thing, because it’s like the river was returning the sound—

**JS:** Was singing back.

**CV:** —the sound of the song.

**JS:** Well rivers contain all sound. I think the whole universe of sound is in rivers. If you ever sit or sleep next to a river, you hear everything.

**CV:** And there are many people like the Quechua and Aymara, who have all these specific names for the different ways water will sound, according to whether it is splashing against the stone, or it’s moving softly, or hastily, or on a different incline, and so forth. The poet Gabriela Mistral said at one point that all things had their own sound, and she believed, for example, that the ocean is lulling—it’s doing a lullabye for itself. That the wind is making its own sound for itself. So each element could have its own lullabye.

**JS:** Right, it’s a feedback. Do you have a story about singing to plants or animals?

**CV:** Yes, well I think at the very birth of poetry, at the time when people were really listening—this is of course a myth, we who are listeners have this myth. It’s a myth about people deriving the sound of words, that become alphabet, signs. They say the sound of A, the Aleph is first the sound of a cow, then it becomes the opening Aprire and the universe itself, and then people forget. So there is this movement like the tide, that goes in and out of forgetting and remembering. This is also part of the cycle of the sound and the word. For example, when I wrote my vicuña poem, I had never seen a vicuña. But I wrote the poem anyway.
It was like a longing for her, for meeting the animal. A moment came when I was able to take a pilgrimage, because you have to cross the desert, you have to go to the highlands—this is not an easy thing, to go see a vicuña, you know, you have to take your life in your hands [laughs], and go into the mountains. So I took this trip, and I was riding in this huge bus, taking me to the highlands, to this place where you can see them, which is about four thousand meters above the sea level, so everybody faints, and almost dies out of lack of oxygen. This is the place where they live. And finally, we see a flock, you would say a “flock” of vicuñas? Un rebaño.

**JS:** A herd?

**CV:** A herd of vicuñas. So I ask the drivers to stop, to please—

**JS:** Or a family, actually, aren’t they very tightly organized around family groups?

**CV:** Exactly, a family group. That’s more appropriate. A family group of, perhaps fifteen, twenty vicuñas. And so I ask the driver to please stop. Because I want to get off and see the vicuñas, who are fairly close to the road. This is a road where you probably have a bus every three to five hours. There’s not a lot of people riding through there. The bus driver says, no, we shouldn’t stop here, because the minute we stop, the vicuñas will be afraid, and run off. So I insist, and I tell him the story, that I am, that my name is Vicuña—with that, he decides to stop. And exactly what he had said would happen happened. The vicuñas instantly turn around, look at the bus, and start to flee, because they are very shy animals. So I run off behind them, and I start to sing to them, and the minute I started to sing, they stopped. They were terribly afraid, but they were more curious than afraid. They wanted to know what this song was. I kept on singing and singing and singing until the vicuñas started to come closer and closer and closer and closer. So there was finally an encounter with the vicuñas, and we’re finally coming close enough, you know, to really start a dialogue. Banh, banh! The driver decides that’s enough of waiting for me [laughs]. And of course, they hear that horrible honking, and they leave.

**JS:** No more vicuña love. So were you singing the vicuña song, the vicuña poem?

**CV:** No, I had to improvise a song as fast as I could. But I think the animals, like us, do not connect so much with words as with what’s behind the words, with the vibratory sound, the voice itself, the tone. The tone is what does it.
JS: The vibration. As you say, the intention.
CV: Exactly, exactly. Because the intention is carried by the tone. You can lie in many forms, but you cannot lie with your tone. The tone betrays your true emotion, whether you are afraid. For example, I have been in dangerous situations, where I have been attacked by people, and I have saved my neck only through the tone, you know.
JS: Absolutely. And the physical attitude, the way you carry your body.
CV: Yes, because in those instances, we really become animals. And what’s important is not what you say, but the tone of your voice as you speak.
JS: So, the river too or plants would respond to the tone?
CV: Relate to that, exactly. For example I have had encounters with jaguars, with many other animals. And it’s always like that—
JS: In the wild! With jaguars?
CV: Well, no. This was in the rainforest, but there was a pit where they kept some live jaguars. This was in the forest itself, in Brazil, and it was a painful thing to see them kept there. And there was, how do you call it, a net? Not a net, a wire—
JS: Fence?
CV: A fence. And I stood there very quietly for a long time. This one particular jaguar noticed me, and he was deep down in this pit. I was with my face very close to this fence. I quieted myself down completely, and since everybody left, there was not a lot of noise; it was just me and the jaguar there, and he started to circle, to circle, to circle—until the moment came when the jaguar made an incredible leap, from the bottom of this pit where he was—I was here, you know, at the level of the fence—he jumped like that, prkew! and grabbed the fence to face me. He looked at me intently, and then the weight of his body pushed him back into the pit. It was like an acknowledgement of that level of quietness.
JS: To go back to the betweenness we discussed, do you think that sound is fundamental, or do things inhere more the relationship between, say, the senses? I’m thinking of Merleau-Ponty, who points out the chiasmic relation between sight and sound which, to his mind, brings about consciousness and thought, in human beings in particular.
CV: Well sound is a magnificent vehicle, for these delicate forms of relationship that somehow we are endowed to perceive. But the most crucial thing is not sound—sound is one form—what is most crucial is the relationship, the way that all living things relate to one another. This is the weaving; the weaving is not threads, but truly the way we relate. And that is what is being expressed or manifested in the sound.

JS: I wanted to ask you about basura (garbage). There’s that great word of yours basurame—which has South in it, too, the North-South; how do you poeticize trash, or how does garbage, you know, not just recycling your bottles, but how does garbage become a part of your vocabulary?

CV: Through acknowledging the exchange and the circulation of energy. David Hammonds has done that: he has used precisely discarded bottles to make, for example, a sculpture. But it’s not the physical concept that matters. It’s precisely the idea that everything you use will be discarded—once you pick up the awareness of that, then a whole universe of perceptions and of names opens up. This is what happened to me when I started to pick up this debris. This debris was basura, no? Some people say, but that’s not basura—but who says what is basura and what isn’t basura, you see? It’s for me to decide what basura is; it is in my power, and it is in my realm to use words in whatever manner I think best. If you disagree with that, come up with something that’s better, and convince me, you see—that’s where dialogue begins.

JS: Do you collect words the way you collect, say, scraps in the street? Do you feel that there’s an equivalent in language, in speech, and maybe in written words, of basura?

CV: I think that the mind is wired that way, may be as a remnant of the hunter/gatherer: certain animal prefers certain kinds of berries. Certain poet prefers certain kinds of words. Certain basura collector prefers certain kinds of basura. So you find each person has a sort of vibratory affinity with certain people, with certain colors, with certain flavors, and this is probably coming from a personal movement of
energy or chemistry or whatever. If you follow that pattern of your own deep likes and dislikes, you are creating a diagram for yourself.

**JS:** The dislikes are important too. When I say *basura* I’m thinking of the waste that goes into writing a poem: whether literally all the paper used to print out drafts, but also the words you cross out and discard. I’m thinking of the very refined kind of poem as it’s been practiced through modernism (prolonging that literary perfectionism found at its apotheosis in Flaubert, or Mallarmé) as the artifact that really is waste, the wasteful poem in some ways—because it consumes a lot of resources, and then you just sort of, you throw all that extra stuff away. I mean, what I love about Olson, say is, for example, the extent to which the scraps often do come back, and there’s a real circulation there. Of course, from a pure market standpoint, as Charles Bernstein points out, a blank sheet of paper is more valuable than one with poetry printed on it—by almost exactly the value of that blank sheet of paper. In other words, economically speaking, poetry is essentially wasteful. Is this why there is so little fronting of ecological questions amongst “innovative” writers today? If you put all this poetry into a time capsule, someone who found it three hundred years from now, or five hundred years from now, would never know there had been an ecological catastrophe, because it doesn’t filter to the surface.

**CV:** It’s *dar d’espaldas*, you know, it’s turning away from—

**JS:** Turning their backs on it.

**CV:** Yes, turning their backs, you know, and it shields them. This shielding prevents people from coming in touch with their own nakedness and fragility and madness, you know, which is for them the only way to relate, because I think in reality people in our times are completely terrified—even though people may not speak about it, everybody knows that the earth is warming up, absolutely everybody knows that the storms are getting more violent, everybody knows that people are dying from eating poisoned food, that there are all these new diseases, everybody knows it in their guts. But in every age and period you would have one Shakespeare, or you would have one Dante, so one poet will come up who will be able to say this. And if there are millions of poets who are not saying it, this is part of our life, you know.

**JS:** Well I also think it’s historically rooted in the North American psyche, and it has to do with a history you cite at the beginning of the conversation—this whole creation of the notion of wilderness, and nature as something up in Alaska.
CV: Away from us, exactly.

JS: So that, you think you have to leave the city to experience nature. But it’s right out your door.

CV: It’s ridiculous, because nature is inside you. You are nature; every hair and every molecule in your body is as much nature as the Arctic. And the streets are as much nature as the Hudson River is. For me it’s integrated, it has always been. People constantly ask me, “Do you miss the Andes?” What a silly question! I mean, do I miss the Andes? Of course, the Andes misses me too! You know. But what happens is that you have to migrate for other reasons. And it matters not, it matters not where you are. What matters are these prejudices, you know, these categories, which are wrong—because they do not respond to a living reality. The only hope is in a mixing up of the categories. You have, for example, enlightened people like William Joy. I don’t know if you know the article he wrote, “Why the Future Doesn’t Need Us?”

JS: No, I haven’t read that.

CV: You must read that. He is the inventor of the Java script, and he is a computer scientist suddenly saying that scientists have gone mad, and they have gone mad because of A, B, C. He used to publish in Wired, so he is coming from the belly of the beast. Or you have a scientist like Hagelin, you know, along with lots of other scientists who are now saying that science has gone into bad science. They are altering the seeds with the pretense that this can be contained. But the more you attempt to control nature, the more it goes out of control. So when a scientist starts to speak like that, he’s jumping rope, you see, he’s going into a new realm. And I think this is what people have to do; it’s a risky business, because you are perhaps using a language that’s not the best or the one you have mastered.

JS: You become an amateur.

CV: I am constantly reading science, and this informs my work, because I think there is more poetry, often, in those discoveries than there is in many of the poetries we’re reading. Because scientists are pushing a frontier of knowledge, and they have to create language as they go. Eventually, people with ears for music will pick up on this new language, and even the scientists, the way they are beginning to say things, it’s beginning to sound like the ancient, sacred texts.

JS: Do you ever get frustrated by the false dualism between playfulness and correctness? Scientific language is mistrusted by poets because it’s utilitarian, it’s an instrumental approach to language, and because it says
that something is one way and not another way, while scientists distrust poets, because they’re inventing false etymologies all the time.

**CV:** It’s true that there is this mistrust, and there is this different orientation, but I think they feed each other endlessly. Whether this is acknowledged or not. For example, when you read a scientist like Hagelin, see, he is explaining why genetically manipulated organisms are an endless crime. It’s because nobody knows what will happen, and he says, it’s nineteenth-century science that believes that these things can be controlled. So in a way it’s a scientist acknowledging the possibility of not knowing. So there is a moment when these two languages touch each other and those are the moments of in-betweenness that are fertile.

**JS:** How do you deal with the pain of witnessing what’s happening at the moment, in particular the tone right now, with the current administration? In your writing, where does pain sit?

**CV:** It’s the key of everything, pain is the key of everything.

**JS:** The cure?

**CV:** The key. The key of everything. I don’t think any writer ever could have written if it weren’t for that pain that is burning inside. And it’s the necessity of transforming that pain that pushes you to write. I think this is the energy of prayer: prayer is transformation of energy. So there is a commonality between prayer and poetry, in the transformation of this pain. When you come to a river that’s dying, when you come to a forest that’s dying, our emotion is the same as that of the animal—the animal that’s dying. You go to the forest and you perceive the sadness even in the leaves. There is a commonality of sadness that is now joining the world.

**JS:** Do you think, even though this official project may have failed, of propagating the seeds through the gallery, that people come away from your exhibits and your performances with perhaps the intention to pray or, you know, to make *precarios,* to make these acts and gestures—that the seeds propagate themselves, in some way?

**CV:** I don’t know, but I would hope so. In Chile, I got hundreds of letters from people, and they very often said that when they came into the gallery they didn’t know what this was about, that they could tell that this was not art, that this was different from the art they normally saw. And the more they thought about it the more they realized that this exhibition was not really about seeds, but it was about themselves.

**JS:** You say that “only poetry can guarantee the continuation of the species.” Can you comment on that? Or maybe no comment is needed! [laughter]
CV: I think without poetry we’re completely doomed. Vicente Huidobro said “La poesía es la vida de la vida”. Poetry is the life of life, and this is for everybody to consider. Every living being feeds on every other living being, and poetry honors that exchange. Poetry is life’s reserve, a forest for the renewal of language, a biodiversity of the soul.
JS: Well thank you, for this river of words.
CV: [laughter] Thank you, Jonathan.
CONTRIBUTORS

Rosa Alcalá has translated El Templo (Situations Press, 2001) Cloud-net (Art in General, 1999), and Word & Thread (Morning Star Publications, 1996), all books of poetry by Cecilia Vicuña. Her own poems have recently appeared in Chain and Open City. She is currently pursuing a PhD in English at SUNY-Buffalo, where she co-curates ñ: poesía, crítica, y arte/ a non-unilingual series.

Bruce Andrews, who has made NYC his home since 1975, is the author of over 30 books of poetry (the latest, Lip Service, the monumental reworking of Dante’s Paradiso, is just out from Coach House Press, Toronto) and a collection of innovative critical essays (Paradise & Method: Poetics & Praxis, Northwestern UP, 1996). Aerial #9 has anthologized interviews and essays on his work. He is Music Director for Sally Silvers & Dancers, and teaches Political Science and Political Economy at Fordham University.

Joel Bettridge is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He has recently published poems and reviews in Tinfish, Facture, Cross-Cultural Poetics and the Chicago Review.


Odile Cisneros is a writer and translator living in New York City. She has translated the work of Jaroslav Seifert, Haroldo de Campos and Régis Bonvicino, among others.

Alicia Cohen lives in Portland, Oregon where she is a founding member of Pacific Switchboard Arts Collective, and works as a teacher. Alicia recently moved from Buffalo, New York where she was a graduate student from 1994-2000. She was born in San Diego, California, and rides her bicycle everyday.

Brenda Coultas, a NYC poet who also hails from Indiana, is working on a long poem entitled The Bowery Project and has a Coffeehouse book coming out in 2003. Her first book was Early Films (Rodent Press, 1996).

Peter Culley lives on Vancouver Island and is the author of Fruit Dots, Natural History and The Climax Forest. His writings on visual art have appeared in numerous catalogues and publications.
Catherine Daly has lived in Park La Brea in Los Angeles for five years. During that time, a story was cut off the ficus tree in back, Indian Paintbrush trees were trimmed into cubes, then decimated, and potted geraniums were weed whacked to death.

Marcella Durand’s “Kite” is part of a series called “The Geometrics,” which will be published as a chapbook by BeautifulSwimmer Press this spring. MD is also the author of the two chapbooks, Lapsus Linguae and City of Ports, as well as a full-length collection of poetry, Western Capital Rhapsodies, published by Faux Press, fall 2001.

Kristen Gasser is an actress who works for the Buffalo Museum of Science, and is having a second daughter.

Kenneth Goldsmith’s book-length writings include No. 111.2.7.93-10.20.96 (The Figures, 1997), Fidget (Coach House Books, 2000), and Soliloquy (Granary Books, 2001). He is a DJ for WFMU and founder and editor of Ubuweb: the definitive source for Visual, Concrete + Sound Poetry (www.ubu.com).

Robert Grenier’s numerous works include Sentences (Whale Cloth Press, 1978), A Day at the Beach (Roof Books, 1985), Phantom Anthems (O Books, 1986), and Owl/On/Bough (Post-Apollo Press, 1997). He lives in Bolinas, CA.

Lisa Jarnot lives in New York City. She is the author of Some Other Kind of Mission (Burning Deck, 1996) and Ring of Fire (Zoland Books, 2001).

Christopher Johnson is a traveler, translator and scholar of 17th-Century Baroque literature, who lives in NYC. Johnson edited the latest edition of Charles Leland’s translation of Heinrich Heine’s travelogue, The Journey to Italy (Marsilio, 1998). He spent the summer of 2001 working on the Nootka Rose Farm on Waldron Island, WA.

Michael Kelleher, a Ph.D. candidate in Poetics at SUNY Buffalo, has published two chapbooks: The Necessary Elephant (1998), and Three Poems (1999). He is the editor of two electronic journals, a l y r I c m a I l e r, and lume: a journal of electronic writing and art, and also of the artist book/poets’ press, ELEVATOR. His poems and essays have appeared in Kiosk, Rampike, Queen St. Quarterly, verdure, murmur, The Transcendental Friend, Lagniappe and others.

Kevin Killian is a San Francisco novelist, poet, art writer, critic and playwright. His books include Bedrooms Have Windows (Amethyst Press, 1989), Shy (Crossing Press, 1989), Little Men (Hard Press, 1996), Arctic Summer (Masquerade Books, 1997) and Argento Series
(Krupskaya, 2001). With Lewis Ellingham he has written *Poet Be Like God: Jack Spicer and the San Francisco Renaissance* (Wesleyan, 1998), the first biography of the important US poet.

**Robert Kocik**'s works include *AUKSO (the genesis of Oneself)* (Object, 1995); *Overcoming Fitness* (Autonomedia, 2001), and *How Colossal the Disservice* (unpublished, 2001). He founded the Bureau of Material Behaviors in 1996. In 1997 he began research in the Sore, Oversensitive, Insecure and Subtle Sciences, discovering the *logosome* (key to the sexual transmissibility of artwork) and the *prosopath* (particulate unit in the relationship between prosody and disease). In 2001 he founded Poetry Outsource (missing social service responding to poets' lack of place in the culture).

**Peter Larkin** is a Librarian at Warwick University, with research interests in ecocriticism and in postmodern theology. He also runs Prest Roots Press with its commitment to affordable fine press work. He has contributed to *Reality Studios, Fragmente, Parataxis, Talisman, Shearsman, Inscape, Angelaki, Stand* and *The Gig*. He appeared in the anthology *Ten British Poets* (1993). A collection of 10 years’ work, *Terrain Seed Scarcity*, was published by Salt Publications in 2001.

**Douglas Manson** is a poet and teacher currently completing his PhD in Buffalo, NY.

**Tom Morgan** wrote his first poems the same year he learned to make fire from two sticks. He holds an M.F.A. degree from Naropa University and recently served as the Managing Editor of *Bombay Gin* #27. His work has been published in *The @tached Document* #1. He currently lives in Nevada City, CA.


**Julie Patton** is a one-woman center for the verbal, visual, and performing arts. Working on the page and on stage, her media may encompass body, text, graphic image, and voice, singly or in collaboration; Patton’s lectures and performances have taken her across the United States.
to South America and Europe. Her books include *Teething on Type* (Rodent Press, 1995) and *Typographical Topographies* (Tender Buttons Press, forthcoming); Patton’s vocal “composaytions” are featured on CDs by Uri Caine and Barnaby McAll.

**Isabelle Pelissier** is an artist and sculptor based in Buffalo who works in metal (small to large format), mixed media, oil (postcard sized paintings), and pencil, ink and paper (artists’ books). Her sculptures have been purchased by the City of Buffalo as well as by several Buffalo businesses; her steel garden grows day and night.

**Andrew Schelling** lives along the Front Range of the Southern Rockies in Colorado. He is active on ecology and wildlife issues, and teaches poetry, Sanskrit, and wilderness writing at Naropa University. His translations from India’s classical poetries have been widely anthologized. Recent books include *The Cane Groves of Narmada River: Erotic Poems from Old India* (City Lights, 1998), *The Road to Ocosingo* (Smoke Proof Press, 1998), and *Tea Shack Interior: New & Selected Poetry* (Talisman House, 2002).

**Eleni Sikelianos**’s most recent book is Earliest Worlds (Coffee House Press, 2001). She grew up in California, and currently lives and works in NYC.

**Jonathan Skinner** is currently pursuing a PhD in Poetics at SUNY-Buffalo, where, with partner Isabelle Pelissier, he curates the Steel Bar reading series, edits *Ecopoetics*, and misidentifies birds on the Niagara river. His poems, essays and translations have appeared in numerous magazines, including *Curricle Patterns, Elevator, Gare du Nord, Jacket, Lagniappe, murmur, The Transcendental Friend* and *verdure*.

**Cecilia Vicuña**’s films, installations, and performance pieces have been exhibited in numerous museums and galleries in Latin America, Europe, and North America, including the Whitney Museum, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Whitechapel Gallery in London. Her books include *Unravelling Words & the Weaving of Water* (tr. Eliot Weinberger and Suzanne Jill Levine; Graywolf Press, 1992), *quipoem* (tr. Esther Allen; Wesleyan, 1997), and *Cloud-net* (tr. Rosa Alcalá; Art in General, 1999).
FURTHER NOTES

About Dizzyistics 10, Bruce Andrews writes: May 2001, a one night performance of BARKING, a performance project of mine and the choreographer/performer/ writer Sally Silvers, started in the early 1980s with Tom Cora; this version had Sally and I and Julian Jackson (music & dance) and Dan Evans Farkas (music, electronic processing, toys). It involved the four of us in 13 thematically-keyed pieces, each about four minutes long. Dizzyistics 10 is the text for the Eco/Nature section. During it, Sally presented the text with a mic while doing (mostly 'floorwork') improvised movement with a 'feral child' quality; Julian did an improvised dance solo; I did a live mix of three tracks of sound (one, processed FX, one a collage of my solo improvising on a variety of instruments, one a tape of segments of my 'digital scratching') and I added on top of the mix a live solo on a teeny toy electric guitar with manipulable 'surf guitar' sound; meanwhile, Dan brought back from the kitchen sixpacks of mini-size beers to distribute to the audience and started cooking on the electric wok (sizzling during the piece —cabbage, onions and garlic). A densepack four minutes!

Robert Kocik writes: Thus. Ecology in my case: Words generative of physiologies yielding beneficently built environments. Oddly nature nowhere—next stop, cosmos. There is of course the point of origin, i.e. language as an ecology—as sustaining energy, one's perpetual life. Language as such, say particularly in experimental arts, in the fields based on perpetuation through novelty—as endangered as any type. I have my meager means. To touch upon a few: Extraorganopoieia (subtilization of the body, saltation skills, coming up with the next organs/organizations), or my notes on prosody's relationships with disease and health, the Aurivocal (which proposes the location of the prosopath—the particulate unit that allows sound to break the germ barrier and influence inheritance), the Bureau Of Material Behaviors (correlating micro-structure/material behavior/human behavior—and which has never been properly presented in public), and now the next development in poetics—the Susceptive System, which, once elucidated, is sure to show up, physiologically speaking.
Kenny Goldsmith writes: In regards to your request for a NYC weather report, I’m sad to say that after months of a delicious lingering odor drifting from the smouldering wreck of the World Trade Center, the air is once again clean. New York City is notoriously famous for its clean air. As we’re on an island, the air is constantly being flushed out, hence the crystal blue skies. But for several glorious months, New York City air was what I always wished it would be: thick, foul and polluted with the sweetly sick smell of roasting acoustical ceiling tile and burning fiber optic cable. It smelled like a real city. The only other time that I have ever smelled such delights is on my frequent sojurns to New Dehli, where the air is rife with the most wonderful pollutants I’ve ever experienced. Sadly, the residents of Manhattan didn’t get too much WTC vintage air pollution; instead the winds took it out over the harbour to places like Brooklyn, Staten Island and New Jersey who, in my opinion, already have too much of their own pollution. It’s not fair that they hogsed the year’s best air for themselves. {{{ sigh }}} If only they could have bottled it...

ILLUSTRATIONS

Catherine Daly: topiary photographs, pp. 41-43
Kristen Gasser: nymph casing, p. 19; sea urchin, p. 96; plover, p. 134; all from from Field Journal (ink on paper).
Julie Patton and slugs: slug art (found and scanned leaf), p. 8
Isabelle Pelissier: “put it in the pot” (oil on masonite), p. 33
Jonathan Skinner, Julie Patton and slugs: slug art (manipulated leaf scans), pp. 86-89
Jonathan Skinner: flower and seed scans, pp. 114-115
Cecilia Vicuña: seed, p. 113; seed drawing, p. 126; selected Precarios: Con-cón, p. 116; Antivero, p. 117; unidentified Precario from Poet’s Table (Art in General, NYC, 1999); Metal thread, p. 122 (mixed media).

A NOTE ON THE FORMAT

The pocket size of ecopoetics is “field ready”—please take it with you! However, a zoomable PDF file can be emailed to any suscriber for whom this format may cause undue eyestrain. Please request in writing, and don’t forget to include your email address.
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Editor’s note: take this book outside, make something with the following page, tear it out (or scan or photocopy) and send to *ecopoetics*. We’ll print the best “field notes” in our next issue.