

AT THE FLASH & AT THE BACI



KEN BOLTON

Presented as part of the requirement for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English,

University of Adelaide

South Australia

August 2003

## contents

### Part one

- abstract — 3
- acknowledgements — 5
- At The Flash & At The Baci
  - contents — 6
  - poems — 7
  - notes to poems — 130

### Part two (separate volume)

#### —exegetical essay—

- note on the text — 3
- essay: How I Remember Writing  
Some Of My Poems—Why,  
Even — 4
- appendix — 96
- footnotes — 150
- works cited — 159
- bibliography — 166

## abstract

The thesis consists principally of a book-length manuscript of poems, called *At The Flash & At The Baci*. An exegetical essay forms the second part of the thesis. The prospective book's title derives from the purely incidental fact that most of the poems were worked on at those establishments (the Flash and the Baci) and some were begun and even finished there. The collection does not pursue any particular theme. It is organized chronologically and divided into three parts: the middle, dividing section is a group of three poems, elegies that mourn or reflect upon the death of poet John Forbes and my responses to it and to him. These poems differ from the rest of the collection in being less concerned with 'everyday life' and in being more expressly 'focused'. The third group are labeled 'newer poems' and include a group begun in Rome—not, then, the 'everyday' of Adelaide.

The exegetical essay is written as a poem. This was done as a way of achieving a tone not at variance with the poetry itself, but also for the access it gives to a more mobile, elliptical approach to the poems and my memory of their motivations and connections. The exegesis does not explain the poem's 'meanings' to any great extent—these, I think, are fairly clear—but considers the poems' relation to each other and to poems written in the past. In fact it casts the poems as developments of past strategies, as alternatives to those strategies: variants, continuations, alternatives, changes of tack.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

I consent to the thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the award of the degree.

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where the reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

signature

date

20/8/03



These poems were mostly conceived & written,  
& all of them considerably worked on,  
in the mornings before work or in workday lunchbreaks -  
at the two establishments which lend the collection its name,  
*The Flash & The Baci*, coffee shops in Hindley Street, downtown  
Adelaide.

My presence certainly hasn't made these places more glamorous -  
though they have some glamour of their own.  
I would like to express my gratitude to the people who have worked  
behind their counters over the years.

The drawings before & after the poem 'Rumori' are by the author.

Those illustrating the 'Three poems for John Forbes' are a  
photocopy of a newspaper reproduction of Philip Guston's painting  
'Smoking, 1'; a photograph by Weegee, 'Girls watching movie,  
Palace Theater', c. 1943; and a photograph, 'Muddy Waters Relaing  
Between Gigs', by Val Wilmer.

#### acknowledgements

Hometown, A Picture, Coffee & John Forbes Poem,  
and A Prospect of the Young KB  
appeared first in *HEAT*,  
News of the Day in *Overland*  
Giles Auty Furioso (illustrated) was shown  
at the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia  
Walk on the Wild Side in *Overland* and in *Untimely Meditations*  
Walking Down from the Star Grocery in *Untimely Meditations*  
Hometown & Walking Down from the Star Grocery  
also appeared in the UK in *Shearsman*  
To Generalize in *The Famous Reporter*  
Double Portrait and Horizon in *JACKET*  
Hi, John & Cat-bag poem in *Southerly*  
Catching Up With Kurt Brereton in *Newcastle Prize Anthology*  
Long Distance Information in *UTS Review*  
Amaze Your Friends in *Famous Reporter & Tin Fish* (USA)  
American Friends in *Slope*  
Traffic Noises in *Sidewalk*  
Tiepolo in *Shampoo* (USA)

# CONTENTS

Home Town	7
Walk On The Wild Side	12
poem ("Walking Down From The <i>Star Grocery</i> ")	14
Halogen Pam	18
Dynamic Sleeper	25
To Generalize	31
A Picture	34
Mostly Hindley Street	37
News Of The Day	48
Giles Auty Furioso	56
Double Portrait	62

## *Three Poems For John Forbes*

Coffee & John Forbes Poem	66
Hi, John	68
People Passing Time	73

## *Newer Poems*

Your Being Away	80
poem ('cat-bag')	83
American Friends	87
Horizon	89
Catching Up With Kurt Brereton	92
Traffic Noises, Cups, Voices	97
Long Distance Information	102
Tiepolo	107
<i>Rumori</i>	109
Holden Song	118
Prospect Of The Young KB As A Critic	120
Ju-Ju	122
Amaze Your Friends	123
Hindley Street Today, With A View Of Michael Grimm	127
notes	131

## Home Town

Driving into work while  
Cath reads about driving around London  
& wondering when will I next write a poem  
or whether to just work on *Gwendolyn*  
a poem of John's & mine & maybe I should  
it is half mine, I drop Cath off, do a  
U-turn & scoot down to the EAF, park, go inside  
check the mail empty my bag a little  
lock up again & set off for the coffee shop  
where I'll read or write a poem or a  
review - or work on *Gwendolyn*, I suppose, is  
a possibility . . . I feel sophisticated to be  
wearing my long black coat - which, however,  
does not really make me look  
like my idea of a New Yorker: it's a little  
beaten & more groovy than suave  
& doesn't reflect wealth, & the thought of  
my poverty - when I ask for coffee - makes  
me amused & reflective. "The heater's on,"  
I say to the waitress. And she says "Yes.  
You like?" "It's Great!" I say. It is.  
I ask could I have some banana cake please  
with such diffidence she is surprised and  
I realize the thoughts about my poverty  
& entitlements have affected my emotions a little.  
She says I *can* have some & goes off to get it.

Which is where the poem could end. It could all  
be about the small things in life - how I  
do get coffee etc.

Cath thought Laurie's  
latest poem could be broken up into lots of  
smaller ones, or broken with numbers, asterisks -  
so you'd know when to stop re-read & have a think (etcetera).  
Not that she wanted little poems, of shape & mild  
flick-of-the-wrist closure.

This waitress has served me coffee  
for over ten years now. She used to work at the *Flash Café*  
- actually called *Flash Gelateria* - but known to most as just

'The Flash' - but they changed hands finally  
& she came down here where this new place opened. Whose name  
I don't even know - where I've been coming nearly a year  
now. What *is* it called? *Baci* - I look out the window  
find the sign. *The Baci* is big & airy - you can stay all day  
I imagine. The view is very Richard Estes - in a busy kind of way -  
which I think recommends it. Though to whom does it  
recommend it? No one I know, to speak to, daily  
knows Richard Estes' paintings. Except Paul, & Richard  
at a guess - Richard would & Paul would like the aesthetic  
though not, probably, the art - my only Ruscha friend,  
Paul - "if I may so term his aesthetic". (Ha Ha.)  
Though who am I on daily speaking terms with? Cath  
- & Laurie & Pam & John Forbes & John Jenkins -  
in my mind. Realler I guess than talking to Frank O'Hara  
or Tony Towle - whose speaking voice I have no idea of -  
probably silent &, alternatively, garrulous. I imagine him  
mostly staring plumply out a picture window - floor to ceiling  
- is that 'picture'? - hands in pockets, shirt untucked slightly  
saying something rhapsodic & complaining. It's dark outside  
& raining. Hullo, Tony. There, I did it. Now I realize  
I am beginning to talk like him. Which amuses me - though  
talking like him is not my purpose. What *is* my purpose in life?  
the joke answer & the serious, & why am I not up to either  
or both? Because that's life. One is to fail exemplarily.  
"We are gathered here today ladies & glements ..." - SPLASH -  
Somebody has fallen off the pier. The Fellini figure pauses briefly  
& they carry on - it was Malcolm Lowry, the outsider. He  
fell off. Not me - I'm in the Richard Estes painting  
in the middle of Adelaide, that only I know about,  
going, tonight, to the Post-West opening, that everybody  
knows about. Their shows are so frequent & the gallery  
so small I think the artists have them just to drink  
& natter every fortnight. Though tonight the art  
promises to be good, or not hurtful, maybe in fact allright.

\*

When I get there Richard is sitting against the wall with Suzie.  
Paul is hanging about the door, drink in hand. He does  
know Richard Estes I am relieved to find out  
& I talk to all the artists - Aldo & Shaun, & Louise

shows up & later Michael & Mary. Shaun's bought my book.  
We discuss Raymond Roussel, Micky Allan's photographs,  
Harry Mathews, Perec, Svevo, Jr Walker & Wilson Pickett,  
employment

\*

What matters? What is important  
to say?

From reading all morning  
I can manage

a series of assertions  
- or I feel that way -

I can remember  
none, right now

except: "Daniel Buren's art -  
(followed by some blunt denial of his importance)"

But I always knew that.

Walking into town

to deliver an article to the  
*Advertiser*

feeling deliciously alone  
- & modern,

the way John Tranter feels  
when he cleans the pool,

but actually for the Tranter/Benjamin reason  
: Paris,

the streets, arcades, the  
winter light & clouds, the

suggestion of rain  
another article done, anonymous,

but it will appear above my name  
but I feel anonymous -

I see Tubby Justice across the street, waiting.  
I wave.

She waves, & disappears  
hurries off, ahead. I smile

& she reappears & we say hullo. My friends  
are like ghosts in Adelaide.

What is real here? The only  
intelligent people I know who read *The Advertiser*

buy it for the TV guide & movies  
 & I think movies  
 are crap.  
 That's about it  
 for my relation to an  
 audience.  
 Still, it helped me feel modern  
 that day  
 crossing the road. I could just  
 as easily  
 have written a poem -  
 & I'd've felt okay  
 in that light, in that atmosphere, in that coat,  
 in that cold, amongst the early morning crowd, in  
 the Central Business District  
 though strangely, I'd've felt less a  
 public person - more crestfallen  
 as Tubby disappeared,  
 scarcely assuaged when she reappeared  
 can "assuaged"  
 float about free like that?  
 can only hurt be  
 assuaged? or something analogous?  
 Adelaide  
 looked so Kertész at that moment  
 Life could make you  
 weep  
 It would given time, but we move so quickly -  
 it  
 will, in time, maybe. Time now  
 to look for John Forbes  
 to read  
 to calm down : I can't find my *Strange  
 Days Ahead* (Michael Brownstein) a much liked book  
 to check from the cover how to spell Kertész  
 & get it right  
 I am mad - but it must be somewhere  
 I sometimes imagine  
 an open letter to Peter Schjeldahl  
 but there is so much I admire  
 that he doesn't like  
 (e.g., Brownstein)

though I admire *him* -  
would that be a basis on which to write?  
So much of what  
I write is an open letter to someone : Laurie, Pam  
or is meant  
to be read aloud by my collected peers a small society  
that doesn't exist, unfortunately, around a table  
like  
the Royal Society  
meeting somewhere  
- instead, like Tubby,  
they go their own way  
each isolated, with their own projects,  
own worries, own apostrophized thoughts / complaints to / versions  
of things  
as do I.

It is not Kertész anyway  
on Brownstein's book. It's Sander. I *did* mean Kertész. On the streets  
of Adelaide does anyone resemble the portraits of Sander? Some. But  
who stands still that long? Not me.

Here  
are the newer John Forbes poems, in the later pages  
looking  
for a good first line :  
here's one with Spencer Tracy -  
though I see it says "Spent tracer  
flecks Baghdad's sky"  
- I'm going blind -  
& there's the one for me "Frank O'Hara  
never went skating  
but he liked to dance."  
If O'Hara  
taught us timing like the poem says,  
I wish I'd paid attention.  
Did I learn anything from him?  
it has worn off with this moving around.

## Walk On The Wild Side

Tomorrow: shop, bank, wash hair.

Gym

fix salad

maybe put prices

on the new books arrived at

the E.A.F.

I guess read the paper

have

coffee. An eventful day? There

are new poems to work on at last

- I left these at the E.A.F., tonight -

there are poems of Miriel's to look over,

dinner at Cath's.

Anyway,

*now*

I take Little Walter off

and put on

Lou Reed - *Walk on the Wild Side* -

not a judgement :

I will put

Little Walter on

a lot more times

in my life.

Lou is sweet

... and I read the poems of James

Schuyler, the one about Auden, the one

about

*Dining Out with Doug and Frank.*

Better than sweet.

I mean, I *love* Lou -

but this is something else.

- Time goes by.

I put the record back to the first track. -

Actually, Lou *reads* some of these guys.

I wonder if he reads Jimmy Schuyler.

Or does he only read

the Burroughs / Warhol

connection?

Probably not. But *probably*



he had some one-liner

summation

of the

New York 'School' -

that let him off

the hook.

I wouldn't

have him

be different.

- Time passes. -

Well,

a great poet!

I listen

to *Walk on the*

*Wild Side* again.

Sleep.

**poem ("Walking down from the Star Grocery")**

- for Martin Munz

Walking down from the *Star*  
*Grocery* from the far side  
of Morphett Street I saw

the lion on top of the Lion Building  
The first time I have  
noticed it, in quite a while.

Its scale is increasingly  
and loveably inappropriate  
to North Terrace, as it modernizes

and the lion seems small  
earnest, and straightforward.  
And the sky looks great beyond it.

I have chocolate frogs  
for Becky and Julie  
- for Martin I just

casually stroll into the Park Lane  
Liquor Store  
and order a bottle of Strega

- no, Martin is in Sydney ...

and that is a joke ...  
a famous poem  
by a favourite poet

has something like that sequence -  
gifts bought for people and the stroll  
for the Strega purchase. My life

is miles from that - I wear  
a battered leather jacket that  
if I thought about I'd be embarrassed

- when could I  
last afford scotch for someone,  
or go to a dinner laden with presents?

on the other hand - I *am* a poet.  
Different stars shine down on me. I am on  
the other side of the world.

Today I talked to Yvonne Rainer,  
a New York artist. I said, Hullo,  
I liked your film. And then I asked her

about the dedication to Ronald Bladen  
- "in memoriam" - I didn't know  
that he was dead. She asked -

and I said I knew just the few  
well known works  
and had for years. She said

he was a painter originally, romantic,  
expressionist.  
There was going to be a retrospective.

I held Bladen's work in only  
an affectionate regard. I think I had  
originally thought not much of it

- but the most usual photo of one,  
*The Big X* (his sculpture) I had liked  
and had liked to do drawings of,  
sending it up, but liking it really.

At the far end of the photo  
beyond the enormous X that filled  
the two storey gallery, which had

classical pillars around it,  
was a 19th century Roman sculpture -  
Diana, say - some modest naked

nymph or woman, such a  
strange contrast to the big minimal  
sculpture. I used to like doing the

drawing, to bring out this contrast.  
Once I put also two people in it  
small, obviously walking and talking,

oblivious, to the sculpture and the statue.  
Did I? or were they  
always in the photo?

I write my first fan letter -  
to a favourite poet in America. I had  
intended to for years. I had intended to write

to others:  
Joe Turner ...  
This week

I have been confused, and  
acting strangely, my heart  
in panic at its foolishness.

*This* -  
is a day for decisions. I orientate myself  
between a Frank O'Hara poem and the sculpture,

and this new information  
about Ronald Bladen, and the little lion  
on the "Lion" *building*

- in my leather jacket,  
that looks, now that I recall it, like one  
James Schuyler wears

in an early photograph  
and that looks very 'unlike'  
him

- the bomber jacket  
- on such a poet - as unlikely as it  
looks on me - but then, I am

hardly *here* I guess. I  
know the lion is doomed, more or less,  
but I will likely be gone before it. Is that

true? Well, the *thought* is to the point.  
It is the Canutish aspect to the lion I love -  
standing dark and silhouetted,

against the brilliant clouded sunsets -  
that seem like history

## Halogen Pam

I picture

Pam's halogen lamp sending  
a warm cone of light down

onto her desk

- white -

& the warm, transparent brown brandy

- or what was the drink? - sits there -

- still,

exuding calm

& "just reward"

- merely by its light translucence -

undisturbed.

Pam is seated to right, a silhouette  
down lower than the desk, somehow, as I picture it -  
reading;

determinedly - & successfully - 'lost' -  
after the irritation of walking home from work  
into a drying, hair-blowing wind.

But she is fractiously lost, at best, her mind  
coming back to sorrows, till the book succeeds -  
in calming her to think them through,

or to leave them & follow the book, talk to Jane,  
check the garden or whatever it is that  
Pam does do - shower, change her clothes,

do some washing & read again then hang the washing  
out & cook maybe & plan the night: to  
read or write or watch television,

or go out: I think she & Jane  
visit more - than I do. Though I expect  
visits would be planned, arranged more in advance

& she would likely not have had the drink or done the chores  
or would have done them at once if they were going out.  
The idea of the casual visit - of dropping in - of even  
ringing,

to say "*I'm coming over - alright?*"  
is a dream it seems, for me, though why is that?  
I know no one, have no transport, never 'think'

to use the phone (have work, am tired . . . ) - habits,  
developed over time, to keep me from what I might do.  
What kind of friend can I be - to my friends - really?

A disappointment. Imagining the drink,  
standing, still, in a deep, 'martini' glass,  
I try to imagine it as painted: but I imagine it more 'real'

than Vuillard, who would be intimate enough - more  
detailed, less modish, than Margaret Preston, not  
as brushy as a Monet flower piece - a still-life I saw in

a catalogue recently that was so evenly  
& thickly inflected - all grey? all rose? like a Leon Kossoff -  
is that right? - but far nicer: every stroke was

small & flicked & petal-shaped - pink (or grey) &  
loaded with white & it was an instant of perception  
of contentment heightened & raised & made live on -

but when I return to what I'm thinking about - the picture  
of Pam -  
it is inappropriate. I think briefly of Janet Fish (it  
should be more clean-lined) whom I had not thought about much,

in years, though I have not forgotten - a picture  
I saw of hers once made an impression though I am not sure  
at this distance how great or how reasonable

that impression was. It was a picture of gin bottles -  
up close - Gordons or Gilbeys - through which  
light reflected & bounced. A kind of new realism - a

bit like early Susan Norrie - though less claustrophobic, less boringly pointed - though in the book I saw the Janet Fish in, the reason why I think of her again - it is surrounded

by other artists doing similar things to Norrie. (So that kind of thing

happened in America, too: overdetermined: the time required it though it didn't need it (much) (if you ask *my* opinion -

anyway, I'm giving it). Walter Sickert, maybe, could paint it, though I want less gloom. Anyway - I was going to say - Richard made this joke about Janet Fish when I pointed to it

how she was like [someone he named] only obviously on hallucinogens

& alcoholic. It sounded pretty funny. Only, I didn't get the art reference & so I don't remember it.

It would be great to visit Pam now - for a few stiff drinks - just ghost in & sit, or stand - having them with her,

looking out the window

at the garden, or the harbour, modern, neither at a restaurant, which is too noisy & 'ends' anyway, or at a loss for words (because I'm no conversationalist)

& ghost out again, conversation done, or just sink to the floor drunk mildly (though thoroughly), a visitation.

\*

as I sit in this coffee shop Pam,  
the next morning, about to send this letter, to you,  
& this poem - looking out



at the Richard Estes view - maybe  
from this angle it is Ralph Goings -  
I watch some twenty year old drunks

carousing a little as they cross the street  
pathetically buoyed by their idea of themselves -  
*drunk still, at 10 in the morning,*

pretending to hail a car, in whose way  
they nearly get in crossing  
& stagger down the road less heroic than they imagine

in pale t-shirts & baggy shorts & thongs, gormless.

I have behaved that way too, in all probability  
though less through certainty in my uniform  
or my enlistment in the order of good ol boys.

But certain about something, probably.  
Best not to think about it. Conformism does  
make people feel better: / like being a human too -

& the differences I congratulate myself on  
don't measure up to much.

You probably do remember  
Richard Estes, Pam. Typically he paints  
a photographic looking New Realism: a line of

new pickup trucks, parked out the back,  
of *The Texas 'Bean' Diner* - all shiny & bleakly  
meaningless - plenty of blue sky, lots of

chrome & glass & metallic paint-job & cement & macadam.

Reality looks better, though sometimes it is  
aided by resembling these pictures.

Pam, you've tried  
Adelaide - & it didn't work for you. Otherwise  
you could be here. Would we see each other much  
living in the same city?

Sydney - could I live there & be happy?

After all, you can't spend all your time  
looking at the harbour, listening to the frangipani leaves  
slither & rattle, late at night, a drink in your hand

feeling cheerfully or mellowly existential. After all, do *you*?

Though there are other things to Sydney - the balmy,  
milky, soft air on a cool summer day,  
the radios buzzing with the races, that emanate quietly  
from the pubs &

TABs, the old men in thongs, cigarettes in their  
t-shirt sleeves,  
so nicely seedy, the corner shops - but these things  
are tiny patches:  
of Annandale, & other bits - of 100 yards or less - of

footpath and aged picket fence, & the mixture of cars -  
broken &  
flash - the particular charm of which  
is tolerance for everything else, or reads that way.

One facet of a tough city. Can you 'say' that?  
And there's the poetry scene.  
(One down here too.)

"Decoupage" - I guess that does mean putting  
a lining inside something (a box you said) rather than  
cutting little bits, from the top of a box, to make it

castellated - like a toy soldiers' fort - because you say  
you are doing it  
to some cupboards too. I have an image of you & Jane,  
in triangular paper hats, dressed in primary colours

holding aloft small wooden half-swords,

bursting out of open cupboards (slightly castellated)  
- a crowded, vertical composition - a little like  
those de Chirico gladiators: *they're* usually

waving their swords about - with a bit of pillar handy  
& one incongruous lounge chair,  
a fallen bit of pediment - though my picture of you & Jane

is more 'Stanley Spencer' - though less crowded  
& manic & airless. Though anyone who *behaved* like that -  
imagine stepping into your house & finding you & Jane yelling  
& whooping

looking up, interrupted, while playing 'pirates'!  
At that thought I nearly spit nonexistent cake  
from my mouth  
- a noise like a motorbike starting - the little Greek man opposite

looks up. We often sit at tables near each other - he  
with *The Greek Herald*, me with *The Guardian*. (Didn't you know  
I was English?)

Actually, Pam, you *should move* down here: I go outside -  
& the air is exactly what I want from Sydney - so moist  
it is almost cool, & softly bright - & there's another thing

that is very Sydney - or Melbourne's idea of Sydney - the great  
doorway to the T-shirt shop, filled with the fake jaws of a shark -  
that you step through. When it first opened up

I saw a Japanese tourist  
delightedly getting his wife to photograph him  
standing in it. Unfortunately, the t-shirts they sell

are terrible - full of jokes about sharks - gross  
views of Australian life, the sense of humour they appeal to  
making one despair - of creeping Americanization  
- like an old man.

On the other hand, they seem to be going out of business.

I write this  
with a pencil - it's my lunchbreak now (these last  
seven lines). But the pencil drags too slow -

on this particular paper - so I stop here:  
back at the same table  
in the coffee shop.

I read instead.

## Poem (Dynamic Sleeper)

Cath

- a dynamic sleeper -  
makes a curved nougat line  
under the doona, an  
islamic-looking comma,  
her dark head at the end.

As I try to figure

what / am

Cath has moved

(I sit beside)

(& think of Laurie & Pam

why is it always them? &

when I think that I think: Dennis, John Forbes -

& Johnny J.

Anna Couani

Mary Christie

Bronwyn Platten

Mill.

Becky Davis

- a warrior tomorrow.

Thom Corcoran

Thinking: maybe I will write  
a little like Mr Whalen

Shoot off a few opinions  
All isolated from each other

Tho he is a Buddhist &  
the ideas  
hang together

- I am  
just some  
divided nutter

Is man not naturally good, Mr Johnson?  
No Madam, no more than a wolf!  
And woman? No more so. This is worse than Swift (sotto voce  
says woman)

*Scenes of Life at the Capital*

(I am reading)

Margot is going to curate some Adelaide  
Postmodern for the regional galleries  
almost ten years post time

At the Flash I read the paper

At the Baci I think & stare

& write review of Anton.  
& finish it home in bed.

a good idea I nearly have  
goes wandering - to where in  
the room?

I sit patiently  
for its return A couple of times it  
nearly comes goes off again

it is a good thought - I know - at  
last it comes I write it down

Hmm.

Yesterday I was offered  
8 "contact hours" - teaching -  
at the art school - no preparation  
Maybe they *want* me  
to just shoot off .

random ideas -

free associate

from my 'collected' 'wisdom'

(see the inverted commas there?)

the knowledge I have

gained

in all my years of careful

- carefree? -

unemployment

underqualified

finally, not having done 'anything'

has come to seem

the ultimate wisdom?

Or it's the reviewing : he has opinions -

he can teach our students ! (?)

Honours course on Popular Culture !

(hilarious)

To tune of "Yesterday" intones:

Underdale

*do-doot do do do do doot do-do*

I remember when we (every week) drove through Thirroul

I would sing *Thigh rule thighruuule . . . it's*

a wonderful place

to tune of

NY NY

Probably an endlessly talking David Antin / is /

"what this place needs"

Well I'm not it

Most art ideas are so easy to poke your  
finger thru one really feels you've  
got to watch your 'lip' self  
censorship

Most art fails as art : most craft succeeds as craft (Maxim)

but that's its trip! that's  
why we like it, or are interested

This is not the materialist or sociological view  
- tho I can talk that way, too -

but why not? at the bottom of the pyramid  
is art school - *most* of the students don't become  
artists - perfectly consonant with that  
/ is / most artists don't hit the target  
we admire it cause it's difficult -  
or rare

imagine talking the other jargon : common sense,  
deconstruction, & cultural studies  
"The Cultural Efficacy of *Hey Dad*"

I see Becky at work over the weekend : they won  
the game (hockey) against  
a team of toughies. She was  
looking forward to it,  
a toughie herself

And now - months later (I'm  
in bed again, writing this -  
she is leaving : 4 years  
in the job - the best person -  
why didn't I get to know her?  
better ? more ?



I don't want her to go -  
why can't she stay? She can't  
that's all

- moving on;  
moving away

I remember when she first came:  
"weren't but 'this' high"

"Scenes of Life at the Capital"

now I am at the capital - Sydney -  
attending to the last years  
of my dad

closing up the house  
putting him on a plane, an emotional  
time

When he's on the plane  
I will phone Pam - till now  
I have been so taken up with my father  
cooking talking finalising accounts  
care of the house the redirecting of mail  
I have not been able to call /  
anyone -  
not with a view to meeting.

I'm glad I did : it's been an  
intense time.

I am in bed again - that will be the  
principle of the poem maybe -  
*"Poem written in bed"*

in beds.

Is *that* the kind of poet  
he is? - makes me sound  
like Rochester, John Wilmot  
a 17th century rake

alternatively, someone who almost  
never sleeps : 3 times to bed in  
so many months (!)

## To Generalize

We sit at a table in *The Baci*,  
an indoor table -  
with a view of the tables outside, that may act  
as a springboard,  
the false limb,  
or 'pseudopod',  
of a primitive one-cell animal,  
which  
- tho to  
what end -  
I compare our brains to:

We are *not* outdoors, no  
But we are not quite *inside*  
either  
- because of the windows -  
Tho should it rain  
we are entirely inside, & glad  
of it.  
( In fact, it *won't* rain.  
And -  
*another* fact - the fan is on 'too hard'  
- but half an hour, what *is*  
a lunch hour, that one can afford  
to move,  
or complain,  
unless one does it *right away?*

Yep?

Right? )

Take *The Guardian*, a newspaper :  
open it - & you are transported,  
far away.

I sit, 'literally', in *The Baci*, the

literal one - others sit, or sit metaphorically,  
as you do, Reader,  
at metaphorical *Bacis* & think away too, aware,  
as I am - *for I 'generalize'* -  
of the larger world, the larger tides

& patterns that  
pass through it,

& of their smallness  
& the incidental nature

of their own lives  
in relation *to* these tides,

even of the  
invigoratingly

'human dimension'  
this knowledge lends

- & its practical inutility.

You look outside, at the beautiful, slightly glaring light  
that lands on *Cacas' Chemists* - & lands, too,  
on whatever *you're* looking at - & consider the traffic,  
the passersby,  
the scope of the disasters in Africa - which is almost  
Medieval - though modern because man-made -  
& the scandals in the City - which are Hogarthian,  
English, & 18th century, though modern, too -  
& your *own* problems, which are contingent &  
practical - how to rob a bank,  
(whether to move from that fan) whether  
to get another coffee - which you *need*  
if it is metaphorical & this stuff  
*brings you down.*

If it is *not* metaphorical  
but a real one, you must have  
a whole hour for your lunch hour -  
mine has 30 minutes.

## 2

Now, did you take your newspaper? No?

Take mine, the *Guardian*. It is an eye,  
a balloon on which you float, "Eighty Days" style,  
around the world, never really touching down,  
and also, of course, like a limb. You pick it up,  
hit something with it,  
perhaps a fly. And the world  
is that li'l bit littler.

Or it is a steady state.

There are people bashing flies  
all over the world - *Hong Kong Herald* here,  
*Bombay Tribune* there, *The Lima Truth*, Montreal's  
famous *Examiner* - killing perhaps the only fly  
in that part of Canada - or did it get away. Who knows? The

waitress looks up -

what is that guy

swatting at,

at **The 'Syrup & Muffin' Diner**? He settles down.

Her eyes

return to the jars in front of her.

*Your eye*

takes in the window

& the scene outside - cars, pedestrians, *Cacas the Chemist* -

& is 'drawn' outside, & with it you

(with the assent of your brain - which in truth

according to some theories, is

an outgrowth, a sophistication, a *development*

of that optical organ) are drawn outside also.

You arrive together, your eye delighted,

your brain keeping up, & your 'self' rounding out their number,

invigorating to be up & doing - up &

'going', unfortunately, back to work -

*in five more minutes.*

## A Picture

In Manet's great painting  
*The Insomniacs* the three readers

share the bed and white  
bedspread, two with books held up before them

reading, a girl and her mother,  
the other, a man, has books too, on the bedspread before him

but writes in a pad - *in pencil on a pad* -  
their story. His books are:

(black and white) - the poems of Towle -  
and (pink and black) - Violi.

The girl, who lies on her back, and holds her book -  
a pumpkin yellow, with blue and red flashes in it - almost above her,

reads *Mallory and the Mystery Diary*. Her mother, beside her,  
and who reads propped up -

though she has slid down a little  
by the time

of the moment the picture is showing -

has a pile of books,  
between herself and the girl - where their knees would be. These

are chiefly blue, and the book  
she holds is green and black, *Troubled Waters*.

You can see  
that the woman's face

is of a type much used  
by the Impressionists, by Manet and Morisot, the features

delicate and a little sharp, rather than round.

But it is not Morisot's face

as painted by Manet, or  
as in Morisot's

portrait of herself - or Monet's  
*last* portrait, of his wife, as she lay dying -

though it has that *imprecision*, which makes it seem  
'Vuillard' -

it is Cath Kenneally,  
wearing a round-necked top

of the palest, scrambled-egg  
yellow, thinking deeply -

yet attuned - at least slightly - to the girl,  
her daughter, beside her, wearing lilac pyjamas.

Anna. Her face  
is round, unlike her mother's, and her eyes are wide and dark -

where her mother's  
are paler, green - and her hair

is long, and braided in one  
single plait - pulled behind, *in-*

*visible* in the painting, which emphasizes (or only sees)  
the subsequently rounded head. Her

mother's hair, by contrast,  
is dark and a little red - and short and stylistically

a jarring note in Manet's painting - or might  
perhaps be

if the painting's manner were sufficiently sharp,  
detailed enough, to pick this up - but the brushwork

is very generalized and summary: who would notice?

Beside them I am more incongruous.  
I have a watch on for one thing

though in the style I am proposing it could read as  
anything (a bracelet?) - a smear of colour

at the wrist, the kind of detail that remains inexplicable -  
but incidental even in a style this broad

and part of what ... well, what Manet saw -  
and which makes it all convincing, as a gestalt. (A word

I guess Manet did not use: they talked though  
of the decorative effect, the unity, and truth and sincerity -

*"Nature through a temperament."*) The watch hand  
goes to my head

which is bent, writing, writing this.

I tell the girls, and we all look up: Anna smiles,

Cath looks 'poised' and I, because I've been concentrating,  
have a frown disappearing. Hi.



## Mostly Hindley Street

"He never spoke out" - Mathew Arnold

I think the same thing is happening again

Same waitress same coffee same  
street

"A black coffee & a ...

... Baclava."

"We're out, I'm sorry."

"Oh well,"

- points to rumbaba -

"The rumbaba."

I take it to my table

A big smile

to the waitress

who has brought me coffee

for 15 years now

less some years

than others

& look at the view

the State

Bank

or some bank

its name changing

as it goes broke, gets bailed out, gets

sold off

same building at any rate

floating there, handsome, in the grey rainy

sky

above the small-town, 1930s, two-storey

street facades

on Hindley Street

housing

pleasantly cruddy, & crass, dance clubs, drink

barns, & ... *Hellenic Travel* ... *The Singing Restaurant!*

one I never noticed

must've opened in the last

week or so, or is it still being renovated

for its  
dismal tuneful future?  
dismal & short I imagine  
& tune/ess  
If I feel happy again  
isn't that *good*?  
The radio's playing *Werewolf Of London*  
how nice of them  
& I exit & stomp  
confidently to work  
Ar - ooo!  
Well, I *will*.  
For now, I look  
out the window at all the clean surfaces - lovely  
New Realism-style colours.  
A terrible  
art movement -  
paintings mostly dull -  
but it sure made reality look good for  
looking a bit like it - as if the art movement  
gave a certain style of scene  
an ideal  
to live up to  
- to which,  
in certain conditions -  
bit of 'down & out', bit  
of nothing-going-on  
&  
the right light -  
it could aspire  
Suck in that gut! straighten  
that back!  
pull the collar up &  
forward slightly,  
act casual!  
& my heart goes out.

I write to Laurie  
about Thomas Gray, & his  
short walks  
a man well before his time -

he'd've loved day time TV

Anyway, taking a  
short walk now  
I see Millie's friend Steve

lead singer with *Free Moving Curtis*  
a band  
named after a black male Barbie Doll  
that  
never sold in Australia: I think they saw an ad for it  
in a magazine & loved the name

Steve  
was something of a martyr to day time TV himself  
when he lived at Westbury Street, as I remember

I could come out at almost any time & there he'd  
be  
watching it late at night early in the morning

day time TV he watched the worst of whatever was on:

Late at night he could find Day Time TV  
tho

- unlike Thomas Gray -  
(!)

Steve was steeling  
himself, pondering, planning his future

I see him  
now making long strides down Hindley  
past *Cacas Chemist's*, past *Jerusalem Sheshkebab*,  
& on  
tight black jeans, his hair reddish for  
a change -

pursuing the gig I guess

"He never spoke out."

Unlike Thomas Gray Steve speaks out

regularly

a band of humour

& rage

At least, I *hear* they're okay.

Gray wrote that *one* poem, more or less, &  
seven others

- nothing for years on end -

saying 'it pays to keep busy'

so he catalogued this, made

a list of that, wrote in the margins of his books -

taught nothing, wrote nothing, "he never spoke out,"

Arnold said

- & went for short walks, as I told

Laurie, collected seeds, grew some flowers in his rooms. He

"kept himself *to himself*" - a phrase

I always loved - Yes, he did that, too.

Of course

it is a short walk

to the EAF

(where I will walk)

Will Steve

hit the big time?

the odds are against it

More chance in poetry (!)

- tho a smaller

big time

I bought some chive seeds myself

last week

That I probably won't even get round

to planting

- tho Cath will.

I see I am  
drawing  
a comparison  
& that it can't make me  
very happy.

The fortunes of a lunch hour -  
one moment exhilarated

moments later - gloom  
I guess these are the rocky rapids, & breakers,  
Gray rode at the refectory  
imagined slights  
of the undergraduates of Cambridge

Prithee, what  
does Mr Gray 'do'?  
Nothing.

Well, I hear he '*Never Speaks Out!*' (huh-ha-hah)

Letter from Laurie today  
who says  
Wasn't Gray supposed to be a "bit of a prig"?

Well -  
the impression he gave

& tho the biography hates Arnold's  
phrase

& attempts to defend Gray's life on the graveyard  
shift

staying 'occupied' collecting buds  
noting the

weather  
the arrival of the first grasshoppers  
& emendations to various lexicons

— his *fear* of giving his  
first lecture :  
& which he never gave —

still, ...

Yes

“prig” came to mind -  
along with “insipid”

all to an almost hilarious degree applicable

& the ‘life’ of quietism & depression - maybe  
(the only excuse) he couldn’t help it.

One can  
imagine

Samuel Johnson headbutting him

“Gray was dull sir.

Dull in public, dull in his closet, dull to himself.  
He invented a new way of being dull -  
and some people admired him for it.”

They never

met.

Gray saw him in the street once, lumbering  
past, & said - “There goes Ursa Major.”

Prig &

Drip

of the first order.

\*

Tonight I talk on Modernism -

(Rock Hudson

leans to Doris Day’s ear

“*The arts shall march  
in the very van ...*”

“Oh, Rock! Cut it out!”)

- but tonight I do - *post* modernism, too!

\*

Very full today, *The Baci*

Which I remark

to the waitress

who looks almost relieved

when I say it

*Mill!*

who I will ring

when I get to Brisbane in a few weeks time.

Not John Stuart Mill

- Millie Dickins.

---

Sitting here in the pub

Feeling like *Whistler's Mother* -

Waiting for Crab

This always happens

tho tonight I don't mind

(yet)

(in another *hour* I'll be

dis-satisfied)

in black jeans,

black-brown ('coal'?) jumper

- Yves Saint-Laurent ?

someone French -

long black coat

In the corner seat

in the quiet 'nook'

writing

drinkin', thinkin', writin', sittin'

a smile to this couple here

that guy there

*her*

A bit of a look

at the Brute who approaches

the bar

(large guy, officer, of the 'Brute' type -  
enormous jaw, flat nose - seems  
, actually, Mr Gentle

I rock back & forth

like Whister's mother, like *Crabby's* mom  
many times since,

thinking

When will he come?

Where *is* that boy?

Actually I look a

little more like,

probably,

the companion to that painting, a

symphony in grey,

the portrait of Carlyle -

or was it Ruskin? -

some prim dork sitting stiffly

a little huffily in a chair in his greatcoat -

as I sit here. *When in walks Crab ... !*

---

The fat guy, outside  
the tattoo shop,  
holds a baby on his  
chest - well, sitting on  
the swell of his big black T-shirt.



A wife - girlfriend, sister,  
defacto sister-in-law - watches.  
A *paterfamilias* act  
on-the-cheap.

(We  
don't like each other, it is  
true: he felt some need  
to crowd me on the footpath one night,  
to assert what he imagines  
is superiority. Oh well,  
who's perfect? Not me.

Not him.)

Has  
my coffee shop shed custom -  
in the change to smaller premises?  
I want it to survive.

A little 'man' - that is, a kid  
probably - cycles by. No hands.  
A courier, seemingly rolling up  
the cuffs of his gloves - looking remarkably like  
the bad guy in *Doonesbury*. (Duke?  
is that his name? the one with  
the Vietnamese girl assistant?  
who does scams?) Same large head,  
same nose - & crash helmet &  
goggles making the face look large  
& caricatured.

This takes  
longer to describe than his  
whipping past!

No Futurist !! -

just a moseyin' kind of guy.  
(Hi, pard.)

Anyway, now he's gone - in fact

he appeared only briefly in the space  
between a car & a truck -

("I did but see him  
passing by - & thought  
*Doonesbury*")

& I look at my short black  
take a last taste  
& return to work

---

I write a bit more  
of the Richard Grayson review  
add a word  
I'd been waiting to appear in my memory  
- since I started it  
some days ago -  
Simone  
rang just before I left for lunch  
from  
another gallery  
to ask  
Did the E.A.F.  
have a hot glue gun?  
Nuh  
was the answer, finally -  
when I had looked around -  
I wished her luck  
her show 'opens' tonight.  
Things, in art,  
are always very last minute.  
or, like Michael's piece  
(last minute, too?)  
they don't work  
the day *after* the opening.  
So I ring *them*.  
("Your show isn't working.")

I forgot to bring the Tranter interview

- about

how he's *tired* of poetry

- Well, who isn't?

tho when you're writing it

you wouldn't do anything else.

What I *will* do

'tho'

is go back to work - in

just 10 minutes.

Dinner, tonight, with Cath

whom I always have dinner with

but dinner 'out'

is our plan

& afterwards, Crab

- Crab's band -

plays at the Exeter

& we might brave the

beergarden - enclosed

but, in winter, still cold -

the cigarette smoke

& all the rest, to hear them

drummer, trombone & a sax

sort of *Salvos-*

*do-Fred Wellsely*

- and - *Swordfish Trombone,*

only piquant.

We'll see.

## News of the Day

*je est un autre* - Arthur Rimbaud

*I've another, too!* - Lou Costello

Peter B. poet in Rome

w. "difficult second album" problems

- follow-up to first book, need

to be different etc

I spend the morning

giving (an) improvised talk

to high school students

on *The Nature*

of the E.A.F.

& *intro* to a rather formalist, light,

&

decorative

artist

Naturally emphasising his

'conceptual' bits

My own difficult xth book

- difficult "whatever" book -

will be coming out soon,

one in which

I emphasize "the conceptual

bits", too

(Unshaven

& slightly boho looking:

I hope this

contradicts

interestingly

the 'aesthete' piece of my  
talk

tho the students

as likely

- as correctly, too -

thought

What a dill.)

I don't  
'know'

that my poems

say anything new

'conceptually'

well maybe they do

- Doomed to say

everything

twice -

(Twice! you should

*be so lucky. Twice!)*

Don't the Velvet Underground do?

(say things twice) ?

[& I quote]

"too-too, too much"

I ain't

never had

Too Much Fun

(( wistfully ))

or another  
A blues I sing, one way  
in every poem

I've

had  
'enough'

I've

had a little -

but I ain't never had ... (etc)

#

This place

... the students here ...

Uni students this time

- mostly Japanese, all

talking to each other: it is

pleasantly

animated: every

word

emphasised easily

as they

read essay questions

out

quizzically

quotes from articles

etc

their beautiful voices

sophisticated

Optimistic

about their futures

Actually, I look around

& she is

Indian

Tho the ones in view

(male & female,

in pairs, at every

table)

are Asian.

(Business Studies)

Then,

some mixed -

foreign & Australian.

Some all-Australian tables

*me*

*all Australian -*

you Jane?

\*

( Sweet Jane.

\*

do-do do-do,

do doo ... )

\*

Anyone who had a brain

you think that

they would use it

*Not me*

I'm going back to **work** in just a second!

( in  
a 'sec'! )

\*

An essay

By a poet I

... well, 'like', but regard

As something of an

apostate

Saying what I think

but wish she hadn't said

- So *that's* the Church I'm in! -

Explains

that it is not a

matter

of explaining yourself

I buy a pen from the Chinese lady

in the Chinese

shop

pale mauve

( She offered me black )

( Out of deference to my

Baudelairean demeanour )

\*



Kids seem to have invaded the city again

- is it

holiday time? -

the girls being cute, the guys being

tough

ho hum

How much

longer will I inhabit

etcetera

\*

Howard looks more glumly simian

than ever

chump, chimp, & PM

Sumo wrestlers, soon, come to

town

The Japanese student who lives with us

- Tomoko -

briefly interested

Nostalgia for home

where uncle and brother

are enthusiasts

where the domestic

noise

of them,

watching it on television ...

so much more familiar than the sound

here -

*where, however, Tomoko fits in*

Foreigners, us.

I'm

just an other myself

a line I think I have  
never read in the  
original

*imagine having only read the original*

Julia Kristeva's little head

looks at me quizzically

from the book on the table  
near where my coffee once was

- swept now to the kitchen

by the cook

a cheerful type, in high spirits:

I think

it is his first day -

her head rests on her hand

(&) in the light of what I've said

is

severe

disapproving.

"Ideas come to us as the successors to  
griefs."

Remember how world weary we would feel

- adult, woozily melancholic,

iron entering the soul

at 15 ?

when the Walker Brothers sang

"The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore" ?

They sing it now

on the coffeeshop radio

altering the whole key

of my thought

I exit - at last, & briefly -  
"considered"

A noble teenage  
sentiment  
wrapped about me

which I never thought would  
still fit

manfully I stride

thoughtless, modern

mildly sad a little blank unaggrieved

to the  
traffic light  
where I think, *straight against the light I cross*

but wait

## GILES AUTY FURIOSO

"We have noticed a marked decline in deference."

- *The Spectator*, 1997

"I think continually of those who were truly great,"  
someone said, but I like to think of things like  
the *erased de Kooning*, as considered by, say, Giles Auty.

I'm funny that way.

I'm funny like that.

That way I'm funny.

(Etc.)

- Sol Le Witt

I used to find amusing the idea of  
Donald Brook greeting Cy Twombly -  
like King George. *Scribble, scribble, scribble,*  
*eh Mr Twombly.*

But, as the artist's funny name  
has become more prominent the anecdote  
about Gibbon & George

has been forgotten.

I can't *do* that  
any more

Without entering the realm

of the private joke

- sometimes my favourite realm.

Are you with me? There's no point. I can't  
make sense much longer -

Cochise?

- ***Who, me?***

Yes. Take this nail & hit it into my forehead.

Firmly.

- ***You crazy, boss!***

When

I feel like this I read the poems of Ron Padgett

- NO OFFENCE! -

I jump down, turn around  
pick a bale of cotton

A little wine in the morning,  
a little breakfast at night.

Where *is* the great  
but absent art of our age, Giles Auty,  
huh?

Take your hands out of your pocket when you  
talk to me, son!

Crusty old fool  
you sketchy cruiser

To the right of the critic - the picture is on the left,  
large, smudged - to *the right* the wainscot drifts away  
& becomes, after a passage of irresolute drawing,  
sand - there stands the figure of Napoleon.  
*And he is in one helluva mood*, as always. His  
function is purely allegorical - as we must point out  
to him. He represents the mood  
of Mr Auty, on a relatively bad day - the tide of history,  
the impoverished taste of most of this century. What  
am I even *doing* in this allegory, he thinks -  
Napoleon is drawn weakly, as if by  
some amateur - say Victor Hugo,  
inspired but easy, an *idea*, not a figure observed.  
Though it's Napoleon alright, & stormy clouds of brushed ink  
loom immediately right of him, ineptly complementing  
the vague grey,  
at left, of *the erased de Kooning*.

Further right -  
what is this, a bad dream!? - some vacant fool like  
Larry Rivers is fucking a chair. Must I be  
associated with this? What is this called,  
*An Allegorical Disparaging of Giles Auty?* Yep.

*The Raft of the Medusa.*

... for me the rot sets in sometime after Delacroix -

he had colour. Ingres had "the probity of drawing".  
But look at Chassériau ... & then  
the Symbolists came along & it's been downhill  
ever since. That dill for instance - Puvis de  
Chavannes!

& yet, could we have had Gauguin  
without him? I would prefer to.

Just as I would

prefer the late Derain without the earlier -  
though *that is his whole point*. Why couldn't Bonnard  
be stronger - couldn't he see where it led?  
Hard to approve the politics of David,  
or even Caravaggio - a lout probably - I can't see him  
reading *The Spectator*. Was there no one round  
like me to listen to? Or is that the point, not listening?  
The whole thing becomes pretty terminally ill  
with Duchamp. Just look at the deleterious effects  
his permission had on lesser talents - Picabia, Arp -  
though this gives Duchamp credit for talent  
*he never had*.

It leads directly to all this nonsense with  
Sherrie Levine, Daniel Buren - art as  
mere conceptual gesture - in this country John Nixon,  
the idiotic self portraits of Mike Parr (drawn as if  
from a funny angle - what is the point of the  
anamorphosis, somewhere different to stand in the gallery?  
squinting, backing into sculpture?), the grandiosities  
of Imants Tillers. *Young man, the academicians  
were right!* Look at Sickert - & go back from there,  
being selective, avoiding the mistakes of Turner, for what  
was good about him, yet not so far as Poussin; Velasquez  
was a high point, if only generous in very small measure.  
Hard men, he & I. Let me introduce myself,  
Giles Auty - my eyes narrowed, my jaw firm - doomed  
to wander, through time, homeless, a brooding figure,  
part Napoleon, part Goofy, caped. I'm right. You  
do know that. I used to write for *The Spectator*.

Johann Winckelmann

## notes

- “A marked decline in deference”. This decline the *Spectator* noted as it became apparent to even *its* readers that John Major’s Tories would be defeated at the next election. The *Spectator* is home to Peregrine Worsthorne, Auberon Waugh & others of Auty’s ilk who’ve been trotted out to the colonies from time to time - to ginger things up with their ebullient views.
- “I think continually of those who were truly great” - a line from Spender, I think.
- Robert Rauschenberg erased a de Kooning drawing - a kind of ‘significant gesture’ ironising the gestural artist’s endeavour, erasing it, doubling it etc.
- Cy Twombly - the odd, but not so odd, monicker of a European-based US artist whose works are often described as pure mark-making, codeless meaning, automatism, & delectable, moody & poignant.
- *Scribble, scribble, scribble - eh Mr Gibbon!* - King George’s response to Gibbon upon publication of the latter’s *Decline & Fall*.
- Donald Brook - cool & mocking doubter of all things expressionistic, transcendent & idealist in art - in fact rather doubtful of art itself. Excepting art-as-properly-so-called.
- Cochise - in this poem the American Indian - *any* American Indian - as traduced by that country’s cowboy-&-injun movies of the 50s, once a staple of daytime TV.
- Ron Padgett - in many ways the leading US poet of his generation.
- from “jump down, turn around” to “hands out of my pocket” are quoted, respectively, Leadbelly, Lou Reed, Clement Greenberg, Otis Spann.
- “Crusty old fool, sketchy cruiser” - Adelaide teen street argot, circa 1997.
- Victor Hugo - people forget the windbag’s efforts as watercolorist & draughtsperson.
- “fucking a chair” - Larry Rivers, perhaps the leading US artist of his generation: a later work represents (i.e., depicts) this harmless adolescent activity of the artist’s.
- *An Allegorical Disparaging of Giles Auty* - I think this must be the alternative title or job description of the poem - though “Allegorical” aspires to airs.
- *The Wreck of the Medusa* - why do people unfailingly say ‘Raft’? - is a painting by Gericault.
- Delacroix - had colour.
- Ingres - had the probity of drawing. (Or was drawing “the crucible of his style”?)
- Chassériau - tried some of both. (These entries are sourced from *The Dictionary Of Received Ideas*.)
- Puvis (de Chavannes) - solemn, hilarious, he had something though.
- Gauguin - was played by Anthony Quinn in that movie about the life of the other guy.

- Derain - part of the Return to Order.
- David - Jacques Louis David, hot-head radical.
- Caravaggio - we actually know that Caravaggio subscribed in his Roman years (nothing is known certainly of those following) to *The Lanced Tumour Review, We're Dirt & Easy Chicken*. Caravaggio contributed to the second & third issues of *Modern Painters* - a letter from Parma & a letter from Venice (though he is not thought to have visited Venice). He appears never to have been paid.
- "Sculpture? - something you back into while looking at painting." - Ad Reinhardt's view. Actually he had backed into the critic, Hilton Kramer.
- Auty "protests too much"? (Shakespeare) I'm not so sure Auty did write for the *Spectator*.



## Double Portrait

down amongst this pile of books by the bed  
the bottom of a magazine sticks out, as it  
has for some weeks now, announcing "Chuck Close"  
- an exhibition - & consequently, if briefly, I think of him,  
a career I know almost  
nothing about: one portrait, that resembles

the IRA's Gerry Adams, but which - more, presumably - resembles  
Close himself. Also by the bed  
another's portrait, someone I *have* met - almost  
diaphanous, evanescent, in the photo. I met the poet it  
depicts years after it was taken. Tony Towle. It seems therefore magical  
& fictive, like a fable *about* him -  
a fable he has been cast in - relative to the solidity of the few facts  
that, for me, say, constitute Close.

A more recent image of Chuck Close -  
a photo - has him in a wheelchair. He is painting, & it resembles  
that same portrait, so I take it that it *was* him  
all those years ago - done in grids, pixellated in appearance, looming  
over artist, wheelchair, bed,  
table-with-brushes - though (in greys) it could almost,  
or *easily*, be a drawing. It

suggests some struggle, this photo, heroism... True, it  
is something I hadn't known about Chuck Close.  
For seconds each night, regularly almost -  
though subliminally until today - *which*, irritatingly, resembles  
suddenly the day before it, in that again for some seconds this morning, in bed,  
unwillingly I entertain my only two images of him -

they 'pop up': & once more I dwell on them - on him -  
(or don't) momentarily. It  
is my memory's almost empty file on Chuck Close - &, in bed,  
unwanted, it makes itself available to me. Normally it wouldn't, and thinking of Close  
I think pretty immediately of Thomas Ruff, whose work his resembles -  
the German photographer, in large format, of faces & streets. While I have almost

never thought about the American I have thought about Ruff - who almost came to Australia, I think: someone phoned once to ask should we bring him. Out of regret that I didn't push harder I've attended to Ruff ever since. All of which in no way resembles my feelings for this other portrait - a poet whose work I love, so that it is pure good faith, this relationship. The 'cool' of the early Close I found unimpressive, & ugly - in a fashionable way, whose fashionability I wasn't buying. Chuck's by the bed

by accident, a name only. By contrast, the poems are by the bed permanently. It is the poet's *Selected*, now out of print. On it Towle resembles other pictures I have seen of him, though this is the most curious. He might almost have borrowed the coat he wears. He will regret, amusedly, his hair. The guileless heroism of the smile, the eyes, he will not regret. But the poems I keep close

he might have wanted more for. I grant Close the pathos of the new works - though I have only experienced it via magazine pages, one or two pictures ... *Then*, Minimalism & Pop 'had had their day' as things new & imperative. I didn't find them (or him), in '74, inherently compelling. Not the way

I found about the same time, say, Tuckson, Robert Ryman. (In this 'indirect' way guilt maintains a close connection between me and a particular sub-set of art works.

As close or closer than between me and works I've liked probably. I remember them ruefully: a history of opinions - mine - via mistakes I might have made.) Literalism was my big thing. Will the day come when it is not? I'm not sure it still isn't - the pictures

on the back of Towle's books regarding me quizzically as I say it - pictures in which his face has altered from a kind of resolute simplicity, looking the way David would paint Napoleon say, towards a more casually raffish, day-at-the-office pose: open collar, hair tousled, the close New York weather (tho Larry Rivers' artwork suggests Via dei Carrottieri, Via del Corso... a coffee shop or bar on one of them,

- or an Italianate church or library as setting) ... the weather plasters strips of hair to the forehead. Near them

the hand upon which the head rests, the face looking at us, amused though withdrawn.

The pictures  
never tell us who is in that gaze - though of one we know, via  
a poem he wrote, that he wondered would people assume - as they made their way  
past him - he was famous? & would the smoke appear, as it blew close  
by (from left to right, I guess, as we look at the photo)? It doesn't. One imagines him  
that day

stepping out of his office for the portrait - unfairly less certain of fame, or knowing  
that one day

his name would make one of a minor configuration of names. People would read them  
and a certain New York charm, wistfulness, way of life would be evoked - the close  
of the century, the American century perhaps. Of all the various pictures  
I have of New York, mentally, those I like best are intimately architectural, way  
more domestic than skyscrapers, say. (Footpaths. Leaves. Shop-fronts.) Images  
gained via

TV shows - but also my one trip there, and Tony Towle's poems. The connecting  
shots, where we move, via

the coffee shop, to Jerry's apartment, to Elaine's new boyfriend's. Night in Towle  
pertains always to New York, for me, but day

can be either New York's apartments, streets ... or a kind of dazzling, elating,  
studio-lit clarity - that plays over Tiepolo's clouds, de Chirico's white  
horses & crazed senators, way-

laid armchairs, pillars & pilasters - neoclassical, absurdly ornamented. While  
*this* is true of them

the poems are also restful, airy. Poems immensely civilized. Noble, grandiloquent - &  
amusingly indirect as method. Like Close's pictures

they are large, but they are gestures of self-effacement, miming a kind of huge  
Romantic pathos: self-directed irony - but a *fictive* self, the formally  
preserved reticence as to the real self its single enormous gesture. Large -  
like the Close

portrait with its squared, detachedly close-rendered sheets of detail: the big  
identity conveyed via

isolated fragments, all attention to technique. The artist's single pictures locate  
one seeming moment of a day,

typically the moment that begins or ends it, in a mirror. The poems say more, do  
more, pass lightly, even, over the moments of portraiture or exaggerate  
them terribly. Except on the back cover, the poet, to be seen, looks away.

# Three Poems For John Forbes



## Coffee & John Forbes Poem

Funny, the Guston selfportrait  
I always associated with myself  
I associate with you - "he  
became his admirers"  
not much of a fate  
for you in my case.  
Your new book is out  
I'm reading it in  
exactly the place you'd have  
imagined me in - a  
nondescript Adelaide coffee shop  
your picture of me too cruelly true  
- well, not "cruelly", but "true" -  
taking the world in manageable bites:  
there was me, there was the  
art world (I knew all the artists)  
there was Poetry - an idea  
I held in my head -  
there was politics in the papers  
& out the windows Hindley Street -  
reality, the  
'modern world' -  
I could have a think  
maybe a bit of a write  
putting things, keeping things,  
in their place.

The new poems  
are great. But that's it  
the end of the supply -  
poems that as they came along  
seemed admonitions, a wake-up call -  
& we rose or didn't  
to the occasion  
knowing there'd be more,  
thinking of you. I pictured  
you, typically, in late night concentration -  
in your place, rather barren  
a naked light maybe over you -  
your head, your glasses, a  
T-shirt, maybe TV going

in the corner - the sound down  
behind you. Was it like that?  
I feel like phoning Gig -  
saying what *did* he look like  
there writing?

Late at night?  
in the morning? kitchen table?  
did he face the wall, the  
fireplace?  
I visited - once or  
twice -  
I remember the scene.  
He liked it. It was not what you would call  
'comfortable'.

The young look cute to me  
just for being young. A couple  
walks by her hand for warmth  
in his hip-pocket, arms around each other.  
John saw them  
as he saw everything maybe  
more accurately. I don't know.  
I think it'll be weird -  
those wake-up calls that were  
the poems will now come to seem  
a period, a 'moment' as we  
Marxists say (parentheses here for  
*har har*) now passed -  
to which Australian poetry  
never responded.

## Hi John

in the lecture The Idea of The City / Modernity /  
The Suburban Mall I plan to quote my favourite poets

but find I am looking out the window  
looking up from the cream of the paper -

green leaves, ivy-covered tin  
(of the fence some feet away), but mostly

rust, & darker brown: leaves -  
unswept, on the brick & at the base of the olive tree - the

ancient plum whose  
leaves & arthritic black limbs

frame this, I think. A bird moves maybe  
or the sun shines, intermittently,

that little bit brighter.  
I look again at various poems that,

as it happens, could be  
models for talking of you - though

in each case  
I doubt if I could do it,

sustain the particular sort of beauty  
possessed in the original.

It's interesting - or is it,  
is it just adventitious? -

that beauty is the desired effect.  
Maybe it is fair enough -

a number of your poems  
achieved such grace

&, as well,

beauty seems the kind of  
balm that should

be offered the lack you felt -  
recognition withheld.

This seems not  
to be that poem. Not beautiful.

*But that's me*, as you  
might point out, *not you*. In fact

I did point it out. *I* do all  
the talking here.

I'm alone - as are  
others, your friends - in my case

with the curious goad  
of many of the poems before me

you loved, I'd guess. "Buried At Springs", "Salute",  
Berrigan's, Frank's. Whom it is always

weird calling that. Tho  
'the literature'

encourages it. And odd -  
when I had not got very used

to referring to *you* as "John".  
You were in my thoughts a lot

in later years. And were John  
then, and are - alternately -

both now: the fearsomely good  
poet designated by the surname,



& "John" - the pleasure in your  
remarks, gratitude for late night

phone calls: a review I'd written,  
some idea I'd like - our concern,

finally, for your own cares.

When I said goodnight to you - 'composed'  
beneath a 40 watt bulb, on a sagging camp bed -

the doctor having told you you might die,  
it was hard not to be amused

as well as worried: you wouldn't die  
of course, but would you be well?

(The doctor,

we took it, putting the frighteners  
on you.) Anna, twelve,

resembled you  
a few weeks ago -

conked-out, the TV going,  
a blanket pulled high,

her round, angelic head,  
her buried chin. The term

that mediates or bridges  
her image & yours

a Guston picture, of a head smoking  
(called "Smoking"),

its eyes wide, a profile, worried.  
And then you died.

I wonder when I will die?  
Though if you came back

it would not be to talk about  
that, but to admire

some certain turn of phrase,  
or - you being you -

the compressed but  
pivotal implication

in something you had seen -  
something of mine

if you were being generous,  
some point purchased

with the concomitant faults  
attendant on it -

in *my* writing at any rate, not  
in yours.

Since I've mentioned  
Anna you'd ask  
after her (she's going great)

& Gabe & Kim  
(them too)

- as you always did.

Tho I would be impatient  
for the literary talk

that (in any case)  
I didn't do well.

It was a calming sort of thing,  
to talk about them:

the kids you seemed to find  
both an irritant and

hope-giving sign  
of things to come:

miraculous youth.  
You enjoyed their energy, the

connection of mind to  
body, the reflexes, the hormones - the promise.

Then we'd rabbit on.  
(Poetry.) Now we must all attempt

to do that for each other, your friends.  
You're gone. I listened

to a tape of you a few days ago.  
One I forgot I had.

Spot on.

## People Passing Time

On the wall

pictures of people passing time

Young girls

photographed by Weegee

at the movies

Sleeping,

lying on each other, blowing gum,

bored,

transfixed

-at the spectacle probably

of Adult Life

presented to them

Muddy Waters

- *in the other pic* -

playing cards

About to snap one down,

smiling

in the pic John wrote about

John who is dead

As is Muddy

As are the girls

probably

Dead or dying

photographed in 1942

migrant

New Yorkers

their human, evaluating faces

As is Guston

who has painted his own head

a rounded cartoon in profile

eyes wide, smoking

staring sightless

at a ceiling, at his life ...

But not me yet

& I've  
"got a drawing to do"  
for Micky Allan

... Late at night  
& passing time

an old tape  
music

*So my time passed*

*which was given me upon earth*

as Brecht & Eisler said

dead too

*O sky of streaming*

*azure blue*

Micky,

is *this* any good?

does drawing.

It's too late, too late -

Too late too late too late

I'm on my way to Denver

& I cannot hesitate

Joe Turner said that.

Anyway,

I've tried everything I could / just to get along with you

& now I've done this drawing

It shows the Five Basic

Attitudes to life

considered as a problem

- Sleep

Rapt attention,

Boredom,

Intelligent appraisal

(after all, this may happen to you

best

to have an

opinion)

& Half aghast

( - could Life

'be'

so Mean?)

girl puts knuckles in

her mouth

against her face

protection

consolation

Where

Where

where, will you *be* tonight ?

In a *world* of trouble says Joe.

I say I've

got the main girl right

The others are just shapes, but you

get the idea

Don't you

'Too cute!'

I hear John say from the grave

The basic attitude.

I wonder whose voice said those things to John

in

his mind?

Gig's? Laurie's? Mine, maybe,

on occasion.

His speaks to mine

as always - as alive  
#  
His was alive  
mine was asleep  
dozing  
like a very quiet limb  
his supply of  
bon mots  
was amazing  
I've pronounced that "motts"  
by the way  
disfiguring the poem  
- tho it sounds  
better that way  
just as I've disfigured the drawing  
but  
the main girl  
is okay  
& the scribble I've added, left,  
fixes it.  
What would a *similar* shading be for the poem -  
some classical allusion  
about John, the poet, 'from the  
grave' etc  
- something moving  
Like my last  
picture of John  
that resembles the Guston  
composed on his bed contemplating  
death  
Tho I didn't think he would die  
nor did he, maybe

John, forgive me for being a jerk

#

Not that there's any point  
saying it now

God, this will bring me down.

#

Time,  
maybe, to write to Laurie

The 'late' Sam Cooke is  
singing  
'live' "For Sentimental Reasons".

- 'Very funny'.  
but I don't care  
& not too cute

I am like the girl now,  
blowing gum. Life. God, I'm glad I live in a century  
with electric light.

Jesus,  
it occurs to me to say something  
really horrible

... but I won't

The fluoro desk lamp  
when I sit back makes a great white diagonal  
against the dark blue  
of the curtains

Which drape like *Renaissance* drapery  
(or Baroque)

tho they drape mostly  
over  
jars of pencils

pencil cases I never open



'desk furniture'

that has collected against the window ledge.

Nearer,

the mess of papers, folders

- books

watch, toothpicks

biro caps

- a cup a yoghurt container -

that fill the rest.

'Bernini'

(the curtain) -

& this contemporary detritus

Brilliantly lit

More comforting than lovely

My

attention to it meaning

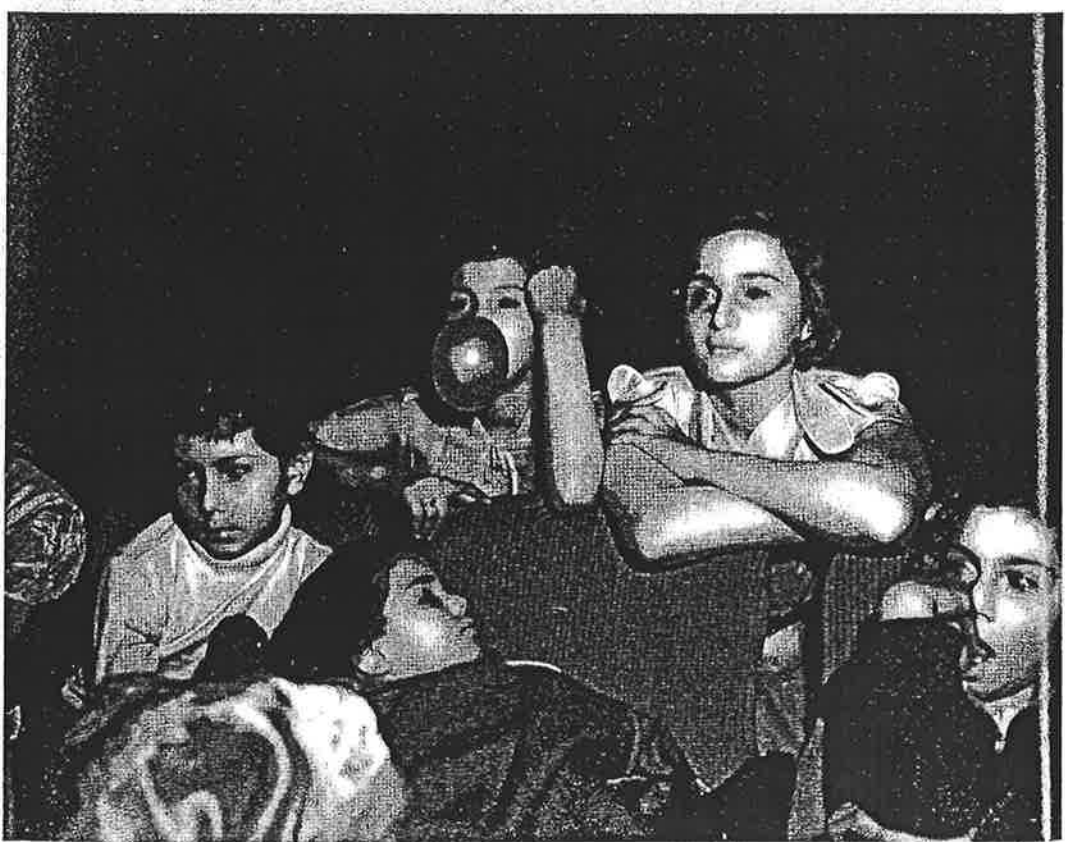
like John was

I'm alive.



Muddy Waters relaxing between gigs

PHOTOGRAPH VAL WILMER



## Newer Poems

## Your Being Away

I'm searching for - I guess - a minor Frank O'Hara  
poem

a late one whose name I can't remember.

Not one

I should find

Too sentimental perhaps to bring out  
my best

But one I'm in the mood for.

And isn't

that

why we write poems occasionally? -

not responsibly

but anyhow?

The late hour

& a cigarette

have made

me sensitive to sound

I think

so my ears ring with the

silence

John Pilger & Pam Brown

enjoin me

Not to be sentimental

or at least to be

sharp

Cath's daughter, Anna,

gone to bed,

Cath

away -

for tonight,

& the next

&

Gabe completing an assignment

before catching a plane -

& flying to the bars & surf,

monkeys

etcetera

of Indonesia -

dishes done,  
dinner cooked -  
NATO bombing in Kosovo;  
a program  
on the  
Warsaw ghetto -

What will I be sentimental *about*?

"He says  
'hello'," - to quote the poem,  
which I've found -

"this  
is  
George Gordon, Lord Byron"  
- Frank speaking on the phone  
to a loved one.

Byron liked the Albanians, I know.

"And for once it is not three in the morning,"  
(the poem  
says next)

Tho for me  
it almost is. For Frank  
I think  
he meant  
it wasn't his usual late night call, tired &  
emotional.

I am  
*not* on the phone.  
Tomorrow.

Tomorrow I will call.

'He' - the poem has the first person  
transposed to "he" throughout -

he, in my case, will be  
especially moved  
to see *her*

(who is you) -

tho only a day or two removal

is all there will be -

enough to constitute 'me'

as lonely,

or *alone*,

tho pleasantly -

dreaming of you, your finely nerved,

beautiful & expressive face -

on the pillow, or,

characteristically, reading,

the eyes so liquid

drinking the book in

intelligently:

happy to watch

*your* intelligence,

more balanced more calm

more

finely tuned than 'his'

(mine),

except when watching you

- To sleep, now

(or - as I'm staying up - *later* )

"protected

only by your love"

## poem ('cat-bag')

down the back  
the light is on  
so my dad,  
if he wakes, can see.

The rain  
beating down creates  
a kind of silence, a sound  
that blankets all the others - fridge,  
fluoro light -  
a bubble  
in which I work,  
sit really

seeking to avoid cliché -  
& thus reduced to silence

A review  
in front of me that I  
don't want to write.

The poems  
of a poet I admire - full of things  
that *it's*  
*allright for him to say*

(That is,  
*"but I can't".*)

A big selection  
of Samuel Johnson to fall back on -  
to pass the time

It is interesting  
how it would change things if I named  
the other poet

"Interesting"? how is  
that used here? *shouldn't* it  
be interesting, the consequence of

what you say?

Or are these  
paths one merely "assents" to,

*as in* -

"not down that path again"? -  
to quote a poem of mine & John's.  
Solipsism the only integrity.

Cath

comes out - squeak of door  
to the hall - appears walking scrunched  
a little, eyes scrunched, half closed  
to remain asleep. Bathroom, &  
back to bed. We talk a little.

The Banana grows older each week  
& tonight came in to say goodnight,  
Cath already asleep, so  
she said it anyway & asked *me*  
to come & check on her (instead)  
"in ten" & when I did  
it was dark, her radio going  
quietly - "Are you asleep?" "*Nearly* -  
*what do you want?*" "Your ten minutes.  
You said to check. You alright?"  
"Yep." "See you in the morning." All  
of this whispered. Sort of amusing.  
In fact I'd told her *she* should  
'come back in ten' & check on Cath -  
but a joke I'd told before. Now  
I get some water for Cath & say  
goodnight, again, to her,

---

& read:

Samuel Johnson, or the poet - Jimmy  
Schuyler.

There, that's the cat out of that bag.

What

do other people do with their time -  
smoke, watch TV, get on the phone? -



I mean, time like this?  
They look for poetry like *you* write, Ken.  
Joke. Point  
taken. Integrity again, a  
careful system of checks &  
balances - joke again, tho  
the point of the joke is lost on  
someone slow as me,  
tho its form I recognize.  
It was my joke of course.

I wrote a  
poem once that said "Chuck-chuck  
chuckling thru the Night." Doesn't  
the word "joke" appear a lot (above)?  
& the word "again"? Doesn't it  
*tell* you something? I suppose it  
does - time to smile now,  
ruefully. Tho on another night  
I'll be laughing, up late, spinning  
records (tapes, vinyl - CDs if  
I'm in this room), reading books,  
daydreaming

strap-hanging - on  
the train that is my life  
as it takes me to my destination, the  
light & dark of the stations meanwhile  
flashing by

now  
I read  
"The Walk"  
the lines  
so slim  
& delicate  
the timing  
almost ec-  
statically quiet  
so great it  
caps the night.

Extinguished,  
I crash out.

## American Friends

"I am ashamed of my century  
for being so entertaining  
but I have to smile" - Frank O'Hara

Ah nuts! It's boring reading English newspapers  
in Adelaide as if I were a Colonial waiting for my gin  
somewhere beyond this roof a jet is making a sketch of the sky  
where is Laurie Duggan I wonder if he's reading under a dwarf pine  
stretched out so his book & his head fit under the lowest branch  
while the great southland sun rolls calmly not getting thru to him  
not caring particularly tho the light in Sydney does not get

to see so many poets, while in Blackheath or Marrickville  
Pam - particle or wave theory? - divides her time  
between them, reads Eileen Myles or Susan Schultz  
(American friends) everybody here is running around or sitting tight &  
being grim I once saw Laurie swim 'backstroke' - so he motored  
feet first around a pool I dreamed I saw Pam  
in a play I never wrote - wave theory  
might explain this, crazy, intense, the picture ghosting

inexplicable Steve Kelen where is he, *et famille?* In Viet Nam?  
Adam, where him? I emailed but did not look  
to see where. Back soon. Alan is in Honkers  
Dipti in Melbourne Richard & Suzy are in New York  
buying the CDs that will fill out his collection - *that* is culture  
right? & maybe making art did I see Jenny Watson's painting of herself  
sleeping in New York in New York? If I did will Suzy see it? a  
bed in Central Park. Susan Hiller calls & sees them  
who would be so New York, wouldn't she, in New York? the way  
she didn't seem in Adelaide tho exotic, sure, an

American friend - Dennis Hopper was the American Friend  
when I first saw it a washed-up American almost,  
a mercenary, like the character, an American 'for hire' which made it seem  
subversive or sophisticated, the use of him. My American Friend here  
is O'Hara so I expect that I am subverted  
I expect the charge - in any case - I deal with him again  
to see can I gain advantage poetically Surely if I get

out of my depth Frank who was by many accounts  
quite a swimmer can come powering thru the surf  
to save me as the life saver does now for a little kid  
'in difficulties' amongst the many bods & standing figures & figures swimming  
round her - like me, with Laurie, Pam, Adam  
(who lives by a beach). Horseshoe Bay, Pt Eliot is where I am,

whereas Adam when he gets back gets back to Bondi,  
a real beach. The lifesaver carries the curly headed girl -  
aged 8, aged 5? - to the very edge of the sand, under one arm,  
above his hip, jokingly & places her in the wet sand  
where the surf just reaches as she runs away from him  
& up the beach no doubt relieved or filled with an  
adventure

to tell

where are my friends -

having adventures?

do

they picture me, & as I am, writing this, sitting  
in the shade at a beach, the cries of kids, mild,  
thinking of them?

I can't help noticing

how wrong

O'Hara's opinions about this

American Century

have turned out to be

& remembering

how much I liked them

tho they were wrong then

they were wrong

even when he wrote them - like Dennis Hopper in the film  
wishing it were not so

So here I am,

protective of these opinions for being even  
as blithe as they are but you are the American, wrong -  
even here, in this client state, my hero

## Horizon

"In this dawn as in the first  
it's the Homeric rose, its scent  
that leads on"

- Frank O'Hara, *Ode to Willem de Kooning*

"As a people we are now called Australians because a vast & lonely land has  
touched us with her differences"

- George Ivan Smith, 1953  
preface to *For The Term Of His Natural Life*

"it's noble to refuse to be added up or divided"

- Frank O'Hara

*"Beyond the sunrise  
where the black begins" -*  
& the lights of the city, we  
imagine, twinkle or blaze ...

the horizon line here  
a curve of butter yellow,  
slightly oxidized - lined,  
at its rim, by olive-green 'natives' -  
hides a city that if I am  
facing the right way  
must be doing its afternoon trade  
relaxed this last few days after December 25th  
but ready nonetheless for the big push  
at night, the raid on  
fun desire release -  
selling mostly coffee, wine,  
Michael / rolls a joint *has* one  
then rolls several others children  
contemplate navels - the girls their own  
with quiet pride, the boys the girls'  
with longing puzzling as it is strong  
Mary paints her nails, reads, Cuban music  
playing. What of Margaret, of Crab? they do  
those things normative in a utopia  
a cork is popped, Marg plays  
*fado*, the soulful music of Portugal  
or Crab practises on sax  
reads some politics, some mayhem, reads

the poems I gave him. /  
try to seize upon that greatness  
which is available to me  
if it is available at all  
(am I facing the right way?)  
thru art.

The view is  
quintessentially Australian, which is its  
problem - for me - tho not classical  
& in its particulars  
is information (where the classic typically presents  
only sign). The essays of  
Meaghan are to hand which might  
stiffen my resolve or form it: *not to be  
inimitably weak & picturesque myself  
but standing forth a subject not a spectacle.*  
There are daisies nearby & a shin-high wall  
of loose but flat-laid shale or slate twelve feet  
beyond - a standard country wire fence; the  
field of grass; on the horizon a distinct  
curve of hill three hundred yards away, a  
water tank nestles in to the furthest reach  
of the olive 'natives' -  
can I drop the scare marks from  
that word now, hasn't it  
done enough? &  
I rest their case

“for now  
a long history slinks  
over the sill”,

& with it history's ironies, reversals  
sarcasms so *de rigueur*. I never wanted to be postcolonial  
or colonial just modern which is  
the joke on me - but who wants to be a category?  
Many would be right - it will do me to be interested - &  
one accepts the truth like a tired disguise handed out  
for the party - is this me? - & joins the crowd  
as the brave must always ascend, always the musts:  
the Eiffel tower, the flight over London, the café  
table - in Rundle Street or rue de la Rocquette  
where Lorraine lived & we stayed tho for me, today,  
this hill is my focus, the clouds - (for I must ascend) -

are beautiful & white & echoing fluidly the hills'  
shape, the splotches of green that mottle the yellow  
& remind of 'Minor Moderns of South Australia'  
a line I join of precursors - Horace Trennery,  
Dorritt Black - pondering a relation  
to the minor English, Europe, the  
universal - & its status as 'the wrong question'  
which strolls now & then into a field  
& sits down like a forgotten rock  
while 'we' walk on  
to an horizon line, that's beautiful, keen,  
precarious, & doesn't tug - not 'rose', but  
serene, & melancholy, & joyous, all at the same time, a kind  
of benediction that says, I'm free & I'm gratuitous  
why not feel better? & since you do you do  
return: into that inanimate world of voices cross-  
questioning you, no longer like your father, a man  
in an open necked shirt eating an icecream (& just,  
perhaps, 'going for a walk'), but in a shirt I bought in Melbourne  
made by migrant Vietnamese late at night, yet in which  
I feel Australian, whatever that is

- a point mapped by shifting co-ordinates  
you momentarily 'keep your eye on', or don't, being  
yourself or a moving target (do the hills you climb as  
no one count? The hostess explains,  
As we leave administered life  
there is a slight discomfort - the tug of  
gravity on re-entry returns, you may  
feel tired. *Where*, the open neck shirted men, women in  
thongs & sandals, ask *is our shimmering ideal?* If O'Hara  
had such timing John his last move suggests he blew it  
Tho exits are notoriously hard to make. "I live above a  
dyke bar & I'm happy" - I might too for all I know.  
Am I? Occasionally, occasionally *very*. The female  
of the tiny blue jay or 'wren' appears, bouncing,  
across the grass outside then some of the 'men' &  
move across my field of view from left to right ...

## Catching Up With Kurt Brereton

Hi Kurt.

(!) I'm sitting up

(here)

(at night)

the Pharoah Sanders I bought while staying  
with you playing

gentle mania

waxing waning

\*

quietly doing its nut

\*

( in the corner )

\*

*"Is Sal alright?"* my main question

That I should ask her

My question to you :

"What's doing?"

Right now, a Sunday night,

will you be stretching the weekend: music spinning ...

lighting a number, painting,

making notes on things

the fish zipping about, watching you, saying

I hope he plays the James Reyne tape again?

But fish - what would they know?

their

red & blue, flickering, the bubbles rising out of that diver

paintings of swimmers

- humanity at its rare least guarded -

around.

*'Around'!*

what are you floating about like

that -

get back with the other swimmers!

*Ya wanna know*

*what I think?* in Peggy's words

("Nick,



ya wanna know what I think?"

"Hey, *Nick!* ..." Etcetera.)

A mantra

\*

I should ring you

\*

but don't know where  
the phone will ring -  
in the house

If it was to hand  
in the studio & you picked it up on just two rings  
& said, mellow & unphased,

Yeah?

that would be  
the greatest thing

(am I *stoned?*)

what is this thing  
with being stoned - I,  
who almost never come out of  
my tree

except by coaxing myself down -

a coffee, a  
long quiet night?

Like *Krazy Kat* now

I stand  
at the foot of that tree (in fact a lamp post  
incredibly  
tall

a foot or two beyond the perimeter of its  
light  
(its penumbra)

pretty benign

charmed

(by my '*own song*')

big-eyed

☞ dumb, yeah,

but what's new -

"I never said I was smart"

to quote Lou Reed

Actually, Lou said "tasteful"

If he can lie

why can't I?

'Smart', eh?

Then

time to

attempt it

I pick up the phone

& dial you

Hello?

I do a drawing, standing, at my desk,  
a hat near some papers & jars & a jar of flowers -

#

looking down.

#

Keeps me going for an hour

#

& call it "August 6th" tho it's April

& years

later

... & the poem I do it for

was probably

not written on August 6th either

the months just have

such evocative names,

Of *what* are they evocative?

just evocative, that's all ;

leaves, sky, weather

This hat

on which I look down -

so

definite,

so casual -

suggests to me scotch

tho I have none now -

& the races, gambling,

A masculine world

the adult world of my father

A flat in Elizabeth Bay

frangipanis, the harbour

where Sal & Laurie live

The light from the lamp

gives a thin firm shadow

round its brim, on one side -

which my charcoal seizes

other details drop out

& as I draw & look

& draw again

it is 1951 - the humidity, the slight  
sweatyness of Sydney

I feel tough & gentle

calm

It is the nostalgia of the style,

the hat

the flower: the flower pink & pale - hibiscus -  
against dark green leaves, the jar small &

six-sided the hat is wheaten yellow straw, with

a band of brown the harsh light of the lamp

whitening everything - sheets of paper, bits of writing,

a pen, pencils

the drink this all suggests

is nowhere to be found an absence that keeps the whole  
unsettled

provisional suggesting a *moment*, not an hour

I get two long-necked bottles from the fridge, put them

in a bag & catch a tram up the Cross meet Cath Pam

Sal & Laurie & continue down the beach

where we meet

you

near where you lived forty five years later

I'm not

wearing a hat, & neither are you, tho Laurie is

aside

from that everyone is dressed pretty much as normal -

classic,

eh? Pam has a rollie

Sal an *Ardath*

I rub Cath's neck simultaneously in 1951 & now

& Rosemary hands you the corkscrew, whose handle is a

bottle-opener, & Sarah & Laurie hold out glasses -

beer really was beer till some time in the seventies -

Laurie says *Well, cheers!* & we clink the glasses

## Traffic Noises, Cups, Voices

"What are you doing here? Shouldn't  
you be in Rome?"

- Tony Kirkman

I can remember coming here  
for the first time, when *The Flash* moved  
from its old spot across the street.  
Larger, brighter, it was a week  
or two, or three, before the move

was not sharply regretted. Jules  
declared the new *Flash* off her round  
so severely did it lack the  
charm the old possessed - the  
hole-in-the-wall, small town

refusal of economies  
of scale, 50s / 60s pale green  
walls, every booth filled more or less  
by six or seven regulars,  
older Italians who'd been

there every day for years - which made  
lucking-out and getting a spot  
a privilege. Incognito  
one sat in silence, espresso,  
paper, book, sunglasses on or off

the balm of being out-of-time -  
The Cone Of Silence descending  
around you. Suddenly what had  
often been the chief complaint had  
been transformed in remembering

to a virtue. The clatter - and  
sometimes pandemonium - of  
*The Flash* not much changed. When did  
it move? Who cares? (Years ago - six,  
eight.) She is reminiscent of

Julie, this waitress, though with less  
idea of makeup - Julie would  
point out - and I'd agree. Less hip.  
A man watching women. Let this  
not be one of those poems. Could

I be said to do anything else?  
Watching people. E.G., I never think  
of the cosmos. Though politics,  
philosophy I read. The trick  
is the sudden fit - *lack of fit* -

then fit again, of enormous  
Abstraction - and the attendant  
force and pity and accuracy -  
with the individual you see  
drinking coffee, daydreaming, bent

on buying a belt or handbag,  
breaking up with their girlfriend or  
choosing to answer question nine  
on the essay list for Design  
and Society, say, or sort

sadly through their mail today, or  
hum a tune. I realize that  
these theories understand me -  
explain, and hold me - just as cruelly  
as they do any other, that

they do so more probably - though  
I don't see it as 'cruel' - that  
lack of exact fit a kind of  
supplement for the human. Does  
this suggest some space left that

'makes room for' the *soul*, the mad vibe  
that keeps the motor ticking? It's  
a rhetoric I can't stand. I  
just want to have my thoughts, not  
understand them. Does this

make sense? Nope. "The Cone of Silence",  
a phrase I've learned from friends younger  
than me, fans of Maxwell Smart - though  
is my usage correct? I know  
The Way-Back Machine (of Doctor

Peabody's), I know Gilligan,  
I remember Maynard and "Work!?"  
exclaimed with shock and surprise. I  
never really approved the tie  
Steve, say, felt, to the afternoon world

that colonized his brain, or Adam's (?)  
though they're common currency now  
between Crab and me. The Way-Back  
Machine - something this poem has  
become, inadvertantly. Now

"My heart, in the tenderness of  
Friendship" - in Johnson's phrase - wishes  
to address itself to Julie,  
Mikey and Chris and be solely  
in the present - *or Rome*, with its

busier streets, strong coffee and  
entirely interesting (because  
foreign) surfaces, feel and past  
that will be new to us. Rome 'starts'  
in two weeks - we'll live a few floors

up, in an old building, in Trast-  
evere, the studio of  
Malcolm Fraser's sister and B.  
R. Whiting, *not* watering the  
plants growing on the balcony hung

above the street - though I hope to  
stand on it mornings and dusk  
and watch the street and skies. Though is  
this reasonable - maybe there is  
no view - or space to stand? A brusque

knocking on the door, I gather,  
announced an officious *poliz-  
iotto* (the dictionary  
gives a term that is maybe  
better, considering, which is

*vigile urbano*): he'd come  
to reprove one previous tenant  
for causing water to drop on  
the heads of those below - his own  
one imagines. Urban vigilant,

caped crusader eyeing testily  
some geraniums and - out-of-  
focus - white wrought-iron railing...  
and tile and slate roof, miles of it -  
or am I thinking Paris? (Doves,

maybe a church tower or dome.  
I will see when I get there. The  
tower suggests Northern religion,  
whether Catholic or Protestant,  
and where the Italian dome

says Belief the dark, grim spires  
of the British-style churches I know  
suggest threat and mostly drear  
failure to comfort.) I've no idea  
what we'll find. *No* view. Maybe no

geraniums. But sky, and clouds -  
those heavy shutters that close to  
keep the sun out. I loved them when  
I was there before - July and  
fairly fierce sun. In Adelaide who

has not put up with far worse, liked  
it even? I loved the nondescript  
street we stayed in, briefly, the first  
time in Pisa. Admittedly I used  
to love the view of Rundle Street...

from my office window at night -  
a neon light said *Rossini's*,  
another said *Prudential*. We used  
joke about a wise, even *ju-*  
*dicial* drink that beckoned via these

red and blue lights in the dark night  
and amid softly lit doorways,  
windows, and parked cars. In daylight  
I loved it too. Supposed to write  
from there I did manage. The change

of scenery might do the trick  
again. Change and stability -  
in this case writing might be the  
stability - and Cath's presence.  
Repeatedly, I see Julie

across a table from me, in  
Rome, excited, curious, her  
head turning, focused on the flow  
around us. Mikey and Chris, both,  
would fit in smoothly - more Southern

in appearance, though each bearing  
their British surnames - Grimm, Chapman.  
Like Julie I look anything but  
Italian, she Anglo, my mug  
Irish, I gather, and foreign -

plainly - in dress, stance; Australian  
by virtue of diet and weather.  
Cath's lovely dial delicately  
Irish and refined - fluently  
speaking Italian I hope: her

brain our forward defence. Her French  
is great. For me six months as a  
Cigar-Store Indian, standing in  
silence, behind, beside. The words spin  
by too quickly. "Cigar-Store Indian"

an objectionable phrase, as  
well as obsolete: do they still  
exist? Better *Il Cono di*  
*Silencio*. Could I seem  
'Bohemian International'? -



Maybe, with Cath nearby. I should  
encourage her to pack her most  
raffish clothes. Funny, to be training  
for Rome at *The Flash*, where being  
Australian has - almost

as often as 'being modern' -  
been my main preoccupation.  
One's life resembling an oyster's:  
breathing in, breathing out what is  
close to hand - a meditation

on (duh) Time, and History, Style - and  
Subjectivity - from *The Flash*!  
Basically, a guy who reads a lot  
is reading, having a think: - What  
Is going on here? A brief clash

of traffic noises, cups, voices - the  
sudden pathos, beauty, truth-to-  
type of some passing figure, the  
recurrence of the familiar,  
a change of the light - the girl who

looks like Julie - just barely - here  
recalls Catherine Demonget -  
was she the oddly dream-like one,  
in *Zazie In The Metro*? - one  
is plunged into deeper thought, a

sudden empathy for someone's  
imagined situation. IS  
THIS JUST COFFEE ?! Intellectual-  
without-portfolio we call  
poets. Every day, oyster-like: sift;

sift. Though to me it seems human.  
If inefficient.

## Long Distance Information

Dear Crab,

It would be great

to be drinking with you here

- because

There Are So Many Bars

& walking between one & the next is

terrific at night.

Rome resembles a beautiful film set:

mysterious, melancholy, & hip,

hip & corny existing

side by side

- but the corny is them, not you, so you

don't have to worry - & the hip you can *emulate*

or blend with - & you'd be *up* to it.

I keep intending to write :

remarks mostly,

all trivial.

Otherwise we're travelling

- *this* place was nice,

*that* one wasn't - sort of thing.

What's going on in Adelaide?

Are you busy? Playing music much?

Working on things?

The travelling

- Pisa, Florence, Bologna, Venice

with Anna

(each for just a few days)

Terracina

then down to

Lecce

- the South - Cath & me;

to give

a small reading

part of a conference, that consisted mainly

of dinners, lunches & parties

enormous Germans

walking into plate glass doors

& rebounding sobered

A

'Greci' band

earnestly representing their remnant culture

(a 14th century survival of Greek settlements)

& *The Beautiful People*

(some)

& arties, hipsters

local aristos or 'notable families'

#

So, seen a lot of historical art  
 - the Baroque in Lecce is  
 'something else'

In both senses  
 I.e., not Baroque & way out.  
 I've become  
 slightly interested

in Italian painting of the 20s to 50s  
 very melancholy & dispirited

I used to just think it was hopeless  
 - hardly having looked -

now I like it  
 Bought some CDs by Jimmy Scott  
 - popular

in the 40s & 50s, with  
 'sophisticated black audiences' -  
 one of bad 'live'  
 recordings

& another from 1999.  
 His voice is amazing - it never broke really  
 due to a rare medical condition -  
 but his style is mannered. It  
 sounds like Nancy Wilson (as I remember her, from the sixties -  
 though it was she listened to him)  
 & he sings Bryan Ferry &  
 Mick Hucknall ballads,  
 'Jealous Guy' & things.  
 A mistake  
 to buy them probably.

No music here. I sing 'Down in Black  
 Bottom' a lot, some Fats Waller,  
 Johnny Littlejohn, Howlin'  
 Wolf-  
 & whistle a bit of bop.

Hey, our tape from Supermild  
 's disappeared. Hold on to yours & I'll copy it.

Strega is a great drink.  
 This I have found.  
 Though \$3 at the Bar

San Calisto  
 buys about 5 inches of it. Almost enough to lay you out.

And as I drink less & less these days  
 & don't have much  
 to say  
 it is the walking about, the setting down, the  
 first  
 taste  
 & the getting up, gladdened, everything rendered  
 alcoholically  
 greater

I dream about.  
 The Italians themselves don't drink  
 a great amount  
 or not to excess

& to stumble about  
 slightly crooked  
 would make you feel boorish  
 a foreigner  
 most specifically one who had willingly  
declared himself alien  
 & therefore uncouth  
 rude at any rate  
 which  
 the Italians don't warrant  
 John Forbes's notes to this place  
 - all past residents at the studio leave tips, advice -  
 include  
 a theory for *Why Italian rock music's no good*  
 Which goes  
 Italian kids are too well loved to feel alienated & to go  
 & sulk in their garages with the amps turned up  
 &, similarly,  
 they don't experience the same need for oblivion  
 Italian pubs  
 exist  
 - mostly calling themselves *Madigan's*  
*Molloy's*  
 or *True British Pub*  
 (like their teas - *Sir Winston's*  
*Sir Andrews, Sherwood*) -  
 but the Italian kids don't  
 stagger  
 from them  
 ripped.  
 We lived a few days above one in Lecce. Each night  
 closing time resembled Adelaide's -  
 young people standing about  
 outside  
 a few sitting - daringly, in *la maniera inglese* -  
 on doorsteps.  
 In 15 minutes they were all gone - no  
 fights, no shouts, no crying  
 Little cuties.  
 So, come to Italy & go on the wagon!  
 Though curiously  
 I saw two beggars  
 who *seemed* drunk  
 complementing each  
 other  
 sprawled more or less identically  
 at opposite sides of the Oviessa steps  
 a kind of  
 upmarket, down-scaled Target  
 calling out to people.  
 They looked as if they'd been lifted  
 from somewhere like the corner of  
 Raphael's *School of Athens*

of course they seemed happier - if  
'philosophic' -  
though I doubt if they'd been drinking *Strega*  
Anyway, people, old ladies  
took no notice, *used*  
the stairs to Oviessa to get in & out  
the babble of voices  
not suddenly hushed, in fear or embarrassment.  
Where  
the Oviessa is seems very French to me: that is,  
it doesn't, but I can't work it out -  
why doesn't it?  
The 'French' thing is the plane trees  
that are pollarded  
so each tree is like an inside-out umbrella, pretty leafless still,  
branches ecstatically imploring the sky,  
looking  
any of celebratory, austere, calm, awaiting.  
Their trunks  
are pale grey & speckled; the sky  
- thru & behind them -  
looks bright & silver & far away  
& sort of serenely unpitying,  
or blue  
& quietly Fauve.  
I guess it *is* Italian  
after all  
- as well as Parisian -  
& in Paris the buildings  
might be uniformly taller,  
coloured more neutrally  
no yellows, no reds  
- more Citroens & Mercedes ?  
It is somehow a little less thinly 'sharp' than the French feel  
more mellow, less sad  
Enough of this. I love it. You  
would too.  
Stendhal says, in his *Guide*,  
how ashamed he is to have announced an instant love  
of Rome  
It is a commonplace & he's embarrassed  
& as he wrote the thing without even being here, you have  
*every right to the same opinion!* (By some logic.)  
The Logic  
of the *Strega*  
Time for me to whistle bop a bit  
collect my 'thoughts'  
or let some more home in  
the head resembling a kind of dove-cot.  
(I'm reading an older poet, whom I'll probably meet in the  
next few weeks  
- poems about Death,  
held in abeyance  
by his ironic manner

framed, *triangulated*,

via high-cultural  
props

- the Renaissance, the Baroque

Brahms, Mozart & Wagner -

but, then, *he chose to live in England...* )

Speaking of warriors

& music

the bus shelters here

all have pix

of Lazio soccer stars, photographed as if they're

centurions

or gladiators

- one looks like Little Stevie

of the Easybeats.

Another thing you'd like: the back page  
of Rome's *Yellow Pages*

- it goes by that name

maybe

internationally? - is one big ad

for a Telly Savalas-looking  
guy

who's a Private Detective

Tony Ponzi

bald head,

dark glasses,

collar of his trench coat pulled up

*"the certainty of knowing everything. Always,"* it says.

*"Resolve your personal problems. (Beware of others using  
similar name.)"*

There must be competition. Seems to handle divorces, industrial  
espionage, everything.

Anyway, I may tear it  
off the phone book

for you.

(Should you *need* a detective he operates

I note, *"in tutto il mondo"*

So do I, tho strictly via

airmail

## Tiepolo

In the 14, 15th &  
16th centuries it was  
all happening in Italy  
artistically tho by the 17th  
other countries had joined in.  
By the 18th  
Italy was definitely off the pace.  
Still, I happen to think Tiepolo  
was a major artist  
tho employed mostly  
by palace owners  
to fill space -  
before the invention in our own time  
of the smoke machine  
that so readily solved this problem -  
for disco proprietors, rave  
parties etcetera. In the last week of  
third year old Bernard  
pulled out all the stops  
in the lecture on Tiepolo. I was there.  
Not alone, but almost.  
(Others were at home, preparing  
for exams, finishing  
last, overdue essays.) Like Professor Smith's  
lecture that no one heard  
Tiepolo was designed  
not to be looked at.  
Like the smoke the machine  
pumps out: billowing cloud  
... some armour ... flesh &  
garments - the suggestion of  
excitement - that no one buys -  
least of all  
the lonely type,  
who can't dance  
& stands, staring into  
a corner  
at a trick of the light.

Tiepolo's *Three Angels Appearing  
To Abraham* in the Venice Accademia

is like that. He is the dud guy  
bottom left - kneeling, dirty feet,  
beard. The angels, thin limbed,  
glamorous, surf up  
on their rubber dinghy of cloud -  
& look down incuriously -  
except to remark, perhaps,  
the dirt - & vouchsafe a glimpse of  
beauty - a limb dangled  
Abe's way, silhouetted against cloud.

As if to say,

You can go home now,

Abe, patron-at-disco, better not  
to wait for more.

You've been catered for -

it costs a lot,

but they've got everything here.

Here today, gone tomorrow.

Which doesn't solve your problem.

Ciao!





## Rumori

*Down in the windy park the leaves all turn  
over at the same time - it's the climate  
explaining the weather to the workers*

- **The Romans**, John Tranter

*A problem, that, solved, would render one almost  
no longer Australian.*

- **The Bias That Makes The Ball Roll**, Ervin Thomas

out the window rises the hill,  
with the houses of the rich people. Apartments.  
The view - unusually after a month in Rome of  
good weather - overcast.

Lively, bustling Rome - where there is plenty of the past, definitely,  
though where, for me, ghosts of my own country's past  
approach & murmur & back away

as if,  
having taken their number on entering the room,  
they queue & file, waiting to be processed - imagery I think  
that comes from Nadezhda Mandelstam - & my own experience

of buying a lamp at the electrical store -  
*Vorrei una lampada:*  
men - builders, handymen, electricians -

standing about in overalls & caps & parkas  
to buy the fittings, yards of wiring  
they would need.

Destinies. Aspiration. Ideas  
more or less capitalized - Romantic & abstract.

And the pathos of 'the human'.

For me,  
always, cities suggest these things. So that  
to visit them

brings these questions up.

Though I never answer. And they return each time  
familiar, with additional features, histories of their own - *their* history

of my not dealing with them.  
("Dealing" - which suggests some finality.  
That will never come.) Merely, "these are the things that I think about".

("Ken, your friends are here."

Oh-oh. And they walk into the room -

Christopher Brennan, Slessor, Grace Crowley:  
suits & coats & mufflers, a paper bag with alcohol in it.

A flat I visited very young a few times -  
Connie, a friend of my mother's - down  
steep steps, it looked out through trees to the harbour.

Cremorne ... Mosman. The characteristic Sydney trees & flowers,  
the tremulous fifties

-a kind of  
Adrian Feint view, out a window.  
A small wicker table. I wonder how accurate  
all this is.

The thematic fifties personalities -  
thirties & forties - imagined entirely, though I've seen  
photos of Slessor.)

\*

I shut the windows to the apartment.

A famous painting by Boccioni, that I love -  
because I love the idea I suppose, but also

its domestic & feminized form in the picture -  
is *Street Noises Invade The Apartment*:  
a woman (mother, wife)

leans over a balcony or window sill  
& all the activities of the street  
'penetrate' - through the walls, through her & the opening.

It was an embarrassingly large number of years (decades?)  
before it finally twigged for me  
that where it said on the slide, or reproduction,

"rumori", the word did not mean "rumours"  
(or "suggestions") but "noises". Futurism:  
so deadly - or loveably - clunky

in its 'execution' of ideas.

But they *are* like rumours - hints, ghostly

callings - the noises from the street here.  
Shutting the windows reduces them to a rumbling, pleasant  
background. I will open them again later. The view

reminds instantly of the densely housed rise  
up Kings Cross from Wolloomooloo.

(From somebody's  
flat you saw that - Sal's old place? an architect's office I visited?  
The same view  
you saw more distantly from the Art Gallery.)

Or -

a Sydney city beach suburb's view. Bondi. But the Trastevere area is more built up, the styles more various -

'30s' thru to now, the ornamentation more particular. What else? White features less often. A huge salmon pink number is dominant on the left. Otherwise

tans & yellows, some shades of orange - stepped & ranked down to street level - where you peer down from our patio: at *Station Pizza*, small shops, garden walls. Trees occur

at more frequent intervals than in the equivalent view in Sydney & a different sort - tall dark pines, cypresses (which must always *spell* 'Italy'), olives &, more surprisingly, wild,

exuberant-looking palm trees. Our first morning I was particularly struck by the closest palm, that grows near an angled junction of roads opening out

onto the main road beneath. The tree fills & overflows its space. So 'twenties' it reminds me of a Roy de Maistre painting - that I assume exists.

(Am I thinking of a flower piece, or a quite different view?)

I decide it will make a drawing - in my mind's eye I can see it looking like de Maistre, Kirchner, Matisse - & also Brett Whitely.

(Though how, if I'm going to do it?)

How will it look, when it's done? The hill overall reminds me of Grace Crowley Her picture called ... *The Italian Girl*? Probably not.

*Tuscan Landscape*, maybe - but a hill of similarly graded cubist planes. Cath comes home, has a sandwich, cup of tea

& goes to bed - to nap & read - before we visit Pietro, our 'third Italian'. We have at last begun to make contacts here - after days & days

of adventurous walking - along the Tiber & into town - through ruins & monasteries & parks & villas Vespas, ambulances.

"Goethe's Foreboding," the latest *TLS* is headed. I've scarcely read him - & should. The picture one has - a cross between Mme Recamier & Oscar Wilde. *Rising to the occasion of his picturing,*

all that is on his mind. *Not* foreboding. He worried about The Poet's Place In Society. Or his own? At the Protestant Cemetery, despite

the signs that promise it, we fail to find him.  
We find Gramsci.

\*

The tree's exuberant,  
20s feel - via the association with de Maistre -  
& the immediate identification of the hill opposite

with the Cross, usher in this same group of thoughts  
I have often in Sydney - as  
a 'foreigner', particularly. That is, I never had them

when I lived there. Though maybe it is Time -  
these things would have come to me 'eventually', & did, have.  
From Sal's newer flat, from Laurie's, they have

swelled romantically, like heavy weather, banked  
clouds over the headlands: the intense, romantic blue  
of the harbour - yachts, boats even, being

'of the past'. Sydney - 1938? '46? '52?  
At Coogee at Michael & Di's I list these themes, the list  
surfaces from time to time - lost eventually.

Ideas mocked & evoked by a sight one time at Kurt's -

As they are mocked & evoked, as it happens,  
in Kurt's thinking. (Do we all think this? shuffle  
these same cards?)

'Sydney' - a group of images - that says 'Nix' to dreams.

Yet the elements - its beauty - encourage them.  
Hence the town's pagan & hard-bitten quality. Which I read  
as acceptance of failure. Like the falling back of the waves.

Slessor. The failure of its artists (their names  
all minor). And, like any city, it suggests the aspirations & failure  
of capital 'c' Civilization - & of its politicians, by whom we mark the years (Gorton:

deposed as party leader -

"And what are you going to do now, Prime Minister?" "Go home  
& watch *Countdown* like everybody else." Keating,  
Hawke, their various bitternesses): highrise Development

& the Unknown Past... - the beer ads of the 30s & 40s -  
that decorated, once, all the pubs. Preposterously,  
men in suits; women in formal wear, bare shouldered;

waiters, aspidistras, smokes;  
the long-necked bottles of the beer itself  
memories of my father.

*It all proves nothing,*  
it seems to say - though, individually, each piece

says something else - like the surf's tumult  
ending in a hiss, as it fails to take the beach.  
Like the leaves that turn over in another's poem.

I visited Kurt one day - &, leaving,  
on my way down the steps, the vertiginous view  
between buildings showed - quite close - the intent figure

of a bodysurfer, deep brown, frowning - in the grip  
of the moment's exhilaration - bright flecks of light bouncing  
off the blue. 'Life'. These aren't questions exactly.

Undivided pleasure - small, yet it looms.  
Perspectives that are incompatible. Is it this pathos  
Sydney is about? or Australia? Me, merely? A

life as if *writ in biro* (more modern, more  
sensible than water?) My new pants,

surely more sensible than Goethe's. Though  
like me he may have found his get up  
eminently suitable, in Rome - & been less wrong in this than me, too

- though he'll have paid more - all that white silk -  
& been right of course, about so much else beside.

The intent bodysurfer -  
what does it mean: *I should swim more often?*  
Things look great but they're *not?* -

yet surely better they look that way  
than worse? Or is that the trap

that suckers you - for 'this unhelpful binary':  
Bernard Smith after a lecture -  
chin rising defiantly.

\*

Like a sore you regularly finger, an ache you press -  
these notions, this 'idea' of Sydney: clouds gathering dramatically  
out to sea, rolling in - (me, moved & conscious of it, thinking

Why did I leave? Will I come back? What have I ever  
made happen?) On the house high up, on the right,  
on the verandah, grows a cypress that has exactly the hunched

brooding shape of the Böcklin figure I know from  
de Chirico & Klinger. It sulks or worries there  
every day, arms folded, chin on its chest, comic, inconsolable,

a dark presence. The 1880s, subjective, German view  
of Italy - its olive green melancholy, its quiet, its liquid stillness,  
& depth. Or something. Cath says today, looking up from

whatever she is reading, It's Goethe's son, not  
the man himself, we should have found at the cemetery.  
Odd, then, the signs proclaiming 'Goethe's Grave This Way'.

We joke about  
*The Lost Sock*, an imagined series of Klinger engravings.  
We've lost one, at the laundry.

There's the sock thrown in the corner of the room -  
there, alone, in the clothes dryer - a dog trots down an alley,  
a crow flies off - with the sock.

Once, friends had thought  
Klinger was the German in *Hogan's Heroes*  
& that the old reviewer, Elwyn Lynn, was being unusually hip,  
to mention him, in connection with their work - in which clothes  
were eerily depicted.

Hip, but differently.

The first few days in Rome I feel myself  
turning into an 18th century Englishman,  
a plump guy in breeches & short frock coat - with a tear

in his eye - bits of Rome looking so sub-Claudian:  
ruin; medieval addition; a stand of trees - needing only a shepherd  
to admit that, yes, it is the Picturesque, or stage machinery.

Hard to have an attitude to it that seems modern - *without*  
*ignoring it*. Which I don't want to do. I zip  
into town & find the central post office - a square

that always turns up about when I'm about to give up on  
finding it - & post our letters (Anna's, Cath's,  
mine) & go off to rendezvous with them at the library -

our impressions of Rome winging home to Adelaide.

Time to do that drawing.

\*

Ideas that are no Big Theme. That pose no question.  
Just 'the way I see things'.

Olsen  
is not so minor. Tuckson isn't. Grace  
Cossington-Smith's drawing -  
of men going on strike, a protest, a rally - I like.

And the loss of heart & confidence in the twenties -  
the deaths, the small  
place afforded, after the War, in the wider world

our volunteers signed us up for -

that diffidence, caution, disappointment  
get built in, built around & built upon  
become character. Which makes me just the frown, the

slight stammer Australia bears into the coming aeon,  
a kind of polishing of the glasses - what is the gesture?  
a chewed lip? a narrowed mouth? Whatever -

& whether true or not - I like this view of things:  
iron taken into the soul - which strengthens,  
like the small dose of poison. If nothing matters,

*nothing* matters then. It is all  
"in the face of negativity": Tuckson, Guston, Pollock ...  
Grace Crowley - whose work I love, more than Kandinsky's -

for the contingent reason: its tentativeness registers so much of this.

\*

A puzzle you pick up & put down, & walk away from.

Small objects on a table - a marble, an ashtray, a postcard view.

A shelf of books beneath the window.

\*

Amusingly, the students we read to  
remark the next day *how 'humble' we were*  
- which we explain as national style. The Italian guy

who read after, introduced his poems at considerable length  
giving them, probably, *strong recommendation* - then read them  
with *a lot of feeling*, seemingly surprised at how good they were.

The students were nice.

And Rome is great - walking aimlessly through it  
as it is lit up tonight, all of it is beautiful, much  
resembling a film set - Rome in the 60s, actresses, models

sportscars, fountains - light picking out the textures  
of walls, greenery thrusting from stone & brick, streetlights  
bright & fluorescent - and a constant randomness

to the flow & sound: darkness, quiet,  
then sudden flaring of headlights  
(Vespas, voices, bodies emerging from a doorway -

& entering a car, parked at such an angle & in such a way,  
that joining the traffic now streaming past will be an effort -  
an adventure, *and* achievement - but won't mean running *me* down, thanks).



The road I'm on rises before me, peaks, disappears,  
& appears again higher, further away. Phosphorescent,  
silver white, the streetlights strung beside it like pearls

rise & dip too. I am reminded of Melbourne  
- though which part - & Sickert & Whistler - & Clarice Beckett!  
that same sad eye: a vision that strikes me as 'teenage'

not because it is inaccurate or to be bettered: that is the age  
at which it becomes available - an intensely sad & stoical projection.  
I think of Laurie as I write this. - 'Mr Melbourne'

(though others are thought to be - & want to be - or are  
*only* that & seem diminished ...). His letter today.

I wonder  
do I have Clarice Beckett's 'eye'? "Oh-oh, a lonely

teen-age-er" - lines from a song John Forbes used often remind me of.  
- *Why Must I Be A Teenager In Love?* (Another.)  
John was Sydney. As is Pam. *For Love Alone* - doesn't that have

descriptions of Sydney I always meant to read? Where  
can I get that book in Rome? I am somewhere, now,  
near Via Dell' Umilita & Via Del Corso, & undecided -

not between those things though - humility & business.  
I'm for business. At least, I think, tonight I am.  
I go home, call the drawing finished - spray it with fixative.

It looks okay. A bit of Rome, a bit of Sydney -  
perhaps London a bit. 'The London Years of  
Roy de Maistre' - a Sydney remembered.

A Sunderland appears & lands whitely in the harbour,  
a corsage. I think of frangipani & carnations,  
look out the dark window - at a Rome that isn't visible -

& see  
the hill, the variegated pink & cream houses, verandahs.

\*

A puzzle you pick up & put down, & walk away from. A rebus.  
Flaws in the glass by which to see. I replace them, this constellation,  
small objects on a table - a marble, an ashtray, a postcard view,

a 1960s beer coaster. Items that  
mean nothing - though they make up  
'a sentimental picture of Australia'.

A perspective - distant from Europe - that lets you see  
more accurately than they do, do things  
with less assurance - but do them anyhow,

amused to be making the gestures that are art  
with all those gestures claim, or make them  
with no claims. In fact, the co-ordinates I love.

As someone, somewhere in Rome, a Roman, must be  
making a painting, making a poem, knowing Rome  
is not a centre any more, that Italy is not central.

Yet they go on, happy, thoughtful,  
Rome's night air outside the window, spelling *Rome*.  
Many happy hours, Pard.



## HOLDEN SONG - or, Homesickness Was His Middle Name

Here, plastic furniture seems like a good idea,  
more natural on a marble chip  
& concrete terrace, as though  
what we treat as objects,  
they take for granted

(hence 'style'  
and how for us this word belongs in ads

- *Roman Poem*, John Forbes

Reading about Marie Henri Beyle  
I suddenly wonder if Murray Bail hasn't named  
himself  
after Stendhal - Marie Beyle. Why shouldn't he  
of course, despite... Or are the similarities numerous?  
Anyway, an act of faith. Cath, Michael, & Di  
have gone down to the markets.  
I, in an act of enlightened disbelief -  
after all I have been before -  
remain & quietly read  
&, now, inside, write -  
another act of faith. As the trams  
roll by & traffic noises - horns mostly,  
but distant ones - bleat & sigh, complain,  
or mechanically & pleasantly  
drag the moments by. From where I sit I see,  
outside, the white plastic chairs  
John was so caustic about, momentarily, in his poem -  
& beyond them, six feet further - green shrub  
& the pink-&-biscuit-coloured faceted climb  
of buildings on the hill opposite: warm, calm, marked by  
the grey-white *horizontal*s of verandahs -  
the *vertical* accents of window frames, aerials,  
&, dominant, one dark green pine.  
Above, blue sky, & a bit of awning hanging down  
outside our doorway,  
the door I look out to see all this.  
John joked severely  
that the plastic chairs that, to us,  
would look less than ideal  
or even cheap, at home in Adelaide  
in Rome look sensible, approaching elegance, & closes  
with those Australian expatriates  
looking fondly on them, turning  
their hearts against Australia.

My point? None, as usual.  
Two months to go, of our stay here in Rome -  
where the chairs look okay, to me,  
though, true, I wouldn't like them  
at home - where  
I can't wait to go

though happy for the time to run out  
at its own pace -  
where the sight of the first aged Holden  
will make me smile - like the thought  
"Murray Holden Bail."

## A Prospect of the Young KB as a Critic

"For a long time I stayed in bed very late." - Marcel Proust

I remember with a kind of spiritual/intellectual  
'wince' the boredom of the papers on Sunday. The comics.  
The last page, if you still hoped  
for some relief (it was, after all, 'the last page'), featured Val  
(*Prince Valiant*), *Raddish*, *Laredo Crocket* & maybe  
*The Potts* ... (& some puzzles, Chucklers, I never did).

*Raddish* I remember with some affection. Though did  
I feel it then? Rarely. In it a couple - or a threesome? - engaged in  
Intellectual  
problems thought to typify their late-middle-aged, maybe  
almost 'battler' status. There was no action in these comics -  
& in this instance, invariably, the old lady, her hair worn (unlike Val  
's) in a bun (Val sported, when I think about it, a curious Cleopatra  
cut), dried a dish or waved an admonishing finger - & hoped

or worried that - say - money, which she hoped  
would arrive, *would arrive* - & pay their bills. The bloke, though he  
did  
hardly anything (& nothing that didn't go wrong) - read the paper,  
bottled beer - or carried *his* device, a manly hammer - tightened  
a val-  
ve that needed loosening - & while he talked over his shoulder she  
wiped up & talked back. (As fair to call this "intellectual"  
as "abstract", I think.) *Maybe it would happen*, maybe it wouldn't,  
whatever 'it' was & one rarely knew. In these comics  
long-foreshadowed action - maybe

because it took so long & was uneventful - like tension 'going away'  
rather than definitively ending - did not *seem* like action, & maybe  
*Raddish* held some microscopic fascination - how I think of it now -  
because, in a pasture out the window he grazed, the 'wild' or  
trump card we hoped  
might one day be played - in a rescue of narrativity, surreal but  
consequential. *Raddish*, the last of the comics  
on this last page, took its name from the badly drawn, sway-backed  
horse - suspended *leit motif*, incendiary loose-cannon narrative device -  
available, should its creators feel (as I did)

the need for it. In fact weeks would go by in which we did not catch sight of the  
beast - & then we did - leading his contemplative (not to say intellectual)  
life, truly a Life of Riley, munching, chewing, raising his tail. Was he their  
unconscious? their libido? The Potts' *id*? "Val,"

Prince Valiant's flaxen-haired betrothed would say, "Val,  
stick it to me." But she never did - though she admired him, as I never could,  
while he practised his archery, sharpened his sword, '*had moods*'.

Was this maybe  
muscular Christianity *avant la lettre*? or a puritan paganism? Val  
never promised the violently insurrectionary the way Raddish did,  
or even the intellectual  
far-fetchedness & 'possibility' of the horse - who had a rumoured history  
as a one-time winner: hopes hoped  
of him had some basis. Val on the other hand, had done nothing -  
text-book stuff, dutifully, text-book battles, text-book dispensing  
of justice, text-book falconry. There was no melodrama. Val did  
everything in orderly fashion. He would never even grow bored with himself,  
bored enough to come bursting through the door, cigar in his mouth,  
gun in improbable hoof, announcing *He-haww! The Drinks are on me*,  
as the horse would ... or would in the comics

I desired. Was the strip named after the horse, as I imagined? Then  
who were The Potts? Or *Wally & the Major*? Why, of the comics  
on the other page, was the one I understood least the most intriguing  
- the modern one, temporal miles from Val  
but geographic miles from me (I assumed it was America, though almost  
too literate - which made it, then, socio-economic miles from me, too)?  
where what they did  
was *sit*, & amble around, in an airy open-planned lounge or den - & maybe  
read the comix, or Sunday papers or a magazine. The heroine hoped  
she would not be bored, & father - handsome, quizzical, sporty dresser -  
made dry remarks - as did mom (another intellectual)?

The young girl (eighteen? twenty-two?) wore Prince Val's hair-do, better than  
Val did,  
& torreador pants & maybe lounged on her spine, oblique & petulant - & hoped  
her boredom would end: like me she hated the comics ... & Sundays ... an attractive  
young bourgeoisie - while I remained, *like Raddish before me*, a 'dark horse' -  
yet, like the girl, soon to grow *fiercely intellectual*.

## Ju - Ju

Wayne Shorter when  
you don't need  
him to  
be great  
    is good  
when you  
need help  
    is no use

which I think is maybe  
A Definition of Cool -

a gift & congratulations -  
to your good mood.

'Trane

is more reliable  
& is Great  
but is never cool. I would  
buy *both* your music  
a drink.  
    Yes,  
tonight *yours*  
Wayne too





The stuff with Miles equals it  
- Dolores, *Freedom Jazz*  
*Dance*  
*Gingerbread Man* -  
but by *Island & Moon* I'm made  
As happy as music has ever made me.  
Earlier,  
Tonight,  
singing an old song my father used to sing  
& thinking of him  
has maybe set me up  
For this untroubled ascent of spirit  
Banana  
Takes herself off to bed  
last night she refused  
& fell asleep on the couch  
wouldn't wake to rise  
I watched a bit of *Rage* there beside her, her  
Blissed out body  
lit by the TV screen. It was  
hosted  
This night by Tex 'Whoever'  
From *The Cruel Sea*  
Who showed old clips - mostly it seemed for reasons  
Of physical deformity or abnormality  
Mick Jagger's  
Big lips  
singing *Girl With The Far-Away Eyes*  
very funny  
& my heart warms to him too,  
his send-up of Gomer Pyle  
His dial prettier than, but resembling, Barney Fife's  
a girl  
with  
Very big tits  
is the stated reason for the next clip  
as tho  
To say "I know this is an odd reason  
but wait till  
you see them!"  
Then Iggy Pop working *very hard*  
To an entirely unresponsive *Countdown* audience

of

The young  
*who fail to wave their arms, scream, or smile*  
 even -  
 Tex's point. Well, I try to wake Anna  
 again  
 Decide she's warm enough where she is  
 & go to bed.  
 The  
 Needle lifts off  
 from the vinyl, a second time.  
 I play it again.  
 A friend's poem once commented on  
 his bladder's being  
 his metrical device  
 - he was writing in a pub -  
 something  
 I have almost never done  
 - or never to good effect -  
 The needle lifting tho  
 I've experienced that  
 Sudden attention  
 drawn  
 To the relative quiet  
 & to some aspect of your concentration  
 A gentle sound.

*Moon of Manakoora*

Written by Alfred E. Newman  
 the father of Randy Newman, &  
 Whose name featured on all those film credits  
 - late night & midday movies I watched  
 as a kid -  
 & for that same reason apparently  
 chosen  
 For *Mad Magazine*  
 that irritating lunk-head  
 who was their logo

What Me Worry?

What

a culture!

Well, I'm in it, & of it

Thinking just today, at the gym,

where Bruce

Springsteen was playing

- unusually : usually

it's disco, hip-hop -

What better confirmation of Adorno's  
point

- the masochistic use of music's repetition.

Songs sad, & to *be* loved ...

& *Born In The USA* - an anthem

red-necks cheer for, on American Wrestling -

to honor

their boy

& chant identification

yet the song means to point

To disillusion.

Know yourself I guess. I'm

Too serene tonight

to want to think that thru

to

any diminishing conclusion.

My father went before

me

& had, maybe, all these notions

in t-shirt & shorts

On the back steps, in

the kitchen, down the bush

that started beyond our yard

They are

their own reward

point to the fact of the time

& freedom to have them

- brief.

## Hindley Street Today, with a view of Michael Grimm

What to do

when the day's heavy heart,  
settled,  
rises then -

*thru some quality of the light* -

& you your own mug

raise up

to see it,

*register* it

bing!

the way counter staff would

gain change

in the old days,

but not any more -

& not 'today', today

being *now*

(&) in *this* 'day & age' -

Those old-time cash registers

having gone

before *the electric typewriter*, even, disappeared

- tho I never

had one of those.

Why,

pause, & reflect, & look down the street

where Michael Grimm might come

- & with any luck holding

in his hand

the tape you requested

& he was pleased to deliver

notionally.

Tho 'notionally'

*Notionally* might well mean "Never"

*Have you got it? Well*

*give it here!*

Maybe he does.

On it several versions of *Bauhaus*:

"Bela

Lugosi's

Dead”.

It's too bright & clear

in Hindley Street -

for him to be about,

the Count.

Yet “Yeah, I frighten a lot of people,”

the waitress says

jokingly

tho without much effort

as she clears the table

where I sit today

outside

to a patron whom she'd startled

- & actually, tho she's

pretty enough

her makeup's vaguely 'Goth'.

I find her interesting

- as I look up today

& down the street

looking for it to confirm my intimation

& expanded heart

With a view of, say, seraphic Michael Grimm

& my tape

on which

Bela Lugosi's dead

studio version & 'live'.

*He's* dead

& Dion

& so is Bing.

Bob Hope lives on, I think,

tho barely

but I'm alive

& Michael & Julie & Chris -

& those dead-heads from

the Arts Department

they've moved in

& now they find *us* 'more alive' -

we

laugh

at that,

'good naturedly',

the street is cleaner, too  
since  
they arrived  
a reason why  
the light strikes things better now  
&, if this coffee haint improved  
*my mood has*  
as I think, Yep  
- of Michael,  
The Grimster -  
will he have done it yet?  
Too soon.  
"Too Soon"  
*- the Nirvana story*  
it usually is  
too soon, I guess  
even Lugosi might have thought  
One more day, a week!  
I think, "not yet"  
I've got  
the 'Hindley Street' template out & operating again, the  
details falling in  
- 'signed up' for the long ride,  
Tho less some days than others  
but  
*just this minute* I'm up for it.  
The street looks grey & white  
& muted  
benign - or tired - or  
more forgiving  
Is that just the lack of traffic?  
Temporary. And the lull between the late  
breakfasters  
& the early-lunch crowd, the time  
given  
the waitress to talk  
the old men  
at their tables, plotting  
- plotting nothing -  
the Tech teachers at elevenses, me,

& fucking  
Michael Grimm

the nut



## NOTES

*Home Town* - "Gwendolyn windswept", a poem of John Jenkins' and mine; O'Hara and Towle are two New York poets; Estes and Ruscha are American artists; *The Advertiser* is Adelaide's newspaper, for which I wrote art reviews for a time; Tubby Justice is a singer; Kertesz is an early mid-century photographer, of Paris particularly; August Sander was a German photographer, one of whose works is on the cover of American poet, Michael Brownstein's book, *Strange Days Ahead*. Peter Schjeldahl is a New York poet and art critic. The other names are those of friends & artists, mostly in Adelaide: Cath Kenneally, John Jenkins, Laurie Duggan, Paul Hewson, Richard Grayson, Suzie Treister, Aldo Iacobelli, Shaun Kirby, Louise Dauth, Michael Zerman, Mary Christie, Pam Brown.

*Walking Down From The Star Grocery*: Painted blue & white, the Star Grocery - since disappeared - gave Adelaide a country town aspect: an old-fashioned, blue & white Greek grocery on the intersection of Hindley & Morphett Streets. The poem echoes a little Frank O'Hara's "The Day Lady Died". Yvonne Rainer and Ronald Bladen are American artists. As it turns out James Schuyler is *not* wearing a leather jacket in the photograph I was (therefore) misremembering.

*Halogen Pam* - is or served as a letter to Pamela Brown, Sydney poet, following on from the earlier poem "Home Town". In the poem I imagine her routine, as she had described it, and imagine the scene - though I've never seen it - as it might be painted, by various artists. Richard Estes and Ralph Goings are American New Photo-Realist painters.

*Poem (Dynamic Sleeper)*: - was it Rochester or Lord Byron who wrote a poem using a lover's back for support? Or Sedley or Buckingham - one of that crew! *Scenes of Life at The Capital* is a book-length poem by Philip Whalen.

*Mostly Hindley Street*: mentions Laurie Duggan, Cath Kenneally; artists Richard Grayson, Simone Hockley; & 'Crab' (Graig Tidswell) - of various bands: *Speedboat*, *Crab's Cocktail Hour*, *The Tuesday Welders*, *Soulpower*, *Powertools*, *This Is Hip*, *The Hip Replacements*, *Hipsters in Paradise* & others.

*News Of The Day*: "too-too, too much" - from a song of the same name that the live Velvet Underground album, 1969, has combined with another, "Sweet Bonnie Brown"; "(Ain't Never Had) Too Much Fun" - not Chuck Berry, but who?; "Sweet Jane" - the Velvet Underground; "simian" - a reference to Howard's *physical* resemblance to an ape; "straight against the light I cross" is from a Frank O'Hara poem.

*Double Portrait* reports my idle (& uninformed) comparison of Tony Towle, a poet I admire greatly, & painter Chuck Close, whose life & work I know little of. The form is two sestinas, linked at the 'envoi' stanza of the first. Other artists mentioned probably don't (for the poem's purposes) require explaining.

*Three poems for John Forbes*. These were written in a bunch a few months after John died in early 1998.

*Your Being Away*: the O'Hara poem - from which are taken the quotes my poem so obscurely structures itself around - is "Those Who Are Dreaming".

*American Friends: The American Friend* is the movie treatment of a Patricia Highsmith 'Ripley' novel. Set in Germany, the film stars Bruno Ganz with Dennis Hopper as 'the American friend'.

*Horizon:* refers to Meaghan Morris's essay "On The Beach", collected in her book *Too Soon, Too Late*, Indiana University Press. The essay, in part, considers 'the ordinary' in John Forbes, Les Murray & Donald Horne. "I live above a dyke bar" is from Frank O'Hara.

*Catching Up With Kurt Brereton:* *Ardath* was a cigarette brand of my early childhood: red packet with a small cat as logo I think. I thought them sophisticated.

*Traffic Noises, Cups, Voices:* The 'Cone Of Silence' features in some episodes of *Get Smart*, whose hero was Maxwell Smart; the 'Way Back Machine' allowed Dr Peabody (a professorial, cartoon 'dog' who wore glasses & expounded confidently & 'equably' on history) to visit significant moments in the past. Gilligan & Maynard G Krebs were played by Bob Denver (in, respectively, *Gilligan's Island* & *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*).

*Long Distance Information:* "Down In Blackbottom" - Joe Evans, recorded in 1931.

*Holden Song:* One of Murray Bail's novels is *Holden's Song*.

*Amaze Your Friends:* The film, *Mouchette* is from 1967 & directed by Bresson. The Wayne Shorter tunes are rather restrained & - within his oeuvre & for the time - conservative, but I like them. Tex Perkins is okay by me. Barney Fife was the deputy in *The Andy Griffith Show* & played by Don Knotts. Gomer Pyle is the character from the show of that name, played by Jim Nabors.



At The Flash and At The Baci

by Ken Bolton

English Department

August 30, 2003

Part two

exegetical essay

How I Remember Writing Some Of My Poems—Why, Even

## table of contents

- note on the text — 3
  
- essay: How I Remember Writing Some  
Of My Poems—Why, Even — 4
  
- appendix — 96
  
- footnotes — 150
  
- works cited — 159
  
- bibliography — 166

## Notes on the text

### List Of Abbreviations

Some of my own books are referred to in passing and will on occasion be identified by italicized initials in the right margin:

*Four Poems*, Sydney, Sea Cruise Books, 1977 — *FP*

*Blonde & French*, Bundeena, NSW, Island Press, 1978 — *BF*

*Talking To You*, Melbourne, Rigmarole Press, 1983 — *TTY*

*Notes For Poems*, Adelaide, Shocking Looking Books, 1984 — *NFP*

*Blazing Shoes*, Adelaide, Open Dammit, 1984 as *BS*

*Sestina To The Centre Of The Brain*, Adelaide, Little Esther, 1990 — *STC*

*Selected Poems*, Penguin, 1992 — *KBSP*

*'Untimely Meditations' & other poems*, Adelaide, Wakefield Press, 1997 — *UM*

*Happy Accidents*, Adelaide, Little Esther Books, 1999 — *HA*

*August 6th*, Adelaide, Little Esther Books, 1999 — *A6th*.

*AF&B* indicates the manuscript of current poems—At *'The Flash'* & At *'The Baci'*.

Others cited frequently are Ted Berrigan: *So Going Around Cities (SGAC)*, *The Sonnets*; Frank O'Hara: *Collected Poems (CP)*; John Forbes: *Collected Poems (CP)*.

### Appendix

Some poems are quoted in part or in full in an appendix following the body of the essay as illustration of the argument, though they are optional for the reader. The presence of relevant material in the appendix is indicated on right of page by the letters *APPDX*.

### Citation

Works cited are noted in the right margin and are listed as such after the essay, appendix, and footnotes. They appear also in the bibliography. However, in accordance with the essay's conversational tone merely passing references are not noted. Nor are works noted with every mention.

Note the usages "for example" and "that is" in this text are never abbreviated. That is, where "E.g." and "i.e." are employed in the poems, and in this text, it is as the two-syllable synonyms for those phrases which are pronounced "eye-ee" and "ee-gee". Consistency has been attempted where possessive case occurs—except that with a name such as Wallace Stevens, for example, the possessive might take the form of an apostrophe after the final 's' or of an apostrophe followed by an additional 's'. The latter option indicates that the word gains an extra syllable in pronunciation.

## HOW I REMEMBER WRITING SOME OF MY POEMS—WHY, EVEN

Time I suppose to see  
just what I've been doing  
writing poems—lost, in the  
middle of a dark wood  
or whatever—at any rate fifty,  
and enrolled, for this degree. (For why?  
you ask, as in fact I ask myself.) I know  
what I think I've been doing  
but these things will have  
changed, over time. Changes I sometimes  
will have 'noticed' merely,  
other times willed. But sometimes  
I will have noticed nothing  
or stopped, after a time, noticing.

And I will have changed—my ideas  
(though ideas were not important to me—  
in the sense of themes to 'pursue'—  
only that there should be some), my  
style and conception of form—as  
one gambit after another  
ruled itself out, through repetition,  
or my glands and reflexes grew  
gaining wisdom and sclerosis.

Those things together  
constituting 'change', development  
or something more in the nature  
of contradiction—discrepancies to be  
explained, or shrugged away,  
concerns or habits that like  
a shirt have worked their way  
low in the drawer and you say Oh,  
I don't wear that anymore—  
it's hard to say why.

(I'm not sure what I mean here  
or how best to say it:  
the ideas seemed extra-literary:  
that is, good ideas  
were better than bad  
and made the poem better—  
but the test of them as ideas was not literary.)

Or it's obvious.

The process poem, for example,  
 that strikes me as such a seventies thing,  
 and would have me 'respond' — *This*  
*coffee shop—I won't eat here again!*  
 Though in fact I will, despite the  
 fluctuating price, the mathematical  
 inadvertance that accompanies  
 lunch each day—the sensitivity  
 of the teenage girl who administers it  
 precluding objection.

Not that she is aware of this.

I have only ever *used* the conventions  
 of that sort of poem, not been bound  
 by them as rigor: a device  
 for changing the subject. Though 'subjects',  
 like ideas, were not the point exactly—

or *were* the point ... of the self that  
 entertained them, were just the *figure* or  
 'theme' on the other hand  
 of the one writing the poem—  
 and you were *both* these people, and you  
 might not have to decide between them—  
 unless the power of one called  
 for its being overruled and  
 even then it may have been a matter  
 of ceding ground, regrouping  
 redefining the goal or conception,  
 the ambition or gestalt:

two people  
 endlessly moving the goalposts  
 to gain advantage.

Or an impossible coalition—  
 say, the Labor Caucus.

(Prospective Content  
 and Vague Form, aligned  
 provisionally.

Though conceptually

they are of different order:  
more Incommensurable than Opposed  
— incommensurable *and* opposed? —

and, really,  
fictive entities:  
the form can only express  
or otherwise stand *in relation to*  
a 'content', which itself cannot exist  
independently.)

The Labor Caucus.  
(Or something more cooperative.) In  
any case the tension between the two—  
*form* and *content*—being productive,  
and the *poem* side brought off best with no  
one pole too long dominant. Though this

is to offer a generalization, not a memory.  
What poem do I remember this way? Well,  
'A Terrible Attitude, Based on Mourning' might  
be a candidate— *is* one,  
so perhaps there were others.

2 KBSP 172

Having something that must be satisfied,  
that might even 'drive' the poem—besides 'art'—  
was necessary. An impulse or orientation  
I think of as Protestant or Puritan—though  
what thing Catholic—if that is its opposite—  
is it distinguished from, the Baroque?

(Why did I say I wouldn't eat 'here', any more—  
and then admit I would?

The effect is to change the subject  
—but, more interestingly—*since* or *if* or  
*to the degree that* 'subjects  
are not the point'—a level of sincerity  
is introduced, or introduced  
critically:

an 'earnest' of it—  
a marker—introduced



as, simultaneously,  
it is undermined—  
a promise  
of unreliability

and a foregrounding of artifice  
—or, more correctly, of the form  
of some sort of  
bond with the reader. I *hope* it did all that

—because as illustration of  
a 'worn out form'—the shirt  
*never to be worn again*—  
it backfires: there I am  
using it/wearing it.

                            The failure  
set up here, maybe 'demonstrates'  
continuity?

                            Or is this a moved  
goal-post?

                            In some ways *good* if it is.

Perhaps this is that process  
where you *talk* to get out the truth,  
that is, my beating about here,  
trying to locate this essay's 'method'?  
Like the stoolie who 'sings'.  
One part of me (the formalist?)  
is the soft cop  
who encourages this,  
  'facilitates' it? (Then  
who is the hard cop?)

                            Did Robert Lowell  
have this problem? Doesn't everyone?

The Baroque I have some tolerance for  
and it would mean in this context  
the excessively, or entertainingly conventional  
and artificial. Certain kinds of  
postmodernism favor it. I like it  
where it is comedic  
but find it tiresome otherwise, time-

wasting, fake, not credible. I guess  
the rigor of some higher aim  
(by the logic of the binaries  
I seem to *think* in, *shuffle* between)  
—that eschews the Baroque and the  
conventions—I associate  
with Modernism (which seems to me  
Protestant, puritan, functional  
—where “*ornament is crime*” 3  
—Adolf Loos, where function is *ethical*  
—Reyner Banham, where “*form* 4  
*follows function*” (though I can’t think  
who said that—Gropius, Mies  
van der Rohe? Or was it Olson?). 5

(“(F)orm follows function”—the Bauhaus  
and, later, Functionalist line.  
Olson: form is *never anything*  
*but an extension of content* 6  
I think.)

Being virtuous, chaste even,  
I associate with Creeley—  
and don’t like it, much, in him—  
though where he has a virtue  
that is it, often. Though I don’t  
wish, often, to concede it. Well,  
there was *The Purity Of Diction*  
*In English Verse,* 7  
which I liked too—  
without liking, much,  
the contemporary poems  
it ‘spoke to’. Or liking them  
but not feeling them ‘contemporary’.  
I mean Davie and Larkin. ‘Chastity’ in verse  
was a concept I might have first  
met here. I had  
better ideas—I thought—*enthusiasms*—  
than being virtuous:  
the more positively exhilarating pleasures—  
of Thought-that-moved-swiftly and was not ‘poetic’  
that was amusing, that had the formal excitement

of collage, its disjunctions: Ted Berrigan, O'Hara.

Where I liked, or 'employed', conventions  
I wanted them laid bare.

I saw Berrigan's *Sonnets* and 'Bean Spasms'  
as like Rauschenberg  
and read Rauschenberg  
through the ideas of Minimalism and Kozloff  
(or so I thought or *think now* I thought)

8 & 9

—but mostly

I just liked the poems, found them  
speedy and smart.

APPDX

John Forbes's poems

I liked the same way.

("speedy and smart")—

I wanted to be smart.

Forbes's poems

were not just smart—

and the attraction

was not just that they 'knew things'.

"They were a kind of argument

or demonstration

of how it is being smart—

a blueprint, a way of

actively thinking."

So much of what was Poetry  
seemed dumb, does still, lame,  
ineffectual.

(Poet Cassie Lewis in a letter to the  
author.)

Poetry—as one  
usually came across it—  
seemed out of date, hopeless.  
I thought the way was, in part,  
to avoid metaphor, push  
intellection  
and selfconsciousness.

What did I mean

by these, quite aware  
that they were matters  
of nuance, of emphasis—  
that they were relative,  
not available  
as pure positions?  
Being less metaphoric

could only be  
a matter of degree: like, for example,  
the twenty-something  
in the kitchen with her mother:

*The trouble is  
I'm a feminist  
but I still like men—*

mother, scarf  
around her head, picks a nibblet  
from the plate between them—

*Like you're a  
Vegetarian but you  
still like Crispy-Skin Chicken?*

These two cartoon frames  
were in the kitchen and  
stayed for ages.

Dumb.

I think Mary  
liked the mother and daughter figures themselves  
as much as anything:  
their large tired eyes, their  
identical expressions.

The joke was tired.  
The humor was in  
the cartooning.

### Simile

is regarded as metaphoric  
but it seemed to me  
that simile was a little more open  
in its 'argument', less insistent  
than metaphor was  
of its case. And it was less  
of a 'marker' of Poetry.

A lot of the poetry

I disagreed with  
employed a 'powerful' image  
(apocalyptic, derived probably  
from 'Howl' and Bly—  
I don't know, really)—usually signaling  
more the heaviness, the amount  
of thrust behind the finger  
your chest got poked with

than describing 'vividly'.

Allen Ginsberg

To me it seemed a sort of cheating—  
and uninteresting and hectoring.

Poetic 'sentiments'

seemed dumb—invariably  
regretting the contemporary world  
—as though to be out of place  
were the point,  
demonstrating an acquired,  
a learned,

a pretended (?)

helplessness.

Did this all stem  
from the Romantics  
—Wordsworth—  
Gray's Churchyard?  
'The Deserted Village'? I'm sure  
they didn't know, these audiences.

10 Goldsmith

The wryness  
with which these attitudes  
were held reflected well—  
as designed—on the poet,  
you could tell, and the audience  
could nod and applaud, saying in effect,  
*We're hopeless, too*  
*(Ah, for this respite from*  
*the pressures of the world!).*

Instead

one attempted a 'thoroughly contemporary idiom'  
—mixed in ways  
which reflected contemporary complexity  
and a truth to one's  
background, politics, thinking—  
to the time's, the world's, complexity.

(I now 'sign off',  
microphone in hand,  
in an overcoat, in a field in  
war-torn somewhere...

But then—that's manifestos!)

No position guarantees

the ensuing product—  
some produced poems  
that were terminally hip, terminally glib,  
or marked *only* by the  
with-it surface,  
the content being unremarkable  
or dumb—usually, in some common sense,  
Romantic.

                    The puritanism  
endemic to the position  
could lead to a too meagre  
verbal mix—all  
color, exoticism, heat  
abjured or unavailable. *Wearing*  
*that shirt again, the black one?*  
Guess so.

                                    And all weight,  
all focus or movement,  
centred on pacing, phrasing,  
the idiom of speech. An  
aural dullness was one risk.  
One 'achieved' it, probably, often. Another  
—not even an alternative—  
was the impersonation of the self,  
even the *sincere* self, the  
*authentic* self—a presence meant normally  
to function as guarantor.  
This felt so unpleasant it had to be avoided.

                    By the 80s this had become generally recognized  
as the problem of the Subject, I think, and of 'presence'.

                                    Though poets mostly regarded it  
                                    as  
                                    'playing the *Sincero* card'.

I think poetry should  
(probably 'can')  
only inhabit spaces  
where it is in danger ... of  
the nil result, of error.

                    (Some kind of fakedness—falsity, false  
                    (rhetorical) authority—

is always a possibility—  
from *any* aesthetic. And nothing  
—as necessary or sufficient—  
guarantees the outcome.  
(Paying attention helps.)

I notice

I've slipped from talking  
of my own work  
to that of a phalanx of  
related others—initially out of modesty:  
who could bear to say "*I attempted  
a thoroughly contemporary idiom*"? Perhaps  
if I'd dropped the "thoroughly".  
And I don't think, personally, I ever produced  
"the terminally hip"—  
or that it's relevant  
to belabor those who did.  
I've written enough duds  
to know bad poems  
are their own 'reward'—  
own, punishing reward.

I notice also

that it's difficult to talk  
of past intentions  
except with the mindset  
*of* those intentions—  
the arguments I had rehearsed  
so many years ago.  
They're a little embarrassing  
and one notes  
'problems' with them now—

not always one's  
own problem with them—

and, in this case, finds  
the truisms of today  
demand you define yourself  
as, to a degree, in opposition:

it looks like you're a modernist

to some extent, or would-be avant-gardist.

(Though back then  
it was more that I thought  
that that was how  
art changed—*through*  
avant-gardes—  
than that I thought  
I was demonstrably 'of' one.)

Both have gained a  
sort of respectability  
since the high-tide  
of postmodernism's  
rise and rise,  
and now its seeming stalling  
—as though postmodernism now felt  
much less confident of its future

or of its distinction from the past.

Though the valency of *this* word ("postmodern")  
seems to change and diminish  
every few months—  
its high-water mark  
in terms of *éclat*  
a distant decade ago.

(And that's how *you* feel,  
right?)

Still, a kind of  
crusty, modernist/avant-gardist insistence,  
it's true, can look impressive.

I guess  
all this must be 'gone into'.

It is amusing, 'instructive' (i.e., Who's  
amused, instructed?) that, as one begins,  
these themes exfoliate, blossom, radiate  
(... um, outward).

The alternative to proceeding thus



would be to state  
an intended itinerary  
and follow it:  
a little like explicating  
the not very eidetic code  
of a map  
and then producing it

—an acknowledgement of the inevitable  
coarseness of grain, loss of detail,  
verisimilitude,  
of 'accuracy' even.

But at least  
it would be  
legible, read.

The intimate,  
responsive flexibility  
of the prior tangent-chasing  
(to 'name' a method)  
might claim to touch more bases  
but not offer the clarity of abstraction.

Think of 'The Oath of the Horatii'. No, no!  
Think of *maps*—as contrasted with *in situ* photographs.

11

And it might be infinite, *relatively* infinite,  
the "tangent-chasing" ... (Did you in fact  
recognize it as "intimate", "responsive"? Or  
*am I just saying that?*).

And how interesting  
is my poetry, or 'thought',  
that it should be endlessly analysed?

How interesting is anybody's  
(a safer question)

that second-degree description  
is more rewarding  
than the primary thing?

"Is this the case  
for changing tack, then?"

(A small English comedian  
dressed in women's clothes—  
and possibly *a woman*, though  
you know English comedians—  
asks this question,  
                    of *another* comedian,  
a *tall* one dressed in  
railway worker's uniform.)

Or is it

the formal requirement  
of a change of tone,  
or of focal distance? or time for a joke—  
a quip to relieve  
tension, tedium, brain space?

Certainly

I'd rather be writing a poem than  
writing this!—ha ha—(which signals 'joke').  
Though it's  
not entirely different:

                    like reflecting on a  
channel-identification advertisement—  
*glimpses*, of all those  
whacky shows—rather than  
sitting at a table in  
a cafe, writing  
what I normally write:  
a letter to a friend,  
making up a story, say  
—(the things I do)—

instead, fleeting references  
to poems of the past,  
so that they are recalled  
but barely and briefly  
and dropped again:  
*That's the guy in...*  
*Isn't she from*  
*Neighbors, The Bill?* —  
the reason—and the manner in which—  
this seems  
not satisfactory enough  
to be a poem. Well,

maybe Charles Bernstein  
would not—on those grounds—object

(He has his problems, too, right?)

(Um, “too right”?)

I’m tossing up between two methods—  
that a little resemble the tussle between  
the two figures with their goalposts—  
and will have to decide.

It seems I’m talking  
about past practice  
—and must at some stage  
talk about concurrent work  
and decide where past practice ends,  
some continuing present  
takes over. I’ll put the past’s rationales  
in its own terms  
as I remember them  
and comment on those terms  
as I see them now. The success  
or failure, then,  
of those early poems  
will not be relevant.  
A pity, because I *like* them—  
most a little innocent  
and confident, concerned  
more exclusively  
with aesthetic issues.  
Some led where I am now.  
Some are where I still am  
in one way or another—  
same ideas, or similar,  
still signed up  
for the same event—  
my technique a little looser  
a little tighter, wilier, more  
direct, or less so,  
guard up more, footwork slower,  
ring craft more sure  
etc etc

But what else—  
blather on about the  
'austerities' of a 'late style'?  
(Am I a painter?!)

There should be  
swelling music here,  
or a sudden silence, the  
ambient sound-track maybe spookier—  
the light should change:  
I'm about to make  
the necessary statement  
delimiting what I'll set out to do,  
what I won't be doing, my method

(Death by a thousand similes— metaphors abandoned in  
mid extension?) ...

Of the two procedures  
chasing tangents seems  
so likely to invade in any case  
that it should not be entirely  
given its head  
and nominated as 'the rule'.

Rather,  
the discussion—  
by poem or group of poems—  
quoted a little and included  
as an appendix, 'tabled'  
in some way—maybe  
to go unread, but  
'on the record'—  
might be the best way to go.

('tabled', in the appendix)

There must  
be so many more prejudices,  
'themes', ambitions I had  
that I still haven't covered—  
though this is just the prelude.

("themes, ambitions"—one theme  
might be the interpersonal,  
a concern with friendship

—an ideal, or notional, *community*  
... or solidarity—marked  
by the concomitant use  
of (real) personal names.

Not a theme  
I consciously pursue—  
or even find interesting  
in the abstract  
though I see it's something I do.)

But maybe 'significant highlights',  
a kind of typology, and examination  
of major cases  
will flush those remaining un-named  
into the light—

will, in fact, give substance  
to what has been abstraction, rumor!  
I.E., —"he must write about *something!*"

(Though poems are so ghostly,  
in their way:  
it might be like  
handing round negatives  
to friends—who hold them  
up to the light, squint, and try  
to reconfigure  
the picnic, party  
or travels I'm expounding.  
"On", "on". (I think the line  
should not end on "on"—  
but "expounding"  
requires the preposition.

I supply it.)

But that is a doubt,  
isn't it? And neither  
here nor there. On!

'(H)appy snaps' of the *past*—  
check 'em out!

#

(Jesus!)

(gulp!)

#

There seems so much to say  
about the early poems. I cared  
about them at the time. But what  
they didn't do  
meant so much more  
than what they did: a series—  
or simple instances of—  
*exemplary avoidances*  
of what I considered then  
to be error  
and which added up  
to a style of subtractions. I guess  
'cool' is always a matter of 'less  
is more'. Maybe I thought the poems  
exciting in their severity? The audience  
whipped—and a little shocked  
but liking it, or lapping it up?  
Maybe I didn't think this—  
as I read mostly to friends, the  
like-minded or moderately rivalrous 'peers'  
of similar or different persuasion.

The influences at work and the theory in play,  
for me, were New York School writers  
like Berrigan, O'Hara, Ashbery, Koch,  
to a lesser degree Padgett, Schjeldahl—  
Berrigan's *Sonnets* in particular, some  
early long poems of O'Hara's ('Day & Night In 1952',  
'Meditations In An Emergency'—

O'Hara, *Collected* 93  
*ibid* 197

—other poems of O'Hara's  
I know I re-read regularly  
as I slowly made my way  
through the *Collected Poems*:

'Oranges: 12 Pastorals', 'Homage  
To Rose Selavy', 'Memorial Day 1950',  
'A City Winter', 'Blocks', 'Romanze,  
the Music Students',  
'Aus Einem April', 'On Rachmaninoff's  
Birthday', 'Poem In January'... And  
in a way  
it is almost as important  
that I liked things  
about almost every poem  
from about page 200 on  
—to maybe the 400s—  
and that I read them slowly and often  
over more than a year.  
1974/75/76);

and

Ashbery's books,  
up to *Three Poems*. 'For Grace After A Party'  
for example. A number of specific poems  
I returned to:

APPDX

'Tricks for Danko'

APPDX

('For Grace After A Party'  
is by Frank O'Hara,  
not a poem that is  
usually much remarked upon—  
but I liked it a lot  
and wondered at its slippery ease.

CP 214

'Tricks For Danko'  
is by Robyn Ravlich, another poem  
I liked a great deal.)

13

John Forbes's poems  
of the early 70s  
(and Tranter's) I admired—  
for their confidence, uncluttered,  
un-sentimental clarity:  
their evasion  
of thinking

that came bearing its excuse  
in the form  
of the conventional markers  
of 'poetry'  
and introduced therefore  
as already failed,  
as cornball, a waste of time—poetry that said  
"I'll get out of your way now," having tugged at your sleeve  
and gone, and—in a mildly ironic, chastened, reflective way—  
*made one comparison*  
and ruefully backed away  
from useful conclusions—  
except to tighten its lips  
and say, in a pretence at 'grimly', bitterly, or  
philosophically, something like  
"So *that's that*," or  
"*It's fucked—how about that, eh?*"—Poetry's own variation  
on "If it's not broke don't fix it":

"It's a disappointment—  
so it'll need a poem."

"It's broke!  
This won't fix it."

That this may have been unfair—which  
I don't feel the need to concede, except hypothetically—  
seems no objection to it, at this remove  
especially. I think art develops that way. ((through such impatience))  
I thought it then too (though I was not hindered especially 14  
by the thought that I was wrong about the poetry  
I objected to).

Art history seemed  
to back up this view: the annoyance, impatience  
the Minimalists, the Hard-Edge crowd, 15 & 16  
Rauschenberg and Johns felt with each other  
but *all* felt with the Abstract Expressionists—  
second-generation especially: suddenly  
all the sincerity, directness, expression, 'touch',  
vigor, the 'tough' quality ascribed (I think)  
to Tenth Street gallery style—became suspect,  
risible, distrusted, its credit blown. (Picasso's scorn



for Bonnard is an example. We can see  
Bonnard's painting  
as beautiful, and still evolving  
through the 30s and 40s—where Picasso,  
with no justice, but with profit  
to his own determination,  
saw it as weak, "pissy". His  
term.)

17

Language is far more strictly  
and richly coded  
than the media of visual art  
whose immediacy and  
phenomenologically rich physical presence  
are so much greater. (One  
has a rich or enriching  
code—the other  
has a rich medium  
and weaker code. )

This renders  
many reductive procedures in visual art  
not easily, or profitably,  
transposable to poetry.  
On the other hand  
the slightly anaemic,  
weakly willed presence  
of Lyrical Abstraction  
and of artists, like Rivers, mixing the modes  
and diluting their aesthetic intensity  
as kinds—though for some payout  
in the individual pieces produced—  
seemed to me *not* so debilitated  
as applied to poetry. Here, in fact,  
a conceptualist's rigor  
applied to poetry  
emptied the field of much interest.

((diluted  
as kinds, or essences))

Witness

the early work of David Antin.  
Antin's later 'talks'  
follow another literalist reduction  
enabling him to bring a lot of resources  
to a limit case example of Poetry.

18

But not one I wanted to take up—  
except in its refusal  
to rule any subject out of poetry.

This  
is what I mean by “So much to say”. And yet  
it doesn’t describe the process: small, thin things  
aesthetically, my poems. But it describes how they were intended.

(Sigh.)

Also in the mix

—am I talking  
like a footnote here?—

were the injunctions of Robbe-Grillet  
and, soon, the rather sheer—*pace* Peter Craven (is there  
any term more suspect than “sheer”—especially  
“sheer quality”, even from a critic “at  
the height of his powers”?)—sheer cynicism of  
Gilbert Sorrentino. How late did I come across  
*Imaginative Qualities Of Actual Things?* By '78, surely.

19

To close this footnote: my own rather old-fashioned  
avant-gardist reading of modernist art history  
which I generalized and transposed to literary history  
automatically ... This was in the mix—gingered up  
a little bit, to some degree—by the coolly cerebral effect  
of Donald Brook’s views; study of Nelson Goodman’s book  
*Languages Of Art*; etc—and close involvement/immersion  
‘with’/‘in’ the vocabulary (and attendant attitudes)  
of the art criticism  
in *Studio International* and *Artforum*—  
Michael Fried and Clement Greenberg  
versus the Conceptualists, Kosuth, Judd, Smithson.

20 & 21

#

( A Cloud Of Knowing )

#

All of this formed—what?—a cloud, a  
rebus, a lens that focused my ideas and

intuitive writing and enthusiasm for some of the effects  
of the poetry I was steeped in. I think  
one puts one's shoulder to the door and pushes  
and cracks appear and you break through—  
but which and where?  
Where Theory indicated?  
Not necessarily. It is  
not so linear and directed, the process. Or not reliably.  
I could approve  
more poetry than I could write, for instance.  
It is all improvisation  
against what is *not* or  
*no longer*  
allowed or possible,  
against what  
you or your limitations  
make impossible—and an alertness  
always over eager—easily roused, easily dampened—  
for light at the end of the tunnel—a new poem  
begun, taking shape, a gestalt suddenly  
imagined. The theories are just the stilts,  
trainer-wheels, tug boats by which you've  
manouevred the giant gun-boat  
of your 'giant' ambition  
into place and have it firing at its target,  
a kind of imprecise or 'good enough'  
orientation—and your faulty character,  
weird inhibitions and desires,  
solipsisms, solecisms,  
humor and the rest of it (sensibility, taste, style)  
drive it.

So, the poems?

The reason I go on at such length—is that  
the inchoate list of ideas and influences  
has not changed so much  
so much as it has grown a little and  
maybe refined itself—  
some self-correction—and  
new art has been experienced—poems,  
art, TV, reading—but not much real revision:  
adding up to a more hedged about, more

qualified thesis or body of opinion ('weaker' in the philosophical sense of 'strong argument') that is closely related to the earlier, brasher, bolder, more 'certain' form.

The poems—'Terrific Cigarette', 'Nerve', 'The Mysteries', 'aeiou', 'Minimal Poem'—do a few things that will seem to fit with the above.

KBSP 34, 7, 5  
Blonde & French 10

Their culmination,

first peak, as it felt,

were the poems in my initial publication.

(*Four Poems*, Sea Cruise Books, 1976.)

What *were* the theories? I'll tell you but at the time 'Theory' had not been capitalized, and for me it remains mostly in the same state ... I believed in ideas, thought poetry should not bar them:

but I read mostly poetry and art criticism— and the access that gave me to, say, Jasper Johns' or Robert Rauschenberg's way of working was pretty much empathetic conjecture (only)—

APPDX

I thought *The Sonnets* and 'Tambourine Life' worked the same way, or somehow similarly and that was how I read them.

APPDX  
Berrigan, SGAC 84

A theory? If the theory was wrong is the poetry? I don't see it.

But, for curiosity's sake:

I might here, as well as anywhere else, give a list of some constituent nodes of theory, of attitude, of concept and a brief account of them—a little late coming? too early, who knows?

- *Minimalist Literalism*. This meant an insistence on presented structures—*materials* in the art work,

composition etc, being strictly non-symbolic. A step beyond Pound's "No symbols where none intended". No symbols *tout court*. Typically, minimalist works were sculpture—simple shapes like boxes and cubes, a line of bricks, pieces of metal leaning against a wall, or against each other, a repetition of units (the bricks, a set of rungs ascending a wall, Eva Hesse's perfunctorily random series of tubes against a wall).

But literalism was a big factor in the sensibility of US art generally at the time:  
the sheer (?) expansiveness of the paintings emphasizing their physicality, the material nature of their facture; the poker-faced quality of the images that much Pop Art re-presented:  
the Ben-Day dots of Lichtenstein's comic strip frames, the centrally placed and deadpan presentation of images in Warhol, the mysteriously unexplained juxtapositions (of paint with feathers, with silk-screen image, with real chair or stuffed bird or drinking glass—in Johns and Rauschenberg (the ambiguity of 'real' expressive brush stroke beside (real or depicted) flag— itself a thing or a design?)

The literalism of Ed Ruscha  
in his books—*Nine Swimming Pools*, *Real Estate Opportunities*, 26 *Gas Stations*. It's in Frank Stella, Robert Ryman, Cornell even—in fact Cornell is one example of it as a factor that (merely?) counterbalances *and* retards

22

a too easy translation  
into meaning—because obviously  
his work is 'poetic'—  
but the poetry derives  
from the objects' aura as things, depends  
upon their slow yield  
to symbolic meaning  
(to any meaning), upon their  
inner tension as  
a constellation  
of equal parts—rather than as  
orchestrated intentional staging.

Literalism as present in  
Rauschenberg or Cornell (whom  
I'm surprized to be talking about—  
he was no more than a curiosity  
for me in the 70s, though likeable)  
is clearly more transposable  
to poetry than that of the Minimalists  
(like Serra, Andre, Judd, Morris)—  
though their insistence on a deliberate  
(or 'dumb') literal understanding  
of procedure  
could be attractive: a sculptural process  
might consist of (only) laying down,  
adding, subtracting, leaning, pouring  
a material  
(to demonstrate its character  
and the logical exposition of the  
constructive procedure. All should be known—  
no mystification).

23

• **the arbitrary.** I think I have explained already  
most of its charm  
in discussing "literalism". I mean  
the jolt that the arbitrary can give,  
its contrast with what surrounds it—  
*a la* Rauschenberg. This charm  
and the (in part) rather deliberate  
working method can be seen I think  
in Berrigan's *The Sonnets*;

APPDX

O'Hara's shocks—of disparate imagery—  
are more old-fashioned in derivation—  
coming from  
the licence given by Surrealism,  
and Mayakovsky.

APPDX

• **collage** is of course  
just the technique  
of affixing many or various pieces  
to a flat surface, usually combined  
with paint—as begun  
by the founding Cubists and by  
the Dadaists (Arp, Schwitters, Ernst).  
Johns and Rauschenberg were called for a time  
Neo-Dadaists for this reason.  
Burroughs' cut-up technique  
is a kind of collage (but overlaid  
with a faith in its ability to produce  
higher truths). Berrigan similarly (in  
*The Sonnets*) draws from a more or less  
uniform or unified pool (like Burroughs)  
but not with the tone or formal expectation  
of higher truth  
so much as that of surprising or beautiful or amusing combinations.

A series of decisions.

#

Recognition—as a process—is the arbiter  
in this collage compositional process.  
But, for the degree  
of 'blindness'  
necessary to the process  
—of seeking the arbitrary, the  
arbitrary-yet-somehow 'good'—the artist  
need not (needs to not)  
know or acknowledge this basis!

This augurs badly, I think,  
for the lasting value  
of these works—they will surely

be found to be more conservative  
and predictable than they knew—  
or allowed themselves to know. Still,  
I have liked the results.

#

Generally collage affords—and works—by  
contrasts and unexpected consonance:  
pieces betray (or simply stand for)  
their different origins,  
their difference in kind,  
difference of material. But  
they also possess shape,  
duration within themselves—  
as well as (and apart from)  
their function as an accent, say,  
part of a rhythm or of a composition  
within the larger work,  
where they function as light or dark,  
sharp or amorphous, slow or  
quick *in contrast with their surround*—  
also working to seem (relatively)  
historic, contemporary,  
real/representational,  
coherent/truncated,  
dramatic/calm etc etc.

There were a number of artists  
not highly thought of at the time  
who (as well as stars like Johns and  
the Pop artists) were employing collage:  
taschists, second-generation Abstract  
Expressionists (like Joan Snyder)  
and Robert Motherwell himself  
(of the first generation)

• **Abstract Expressionism**  
should not need much explanation.  
But note its largeness of scale  
(relative to the time),  
supposed directness



(of expression and method)  
 and avoidance of symbol. This last  
 is not so secure—though it fits  
 with Kline and much of De Kooning  
 and Pollock, Guston and Rothko.  
 Many began using symbol and allegory  
 (as New Deal Social Realists—  
 or with psychoanalysis of one type or another  
 in Pollock's case) and could be argued  
 to have striven to work the new style  
 back to it—in Pollock's case maybe,  
 in Rothko's (if the late works  
 are all held to be symbolic—  
 a kind of one-note painter in different keys and tones?).  
 The *non* symbolic reading  
 was also the 'advanced' reading of the day  
 (the 60s and 70s)—of Greenberg, Fried,  
 and Minimalists and literalists. Like the repressed,  
 the symbolic readings and interpretations  
 were not long kept at bay.

The second-generation Abstract Expressionists  
 and subsequent Lyrical Abstractionists—  
 were not seen as of much chop  
 (advancing less, risking less,  
 less existential and edgy,  
 less pioneering—and therefore—  
 doomed to being hackneyed).  
 But many I liked.  
 Not that I knew a great many  
 examples of their work.

• **Alain Robbe-Grillet's** positions, as  
 outlined in his *Towards A New Novel*, 24  
 I found consonant with much of the above:  
 the emphasis on the literal,  
 the phenomenological, experiential.  
 (*La Jalousie* could be the latest—then— 25  
 in a line from Gide's *The Immoralist* through  
*The Outsider*). His ideal  
 was an objective style  
 (Barthes' *Degree Zero*) 26

with no anthropomorphism  
or seemingly all-seeing/knowing  
authorial presence. An inherent contradiction  
comes with the last—which I think turned him  
towards game and pastiche.  
And the ‘degree zero’ is  
an unattainable ideal—  
and maybe a chilling and limiting one,  
though I liked *Jealousy* a great deal and some of the others.

I also liked Duras  
(the earlyish books *Moderato Cantabile*, 27  
*The Square*, *The Sailor From Gibraltar*,  
*The Little Horses of Tarquinia*— 28  
and I read the later books in the 80s)  
and Butor (whom I know really  
only through *Passing Time* and 29  
*A Change Of Heart*).

• **Clement Greenberg** (see his 30  
*Art and Culture*, or more  
recent collections of his essays)  
was the critic most responsible  
for clearing the way for the Abstract Expressionists.  
His critical influence  
peaked in the 60s  
by which time he had pretty much  
stopped writing. His ideas were developed  
and argued by Michael Fried, Rosalind Krauss,  
Barbara Rose and others  
in *Artforum* magazine  
through the 60s and early 70s—and defeated, finally,  
as necessary doxa  
by their own narrowness:  
an increasingly delimited modernism,  
made more and more thinly pure,  
had arrived at paintings  
(by Louis, Olitski and others)  
that could not compete for interest  
with the art of the Minimalists,  
Conceptualists, Pop artists  
and performance artists present

at the same time. Nor  
could this position  
point to a likely seam  
for further development. Postmodernism—  
perhaps heralded by and consisting of  
this competition—  
put paid to his ideas. (that is, Greenberg's)

His essay 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch'  
I liked a great deal and found persuasive.  
Centrally he proposes  
that real art—the avant-garde—imitates  
the *methods* of art  
(i.e., isolates, identifies, purifies,  
the essential means), while kitsch  
(i.e., most other art)  
imitates *the effects* of art  
(the general look and feel  
of past, acknowledged art).

31

It may be Ptolemaic of me, neo-Ptolemaic?  
but I think Postmodernism  
can be brought under this rubric—its dependence  
on irony and parody and criticism  
meaning  
that it does not imitate past works  
(not as its point at any rate)  
but works on their methods and conventions.

A favorite phrase of mine is Greenberg's  
"Where is the great but absent art of our age?"  
Foolishly he goes on to list its possible characteristics  
and bemoan its non appearance,  
pretending to be convinced  
of his later, *forthcoming* vindication.)

- *Donald Brook's* position (and fate)  
was akin to Greenberg's—  
admittedly they were critical opponents—  
in that for Donald  
art 'as-properly-so-called'  
(his phrase, naturally)

was innovatively, exploratively conceptual  
and critical. Art that was not  
(i.e., most art) was in fact craft:  
the use of *known methods*  
*for a known result*—  
some comfortingly expressive art,  
or decorative art,  
that functioned as signifier of taste,  
as conversation point,  
as, indeed, decoration. Brook  
taught me at Sydney University  
and I enjoyed the experience—though few did.

- *the decorative, the lyrical abstractionists.*

An idea of the late Greenberg school  
was that the decorative could be  
'heroic', achieve a major key  
(escape the pejorative sense of the word)  
and *mean*, though mean by being.  
And here I think they referred  
to their usual quartet of contenders—Louis,  
Noland, Olitski and to the better but, they figured,  
ideologically apostate,  
Frank Stella.

It seemed or attractive to me (i.e., —the decorative as heroic)  
as fitting many of O'Hara's  
larger poems—their conception of themselves—  
and lesser artists ("lesser"?—Tuckson, Norman Bluhm,  
Jack Bush, Twombly, Joan Snyder,  
Motherwell). O'Hara's  
(never clearly articulated) concept  
of 'composition by field'  
seemed likely to aspire  
to such ambitions and desiderata,  
transposed to poetry:  
producing an immanent, enlivened field  
of verbal moves and tensions and textuality.

- *Olson, Creeley, Davie.* I hardly  
want to talk about Olson and Creeley—  
though for a while they were in there,

furnishing the back of my mind,  
 urging a poetry of intuitive discursive  
 nerve and an emphasis, therefore, on phrase,  
 on expressive rhetoric rather than  
 on metaphor and older kinds of formal unity.  
 ("Closure" I guess is the term now.)  
 Donald Davie's theories (see  
*Purity Of Diction In English Verse* and  
*Articulate Energy*) I found  
 compatible with what I chose to go with  
 of the Projectivists:  
 again it focused on phrasing, diction, rather than tropes.

32

33

#

Now the poems—'Terrific Cigarette', 'Nerve', 'The Mysteries'  
 'aeiou', 'Minimal Poem', 'Lyric (For Nature)',  
 'Sardine-Can Experience' and a poem I remember now  
 as having a dog barking in it.

KBSP 50

KBSP 10

34

The poem 'Terrific Cigarette' is probably meant  
 —or had tickets on itself—  
 as a demonstration of poetry created out of the  
 everyday and ordinary *without* needing to indicate  
 'everyday' by a shift in its tone  
 or by framing it as special  
 within 'the cultural space' of Poetry.

APPDX

It is determinedly  
 down-at-heel urban:  
 plumbing failures, trips to the laundromat,  
 a scenario of (the)  
*woman-goes-to-work*, (the) *man-*  
*stays-home*.

The poem states an enthusiasm for O'Hara and  
 delights in his flatly literal reading of 'In Dreams  
 Begin Responsibilities' (Delmore Schwartz)—i.e.,  
 "responsibilities start in bed". The poem is also a love poem  
 which it tells with a deflationary simile at its end

APPDX

meant partly as comment on poetry's reliance on such practices. I'd better read the poem to see if there's any more I should say—or if it bears out what I've so far said.

    ("poetry's reliance on such practices"—*NB other* poetry,  
    the wrong poetry. But 'such practices'? Love?  
    I suppose I meant too clinching,  
    too powerful (too poetic) similes

'Nerve' is a joke made of false naivety  
and repetition, and an apparently merely rational voice  
and mentality: again a poem made out of nothing.

*KBSP, 7*

It describes a poetry reading  
featuring friends of mine, joking about  
their favorite poems. I must've written it  
hard on the heels of writing 'The Mysteries'  
(a title that now recalls John Forbes—  
as a source of the fascination

APPDX

of that word). 'Mysteries' is a poem that explains  
and then makes more interesting the word "mystery"—  
by replacing its referent with another.

*KBSP 5 APPDX*

35

Something like that. The fly crawling along  
the rim of a lampshade is from Robbe-Grillet  
I think (*In The Labyrinth*)—not that it matters—  
and the poem also derives somewhat from the clarity  
and arbitrariness of John Ashbery. These are things  
I note about it merely.

36

'aeiou' and 'Minimal Poem' are poems that,  
in their tiny ways, applied a particular reading  
of Minimalism to poetry. If painting should  
be color (with no gesture to import "drawing")—then  
sculpture should be purely carving (i.e., subtraction  
of elements) *or* assembling (the addition of parts  
to each other) and composition (in either case)  
should be unemphatic, non-illusionistic, non  
anthropomorphic *procedure*—a neutral order  
that represented nothing and not 'Order' as any platonic  
concept (in this I echo Greenberg, Judd  
and others, Stella say). Poems could do

APPDX

something similar. 'aeiou' likes its couplets,  
 lines more or less self-enclosed, emphasising  
 their extendability. Each pair plays on  
 one vowel (or means to). The second half  
 in a willful abandonment of rigor mirrors  
 the first half visually and is simply (i.e., 'hardly',  
 or *in no very tightly demonstrable way*) an emotional  
 equivalent and extension of the first half. It's  
 almost 'winsome', cute, as a love poem. Though  
 hard to hate I hope. 'Minimal Poem'  
 decides to consist entirely of simile or analogy  
 —as the mark or province of poetry—and to evacuate  
 the comparisons of (their) meaning. Not a great poem.  
 Another that attempted this was 'beers', a poem  
 I like a lot better: again, made of deliberately  
 failed, inadequate, 'understrength' comparison:  
 something is compared to "something", or to a drawing  
 that might be a drawing of clouds or that  
*could be taken* to resemble clouds. And if something  
 is only like something that *could be said* (only)  
 to resemble something else how much is it like that thing?  
 Ha, ha. Still, it amused me. And there it is.

APPDX  
 BF 10

37 BF 28  
 APPDX

APPDX

'beers' is also a little about  
 theories of sight and recognition,  
 the duck and rabbit paradigm  
 and that sort of thing. Its flat tones  
 (and air of surprize at itself) make it akin  
 to some of the Schjeldahl poems I liked.  
 The book of his available then  
 was *White City*, Corinth Books.

(the duck that looks  
 like a rabbit and vice  
 versa)

38

A poem called 'Lyric', sarcastically I think, and subtitled  
 'for nature', is 'about' a build up of tension  
 through the postponement of the discovery of the source  
 of a sound. It describes an ambient atmosphere  
 that is 'boring'—or experienced  
 as desultory—and the misplaced  
 attribution of a noise (as the source of a  
 mild irritation)—along with  
 the build up of an atmosphere  
 suggesting imminent rain. Imminence

KBSP 50 APPDX

is all. Then suddenly and unclimactically it is all over.  
Not a bad poem: 'natural' processes i.e., weather and  
industrial noise, reading, disease—a trip to a chemist's  
for an ointment—make the 'nature' *urban*.

The dog-barking poem and 'Sardine-Can Experience' both  
quote, unattributed or distinguished by quote marks,  
phrases from Harold Rosenberg, Greenberg's rival  
for the meaning of Abstract Expressionism—and the loser  
of that debate. He was less of a formalist and more willing  
to insist on a psychologizing and Surrealist reading—  
and to write a less restrained, more poetic  
critical appraisal.

KBSP 10

39

Action Painting and the emphasis on Expressionism in the term  
'Abstract Expressionism' were his contribution—and the existential  
individualism and implicit criticality. (Greenberg stressed the progressive  
delimitation of painterly means and a derivation from  
Cubism and Picasso—a Cubist, *Picassoid* Miro, and from  
Arshile Gorky: a high-water mark  
of European achievement,  
set by Picasso and Matisse, and inflected by Klee, Kandinsky  
and others—reducing Painting to its proper, essential means  
—the meaning of modernism: distillation—color, not drawing,  
not illusionism, not narrative sequences but a  
unified (if complex maybe / maybe not) gestalt  
compelling because it effectively said, This is painting  
and nothing else, nothing extraneous and it is enough  
and is more—because more pure, less trammeled—  
more satisfying, more *overpowering* for not telling  
a story, depicting a beautiful woman or a  
cavalry officer on a horse—for being an arrangement  
of colors on a flat plane and not denying that plane.  
This is to paraphrase Greenberg in the vocabulary he would  
Approve—the terms of Maurice Denis in the 1890s.  
These terms Greenberg would have lead to Stella, Noland,  
Olitski, Louis.)

40

But I forget the poems!

They're rather small beside this argument and its imperatives.  
I fell asleep writing the 'Sardine-can' poem—  
and very much liked the way the words I deciphered,  
the words I'd written as this happened, had begun  
to stray and, in their straying from sense, have

APPDX



a lulling almost narcoleptic effect for the reader—  
if not 'on' the reader (though for all I know people  
regularly cannot get past that poem awake,  
heads hit the table regularly maybe at that point).  
Anyway, I like it. It quotes bits  
of what were arguments for  
the 'still-life', for the collaged bit of 'reality'  
(the sardine-can, say), as being signally  
or emblematically Modern. There's a bit of Stevens,  
too, though via Rosenberg. (I wasn't a Stevens reader—  
never have been.)

More of Rosenberg's characterizations of 'the modern'  
turn up in 'Life At The Grande Jatte', the title I find  
I had given the barking dog poem. I have it here  
before me. It has pleasingly large quotes from  
Rosenberg, adding to them the aural suggestion  
of the dog's barking—and of confusion and tension—  
to sit beside his 'modern'—and make it *more* modern  
I guess.

\* meant to suggest Seurat  
see BF 10

'Minimal Poem' consists mostly in a description of  
a poem that is like a tennis player *or* is like  
a system of organization or system of canal locks,  
or a case moving through (legal) courts,  
or like rhyme  
or a poem whose sense (or organization really)  
lurches from simile to simile  
discarding each for the next  
and so on—  
with some suggestion  
(or attempt at it)  
of a moebius strip's  
*return* and repetition. (A poem called 'Girls'  
attempts to divide the sound of the word from its  
(gendered, connotative) meaning and then to associate  
(as *if not* logically) the meaning with the word. (!)

BF 14

It seems not unlike 'Minimal Poem' in its way—in  
*this* way. Generally this kind of writing  
was never going to allow me to say a great deal  
except—allegorically, or 'by the by'—

on what might be an  
'ostensible' surface.

'beers' seems smarter than some of the others  
and cleaner in its language.

BF 28

As well, there are  
a few overheated poems—in that first collection,  
*Blonde & French*—an attempt at O'Hara's  
'ravishing' phrasing.

The real climax  
of this youthful writing had been published earlier  
in a smaller pamphlet: these were  
longer, collaged poems that manage to mix  
the techniques and aesthetic determinations  
of the poems discussed so far  
with the prettier language,  
and imagery, and diction  
of O'Hara (or licensed by  
O'Hara ... and by Berrigan and Koch and John Forbes—his  
'Admonitions' (written with Mark O'Connor)—  
and Rauschenberg—  
and second-generation Ab Ex painters—whose work  
was not critically rated high  
but which I was attuned to (a major  
misgiving for me  
in relation to these techniques and procedures—  
or a major misgiving  
tempered and suppressed into a minor one:  
I like a lot of painters whom I can not so easily  
approve or justify,  
and, conceptually,  
distinguishing between  
taste and judgement  
doesn't help. Still).

O'Hara's language and range are impressive.  
But in these poems of mine  
the shifts, I think,  
show the constituent parts  
often to be  
quite different in origin  
and not to emanate

from a single voice  
—as O'Hara's poems do—  
though the unity of the poem  
(say 'Terrific Days')  
does register,  
but as musical,  
to do with  
orchestration  
or emergent order.  
*If* the poems are thought to work.

("distinguishing between taste and judgement")  
I don't have a fixed usage  
for the term 'taste' but here  
I am thinking of it as unreconstructed  
and not very reconstructable—

like the sense of  
"ideology"  
that says  
it is 'false'  
but that 'scientific ideology'  
("judgement" my term here)  
can 'correct' it or see beyond it.  
Punishingly Althusserian I don't intend to be.

There were three  
of these long poems, published—together with one short one—  
as *Four Poems*: they were 'Four Poems', 'nonplussed'  
(the short poem), 'Water', and 'Terrific Days Of Summer'.  
(This last, published also in *Blonde & French*, David Malouf singled out  
as surpassing anything in *Four Poems* ... (?) ... but good  
of him to praise it.)

in *KBSP* 25  
*KBSP* 26, 34

41

Anyway, those four poems. I think they  
bear more attention  
than the poems I've so far  
spoken of. Generally they are of  
a higher attainment (a so much  
more *important* word  
than 'standard') and are

more ambitious aesthetically.

They are—or appear to be—  
collage (as I've used that term so far)  
and by that means  
do not locate a speaking voice  
or do not locate that voice  
—if and where  
it is seen to be one—  
as an unproblematic, lyric  
'subject'. At the time—  
if I had needed to,  
and I didn't—I would have thought  
it was simply 'not subjective',  
or that the subjectivity was 'modern'  
(meaning the experience was  
fractured and myriad and fast-paced  
and delivered through various registers—  
intellectual, emotional, physical,  
sophisticated, 'dumb'—through various cultural  
filters). Like 'real life'—  
and that it was Abstract, was  
evidently Art.

APPDX

APPDX

The first, 'Four Poems', has a motif of  
narrative, filmic grabs, used quite  
shamelessly (i.e., 'literally')  
as a formal device. The last poem,  
'Terrific Days of Summer', is to my mind  
lyrical enough  
but breaks up any propositional coherence  
sufficiently

APPDX

—again  
the characteristic relational usages  
parts are put to  
in collage, as I've described it—  
to seem,  
while emotional, still, *impersonal*—  
a structure more than a voice.

APPDX

'Water' is the third poem  
and begins as tacked-on

to the preceding short poem 'Nonplussed'.

It begins with the

APPDX

roman numeral (II)

indicating it is part two—

and it reprises the 'story' of the short poem.

'Water' is collage—but in a more

(deliberately cheesy) comedic

(i.e., comedian's) way. So it

uses fewer elements than 'Four Poems'

or 'Terrific Days'.

KBSP 34

It discusses a hangover

and a feeling of "belatedness" (to use

42

Bloom's phrase—is it his?)—anyway,

an anxiety

about influence: that of the New York poets.

It selects a number of lines

from the New York School

using the word "pill"—and some, too,

of the Johns Tranter and Forbes. The word

"pill" was attractive to all of them

APPDX

for its phonetic oddness

and its contemporaneity and mundane quality

as an object or referent. It was

my intention to joke slyly

with this locally fascinating importation—

suggesting it, implicitly, as an indicator

of cultural imperialism or colonization.

I disown this tack finally. The poem

also makes use

of a deliberate and gratuitous tangent

or interruption—transparently

APPDX

a means of upping the tempo

which was flagging.

This interruption was plainly an out-take

from the narrative riffs used in 'Four Poems'.

KBSP

'Terrific Days' was compiled

by going through filled

and much worked and mined

notebooks—circling good passages, phrases,

words—from poems that had

not come off, had failed,

as well as bits of writing transcribed  
from art criticism, aestheticians etc,  
phrases overheard.  
Because I deliberately  
opened these exercise books  
at any page at random  
(when I originally used them—and turned the book  
upside down  
when blanks became hard to find easily—  
and started again, as before, till it felt  
full once more) the passages  
were free of any too close  
chronological sequence.  
I chose a spot to start  
or some spots  
and then typed them up—  
if I liked them—in  
the order they appeared,  
I added to them  
whenever inspired to. As  
the poem began to take  
a shape and thematic form or gestalt  
I could occasionally riffle through  
to passages I *knew*  
I wanted next  
and then go back to the system's  
own delivery of the arbitrary, the  
stunning, the banal. Maybe a third of the poem  
was new work written in the process. Maybe less.

Lots of editing.

The distance of the voice  
from that of a conventional lyric Subject  
(a locution it tries me to write. I do it  
for you, o examiner!), the use—  
as (an evident) method—of  
collage and of quotation,  
appropriation—(a term the  
art crowd used to love  
so amusingly a few years ago,  
pronouncing it with great nicety,

knowing it ennobled *so much*)—this  
let the lush  
and poetic language—that I had not been able  
to make seem unforced  
in earlier poems—read as detached  
and acceptable, rendering  
the previously objectionable  
purple, striving, *forced* imagery and diction  
now ‘second degree’: to seem  
quoted, held in objectifying pincers of  
(unstated, unquantifiable)  
irony:  
at once a kind of distance and a kind of immediacy.

APPDX

((At some point I thought of these poems—  
with their kind ad hoc system  
and willing departure from it—as like  
Larry Rivers’ painting  
*Washington Crossing The Delaware*. Which  
I knew  
as parodying the corn of the subject  
and deliberately putting itself at odds  
with shibboleths  
held dear by the Abstract Expressionists  
and the cooler, newer crowd—  
while availing itself of their modes  
and attitudes. It was like Johns and Rauschenberg  
(a kind of composite in my mind)—  
but less programmatic. ‘Lighter’, too, admittedly.

APPDX

*Washington Crossing The Delaware*  
by Larry Rivers.

Rivers was of course a favorite  
of the O’Hara set. I knew that  
and I knew that O’Hara’s taste and affiliations  
were not seen as all that avant-garde  
by the 60s art world. I could see  
that they weren’t.

On the other hand  
I do genuinely like much of Rivers’ work.  
The picture manages to take life  
from the heroism it parodies

(the staged grandeur of the  
History Painting genre), and from  
the 'expressivity' (homeless, untethered)  
of the expressionist manner  
—as well as from  
the cool casualness  
of the work's 'perfect' incompleteness,  
sketchiness, cheeky estimation of what is  
'good enough'.

If 'Terrific Days', for me, broke any 'rules' at the time  
it was the crime of being 'romantic'—at least  
in 'subject matter'. But it escapes that by  
holding it all in its manner of presentation. A  
cake had and eaten.))

#

I've written other collaged poems.  
Each, usually, at some interval from the last.  
I have not wanted them to become too similar.

'Blazing Shoes', 'August 6<sup>th</sup>', are the  
main ones. In terms of length. 'Life  
Your Weight', 'Italian Drink' are others.

*KBSP 97, A6th*

*KBSP 88, 1*

'Beginning The New Day' is a slightly special case—  
it has rules binding its procedures.

(Three-line stanzas, the middle, or second line of which  
was a second line from a particular John Ashbery volume.)

Some poems begin with and in the framework  
associated with the process of collage, take  
energy from it, and become more ordinarily discursive

i.e., some poems of mine

or meditative poems thereafter. Or switch in and out  
of that mode: 'Double Trouble' is one such.

43

One avoidance of what was for me  
the disablingly conventional meditation  
was to attempt a poetry of statement—



neutral in tone, but allowing many sorts of discourse  
(fragmentarily) to operate. 'Talking To You' did this—  
as did 'A Terrible Attitude, Born of Suffering'.

KBSP 172

The correct title  
ends 'Based On Suffering'.

(Ken Bolton *Collected Poems*, Penguin 1992)

In all these—many of them—  
it is not clear whether the poem's discursive content  
is at the heart of the poem's conception

or something more formal: prospective shape,  
a range of tones. Where a switch occurred,  
a transformation or conversion,

it was more often to the discursive.

The reverse I would think was,  
with me, less likely. Though the formal may  
have reasserted itself to end a poem.

In any case, I think it probable  
that the discursive's drama is formal  
in its effects, that they have a formal dimension.

APPDX

(Is this a dumb idea? I mean they *would* be  
analogue to the 'sense' wouldn't they?  
As in, Of course—well, *durrghhh!*)

("ha ha, / me & Mondrian"  
ends 'Terrible Attitude'—a kind  
of cranky bathos,

which strikes an attitude at the end.  
For example.)

To follow change of subject for formal reasons is to  
parody the genre—along the way  
to keeping pace with comic thought

—(whereas) changes that reflect  
a 'realization' of some sort—  
thought at the discursive level within the poem—

aim at contemporaneity and a mapping of *thought-in-context*;

changes that reflect unknowingly or guiltily  
a flight from certain contents  
create speaking (or at least 'present') absences,

a subtext of the evaded.

The crude opposition 'form and content': it is  
not a mystery that they're not soluble—  
surely purely category-based, abstract philosophy,

or 'purely' aesthetic poetry,  
would be more a mystery. (Though there  
are candidates—Austin? symbolic logic? Swinburne?)

44

Do I have to have an attitude here  
as to whether Adorno is literature, whether  
prose is poetry?

Does an attitude that says  
Philosophy, and Poetry, are rhetoric  
help? count? need defending?

Probably I do some injustice  
to both Austin (who is  
just a memory to me: a brief encounter

with *How To Do Things With Words*  
or *Sense and Sensibilia*) and Swinburne  
(him too I've hardly read or

45

'read successfully'—'Hendecasyllabics'  
was a poem I was impressed with.  
Beyond that—I subsided with the

usual response to him: I can't think  
above this din! Though  
'A Din Melodious').

It seemed to me  
 —at one stage, at *some* stage, I thought this ...  
 and think it still!—that poetry  
 should *do* philosophy. In my father's usage  
 this would mean a swift punch  
 to the solar plexus, a rabbit chop  
 and a knee to the chin, as Philosophy  
 goes 'down'. But I mean  
 the gentler usage of  
 'doing the same job'. Both  
 are speculative, Philosophy and Poetry,  
 and deal with the same things—a  
 co-termininity (to coin a useful  
 'though' amusing term we won't expect  
 to see again) that Plato's  
 late reaction against Poetry  
 acknowledges. He feared Poetry's  
 'affective dimension'.  
*His* problem, in my view. A partial,  
 complicating rejoinder is to posit  
 Philosophy's dealing calmly  
 in 'abstraction' and 'the discursive'  
 as *rhetoric*

46

"coterminousness"?

47

—that is,  
 'affective—not an original move  
 even when I made it,  
 though it seemed so  
 to me at the time—at the same time  
 as it felt 'belated', 'unnecessary'. Some notions  
 of 'academic philosophy' hold that the latter  
 is more responsibly constrained  
 by conventions of argument, burden of proof  
 etc. Poetry, from  
 this perspective, might be held to  
 'try philosophy out' without these obligations—  
 a kind of dressing-up, or play—Let's Pretend  
 or Let's Imagine—that the poem will attempt  
 to inhabit and to extend its guise—  
 often in the face of  
 acknowledged or possible objections  
 (to the tenability of doing so)—and be applauded,

the ploy revisited time and again,  
for its very untenability. It doesn't seem to me  
that this is beyond philosophy: Nietzsche?  
Benjamin, Foucault—mystics?

The view that allows Benjamin as philosophy  
would not bar poetry—might, in fact,  
tend to dismiss much academic philosophy.

(On the other hand if the word  
is to remain useful we have  
to allow it some distinction from  
Thought or mere Consciousness.)

But, as well, I don't see that poetry may  
only 'do' philosophy under  
these conditions, this  
dispensation: irrational, akin  
to Benjamin. Footnotes (though included  
here) may well be absent,  
'i's and 't's not dotted and crossed,  
but propositions might still be put  
and considered with whatever degree  
of clarity or probity the poet determines  
and from a basis of knowledge—if one  
has it.

(A poem, a poet, advertizes  
the 'conception  
under which the poem operates'—  
that is, states the rules, implicitly,  
and not always with legalistic clarity  
as to how binding, how committed to them  
the poet is.) (See footnote 10 above.)

In an age  
of specialization everyone  
—even poets—will have one,  
a specialization, *some*  
special knowledge.  
Why not use it? This applies  
particularly to vocabulary—the verbal tools

(would not bar poetry  
*tout court*  
though it might have had  
more time for Celan than...  
... Betjeman)

of education in any area should pollinate  
the received language of poetry.  
Again, not a new idea  
and the process has been part of  
Modernism's project  
and of Romanticism's, and the 18th Century's. Poetry's  
taking up the discursive  
may seem a non Modernist move (if  
Modernism is to be taken as described  
by New Criticism—as uniquely 'presentational'  
rather than 'discursive' knowledge)—  
then this marks the division  
Modern / Postmodern  
as well as showing continuity—  
linking them to each other—  
and the Postmodern  
to the Romantic, —and the Enlightenment.  
All arguable, and not to my purpose.  
(I *think* —unless I will crucially  
need to assert a connection with  
Diderot and Coleridge, Shelley and  
Blackmore.)

48

Admittedly

—which

one says so easily when  
making a claim  
and not an admission—

I can admit that  
all is 'indeterminate', like any  
hard-hat deconstructionist,

and that it is the suggestive play  
of the language and concepts that is  
the point, with the rider

that trying to believe them  
(being able to believe them,  
believability as precondition)

as you write, is fun  
and 'enabling'—better to mean more

rather than less.

Though there are different means of meaning.

(Finally, I don't see the logic,  
the logical possibility, of claiming  
that all speech acts

outside of those  
by Deconstructivists,  
are suspect. Why can't poetry

be just as self-conscious—intent  
on reading its own agenda,  
*and* the culture's

“(J)ust as selfconscious”—that is,  
as Philosophy, Criticism, Theory.)

That said  
—what did I do  
with these impulses?  
The  
Usual story: not much.  
Not much in the way of philosophy  
—or philosophy as it's usually described.

It turns out  
I am not my time's, or place's,  
great thinker. Not its most  
systematic either.

All these chosen vectors  
were operating—continue to—  
in my writing—beside each other.

I sought to mix dictions and vocabularies  
(and their perspectives), use  
the antipoetic cerebral and abstract  
usages and rhetorics, attempt

various sorts of literalism:  
one foregrounding the found  
or appropriated, the quoted speech  
of an elsewhere—another attempting  
a discursive, flat speech of  
degree zero. Some poems tried  
a similar range through parody.

'Talking To You'  
was grave—and 'Terrible Attitude'  
was grave parody. I must have been

KBSP 61, 172

in a serious mood.

Were they any good?  
Do they bear upon more recent work?  
Same? Different?

Are they so  
because of something  
that worked? that didn't work,  
in the earlier poem?  
I suppose  
that sort of thing is  
what I'm looking at  
with these poems—

has there been 'development'  
and how do I feel about it?

'A Terrible Attitude, Based On Suffering'—not  
as I had it earlier 'Based on Mourning',  
which confused it with another poem,  
another poem's title or best phrase  
(I couldn't *remember* how 'mourning'  
was involved)—starts out  
with poet Chris Burns' summation  
of the line that has the Ern Malley hoax  
*fatally* block the way of modernism  
here (or, "on our shores" as  
the more portentous put it).

APPDX  
49

It then states(:) my own supposed relation  
to modernism; the latter's  
now unfashionable  
obsolescence; and  
in a detached but sarcastic way  
casts an eye  
over the changing dicta and orthodoxies  
that grip the visual arts: Michael Fried's wish  
to be "compelled to conviction"  
by great paintings—  
seeing this desired state  
as escapist transcendence,  
an experience  
which the poem compares  
to a (particular) 'systematic derangement'  
of the senses  
that I would practise  
in the more boring lessons  
at high school. (A comparison  
is made with glue sniffing.)  
The poem then begins a litany  
or Credo  
made up of  
the names of the artists  
I did / do care about—

50

These poets seemed equivalent  
in attention & attitude

To the art I thought was serious—their work,  
& their light & grace, their

avoidance of *crap*,

& conceptions of art, *and* life, as qualifying for  
all one's attention,  
& their despair of the symbolic.

- I still like all that. And that is what I liked then.

The love,  
now, of the paintings I associate with that

I still have - or the *idea* of the paintings -  
it is 'extra', sentimental, I could jettison it.

Or not.

54



It is my 'taste'.

Having believed, simultaneously,  
in those big paintings,

in the 'End' of painting, & in  
'the Conceptual', etc,

I can only attend  
now

"with interest".

Though as life goes on there are

more & more pictures that have  
'blown me out'

Pass me  
that glue,

once again.

Is that what it is like?

The poem continues—

Well,  
it tried to be terrific, that painting,

in *my* head at any rate,

and its trying,  
plus the fact

it might all turn out  
to be a mistake, no good, over -

only made it all the more serious didn't it?  
'embattled'?

The litany is a little fuller, the Credo  
exactly the same,  
as I have given it  
in this poem, this essay.

51

Then the Credo becomes still more  
'tough' minded—states  
basic attitudes:

well I won't work,  
but I do brush my teeth,

I have jeans & a suit,  
but no car. There are those that say

I should do more  
that I don't take them seriously enough,

I am too involved with art,  
or not enough.

I keep my life  
free enough to work, to not feel

too strung out—& I manage this -

Well, it accepts poverty, states  
that enough balance is maintained  
to write poems occasionally.  
It claims solidarity with—  
Incidentally—another Adelaide writer  
and more determinedly  
with a second, a singer  
Tubby Justice (seen  
in the poem  
walking—across the street).  
The poem jokes some more  
about accepting the  
artist's life, having  
signed up for it. And ends.  
The poem  
passes through many tones  
of 'realism'—  
where "real" means  
"stoical".

It's not based  
on any particular  
model. It would be  
stretching it to say  
it was much like Coleridge's  
'Lime Tree Bower' poem, for instance.  
Though it has an aspect  
where isolation from friends  
is considered. Its boldness  
of tone  
is the thing I liked best about it—  
apart from the jokes it contains  
and which I still find funny—

and its discussion  
of high art, high school,  
high modernism—and a high if better dudgeon—  
and the everyday  
(the latter not just present  
as background  
but part of the material existence  
the poem talks about).  
No level need  
apologize or  
defer to another,  
the vocabulary remains  
'objective' throughout.

                    A tone,  
equivalent of an  
'eye' that is jaundiced,  
attains a kind of affirmation.

APPDX

The poem's framing irony  
probably extends  
to neutralize this development  
as something comic in itself—  
or to register this revision  
as the speaking subject's own—  
or as *available*  
to that position: a poem  
that is finally full of fight  
or that is absurdly 'full of fight'—  
a parody of the  
redeeming turn. Hmmm.

Around the same time  
I had written  
a couple of poems  
that attempted criticism. One was  
'The Artists', the other 'Criticism'! (!)  
'The Artists'  
describes the themes and manner  
of four Adelaide artists  
in an exhibition  
I had curated—  
begun partly

KBSP 143, 161

52

as a way of expunging  
the memory I had  
of having written the catalogue essay.  
'Criticism' is a parody:  
the ostensible speaker  
is a near apoplectic  
art critic and goes  
picture by picture  
through the exhibition  
(that had been current).  
It's genuine art criticism  
of a kind,  
though exaggerating  
the function of delivering judgements.

53

Some time later—  
asked to take part in a conference—  
I began a poem called 'Untimely  
Meditations'.  
While this one parodies the  
lecture format to some extent,  
it also offers most of its points straight.

UM 54

And I hear somebody remark

What's so important  
about YOUR attitudes?

somebody who hoped I would not just  
state my own

but take this opportunity  
to be an expert

responsibly talking  
in the voice of reason and platitude

- enunciating views  
that are *not* my own?

Is that responsible?  
Then talk naturally!

Though theory has taught us  
there is no such thing

that even prose  
is rhetoric, is untransparent -

though it is mostly prose  
it has taught us that *in*.

Theory sees my point—  
though I'm sure it doesn't like it.

In part it is a conventional discussion  
of the primacy  
of the Australian landscape tradition,  
an attack on the politics  
of Les Murray (but also  
those of Adamson and Tranter)  
and a description  
of the *experience* of the arrival here  
of Theory and  
the postmodern.

The poem 'Dazed', written  
probably not much later,  
offers a deliberately plodding  
transcription and reading  
of John Forbes' poem 'Nostalgia'—  
contrasting his  
mental speed with mine. It's  
partly a homage,  
partly a joke  
(that has forgotten its ruefulness

UM 80

55

—as it becomes *more* rueful.  
The speaking position  
of the poem  
eventually centers in  
the speaker as protagonist  
within the poem's encroaching  
and increasingly detailed  
landscape effects  
so that, at the end anyway,  
the speaker presents an amusingly  
sentimental/tragic figure—  
'Object' rather than 'Subject')

APPDX

and it's point, literarily, was  
to do such a thing in poetry  
and yet be entertaining.

('Happy Accidents' was another  
poetic essay. More consistently jocular  
but focused on a very few intentions:  
it gives a history of *what 'everyone'*  
*—in my scene—was reading, was*  
acknowledging as influence. In  
the mid to late 70s. A kind of documentation  
and bibliography.)

56

John Forbes'

main influence on me has been  
as an embodiment  
of standards and as  
a pointer to the work  
of Berrigan and O'Hara (at  
least initially). I have  
been more influenced formally  
by his less flashy friend  
Laurie Duggan. Laurie's  
more scattered manner of  
the 70s (his poem—  
a book—*Under The Weather*  
and poems of that sort—  
E.g., 'The New England Ode'),  
his enthusiasm (late 70s)  
for Philip Whalen.

57

58

These things  
combined—together  
with the airy structures of  
O'Hara, Berrigan and others—  
as a formal model  
(and model for the tone, mode of  
address, under-determined  
subject position): the loose,  
stepped lines. Admittedly,  
I was writing this way  
before I read Laurie—or when I'd  
only read a few small, more tightly formal things of his—

but his example  
 would have further extended  
 permission—and exemplified  
 further tones or stances that give entry  
 to this manner. I know, I know—Who needed  
 permission? Encouragement, then. Readyness.

My point in much of the above  
 is the attraction of flat statement  
 (its attraction for me)—  
 as having the flavor of ‘literalism’,  
 as a move from lyricism and New Critical compression  
 to 18<sup>th</sup> century discursiveness  
 (a refusal  
 not so much of the disabling  
 Two Cultures divide  
 as of the demotion of Poetry  
 from serious engagement  
 with philosophy and argument)

—as a means towards  
 admission of a greater range of experience  
 and the language to talk about it

(maybe a “greater range of reflection”—  
 what ‘experience’ was I having?)

#

***Learn To Stutter — Scenes  
 From Damaged Life!***

Is that the true title  
 of this apologia?!

A traditional path  
 to aesthetic  
 seriousness  
 has been  
 “the pursuit  
 of the direct and the difficult”  
 (Lucy Lippard). As

writer and art critic  
Gary Catalano once said—

of artist Ken Whisson—

(that) (he) “resists  
all facility”.

“Risible? You bet.

but all that I’ll soon forget  
with my man

ner of working” (Billie Holiday). (‘My Man’)

60

Rhetorical facility  
(especially of the  
readily available ‘going kinds’)  
must be resisted.

At the same time  
“all is rhetoric”  
(Johnny Mercer)—

61

so what to do about that?  
That’s the bind,  
“and yet

*the bind is the point”*  
(Bobby ‘The Brain’ Heenan). (World Wrestling Federation)

62

A purchase on interest—on  
‘authenticity’  
even—is gained  
through involvement  
with the form  
and the medium,

with tools  
of artlessness and irony,  
parody, resistance and the rest.

“Damaged life”—I’ve not  
read all of Adorno by a long shot  
and don’t know



where the phrase occurs—

but Bogart/Sam Spade  
utters his lines  
in reply to Elisha Cook's  
observation  
that Spade talks easily,  
confidently.

“What should I do—  
learn to stutter?”

‘Scenes from Damaged Life’  
is the subtitle to Adorno's  
*Minima Moralia*. The Spade character  
“utters these lines” in  
*The Maltese Falcon*.

63

In the case of Poetry  
the answer is, maybe,  
Yes. One of the kinds  
of resistance  
I want to posit  
—have I posited it already—  
if *not*, maybe, *discuss*—  
is the resistance  
to a too easy rhetoric,  
at least when spoken  
from a subject-position  
that can be construed  
as the poet's.

(Q: “Learn to stutter?”)

But I  
*will* discuss it! Give me  
one more cup of coffee!

One effect  
of a poet's sensitivity to words  
even one such as mine  
will be  
a difficulty  
and self-consciousness

about utterance—  
and about banality,  
    *seeming* importance, por-  
tentousness of tone  
or cloying sincerity—

and a consequent  
deal of difficulty  
about where to begin,  
and a resultant silence.

    This  
self-censure will be—  
by means of projection—  
experienced  
as the medium's resistance.

I.

    E. — you  
don't know  
how hard this is.

The obvious way  
round it is  
parody or genre,  
where the model chosen  
can be both object  
and vehicle of your  
analysis.

Adorno's sense  
that the luxury required  
to have complex, analytical  
or speculative thought  
is incriminating  
is another sense of resistance  
in (or *to*) the very  
occasion of writing.  
And you trick yourself  
out of it,  
or around it or plow  
on occasion directly over it  
but accord it a degree

—*varying degrees*—  
of difficulty, surely.

The equation  
of civilization with barbarism  
is Benjamin's formulation  
originally, but elaborated by Adorno  
in *Minima Moralia* and elsewhere.

Billie Holiday,  
and Johnny Mercer...  
and even Bobbie 'The Brain'  
Heenan, from International  
World Wrestling! That makes this  
Cultural Studies practically.  
Doesn't it? "We have no culture  
just aeriels"? Isn't that  
what the bohemian young  
*eminence grise* said?

64

Or as one  
Justin Clemens has it,  
"All Cultural Studies  
Aspires to the Condition  
of bad rock journalism." (a variation on Walter Pater)  
Good to say that somewhere.

65

Yes, Poetry must 'defeat'  
Cultural Studies. They have  
the same job description:  
'Intellectual-  
Without-Portfolio'.

("(D)efeat"—that is, as in Harold Bloom,  
*The Anxiety Of Influence*.)  
And maybe we *don't*  
have to defeat it.

66

Back to the poems!  
Time for a coffee?  
Yoiks—time for *work!*

#

So—

'Notes For Poems' (early 80s)

KBSP 91

was a deliberate choice

of a more flowery diction

and an alternately hysterical and

APPDX

rhapsodic discursive manner.

Capital 'P' poetry. Chosen

as a way out of the dead-end

that degree zero and the process poem

67

had—temporarily? permanently?

necessarily?—brought me to.

US poet Tony Towle

was probably the main influence,

though the poem bears little resemblance

to his productions. (Actually

'Notes For Poems' took off

from the opening paragraph of

some old-fashioned *Guide*

*To Classical Music* I had found.

I think it had the phrase

"species of fine frenzy

descend from the sky"—and I was away.)

The signs of Towle's presence

68

are apparent to me though—

in the deliberate artificiality,

the persona (to a degree),

the linked, extended, 'classical' similes, metaphors,

and rhetorical patterns or schema,

the great show of their 'deployment'.

At various times I wrote poems as letters

(*instead* of letters even

in most cases) and the first published of them

UM 103—114

I think were three from France and Italy

(appearing in *Untimely Meditations*).

These allow an intimacy of address and tone

and make plausible a greater freedom of association.

I suppose they also involve

a degree of self-representation and

representation of the addressee (their

expectations, background, opinions). A kind of

negotiated relationship.

Their attraction for me  
as letters or surrogates for letters  
was that they gave me  
access I normally don't have  
when writing letters  
to areas of free association.  
One should have access  
to this in letter writing  
but I don't normally seem to.

these poems do not  
derive from Bruce Beaver's  
*Letters To Live Poets*—which  
poems would not in fact function  
as letters

Almost none of these poems  
did I conceive of  
in the terms I have used. I conceived of them  
pretty much wordlessly and intuitively.  
Involving a recognition  
perhaps readied by these kinds of thinking.

#

I was reading John Koethe recently  
whom I knew as an interesting poet-critic  
of Ashbery's,  
though whose poetry I didn't know. (In fact  
I thought I'd read a novel once  
by him, slightly *nouveau roman*,  
and not liked it). Anyway, Koethe  
is professionally a philosopher  
at the Uni of Wisconsin.

*(Poetry At One Remove)*

He says, "The conception of poetry  
that animates my work  
is based on what I take to be  
the fundamental impulse  
underlying romanticism: the enactment  
and affirmation  
of subjectivity  
and the contestation of its  
inert, objective setting  
in a world that is emblematic of its annihilation".

69

*Poetry Remove.* 111

... I thought, Wouldn't knowing that

beforehand reinforce a feeling of  
'Here we go again'? Like  
Russell Crowe's character  
going once more, each time,  
*out into the ring*, a gladiator—same  
old foe, in one guise or another,  
same old triumph sought?  
Koethe doesn't strike one as weird enough  
(an idea that came with the phrase  
"in one guise or another")  
to be an *El Topo* character—primed to meet  
'the same foe' but in weirdly Zen and  
Magic Realist guises. ("Geezers"?)

Fighting a baby here,  
there a legless guy  
on a blind guy's shoulders,  
a hermaphrodite etc.  
—I imagine  
it is always him  
in his lime-tree bower.  
(A little like me.)— (Yet I disapprove?)

He goes on to say,  
of this heroic enactment scenario,  
"one form this enactment takes  
is the representation  
of an attenuated version  
of the experience Kant called  
the dynamical sublime,  
in which the self—  
at first threatened  
by its perception of a world  
that reduces it to insignificance—  
attempts to attain a vantage point  
from which that world can be  
encompassed in thought."

And I thought,  
That's exactly the opposite of the plot  
—or at any rate, outcome—  
enacted in 'Dazed'  
where the attempted theorizing  
is defeated and the landscape

70  
*ibid.* 111

UM 80 APPDX

(nothing very awesome or sublime)  
comes even so to assert the speaker's smallness. If this  
is black comedy  
then does it, by inversion, assent to  
the same model Koethe invokes?  
I don't *feel* it does. Though I don't  
'think' that it doesn't either.  
I likely share  
much of Koethe's orientation  
but with less seeking after  
the spiritual triumph at the poems' close.  
I'm not opposed  
to that latter instinct. But a consciousness of it  
—self-consciousness about it—  
prior to writing—"exterior  
to the poetic impulse," Koethe would say—  
would for me preclude its being allowed  
free rein. I would want  
maximum self-consciousness and reflexivity  
*in* the poem, in the poem's process.

#

(The letter poems' making plausible "greater freedom of association")

"Make *more* plausible"? I mean  
*conventionally* more plausible—  
or expected—*because* they are poetry  
and have less of the utilitarian tone  
of contemporary, debased, truncated, not-very-well-mannered  
communications. The poems  
signal that they are Poetry  
by convention  
and that their humor  
consists partly of the ill fit  
of their notions (the notions they express  
thereby) with 'Poetry'.

APPDX

(Not that these poems set up to demolish  
that idea of Poetry—considering it demolished already—  
but invoke it to bounce off.)

bounce off of.)

What sort of ill-fit? The usual: the everyday, but also the more abrasive and, if not shocking, impolite: watching a big Frenchman's little dog cower under his chair, small, leonine and cowardly; watching cars park; remarks on the disappeared mosques of the Jewish Quarter; jokes about Australian War artists; anti-clerical sentiments; quick artistic judgements on the French Baroque's taste in Italian art; a drawing of the Sienna square done as if lying drunk in the middle of it. And so on. These things fill out the 'letter poems'.

#

On this tour of the various formal gambits, or moves, I've made—"formal/attitudinal" might have been the more circumspect phrasing there—their motivations, their characteristics, I'm left with a small bunch of poems with traditional form: some sestinas and a moderately long poem called 'Traffic Noises, Cups, Voices'.  
*And* with the fact that I've written a lot of poems in unrhymed couplets and triplets—since the mid 80s I think. I think the latter were an attempt at a less obtrusively ("ostensively" used to be Donald Brook's great phrase—as in "look there", "it's obvious")—um, less obtrusively apparent Subjectivity—through a greater regularity of look, but *also* (as it transpired, but not of necessity) greater regularity of tone—and argument.

AF&B 97

Not really a category, these, as the manner is adopted in works already categorized: 'Dazed' for example.

The sestinas were written mostly in the 80s when I finally realized



that some poems I liked *had* that form  
and that it explained part of their mystery  
and appeal. (Ashbery's 'Faust'  
being one. It recalls mostly the Claude Rains  
*Phantom Of The Opera* movie of the 40s.)

71

*Tennis Court Oath* 47

I used them in the spirit  
of the Ou Li Po (of whom  
I didn't know anything at the time)—  
as productively *restrictive form*.

72

The sestina formula  
was a machine you strapped to your brain  
and the product was something  
you could not have produced  
otherwise. 'Bunny Melody'  
is one I think is successful. My first, 'Funny Ideas',  
I began by choosing the amusingly nutty blurb  
from *The Fontana Dictionary Of  
Modern Knowledge* and making it  
the middle stanza of the six  
and plotting the determining end-words  
for the other stanzas  
from that mid-point—and 'writing'.

KBSP 85 APPDX

*Sestina Centre Brain* 1

APPDX

APPDX

Limited returns set in, I've found,  
after a time  
and I don't revisit the form very often.

The other poem 'Traffic Noises...'  
—but that is to jump ahead, to poems that are 'current'—  
the destination in a way  
of this whole exercise. We must be nearly there.  
Word Count could tell me  
exactly how far away it is.  
Exciting? And just  
as I've got the hang of this—  
got it, lost it a few times,  
but basically ...

So, *later*.

Finally,  
I've done more in the collage line, too.  
Not so much—and this time not because

Diminishing Returns threatened,  
but because I feared  
that the more purely 'aesthetic' determination  
—'aestheticist' even—  
would come to govern,  
that I would have to think of myself  
producing 'confections',  
the verbal equivalent  
of the Lyrical Abstraction paintings that,  
though I could like them, seemed to trade  
on the *look* of daring abstraction  
(daring accident, risk and etcetera), and which  
controlled that look pretty perfectly,  
orchestrated their colors, their  
randomness, their accident—  
too conveniently, whose daring was in fact  
already and long ago acceptable.

So, to avoid this embarrassment.

As well I had mostly turned this process  
upon a quite large mass of well digested  
and abandoned material, usually a good while  
abandoned. I was producing less of this  
(fewer fragments of unfinished poems)—  
was less of a bower bird of others' fragments—  
or of 'fragments' of my own. The discursive and flat manner  
I had been maintaining  
did not generate these nuggets. So,  
few examples: 'Blazing Shoes',  
'August 6th'. The latter, *because* it is later,  
shows the effects I have been describing.  
It is made up  
much less of small verbal, linguistic  
units. It is itself (consequently?) larger  
and cloudier—whole discursive chains are set up  
and run for a page, or pages.

KBSP 97

A6th

I like the poem very much—  
but it is commodious, capacious  
and stands at different sorts of angle to  
—different sorts of distance *from*—

its material. It *is* their voice  
more often: more often close  
to first person Subject-position—  
though it is more openly and more quizzically  
ironic about the voices it mimics, voices it quotes and ‘affects’.  
But voice and subject  
are a more determining principle  
with it than with ‘Terrific Days’—  
which could be regarded  
as having *no* Subject position. So,  
a difference.

There are a few shorter poems  
done this way: ‘Italian Drink’,  
‘Life Your Weight’—and a number of poems  
that begin with the method or incorporate it  
at some stage (‘Double Trouble’, ‘How I’m Feeling’)—  
and maybe it is almost a habit of thought  
or attention I now bring to writing. This, though,  
would be less ‘collage’  
than free association. (“Free”, what a nutty idea.)

KBSP 88

#

(I think we’re there.)

#

Well here I am,  
in *The Flash Café*, having  
shocked the woman behind the counter  
by ordering tea:  
she likes to guess, long black?  
latté? But my throat is sore—  
coffee would hurt.  
I’m about to embark now  
on the exegesis  
of the new poems  
that have been collecting under the title  
*At The Flash & At The Baci*—  
poems written here, written  
or revised here. Or at the *Baci*

down the street. A few weren't.  
Or, *if* they were, I associate them  
with the desk at home: one of  
the John Forbes poems  
    (the second, 'Hi, John' the title) AF&B 68  
looks out that window  
at a plant outside  
and another was written  
late at night  
("People Passing Time") AF&B 73  
and depended on pictures I had  
taped or blu-tacked to the wall.  
Similarly the poem for Kurt:  
(entitled "Catching Up With Kurt Brereton") AF&B 92  
I was doing a drawing or *had*  
just done. A few others—  
the 'Manet' one—I was with ('A Picture' is the title) AF&B 34  
Anna and Cath, another I was  
watching television while Anna slept  
in front of it or—no I wasn't—  
I wrote it the next night  
while alone—watching *Mouchette*.

(The poem is 'Amaze Your Friends'  
*Mouchette* is a 60s French film.) AF&B 123  
73

Because I'm writing this here  
at *The Flash* in a poem with  
the waitress in it—looking at  
poems I wrote here too—will she  
be able to see them—by some  
weird sort of *On Being John Malkovich* logic? 74  
If she could  
she would like her appearances APPDX  
I hope—though I can imagine  
*Whadya mean 'Gothic'?* 75  
*And who's this stylish bitch*  
*you work with that knows so much?*  
Would she like the poems—um—  
on 'purely aesthetic grounds'?  
No one else does—ha ha ha.

The best poems in the book  
are not necessarily the ones to talk about  
I guess, though it might turn out  
they get covered. The newest poems  
at the back  
are to do with Italy, in part,  
where I was last year (in the first half of 2000)  
—and the coffee shops

*Flash and Baci*

are Italian—the poems  
consider frameworks, locales  
perspectives  
from which experiences can be seen  
or my thinking can.

Nervously relative. In fact my  
trip to Italy to another perspective  
was the seemingly longed-for,  
or wondered-at, coming true—  
disconcertingly, as  
might be expected.

Anyway, I am not  
a markedly 'centered' poet  
though I live with that  
happily enough: tethered  
here—but lightly, barely.

The constants might be friends,  
Relationships—and a mix of  
culture, in which I'm at home,  
(though it's partial, not 'adequate',  
in various ways—but then I'd  
'have all the answers' if it were  
which would be boring  
or boring because 'not me'. Who knows?)  
(Somebody once said  
that was a recurrent phrase  
in my poems.)

I seem  
To have talked myself  
into a curious mood. Maybe  
I should write a real poem  
instead of 'this' then? (A

joke I like, which I've made  
a number of times  
not being sure what its import is  
or caring to decide.)

The whole relativism 'thing'  
I would like to bracket out  
—like my ideas—as non literary.  
It's not a conscious theme, or  
—and this *is* literary, I guess—  
is boring for its repetition  
and embarrassing: like  
some other themes—Who wants  
to seem this sook  
who always needs his friends?  
Similarly poems looking out  
a window, or up late at night  
thinking. 'Thinking'?  
"Thinking—but never making up  
his mind!"

though one is  
and does

Not

that I mind repetition  
in the poets I admire.  
(But I'm not one of them.)

So what's in this putative book then—

apart from the issues above  
which indicate 'more of the same'—

anything good?

The first poem in the book,  
'Home Town', is okay.  
It could be characterized  
as an 'I-do-this, I-do-that' poem  
James Schuyler-style.  
I do this I do that  
is associated with particular  
O'Hara poems. If it's 'James  
Schuyler' it is in being,

APPDX

initially, a narrow column  
 and in being less jumpy—  
 in the ordering and kind  
 of events and ideas, than F. O'H.  
 Not that this is 'true' exactly  
 or that I thought about it  
 that way then. But as shorthand.  
 The poem breaks up into  
 staggered lines after a while  
 —as concepts and moods  
 begin to dictate its pace  
 rather than the more ('telegraphic?')  
 actions and events. It begins—

Driving into work while  
 Cath reads about driving around London  
 & wondering when will I next write a poem  
 or whether to just work on *Gwendolyn*  
 a poem of John's & mine & maybe I should  
 it *is* half mine, I drop Cath off, do a  
 U-turn & scoot down to the EAF, park, go inside  
 check the mail empty my bag a little  
 lock up again & set off for the coffee shop  
 where I'll read or write a poem or a  
 review—or work on *Gwendolyn*, I suppose, is  
 a possibility . . .

and later goes on  
 to become a series of thoughts  
 about my 'place' in the world  
 how it feels etc and the insubstantiality  
 evanescence  
 of the terms  
 in which I think these things.  
 The poem affects a wistfulness  
 that it mocks—though to which  
 it resigns itself finally (if  
 'formally' only) at the end  
 in ruefully examining the lines  
 on O'Hara John Forbes communicated  
 to me: about timing, grace.

"Frank O'Hara never went skating  
 but he liked to dance," Forbes tells me

Two other poems early in the MS  
would seem comparable—'Walk  
On The Wild Side' and 'poem ("walking  
down from the *Star Grocery*")'.  
Both feature walking, obviously,  
as does much of 'Home Town'  
but actually 'Wild Side' contemplates  
future daily events

AF&B 12, 14

—"Tomorrow:  
shop, bank, wash hair" —  
and, still more banal, "put prices  
on books arrived at the EAF"  
(my job) "have coffee".  
"An eventful day?" the poem asks.

APPDX

The poem then goes on  
to calibrate loyalties  
to various 'heroes'  
Little Walter, Lou Reed  
James Schuyler—then ponders  
further nebulous things  
pleased to be making no  
firm decisions. It is  
a far more measured poem  
than 'Home Town', biting off  
almost less than it can chew.  
'Home Town' takes a number  
of big bites. The  
'*Star Grocery*' poem  
has some of the same  
measured quality and is  
in relatively grave  
three-line stanzas.  
But it is midway between,  
or *somewhere* between—or  
a *provisional plural*—  
"somewhere(s) between"?  
Is it a literary convention,  
or realism, that academic jokes are dull?)  
between



the contentedness of 'Wild Side'  
(the contrast with its title  
is *its* joke) and the anxiety  
of 'Home Town'. 'Star Grocery'  
runs unfavorable or slightly down  
and crestfallen comparisons  
of oneself (me, not you)  
with the major players of  
cosmopolitan centres  
and sort of decides to take them  
on the chin which it 'bravely'  
holds up in its  
last lines—contemplating  
total annihilation. In fact. (!)  
A bit histrionic.

('Walking Down from the *Star  
Grocery*' is its full title.)

APPDX

APPDX

(Just 'Death'.)

Other poems in the book  
treat 'the street'—  
this same street, Hindley Street.

'Mostly Hindley Street' does so—  
but more in the framework  
of the process poem: cursorily  
diaristic, sketching shops and sites  
and characters of the street  
and thoughts produced that way.

AF&B 37

It happens upon  
a kind of thesis or question—  
Is my 'compass' any broader than  
Thomas Gray's—whom I rather thoughtlessly  
deride. 'Halogen Pam' is a more circumspect  
account of my life in urban Adelaide  
contrasting it with those of friends—  
contrasting their imagined attitudes, too,  
to mine. It is in three-line stanzas  
and does a fair bit of thinking. Is its tone  
too heavy? Unrelieved? Later poems,  
like 'Hindley Street (with  
a prospect of Michael Grimm)' and  
'Amaze Your Friends', seem not similar.  
Their mood is less self-critical.

AF&B 18

AF&B 127

'Amaze Your Friends', anyway, is not about the street but was simply written about the same time. 'Prospect' begins in emulation of some lines and the feel of Ted Berrigan, his poems like 'Ann Arbor Elegy' or (particularly) 'Peace'. But readers won't notice. And it doesn't matter—it got me started—and its, or similar—repetitions are what 'Prospect' seeks for, overreach being its intent though hoping to 'save' or 'recoup' it.

APPDX  
77

APPDX

Interesting, I hope, is a satirical poem 'Giles Auty Furioso' which starts sort of scrappily—like a comedian at half pace, (maybe rehearsing a show, it occurs to me now)—then clicks into gear: the supposed voice of mad Giles Auty bemoaning the state of Australian Art Today, of art today generally. It's funny, if it is funny, because of the extremity of its views—but also because of their similarity to his. In my view, at any rate. The notes to the poem are amusing in something like the same way, if maybe more slyly.

AF&B 56

APPDX

APPDX

A poem called 'A Picture' but which I think of usually as The 'Manet' poem is I suppose 'ekphrasis' which, if this weren't a process poem and I was going to revise even a line, is a word I'd drop (usually

AF&B 34

I cannot remember it—it  
seems to mask the ordinariness  
of an ordinary enough  
concept). Describing a picture.  
This poem describes a painting  
by Manet that, it becomes apparent  
quickly enough, is imaginary.  
My partner Cath, her daughter Anna  
and I are in it, sitting in bed  
reading—they *are*, and I am  
or I might almost be  
but I'm writing the poem in question.  
I describe our respective books  
and the appearance of mother and  
daughter. Cath's description is mediated  
through characterizations of  
Monet and Berthe Morisot  
and a bit of pondering  
on Manet's likely attitude  
to detail—that is, is the anachronistic  
wrist-watch I'm wearing  
likely to show up in the painting  
recognisably? We all look up  
for the last line of the poem—  
and say 'Hi'—a reason why  
for a long while I used to toy  
with the idea of calling it  
'Polaroid'. The poem is moderately  
columnar, ranged from  
the left margin in one version—  
in another in longer-lined couplets.  
This last gives more control  
but slows the overall poem.  
A nice poem—but with  
very much the air of a set piece.  
A nice poem I don't care about.  
Far more interesting—but  
does it work?—the poem  
'Double Portrait'. Not conceived  
as 'ekphrasis'. It's a kind of  
doubled sestina, linking a second  
to the first—at the 'copula' of

APPDX

APPDX

AF&B 62

the first envoi or  
final three lines (that is,  
the envoi that would end—  
be the final three lines of—  
an ordinary sestina). It's  
the product of fabulous New York:  
the sight of a New York artist—portraitist  
mainly—one whom I've never liked

(Chuck Close: he was  
sometimes included  
under the rubric 'Pop Art' and also  
as a New Photographic Realist,  
though *their* subject matter (not his)  
was usually pick-up trucks and  
chrome-and-glass Americana.  
These latter artists  
have now mostly been forgotten.

Close's paintings are enormous.  
He has lately been  
confined to a wheelchair  
and with very little motor control  
of his muscles  
yet has devised a way to continue.)

"... one whom I've never liked"  
or thought much of. He is contrasted  
in all his art-world success (a  
second-stringer's degree of it)  
with the comparative and undeserved obscurity  
of poet Tony Towle—whose  
work I like. I discuss  
a Chuck Close self-portrait  
and a series  
of photographic portraits  
of Towle. My ambivalence  
about Close—who has  
risen above adversity  
in recent years—and about  
my opinion of him, and of  
other artists, is discussed.

It's all complicated enough  
and I like it as a kind of  
ruminative thinking that  
might belong in an essay  
in some people's view but  
is less usual and stronger too  
in a poem. The form  
might be the fault in the poem, or  
cause of its faults, but  
it also gives the ideas' expression  
some strength. It was absorbing fun  
to write a serious—seriously toned—  
poem in the sestina form.

Which  
links it, though at some months' remove,  
with 'Traffic Noises, Cups, Voices'.  
This poem, too, and unusually for me,  
takes a 'tight' form—the  
stanza pattern of FT Prince's poem  
'Memoirs in Oxford'. These few  
months' removal is not much,  
'Double Portrait' being examined  
two or three times a week most weeks  
for the next three or four months, given a rest  
and subjected to it all again—  
minor revisions being made  
or visited upon it, the poem  
gradually obscured, cleared  
and obscured again but fixed  
I think finally: over  
longer and longer periods left  
in the dark (to be read  
freshly). I decided  
it was complete  
about the time I finished  
'Traffic Noises'.

It is a more serious or  
heavier-toned poem than 'Traffic'.  
And interesting, *more* interesting—  
if in fact it retains the reader's  
attention: it is less comfortable

APPDX

i.e., the other sestinas were comic:  
there is one of these in  
the book too—'Prospect  
of the Young KB  
As A Critic'

APPDX  
78 Prince, *SP* 121

with its own thoughts—their status  
as reasonable opinion, *mere* opinion  
capricious opinion, unjust even.  
As well, I like 'Double Portrait'  
for the manner  
of its thinking about art—which is  
usually done with an eye to History.  
In fact poems usually discuss work whose  
status is, or seems, decided.  
'Portrait' discusses mere taste and  
fallible judgement—and error giving  
some works a special longevity  
for me.

(That is, a kind of 'critic's guilt'  
at having got the work wrong:  
there are subsequently  
works I remember especially—  
and disproportionately—  
having originally underestimated them.)

APPDX

'Traffic Noises' is much  
lighter in tone. It anticipates  
a trip to Rome, bemused  
to run through its file of information:  
knowledge of Rome generally, of  
the studio in which I would be staying  
etc—the point/points being  
contrasts of notional Italy  
and the 'Italian' coffee shop in  
which I write—and Adelaide.  
The poem is 'a bit civilized'  
in my judgement—'polite'  
in a way I find diminishes any  
urgency or immediacy... into an  
entertainment.

AF&B 97

But still,  
something to have done.

Maybe  
each poem is calisthenics, training  
for the next, or 'a' next. The same moves  
get made in more pressing contexts

or avoided, topped. Modified  
as they approach again. Like  
philosophy, I think. (Would *like*  
to think.) Or do I mean  
'thinking' rather than philosophy?

The three poems for John Forbes  
are a response to his death  
and explain themselves that way:  
in summary, they recount  
the following: that John  
was a kind of point-of-reference  
a constant in my thinking—  
intermittently invoked for  
purposes of comparison (my writing,  
my life, attitudes ...  
compared to his) and as  
a kind of bench-mark  
I could apply. He had  
stayed with us shortly before  
his death—not in good health  
but maybe prepared  
to 'look after' himself. In  
the second poem I reprise  
much of this.

AF&B 66, 68, 73

Both poems begin with,  
and mix in, everyday occurrences  
and return to John. The third  
is less anchored to the everyday—  
partly it is that it is written at night  
in a 'study'—work room—so that  
intrusions are less random, more  
chosen, and partake more of the subjective—  
maybe it is somatic, too (the  
body late at night): the poem  
as it turns out is a bit more  
'about' death as well as being  
—well, mostly—about John.  
It looks at three images—  
on my walls as I wrote—  
a large A3 photocopy photograph  
of 'Muddy Waters playing cards

APPDX

between sets', a photo  
(photocopy again) of New York migrant kids,  
girls mostly (or all)  
by Weegee from the 40s,  
and a photocopy reproduction  
of a Philip Guston painting  
*Smoking I*.

This last I have had on my walls  
for years—a photocopy actually  
of the picture torn from a page  
of newspaper so it consists  
of the rectangular image, the titling  
underneath and a triangular fragment  
of newspaper type still further below.  
I like it as black and white graphic  
more than as colored painting, I think.  
I can kick on with it all night  
to any accompaniment—Velvet Underground.  
jazz, anything. It is 'about'  
staying up late. Though for Guston—  
I know this—it is  
also about insomnia, its  
worries and bad conscience and hopelessness.  
This is the reason it reminds me  
of John. As the poem/s say or said  
—we had John resting down the back  
exactly like that, a waking, un-  
blinking head contemplating  
the warnings he had received  
about his health. Plainly  
I didn't know what was going on.  
Maybe he did. (Maybe not.)  
He was frightened, surely,  
to a degree.

Anyway,  
the poem considers the images:  
the young girls, shown together  
watching a movie, a crowded  
afternoon matinee session with  
other kids—all now, probably, aged  
or dead; Muddy (in



the pic John had liked and  
wrote about a few years before  
when he'd stayed another time and seen it on my wall)  
dead too; Philip Guston, dead.  
And maybe I was listening to Joe Turner  
(dead—do I say that, in the poem?)  
or was it just the repetitions  
reminded me of him ('On My Way  
To Denver'—*It's too late—  
too late, too late, too late:*  
*Too late, too late too late, too late.*  
Says the woman, whose speech Joe reports in the song:  
she's *on my way to Denver—tomorrow*  
*It will be too late.*  
She is dying of TB.

Anyway, for an overdetermined number of  
reasons, given my aurally spurred  
memory, I mention Joe Turner.  
The poem says John's dead  
and I'm alive, and doesn't know  
what to say or 'know' further.  
Some elements—my doing a drawing,  
friend Micky Allan, just things  
'on my desk' (pencils, jars, the  
curtain closing out the window I face)—  
are allowed in, partly because  
the curve of the poem is so powerful  
it will bend anything to its purpose,  
the concentration on its theme.

Technically—though as O'Hara says,  
"you just go on your nerve",  
(*that caveat*)—I guess the poems  
do the 'I do this / I do that'  
thing, but also allow themselves  
or the third poem does  
the freedom of the collage style  
(*not collage, but similar randomness*).  
And I think they shift gears  
often enough in terms of  
different registers of ... cultural reference,

tones and dictions. Not that,  
in *this* circumstance, this was planned.  
Training, you see.

Is this the place to say:  
John was not—in terms  
of style or technique—  
an influence for me:  
too different temperamentally,  
too big in the front brain department,  
more interested in compression  
than I am.  
But he represented a position  
I spoke to occasionally,  
addressed explicitly, or  
undisclosedly on occasion,  
and he represented a finger-wagging  
critical presence—in my imagination—  
though amusing, a kind of  
comic 'ravishing super-ego'.

---

Also influences, in  
variations of the same way,  
were Pam Brown and Laurie Duggan. 81  
—Less comically different  
from me, but different enough.

John's early death  
has made him more central  
to my poems recently. I don't know  
whether permanently or as  
a blip.

The Italian poems—'Traffic Noises'  
was one in anticipation,  
and we've dealt with it (on other grounds—  
not as anticipation, but  
because it was in a somehow  
'fixed' form, a  
stanza pattern)—what to say of them?

There were three basically: 'Rumori',

'Long Distance Information',  
and 'Tiepolo'. 'Tiepolo' is  
very much, and inevitably, in the shadow  
of John Forbes's 'On Tiepolo's  
*Banquet of Antony & Cleopatra*'—  
which is a better poem—  
though about a painting I  
don't much like. I've liked  
Tiepolo forever—bought prints  
of his drawings from Rowe Street  
Art Shop when I was  
first a student (finding out  
years later that it had once been  
importantly a connection with Europe  
for Sydney artists. By the time  
I happened upon it it was genteel  
and faded). I've always preferred  
Tiepolo's brushier, less formal compositions.  
I describe one I saw in Venice,  
beginning with a potted history—

AF&B 107

CP 189

In the 14, 15th &  
16th centuries it was  
all happening in Italy  
artistically though by the 17th  
other countries had joined in.  
By the 18th  
Italy was definitely off the pace.  
Still, I happen to think Tiepolo  
was a major artist

and an account of Tiepolo's isolation  
within the Fine Arts course  
at Sydney Uni—too important  
not to be included, not central enough  
to fool the students. Forbes's influence  
I think is in the comparison of  
the begging saint-figure  
with a lonely guy at a disco—  
a comparison John might have made  
and would have liked, might even  
have identified with.  
The poem is something of a 'set piece'  
—like the Manet poem—and

(that is,  
Tiepolo wouldn't feature  
in the exam)

APPDX

for that reason I dislike it.  
Maybe poems about pictures  
are not my thing—or *not*  
where 'Art History'  
has entered its verdict.

'Rumori'

AF&B 109

is a long poem about daily life in Rome  
and my preoccupations there  
with 'Australian artistic identity':  
Australians' looking to the Larger World  
—though there are only powerful centres  
that seem to constitute it—this larger world:  
London, Rome. (New York.) The loss of nerve  
and failure of certain Australian art and careers  
—Slessor, Crowley—and the pathos  
that attaches—were difficult in the poem  
to verbalize, or prove. It felt true  
—felt true more than it seemed it—  
and seemed and felt hysterical, projection.  
This reduces the poem, I think,  
to reiteration and shrinking from  
conclusion. Rome's *own* independence  
from these pressures (at least  
as a context or working space) is made  
absolve the feeling.

APPDX

APPDX

But not logically.

APPDX

It might as easily be seen  
that Rome (*cf* the Tiepolo poem's  
potted history) was no longer competitive.  
Like Sydney—or Slessor's Sydney.

Well, there are good things in  
It—but propositionally the poem  
is weak and uncertain.

Written

at the same time is a 'letter poem'  
to a friend in Adelaide, 'Long  
Distance Information'. The phrase  
is from Chuck Berry and  
'Long Distance Call', the Muddy Waters song,  
might be hipper as a title (as

AF&B 102

a reference, surely) but there  
you go: it does purport  
to give information—to a friend  
back home. Some of it  
is fanciful and some of it is true  
and most of it is humorous. Good  
fun, but no more—in terms  
of although satisfaction.

APPDX

No fun  
writing poems is it? I enjoyed it  
at the time and I don't hate the poem.  
But it was not the big pay-off  
and never was going to be.

Similarly  
'Amaze Your Friends', 'Hindley Street  
with Michael Grimm' and  
'News of the Day'—all  
likeable. 'News' deals notably  
—though was that its point?—  
with Asian students; 'Amaze'  
with sitting up at night, with rock clips, our  
daughter Anna (have I mentioned this?)—  
and 'Michael Grimm' is another  
portrait of Hindley Street  
from *The Flash*—all in stepped,  
scattered lines. I *have*  
talked about this.

AF&B 48

AF&B 123

AF&B 127

Some poems that link with 'Rumori'—  
its themes of art-making and identity—  
are 'Horizon', 'American Friends'  
and 'Catching Up With Kurt Brereton'. The last  
fits in perhaps because it was  
of that time—and it celebrates  
a Sydney aesthetic—mostly pretending  
my friends and I are having a reunion  
aged 50—*but 50 years ago*,  
in the Sydney of then.

AF&B 92

'American Friends' wonders where  
my writer friends *are*. (I'm on  
holiday as I write it myself.)  
The poem expresses ambivalence

APPDX

AF&B 87

as to the effect of O'Hara *et al*  
on those so far away. (The movie,  
from a Ripley novel, is about  
inadvertent betrayal  
of a German by an American.)

film title: 'The American Friend'

But "those so far away"?  
Is this a 'class action' I'm proposing—  
though I seem, conspicuously, the only victim?

US Imperials  
*New York blend*—  
it said on the pack  
so I knew what I was doing.

'Horizon' summarizes as similar—  
but is higher toned and more  
poetically obscure: it too begins with  
quotes from O'Hara—  
chosen almost at random  
but to fit my situation  
of looking out a country window.  
I do this and think of  
what my friends are doing—  
it is Xmas time—  
and wonder at the country / city divide,  
the Australian landscape tradition,  
Australia—which I would like, or  
*had wanted*, to think of  
as modern—in this *post-modern*  
'age' is 'post-colonial':  
how diminishing that is.

AF&B 89

APPDX

APPDX

The poem  
considers Meaghan Morris's contrast  
of Les Murray's  
"ordinary man with an icecream"  
(Les's, or Donald Horne's?)  
and John Forbes'

(Morris, 'On The Beach', *Too  
Late Too Soon*)

82

different take on things. I think  
the poem addresses John again  
near the end. The poem concludes  
but is not conclusive.

APPDX

It's good,  
I think—and was different for me  
in its manner—of looking for a  
new piece of text to push off from  
whenever it stalled. I chose  
fragments from the less well-thumbed  
O'Hara poems—not always signalling this  
with quote marks—and kicking off  
from them. Choosing O'Hara,  
while contemplating the Australian countryside,  
was a deliberate or perverse ploy, a  
self-incrimination, since the poem  
is about cultural imperialism  
to some extent.

The poem affixes my  
usual declarative style  
to a structure jointed at  
or powered from (in part)  
images, passages ... that are  
less 'transparent' than that style—  
but are poetically weighted or resonant.  
These are the O'Hara lines—  
quoted before the poem *and*, italicized,  
at its beginning—  
and again some pages further in, more—  
(italicized: "*not to be / inimitably  
weak & picturesque myself /  
but standing forth a subject  
not a spectacle*");

later, un-marked:

"as the brave must always ascend,  
always the musts" and  
"which strolls now & then  
into a field / & sits down like  
a forgotten rock".

The next O'Hara quote is signalled  
(by quote marks)  
and is from memory and  
meant to be recognized: "I live  
above a / dyke bar & I'm happy".  
"I might, too for all I know. /

Am I?" the poem asks.

I have  
a more detailed and critical  
view of O'Hara than I did  
in the 70s. I didn't read him  
a lot in the 80s—and use him now  
partly as emblematic—not just  
out of enthusiasm. ("Emblematic":  
'my' America—or  
an early, important  
enthusiasm.) I still  
like his work immensely,  
but see it more clearly. (Does this  
sound like 'knowledge'? Then  
I mean "clear-eyed".) (And it may be  
that I see it  
no more accurately.)

83

Not that  
I think the story of my poetry  
is of a relation to O'Hara's poetry  
—is it?! Is Dick Watkins  
*about Picasso*? Or Tuckson  
*about Pollock*? Should they  
not be? Anyway, if it were so  
that it could be seen that way  
it would be news to me.  
A possibility of course.

Or is it *not* news:  
exactly what I expect?

The smart thing for this book  
would be a blurb that directs attention  
this way—since it will be inevitable—  
and seeks to control it. Something along the lines of  
"re-examines the place of O'Hara and others  
in an Australian poetic."

If it does, still, that  
is not my point at all.



Thinking is, then?  
or poetry  
(form, art,  
the aesthetic)?

Poet considers a shirt he used to wear—  
why did he do it? how could he? would  
he do it again? Should this shirt be destroyed  
forever—is it a museum piece, tragic  
—or empowering—handy for someone else? Is this, in fact,  
the *same* shirt?

Scene—The Op Shop of the poetic heart:

*What a lovely shirt. Somebody should wear it!*

Not me.

*No, you've got too many like that already.*

Really?

*It's very like what you're wearing.*

## APPENDIX

This appendix quotes excerpts from poems of mine and others. The appendix does not offer argument—but as the exegetical poem assumes a knowledge of poems that will in fact quite likely not be known, the following samples serve as a supplement in some degree.

Indication is given of those pages of the exegetical poem to which the excerpts are relevant.

Book titles are indicated, after their first appearance, by initials.

• *reference page 9*

From Ted Berrigan, whom I saw as “speedy and smart” —

One dollar, you Mother!

Make all your friends

STOP!

(now there's an idea)

ARTFORUM

7231/2 La Cienega Blvd

Los Angeles, California

Back to the wall

(it's all in California)

Thanks to Jack

I mean it's all right here

it's morning

and I'm looking over the wall

at Mr. Pierre Loti and his nameless dog

they work well together

on paper i.e. this here

chasing a tiger across white expansiveness

that is not lacking in significance

(what is?)

— from Ted Berrigan. 'Tambourine Life',  
*So Going Around Cities*. Berkeley, CA: Blue Wind, 1980. 84





you could have almost clicked your heel  
and I/ gesticulating like a  
yellow canary

4

Your investigation of the alphabet  
is more surprising than any poet's/  
leading me to note  
BIZARRE

5

Often we have passing conversations  
direct questions and schizophrenic answers  
that somehow seem more appropriate  
and are always very amusing

6

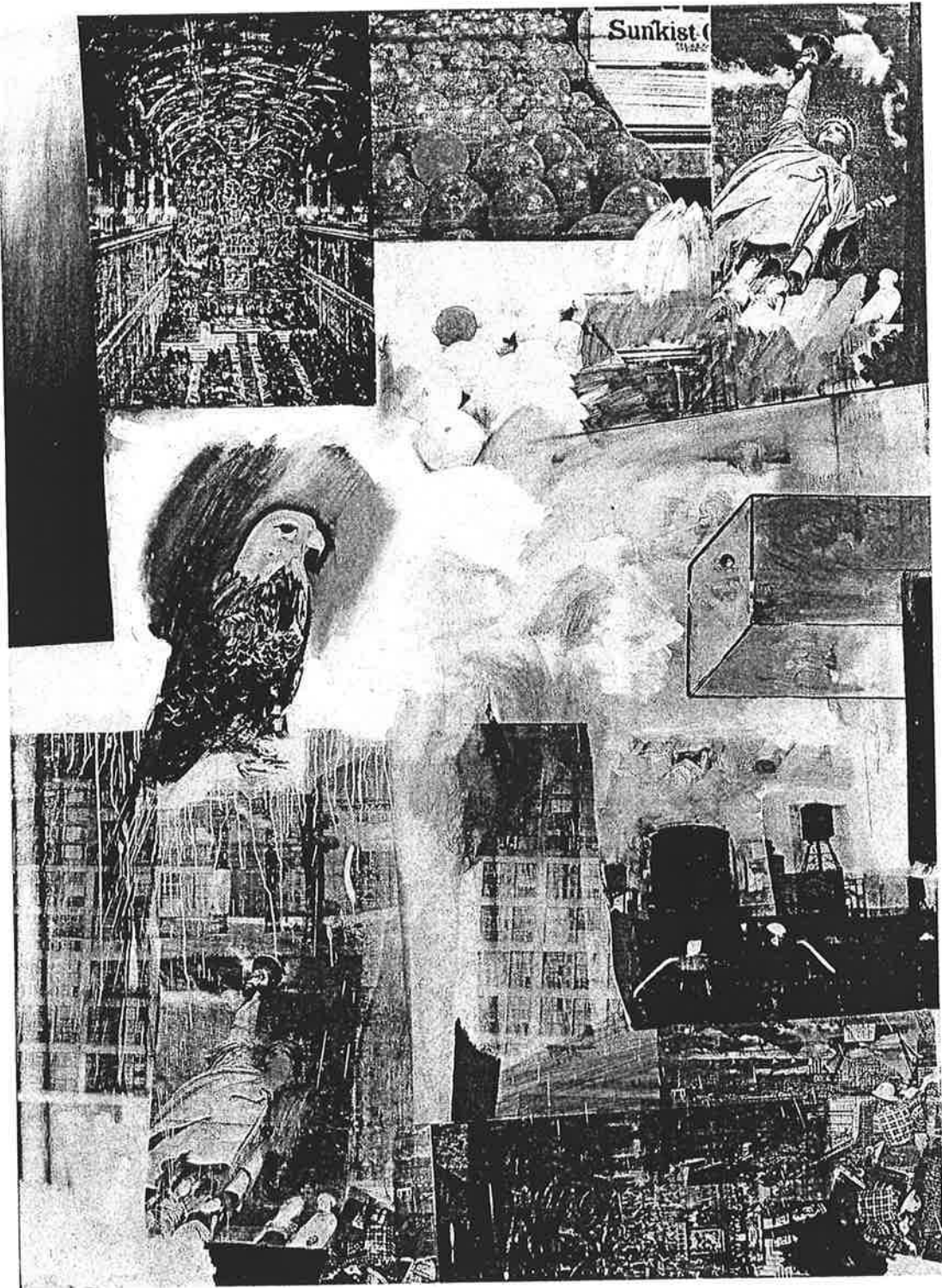
The trick is to drink beautiful  
cups of tea. Coffee is always highly overrated

7

Is gauloises, Sunday afternoons  
/drafts of a poem that begins  
'I know your name . . . '

— Ravlich. 'Tricks/Danko', *Applestealers*, eds Kenny and  
Talbot. Melbourne: Outback Press, 1974. 81

pic Robert Rauschenberg  
'Windward', 1963. Private collection.  
Reproduced in *Pop Art 1955—1970*, Henry Geldzahler.



Ted Berrigan —

LXXIV

*“The academy of the future  
is opening its doors”  
- John Ashbery*

The academy of the future is opening its doors  
my dream a crumpled horn  
Under the blue sky the big earth is floating into “The Poems.”  
“A fruitful vista, this, our South,” laughs Andrew to his Pa.  
But his rough woe slithers o’er the land.  
Ford Madox Ford is not a dream. The farm  
was the family farm. On the real farm  
I understood “The Poems.”

Red-faced and romping in the wind, I, too,  
am reading the technical journals. The only travelled sea  
that I still dream of  
is a cold, black pond, where once  
on a fragrant evening fraught with sadness  
I launched a boat frail as a butterfly

— Berrigan, ‘LXXIV’, *The Sonnets*. 62

from XV

In Joe Brainard’s collage its white arrow  
He is not in it, the hungry dead doctor.  
Of Marilyn Monroe, her white teeth white-  
I am truly horribly upset because Marilyn  
and ate King Korn popcorn,” he wrote in his  
of glass in Joe Brainard’s collage  
Doctor, but they say “I LOVE YOU”  
and the sonnet is not dead

— Berrigan, *The Sonnets*. 20

the 'jolt' of the arbitrary— as provided by Ted Berrigan

II

Dear Margie, hello. It is 5:15 a.m.  
dear Berrigan. He died  
Back to books. I read  
It's 8:30 p.m. in New York and I've been running around  
all day  
old come-all-ye's streel into the streets. Yes, it is now,  
How Much Longer Shall I Be Able To Inhabit The Divine  
and the day is bright gray turning green  
feminine marvelous and tough  
watching the sun come up over the Navy Yard  
to write scotch-tape body in a notebook  
had 17 and 1/2 milligrams  
Dear Margie, hello. It is 5:15 a.m.  
fucked til 7 now she's late to work and I'm  
18 so why are my hands shaking I should know better

— Berrigan, *Sonnets*. 8

Licensed by Surrealism? —

and I am a nun trembling before the microphone  
at a movie première while a tidal wave has seized the theatre  
and borne it to Siam, decorated it and wrecked its projector.  
To what leaf of fertility and double-facedness owe I  
my persistent adoration of your islands, oh shadowed flesh  
of my smiling? ...

— from O'Hara. 'Second Avenue', *CP*. 140



'Terrific Cigarette' begins —

relaxing lying back  
after reading the inspirational texts  
of the poets I love  
— briefly — & watching  
your back & side  
as you write, naked, in  
bed  
calm & pale as a cigarette that is smoked,  
lying here **am**  
I smoking one, aren't I?  
responsibilities  
"start in bed" you hardly seem like  
a responsibility & I take you  
the responsibility  
of taking you, & later finishing  
your writing  
up  
you take me  
o terrific cigarette

The poem ends thus —

& now I think  
you are far more  
'natural' than a film,  
& like a cigarette in existing  
in 'real time', & of course better than both, because you're  
a person.  
but not one comparable with any other

— from Ken Bolton. 'Terrific Cigarette',  
*Selected Poems*. Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1992. 3 - 4

'Nerve' begins —

at the reading Nigel read  
'a poem with a quote from  
Auden'; & Rae Jones read 'Moirá'  
& a few others; & a few  
others read a few things they'd read  
other times too; & so did I - I read  
one or two I'd read other times; Carol read  
one she'd read a lot at a lot of readings  
a lot of times : 'The Eye, The Moon, & The Tree' (you've  
heard it before); & who else was there.  
& what did they read? Kerry was there & he  
was very defensive about this poem he'd read a lot  
& he said he'd read it a lot & he read it. (though  
he read it very well.) Anna read a story that was ...

— from Bolton 'Nerve'. *SP*. 7

From 'The Mysteries' —

A mystery appears & doesn't mention  
intelligence or death.

A mystery appears & climbs into a tree  
yelling 'Intelligence!', "Death!" It is  
a diversion

Above the roof  
is a mystery. It steers its way along & between  
chimneys, mysteriously, & is it weeping or is it chuckling  
as it veers around the unlit neon sign mounted on the  
roof

\* \* \*

in the paper bag the greyhound the mystery the  
hydrant. Mysteriously moth.

(& so on)

above the trees there is no mystery. There is  
just the plane it is crawling slowly along the  
sky . like a fly along the rim of a lampshade.

— from Bolton. 'The Mysteries', *SP*. 5 - 6

'a e i o u' begins —

today,  
aflame with love for you my main  
feeling is un-nameable & is concerned with the way

these attitudes, which you weave about you, you weave  
about you. which are these ? - your

As to 'winsome': the poem continues -

best, you look like you might do that to me - me in the wire basket  
of your bicycle you pedal me to the picnic smiling

not at me but at the clouds little white Magrittes  
against the quiet, loud blue so I can see your chin. You're  
pedalling.

— from Bolton. 'a e i o u', SP. 8 - 9

From 'beers' —

the lines were just scribbled  
but approximated to the outlines  
of roughly drawn clouds

but only if the clouds  
were only partly drawn

& one just looked like scribble

for the most part,  
but against the white ground  
it was possible  
to see them **all** as  
clouds.  
this was the point :  
it was conventional:  
they looked like clouds  
or they didn't :  
it was a matter of "seeing them  
'as'",

The poem ends -

like 'quotes' they said  
"clouds"  
plainly.  
or they didn't.

— Bolton. 'beers', *Blonde & French*. Bundeena, NSW: Island,  
1978. 28



**(THE) SARDINE-CAN EXPERIENCE**

I invite you  
into poetry,  
sardine can

— which are nothing else  
than experience,  
the roller of  
big cigars, as  
absolutely 'real'  
an experience

— as image, or  
sound —

as you could want  
for a p[oe]m  
of hard facts,  
written down  
to be

indigestible  
like irreducible ore,  
sending the mind  
on tacks  
to try to find a  
way in

— hard  
as a Gris painting  
a sharp, light-  
hearted one  
whose attraction  
is that of one

whose attraction  
wears off  
only to leave  
the lover there  
un - enamoured;  
there was  
nothing killing you  
that wasn't happening  
any day. the mystery  
of those sad romances,  
these lines

into which  
we would inject  
a little glamour,  
or little charisma  
into these lines.  
will keep you  
out of the pool shots

& out of prostitution  
“Now I’ll  
never have to  
see a whale. I  
enjoyed it. were you lighting me a match/  
No? Good. he will  
be back soon & then we will  
have to leave

— Bolton. ‘(The) Sardine-Can Experience’. *SP*. 10 - 11

From 'poem, the terrific days of summer', which begins —

the fabulous limp calligraphy of the afternoons  
(the terrific mornings !)

zorro !  
\*

little rictus , & the mystique of normalcy

...

the air risks itself among her hair & everything  
is aroused

the air & things are all aroused & everything, & that.

It was like some sort of 'stuff'.

— from Bolton. 'The Terrific Days of Summer', *SP.* 34, 36

From 'Four Poems', which begins —

Intricate days / portrait of certain people as/  
Spanish assassins;

& a portrait of Rose Selavy's uncle,  
the assassin ; & of

Rose Selavy's assassinating  
desires.

intricate days. the Citroens. ———-‡  
irritable rose & black Coltrane Jazz & blues over-  
eating days the thought of you a blue cool mile  
from the ways I can feel on these days, now, -days  
like the longest afternoon in history through which

...

— from Bolton. 'Four Poems'. *SP.* 15





From 'Water' —

At home,  
feeling like a New York poet, or some Australian derivative,  
I watch an aspirin slowly turn a glass of water blue

.....

Un  
expectedly  
Suddenly, a golf ball comes in through the window  
& lands, crushing  
the pills  
of aspirin on my desk  
& which now lie in pieces round it  
like the wreck of 3 or 4 white garden statues  
(of egrets), or like a ring  
of broken aspro pills  
around a vitamin pill that is *huge* (—'big' as a golf ball).

I stare at it.  
The shock has spilled some of the water from my overfilled glass.  
& the edge of this spill is softening some parts of crushed pill  
on the  
left of the glass  
which crumbles slowly & whitely  
like a film I saw  
as a child  
(with Richard Widmark in it),  
which, while the credits showed,  
showed the ice & snow coasts  
of Iceland  
crumble, & fall into the water  
(this we saw from the fishing boats).  
And now it is happening  
on the table  
in miniature.

all my desk seems covered with water. I'm looking at it everywhere.  
But I'm looking at it somewhere else now. (joke!)  
**"It's the water in the drinking glass the tulips are in".**

— from Bolton. 'Water', *SP*. 26 - 30

“I wonder if I’m fooling myself about pills.”

— Ted Berrigan,  
which is quoted in ‘Water’

See also this early John Forbes poem ‘Angel’ — which ends —

and I’d like to kiss you  
but you’ve just washed  
your hair, the night goes  
on and we do too until  
like pills dissolving  
turn a glass of water  
blue it’s dawn and we  
go to sleep we dream  
like crazy and get rich  
and go away.

- from Forbes, ‘Angel’, *CP*. 60

At one point the poem 'Water' shouts "INTERLUDE!" - in bold caps with a box around it, then continues.

**"INTERLUDE!"**

I-know-a-guy-called-Michael-Witts. For-some-reason suddenly,  
I imagine him  
in a citroen: it is a black one; I do it for a joke

&

I consider that

become 'blue'  
at the thought

of a pill & a glass of water"

from Bolton. 'Water', *SP*. 28

From 'the terrific days of summer' —

( & suddenly (ha! ha!)  
the poems of Reverdy  
seem mannered )

incredibly  
long days.  
days  
of what must be  
a legendary chromaticism; days/  
without parallel.

& days, days & days of them, that are all  
**exactly-the-same**

\*  
frankly stellar  
\*

the brilliant sunlight more brilliant  
than the sunlight is from your view, in your  
apartment, is flashing existentially  
in the water's blue  
bleaching on the shore.  
dolorously.  
dostoyevsky ?  
is of you, is of you  
fabulous eyes,

& the smell of your sweat sleeping, in the sheets in the sun.

days without parallel,

of)

let's go sleeping

&)

leaving Bondi beach at dawn

— from Bolton. 'The Terrific Days Of Summer'. *SP.* 38 - 39

Any passage from Kenneth Koch's 'Sleeping With Women' would indicate a source for the enjoyment of repetition-with-variations that is in 'Four Poems' & 'Terrific Days of Summer' -

Sleeping with women and causing all that trouble  
As in Roumania, as in Yugoslavia  
Asleep and sleeping with them  
Anti-Semitic, and sleeping with women,  
Pro-canary, Rashomon, Shakespeare, tonight, sleeping with women  
A big guy sleeping with women  
A black seacoast's sleeve, asleep with them  
And sleeping with women, and sleeping with them  
The Greek islands sleeping with women  
The muddy sky, asleep and sleeping with them.  
Sleeping with women, as in a scholarly design  
Sleeping with women, as if green polarity were a line  
Into the sea, sleeping with women  
As if wolverines, in a secret line, as if sheep harbors

— from Kenneth Koch, 'Sleeping With Women' *The Pleasures  
Of Peace.* NY: Evergreen/Grove, 1969. 12

Compare this, from 'Terrific Days' —

days

full of people (like the film

**the longest day**);

& a tiny day

— you occasionally get them, recovering from the others,  
very small, & where nothing happens.

\*

& days as if!

days as if nervous

& days as if

the whole world had stopped for the "pause  
that refreshes" & could not get going. days  
when walking through Glebe

is so multiplicit

as if everyone actually was 'marvellous'.

as if 'arid'

like a dry sandwich,

as if reproachful

: there are lingering opportunities for things one  
must do

— from Bolton. 'The Terrific Days Of Summer', *SP*. 41

Concerning purple being recycled (from 'Terrific Days of Summer') —

— lines, their beauty consisting of their pursuit of the breadth of the page  
beautiful & cool & tendril-like (like the arms of cranes above the tallest  
buildings of the city,

days like tendrils.  
elixir days, days like Miles Davis days/  
like Alex Katz

effectual days

days like  
“the mysterious armature of the poem” when I  
almost thought he said ARMCHAIR.

— from Bolton. 'Terrific Days Of Summer' SP. 43 and 44

Larry Rivers, 'Washington Crossing the Delaware', 1953. MoMA.  
reproduced *Pop Art, 1955—1970*, Henry Geldzahler.



The formal “may have reasserted itself [so as] to end a poem”. Two examples follow, the first from *August 6<sup>th</sup>*, the second from poem (‘cat-bag’)—

It is as if the river sighed, became  
that degree more sad. The pale ash cloud has darkened;  
the sky above it is a deepening blue. I wonder  
did Shelley breathe this breath, feel similarly  
the river’s non-committal bearing him upon its surface.

Did he see the scene

where her little legs  
walk down the hall?  
(Claire’s? Mary’s?)

“Should pleasure,  
in the form of a *perpetually*  
*perambulating woman*” lead you on, this might be  
*just the thing*, the wick of a bomb,

a bomb in Pisa.

what a funny day you’ve been, August 6<sup>th</sup>

— from Bolton. *August 6<sup>th</sup>*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1999.

33 - 35

And the ending of ‘Cat-bag’ —

... time to smile now,  
ruefully. Tho on another night



I'll be laughing, up late, spinning  
records (tapes, vinyl - CDs if  
I'm in this room), reading books,  
daydreaming  
strap-hanging — on  
the train that is my life  
as it takes me to my destination, the  
light & dark of the stations meanwhile  
flashing by

now  
I read  
"The Walk"  
the lines  
so slim  
& delicate  
the timing  
almost ec-  
statically quiet  
so great it  
caps the night.  
Extinguished,  
I crash out.

— from Bolton. 'Cat-bag', *At The Flash & At The Baci*

'A Terrible Attitude' begins —

Chris's joke  
about Modernism in Australia —

that it's like the guest  
who arrives late

— "Sorry I am late.  
I was mugged."

History's view  
Of the Ern Malley hoax. Irreparable damage & all that ...

— from Bolton. 'A Terrible Attitude, Based On Suffering', *SP*. 172

'A Terrible Attitude' ends -

I don't know how to 'deal'

With poverty, in poems, except realistically  
— to state it —

or ignore it. Both. I am poor. I  
hate it, but it has not been inflicted on me

A writer friend says she hardly knows  
how to *talk* to the local arts officer, now,

now she's got a grant,  
when mostly such duds have —

I say "Shit, I wouldn't 'stop'."  
— as advice,

though certainly I wouldn't bother  
Tough?

A terrible attitude. Born  
of suffering —

ha ha,  
me & Mondrian.

— from Bolton. 'A Terrible Attitude, Based On Suffering' *SP*. 182 - 183

From 'Dazed' —

You stand there,  
your spirit does,  
weaving about

(while your body sits,  
or leans *still*  
probably,

intrigued by this idea)

. . . 'Pardon me,  
monsieur.'

It is  
the greenkeeper guy.  
He bends over

and looks into  
the face of one.

'Qu'est que vous?'  
you say. (Your French  
is rotten.

Mine is.)

He says,  
'Monsieur —

you have fallen down?'

'No,  
I'm sitting,' you say,

Though plainly you look  
what would pass for  
completely out of it,

sitting beside  
a stone bench,

one arm stretched,  
propriatorially,

lovingly,  
over it.

the figure warns —

'It will be  
dark soon,'

• reference page 59  
— from Bolton. 'Dazed' *Untimely Meditations*. Adelaide:  
Wakefield, 1997. 95 - 99

Earlier passages, which followed upon the protagonist's being hit, perhaps by a golf ball, give some idea of the parkland setting. But disorientation sets in early —

Life does not make sense.

You are standing in the wrong place.  
Get down off that roof immediately!

—Bolton. *UM*. 94

From Laurie Duggan's *Under The Weather*: the section 'Sleeping in the Dining Room' begins -

being actually always careful  
to keep myself together & pursue  
Poesy & have a forwarding address  
— Allen Ginsberg

1

a vase of dead yellow chrysanthemums  
green apple, persimmon, purple grape  
capsicum, chinese gooseberry

LEGEND GIN ashtray

air conditioner  
cistern  
wind  
airliner

cerebral junk

ecstasy

nose sniff  
"it feels like winter"

letterbox (empty)  
one advertisement

boiling water

— from Duggan. *Under The  
Weather*. Sydney: Wild & Wooley, 1978. 42

(The previous section of *Under The Weather* features Anna Couani & me; some of it, possibly, is a little bit 'in my manner'. A nod from Laurie.)

'Notes For poems' begins —

My first note, though I don't know why I make it, is  
the bridge at Redfern Station. Near dusk, or at  
night. Near dusk it is unbearable & I rest against  
its sides, my head lowered, on the wall & choke with  
emotion regret lost inspiration, I might almost say  
species of fine frenzy descend from the sky wash over  
me, & pass. Instantly I'm tired. & again 'alive',  
awake & refreshed, though with nothing on the page.

“the beach is  
rather Boudin — if you want to know, & if that helps,  
otherwise you must just accept that it is a nice beach,  
or reserve judgement, — Boudin might have died weeping  
for all I know & maybe it is a terrible beach, though  
I can't see how.

But how would I *know*, when I  
“left myself” so to speak, weeping at the sight of the  
city I love, prostrate amongst the black dust &  
fluctuating thunder of the traffic, my fingers on the bricks,  
eyes sightless (etc)

from Bolton. 'Notes For Poems' SP. 91

'Dazed' ends like this —

'Pardon me,  
monsieur.'

It is  
the grenkeeper guy.  
He bends over

and looks into  
the face of one.

'Qu'est que vous?'  
you say. (Your French  
is rotten.

Mine is.)

He says,  
'Monsieur —  
you have fallen down?'

'No,  
I'm sitting,' you say,

though plainly you look  
what would pass for  
*completely out of it,*

sitting beside  
a stone bench,

one arm stretched,  
propriatorially,

lovingly,  
over it.

'Are you Daniel Buren?'

'No sir. But my  
golfball — did it not pass  
this way/ Did it not  
hit you perhaps?'

'No, mate,  
I'm just sitting here  
wondering how to  
seize the day.'

'It will be  
dark soon.,'

says the Buren figure



quietly.

A nice guy.  
You rise.

from Bolton. 'Dazed', *UM*. 98—99

(Daniel Buren is a French conceptual artist the poem's speaker had earlier raged  
against.)



'Bunny Melody' parodies novelistic conventions: it begins —

Had Gwendolyn's life ever seemed less than a melody thought the Duke,  
As he drove, himself, into the small drive to Gwendolyn's. Outside  
Late afternoon sun broke through the trees: he remembered Gwendolyn,  
running,  
Her yellow hair, tiny frocks, her cry, running from the training kennels then  
Some distance from the house. He had had his trainer select a young  
dog from the current batch for her & badly  
Hoped that she would like it. ...

— Bolton.

'Bunny Melody', *SP*. 85

'Funny Ideas' begins —

If we would only ask ourselves the phrases our friends would least likely  
shout, & then why  
These are so unlikely we have begun something both entertaining &  
interesting - not a collage  
Of random statements, & though better, not just a silly tableau - we have  
the grammar  
Begun of an amazing argument...

— from Bolton. 'Funny Ideas', *Sestina To the Centre Of  
The Brain*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1990. 1

But the poem was planned by working outwards from the end-words of the third stanza  
which consists mostly of the blurb from *The Fontana Dictionary Of Modern Knowledge*:

... But 'Structuralism, operant conditioning, generative grammar,  
Historical materialism, vorticism, pedology, situation ethics,  
Oligopoly - what do these terms mean  
And in what context are they used? What was the Bauhaus & why  
Was it important? What is the difference between a shame culture & a  
guilt culture, hardware & software, collage  
& decollage? Do beat, creep, black hole gate &

Model mean what you think they do?'...

— from Bolton. 'Funny Ideas', *Sestina*. 2

There are allusions to remarks that could be construed as mildly critical of the waitress: in 'Traffic Noises' & 'Hindley Street with a prospect of Michael Grimm'.

On this waitress (from 'Hindley Street Today') —

“Yeah, I frighten a lot of people,”  
the waitress says  
jokingly  
tho without much effort  
as she clears the table  
where I sit today  
outside  
to a patron whom she'd startled  
—& actually, tho she's  
pretty enough  
her makeup's vaguely 'Goth'.  
I find her interesting  
— as I look up today  
& down the street

— Bolton. *Flash*. 127—130

And, from 'Traffic Noises, Cups, Voices' —

She is reminiscent of  
Julie, this waitress, though with less  
idea of makeup - Julie would  
point out - and I'd agree. Less hip.

— from Bolton. 'Traffic Noises, Cups, Voices'. *Flash*. 97—101

O'Hara's well known 'The Day Lady Died' is an 'I do This I do That' poem:

It is 12:20 in New York a Friday  
three days after Bastille day, yes  
it is 1959 and I go get a shoeshine  
because I will get off the 4:19 in Easthampton  
at 7:15 and then go straight to dinner

and I don't know the people who will feed me

I walk up the muggy street beginning to sun  
and have a hamburger and a malted and buy  
an ugly NEW WORLD WRITING to see what the poets  
in Ghana are doing these days  
I go to the bank

...

— from Frank O'Hara, 'The Day Lady Died', *CP*. 325

James Schuyler is quoted here from poems conveniently to hand: from 'Growing Dark', which begins —

The grass shakes.  
Smoke streaks, no,  
cloud strokes.  
The dogs are fed.  
Their licenses  
clank on pottery.  
The phone rings.  
And is answered.  
The pond path  
is washed-out grass  
between green  
winter cover.  
Last night in  
bed I read.  
You came to  
my room and  
said, "Isn't  
the world  
terrible?" "My  
dear..." I said. It could be  
and has been  
worse ...

— from James Schuyler, 'Growing Dark'. *The Morning of the Poem*.  
New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1980. 11

And, from 'Korean Mums' —

The dogs are barking. In  
the studio music plays  
and Bob and Darragh paint.  
I sit scribbling in a little  
notebook at a garden table,  
too hot in a heavy shirt  
in the mid-October sun  
into which the Korean mums  
all face. There is a  
dull book with me,  
an apple core, cigarettes,  
an ashtray. Behind me  
the rue I gave Bob  
flourishes. Light on leaves,  
so much to see, and  
...

— from Schuyler. 'Korean Mums'. *MOTP*. 10

From 'Hometown' - concerning 'place in the world':

... The view is very Richard Estes — in a busy kind of way — which / think recommends it. Though to whom does it recommend it? No one I know, to speak to, daily knows Richard Estes' paintings. Except Paul, & Richard at a guess — Richard would & Paul would like the aesthetic though not, probably, the art — my only Ruscha friend, Paul — "if I may so term his aesthetic". (Ha Ha.)  
Though who am I on daily speaking terms with? Cath — & Laurie & Pam & John Forbes & John Jenkins — in my mind. Realler I guess than talking to Frank O'Hara

— from 'Home Town'. *Flash. 7*

From 'Walk on the Wildside' —

An eventful day? There  
are new poems to work on at last  
— I left these at the E.A.F., tonight —  
there are poems of Miriel's to look over,  
dinner at Cath's.

— from Bolton. 'Walk on the Wildside', *Flash*. 12



The poem 'Star Grocery' runs a comparison with O'Hara's activities - the buying of presents to take to Easthampton (see his poem 'The Day Lady Died'):

gifts bought for people and the stroll  
for Strega. My life

is miles from that — I wear  
a battered leather jacket that  
if I thought about I'd be embarrassed

— when could I  
last afford scotch for someone,  
or go to a dinner laden with presents?

on the other hand — I *am* a poet.

The poem ends with a comparison of my jacket with one I (mis)remember Schuyler having worn:

— the bomber jacket  
— on such a poet — as unlikely as it  
looks on me — but then, I am

hardly *here* I guess. I  
know the lion is doomed, more or less,  
but I will likely be gone before it. Is that

true? Well, the *thought* is to the point.  
It is the Canutish aspect to the lion I love —  
standing dark and silhouetted,

against the brilliant clouded sunsets  
that seem like history

— from Bolton. 'poem ("Walking down from the Star  
Grocery")', *Flash*. 14

See poems such as 'Ann Arbor Elegy', or 'Peace' (quoted here) -

What to do  
    when the day's heavy heart  
                                    having risen, late  
in the already darkening East  
                    & prepared at any moment to sink  
                                    into the West  
surprises suddenly,  
    & settles for a time ...

— Berrigan. 'Peace'. SGAC. 223

And, from me, from 'Hindley Street Today, With A View Of Michael Grimm'  
(Flash 127—130) —

What to do  
    when the day's heavy heart,  
                                    settled,  
  rises then -  
*thru some quality of the light* -  
                                    & you your own mug  
  raise up  
  to see it,  
*register it*

The repetitions, either 'lightly dark' or 'darkly light' — are all about Death, The Count etc:

With a view of, say, seraphic Michael Grimm  
  & my tape  
on which  
    Bela Lugosi's dead  
                                    studio version & 'live'.  
*He's dead*  
    & Dion  
                                    & so is Bing.

• reference page 80

Bob Hope lives on, I think,

tho barely

but I'm alive

& Michael & Julie & Chris -

— from Bolton. 'Hindley Street Today, With A View Of Michael Grim' *Flash*. 127

• reference page 80

From 'Giles Auty Furioso': the scrappy beginning —

"I think continually of those who were truly great,"  
someone said, but I like to think of things like  
the *erased de Kooning*, as considered by, say, Giles Auty.

I'm funny that way.  
I'm funny like that.  
That way I'm funny.  
(Etc.)

— Sol Le Witt

I used to find amusing the idea of  
Donald Brook greeting Cy Twombly —  
like King George. *Scribble, scribble, scribble,*  
*eh Mr Twombly.*  
But, as the artist's funny name ...

— from Bolton. 'Giles Auty Furioso'. *Flash*. 56

And from the speech attributed to Auty:

Ingres had "the probity of drawing".  
But look at Chassériau ... & then  
the Symbolists came along & it's been downhill  
ever since. That dill for instance - Puvis de  
Chavannes!

& yet, could we have had Gauguin  
without him? I would prefer to.

Just as I would  
prefer the late Derain without the earlier -  
though *that is his whole point*. Why couldn't Bonnard  
be stronger - couldn't he see where it led?  
Hard to approve the politics of David,

or even Caravaggio - a lout probably - I can't see him reading *The Spectator*. Was there no one round like me to listen to? Or is that the point, not listening? The whole thing becomes pretty terminally ill with Duchamp. Just look at the deleterious effects ...

The 'Manet' poem (its title is 'A Picture') begins —

In Manet's great painting  
*The Insomniacs* the three readers

share the bed and white  
bedspread, two with books held up before them

reading, a girl and her mother,  
the other, a man, has books too, on the bedspread before him

but writes in a pad

- *Flash*. 34

and ends —

The watch hand  
goes to my head

which is bent, writing, writing this.  
I tell the girls, and we all look up: Anna smiles,

Cath looks 'poised' and I, because I've been concentrating,  
have a frown disappearing. Hi.

— from Bolton. 'A Picture'. *Flash*. 36

Some of the ambivalence about art historical opinions (in 'Double Portrait') —

unwillingly I entertain my only two images of him —

they 'pop up': & once more I dwell on them — on him.

Or don't. Briefly. It

is my memory's almost empty file on Chuck Close — &, in bed,  
unwanted, it comes to me. Normally it wouldn't, and thinking of Close  
I think pretty immediately of Thomas Ruff, whose work his resembles —  
the German photographer, in large format, of faces & streets. While I have  
almost

never thought about the American I have thought about Ruff — who almost  
came to Australia, I think: someone phoned once to ask should we bring him.  
Out of regret that I didn't push harder I've attended to Ruff ever since. All of  
which in no way resembles

my feelings for this other portrait — a poet whose work I love, so that it  
is pure good faith, this relationship. The 'cool' of the early Close  
I found unimpressive, & ugly — in a fashionable way, whose fashionability I  
wasn't buying. Chuck's by the bed

by accident, a name only.

— from Bolton. 'Double Portrait'. *Flash*. 62

The FT Prince stanza form (which I think he attributes to Shelley): here from the  
poem's beginning —

The sun shines on the gliding river,  
The river shines & presses through  
Damp meadows and just yellowing trees;  
The tall trees left without a breeze  
Stand up against the blue.

And on one side a space for cows is  
Fenced off with willow stumps and wires;  
While there the place of learning drowns,  
Churches and colleges and houses  
Lifting their domes and towers and spires.

— from FT Prince. 'Memoirs in Oxford'.  
*Collected Poems*. NY: Sheeps Meadow, 1979. 121

'Traffic Noises, Cups, Voices' begins —

I can remember coming here  
for the first time, when *The Flash* moved  
from its old spot across the street.  
Larger, brighter, it was a week  
or two, or three, before the move

was not sharply regretted. Jules  
declared the new *Flash* off her round  
so severely did it lack the  
charm the old possessed - the  
hole-in-the-wall, small town

refusal of economies  
of scale, ...

*Flash. 97*

From 'Double Portrait' (some 'critic's guilt') —

... I grant Close  
the pathos of the new works — though I have only experienced it via  
magazine pages, one or two pictures ...  
*Then*, Minimalism & Pop 'had had their day'  
as things new & imperative. I didn't find them  
(or him), in '74, inherently compelling. Not the way

I found about the same time, say, Tuckson, Robert Ryman. (In this 'indirect' way  
guilt maintains a close connection between me and a particular sub-set of art  
works. As close  
or closer than between me and works I've liked probably. I remember them  
ruefully: a history of opinions — mine — via  
mistakes I might have made.) Literalism was my big thing. Will the day  
come when it is not? I'm not sure it still isn't — the pictures

on the back of Towle's books regarding me quizzically as I say it —

— from Bolton. 'Double Portrait'. *Flash* 62—64



From 'Hi, John' —

When I said goodnight to you — 'composed'  
beneath a 40 watt bulb, on a sagging camp bed —

the doctor having told you you might die,  
it was hard not to be amused

as well as worried: you wouldn't die  
of course, but would you be well?

(The doctor,

we took it, putting the frighteners  
on you.) Anna, twelve,

resembled you  
a few weeks ago —

conked-out, the TV going,  
a blanket pulled high,

her round, angelic head,  
her buried chin. The term

that mediates or bridges  
her image & yours

a Guston picture, of a head smoking  
(called 'Smoking'),

its eyes wide, a profile, worried.  
And then you died.

— from Bolton. 'Hi, John'. *Flash*. 68—73

From 'Tiepolo' - in which a 'lonely guy', pensive amongst the smoke machine's product, at a disco is seen to resemble the begging saint from Tiepolo's painting. —

Like Professor Smith's  
lecture that no one heard  
Tiepolo was designed  
not to be looked at.  
Like the smoke the machine  
pumps out: billowing cloud  
... some armour ... flesh &  
garments —the suggestion of  
excitement — that no one buys —  
least of all  
the lonely type,  
who can't dance  
& stands, staring into  
a corner  
at a trick of the light.  
Tiepolo's *Three Angels Appearing  
To Abraham* in the Venice Accademia  
is like that. He is the dud guy  
bottom left — kneeling, dirty feet,  
beard. The angels, thin limbed,  
glamorous, surf up  
on their rubber dinghy of cloud —  
& look down incuriously —  
except to remark, perhaps,  
the dirt — & vouchsafe a glimpse of  
beauty — a limb dangled  
Abe's way, silhouetted against cloud.  
As if to say,  
You can go home now,  
Abe, patron-at-disco, better not  
to wait for more.

— from Bolton. 'Tieplolo', *Flash*. 107

From 'Rumori' (*Flash*. 10 —117) —

Destinies. Aspiration. Ideas  
more or less capitalized - Romantic & abstract.

And the pathos of 'the human'.

For me,  
always, cities suggest these things. So that  
to visit them  
brings these questions up.

Though I never answer. And they return each time  
familiar, with additional features, histories of their own - *their* history

of my not dealing with them.  
("Dealing" - which suggests some finality.  
That will never come.) Merely, "these are the things that I think about".

("Ken, your friends are here.")

Oh-oh. And they walk into the room -  
Christopher Brennan, Slessor, Grace Crowley:  
suits & coats & mufflers, a paper bag with alcohol in it.

A flat I visited very young a few times -  
Connie, a friend of my mother's - down  
steep steps, it looked out through trees to the harbour.

Cremorne ... Mosman. The characteristic Sydney trees & flowers,  
the tremulous fifties

From further on in the poem —

The tree's exuberant,  
20s feel - via the association with de Maistre -  
& the immediate identification of the hill opposite

with the Cross, usher in this same group of thoughts  
I have often in Sydney - as  
a 'foreigner', particularly. That is, I never had them

when I lived there. Though maybe it is Time -  
these things would have come to me 'eventually', & did, have.  
From Sal's newer flat, from Laurie's, they have

swelled romantically, like heavy weather, banked  
clouds over the headlands: the intense, romantic blue  
of the harbour - yachts, boats even, being

'of the past'. Sydney - 1938? '46? '52?  
At Coogee at Michael & Di's I list these themes, the list  
surfaces from time to time - lost eventually.

Ideas mocked & evoked by a sight one time at Kurt's -

As they are mocked & evoked, as it happens,  
in Kurt's thinking. (Do we all think this? shuffle  
these same cards?)

'Sydney' - a group of images - that says 'Nix' to dreams.

Yet the elements - its beauty - encourage them.  
Hence the town's pagan & hard-bitten quality. Which I read  
as acceptance of failure. Like the falling back of the waves.

Slessor. The failure of its artists (their names  
all minor). And, like any city, it suggests the aspirations & failure  
of capital 'c' Civilization - & of its politicians, by whom we mark the years  
(Gorton:

deposed as party leader -

"And what are you going to do now, Prime Minister?" "Go home  
& watch *Countdown* like everybody else." Keating,  
Hawke, their various bitternesses): highrise Development

& the Unknown Past... - the beer ads of the 30s & 40s -  
that decorated, once, all the pubs. Preposterously,  
men in suits; women in formal wear, bare shouldered;

waiters, aspidistras, smokes;  
the long-necked bottles of the beer itself  
memories of my father.

*It all proves nothing,*  
it seems to say - though, individually, each piece

says something else - like the surf's tumult  
ending in a hiss, as it fails to take the beach.

The 'argument' of the poem —

John was Sydney. As is Pam. *For Love Alone* - doesn't that have

descriptions of Sydney I always meant to read? Where  
can I get that book in Rome? I am somewhere, now,

near Via Dell' Umilita & Via Del Corso, & undecided -

not between those things though - humility & business.  
I'm for business. At least, I think, tonight I am.  
I go home, call the drawing finished - spray it with fixative.

It looks okay. A bit of Rome, a bit of Sydney -  
perhaps London a bit. 'The London Years of  
Roy de Maistre' - a Sydney remembered.

A Sunderland appears & lands whitely in the harbour,  
a corsage. I think of frangipani & carnations,  
look out the dark window - at a Rome that isn't visible -

& see  
the hill, the variegated pink & cream houses, verandahs.

\*

A puzzle you pick up & put down, & walk away from. A rebus.  
Flaws in the glass by which to see. I replace them, this constellation,  
small objects on a table - a marble, an ashtray, a postcard view,

a 1960s beer coaster. Items that  
mean nothing - though they make up  
'a sentimental picture of Australia'.

A perspective - distant from Europe - that lets you see  
more accurately than they do, do things  
with less assurance - but do them anyhow,

amused to be making the gestures that are art  
with all those gestures claim, or make them  
with no claims. In fact, the co-ordinates I love.

As someone, somewhere in Rome, a Roman, must be  
making a painting, making a poem, knowing Rome  
is not a centre any more, that Italy is not central.

Yet they go on, happy, thoughtful,  
Rome's night air outside the window, spelling *Rome*.  
Many happy hours, Pard.

— from Bolton. 'Rumori'. *Flash*. 109—117



'Horizon' begins —

*"Beyond the sunrise  
where the black begins" —  
& the lights of the city, we  
imagine, twinkle or blaze ...*

the horizon line here  
a curve of butter yellow,  
slightly oxidized — lined,  
at its rim, by olive-green 'natives' —  
hides a city that if I am  
facing the right way  
must be doing its afternoon trade  
relaxed this last few days after December 25<sup>th</sup>

— from Bolton. 'Horizon'. *Flash*. 89

From 'Horizon' —

relaxed this last few days after December 25th  
but ready nonetheless for the big push  
at night, the raid on  
fun desire release -  
selling mostly coffee, wine,  
Michael / rolls a joint *has* one  
then rolls several others children  
contemplate navels - the girls their own  
with quiet pride, the boys the girls'  
with longing puzzling as it is strong  
Mary paints her nails, reads, Cuban music  
playing. What of Margaret, of Crab? they do  
those things normative in a utopia  
a cork is popped, Marg plays  
*fado*, the soulful music of Portugal  
or Crab practises on sax  
reads some politics, some mayhem, reads  
the poems I gave him.

The poem addresses JF at its end —

... If O'Hara  
had such timing John his last move suggests he blew it  
Tho exits are notoriously hard to make. "I live above a  
dyke bar & I'm happy" — I might too for all I know.  
Am I? Occasionally, occasionally very. ...

footnotes

- 1 The phrase means—or I took it to mean—a poem that documents the real time of its writing. Typically such poems refer to passing time, the place of the writing/ thinking situation and its self-reflexivity. These poems tend to run to some length.
- 2 The correct title ends 'Based On Suffering'. (Bolton, Ken. 'A Terrible Attitude, Based On Suffering'. *Selected Poems, 1975 - 1990*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1992. 172.).
- 3 Adolf Loos (1870 - 1933) was a Viennese architect at the turn of the century, representing a purist form of early modernism developing out of and 'against' Art Nouveau and anticipating De Stijl.
- 4 Reyner Banham is an architectural critic who championed the 'functionalist' 1950s/ 60s English architects who often followed loosely Bauhaus principles but tended to foreground the functional: exposed pipes and ducting and the perfunctorily (sometimes perversely) awkward staircase etc. Banham, R. *New Brutalism*. London: Architect Press, 1966.
- 5 Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe (1886 - 1969) and Hans Gropius (1883 - 1969) were German Bauhaus architects, later working in the USA. Mies said 'less is more' and Gropius said 'form follows function'—among many other dicta.
- 6 Charles Olson proposed most clearly in his essays on Projective verse a kind of kinetic/organic theory relating the poem's form to interconnected impulses of thought, breath and emotion. See Olson. 'Projective Verse'. *The Human Universe and other essays*. NY: Grove Press, 1967. 51
- 7 Donald Davie. *The Purity of Diction in English Verse*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1952. Enjoyably prissy and severe.
- 8 Ted Berrigan. *The Sonnets*. NY: 'C' magazine, 1964. Subsequent editions from Grove, United Artists and Penguin USA.
- 9 Ted Berrigan 'Bean Spasms'. *So Going Around Cities, new & selected poems*. Berkeley, CA: Blue Wind, 1980. 116.
- 10 Goldsmith, Oliver. 'The Deserted Village'. *Selected Poems of Johnson and Goldsmith*. Eds. A. Rudrun and P. Dixon. London: Edward Arnold, 1965. 114.
- 11 *The Oath of the Horatii*, an Ancien Regime, pro-republican painting: Jacques Louis David. *The Oath of the Horatii*. Oil on canvas, 1785. Paris: Louvre.
- 12 Charles Bernstein is a poet of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E school—often amusingly barbed—is happy to conflate poetry and criticism.
- 13 Ravlich, Robyn. 'Tricks/Danko'. *Applestealers*. Eds. Robert Kenny and Colin Talbot. Melbourne: Outback, 1974. 81. The poem appeared after Ravlich's collection *Black Abacus*. Sydney: Prism Books/New Poetry, 1974. 81.
- 14 ("though I was not hindered especially")—which is to say, that at the time I simply thought I was right.
- 15 Minimalism in the visual arts is characterized in various books. One of the first was *Minimalism*. Ed. Gregory Battcock, NY: E.P. Dutton, 1968.



- 16 'Hard-Edge'—a painting style of clear geometric shapes, flatly painted, often using masking tape to give the forms perfectly crisp, firm definition. It thereby avoided Abstract Expressionism's personalized, 'autographic' style.
- 17 "pissy"—Picasso's term, as translated in Hyman, Timothy. *Bonnard*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1998. 211.
- 18 David Antin: early work in *Code Of Flag Behaviour*. California: Black Sparrow, 1968; and, the beginning of his later work: *Talking*. NY: Kulchur Foundation, 1972.
- 19 Sorrentino, Gilbert. *Imaginative Qualities Of Actual Things*. NY: Pantheon, 1971. A novel.
- 20 Brook, Donald. *The Social Role of Art*. Adelaide: Experimental Art Foundation, 1977.
- 21 Goodman, Nelson. *Languages Of Art*. London: Oxford UP, 1969.
- 22 Ruscha, Ed. *Twenty Six Gasoline Stations*. Santa Barbara, CA: Ed Ruscha, 1963. *Nine Swimming Pools*, Santa Barbara, CA: Ed Ruscha, 1968. *Real Estate Opportunities*. Santa Barbara, CA: Ed Ruscha, 1968. Ruscha's books are large edition 'artist's books', self-published, with no text, just pictures.
- 23 Since writing I have read an article that is interesting in this respect in a number of ways. It is 'O'Hara, Judd and Cold War Accommodation: Perceptions Equalizing Ground and Figure' by Stephen Paul Miller (in *The Scene Of Myself*. Eds. Terence Diggory and Stephen Paul Miller. Maine: National Poetry Foundation/ University of Maine, 2001. 175 - 186). The essay looks at O'Hara's work, and most interestingly, for me, his 'Personism' manifesto, to show similarities of attitude between O'Hara and the Minimalist sculptor Don Judd. The thesis is that they are similarly reductive, that Judd's refusal to countenance anything but a literalist approach to the art object is akin to O'Hara's refusal of (the signs of) conventional poetic technique.

Miller's argument is seemingly persuasive. There are a number of difficulties with it, two of which he recognizes: O'Hara's statement, and the bulk of his practice, pre-date Judd's; and Judd's aesthetic seems otherwise quite different to O'Hara's.

This last is compounded by a fact that I think is not noted: that O'Hara was actually pretty hostile to the Minimalist movement and all the anti-expressivist movements ranged against Abstract Expressionism. (His seeming allegiances to some of these camps' members—to Johns for example—are by way of their own ambivalently expressivist tendencies.) O'Hara was regarded by the tougher minded art world avant-garde as a captive of rather twee or chi-chi taste—as far as I can tell.

None of this disproves the case. But the pre-dating does point to the real answer I think, which is that both Judd and O'Hara are part of a tendency that was general within the American avant-garde, over decades, one which underlies Abstract Expressionism as well as the opposed Minimalist art, and which in the same way underlies, probably, some of later Lowell as well as the 'opposed' O'Hara. This tendency finds convention, where it identifies it, as artificial, inauthentic and dispensable. A Lucy Lippard article, 'The Cult of the Direct and the Difficult' pointed it out (in Lippard. *Changing*. NY: E.P. Dutton, 1971). But Lippard would

hardly have been the first to do so: the 'directness' of the Abstract Expressionists was an article of faith among the artists themselves and was well known, as was their remarking on the too tasteful finishedness of contemporary French art.

The thesis about 'figure and ground' is also part of the Abstract Expressionist period and style (to which O'Hara was attentive as he was not to the work of such as Judd) and ties to O'Hara's invocation of 'the poem as field' and an 'all-over' style—a surface evenly and everywhere inflected. It makes the work of de Kooning or Pollock a better analogue for O'Hara than Judd's work.

What was surprising for me was seeing the 'Personism' piece in this light. I had always found it amusing, though only in part and to strain a little after its light and slightly snotty tone. I couldn't see that it was proposing much in the very memorable phrases about simply "going on your nerve", pants 'tight enough to be attractive' and "I was a track star for Minneola Prep!" But Miller suggests that this was a pointed (if pointedly casual) rejection of conventional technique—rhyme, metre, all that—associated with, for example, Lowell. A kind of dealing with materials 'direct', with full attention, but not the protection of a preordained technique to shape and control it. (The stand-off with Lowell, possibly bemusing to the older poet, if he gave it any thought at all, is symbolized in their reading together: their styles contrasted markedly: O'Hara read a poem he had written on the way to the reading (the poem in which Lana Turner collapses); Lowell remarked that he on the other hand, though it might be expected of him, would not be reading something he had written "on the spot".)

(Evidence could be adduced I suppose to trace this attitude towards Lowell in O'Hara—through further remarks, earlier and later. It's not important to me to nail it down. I do know that, for example, *Yugen*, the magazine of O'Hara's friend Leroi Jones, carried a very vicious attack on Lowell (by Gilbert Sorrentino) and that O'Hara published in that same issue and in many others. *Yugen*. #7. NY: Totem Press, 1961.)

I think I had never seen the import of O'Hara's remarks about technique because technique seemed hardly part of the contemporary poetic landscape to me when I began. Partly I would not have known enough to recognize it or properly understand its workings, partly 'the job had been done' and conventional technique was simply less evident by this time. I could see that O'Hara's work was—by my lights—'better' than a lot of other poetry, but not that it lacked technique. It seemed to me simply 'flexible' I think.

In any case 'O'Hara, Judd and Cold War Accommodation' supports the characterization I have outlined in this essay—about the coherence of the critical-aesthetic environment I was writing out of.

24 Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *For A New Novel*. Trans. Richard Howard. 1963. NY: Grove Press, 1965

25 Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *Jealousy*. Trans. Richard Howard. 1957. London: Calder/Jupiter, 1965.

26 Barthes, Roland. *Writing Degree Zero*. Trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. 1953. NY: Jonathon Cape, 1967.

27 Duras, Marguerite. *Moderato Cantabile*. Trans. Richard Seaver. 1958. Collected in *Four Novels*. NY: Grove Press, 1965.

- 28 Duras, Marguerite. *The Square*. Trans. Sonia Pitt-Rivers and Irina Murdoch. 1955. Collected in *Four Novels*. NY: Grove Press, 1965.
- 28 Duras, Marguerite. *The Sailor From Gibraltar*. Trans. Barbara Bray. 1952. Calder & Boyars, 1966.
- 28 Duras, Marguerite. *The Little Horses of Tarquinia*. Trans. Peter DuBerg. 1953. London: John Calder, 1960.
- 29 Butor, Michel. *Passing Time*. Trans. Jean Stewart. 1957. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969.
- 29 Butor, Michel. *A Change Of Heart*. Trans. Jean Stewart. 1957. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969.
- 30 Greenberg, Clement. *Art and Culture*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1973. US publication in 1961. As individual essays these were published throughout the 40s, 50s and 60s.
- 31 Greenberg, Clement. 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch'. *Art and Culture*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1973. 3 - 21.
- 32 Davie, Donald. *The Purity of Diction in English Verse*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1952.
- 33 Olson, cited above, footnote 6.
- 34 Bolton, Ken. *Four Poems*. Sydney: Sea Cruise, 1977; and Bolton, Ken. *Blonde & French*. Bundeena: NSW, Island, 1978. The poems mentioned here come from 1978's *Blonde & French*; a number are reprinted in Ken Bolton, *Selected Poems*.
- 35 The model for this poem is a one by Michael Benedikt, 'The European Shoe', collected in his book *The Body*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 1968. Benedikt's other work seemed limited to a very non-convulsive, well-mannered Surrealism. But this particular poem I have always liked.
- 36 Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *In The Labyrinth*. Trans. Richard Howard. Collected in *Two Novels*. 1959. NY: Grove, 1989.
- 37 in *Blonde & French*, *ibid.* 28.
- 38 Schjeldahl, Peter. *White Country*. New York: Corinth Books, 1968.
- 39 Rosenberg, Harold. *The Tradition Of The New*. 1959. London, Paladin, 1970.
- 40 Denis, Maurice. 'Definition of Neo-traditionalism'. Ed. Elizabeth G. Holt. *A Documentary History of Art*, vol 3. NY: Doubleday, 1966. 509.
- 41 David Malouf, David. 'Contemporary Australian Poetry'. *New Currents in Australian Writing*. Katherine Brisbane, R.S. Brissenden and David Malouf, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1978. 29 - 35.
- 42 Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973; and Bloom, H. *A Map Of Misreading*, London: OUP, 1975.
- 43 Bolton, Ken. 'Double Trouble'. *Otis Rush*, #10 (1994): 1—10. Uncollected poem.

- 44 Austin, J.L. *Sense and Sensibilia*. London: Oxford UP, 1962; and Austin, J.L. *How To Do Things with Words*. Harvard: Harvard UP, 1975. Both books I have possessed but have hardly read.
- 45 see note 44 above.
- 46 An unnuanced formulation that seems to me true enough is that Philosophy is not a closely defined term or field: whole national schools ignore each other, major philosophers are outside the institution very often (whatever it is at any one time and place). Academic philosophers unquestionably know (something) about philosophy, might 'do' philosophy, without being Philosophers—any more than a lab worker is a scientist. (Was Bachelard less of a philosopher when he was a postman? Does Anglo-American philosophy regard him as a philosopher in any case? Etcetera.) I don't see that the question can be settled, that I need to settle it, or that discussing it further here is to the point. Though that sounds horribly blunt.
- 47 Koethe, John. *Poetry At One Remove*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Michigan UP, 2000. Some terms here, and the account of Plato, though none of the thinking (which is congenial enough), are taken from Koethe's introductory essay. (And see further regarding "legalistically explicit" etc., Koethe, *ibid.*, 41.)
- 48 Sir Richard Blackmore, one of a number of 18<sup>th</sup>-century poets (with Thomson of 'The Seasons', Erasmus Darwin, John Dyer and others) who celebrate and describe science and modernising technology, full of praise and wonder at its intricacies. Dr Johnson praised Blackmore's 'The Creation'.
- 49 Chris Burns, Chris. 'Art Commentary – Sydney'. *Otis Rush #4*, 1989. Burns is a Sydney poet. His poems are not collected in book form. In chasing up the reference I found his summation of the Ern Malley hoax as the 'mugging' of Modernism in Australia not to come from one his poems but from his art criticism where it is offered as a parody of John Tranter's view (as expressed in the introduction to *The New Australian Poetry*).
- 50 Fried, Michael. *Art & Objecthood*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. See also discussion of these ideas in Amy Newman, *Challenging Art*, Artforum 1962 - 74. NY: SoHo Press, 2000.
- 51 A partial account of these enthusiasms (and those of others I knew in the early and mid to late 70s) is given in my book *Happy Accidents*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1999.
- 52 Bolton, Ken. 'The Artists'. *Selected Poems*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1992. 143. The artists were Shaun Kirby, Kerin Murray, Anna Platten and Bronwyn Platten—see the exhibition catalogue, *The Image in Question*, Adelaide, Adelaide Festival, 1988.
- 53 An exhibition, *The Naked City*, at the Contemporary Art Centre, South Australia, 1988: artists were Simon Blau, John Bursill, Jon Cattapan, David Larwill, Stewart MacFarlane, Glenn Morgan, Margaret Morgan, Pie Rankin, Steve Smith, Vicki Varvaessos. I reviewed it in *Otis Rush #4*, 1989.
- 54 Bolton, Ken. 'Untimely Meditations'. *'Untimely Meditations' and other poems*. Adelaide: Wakefield, 1997. 32. The poem was written for a proposed conference on 'National Identity and Representation' that fell through. It was delivered as a paper at the 'Space of Poetry' conference, University of Melbourne, in 1993 and

was excerpted and reprinted thereafter in a number of academic journals.

- 55 Forbes, John. 'Nostalgia'. *Collected Poems*. Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger, 2001. 160.
- 56 Bolton, Ken. *Happy Accidents*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1999. That is, "another" like 'The Artists', or, more so, 'Untimely Meditations'.
- 57 Duggan, Laurie. *Under The Weather*. Glebe: Wild & Woolley, 1978.
- 58 Duggan, Laurie. 'New England Ode'. *The Great Divide*. Sydney: Hale Iremonger, 1985. 16.
- 59 Lippard, Lucy. 'The Cult Of The Direct and The Difficult'. *Changing and other essays*. NY: E.P. Dutton, 1971. 64 - 75.
- 60 "Tired, you bet. But all that I'll soon forget / with my man" —Holiday, Billie. 'My Man'. (recorded: 1956.) *The Essential Billie Holiday - Carnegie Hall Concert Recorded Live*. Verve/HMV, 1961.
- 61 Johnny Mercer—popular song-writer in the 30s and 40s.
- 62 Bobby 'The Brain' Heenan was/is a wrestling manager on American TV wrestling of the 1980s.
- 63 Adorno, T.W. *Minima Moralia*. Trans. E.F.N. Jephcott. 1951. London: Verso, 1978.
- 64 McKenzie Wark's remark was more an objection and joke about the phrase 'cultural roots'—we don't have roots we have aeriels—made at a conference or arts festival, but undoubtedly in print somewhere.
- 65 Clemens, Justin. 'A Report To An Academy', *UTS Review* 4.1 (1998): 107 - 122. The article contains Clemens's variation on Walter Pater's phrase about "all art" and "music".
- 66 Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.
- 67 I note late in the process of writing this exegesis that I have neglected to mention one whole book of mine, given over to a single 'process poem' and a correspondingly long de-briefing coda. *Two Poems - a drawing of the sky*. Adelaide: Experimental Art Foundation, 1990. This is a poem of process and is diary-like. The main influence that I am aware of behind it is James Schuyler's 'The Morning Of The Poem'.
- 68 Towle, Tony. *'Autobiography' and other poems*. NY: Sun/Coach House South, 1977.
- 69 Koethe, John. *Poetry At One Remove*. Michigan UP, 1999. 111. Koethe's (prose) punctuation, lineation etcetera are altered in this and the quotation that follows it in the poem.
- 70 Koethe, *ibid.*, 111.
- 71 Ashbery, John. 'Faust'. *The Tennis Court Oath*. Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 1962. 47.

- 72 The Oulipo (shortened form of *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*). To be made a member one has to invent a new form with strict rules. Some simple ones are Perec's novel without the letter 'e', *La Disparition*, Harry Mathews' stories written using only the vocabulary of a particular, simple text. 'Restrictive form' is held to be liberating and productive, hence the *Ou Li Po*'s liking for the sestina and forms like it. See the *Ou Li Po Compendium*. Eds. Harry Mathews and Alastair Brotchie. London: Atlas Press, 1998.
- 73 *Mouchette*. Dir. Robert Bresson. With Nadine Nortier. Argos/Parc Film, 1966.
- 74 *Being John Malkovich* is a movie—whose amusing logic has people able to gain access to and 'be' John Malkovich for a short time after climbing through a hole. *Being John Malkovich*. Dir. Spike Jonze. Gramercy/Single Cell, 1999.
- 75 These are allusions to remarks mildly critical of the waitress—which appear in 'Traffic Noises' and 'Hindley Street with a prospect of Michael Grimm'. Bolton, Ken. *At The Flash & At The Baci*. Forthcoming.
- 76 Forbes, John. 'Thin Ice'. *Collected Poems*. Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger, 2001. 145. Thin Ice was the title poem of a pamphlet Forbes printed privately in the late 80s.
- 77 Berrigan, Ted. 'Ann Arbor Elegy'. *So Going Around Cities, New & Selected Poems, 1958 - 79*. Berkeley, CA: Blue Wind, 1980. 219. And: Berrigan, 'Peace'. *SGAC*. 223.
- 78 Prince, F.T. 'Memoirs in Oxford'. *Collected Poems*. New York: Sheeps Meadow, 1979. 121.
- 79 Correct title of the photograph is 'Muddy Waters relaxing between gigs'—by Val Wilmer. My copy is from an unsourced newspaper. Forbes, John. 'Muddy Waters Relaxing Between Gigs'. *Collected Poems*. Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger, 2001. 188. The photo is reproduced in *Otis Rush 12/13*, 1996. 96.
- 80 The phrase is from O'Hara's 'Personism' manifesto: he doesn't worry about technique, he says, "you just go on your nerve". O'Hara, Frank. 'Personism'. *Collected Poems*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1971. 498 - 499.
- 81 Pam Brown, Laurie Duggan, and John Forbes are the main local influences within my writing career: they are philosophical or aesthetic or political 'stiffeners' (as I have allowed them to be)—as much as, or more than, they have been directly poetic influences. The two things would be hard to separate.

John Jenkins and I have collaborated on a great deal of work—since the middle eighties. I do not think we have been much influence on each other's solo work: our ideas and interests are rather antithetical—the poems we write together come mostly out of our amusement at this: many of them are dialogic. (No reference to Bakhtin intended.) Most of them neither of us would work up the volition to write alone. If I could manage the psychic momentum to write a verse play I am sure it would be indebted to our work together—an attempt to capture the same nutty energy and foolishness. But it hasn't happened.

Laurie Duggan's poetry I find extraordinarily impressive. *Under The Weather*, which has in parts lost some of its charm for me, I was very impressed with at the time of its writing—for its form and its ellipses, its overall musicality, and for being

a poem of that kind: where else was there one? (There were many, probably, stemming from Bunting, Pound and maybe Olson, in the US and the UK. I didn't see many though—and liked fewer.) I read *Under The Weather* as it was being written. Laurie's next books were very good (*The Great Divide*—with poems in it like 'The New England Ode'—and *Adventures In Paradise* which I published myself).

*Blue Notes* was more a miscellany, but with very good things in it. The Ash Range was so much less personable and was different. It was not what I wanted to write though impressive and ambitious. I published Laurie's *Memorials*—which I like immensely. If some of my more scattered, staggered, processual (!) poems approach this I would be very happy. Laurie's work pointed me to Philip Whalen's—if I needed another source and originating personality and temperament for writing like this. (I don't think I did. But good to have it.)

Laurie and Pam are both readers whom I imagine writing my work for. So their respective severities temper my work. Not that they are severe as people—but that what they see as bullshit counts.

I wrote numerous letters to the addresses given in Pam Brown's early books. To no avail for years—she had 'always already' moved on. Her work interested me from the mid seventies onwards. At first intermittently. It was very different from my own. Since meeting in the late 70s our work has grown closer—what a phrase—and apart again, in various ways (formally). But we share a great many attitudes. I think her influences are less narrow than mine. But we want our poetry to do many of the same things. My work sometimes takes off from lines of hers, often takes off from the imagined attitude 'Pam Brown' would evince. Laurie for me functions similarly.

John Tranter has been for me impressive without his work having any siren pull. I was fascinated by early versions of 'Rimbaud and the Pursuit of the Modernist Heresy', I remember, in the mid seventies. I read him mostly in magazines then. His early books, *Parallax*, *Red Movie*, already seemed old compared to his current work. I mention him because it may be presumed that he would have been significant for me. But no.

I suppose I should acknowledge that my influences are mostly male. But then they are also fairly few—amongst contemporary Australians they are three, of whom one, of course, is a woman. I lived with writers, Anna Couani and later Sal Brereton. Both are prose writers and I think for that reason less influential.

The US anthologies and 'schools' or movements were pretty exclusively male: One woman (Bernadette Mayer) in the NY School anthology, two or three in Donald Allen's effort (Helen Adam and Levertov and Barbara Guest). Guest seems alternately inert and diaphanous-and-wafty to me. Her critical rehabilitation is being organized but I am not a subscriber. Bernadette Mayer I've read a fair bit of and liked. Anne Waldman—I liked only her first book, *Giant Night*. Adrienne Rich's later, 80s work I read in the mid and late 80s and liked—but, aside from its seriousness, its 'techniques' were those I already used. (I had read her *Diving Into The Wreck* in the 70s.)

I now read Eileen Myles and some Alice Notley. Both okay, but hardly available to me 'back then'. Susan Schultz. The Howes, Hejinian, I read a little of. I find the former solemn. Lyn Hejinian I'll read with interest.

So, I liked only a small percentage of what was available. Should I explain why I ignored so many male writers? Influence is a matter of enthusiasms and

compatibilities—and timing and availability. Within the narrowness of my tastes—which is my business and my problem—I don't think I was culpably blind to others' talents, male or female. Still, I doubt that my social attitudes were way ahead of their time either.

82 Morris, Meaghan. 'On The Beach'. *Too Soon Too Late*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998.

83 The reoccurrence of O'Hara references in my poetry of the 90s is maybe overdetermined: my work has been to some extent in intermittent dialogue with that of (or with the figure of) John Forbes—for whom O'Hara was important. And John mentions O'Hara in connection with me, as a token of some affinity or some attitudes we might share. John's death in early 1998 brought him still more to the fore of my thinking—and possibly more present than might have been the case as I began to edit *Homage to John Forbes*, a book of appreciation, memoir and criticism—published by Brandl & Schlesinger in 2002.



## WORKS CITED

The author's own books are referred to in passing in the text and are on occasion identified in its margins by italicized abbreviation. But not all separate books are referenced here as many of the poems are reprinted in the larger collections, *Selected Poems*, *'Untimely Meditations' & other poems*, & in the forthcoming *At The Flash & At the Baci* which forms the body of this thesis.

These books are listed immediately below in chronological order, together with the initials by which they will be identified after first appearance here, in the exegesis, and in footnotes:

- Bolton, Ken. *Four Poems*. Sydney: Sea Cruise, 1977. FP
- . *Blonde & French*. Bundeena: NSW, Island, 1978. BF
- . *Talking To You*. Melbourne: Rigmarole, 1983. TTY
- . *Notes For Poems*. Adelaide: Shocking Looking Books, 1984. NFP
- . *Blazing Shoes*. Adelaide: Open Dammit, 1984. BS
- . *Sestina To The Centre Of The Brain*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1990. STCB
- . *Selected Poems, 1975 - 1990*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1992. SP
- . *'Untimely Meditations' & other poems*. Adelaide: Wakefield, 1997. UM
- . *Happy Accidents*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1999. HA
- . *August 6<sup>th</sup>*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1999. A6th
- . *At The Flash & At The Baci*. - unpublished: constitutes the bulk of this thesis. AF&B.
- . Ed. *Homage to John Forbes*. Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger, 2002.

One book by the author, *Two Poems - a drawing of the sky* is inadvertently not mentioned or discussed—nor, except in footnotes, are the books written collaboratively with John Jenkins discussed.

Adorno, T.W. *Minima Moralia*. Trans. E.F.N. Jephcott. 1951. London: Verso, 1978.

*American Friend, The*. Dir. Wim Wenders. Road Movies, 1977.

*Artforum* magazine, any issue of the early 1970s.

Ashbery, John. 'Faust'. *The Tennis Court Oath*. Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 1962. 47.

—. *Three Poems*. New York: Viking, 1972.

Austin, J.L. *How To Do Things with Words*. Harvard: Harvard UP, 1975.

—. *Sense & Sensibilia*. London: Oxford UP, 1962.

- Barthes, Roland. *Writing Degree Zero*. Trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. 1953. New York: Jonathon Cape, 1967.
- Beaver, Bruce. *Letters To Live Poets*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1969.
- Berrigan, Ted. 'Ann Arbor Elegy'. *So Going Around Cities, New & Selected Poems, 1958 - 79*. Berkeley, CA: Blue Wind, 1980. (Henceforth SGAC.) SGAC. 219.
- . 'Bean Spasms'. SGAC. 116.
- . 'Peace'. SGAC. 223.
- . *The Sonnets*. New York: Grove, 1967.
- . 'Tambourine Life'. *So Going Around Cities, New & Selected Poems, 1958 - 79*. Berkeley, CA: Blue Wind, 1980. 84. (Henceforth SGAC.)
- The Bill*. Channel Two, presently showing.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.
- Bolton, Ken. 'aeiou'. *Selected Poems, 1975 - 1990*. Ringwood: Penguin, 19928.
- . 'Amaze Your Friends'. *At The Flash & At The Baci*. Cambridge: Salt, forthcoming. (Henceforth AF&B.) 123.
- . 'American Friends'. AF&B. 8t.
- . 'The Artists'. SP. 143.
- . *At The Flash & At The Baci*.
- . *August 6<sup>th</sup>*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1999.
- . 'beers'. *Blonde & French*. Bundeena: NSW, Island, 1978. (Henceforth BF.) 28.
- . 'Beginning the new day'. SP. 59.
- . 'Blazing Shoes'. SP. 97.
- . 'Bunny Melody'. SP. 85.
- . 'Catching Up With Kurt Breteton'. AF&B. 92.
- . 'Criticism'. SP. 161.
- . 'Dazed'. *'Untimely Meditations' & other poems*. Adelaide: Wakefield, 1997. (Henceforth UM.) 80.
- . 'Double Trouble'. *Otis Rush, #10* (1994): 1—10.
- . *Four Poems*. Sydney: Sea Cruise, 1977.
- . 'Funny Ideas'. *Sestina To The Centre Of The Brain*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1990. 1. (Henceforth STCB.)

- 'Giles Auty Furioso'. *AF&B*. 56.
- 'Girls'. *B&F*. 14.
- 'Halogen Pam'. *AF&B*. 18.
- *Happy Accidents*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1999.
- 'Hi, John'. *AF&B*. 68.
- 'Hindley Street, with a Prospect of Michael Grimm'. *AF&B*. 37.
- Ed. *Homage to John Forbes*. Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger, 2002.
- 'Home Town'. *AF&B*. 7.
- 'Horizon'. *AF&B*. 89.
- 'How I'm Feeling'. *Thylazine*. <http://www.thylazine.org/>. Date accessed - 2003.
- 'Italian Drink'. *SP*. 1.
- 'Life at the Grande Jatte'. *B&F*. 16.
- 'Life Your Weight'. *SP*. 88.
- 'Long Distance Information'. *AF&B*. 107.
- 'Lyric'. *SP*. 50.
- 'My Considered Opinion'. unpublished poem.
- 'Mysteries'. *SP*. 5.
- 'Minimal Poem'. *Blonde & French*. Bundeena: Island, 1978. 10. (Henceforth *B&F*.)
- 'Mostly Hindley Street'. *AF&B*. 37.
- 'Nerve'. *SP*. 7.
- 'Nonplussed'. *SP*. 25.
- *Notes For Poems*. Adelaide: Shocking Looking Books, 1984.
- 'Notes For Poems'. Excerpted *SP*. 91.
- 'People Passing Time'. *AF&B*. 73.
- 'A Picture'. *AF&B*. 34.
- 'poem (walking down from The Star Grocery)'. *AF&B*. 14.
- 'Prospect of the Young KB Surrounded By Papers'. *AF&B*. 120.
- 'Rumori'. *AF&B*. 109.
- 'Sardine-can Experience'. *SP*. 10.

- . *Sestina To The Centre Of The Brain*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1990. *STCB*
- . *Selected Poems, 1975 - 1990*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1992. *SP*
- . 'Talking To You'. *SP*. 61.
- . 'A Terrible Attitude, Based On Suffering'. *SP*. 172.
- . 'Terrific Cigarette'. *SP*. 3.
- . 'Terrific Days of Summer'. *SP*. 34.
- . 'Tiepolo'. *AF&B*. 107.
- . 'Traffic Noises, Cups, Voices'. *AF&B*. 97.
- . 'Untimely Meditations'. *UM*. 31.
- . 'Walk On The Wild Side'. *AF&B*. 12.
- . 'Water'. *SP*. 26.
- Butor, Michel. *Change Of Heart*. Trans. Jean Stewart. 1957. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969.
- . *Passing Time*. Trans. Jean Stewart. 1957. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969.
- Camus, Albert. *The Outsider*. Trans. Stuart Gilbert. 1942. London, Penguin, 1961.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. 'This Lime Tree Bower My Prison'. *Selected Poetry and Prose*. Ed. Donald A Stauffer. New York: Modern Library/Random, 1969. 60.
- David, Jacques Louis. *The Oath of the Horatii*. Oil on canvas, 1785. Paris: Louvre.
- Davie, Donald. *Articulate Energy*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955.
- . *The Purity of Diction in English Verse*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1952.
- Duggan, Laurie. 'New England Ode'. *The Great Divide*. Sydney: Hale Iremonger, 1985. 16.
- . *Under The Weather*. Glebe: Wild & Woolley, 197
- Duras, Marguerite. *Little Horses of Tarquinia*. Trans. Peter DuBerg. 1953. London: John Calder, 1960.
- . *Moderato Cantabile*. Trans. Richard Seaver. 1958. *Collected in Four Novels*. New York: Grove Press, 1965.
- . *Sailor From Gibraltar*. Trans. Barbara Bray. 1952. Calder & Boyars, 1966.
- . *Square*. Trans. Sonia Pitt-Rivers and Irina Murdoch. 1955. *Collected in Four Novels*. New York: Grove Press, 1965.
- El Topo*. Dir. Alejandro Jodorowsky. Abkco, 1971.

- Fontana Dictionary of Modern Knowledge* (Ed. Bullock & Stallybrass); Glasgow: Fontana. 1978.
- Forbes, John. 'Angel'. *Collected Poems*. Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger, 2001. (Henceforth *CP*.) 60.
- 'The History Of Nostalgia'. *CP*. 160.
- 'Muddy Waters relaxing between sets'. *CP*. 188.
- 'On Tiepolo's The Banquet of Anthony & Cleopatra'. *CP*. 189.
- 'The Sorrowful Mysteries'. *CP*. 57.
- 'Thin Ice'. *CP*. 145.
- Forbes, John and Mark O'Connor, Mark. 'Admonitions'. *CP*. 42.
- Gide, André. *The Immoralist*. Trans. Dorothy Bussy. 1902. London: Penguin, 1950.
- Ginsberg, Allen, 'Howl'. *Howl & Other Poems*, San Francisco: City Lights, 1956. 9.
- The Gladiator*. Dir. Ridley Scott. Dreamworks/Universal, 2000.
- Goodman, Nelson. *Languages Of Art*. London: Oxford UP, 1969.
- Goldsmith, Oliver. 'The Deserted Village'. *Selected Poems of Johnson and Goldsmith*. Eds. A. Rudrun and P. Dixon. London: Edward Arnold, 1965. 114.
- Gray, Thomas. 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard'. Gray, *Poetry and Prose*. Ed. J. Crofts. London: Oxford UP, 1926. 62.
- Greenberg, Clement. *Art & Culture*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1973.
- 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch'. *Art & Culture*. *Ibid*.
- Guide To Classical Music* Author place: pub, date. unknown.
- Guston, Philip. *Smoking, I*. Oil on canvas, 1973. Private Collection.
- Holiday, Billie. 'My Man'. (recorded: 1956.) The Essential Billie Holiday - Carnegie Hall Concert Recorded Live. Verve/HMV, 1961.
- Koch, Kenneth. 'Sleeping With Women'. *The Pleasures of Peace*. New York: Evergreen/Grove, 1969. 11.
- Koethe, John. *Poetry At One Remove*. Ann Arbor: Michigan, Michigan UP, 2000.
- Leutze, Emmanuel. *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. Oil on canvas, 1851. New York: Metropolitan Museum.
- Lippard, Lucy. 'The Cult of the Direct & the Difficult'. *Changing*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1971.
- Maltese Falcon, The*. Dir. John Huston. Warner Bros., 1941.

Morris, Meaghan. 'On The Beach'. *Too Soon Too Late*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998.

*Mouchette*. Dir. Robert Bresson. With Nadine Nortier. Argos/Parc Film, 1966.

*Neighbours*. Channel Ten, Adelaide, presently showing.

O'Hara, Frank. 'Aus Einem April'. *Collected Poems*. Ed. Donald Allen. New York: Knopf, 1972. (Henceforth *CP*. ) 186.

—. 'Blocks'. *CP*. 108.

—. 'A City Winter'. *CP*. 75.

—. 'Day and Night in 1952'. *CP*. 93.

—. 'The Day Lady Died'. *CP*. 325.

—. 'For Grace, After A Party'. *CP*. 214.

—. 'Homage to Rose Sélavy'. *CP*. 10.

—. 'Meditations In An Emergency'. *CP*. 197.

—. 'Memorial Day 1950'. *CP*. 17.

—. 'On Rachmaninoff's Birthday'. *CP*. 189.

—. 'Oranges:Twelve Pastorals'. *CP*. 5.

—. 'Poem In January'. *CP*. 190.

—. 'Romanze, Or The Music Students'. *CP*. 165.

(*On*) *Being John Malkovich*. Dir. Spike Jonze. Gramercy/Single Cell, 1999. Correct title has no "On".

*Phantom of the Opera*. Dir. Arthur Lubin. Universal, 1943.

Prince, F.T. 'Memoirs in Oxford'. *Collected Poems*. New York: Sheeps Meadow, 1979. 121.

Ravlich, Robyn. 'Tricks/Danko'. *Applestealers*. Eds. Robert Kenny & Colin Talbot. Melbourne: Outback, 1974. 81.

Rivers, Larry. *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, oil on canvas, 1953. New York: MoMA.

Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *For A New Novel*. Trans. Richard Howard. 1963. New York: Grove Press, 1965.

—. *In The Labyrinth*. Trans. Richard Howard. Collected in *Two Novels*. 1959. New York: Grove, 1989.

—. *Jealousy*. Trans. Richard Howard. 1957. London: Calder/Jupiter, 1965.

Ruscha, Ed. *Nine Swimming Pools*, Santa Barbara, CA: Ed Ruscha, 1968.

- . *Real Estate Opportunities*, Santa Barbara, CA: Ed Ruscha, 1968.
- . *Twenty Six Gasoline Stations*. Santa Barbara, CA: Ed Ruscha, 1963.
- Schjeldahl, Peter. *White Country*. New York: Corinth, 1968.
- Schuyler, James. 'Growing Dark'. *The Morning of the Poem*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1980. 11.
- . 'Korean Mums'. *The Morning of the Poem*. Ibid. 9.
- Schwartz, Delmore. 'In Dreams Begin Responsibilities'. In *Dreams Begin Responsibilities and other stories*. 1938. New York: Norton, 1978.
- Sorrentino, Gilbert. *Imaginative Qualities Of Actual Things*. New York: Pantheon, 1971.
- Studio International* magazine, any issue of the early 1970s.
- Swinburne, Algernon Charles. 'Hendecasyllabics'. *The Symbolist Poem*. Ed. Edward Engelberg. New York: Dutton, 1967. 89.
- Turner, Joe. 'On My Way To Denver/ TB Blues'. *Boss Blues*, Intermedia. 1982.
- Waters, Muddy. 'Long Distance Call'. (recorded: 1951) *The Best of Muddy Waters*. Chess Records. 1958.
- World Wrestling Federation*. Channel Ten, middle 1980s.

bibliography

- Adamson, Robert. *Swamp Riddles*. Sydney: Island Press, 1974.
- Adorno, T.W. *Minima Moralia*. Trans. E.F.N. Jephcott. London: Verso, 1978.
- Adorno, Theodor, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, Georg Lukacs. *Aesthetics and Politics*. Verso-New Left, 1977.
- Allen, Donald. Ed. *New American Poetry*. New York: Grove, 1960.
- Altieri, Charles. *Canons and Consequences*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern UP, 1991.
- . *Painterly Abstraction in Modern American Poetry*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1990.
- . *Self and Sensibility in Contemporary American Poetry*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1984.
- Anderson, John. *bluegum smokes a long cigar*. Melbourne: Rigmarole, 1978.
- Andrews, Bruce and Charles Bernstein. Eds. *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book*. Carbondal, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1984.
- Antin, David. *Code Of Flag Behaviour*. California: Black Sparrow, 1968;
- . *Talking*. New York: Kulchur, 1972.
- . *Talking At the Boundaries*. New York: New Directions, 1976.
- . 'Modernism and Postmodernism: Approaching the Present in American Poetry'. *Boundary Two*. Fall, 1972.
- Art & Text* magazine, throughout the 1980s. Paul Taylor. Ed.
- Artforum* magazine, any issue of the early 1970s.
- Ashbery, John. *Double Dream of Spring*. New York: Ecco Press, 1976.
- . *Reported Sightings, art chronicles 1957—1987*. New York: Knopf, 1989.
- . *Rivers & Mountains*. New York: Ecco Press, 1977.
- . *Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror*. New York: Viking, 1975.
- . *Some Trees*. New York: Corinth, 1970.
- . *Tennis Court Oath*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 1962.
- . *Three Poems*. New York: Viking, 1972.
- Ashbery, John and James Schuyler. *Nest of Ninnies*. 1969. Calais, Vermont: Z Press, 1975.
- Austin, J.L. *How To Do Things with Words*. Harvard: Harvard UP, 1975.



- . *Sense and Sensibilia*. London: Oxford UP, 1962.
- Banham, Reyner. *New Brutalism*. London: Architect Press, 1966.
- Barthes, Roland. —. *Barthes On Barthes*. Trans. Richard Howard. 1977. New York: Noonday/Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1989.
- . *Image-Music-Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. 1977. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1979.
- . *Mythologies*. Trans. Annette Lavers. (1957) London: Paladin/Granada, 1973.
- . *Pleasure of the Text*. Trans. Richard Miller. 1973. New York: Hill and Wang-FSG, 1975..
- . *Writing Degree Zero*. Trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. 1953. New York: Jonathon Cape, 1967.
- Battcock, Gregory. Ed. *Minimalism*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968.
- Beaver, Bruce. *Letters To Live Poets*. Sydney: South Head, 1969.
- Beaver, Bruce. *Lauds and Plaints*. Sydney: South Head, 1974.
- Benedikt, Michael. *Body*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 1968.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Baudelaire—A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. Trans. Harry Zohn. 1969. London: Verso, 1976.
- . *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. 1955. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977.
- . *One Way Street and other writings*. Trans. Edmond Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter. London: Verso, 1979.
- Berkson, Bill and Joe LeSueur. Eds. *Homage To Frank O'Hara*. Spec. issue of Big Sky 11/12 (1978)
- Bernstein, Charles. *Content's Dream: essays 1975—1984*. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1986.
- . *My Way—speeches and poems*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1999.
- Berrigan, Ted. *So Going Around Cities, new & selected poems*. Berkeley, CA: Blue Wind, 1980.
- . *Sonnets*. New York: 'C' magazine, 1964. New York: Grove. n.d
- . *Talking In Tranquility interviews w Ted Berrigan*. Stephen Ratcliffe and Leslie Scalapino. Eds. Bolinas, CA: Avenue B/O Books, 1991.
- Berrigan, Ted and Ron Padgett. *Bean Spasms, collaborations*. New York: Kulchur, 1967.
- Big Sky* magazine. Bill Berkson. Ed. #1—#10. Bolinas, CA: 1971—1976.
- Billeter, Walter. *Australian Novemberies*. Melbourne: Paper Castle, 1979.
- Bishop, Elizabeth. *Geography III*. London: Chatto, 1977.

- Bloom, Harold. *Anxiety of Influence*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.
- . *Map Of Misreading*, 1975. London: OUP, 1980.
- Bolton, Ken. *Four Poems*. Sydney: Sea Cruise, 1977.
- . *Blonde & French*. Bundeena: NSW, Island, 1978.
- . *Talking To You*. Melbourne: Rigmarole, 1983.
- . *Notes For Poems*. Adelaide: Shocking Looking Books, 1984.
- . *Blazing Shoes*. Adelaide: Open Dammit, 1984.
- . *Sestina To The Centre Of The Brain*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1990.
- . *Two Poems—a drawing of the sky*. Adelaide: Experimental Art Foundation, 1990.
- . *Selected Poems, 1975—1990*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1992.
- . *'Untimely Meditations' & other poems*. Adelaide: Wakefield, 1997.
- . *Happy Accidents*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1999.
- . *August 6<sup>th</sup>*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1999.
- . Ed. *Homage to John Forbes*. Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger, 2002.
- Bolton, Ken and John Jenkins. *Airborne Dogs*. Melbourne: Brunswick Hills Press, 1988.
- . *Ferrara Poems, a verse novel*. Adelaide: Experimental Art Foundation, 1989.
- . *Gutman Variations*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1993.
- . *Wallah Group*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 2000.
- . *Nutters Without Fetters*. Berry, NSW: PressPress, 2002.
- Bornholdt, Jenny. *Waiting Shelter*. Wellington, NZ: Victoria UP, 1991.
- . *How We Met*. Wellington, NZ: Victoria UP, 1995.
- . *These Days*. Wellington, NZ: Victoria UP, 2000.
- Brainard, Joe. *I Remember*. New York: Full Court, 1975.
- . *New Work*. Los Angeles: Black Sparrow, 1973.
- Brisbane, Katherine, RS Brissenden, and David Malouf. *New Currents in Australian Writing*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1978.
- Brook, Donald. *Social Role of Art*. Adelaide: Experimental Art Foundation, 1977.
- Brown, Pam. *Automatic Sad*. Sydney: Tomato Press, 1994.

- . *Cafe Sport*. Sydney: Sea Cruise, 1979
  - . *Country & Eastern*. Sydney: Never-Never, 1980
  - . *Small Blue View*. Adelaide: Magic Sam/EAF, 1982
  - . *Selected Poems*. Sydney: Wild & Woolley, 1984.
  - . *This World, This Place*. St Lucia: UQP, 1994
  - . *50—50*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1997.
  - . *Text thing*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 2002.
- Brownstein, Michael. *Strange Days Ahead*. Calais, Vermont: Z, 1975.
- . *Highway to The Sky*. New York: Columbia UP, 1969.
- Burns, Chris. 'Art Commentary – Sydney'. *Otis Rush #4*, 1989.
- Butler, Rex. Ed. *What Is Appropriation Art?* Brisbane: IMA, 1996 XX ??
- Butor, Michel. *Passing Time*. Trans. Jean Stewart. London: Jupiter-Calder, 1965.
- . *Change Of Heart*. Trans. Jean Stewart. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969.
- Carroll, Jim. *Living At The Movies*. New York: Grossman, 1973.
- Clark, Tom. *When Things Get Tough On Easy Street. Selected Poems 1963—1978*. Santa Barbara, CA: 1978.
- . *Late Returns – a memoir of Ted Berrigan*. Bolinas, CA: Tombouctou, 1985.
- Couani, Anna. *Italy*. Melbourne: Rigmarole, 1977.
- . *Were All Women Sex-Mad?* Melbourne: Rigmarole, 1982.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Selected Poetry and Prose*. Ed. Donald A Stauffer. New York: Modern Library/Random, 1969.
- Cooper, Dennis. *He Cried*. Los Angeles: Black Star, 1985.
- . *Dream Police. Selected Poems, 1969—1993*. New York: Grove, 1995.
- Creeley, Robert. *Contexts of Poetry: Interviews 1961—1971*. Bolinas, CA: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973.
- . *Poems 1950—1965*. London: Calder & Boyars, 1966.
  - . *Finger. Poems 1966—1969*. London: Calder & Boyars, 1973.
  - . *Quick Graph: Collected Notes and Essays*. Ed. Donald Allen. San Francisco: Four Seasons, 1970.
- Davie, Donald. *Collected Poems, 1950—1970*. London: Routledge, 1972.
- . *Purity of Diction in English Verse*. 1952. London: Chatto & Windus, 1969.

- . *Articulate Energy*. 1955. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.
- . Ed. *Late Augustans*. London: Heineman, 1958.
- Davison, Dennis. Ed. *Penguin Book of Eighteenth-Century English Verse*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.
- Denby, Edwin. *Collected Poems*. New York: Full Court, 1975.
- Diggory, Terence and Stephen Paul Miller. Eds. *Scene Of My Selves*. Maine: National Poetry Foundation/University of Maine, 2001.
- Duggan, Laurie. *East. Poems 1970—74*. Melbourne: Rigmarole, 1976.
- . *Under The Weather*. Glebe: Wild & Woolley, 1978.
- . *Adventures In Paradise*. Adelaide: Magic Sam/EAF, 1982. Greatly expanded edition. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1991.
- . *Great Divide*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1985.
- . *Blue Notes*. Sydney: Picador, 1990.
- . *Memorials*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1996.
- Duras, Marguerite. *Moderato Cantabile*. Trans. Richard Seaver. Collected in *Four Novels*. New York: Grove Press, 1965.
- . *Square*. Trans. Sonia Pitt-Rivers and Irina Murdoch. Collected in *Four Novels*. New York: Grove Press, 1965.
- . *Sailor From Gibraltar*. Trans. Barbara Bray. Calder & Boyars, 1966.
- . *Little Horses of Tarquinia*. Trans. Peter DuBerg. London: John Calder, 1960.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Ideology of the Aesthetic*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.
- Ear in a Wheatfield*. Ed. Kris Hemensley. Westgarth, Melbourne, 1973—76.
- Elledge, Jim. Ed. *Frank O'Hara—To Be True To A City*. Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 1990.
- Elmslie, Kenward. *Circus Nerves*. Los Angeles: Black Sparrow, 1971.
- Etymesperes*. Eds. Walter Billeter and John Jenkins. Carlton, Melbourne, 1974—1977.
- Forbes, John. *Tropical Skiing*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1976.
- . *On The Beach*. Sydney: Sea Cruise, 1977.
- . *Stalin's Holidays*. Sydney: Transit, 1981.
- . *Stunned Mullet*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1988.
- . *New & Selected Poems*. Angus & Robertson, 1992.
- . *Damaged Glamour*. Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger, 1998.

- . *Collected Poems*. Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger, 2001.
- Foster, Edward and Joseph Donahue. Eds. *World In Time & Space—towards a history of innovative American poetry in our time*. Jersey City, NJ: Talisman, 2002.
- Fried, Michael. *Art & Objecthood*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1998.
- Gallagher, Denis. *Star Quality*. Sydney: Sea Cruise, 1977.
- . *Country Country*. Sydney: Island Press, 1979.
- Geldzahler, Henry. *Pop Art, 1955—1970*. Sydney: International Cultural Corporation of Australia, 1985.
- Goldsmith, Oliver. *Selected Poems of Johnson and Goldsmith*. Eds. A. Rudrun and P. Dixon. London: Edward Arnold, 1965.
- Gooch, Brad. *City Poet — the Life and Times of Frank O'Hara*. New York: Knopf, 1993.
- Goodman, Nelson. *Languages Of Art*. London: Oxford UP, 1969.
- Gray, Thomas. *Poetry & Prose*. J, Crofts. Ed. Oxford: OUP , 1926.
- Greenberg, Clement. *Art and Culture*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1973.
- . *Collected Essays and Criticism, Vol 1—4*: Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986—1993.
- Grosseteste Review*. Eds. Tim Longville and John Riley. Various issues 1967—1984.
- Gruen, John. *Party's Over Now—reminiscences of the fifties*. New York: Viking, 1972.
- Harrison-Ford, Carl. 'Book Reviews' and 'Notes and Comments', *New Poetry* various issues Vols 19—21, 1971—1975.
- Hawken, Dinah. *It Has No Sound And Is Blue*. Wellington, NZ: 1987.
- Hemensley, Kris. Ed. *Best of the Ear: the Ear In A Wheatfield 1973—76, a portrait of a magazine*. Melbourne: Rigmarole, 1985.
- . 'Notes and Comments', *New Poetry* various issues Vols 21—22, 1975-1976.
- . 'Books Received', *Ear In A Wheatfield* various issues, 1973—1976.
- . *Poem of the Clear Eye*. Carlton, Melbourne: Paper Castle, 1975.
- . *Rocky Mountains & Tired Indians*. London: Joe Di Maggio, 1973.
- . *Sulking in the Seventies*. Melbourne: Rigmarole, 1975.
- Hess, Thomas B & John Ashbery. Eds. *Avant-Garde Art*. New York: Collier, 1968.
- Hatje, Gerd. Ed. *Encyclopedia of Modern Architecture*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1963.
- Hejirian, Lyn. *Language Of Inquiry*. Berkeley, CA: California UP, 2000.

- Holt, Elizabeth G. Ed. *Documentary History of Art*, vol 3. New York: Doubleday, 1966.
- Howard, Richard. *Alone With America—the Art of Poetry in the United States since 1950*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1970.
- Hyman, Timothy. *Bonnard*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1998.
- Jay, Martin. *Force Fields. Between intellectual history and cultural critique*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Jefferies, Alan. *Writing from a bankrupt 13<sup>th</sup> principle*. Sydney: Third Degree, 1990.
- . *High Jinx*. Sydney: Transit Poetry, 1983.
- Jenkins, John. *Blind Spot*. St. Lucia: Makar, 1978.
- . *Inland Sea*. Melbourne: Brunswick Hills, 1984.
- . *Wild White Sea*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1990.
- . *Days Like Air*. Melbourne: Modern Writing, 1992.
- . *Break In The Weather*. Melbourne: Modern Writing, 2003.
- Jones, Rae Desmond. *Orpheus With A Tuba*. St. Lucia: Gargoyle/Makar, 1973.
- . *Mad Vibe*. Sydney, Saturday Club, 1975.
- . *Shakti*. St. Lucia: Maker, 1977.
- Kane, Paul. *Australian Poetry—Romanticism and Negativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Kelen, S(teve) K. *Gods Ash Their Cigarettes*. St Lucia: Makar, 1978.
- . *To The Heart Of The World's Electricity*. Melbourne: Senor, 1980.
- . *Zen Maniacs*. Sydney: Glandular Press, 1981.
- . *Atomic Ballet*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1991.
- Kenneally, Cath. *Harmers Haven*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 1996.
- . *Around Here*. Adelaide: Wakefield, 1999.
- Kenny, Robert. *'Poem' – poem in inverted commas*. Melbourne: Rigmarole, 1975.
- . *Book of Detection*. Sydney: Sea Cruise, 1978.
- . *Etcetera*. Melbourne: Rigmarole, 1978.
- Kenny, Robert and Colin Talbot. Eds. *Applestealers*. Eds. Melbourne: Outback, 1974.
- Koethe, John. *Poetry At One Remove*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Michigan UP, 2000

- Koch, Kenneth. *Great Atlantic Rainway – Selected Poems, 1950 – 1988*. New York: Knopf, 1994.
- . *Art Of Love*. New York: Random, 1975.
- . *Thank You and other poems*. New York: Grove/Evergreen, 1962.
- . *Pleasures of Peace*. New York: Evergreen/Grove, 1969.
- . *Duplications*. New York: Random, 1977.
- Rudi Krausmann. *Everyman: A Sentence Situation*. Melbourne: Paper Castle, 1978.
- Larkin, Philip. *Whitsun Weddings*. 1964. London: Faber, 1971.
- . *Less Deceived*. 1955. London: Marvell, 1973.
- Lehman, David. *Last Avant-Garde — the making of the New York School of poets*. New York: Anchor/Random House, 1999.
- Lewis, Cassie. *High Country*. Adelaide: Little Esther, 2001.
- Lippard, Lucy. *Changing*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1971.
- . *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object*. New York: Praeger, 1973.
- Maiden, Jennifer. *Problem of Evil*. Sydney: Poetry Society, 1975.
- Mathews, Harry. *Immeasurable Distances — the collected essays*. Venice, CA: Lapis, 1991.
- . *Way Home—collected longer prose*. London: Atlas, 1989.
- . *Selected Declarations of Dependence*. Calais, Vermont: Z Press, 1977.
- Mathews, Harry and Alastair Brotchie. Eds. *Ou Li Po Compendium*. London: Atlas Press, 1998.
- Mayer, Bernadette. *Midwinter Day*. Berkeley, CA: Turtle Island, 1982.
- Meyer, Leonard B. *Music, the Arts, And Ideas: patterns and predictions in twentieth-century culture*. (1962). Chicago: Chicago UP, 1973.
- Morris, Meaghan. *Too Soon Too Late*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998.
- Myles, Eileen. *Sappho's Boat*. Minneapolis: Coffee House, 1982.
- . *Maxfield Parrish, Early and New Poems*. Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow, 1995.
- . *School Of Fish*. Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow, 1997.
- Newman, Amy. *Challenging Art: Art Forum 1962—1974*. New York: Soho, 2000.
- North, Chareles. *Nearness of the Way You Look Tonight*. New York: Adventures in Poetry, 2000.
- Notley, Alice. *Selected Poems*. Hoboken, NJ: Talisman House, 1993.

- Novack, Carol. *Living Alone Without A Dictionary*. St Lucia: Maker, 1977.
- O, □. *Panash*. Melbourne: Collective Effort, [1978?].
- *Fitzroy Poems*. Melbourne: Collective Effort, 1989.
- O'Hara, Frank. *Collected Poems*. Ed. Donald Allen. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1971.
- *Lunch Poems*. 1964. San Francisco: City Lights, 1974.
- *Meditations in an Emergency*. 1957. New York: Grove, 1967.
- *Odes*. New York: Poets Press, 1969.
- *Standing Still and walking in New York*. Ed. Donald Allen. Bolinas, CA: Grey Fox, 1975.
- *Art Chronicles 1954—1966*. New York: Braziller, 1975.
- Olson, Charles. *Archaeologist of Morning*. New York: Grossman, 1973.
- *Distances*. New York: Grove, 1960.
- *Human Universe and other essays*. New York: Grove Press, 1967.
- *Letters for Origin, 1950—1955*. Ed. Albert Glover. London: Cape Goliard, 1969.
- Otis Rush* magazine. Ed. Ken Bolton. 1987 — 1996.
- Padgett, Ron. *Great Balls of Fire*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969.
- *New & Selected Poems*. Lincoln, MA: Godine, 1995.
- *Ted, a personal memoir of Ted Berrigan*. Great Barrington, MA: The Figures, 1993.
- Perloff, Marjorie. *Radical Artifice*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992.
- *Frank O'Hara – Poet Among Painters*. Chicago: Texas UP, 1998.
- *Poetics of Indeterminacy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1981.
- *Postmodern Genres*. Chicago: Oklahoma UP, 1989.
- Pevsner, Nikolaus. *Sources of Modern Architecture & Design*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1968.
- Poetry of Surrealism, An Anthology*. Michael Benedikt. Ed. Boston: Little Brown, 1974.
- Ponge, Francis. *Things*. Trans. Cid Corman. New York: Mushinsha-Grossman, 1971.
- Prince, FT 'Memoirs in Oxford'. *Collected Poems*. New York: Sheeps Meadow, 1979.
- Queneau, Raymond. *Pierrot Mon Ami*. Trans. Barbara Wright. London: Atlas, 1988.
- Ravlich, Robyn. *Black Abacus*. Sydney, Prism Books/New Poetry, 1974.



- Rich, Adrienne. *Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far, Poems 1978—1981*. New York: Norton, 1981.
- Rivers, Larry & Arnold Weinstein. *What Did I Do?* New York: Harper Collins, 1992.
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *For A New Novel*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Grove Press, 1965.
- . *Jealousy*. Trans. Richard Howard. London: Calder/Jupiter, 1965.
- . *In The Labyrinth*. Trans. Richard Howard. Collected in *Two Novels*. New York: Grove, 1989.
- Roberts, Nigel. *In Casablanca For The Waters*. Sydney: Wild and Woolley, 1977.
- . *Steps For Astaire*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983.
- Rodefer, Stephen. *Four Lectures*. Berkeley, CA: The Figures, 1982.
- Rosenberg, Harold. *The Tradition Of The New*. 1959. London, Paladin, 1970.
- Roussel, Raymond. *How I Wrote Certain Of My Books*. Trans. Trevor Winkfield. 1935. New York: Sun. 1975
- . *Locus Solus*. Trans. Rupert Copeland Cunningham. 1914. London: John Calder, 1982.
- . *Impressions of Africa*. Trans. Rayner Heppenstall. 1910. London: John Calder, 1966.
- Rudrun, A and P. Dixon. Eds. *Selected Poems of Johnson and Goldsmith*. London: Edward Arnold, 1965.
- Ruscha, Ed. *Twenty Six Gasoline Stations*. (1963) [Santa Barbara, CA: Ed Ruscha], 1967.
- . *Nine Swimming Pools*. [Santa Barbara, CA: Ed Ruscha], 1968.
- . *Real Estate Opportunities*. [Santa Barbara, CA: Ed Ruscha], 1968.
- Schjeldahl, Peter. *White Country*. New York: Corinth Books, 1968.
- . *Since 1964—New & Selected Poems*. New York: Sun, 1978.
- . *Atomic Jukebox. Selected Writings 1978—1990*. Ed. Malin Wilson. Berkeley, CA: California UP, 1991.
- . *'7 Days' Columns, 1988—1990*. Great Barrington, MA: The Figures, 1990.
- . *Columns & Catalogues*. Great Barrington, MA: The Figures, 1994.
- Schuyler, James. *Collected Poems*. New York: FSG, 1993.
- . *Hymn To Life*. New York: Random, 1974.
- . *Few Days*. New York: Random, 1985.

- . *Morning of the Poem*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1980.
- Schwartz, Delmore. *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities and other stories*. 1938. New York: Norton, 1978.
- Shattuck, Roger. *Banquet Years. Origins of the Avant-Garde in France: 1885— World War 1*. 1955. New York: Vintage-Random, 1968.
- Silliman, Ron. *N/O*. New York: Roof, 1994.
- Slessor, Kenneth. *Selected Poems*. 1944. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1975.
- Sorrentino, Gilbert. *Imaginative Qualities Of Actual Things*. New York: Pantheon, 1971.
- . *Crystal Vision*. London: Marion Boyars, 1981.
- . *Mulligan Stew*. London: Marion Boyars, 1980.
- . *Pack of Lies*. Normal, Illinois: Dalkey Archive, 1997.
- . *Gold Fools*. Los Angeles: Green Integer, 2001.
- Studio International* magazine, any issue of the early 1970s.
- Surfers Paradise*. Ed. John Forbes. Newtown, Sydney/Melbourne: irregular.
- Three Blind Mice*. Ed. Kris Hemensley, with Walter Billeter and Robert Kenny. Melbourne: Rigmarole, Ear in a Wheatfield, Paper Castle, 1977.
- Towle, Tony. *Autobiography and other poems*. New York: Coach House, 1977.
- . *North*. New York: Columbia UP, 1970.
- . *Works On Paper*. 1978. New York: Swollen Magpie, 1980.
- . *New and Selected Poems (1963—1983)*. New York: Kulchur, 1983.
- . *Some Musical Episodes*. New York: Hanging Loose, 1992.
- . *History of the Invitation—new and selected poems*. New York: Hanging Loose, 2001.
- Tranter, John. *Selected Poems*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982.
- . *Crying In Early Infancy*. St Lucia: Makar, 1978.
- . *Blast Area*. St Lucia: Gargoyle/Makar, 1974.
- . *Dazed In The Ladies Lounge*. Sydney: Island, 1979.
- . Ed. *New Australian Poetry*. St. Lucia: Makar, 1979.
- Tranter, John and Philip Mead. Eds. *Penguin Book of Modern Australian Poetry*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1991.

*UTS Review* 4.1 (1998)

*Various Art*. Andrew Crozier and Tim Longville. Eds. Manchester: Carcanet, 1987.

Violi, Paul. *Breakers*. Selected Poems. Minneapolis: Coffee House, 2000.

—. *Likewise*. New York: Hanging Loose, 1988.

—. *Fracas*. New York: Hanging Loose, 1999.

—. *Curious Builder*. New York: Hanging Loose, 1993.

*VORT #2*, Anselm Hollo / Ted Berrigan. Interviews. Ed. Barry Alpert. 1972.

*VORT #6*, Gilbert Sorrentino / Donald Phelps. Interviews. Ed. Barry Alpert. 1974.

Waldman, Anne. Ed. *Nice To See You—Homage to Ted Berrigan*. Minneapolis: House, 1991.

—. *Giant Night*. New York: Corinth, 1970.

—. *Journals & Dreams*. New York: Stonehill, 1976.

Wallis, Bruce. Ed. *Art After Modernism: rethinking representation*. New York: Godine, 1984.

Warsh, Lewis. *Part Of My History*. Toronto: Coach House, 1972.

—. *Long Distance*. London: Ferry, 1971.

Whalen, Philip. *On Bears Head*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1969.

—. *Scenes Of Life at the Capital*. Bolinas, CA: Greer Fox, 1971.

—. *Heavy Breathing, poems 1967—1980*. San Francisco: Four Season, 1973.

Wearne, Alan. *Public Relations*. St. Lucia: Gargoyle/Makar, 1972.

—. *New Devil, New Parish*. St. Lucia: UQP, 1976.

*Yugen*. Leroi Jones. Ed. New York: Totem Press, 1961.

*Z* magazine. Kenward Elmslie. Ed. #2—#6. Calais, Vermont: 1974—1977.